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DOI : 10.14746/ps.2023.1.17

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VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY'S PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC AS A STRATEGIC RESOURCE

1. INITIAL REMARKS

The political communication implemented by the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy, in 2022–2023 emerged as part of Ukraine's response to the Russian hybrid war. It is carried out using the communication tools of the third millennium in combination with the traditional messages of a head of state in TV and radio programs: personal posts on thematic pages of social media, video broadcasts, and statements of the press office in social networks, emotional speeches and appeals to Ukrainians, global public opinion, and democratic leaders of the world.

The impressive variety and intensity of persuasive activities undertaken by the incumbent Ukrainian president provoke questions about the strategic quality of his public communication. Are his speeches effective? Do they belong to the long-term scenario of strengthening Ukraine's soft power? Do they co-create a congruent chain of public performances that manifests a clear vision of presidential leadership proposed by Zelenskyy? If so, is this vision rooted in the adequate interpretation of circumstances? Does it support Ukrainians in recognizing opportunities and effectively engaging their resources? Can it be identified as a manifestation of a facilitating presidency focused on discovering and indicating successful transformative paths for Ukraine?

The term "facilitating leadership" or "facilitating presidency" can be understood as George C. Edwards III proposed. According to his characteristic: "Facilitators understand the opportunities for change in their environments and fashion strategies and tactics to exploit them. Rather than create a constituency, they reflect and sometimes clarify, intensify, or channel their constituencies' aspirations, values, and policy views. Instead of persuading others to support them, they skilfully work at the margins of coalition building, perhaps influencing a few critical actors, to obtain support for their initiatives." (Edwards, 2009: 12).

Admittedly, Edwards employs the concept in the context of the U.S. presidency. However, we are convinced about the possibility of borrowing his formula for our purposes. This conviction stems from a couple of premises, but two are particularly important. Firstly, in many aspects, the legal, political, and symbolic position of the Ukrainian head of state is similar to the American one. Secondly, Zelenskyy's style of

appealing to the public is unquestionably inspired by American patterns of political communication.

In this article, we will point out selected aspects of Zelenskyy's current political rhetoric. We will focus on those features that make it one of the strategic intangible goods used by the Ukrainian state in its struggle with the Russian aggressor. Presidential speeches will be analyzed as engaging extra-political experience and competencies. We intend to expose his performances as manifestations of unobvious intersectionality (political communication supported by tools developed in show business). Zelenskyy's rhetoric will be understood as a variant of the Medici Effect – an innovative and complex combination of elements previously identified as incompatibilities (Johansson, 2004).

Additionally, our reflection is thought as a starting point for in-depth and regular interdisciplinary research. Their implementers, representing diverse methodological traditions and disciplines, can and should elaborate a pluralistic perspective at the phenomenon of political communication of the current Ukrainian president. By grasping its varied aspects, we can understand how Ukraine exercises its power to create an effective communication campaign in times of being invaded by the Russian Federation driven by neo-imperial resentments. In particular, it is a matter of 1. grasping the goals that Zelenskyy wants to achieve through political communication, 2. identifying the means he uses. It is also essential to determine the short-, medium- and long-term effects caused through the Ukrainian president's media messages (both for him as a politician and for the political community he represents). It is particularly important to recognize how Zelenskyy creates a narrative that allows him to illuminate the drama of Ukraine on a global, regional, and local scale. We are also intrigued by what rhetorical instruments he employs to harmonize messages profiled to respond diversified needs of various audiences (including, in particular, speeches aimed at Ukrainians and non-Ukrainians). Last but not least, the study of the political rhetoric of the current Ukrainian president should compel reflection on the identity-appealing and/or identity-inspiring capabilities of heads of state, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. In this last aspect, Zelenskyy presents solutions that, to some extent, can be adapted outside Ukraine. Using his experience, other presidents can improve their public performances. Such advancements can encourage various political communities to reflect more profoundly and efficiently on what they can move toward and who they can become.

