

CRISIS MANAGEMENT THROUGH VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICA- TION – ZELENSKY VS PUTIN

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Abstract: Crisis situations are sudden and unforeseen situations that require a rational and calm response to the crisis and a strategic approach to its management. This includes not only verbal communication but also non-verbal communication. The image that a person projects to the outside world is a decisive factor in how the environment reacts to him. Image is always important if you are trying to attract the attention of the environment. However in some situations it is a hidden success factor. The presidents of the countries know this, and with their verbal and non-verbal communication they create their own image and indirectly the image of the country they lead.

This paper provides an analysis of the content of public appearances and a comparison of the verbal and non-verbal communication of presidents Zelensky and Putin during the Ukrainian - Russian war and the reaction of the EU countries and the USA to the president's communication in the media.

Keywords: crisis management, war, communication

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Introduction

Perhaps the word „crisis“ is too „light“ for the largest armed conflict since the World War 2 on the territory of Europe that broke out on February 24, 2022 after Russia’s aggression on Ukraine and everything that preceded and followed it. However, from the aspect of crisis communication, that is what we will call a sudden and unforeseen situations that puts people's lives, property, safety, health and psychological stability at risk and that require a rational and calm response and a strategic approach to its management. It is clear that the war in Ukraine has become a communication war, a war of propaganda, information and disinformation. There is a saying that the first casualty of war is the truth because then everyone starts lying and it is simply no longer possible to understand the truth easily. This is especially emphasized in modern times when war happens in real time also through advanced communication channels. This presents a special challenge to state leaders when it comes to crisis management, while, at least as far as the communication aspect is concerned, the results of their efforts are diametrically different. This paper does not deal with political issues, nor with issues of progress in war conquests, defense efforts and similar issues. This paper exclusively investigates the way in which the two presidents communicate with their internal and external publics, and this includes verbal as well as non-verbal communication, through which 97% of our message is sent, and perhaps not as much attention is paid to it as to what we actually say.

Crisis communication and crisis management

According to Jugo, Skoko and Petrović (2021) there are numerous definitions of crisis situations. They are events that lead to an increase in risk, which may fall under strong media interest or government surveillance (Fink, 2002: 15 according to Jugo et al.), anomalous events that can negatively affect organizations or society and which require effective communication in order

to minimize the harm associated with them to a greater extent (Zaremba, 2010: 20 according to Jugo et al.), unplanned and undesirable processes of limited duration and possibilities of influence with an ambivalent outcome (Krystek, 1987, according to Tomić, 2008: 362 according to Jugo et al.). Definitions of crises by different authors overlap, so Sellnow i Seeger (2013: 6 according to Jugo et al.) point out three primary characteristics of crises that they most often contain: (1) unpredictability and violation of the expected, because the stakeholders meet the crisis unprepared, although it is most often preceded by warning signs, (2) the threat that the crisis represents to the goals organization, lives, property, safety, health and psychological stability of people and (3) urgent activity, i.e. urgent response of individuals, groups or organizations to which it is possible to contain and limit its negative consequences.

The characteristics of crisis situations according to which it is possible to define a common pattern of its characteristics include the factor of surprise, an unexpected event, an activity or incident that changes the perception of the organization in the eyes of the public, a threat to human life, property or the environment, an uncontrolled event, and expectation of quick reaction and quick response (Jugo, 2017). Although we say that a crisis is primarily a danger, these and similar methods, i.e. preparing for a crisis, can primarily be a challenge and possible new beginning. For a crisis to be an opportunity, organizations must prepare for crisis, so they should be proactive, and by no means wait for the crisis and act reactive (Tomić & Milas, 2007).

Management of crisis communication in crisis situations (crisis communication management) is communicational-psychodynamic model of transmitting messages to citizens and institutions about possible damage and critical threats (fires, earthquakes, environmental disasters, warfare, refugees and other related emergencies) that come suddenly, unexpectedly, insidious with possibly catastrophic consequences. Sudden and unannounced crisis situations collaterally make citizens uncer-

tain and they destabilize institutions, the state and the whole environment is affected by crisis events (natural disasters, technical and technological accidents, destructive situations, wars, terrorism, human disasters or refugees) (Plenković, 2015).

