

# LAUGHTER UNDER FIRE: POLITICAL HUMOR AS SYMBOLIC RESISTANCE DURING RUSSIA'S FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE

Syrko I. M.

## INTRODUCTION

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, initiating the most extensive military conflict in Europe since the Second World War. From the very first hours of the invasion, alongside military confrontation, an extraordinary wave of digital cultural production emerged. Among its most visible manifestations was the rapid proliferation of political humor – memes, cartoons, slogans, graphic art, and viral textual fragments – that circulated widely across social media platforms, both domestically and internationally. These humorous forms quickly became an essential lens through which the war was interpreted, narrated, and emotionally processed.

Two statements quickly crystallized into symbolic anchors of this humorous discourse. During the attack on Snake Island, Ukrainian border guards were ordered by a Russian warship to surrender. The response – «*Russian warship, go fuck yourself*» – immediately became emblematic of defiance and moral resilience. Around the same time, when offered evacuation assistance, President Volodymyr Zelensky famously replied: «*I need ammunition, not a ride*». Both utterances transcended their immediate circumstances. They were transformed into digital artifacts, reproduced, remixed, and disseminated across platforms, becoming foundational memes in wartime Ukraine.

These phrases were not isolated rhetorical moments. They functioned as narrative templates, shaping subsequent humorous and symbolic production. Within hours, they appeared in visual adaptations, typographic posters, cartoons, and commercial merchandise. They were printed on billboards and later commemorated on postage stamps. Their repetition marked the emergence of a symbolic battlefield parallel to the physical one, where meaning, morale, and cultural identity were contested and affirmed through humor.

This article examines Ukrainian wartime humor that emerged after the full-scale Russian invasion of February 2022 and argues

that it should be understood not merely as emotional coping or state propaganda but as a form of civic activism operating within a digitally networked public sphere. Through humorous production, circulation, and engagement, citizens, artists, institutions, and businesses collectively participate in constructing a moral, political, and emotional framework for understanding the war. Humor becomes a tool for resistance, solidarity, vigilance, and the reinforcement of national identity, functioning simultaneously as commentary, documentation, and mobilization.

This framework allows us to move beyond the traditional binary of humor as either «subversive resistance»<sup>1</sup> or «state propaganda»<sup>2</sup>, recognizing the «networked, participatory, and semiotic dimensions of meme culture»<sup>3</sup>. Ukrainian war humor represents a hybrid space in which digital creativity, civic engagement, and ethical reflection intersect. It performs multiple functions: shaping domestic morale, signaling solidarity, exposing disinformation, and communicating resilience to international audiences.

Building on this perspective, the present study examines four interrelated dimensions through which Ukrainian wartime humor operates: resistance, solidarity, vigilance, and commitment to victory. Each dimension is explored through «recurring motifs, linguistic strategies, and material circulation, demonstrating how humor serves as both a cultural and civic practice»<sup>4</sup>. In the sections that follow, the analysis traces how specific phrases, visual tropes, and viral narratives emerge, circulate, and solidify into shared symbolic resources, revealing the ways in which humor mediates experience, constructs social meaning, and participates in the broader struggle for national survival.

### **Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative interpretive approach to examine Ukrainian wartime humor as a form of civic activism within a

---

<sup>1</sup> Scott J.C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*: Yale University Press. 1985. P. 99.

<sup>2</sup> Kuipers G. *Good Humor, Bad Taste: A Sociology of the Joke*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. 2015. P. 135.

<sup>3</sup> Milner R.M. *The World Made Meme: Public Conversations and Participatory Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2016. P. 70 p.

<sup>4</sup> Siuta G.M. Transformation of lingual and mental profiles of the Ukrainian language picture of the world during the war. *Man and law in the language of modern mass media*. Vol. 1. Riga, Latvia: Baltija Publishing. 2025. P. 57.

digitally networked public sphere. The analysis focuses on widely circulated memes, humorous slogans, visual motifs, and viral narratives that emerged during the first year of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The empirical material consists of a purposive corpus of digital artifacts collected from major online platforms where wartime humor circulated most actively, including Twitter (X), Telegram, Facebook, Instagram, and widely shared media reports documenting viral memes. The selection of examples followed three primary criteria: high visibility and widespread circulation across multiple platforms, recurrence of specific motifs or phrases within meme culture, and cultural or political relevance to key wartime events. Rather than aiming for exhaustive quantitative representation, the corpus was constructed to capture culturally significant and widely recognized instances of humor that shaped public discourse.

The analysis draws on approaches from discourse analysis and digital culture studies, particularly meme analysis as conceptualized by Limor Shifman. Memes are treated not as isolated artifacts but as groups of related cultural items that share thematic, visual, or linguistic features and evolve through processes of imitation, variation, and remixing. Accordingly, the study focuses on recurring symbolic patterns – such as *tractors towing tanks*, the term «*bavovna*», or references to *Chornobayivka* – that function as shared narrative templates within Ukrainian wartime communication.

Interpretation proceeds through qualitative thematic analysis. Individual memes and humorous narratives were examined in relation to the social and political contexts in which they appeared, with attention to their symbolic structure, rhetorical strategies, and patterns of circulation. Particular emphasis is placed on how humor frames wartime events, constructs moral interpretations, and fosters participatory engagement across diverse actors, including state institutions, civil society, private companies, and individual users.

The analytical framework is organized around four interrelated dimensions identified inductively during the analysis: resistance, solidarity, vigilance, and commitment to victory. These categories reflect recurring communicative functions through which humor contributed to symbolic resistance, collective identity formation,

informational awareness, and future-oriented narratives of national resilience.

The study does not attempt to measure audience reception quantitatively; rather, it investigates humor as a cultural and communicative practice embedded within digital networks. By examining how specific motifs and phrases emerge, circulate, and stabilize within meme culture, the analysis seeks to illuminate the role of humor in shaping collective interpretation of wartime experience and in sustaining civic engagement under conditions of military conflict.

### **1. Theoretical Context: Between Resistance and Propaganda**

Academic literature on political humor traditionally operates within a binary framework. On the one hand, humor is frequently conceptualized as a subversive practice employed by socially or politically subordinate groups to challenge dominant authority structures. This interpretation is closely associated with the work of James C. Scott, whose «concept of *hidden transcripts* describes the informal, often disguised forms of resistance that emerge in contexts where open opposition may be dangerous»<sup>1</sup>. Within this perspective, jokes, satire, and ironic commentary provide relatively safe channels through which criticism of power can circulate. Humor thus becomes a *weapon of the weak*, enabling individuals to symbolically undermine authority without engaging in direct confrontation.

At the same time, historical analyses of wartime satire demonstrate that humor can function in a very different way. Studies of propaganda during the world wars have shown how states actively employed caricatures and satirical imagery to mobilize populations, reinforce national cohesion, and demonize the enemy. In such contexts, humor did not challenge power structures but rather supported them. Ridicule directed at the enemy served to simplify complex geopolitical conflicts into morally legible narratives, strengthening public commitment to the war effort. In such contexts, humor frequently operated not as resistance but as a persuasive instrument embedded within official communication strategies.

---

<sup>1</sup> Scott J.C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*: Yale University Press. 1985. P. 94.

The coexistence of these two traditions – humor as resistance and humor as propaganda – has structured much of the scholarly debate surrounding political satire. Yet the emergence of digital communication environments has complicated this binary distinction. The participatory architecture of social media enables large numbers of users to produce, remix, and circulate humorous content at high speed, creating communication flows that are neither purely grassroots nor strictly institutional.