2. FROM POLITICAL STORYTELLING TO EXISTENTIAL IDENTIFICATIONS

Ukrainian society has formed two sets of impressions about the activities of its president. One is based on his messages after he became the head of Ukrainian state but until February 24, 2022. A brief general description of this period appeared in the Ukrainian media after November 26, 2021. At this time, a so-called press marathon was conducted (i.e., long press conference), designed as an event summarizing and/or framing the first half of the presidential term. Following Kyrylo Perevoshchykov and

Eduard Dudka, messages delivered by Zelenskyy during the marathon can be divided into three categories: theses that cannot be verified through fact-checking, “fact-based and largely correct statements on foreign policy,” “the most manipulative comments regarding the presidential team’s accomplishments” (Perevoshchikov, Dudka, 2021).

Opposition political party actors and journalists criticized (and continue to do so now) Volodymyr Zelenskyy for his TV speech on January 19, 2022. In this appeal he asked not to panic and to critically perceive information about a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine (Zelenskyy, 2022).

The head of the Ukrainian state was criticized for failed communication. Thus, according to Oleksandr Sushko, leading the International Renaissance Foundation, “the president’s message can be perceived as a sign of distrust in the entire democratic world, which mobilized to avert the disaster and help Ukraine.” (Kravchenko, 2022).

Within this context, a famous Ukrainian opinion journalist and laureate of the Taras Shevchenko National Prize, Vitaly Portnikov, announced his column for Espresso TV “Biden promises disaster, Zelenskyy is worried about barbecues.” The columnist compared texts of speeches delivered by Joe Biden and Volodymyr Zelenskyy in January 2022 and drew contrasts: “Biden, like Blinken in Kyiv, warns that a Russian invasion will happen at any moment. Zelenskyy denies its very possibility. [...] Biden is concerned about the world leadership of the United States. Zelenskyy – with barbecues. The United States is governed by a professional, experienced politician who can make mistakes and errors but is disquieted with the assistance of responsible citizens. Ukraine is ruled by a random number generator concerned only with one thing: that he and those who still support him, despite common sense, would not be prevented from enjoying undeserved success” (Portnikov, 2022).

Another stage of the Ukrainian president’s political communication began after February 24, 2022. It started with the full-scale invasion of the Russian army on Ukrainian land and continues until now (time of completion of the paper: November 2023). The Ukrainian president’s political communication underwent a profound transformation during this period. Most generally, it ceased to be primarily an instrument of usual political storytelling implemented by the Ukrainian head of state to disseminate narratives tactically helpful in fulfilling his agenda. Instead, it became one of the main channels through which Ukraine and its society define and present their goals and aspirations in the face of a full-scale Russian invasion. In this context, it is understandable that presidential rhetoric is gaining particular importance in the course of Ukrainian self-identification and self-expression. Zelenskyy is coordinating this process and pointing out its main directions. He leads a struggling Ukraine, making critical choices under conditions of its existential to be or not to be (access to all speeches and announcements of Zelenskyy after 24.02.2022 see: www.president.gov.ua).

Zelenskyy’s victory in the 2019 presidential election, both inside and outside Ukraine, was remarked on as a surprise. Since he was a candidate with no in-depth experience as a politician, many commentators expressed astonishment at his triumph. The artistic and stage-playing, especially the cabaret experience and skills of the incumbent Ukrainian president, were presented as a peculiarity.

Simultaneously, the cultural significance of the series “Servant of the Nation” was widely commented on. In this production, Zelenskyy played the primary role of a pro-