It is necessary that leaders and other experts know how to create an effective crisis communication strategy that will cover all the possibilities of developing a crisis and ways of behaving in a crisis, as well as detecting internal and external recipients of information during a crisis (Jugo, 2017).

Crisis communication in a crisis situation, that is in public relations (crisis communication), with the help of new (IT) technology, smart mobile technology, social networks, the Internet and digital communication have changed and started a new page of the methodology and techniques of modern sophisticated Crisis Communications, now called "Modern digitized strategic crisis communications management" (Plenković, 2015).

Volodymyr Oleksandrovich Zelensky

Volodymyr Oleksandrovich Zelensky (Ukrainian: Володимир Олександрович Зеленський; Kryvyi Rih, January 25, 1978) is a Ukrainian politician and the sixth president of Ukraine. Before his political career, he was an actor. In the 2019 presidential elections, Zelensky defeated Petro Poroshenko, the fifth president of Ukraine, with more than 73% of the vote. His mandate began on May 20, 2019.

Zelensky grew up as a native speaker of Russian in Kryvyi Rih, a large city in Dnipropetrovsk Oblast in central Ukraine. Before his acting career, he graduated in law from the Kyiv National University of Economics. He then went into comedy and founded the production company „Kvartal 95“, which produced films, cartoons and TV shows, including the TV series "Servant of the People", in which Zelensky played the role of the Ukrainian president. The series aired from 2015 to 2019 and was ex-

tremely popular. The political party that bears the same name as the television show was founded in March 2018 by the employees of „Kvartal 95“. Zelensky announced his candidacy in the 2019 Ukrainian presidential elections on the evening of December 31, 2018, along with the New Year's address of then-president Petro Poroshenko on TV channel 1+1. A political outsider, he has already become one of the favorites in the election polls. He won the elections with 73.23% of the votes in the second round, defeating Poroshenko. During the campaign, he often emphasized the fight against corruption.

As president, Zelensky is an advocate of e-government and unity between the country's Ukrainian and Russian-speaking population. He often uses social networks, especially Instagram. His party won a landslide victory in early parliamentary elections held shortly after his inauguration as president. During his administration, Zelensky oversaw the repeal of legal immunity for members of the Verkhovna Rada, the country's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent economic recession, and some progress in the fight against corruption in Ukraine. Zelensky promised to end Ukraine's long-running conflict with Russia as part of his presidential campaign and attempted to engage in dialogue with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Zelensky and Russian president Putin met in Paris on 9 December 2019 in the "Normandy Format" aimed at ending the war in Donbas.

The Zelensky's administration faced escalating tensions with Russia in 2021, culminating in the launch of the ongoing full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022. Zelensky's strategy during the Russian military build-up was to appease the Ukrainian population and reassure the international community that Ukraine would not retaliate. At first, he distanced himself from warnings of imminent war, while calling for security guarantees and military support from NATO to "counter" the threat. After the start of the invasion, Zelensky declared a state of emergency throughout Ukraine and a general mobilization of the armed forces. His leadership during the crisis earned him widespread

international admiration, and he has been described as a symbol of Ukrainian resistance (Wikipedia, 2023).

Zelenskys verbal communication

He communicates every day and reports on the situation on the ground. He mainly uses the social network Twitter to report on the daily casualties of the war, to encourage his people and to report on what Ukraine is doing at any moment. For example, a Twitter post dated October 6 says: "Kharkiv, Russian strike this morning. A child, a boy, 10 years old... My condolences to his family and loved ones! Over 20 people have been injured. All the injured are receiving the necessary assistance. The rescue operation is ongoing, and I thank everyone who is helping our people. I also express my gratitude to all our warriors who, despite everything, are moving forward, defeating the occupiers, and bringing justice for Russian crimes closer. Our resilience, our movement, and the daily losses of the occupiers are the response to Russian terror."