Research on digital memes by L. Shifman provides an important framework for understanding this transformation. The author conceptualizes memes not simply «as individual jokes but as groups of digital items that share common characteristics and are created through processes of imitation and variation»<sup>1</sup>. Memes function as participatory cultural units whose meaning emerges through collective reproduction and modification. In this sense, they represent a form of distributed cultural production rather than a singular authored message.

The Ukrainian case following the full-scale invasion in February 2022 illustrates precisely such a participatory dynamic. Wartime humor in Ukraine has been produced not only by anonymous social media users but also by state institutions, journalists, artists, volunteers, and commercial actors. Government agencies frequently adopt meme formats in their official communication, while grassroots creators reinterpret official statements or slogans in humorous ways. Instead of a linear model in which propaganda flows downward from institutions to the public, the communication structure more closely resembles a networked ecosystem of symbolic co-production.

This participatory dimension also resonates with sociological analyses of humor as a mechanism of social boundary formation. According to Giseline Kuipers, «humor frequently operates as a marker of group membership: understanding a joke signals familiarity with shared cultural references, values, and experiences»<sup>2</sup>. In wartime contexts, this boundary-making function can become particularly pronounced. Jokes may simultaneously reinforce internal

---

<sup>1</sup> Shifman L. *Memes in Digital Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2013. P. 68.

<sup>2</sup> Kuipers G. *Good Humor, Bad Taste: A Sociology of the Joke*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. 2015. P. 158.

cohesion within a community while excluding or ridiculing perceived outsiders.

Ukrainian wartime memes demonstrate this dynamic clearly. The ability to recognize certain references – such as linguistic jokes, recurring symbolic motifs, or specific wartime events – signals participation in a shared interpretive community. Humor therefore contributes not only to emotional coping or political commentary but also to the ongoing construction of collective identity. Taken together, these theoretical perspectives suggest that wartime humor cannot be fully understood within the traditional binary of resistance versus propaganda. Instead, humor in contemporary digital environments emerges from the interaction between participatory media structures, cultural memory, and political conflict. It simultaneously challenges, reinforces, and reconfigures existing power relations.

Consequently, this article proposes an alternative analytical lens: *civic activism*. *Civic activism* here refers to «collective practices oriented toward public concerns and enacted outside formal political institutions, yet often intersecting with them»<sup>1</sup>. In the Ukrainian context, humorous expression became one such practice. Through memes and cartoons, participants documented events, articulated moral judgments, countered disinformation, and mobilized resources. Humor in this sense functions not merely as entertainment or commentary but as a form of participatory civic engagement embedded within digital culture. By circulating symbolic interpretations of wartime events, meme creators contribute to the formation of a shared narrative framework through which the conflict is publicly understood.

## 2. Resistance as Symbolic Practice

At the outset of the invasion, numerous Russian political commentators and media figures publicly predicted that Kyiv would fall within three days. The expectation of swift capitulation shaped the early Russian narrative of inevitability and superiority. However, the anticipated scenario failed to materialize: Ukrainian state institutions did not collapse, the capital did not surrender, and the gov-

---

<sup>1</sup> Angus J. The role of laughter in establishing solidarity and status. *The European Journal of Humour Research*. 2022. Issue 10 (2). P. 39.

ernment remained operational. In this context, humor emerged as a mechanism for publicly dismantling the myth of rapid conquest, transforming expectations of inevitability into opportunities for symbolic contestation.

Mememes mocking the «*three-day*» forecast depicted Russian troops as lost, exhausted, or stranded. The gap between prediction and reality became fertile ground for satire, illustrating the broader principle identified by James C. Scott in *Weapons of the Weak*: «humor can function as a public articulation of resistance, exposing the overconfidence of dominant powers while affirming the agency of the subordinated»<sup>1</sup>. Ukrainian humor did not merely celebrate military resistance; it emphasized narrative failure, making visible the discrepancy between propaganda and lived experience.

President Volodymyr Zelensky's early wartime address framed the conflict in explicitly moral terms. The formulation «*We will be defending our country, because our weapon is truth, and our truth is that this is our land, our country, our children*» positioned the war not only as territorial defense but as an ethical struggle. Humor circulated within this moral and discursive framework. It did not trivialize the conflict; rather, it reinforced the legitimacy of resistance, embedding laughter and satire within a broader narrative of sovereignty, dignity, and truth.

The encounter at Snake Island quickly became a defining symbolic episode of the early war. When Russian forces demanded surrender, the response – «*Russian warship, go fuck yourself*» – transformed a coercive military ultimatum into a moment of rhetorical reversal. The phrase circulated almost instantly across social media, banners, protest signs, graphic designs, and digital posters. It was translated, stylized, and incorporated into artistic formats. The obscenity of the phrase amplified its authenticity, emotional intensity, and cultural resonance, aligning with notions of the carnivalesque: «subversion through humor inverts hierarchical authority, turning Russian military coercion into public mockery»<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Scott J.C. *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*: Yale University Press. 1985. P. 82.

<sup>2</sup> Pavlenko V. The emotional and behavioral consequences after the Russian invasion of Ukraine for the civilian population of Ukraine. *Dispossession: Anthropological Perspectives on Russia's War Against Ukraine*. New York and London: Routledge. 2024. P. 55.

The sinking of the cruiser *Moskva* on April 14, 2022, was narrativized through humor as poetic justice. Social media users joked that the vessel had been «*promoted to submarine*», or parodied Russian terminology by labeling it a «*special underwater operation*». A widespread meme framed the event through the lens of «The five stages of grief in Russia»:

- Denial: «The cruiser Moskva didn't sink».
- Anger: «The cruiser is on fire after the detonation of ammunition».
- Bargaining: «The cruiser is all right, we've [evacuated] her».
- Depression: «The cruiser continues to be on fire».
- Acceptance: «The cruiser sank».

This structure transformed military news into a staged emotional drama, exposing inconsistencies in official statements and producing a collective interpretive framework in which humor reinforced informational vigilance. Recurrent visual motifs, such as cigarettes, parodied Russian explanations of accidental explosions, demonstrating how meme culture recycles and amplifies tropes of official absurdity. These patterns illustrate Giseline Kuipers' argument that «humor operates as a marker of social knowledge, enabling insiders to identify truth from falsehood and collectively negotiate meaning»<sup>1</sup>.

The phrase from Snake Island was institutionalized through material culture. The Ukrainian Postal Service issued a stamp featuring a soldier gesturing toward a warship with the caption «*Russian warship, go fuck yourself*». Following the sinking, a subsequent stamp carried the word «*Done*». These items «generated public enthusiasm and international media coverage»<sup>2</sup>. The slogan also appeared on billboards, T-shirts, mugs, and other merchandise, often channeling profits toward military support initiatives. The warship episode exemplifies how a single moment of verbal defiance can be transformed into a durable symbolic resource, circulating simultaneously in digital, physical, and commercial spaces.

---

<sup>1</sup> Kuipers G. *Good Humor, Bad Taste: A Sociology of the Joke*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. 2015. P. 202.

<sup>2</sup> Lutska V. *Ukrainian meme forces: What makes us laugh in the times of Russia's invasion*. 2022.