vincial teacher, Vasyl Holoborodko, who accidentally and unexpectedly became a head of the Ukrainian state. The parallelism of Holoborodko's fate and Zelenskyy's political career incited discussion about intermingling media fiction and political reality in Ukraine. On its basis, much has been written and spoken about the anti-establishment attitude of Ukrainians. Opinions were also eagerly put forward, according to which Ukrainian society represents a deep distrust of the elites, disillusionment, and tiredness with politics in their country. Popular were the views that the election of Zelenskyy indicated the political immaturity of Ukraine. Various commentators claimed that Ukrainians, as a political nation, are divided and unable to determine what they expect from their representatives. The election of Zelenskyy was treated as a voice of protest, which remains far from an affirmation of such values as democracy, the rule of law, stabilization of the political system, and building strong state institutions. In this context, interpretations of his political agenda as a variant of political spectacle have often appeared. With that said, frequent suggestions emerged that the new Ukrainian president represented neoliberal populism, consistently stoking social divisions and steering political conflict in the interests of the wealthiest (Baisha, 2022).

Many commentaries also focused on the potential and capabilities of Zelenskyy as the first Ukraine representative on the international stage. In this context, his program was often assessed with scepticism, predicting that the new Ukrainian president, in particular, would fail in managing and improving Ukrainian-Russian relations. It has been pointed out that Vladimir Putin sees Zelenskyy as a weak man who can easily be pressured and manipulated effectively. In this context, the Ukrainian president's crucial election promise – ending the war in Donbas – was seen as unrealistic or utopian. This conviction resulted in a growing belief that the Ukrainian foreign policy is not and cannot be effective.

Speeches delivered by Zelenskyy in this context did not receive excessive publicity and were not treated as significant events capable of defining the situation. They were perceived instead as a reaction to the course of events and an unconvincing attempt to address them (Donaj, Wochelski, 2022).

Perceptions and assessments we described proved to be superficial (yet inspired by ineffectiveness of presidential performances from 2019 till the beginning of 2022). They indicate inadequate recognition of Zelenskyy's rhetorical potential prior to Russia's full-scale aggression in Ukraine. After February 24, 2022, the Ukrainian president's artistic experience has been constantly used as a vital communication resource that significantly inspired and strengthened Ukrainians' perseverance and patriotism. In the face of Russian aggression, Zelenskyy did not leave Kyiv, presenting himself as a leader determined to stay with his people regardless of the course of events. His decision was a meaningful and accurately recognized choice, as Western allies offered him the possibility of safe transportation out of Ukraine. In response, the Ukrainian president was reported to say that he "needs ammunition, not a ride," and these words rose to prominence almost immediately. The phrase became a clear signal to Ukraine, the world, and the aggressors. It signified a call to Ukrainians to defend themselves, an assurance that this defense would continue and that the Ukrainian state and army were determined to carry it out. As a result, Zelenskyy has grown into a courageous and decisive leader of a nation attacked unduly by its powerful neighbor. Playing this

role, he focused the attention of global public opinion on his person for some time. By the same token, Ukraine uncovered that is governed by a professional who is perfectly capable of responding this attention to create and disseminate a multi-layered and high-quality political message (Bryžko-Zapór, 2022; Stączek, 2022).

Answering the launch of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, the Ukrainian president has succeeded:

- 1) at the level of *logos* – to present clearly the situation in which his country finds itself, as well as the goals that Ukrainian authorities and society want to achieve under the circumstances. In this context, Zelenskyy consistently declares the desire for full de-occupation of Ukrainian territories invaded and controlled by Russia. He also points to the need for the reconstruction and political transformation of Ukraine, understood as democratization and an effective state system based on the rule-of-law principle. Those goals resonate with the international aspirations of the Ukrainian state, expressing its willingness to integrate with Western structures, NATO and the EU in particular. The Ukrainian authorities offer constructive participation in the renewal of the regional and global security system, stressing that they want Ukrainians to enjoy the economic and social benefits associated with the development of the European integration process.
- 2) at the level of *ethos* – to point out that Ukraine has strong, decisive leadership, aware of its goals and the means necessary to achieve them. Following Olga Onuch's and Henry Hale's opinion, it should be admitted that Zelenskyy is acting as a representative of the 'Independent Generation,' i.e., Ukrainians in their 40s, 50s, whose young adulthood fell during the last decade of the Soviet Union and the first decade of independent Ukraine. This generation – while remaining in the prime of their lives – can be seen as the part of Ukrainian society who currently bears a special responsibility for the formulation and expression of Ukrainian aspirations and identity choices. Yet they have been not very politically active, but already in possession of considerable baggage of civic experience and significantly aware of the opportunities and threats generated by Ukraine's contemporary situation. Because of this, representatives of the Independent Generation can and often are seen as capable and obliged to define and test, through word and deed, the current forms of Ukrainian self-identification and self-expression (Onuch, Hale, 2022).
- 3) at the level of *pathos* – to inspire the entire Ukrainian nation with emotional references to the Independent Generation's self-identification choices (shaped at a critical stage of that generation's development). This inspiration is also intended to reach the international community, including Ukraine's neighbors. They, too, await or should await Ukrainian self-identification and self-expression proposals to find new constructive ways of understanding and exposing Ukrainianness in the 21st century. Addressing this expectation, the Ukrainian president is trying to find emotions that allow many people, both inside and outside Ukraine, to recognize the goals for which Ukraine is fighting, as well as to accept the means used by Ukrainians on the way to realizing their agenda. At the same time, the idea is to point out similarities between Ukrainians and other nations. This procedure is intended to facilitate identification with Ukrainian society, which wants to defend its independ-

ence and seeks optimal conditions for its future development. Moreover, Zelenskyy aims to make non-Ukrainian audiences understand that Russian aggression in Ukraine is not only about Ukrainians. It is a war that decides how Russia will act locally, regionally, and globally in the near and distant future. Consequently, the outcomes of this conflict determine whether the world will be capable of curbing or even eliminating the neo-imperial ambitions exercised by one of the most potent global players. It is also a war that answers what principles will form the basis of the new world order. In short, it is a matter of determining – unfortunately, once again in history in a non-peaceful manner – to what extent the new global system will be pluralistic, that is, open to autonomy and freedom of harmonious self-expression and self-determination of the broadest possible range of imagined communities.

3. FACILITATING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

The above comments help to understand how and why Zelenskyy builds specific rhetorical messages. Some examples, along with a general analysis of them, are presented below. These are the speeches that the President of Ukraine performed during his travels abroad, exposing his thoughts directly to the Americans, the Canadians, the British, the French, and the Poles (keeping in mind, however, that his permanent audiences are Ukrainians and the world public and even Ukraine's enemies, whom the presidential addresses should demobilize by retelling the injustice of their endeavors).

“Forbes Ukraine” magazine conducted its research on the rhetoric of the Ukrainian president during the year of the full-scale war. From February 24, 2022 to February 14, 2023, journalists counted 563 speeches for foreign and domestic audiences. Zelenskyy addresses Ukrainians in the evening with a brief summary of the day. Daily speeches refer to holidays and extraordinary events. According to the conclusions of “Forbes Ukraine” journalists, the evening address looks like this: “three minutes of information (353 words) about the front, the situation in the hottest points with an emphasis on cities (from Mariupol, Bucha, to the liberation of Kharkiv region and Kherson, and the defense of Bakhmut), international negotiations, provision of the army, the pressure to impose the sanctions against Russia, awarding of fighters, gratitude to everyone for the defense of the state” (Davydenko, Nadelniuk, 2023).

Regarding the content for international audiences, we are going to review the speeches of Zelenskyy during his foreign visits: Washington, D.C., London, Ottawa, Paris, Warsaw etc. – December 21, 2022–September 21, 2023. Ukrainian diplomat, representative of Ukraine to the European Union from 2010 to 2015, Kostiantyn Yelisieiev, in an interview, recalled the criteria for foreign trips, which were named by the president himself: “...I will visit any capital to achieve the following goals: weapons, sanctions or money” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2023).

Zelenskyy visited Washington, D.C. at the invitation of the American side a week after the Patriot (modern anti-missile defense equipment) was provided by the United States. Senior Director of the Atlantic Council's Eurasia Center, John E. Herbst, believes that this made it possible to “convince the administration to provide Ukraine

with ATACMS missiles, artillery with a range of at least 50–100 km, and preferably 300 km” (Lazur, 2022).

