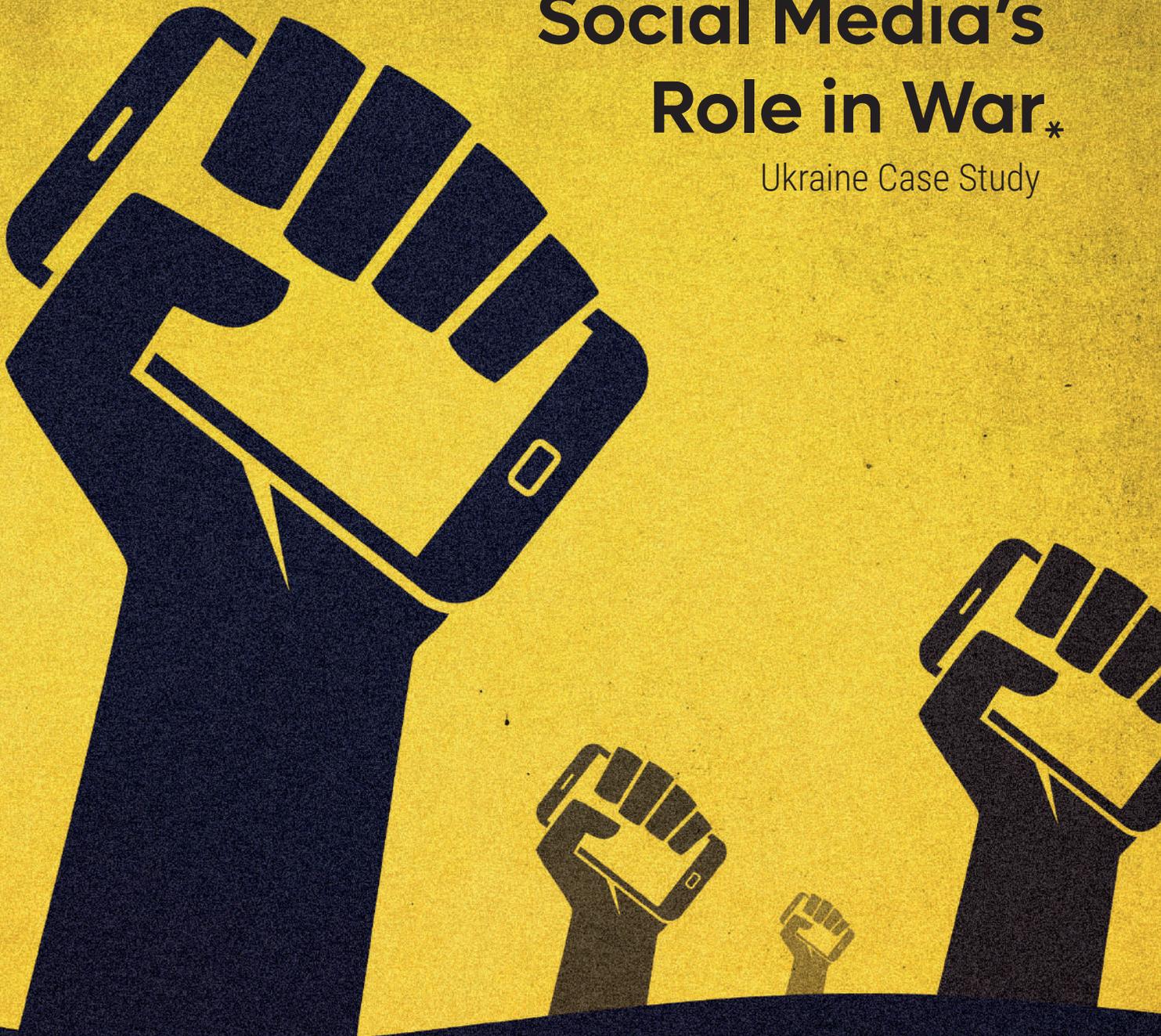


RDL\*B

# Social Media's Role in War.\*

Ukraine Case Study



On February 24th, 2022, Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine began, and the world watched through their screens, wondering what would happen next.