URL: <https://war.ukraine.ua/articles/ukrainian-meme-forces-what-makes-us-laugh-in-the-times-of-russia-s-invasion/>

Another prominent motif of early wartime humor centered on Ukrainian farmers towing abandoned Russian tanks with *tractors*. Videos of such incidents spread widely online, forming the basis for extensive meme production. Within this cultural logic, the reasons for tank abandonment – fuel shortages, logistical breakdown or tactical withdrawal – were largely irrelevant; memes framed these events as deliberate civilian appropriation, humorously recasting ordinary citizens as agents of asymmetrical power reversal. One viral joke suggested that Ukrainian farmers now possessed the fifth-largest army in Europe, while others exaggerated the motif by depicting tractors towing fighter jets or naval vessels. Agricultural machinery thus became a symbolic instrument of resistance, demonstrating the capacity of humor to invert power hierarchies through exaggeration and imaginative reconstruction. The tractor motif also extended into physical merchandise and fundraising campaigns, appearing on stamps, clothing, and other items that often supported the Ukrainian armed forces. These productions affirmed civilian participation in national defense, constructing ordinary citizens as active agents rather than passive victims.

Botanical imagery, particularly the *sunflower*, also acquired heightened significance in wartime humor. A viral video showed a Ukrainian woman confronting Russian soldiers, instructing them to carry sunflower seeds «*so sunflowers grow when you die*». Cartoonists expanded the motif by depicting seeds sprouting from fallen soldiers' pockets, transforming botanical imagery into a symbolic representation of historical inevitability. The motif soon transcended digital space, appearing in protests and demonstrations across Europe. Unlike grotesque caricatures, sunflower imagery operated through quiet certainty, conveying moral inevitability rather than immediate triumph»<sup>1</sup>.

When Russia intensified attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure, humor adapted to everyday hardship. Memes depicted families rushing to charge devices, joking about which appliance to prioritize during power outages. «*Blackout bingo*» templates invit-

---

<sup>1</sup> Bilaniuk L. Memes as antibodies: Creativity and resilience in the face of Russia's war. *Dispossession: Anthropological Perspectives on Russia's War Against Ukraine*, New York and London: Routledge. 2024. P. 151.

ed users to mark failed utilities: electricity, water, internet, heating. President's Telegram message circulated widely in meme culture:

*Without gas or without you? Without you.*

*Without light or without you? Without you.*

*Without water or without you? Without you.*

*Without food or without you? Without you.*

*Cold, hunger, darkness and thirst are not as terrible and deadly for us as your friendship and brotherhood.*

*But history will put everything in its place.*

*And we will be with gas, light, water and food ... and without you!*<sup>1</sup>

Humor echoed this sentiment, repositioning deprivation within a hierarchy of values: material hardship was contrasted with political independence, reinforcing collective resilience. In this way, «resistance as symbolic practice encompassed not only verbal defiance and ridicule but also imaginative reconstruction of reality, transforming vulnerability into agency while fostering solidarity and moral coherence»<sup>2</sup>.

### **3. Solidarity and Collective Co-Production**

If resistance in Ukrainian wartime humor manifested as defiance, solidarity emerged as its social infrastructure, providing the relational and participatory networks that allowed humor to function collectively. One of the most striking features of humor production after February 24, 2022, was the convergence of actors across traditionally distinct communicative domains: state institutions, private companies, cultural figures, volunteer networks, and ordinary social media users. Unlike earlier protest movements – most notably the 2013–2014 Euromaidan period – when satire frequently targeted state authorities, the full-scale invasion generated a different communicative configuration. Governmental actors were no longer perceived primarily as objects of ridicule but as participants in a shared symbolic struggle. Humor thus became a space of horizontal alignment rather than vertical confrontation, fostering collective participation in shaping the national narrative.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2022/09/11/7367041/>.

<sup>2</sup> Siuta G.M. Transformation of lingual and mental profiles of the Ukrainian language picture of the world during the war. *Man and law in the language of modern mass media*. Vol. 1. Riga, Latvia: Baltija Publishing. 2025. P. 61.

Digital platforms functioned as accelerators of this alignment. Memes and humorous posts were not merely consumed; they were actively remixed, reposted, and circulated, exemplifying what Li-mor Shifman describes as the *participatory logic of digital memes*. Shifman emphasizes that «memes operate as replicable cultural units whose meaning emerges through iterative reproduction, adaptation, and variation»<sup>1</sup>. In the Ukrainian case, a meme created by an anonymous user could quickly be appropriated by government agencies, commercial brands, volunteer networks, or journalists, producing a networked ecosystem of symbolic co-production. This ecosystem blurred the boundaries between grassroots expression, institutional messaging, and commercial culture, reflecting a distributed participatory model of civic communication.

Civic participation through humor encompassed both material engagement – volunteering, donating, organizing logistics – and symbolic engagement – producing, sharing, and interpreting humorous content. Humor, in this sense, functioned as a form of digital civic activism, reinforcing social cohesion while mediating the emotional and moral challenges of wartime life. It provided a platform for communal witnessing, narrative framing, and collective sense-making. Through repetition and remixing, memes codified shared experiences, transforming individual observations into publicly intelligible cultural memory, which aligns with theories of social memory in conflict contexts: humor became a medium for documenting, interpreting, and transmitting wartime events.

Public opinion data during the first months of the invasion illustrate the social effects of this alignment. If in 2021 only 55% of respondents considered Ukrainians and Russians to be distinct peoples, by March 2022 this figure rose to 77%, and by April to 91%. Humor both reflected and reinforced this redefined boundary, solidifying distinctions between «*we*» and «*they*» within comedic narratives. Such symbolic differentiation was reinforced through repeated exposure to memes depicting Russian soldiers as incompetent, absurd, or morally degraded, and Ukrainians as resilient, clever, and justified.

The explosion on the Kerch Strait (Crimean) Bridge on October 8, 2022, provides a particularly illustrative example of multi-actor

---

<sup>1</sup> Shifman L. *Memes in Digital Culture*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2013. P. 88.

humorous convergence. Within hours, the Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine posted an image of the burning bridge with the caption «*Good morning, Ukraine!*» In another post, footage of the explosion was juxtaposed with Marilyn Monroe singing «*Happy Birthday, Mr. President*», referencing Vladimir Putin's birthday. The Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) followed with a poetic adaptation echoing Taras Shevchenko: «*Світає, міст красиво палає, соловейко СБУ в Криму зустрічає*». This playful intertextuality merged national literary heritage with contemporary military events, demonstrating how «humor can mediate cultural memory while interpreting current crises»<sup>1</sup>.

Private companies similarly participated in this process. Monobank released a bank card design featuring the burning bridge, which hundreds of thousands downloaded within hours. Brands including Nova Poshta, Ukrposhta, Rozetka, and Kyivstar created their own variations, competing in wit and speed of response. Humor thus became a communicative currency, allowing institutions to position themselves within the national narrative, reinforce solidarity, and contribute to collective moral and civic engagement. The bridge explosion, therefore, was not only a military event but a performative moment of participatory humor, exemplifying Milner's observation that «digital meme culture functions as a form of networked civic interaction, where content circulates across communities to produce shared meaning»<sup>2</sup>.