In his speech before the U.S. officials, the Ukrainian president spoke, among other things, about the Ukrainian peace formula, about its support by the U.S. president Joe Biden, and also about the fact that its implementation will provide an opportunity to restore the international legal order. Zelenskyy repeated his characterization of the war in the new version: “This battle is not only for the territory – for this or another part of Europe. This battle is not only for life, freedom and security of Ukrainians or any other nation, which Russia attempts to conquer. This struggle will define – in what world our children and grandchildren will live and then – their children and grandchildren. It will define whether it will be a democracy – for Ukrainians and for Americans – for all” (Zelenskyy, 2022).

Zelenskyy’s attention to European security issues is based on the message that Ukrainians are fighting not only for their identity, their land, their freedom. Following his position, they are fighting for the integrity and stability of other European countries too.

The President’s of Ukraine speech in front of both houses of the Parliament of the United Kingdom began with moving words of gratitude that were general for the country and people and personal for its leaders. “Great Britain, you extended your helping-hand when the world had not yet come to understand how to react,” said Zelenskyy and turned to Boris Johnson, „Boris, you got others united when it seemed absolutely impossible. Thank you! [...] You didn’t compromise Ukraine. And hence you didn’t compromise your ideals” (Zelenskyy, 2023).

In his speeches, the Ukrainian leader pays attention to the history of a specific country and its great figures. There are short stories about the situation at the front, about the courage of Ukrainian defenders, the unity of Ukrainian society in securing its identity, its values. And only after such messages he formulates his requests for arms to the Ukrainian army, sanctions to the enemy, assuring the audience of victory, no matter how heavy the price. The concept of victory prevails over all other options for ending the war that European leaders offer from time to time. According to Ukrainian diplomat Kostiantyn Yelisieiev, “President Zelenskyy’s speeches are very powerful in motivating our partners” (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2023).

American-born historian and journalist Anne Applebaum writes about the effectiveness of Zelenskyy’s speeches to foreign audiences in a column for “The Atlantic.” On her opinion his rhetoric is effective because it awakens the principles that unite most Europeans, Americans and many other people around the world, reminding them how much worse the world was in the bloodier past and how much worse it could be in the future if these principles no longer mattered. The words Zelenskyy uses also resonate because they are adequate. Ukraine’s victory will actually be a victory for everyone who believes in democracy and the rule of law (Applebaum, 2022).

The visit of the President of Ukraine on February 8–9, 2023 (immediately after London) to Paris and Brussels, meeting and conversations with the President of France Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz were covered by the leading European media. In an analytical review of the events, the BBC News Ukraine correspondent noted that “against the background of firm handshakes, hugs and enthusiastic

words from Western leaders to the Ukrainians and Zelenskyy personally, no concrete statements were made by them regarding the provision of the desired weapons to Kyiv. The United Kingdom Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak announced the training of Ukrainian pilots, and Olaf Scholz and Emmanuel Macron limited themselves to loud, but only statements that *Russia must not win* and *France will lead Ukraine to victory*" (Chernysh, 2023).

Intensive contacts between the presidents of Ukraine and Poland, between government officials and members of parliaments were supplemented by the first official visit of Zelenskyy since the full-scale invasion. The online media "Yevropeiska Pravda" ("European Truth"/"European Pravda") in the analytical article "A visit about the future: what made Zelenskyy's trip to Warsaw special" noted that "Poland was and remains a very important ally of Ukraine, providing military aid, defending Kyiv's interests in international organizations, and most importantly – is the undisputed leader in the provision of humanitarian aid and accommodation of Ukrainian refugees" (Panchenko, 2023).