Although Putin's gamble was that Ukrainian President Zelensky and his government would cower away from a military superpower, he was critically mistaken. Instead of fear, they showed courage and amplified it across a powerful weapon: social media.

*"We are here. We are in Kyiv. We are defending Ukraine"*

On February 25th, instead of an abandoned capital, millions of viewers heard Zelensky defiant as ever, filming himself and members of his cabinet outside on the dimly lit streets of Kyiv. Although Ukrainians at first worried about whether their president and their nation had a chance, one video imbued a nation and impacted the globe by standing firm. Authentic as a social media video from a president under war could be. Engaging and urgent as the message of a war of attrition fought by one nation alone

against a far larger neighbor whose people are under the intense influence of state-sponsored propaganda.

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The global effect of Zelensky's P.S.V.'s (Presidential Selfie Videos) is developing and proving theories of social media's role in mass communication for nations and communities of today. The world barely knew the name of Volodymyr Zelensky, aside from perhaps the fact that his previous position before the president of Ukraine was as a comedian and actor. However, he has taken the lessons and the mantle of Churchill and Roosevelt in orating hope, spirit, and tranquility, but through the power of an iPhone and the global superhighway of social media.

**"I need ammunition, not a ride"**

he said to the U.S. intelligence officials trying to offer him an escape from the capital.

He sends this message out,

strolling in the streets of Kyiv again, now in the day, and with much light-hearted optimism.

An echo of the British bulldog of World War Two that, with fiery and oratory language, lifted the optimism of one of the dire moments in the western world and turned the tide of war. Through the medium that he applies himself in, we see the trace of F.D.R., and his famous "fireside chats" with the people of America, creating a totally unheard-of intimate environment between a leader and the populous in a hectic moment like war. Now too, Zelensky must perform for the world to garner the attention, concern, supply, ammunition, and support that Ukraine needs if it is to also see through its darkest hour. However, through this hour, Ukraine's resilience, resistance, and courage are quickly becoming a legend, and we see a new formation of national culture and pride.



Bayraktar used to be the name of a medium-altitude long-endurance combat ariel vehicle that Turkey gave to Ukraine through the war. To many Ukrainians, Bayraktar now is one of the most popular new war songs. A video filmed by a battalion of Ukrainian soldiers singing “Bayraktar” spread like wildfire as a taunt and rally for the people of Ukraine living in bunkers underground. The playful tune of the song, accompanied by footage of the Bayraktar in action against Russian forces and lyrics with humor and levity, further fuel the people’s resistance and hope

for a unified victorious Ukraine. The chant “Slava Ukraini” can be heard in most major cities now, across screens and tabs, and the worldwide viewership of the event has surpassed Google trend’s historical search on Ukraine. The world is watching, and Ukraine is chanting. Permeating people’s everyday lives across the world like never before. The scale of the war, along with the scale of footage and public relations investment poured into the fight against misinformation, has moved the war into a battle broadcasted across the globe.



Memes, feeds, and TikTok is all playing their roles in the battle of Ukraine. As trivial as that may seem to one, it may not seem so to a disconnected citizen of a nation undergoing a confusing and horrifying war. Their social media feeds and memes bond a nation in a communal event and action; one viral video garnered

immense attention from Ukrainians at the start of the war. The audio recording of the Ukrainian soldiers defending Snake Island from a Russian Warship Moskva saying, “Russian warship, go fuck yourself!” absolutely crazed the Ukrainian public for their heroism and determination against the seemingly inevitable. The soldiers were bombarded and captured, but the video spread like wildfire, quickly becoming the nationwide chant while grandmothers brewed Molotov cocktails and union workers lined up Odessa’s streets with sandbags.



The viral video became so engrained with the national culture that the government released a new stamp commemorating the soldiers and their stand with a soldier defiantly flicking off the warship in the distance. Ordinary people, not soldiers, go to sleep underground with air raid sirens above them; ordinary people are fueling the resistance. The emotional engine of Ukrainians has been their song, their ferocity, and their leader. War of attrition must be fought with an unrelenting and unwavering faith in a cause. Social media for many Ukrainians is not only a form to rally behind the flag, but a reminder that their soldiers are unrelenting, that their leaders are dedicated, and that Ukraine will never cease to exist but instead break from this state and move united into the future.



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