One of the most significant linguistic phenomena of wartime humor was the emergence of «*bavovna*». Russian officials frequently described explosions as «*хлопки*» (*claps or pops*). In Ukrainian, however, «*хлопок*» translates as «*бавовна*»— *cotton*. This semantic slippage generated a powerful meme. *Bavovna* became an ironic euphemism for successful strikes against Russian military targets. Images of *cotton plants* accompanied news reports, maps marking incidents were decorated with stylized cotton icons, and a diminutive fictional character, «*Bavovnyatko*», was imagined as a mischievous being visiting Russian bases. This multi-layered

---

<sup>1</sup> Siuta G.M. Transformation of lingual and mental profiles of the Ukrainian language picture of the world during the war. *Man and law in the language of modern mass media*. Vol. 1. Riga, Latvia: Baltija Publishing. 2025. P. 71.

<sup>2</sup> Milner R.M. *The World Made Meme: Public Conversations and Participatory Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2016. P. 97.

symbol softened violent imagery while maintaining celebratory undertones, creating a shared internal code that reinforced informational vigilance. The meme's adoption by British Ambassador Melinda Simmons illustrates how such humor transcends national boundaries, converting propaganda language into a tool of counter-narrative power.

Similarly, social media users responded to renewed nuclear threats with ironic exaggeration. Posts joking about organizing an «*orgy on Mount Shchekavytsia*» in Kyiv during a potential nuclear apocalypse quickly escalated into a global meme. The absurdity served as a psychological inversion of fear: rather than succumbing to panic, participants exaggerated the threat to ridicule it. Beyond humor, the meme produced tangible outcomes: a charitable foundation organized first-aid and emergency-response training sessions at Mount Shchekavytsia, attended by thousands. This episode demonstrates how collective humor functions as an adaptive, community-oriented mechanism, reframing vulnerability as agency while documenting social and civic engagement.

Ukrainian wartime humor also expanded internationally. Memes were translated into English and other languages, spreading slogans such as «*Russian warship, go fuck yourself*». Visual motifs appeared at protests across Europe and North America, with diaspora communities amplifying content. International media, politicians, and celebrities occasionally referenced viral phrases. The circulation of humor thus contributed to shaping global perception, humanizing Ukrainians, portraying resilience, and countering narratives of inevitable defeat. In line with Milner, these examples illustrate how «digital humor operates as both civic participation and soft power, producing shared cultural meaning across borders while reinforcing local solidarity and national identity»<sup>1</sup>.

#### **4. Vigilance and Commitment to Victory**

Alongside physical and symbolic resistance, Ukrainian wartime humor developed a pronounced function of informational vigilance. In the context of the full-scale invasion, the informational environment itself became a battlefield. Russian disinformation campaigns

---

<sup>1</sup> Milner R.M. *The World Made Meme: Public Conversations and Participatory Media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2016. P. 77.

– ranging from fabricated narratives about alleged «*biolaboratories*» in Ukraine to accusations that Kyiv was preparing a so-called «*dirty bomb*» – circulated widely through official statements, state media, and online networks. These narratives were designed not only to influence international audiences but also to create confusion and distrust within the information space. In response, «Ukrainian digital communities frequently turned to humor as a method of rapid and collective counter-interpretation»<sup>1</sup>.

Rather than merely refuting falsehoods through traditional fact-checking, meme culture often adopted a strategy of literalization. Instead of directly arguing against propaganda claims, meme creators exaggerated them to the point of absurdity. By interpreting disinformation in an overly concrete and literal way, humor exposed the internal incoherence of the narratives themselves. The approach transformed propaganda into a self-defeating spectacle. For example, memes about the alleged «*dirty bomb*» depicted a bomb being vigorously scrubbed with soap, detergent, or household cleaning products. In some versions, characters anxiously tried to «*wash*» the device before detonation. This visual reinterpretation reduced a dramatic geopolitical accusation to the level of domestic farce, undermining its intended seriousness.

The same mechanism appeared in responses to linguistic censorship within Russia. When Russian legislation criminalized the use of the word «*war*», mandating the phrase «*special military operation*» instead, Ukrainian meme culture quickly appropriated the euphemism for parody. One widely circulated example involved renaming the novel by Leo Tolstoy as «*Special Military Operation and Peace*». The joke targeted not only censorship itself but also the broader attempt to regulate reality through bureaucratic language. By inserting the official euphemism into obviously inappropriate contexts, meme creators highlighted the artificiality of the terminology. «The humor suggested that language manipulation could not ultimately obscure observable events»<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Запорожець О., Белоусова Н. Вербальні інтернет-меми під час повномасштабної війни рф проти України. *Вісник Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка*. 2022. Вип. 2(56). С. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Бондаренко А.І. Сміховий дискурс воєнного періоду в Україні. *Мовознавчий вісник: зб. наук. праць*. Вип. 35. С. 78.

Through exaggeration and parody, humor therefore functioned as a cognitive filter. Memes did more than entertain; they trained audiences to recognize patterns of manipulation. When propaganda claims appeared, the immediate emergence of satirical reinterpretations signaled to users that the information should be approached with skepticism. In this sense, humor served an educational role within the information ecosystem. It provided a shared interpretive framework through which audiences could collectively process dubious narratives.

Language itself became a site of vigilance. Pronunciation tests – most famously involving the Ukrainian word «*palyanytsia*», a type of bread – were widely discussed as informal methods for identifying Russian infiltrators who struggled to reproduce certain Ukrainian phonetic patterns. The word's distinctive combination of sounds made it difficult for many native Russian speakers to pronounce convincingly. Other commonly referenced examples included «*zaliznytsia*» (railway) and «*polunytsia*» (strawberry). These «linguistic markers quickly entered meme culture, where exaggerated scenes depicted suspicious individuals failing the pronunciation test»<sup>1</sup>.

Memes amplified this practice by turning it into a recurring comedic motif. Characters attempting to say «*palyanytsia*» would produce increasingly distorted versions of the word, often with exaggerated confusion. The punchline typically rested on the contrast between fluent Ukrainian pronunciation and the clumsy attempts of outsiders. Humor simultaneously marked linguistic difference and reinforced national distinctiveness. Mastery of pronunciation functioned as a symbolic boundary marker: understanding the joke required familiarity with the phonetic nuances being referenced.

Diminutive forms in personal names carried similar symbolic significance. Ukrainian and Russian naming traditions share many common roots, yet their affectionate or diminutive variants often differ. Memes contrasting «*Mashen'ka*» with «*Marichka*», for example, highlighted subtle divergences embedded within everyday speech. Although the names appear superficially similar, they evoke distinct cultural associations and linguistic traditions. By emphasizing these differences, humor drew attention to the everyday ways in which language reflects identity.

---

<sup>1</sup> Сюта Г.М. Лінгвософія опозицій «свій – чужий» у текстах періоду російсько-української війни. «Українська мова». 2023. Вип. 2 (86). С. 31.

Orthographic gestures functioned in a comparable manner. Writing «*russia*» with a lowercase initial letter became a deliberate act of symbolic downgrading in Ukrainian online discourse. This seemingly minor stylistic choice conveyed disapproval and rejection of the authority normally implied by proper capitalization. Similarly, the prepositional choice used in reference to the country carried symbolic implications. Employing the preposition «*na*» rather than the more conventional «*v*» subtly repositioned Russia linguistically, implying distance or altered status within the grammatical structure of the sentence.

These practices demonstrate how humor can consolidate boundaries without formal institutional enforcement. They emerged organically within digital communities rather than through official directives. Participation in the joke required familiarity with linguistic conventions, cultural references, and the broader wartime context. As a result, comprehension itself became a marker of belonging: «those who understood the humor signaled membership within a shared interpretive community»<sup>1</sup>.