Ukrainian experts commended the speeches of the presidents of Ukraine and Poland for the breadth of the issues raised, the courage to see the post-war perspective of the reconstruction of Ukrainian cities and villages, and to work together to establish peace in the European space. In particular, Zelenskyy said on Castle Square (Plac Zamkowy) in Warsaw in front of Polish government officials, citizens of Poland and Ukraine: "Ukrainian and Polish hearts are fighting for one freedom, for the mutual independence of our states, for our native Europe – our common home, and we will be victorious!" (Zelenskyy, 2023; Ukrinform, 2023).

The events of the summer of 2023 were reflected in the Ukrainian presidential discourse as follows: "Ukraine must win" and "We do not forget our main goal – to win the war and not lose Ukraine." Great words of appreciation were sent to all soldiers, heroes, and every country or leader who helped Ukraine defeat the enemy. Ukrainian media and opinion leaders in social networks drew attention to the Vilnius NATO summit. In his address to the Ukrainian people, the President assured: "Ukraine will be in the Alliance, and we are working to make the algorithm for gaining membership as clear and fast as possible." (Zelenskyy, 2023).

On the eve of the summit, a tweet by Zelenskyy appeared, in which he expressed dissatisfaction with the final NATO summit communique, which did not include Ukraine's invitation to the Alliance. This message caused criticism of the Ukrainian president in the world media. But as reported by the "Ukrinform" News Agency correspondent, the dissonance decreased after Zelenskyy's bilateral meetings with NATO leaders (Shkurko, 2023).

Despite the complications of the international situation and the growing effect of war fatigue in Ukraine and abroad, Volodymyr Zelenskyy continues his rhetorical efforts. Visits to Denmark, Sweden, Canada, the USA, and Romania were accompanied by speeches before parliaments and the public. The texts of speeches traditionally contained an emotional link to historical events. But more specific examples of cooperation have appeared, testifying to the multifaceted support of Ukraine. This characteristic is especially true when speaking to Canadian parliamentarians (Zelenskyy, 2023).

During the visit to the USA, the President and the First Lady of Ukraine spoke together before representatives of the US government and business circles, the me-

dia and the Ukrainian community. They alternately called the names of many people who significantly helped Ukraine. Olena Zelenska separately addressed Peter Gelb, the general director of the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, stressing that the legendary opera “has become one of the largest centers of support for our fight with the language of art” (Zelenska, 2023).

Volodymyr Zelenskyy also called on the world to denuclearize the Kremlin from the platform of the UN General Assembly. However, a number of media critically assessed his speech at the UN because of his unfortunate statements regarding difficulties with importing Ukrainian grain. Yuriy Shcherbak, ex-ambassador of Ukraine to Israel, Canada, the USA, and Mexico, commenting on this speech, noted that it “is not the pinnacle of diplomatic wisdom” (Levchenko, 2023).

Even though uneasy humanitarian, military, social, and economic situation and new catastrophes in global environment (especially the war in the Middle East), joining the European Union and NATO remains relevant in Zelenskyy's speeches. Also, representatives of the Ukrainian establishment often talk about this possibility at various international meetings. But their communication does not achieve the desired result – a large part of public opinion outside Ukraine do not understand or stop understanding the importance or probability of a new concept of Ukraine–NATO relations that would correspond to and reshape modern geopolitical realities (as manifestations of this tendency, we can notice a widely discussed article, “Nobody Believes in Our Victory Like I Do,” published by Simon Shuster in “Time” on October 2023, or the amplification by “The Economist” the Ukrainian commander-in-chief, Valery's Zaluzhny's opinion that “Just like in the first world war we have reached the level of technology that puts us into a stalemate” (Shuster, 2023; Zaluzhny, 2023).