Within the broader category of commitment to victory, representations of the enemy frequently adopted grotesque aesthetics. Russian soldiers were commonly portrayed as orcs, zombies, alcoholics, marauders, or technologically incompetent figures. These depictions drew on visual traditions familiar from fantasy literature, video games, and internet culture. By transforming soldiers into monstrous or degraded caricatures, meme creators visually reinforced the idea that the invading force represented something alien and destructive.

President Vladimir Putin appeared in caricatures as skeletal, rodent-like, or mythologically cursed figures. Some images exaggerated physical features into grotesque proportions, while others portrayed him as an aging villain surrounded by symbols of decay. Such imagery echoed broader traditions of wartime propaganda, in which exaggeration and dehumanization serve mobilizing functions. By distorting the physical appearance of leaders or soldiers, visual satire intensifies emotional distance between opposing sides.

---

<sup>1</sup> Мартинова Г.І. Трансформації в українському етносоціумі та його мові як наслідок російсько-української війни. *Мовознавчий вісник*. Вип. 35. С. 49.

In the Ukrainian case, however, these representations did not circulate solely through centralized propaganda channels. Instead, they spread widely through decentralized meme culture, emerging from countless anonymous creators across social media platforms. The absence of a single authoritative source contributed to the impression of spontaneous collective expression. Grotesque portrayals were reproduced, remixed, and adapted across formats, reinforcing a consistent visual language through repetition.

The cumulative effect of such depictions contributed to moral polarization. The enemy was framed not simply as a geopolitical adversary but as ethically degraded and fundamentally incompatible with the values attributed to Ukrainian society. Within this narrative structure, humor played a significant role in simplifying complex realities. Grotesque exaggeration transformed the conflict into a moral drama populated by clearly differentiated figures.

Humor thus reinforced a binary moral universe structured around innocence and aggression. Ukrainian civilians and defenders were typically portrayed as resilient, clever, and morally justified, while the opposing side appeared irrational, corrupt, or monstrous. This contrast did not merely entertain; it shaped collective interpretation of the war itself. By repeatedly presenting the conflict through these symbolic oppositions, meme culture contributed to a shared narrative in which resistance appeared both necessary and inevitable.

The airfield in *Chornobayivka*, repeatedly struck by Ukrainian forces despite continued Russian attempts to use it, became an emblem of stubborn futility. Each new reported strike generated another wave of jokes, spreading rapidly through Ukrainian social media and messaging platforms. Memes portrayed *Chornobayivka* as a cursed location that Russian troops inexplicably returned to despite inevitable destruction. In many versions, the airfield appeared almost mythologized – as if it possessed its own gravitational pull, drawing Russian units back into the same disastrous situation again and again.

The humor relied on repetition: the same scenario replayed with predictable outcome. A typical meme would present a familiar sequence – Russian forces arrive, equipment is positioned, and then Ukrainian artillery or drones strike once more. The punchline lay not in surprise but in the certainty of what would happen next. This

cyclical structure mirrored the perceived irrationality of Russian command decisions. By presenting the events as a loop that endlessly resets, meme creators emphasized how little appeared to change despite repeated losses. Visual formats amplified this pattern. Some memes used templates based on popular films or television scenes in which characters repeatedly fall into the same trap. Others displayed simple countdown graphics or «*attempt numbers*», implying that *Chornobayivka* had already passed an absurd number of strikes. With each new report from the front, the count increased, reinforcing the idea that the pattern was continuing without interruption.

By exaggerating the persistence of failure, memes highlighted strategic incompetence. They suggested that Russian commanders were either unable or unwilling to learn from experience. Humor thus became a form of criticism, transforming battlefield reports into commentary on military leadership. At the same time, the jokes offered psychological relief to Ukrainian audiences following the war closely. Repetition created a shared expectation: each new strike confirmed what people had already come to anticipate.

Over time, *Chornobayivka* evolved into a symbolic shorthand. Mentioning the location alone sufficed to evoke an entire narrative of repeated defeat, failed adaptation, and the stubborn continuation of flawed decisions. The airfield ceased to be merely a geographic point on the map. Instead, «it became a cultural reference embedded in the digital language of wartime humor – a concise metaphor for the spectacle of returning, again and again, to the same avoidable disaster»<sup>1</sup>.

The Russian occupation of the *Chornobyl* exclusion zone during the early phase of the invasion revived memories of the 1986 nuclear disaster. For many Ukrainians, the name *Chornobyl* already carried a powerful symbolic weight, associated not only with the catastrophic explosion at the nuclear power plant but also with decades of stories about contamination, abandoned towns, and the lingering effects of radiation. When news emerged that Russian forces had entered and temporarily occupied the area, the event

---

<sup>1</sup> Otrishchenko N. The time that was taken from us: Temporal Experiences after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. *Dispossession: Anthropological Perspectives on Russia's War Against Ukraine*. New York and London: Routledge. 2024. P. 34.

immediately resonated with this historical memory. Reports that Russian soldiers had dug trenches in contaminated soil prompted waves of dark humor across Ukrainian social media.

Memes depicted invaders as unaware of radiation risks, sometimes portraying them glowing, mutating, or developing exaggerated symptoms associated with popular culture depictions of radiation exposure. In some versions, Russian soldiers appeared as characters from post-apocalyptic fiction, while others compared them to figures wandering unknowingly through toxic environments. The humor often relied on exaggeration: the soldiers were imagined leaving the zone with supernatural abilities or gradually transforming into grotesque caricatures. Although these depictions were obviously fictional, they reflected a widespread perception that the occupiers had underestimated the dangers of the area.

The jokes drew upon long-standing cultural associations with *Chornobyl* as a site of invisible danger. Radiation, unlike conventional threats, cannot be seen or immediately felt, which has historically made it a powerful metaphor for hidden risk. Ukrainian audiences were already familiar with narratives about contaminated forests, abandoned infrastructure, and lingering radioactive «*hot spots*». As a result, the idea that troops unfamiliar with local history might casually disturb radioactive soil seemed both alarming and absurd. Memes exploited this tension by emphasizing the contrast between the seriousness of the hazard and the perceived ignorance of those encountering it.

While the subject matter was *grave*, humor reframed it through irony. Rather than addressing the danger in strictly technical or scientific terms, meme creators highlighted the apparent recklessness of the situation. The implication was that ignorance of local history could have tangible consequences. Digging trenches in the exclusion zone became a symbol of careless decision-making, suggesting that the occupying forces had entered a place whose historical meaning they did not fully understand.

In this way, the *Chornobyl* motif connected contemporary conflict to Soviet legacy, embedding present events within a broader historical arc. The 1986 disaster itself had been shaped by secrecy, bureaucratic failure, and the long-term consequences of technological mismanagement within the Soviet system. By invoking *Chornobyl* in memes about the current war, Ukrainian users implic-

itly linked those earlier patterns to present-day actions. The exclusion zone thus became more than a battlefield location – «it functioned as a reminder of historical continuity»<sup>1</sup>. References to radiation, contamination, and abandoned landscapes framed the invasion within a narrative that stretched back decades, reinforcing the sense that current events were unfolding in the shadow of unresolved past catastrophes.

Reports and intercepted communications suggesting widespread *looting* by Russian soldiers generated a significant body of meme content. As accounts emerged describing stolen household goods being shipped from occupied territories to Russia, everyday objects quickly became recurring visual elements in online humor. Washing machines, microwaves, carpets, and underwear appeared repeatedly across meme formats, often exaggerated to absurd proportions. These items, normally mundane, acquired symbolic significance within the emerging narrative.

One widely circulated theme depicted Russian troops prioritizing household appliances over military objectives. Memes portrayed soldiers abandoning armored vehicles in favor of loading washing machines into trucks or proudly transporting microwaves as trophies. In some variations, military convoys were reimagined as moving vans filled with domestic goods. The comedic effect relied on the contrast between the expectations associated with a modern army and the image of soldiers behaving like opportunistic scavengers. The humor portrayed looting as evidence of backwardness and material deprivation, suggesting that the invading forces were less motivated by strategic goals than by the chance to acquire basic consumer goods.

This framing also reflected broader cultural contrasts. Ukrainian meme creators frequently juxtaposed images of looted appliances with references to everyday life in modern households, implying that such items were unremarkable in Ukraine but treated as valuable prizes by the occupiers. «Through exaggeration, the memes transformed isolated reports of theft into a wider commentary on

---

<sup>1</sup> Siuta G.M. Transformation of lingual and mental profiles of the Ukrainian language picture of the world during the war. *Man and law in the language of modern mass media*. Vol. 1. Riga, Latvia: Baltija Publishing. 2025. P. 70.

economic disparity and social development»<sup>1</sup>. The recurring presence of washing machines or carpets became shorthand for a perceived gap between two worlds: one associated with ordinary consumer comfort, the other with scarcity and outdated infrastructure.

The image of the «*white Lada*» – associated with compensation reportedly given to families of deceased soldiers – became a particularly potent symbol within this narrative. The inexpensive car, already culturally associated with Soviet-era simplicity, appeared in memes as a stark visual metaphor. Memes juxtaposed the value of a life with the price of a car, underscoring perceived moral absurdity. In some formats, grieving families were depicted receiving keys to a white Lada as if it were a solemn state honor; in others, the car appeared parked beside military graves. The humor was intentionally uncomfortable, drawing attention to the perceived imbalance between sacrifice and reward.

Through these motifs, humor framed the conflict not only as territorial but civilizational. The recurring imagery of looted appliances and symbolic compensation suggested a broader narrative about values, priorities, and social systems. By reducing complex political dynamics to simple visual contrasts, meme culture presented the war as a clash between different models of society. Everyday consumer objects became rhetorical tools, used to imply that the motivations and expectations of the invading forces belonged to a different historical and economic context.

When Russia announced partial mobilization in September 2022, Ukrainian meme culture quickly rebranded it as «*mogilization*», blending «*mobilization*» with the word «*grave*» (*mohyla*). The neologism spread rapidly across social media, demonstrating the speed with which meme communities could reshape official language. By altering a single syllable, the new term inverted the intended meaning of the policy announcement. Instead of conveying patriotic duty or national defense, the word suggested an inevitable path toward death.

Images accompanying the term depicted reluctant recruits, overcrowded enlistment offices, and chaotic logistics. Photographs and video clips circulating online were often reframed with captions

---

<sup>1</sup> Кислюк Л. П., Мельник С. Є. Війна в мові та мовній діяльності українців. *Мовознавчий вісник*. Вип. 35. С. 16.

emphasizing confusion, disorganization, or reluctance among those being mobilized. Some memes portrayed men attempting to avoid conscription by fleeing the country, while others depicted outdated equipment and poorly prepared training facilities. The humor emphasized disorder and inevitability of loss, reinforcing the idea that the mobilization campaign was both chaotic and futile.

By renaming the policy, «memes transformed official language into a vehicle of criticism. State terminology, typically designed to project authority and control, was reinterpreted through a single ironic modification»<sup>1</sup>. The word itself became an argument. Simply repeating «*mogilization*» allowed users to communicate skepticism about the policy without requiring further explanation. In this way, linguistic creativity functioned as a concise form of political commentary, compressing complex criticism into a memorable phrase.

Among the most emotionally charged motifs was the recurring image of *Moscow in flames*. Visual depictions of the Kremlin engulfed in fire circulated widely, accompanied by captions envisioning future justice or historical reversal. The imagery was dramatic and often stylized, drawing on visual traditions associated with revolution, apocalypse, or the fall of empires. Within these memes, *fire* did not necessarily represent a literal prediction but rather a symbolic culmination of accumulated grievances.

The phrase «*Moscow's burning in my dreams*» encapsulated this imagery. It expressed a mixture of anger, frustration, and hope for accountability. The burning city functioned not necessarily as a literal forecast but as a symbolic inversion of imperial dominance. For centuries, Moscow had been associated with centralized authority over territories that included Ukraine. In meme form, however, the center of power appeared vulnerable, consumed by flames that suggested the collapse of that authority. In these memes «*fire* signified historical reckoning. It evoked the idea that aggression would eventually provoke consequences, even if those consequences were imagined in symbolic terms»<sup>2</sup>. The fantasy of destruction expressed

---

<sup>1</sup> Хар М.Є. Воєнний дискурс: процеси неологізації. *Закарпатські філологічні студії*. Вип. 24. Том 1. С. 161.

<sup>2</sup> Завальнюк І. Синтаксичні одиниці в мові вітчизняних масмедіа періоду російсько-української війни: оновлення змісту й структури. *Наукові записки Вінницького державного педагогічного університету*. Серія: Філологія (мовознавство). Вінниця, 2010. Вип. 37. С. 124.

longing for an end to aggression and for a reversal of the hierarchies that had shaped regional history. By circulating such imagery, meme creators articulated emotions that ranged from anger to catharsis, using visual exaggeration to convey the intensity of wartime sentiment.

Taken together, «these motifs illustrate how Ukrainian meme culture transformed fragments of wartime information into coherent symbolic narratives»<sup>1</sup>. Everyday objects, altered words, and dramatic visual metaphors functioned as condensed expressions of broader interpretations of the conflict. Humor, even when dark or ironic, allowed participants to interpret events collectively, shaping a shared language through which the realities of war could be discussed, criticized, and emotionally processed.

## CONCLUSION

Across the four interrelated dimensions of resistance, solidarity, vigilance, and commitment to victory, Ukrainian wartime humor demonstrates that it is far more than spontaneous emotional expression. It constitutes an ongoing civic practice, embedded within digitally mediated networks, public discourse, and material culture. Memes, cartoons, slogans, and visual motifs document events in real time, articulate ethical and moral judgments, counter disinformation, mobilize resources, reinforce collective identity, and project visions of the future. Humor functions as a multi-layered instrument of civic engagement, linking everyday digital participation to national resilience.

Crucially, humor coexists with tragedy rather than negating it. Air raid sirens, blackouts, battlefield losses, and attacks on civilian infrastructure form the backdrop against which laughter emerges. The persistence of humor signals endurance, agency, and strategic reframing of vulnerability. Through phrases like «*Russian warship, go fuck yourself*» or Zelensky's «*I need ammunition, not a ride*», isolated acts of defiance became symbolic templates, widely circulated, visually adapted, and materially commemorated through stamps, billboards, and merchandise. Similarly, the sinking of the

---

<sup>1</sup> Бровко Є. Меметика у війні: як мєми стають зброєю. *Press Association UA*.  
URL: <https://pressassociation.org.ua/ua/memetika-u-vijni-yak-memi-stayut-zbroju>

cruiser *Moskva*, Ukrainian farmers towing abandoned Russian tanks, and the emergence of «*bavovna*» as an ironic euphemism for explosions exemplify how humor translates military events into shared symbolic narratives, reinforcing collective understanding and moral clarity.