Persuasive endeavours of the Ukrainian president are aimed at reverse or at least impede demobilization among Ukrainians and their partners. In result, Zelenskyy does not cease to underline integration aspirations of his state to important international structures. Clear and consistent willingness to harmonize Ukrainian structures with the Western ones is constantly considered as a strategic resource in negotiations with current or potential supporters. This attitude is expressed frequently in the Ukrainian president's talks on restoring the infrastructure destroyed by the Russian occupiers. The topic is widely discussed by Zelenskyy in various formats of video conferences with the participation of the IMF, EBRD, and the World Bank. Political capital and mutual experience achieved by Ukraine and its interlocutors during such events can be a vital advantage on many occasions. It deserves to be perceived as a valuable point of reference for efficient reshaping regional and global order after the Russian-Ukrainian war is finished.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize a brief review of the cited examples of presidential rhetoric practiced by Zelenskyy after 24.02.2022, it is necessary to point out its high degree of coherence. For almost two years, the Ukrainian president has been playing the role of a leader who, having clearly defined goals and objectives, consistently seeks for oc-

casions and possibilities to pursue them. Accordingly, he uses a rich palette of means to inform, move, and touch his speeches' audiences. At the same time, the variety of forms of expression used by Zelenskyy does not distract from the clarity and readability of his addresses.

The persuasive procedures used by Zelenskyy are calculated to sustain the unity of Ukrainians, calling on them to defend the country together. Thus, the Ukrainian president continues his effort to constantly convince himself and his audience that Ukraine should and can remain united in its diversity. In light of his statements, respect for pluralism is a fundamental value that Ukrainians defend when confronting the neo-imperialist Russians. Thus, the Ukrainian president's war messages are dominated by promoting and supporting the right to individual and collective self-determination. This means that he practices the rhetoric of partnership as the basis of human relations. At its core is the belief that multiple identities deserve respect which can and should be guaranteed by creative dialogue. According to Zelenskyy, various spaces should be established and protected for harmonious inter-community meetings. It should help to carefully align highly diverse legacies within a democratic political community, remaining well-balanced, sustainable, inclusive, and human rights-oriented (Gumenyuk, 2023).

Onuch and Hale aptly expressed the essence of the Ukrainian President's persuasive activity. Their opinion is worth quoting *in extenso*: "To understand the actions of ordinary Ukrainians and their leader in 2022, it is vital to understand what Zelensky represents. First and foremost, we will show, Zelensky embodies civic Ukrainian national identity and as a Russian-speaker of Jewish heritage from the country's industrial southeastern heartland, few were better positioned than him to understand how *The Divide* in Ukraine is a kind of myth, based on a dichotomous rendering of certain statistics that obscures the middle ground into which he tapped. Having come of age after Ukraine became an independent state, he is like many people in Ukraine's southeast who spoke Russian and might have been decided as *sovoks* but became more politically engaged and patriotic in their daily lives. They rejected the idea there was one way of being a *good patriotic Ukrainian*. Seeing direct benefits from European integration and democratic consolidation, they were also very frustrated by the lack of progress on this path and their people's continued poverty." (Onuch, Hale, 2022: 23–24).

Zelenskyy's presidential rhetoric is a long-standing activity with profound identification and transformation potential. It represents a resource that has allowed Zelenskyy to effectively mobilize Ukraine and a broad coalition of supporting states to resist Russian aggression for almost two years.

After this time, new questions about the following stages of the Russian-Ukrainian war are considered. Long-lasting conflict means a massive number of dramas and losses. Growing damages and protracted fights influence current discourses and geopolitical scenarios. They affect social expectations and attitudes, resulting in decreasing support for the President of Ukraine as a politician. Of course, it is impossible to assess if we are approaching the decline of Zelenskyy's era in Ukrainian politics. However, no matter what the support for him among Ukrainians is, his legacy remains exceptionally significant. So, it can and should be remembered as a critical juncture in developing Ukrainian statehood. It is more than likely that the Ukrainian nation will be reshaping

its identity during discussions on the historical meaning of Zelenskyy's leadership. Also, it is hard to imagine that his successors could design their presidential rhetoric without comparisons to him.

The near future will determine to what extent the incumbent Ukrainian president's oratory can affect the course and outcome of Ukraine's defensive war. In the longer term, it will become clear whether narrative threads invented and elaborated by Zelenskyy can determine the forthcoming understanding of Ukrainian narratives. We will also recognize whether his model of presidential rhetoric has the potential to be skillfully adopted by politicians outside Ukraine. Finally, we should continue asking if the Ukrainian president's rhetoric is translatable to facilitate democracy and the rule of law in Central and Eastern Europe.