Humor also operates as a vehicle for solidarity. Participation is not limited to soldiers or state institutions: volunteers, cultural figures, private companies, and ordinary citizens actively co-produce, circulate, and adapt humorous content. Memes about sunflowers growing from fallen Russian soldiers or blackout bingo templates during energy outages illustrate how humor mediates collective experience, bridges social divides, and sustains a sense of community agency in times of hardship. These practices highlight the horizontal, networked nature of Ukrainian civic engagement, where digital creativity and everyday action reinforce national cohesion.

Ukrainian wartime humor further functions as a tool of vigilance and critical awareness. By literalizing Russian propaganda, exaggerating official explanations, or creating internal linguistic codes such as «*palyanytsia*» or «*bavovna*», humor cultivates informational literacy, training audiences to recognize manipulation while simultaneously fostering shared cultural memory. In this way, memes become not only entertainment but mechanisms of cognitive resilience, translating complex social and military realities into widely intelligible forms.

Finally, humor demonstrates the dimension of commitment to victory. By transforming adversity into symbolic triumph – through tractors pulling tanks, playful exaggeration of threats, or absurdist visions of nuclear apocalypse – Ukrainian memes frame conflict within a narrative of moral and historical inevitability. Humor projects resilience and eventual success, sustaining hope and reinforcing the ethical and strategic legitimacy of defense efforts. Its circulation beyond Ukraine, through diaspora networks, international media, and protest movements, further amplifies its impact, functioning as a form of soft power that communicates national identity, resilience, and ethical clarity to global audiences.

In conclusion, Ukrainian political humor during the full-scale invasion exemplifies the intersection of cultural creativity, civic activism, and ethical assertion. It operates simultaneously as a psychological coping mechanism, participatory practice, and strategic

communication tool, demonstrating how laughter and satire can actively shape social, moral, and political meaning in conditions of extreme adversity. Through memes, cartoons, slogans, and viral narratives, Ukrainians not only document and interpret wartime experience but also actively shape a symbolic language of resistance, transforming humor into a vital instrument of national resilience, civic solidarity, and cultural memory.

### **ABSTRACT**

This article examines Ukrainian political humor that emerged during the Russia's full-scale invasion, conceptualizing it as a form of civic activism within a digitally networked public sphere. The study addresses the problem of how humor functions under conditions of existential military threat, moving beyond the conventional binary that frames satire either as resistance to power or as an instrument of propaganda. Drawing on a corpus of widely circulated memes, cartoons, slogans, and institutional communications, the analysis identifies four interrelated dimensions of wartime humor: resistance, solidarity, vigilance, and commitment to victory. The findings demonstrate that Ukrainian war humor operates as a mechanism of symbolic defiance, transforming episodes such as the Snake Island response and the sinking of the «*Moskva*» into durable cultural artifacts. It also facilitates horizontal alignment among state institutions, private companies, civil society actors, and international audiences, producing a shared emotional and moral framework. Furthermore, humor serves as a tool of informational defense by exposing propaganda through parody, linguistic play, and literalization. Grotesque depictions of the enemy and recurring motifs such as looting, mobilization, and «*burning Moscow*» reinforce moral polarization and future-oriented narratives of justice. Overall, the study concludes that Ukrainian wartime humor constitutes not merely a coping strategy but an active political practice that documents events, sustains collective resilience, and symbolically affirms sovereignty and anticipated victory.

### **АНОТАЦІЯ**

У цій статті досліджується український політичний гумор, що виник під час повномасштабного вторгнення Росії та осмислюється як форма громадянського активізму в умовах цифро-

во-мережевої публічної сфери. Дослідження порушує проблему функціонування гумору в умовах екзистенційної воєнної загрози, виходячи за межі традиційної бінарної опозиції, яка розглядає сатиру або як форму опору владі, або як інструмент пропаганди. Спираючись на корпус широко поширених мемів, карикатур, слоганів та інституційних комунікацій, у дослідженні виокремлено чотири взаємопов'язані виміри воєнного гумору: *спротив, солідарність, пильність і відданість перемозі*. Результати демонструють, що український воєнний гумор функціонує як механізм символічного спротиву, перетворюючи такі події, як відповідь з острова Зміїний та потоплення «Москви», на стійкі культурні артефакти. Він також сприяє горизонтальній взаємодії між державними інституціями, приватними компаніями, представниками громадянського суспільства та міжнародною аудиторією, формуючи спільну емоційну та моральну рамку. Крім того, гумор слугує інструментом інформаційної оборони, викриваючи пропаганду через пародію, мовну гру та буквалізацію. Гротескні зображення ворога та повторювані мотиви, такі як мародерство, мобілізація та «палаюча Москва», підсилюють моральну поляризацію й формують орієнтовані на майбутнє наративи справедливості. Загалом дослідження робить висновок про те, що український воєнний гумор є не лише стратегією психологічного подолання, а й активною політичною практикою, яка документує події, підтримує колективну стійкість і символічно утверджує суверенітет та очікувану перемогу.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Бондаренко А.І. Сміховий дискурс воєнного періоду в Україні. *Мовознавчий вісник: зб. наук. праць*. Вип. 35. С. 72–80. URL: [https://doi.org/10.31651/2226\\_4388-2023-35](https://doi.org/10.31651/2226_4388-2023-35)
2. Бровко Є. Меметика у війні: як мему стають зброєю. *Press Association UA*. URL: <https://pressassociation.org.ua/ua/memetika-u-vijni-yak-memi-stayutzbro%D1%94yu/>
3. Завальнюк І. Синтаксичні одиниці в мові вітчизняних масмедіа періоду російсько-української війни: оновлення змісту й структури. *Наукові записки Вінницького державного педа-*

гогічного університету. Серія: Філологія (мовознавство). Вінниця, 2010. Вип. 37. С. 120–129.

4. Запорожець О., Белоусова Н. Вербальні інтернет-меми під час повномасштабної війни рф проти України. *Вісник Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка*. 2022. Вип. 2(56). С. 20–24.

5. Кислюк Л.П., Мельник С.Є. Війна в мові та мовній діяльності українців. *Мовознавчий вісник*. Вип. 35. С. 6–18. URL: <https://doi.org/10.31651/2226-4388-2023-35>.

6. Мартинова Г.І. Трансформації в українському етносоціумі та його мові як наслідок російсько-української війни. *Мовознавчий вісник*. Вип. 35. С. 45–53. URL: <https://doi.org/10.31651/2226-4388-2023-35>

7. Мова війни: нові слова, нові значення, нове сприйняття: практичний посібник / упоряд. М. Мазурок, Л. Заводна. Рівне: РОІППО. 2023. 48 с.

8. Судин Д. Як війна вплинула на нашу ідентичність, пам'ять та цінності. Український Тиждень. URL: <https://tyzhden.ua/iak-vijna-vplynula-na-nashu-identychnist-pam-iat-ta-tsinnosti/>

9. Сюта Г.М. Лінгвософія опозицій «свій – чужий» у текстах періоду російсько-української війни. *«Українська мова»*. 2023. Вип. 2 (86). С. 3–34.

10. Хар М.Є. Воєнний дискурс: процеси неологізації. *Закарпатські філологічні студії*. Вип. 24. Том 1. С. 160–166. URL: [http://zfsjournal.uzhnu.uz.ua/archive/24/part\\_1/31.pdf](http://zfsjournal.uzhnu.uz.ua/archive/24/part_1/31.pdf).

11. Angus J. The role of laughter in establishing solidarity and status. *The European Journal of Humour Research*. 2022. Issue 10 (2). P. 29–50.

12. Bilaniuk L. Memes as antibodies: Creativity and resilience in the face of Russia's war. *Dispossession: Anthropological Perspectives on Russia's War Against Ukraine*, New York and London: Routledge. 2024. P. 143–166.

13. Budnitsky S. Global disengagement: Public diplomacy humor in the Russian-Ukrainian War. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*. 2023. Issue 19. P. 211–217.

14. Dynel M. Funny You Should Say That: Humour and Conversation Analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 95. P. 1-9. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2015>.

15. Kuipers G. Good Humor, Bad Taste: A Sociology of the Joke. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. 2015. 300 p.

16. Lutska V. Ukrainian meme forces: What makes us laugh in the times of Russia's invasion. 2022. URL: <https://war.ukraine.ua/articles/ukrainian-meme-forces-what-makes-us-laugh-in-the-times-of-russia-s-invasion/>.

17. Milner R.M. The World Made Meme: Public Conversations and Participatory Media. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2016. 170 p.

18. Otrishchenko N. The time that was taken from us: Temporal Experiences after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. *Dispossession: Anthropological Perspectives on Russia's War Against Ukraine*. New York and London: Routledge. 2024. P. 25–44.

19. Pavlenko V. The emotional and behavioral consequences after the Russian invasion of Ukraine for the civilian population of Ukraine. *Dispossession: Anthropological Perspectives on Russia's War Against Ukraine*. New York and London: Routledge. 2024. P. 45–62.

20. Scott J.C. Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance: Yale University Press. 1985. 392 p. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1nq836>

21. Siuta G.M. Transformation of lingual and mental profiles of the Ukrainian language picture of the world during the war. *Man and law in the language of modern mass media*. Vol. 1. Riga, Latvia: Baltija Publishing. 2025. P. 55–75.

22. Shifman L. Memes in Digital Culture. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2013. 212 p.

23. Yermieieva K. To create and to escape watchfulness: Humour and the culture of vigilance. *Mitteilungen*. 2022. Issue 2. P. 31–41.

## REFERENCES

1. Бондаренко А.І. Сміховий дискурс воєнного періоду в Україні. *Мовознавчий вісник: зб. наук. праць*. Вип. 35. С. 72–80. URL: [https://doi.org/10.31651/2226\\_4388-2023-35](https://doi.org/10.31651/2226_4388-2023-35)

2. Бровко Є. Меметика у війні: як мєми стають зброєю. *Press Association UA*. URL: <https://pressassociation.org.ua/ua/memetika-u-vijni-yak-memi-stayutzbro%D1%94yu/>

3. Завальнюк І. Синтаксичні одиниці в мові вітчизняних масмедіа періоду російсько-української війни: оновлення зміс-

ту й структури. *Наукові записки Вінницького державного педагогічного університету*. Серія: Філологія (мовознавство). Вінниця, 2010. Вип. 37. С. 120–129.

4. Запорожець О., Белоусова Н. Вербальні інтернет-меми під час повномасштабної війни рф проти України. *Вісник Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка*. 2022. Вип. 2(56). С. 20–24.

5. Кислюк Л.П., Мельник С.Є. Війна в мові та мовній діяльності українців. *Мовознавчий вісник*. Вип. 35. С. 6–18. URL: <https://doi.org/10.31651/2226-4388-2023-35>.

6. Мартинова Г.І. Трансформації в українському етносоціумі та його мові як наслідок російсько-української війни. *Мовознавчий вісник*. Вип. 35. С. 45–53. URL: <https://doi.org/10.31651/2226-4388-2023-35>

7. Мова війни: нові слова, нові значення, нове сприйняття: практичний посібник / упоряд. М. Мазурок, Л. Заводна. Рівне: РОІППО. 2023. 48 с.

8. Судин Д. Як війна вплинула на нашу ідентичність, пам'ять та цінності. Український Тиждень. URL: <https://tyzhden.ua/iak-vijna-vplynula-na-nashu-identychnist-pam-iat-ta-tsinnosti/>

9. Сюта Г.М. Лінгвософія опозицій «свій – чужий» у текстах періоду російсько-української війни. *«Українська мова»*. 2023. Вип. 2 (86). С. 3–34.

10. Хар М.Є. Воєнний дискурс: процеси неологізації. *Закарпатські філологічні студії*. Вип. 24. Том 1. С. 160–166. URL: [http://zfsjournal.uzhnu.uz.ua/archive/24/part\\_1/31.pdf](http://zfsjournal.uzhnu.uz.ua/archive/24/part_1/31.pdf).

11. Angus J. The role of laughter in establishing solidarity and status. *The European Journal of Humour Research*. 2022. Issue 10 (2). P. 29–50.

12. Bilaniuk L. Memes as antibodies: Creativity and resilience in the face of Russia's war. *Dispossession: Anthropological Perspectives on Russia's War Against Ukraine*, New York and London: Routledge. 2024. P. 143–166.

13. Budnitsky S. Global disengagement: Public diplomacy humor in the Russian-Ukrainian War. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*. 2023. Issue 19. P. 211–217.

14. Dynel M. Funny You Should Say That: Humour and Conversation Analysis. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 95. P. 1-9. URL: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2015>.

15. Kuipers G. Good Humor, Bad Taste: A Sociology of the Joke. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton. 2015. 300 p.

16. Lutska V. Ukrainian meme forces: What makes us laugh in the times of Russia's invasion. 2022. URL: <https://war.ukraine.ua/articles/ukrainian-meme-forces-what-makes-us-laugh-in-the-times-of-russia-s-invasion/>.

17. Milner R.M. The World Made Meme: Public Conversations and Participatory Media. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2016. 170 p.

18. Otrishchenko N. The time that was taken from us: Temporal Experiences after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. *Dispossession: Anthropological Perspectives on Russia's War Against Ukraine*. New York and London: Routledge. 2024. P. 25–44.

19. Pavlenko V. The emotional and behavioral consequences after the Russian invasion of Ukraine for the civilian population of Ukraine. *Dispossession: Anthropological Perspectives on Russia's War Against Ukraine*. New York and London: Routledge. 2024. P. 45–62.

20. Scott J.C. Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance: Yale University Press. 1985. 392 p. URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt1nq836>

21. Siuta G.M. Transformation of lingual and mental profiles of the Ukrainian language picture of the world during the war. *Man and law in the language of modern mass media*. Vol. 1. Riga, Latvia: Baltija Publishing. 2025. P. 55–75.

22. Shifman L. Memes in Digital Culture. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. 2013. 212p.

23. Yermieieva K. To create and to escape watchfulness: Humour and the culture of vigilance. *Mitteilungen*. 2022. Issue 2. P. 31–41.

#### **Information about the author:**

**Syrko I. M.,**

Candidate of Philological Sciences,  
Assistant Professor at the Department of English Language Practice  
and Teaching Methods

Drohobych Ivan Franko State Pedagogical University 24,  
Ivan Franko Str., Drohobych, 82100, Ukraine  
(irynasyrko@ukr.net)