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ABSTRACT

The article exposes Volodymyr Zelensky's presidential rhetoric as a strategic resource in Ukraine's confrontation with the Russian aggressor after 24.02.2022. By grasping varied aspects of political communication exercised by the Ukrainian president, we try to explain how and why the Ukrainian state is capable of creating an effective communication campaign in times of being invaded by its powerful neighbor. According to our assumptions, it is particularly a matter of 1. clarity and relevance of goals that the head of Ukraine wants to achieve through his rhetoric, 2. inclusiveness of the formula that Zelensky uses to demonstrate the essence of being Ukrainian and contributing to Ukrainian culture; 3. his artistic proficiency which helps him in identifying the proper means of persuading broad audiences to his narrative and agenda.

To verify the accuracy of the hypotheses, we employed theoretical concepts of *logos*, *ethos*, and *pathos* in the course of analysing chosen speeches delivered by the Ukrainian president. Moreover, the notions of "facilitating leadership" proposed by George C. Edwards III, and the "Medici Effect" coined by Frans Johansson are involved.

The outcomes of the work confirmed our expectations. The high quality and strategic meaning of Zelensky's statements after 24.02.2022 come from three main sources, i.e., 1. transparent and justified message; 2. the unifying qualities of the speaker; 3. his persuasive skilfulness.

Keywords: presidential rhetoric, Ukrainian presidential rhetoric, political communication as a strategic resource, facilitating leadership, *logos*, *ethos*, *pathos*, Volodymyr Zelensky

RETORYKA PREZYDENCKA WOŁODYMYRA ZEŁENSKIEGO JAKO ZASÓB STRATEGICZNY

STRESZCZENIE

Artykuł ukazuje retorykę prezydencką Wołodymyra Zełenskigo jako zasób strategiczny, który Ukraina wykorzystuje w konfrontacji z rosyjskim agresorem po 24.02.2022 roku. Uchwytując różne aspekty komunikacji politycznej prowadzonej przez ukraińskiego prezydenta, staramy się wyjaśnić, w jaki sposób i dlaczego państwo ukraińskie potrafiło podjąć skuteczną kampanię komunikacyjną w czasach inwazji ze strony potężnego sąsiada. Zgodnie z naszymi założeniami jest to w szczególności kwestia: 1) jasności i trafności celów, które głowa Ukrainy

chce osiągnąć poprzez swoją retorykę; 2) inkluzywności formuły, której używa Zełenski, aby zademonstrować istotę bycia Ukraińcem i wkładu w ukraińską kulturę; 3) jego biegłości artystycznej, która pomaga w identyfikacji właściwych środków przekonujących szeroką publiczność do jego narracji i programu.

Weryfikując trafność postawionych hipotez, wykorzystaliśmy teoretyczne koncepcje *logos*, *etos* i *patos*, by przeanalizować wybrane przemówienia wygłoszone przez ukraińskiego prezydenta. Ponadto odnieśliśmy się do modelu „przywództwa wzmacniającego” w ujęciu George’a C. Edwardsa III, a także zjawiska, które Frans Johansson określił mianem „efektu medycejskiego”.

Wyniki pracy potwierdziły nasze oczekiwania. Wysoka jakość i strategiczne znaczenie wypowiedzi Zełenskiego po 24.02.2022 r. wynikają z trzech głównych źródeł, tj. 1) przejrzystego i uzasadnionego przekazu; 2) jednoczących cech mówcy; 3) jego umiejętności perswazyjnych.

Słowa kluczowe: retoryka prezydencka, ukraińska retoryka prezydencka, komunikacja polityczna jako zasób strategiczny, przywództwo wzmacniające, *logo*, *ethos*, *pathos*, Wołodymyr Zełenski