He will be remembered in history for the simple sentence he uttered after rejecting Washington's offer to evacuate him from Ukraine: "I need ammunition, not transportation." (Tanta, 2023). With that sentence, he made it clear that he did not plan to leave the country during the war and won the trust of his compatriots and the admiration of the world public. Although he has a law degree, what actually helped him the most in managing crisis communication was his previous career as an actor as it made him an excellent communicator who has been compared to Ronald Reagan, the American president who was also an actor and whom Americans greatly appreciate (Pieper, 2022). He is trained to be on the stage and in the limelight, communicating to the audience not only with words, but also by way of voice control and being conscious of his body language, posture, visual identity etc (Søderberg, 2022). Zelenski addresses several target groups, adapting his verbal message, language and communicational channels to each group and speaks very

concisely, directly, and straightforwardly about serious issues. When he addresses the ordinary Russian people, he speaks to them in his mother language, Russian, as neighbors with whom they share a border and not as enemies. He encourages them to think about Putin's policy and to resist it. But also, he sends a message that the Ukrainians will not give up and that they are defending themselves and not attacking. He speaks Ukrainian to his citizens to unite the nation and motivate the men to stay and fight for Ukraine. He uses strong metaphors, such as the image of “the iron curtain”, which reminds them of the divisions between Western and Eastern Europe after World War 2. But here, it is used to illustrate a future division between the civilized world and Russia; a country that is being excluded because of its brutal attack on Ukraine (Søderberg, 2022).

When he addresses the institutions of the USA, EU and institutions across the world he speaks English and uses historical context to approach the topic and make this war a common war of all and animate them to provide military, financial and humanitarian support to Ukraine. By expressing sympathy for the painful past of the nations that he speaks to, Zelensky forms a close relationship with his target audience. For example, in his address to the Polish parliament, the Sejm, he sensitively compared the Ukrainian struggle to the 2010 Smolensk air disaster, in which then-Polish president Lech Kaczyński, his wife, and high-ranking government officials were killed. When addressing the US Congress, Zelensky referenced tragic events in US history that are still in the collective, traumatic memory of most Americas, such as the attack on Pearl Harbor during World War 2 and the terrorist attacks of September 11th 2001. (Kriaučiūnaitė). His words are visual, powerful and ideas-based (Wright). Zelensky's political speeches have mobilized the global community to respond to Russia's invasion. According to the Ukraine Support Tracker at the Kiel Institute for the World Economy, over 140 billion euros in government-to-government commitments were made within the first year alone. Russia is portrayed at an international level as an immoral, dishonest, and sinister actor whose villainous actions in

Ukraine are contrary to the values of the civilized world. This serves to foster a sense of indignation amongst the international community; and crucially with Ukraine's allies. This reinforces the effect of Russia's threat to the West and frames Russia's actions in Ukraine as an existential problem (Kriaučiūnaitė).

The characteristics of his communication strategy are openness, accessibility, constant presence through social networks and willingness to share information. This builds confidence in him as a political leader and simultaneously signals the content of his communication to be reliable and trustworthy (Kriaučiūnaitė). According to Tanta, there are three goals that Zelenski tries to achieve by appearing in public every day. The first goal is to show the world what's going on, reporting details from the battlefield (for example, how many bombs were dropped, how many enemy planes were shot down, etc.). Another goal is to send a message of hope to the Ukrainian soldiers - you see, we are making good progress, we must persevere, we will defend Ukraine. The third goal is to humiliate the enemy and strengthen the morale of the people and soldiers and those on the front line (Tanta, 2022).

Zelenskys non - verbal communication

In his public appearances, the president of Ukraine does not appear in a suit and tie, as we are used to seeing leaders of states in public appearances. He exclusively appears in an olive green T-shirt with short sleeves or hooded sweatshirt with the symbol of Ukraine on it. The olive green color symbolizes the army, and by appearing in public in such a choice of clothes, the president of Ukraine sends a message: "I am just one of the soldiers of my country who shares the fate of his people, a people who are at war!". With this choice, he sends a message of determination to fight together with his country for its freedom and peace. He knows very well that the public reacts to people who seem close to them. Even when he receives or visits the leaders of other countries where in other, normal circumstances, protocol

would require formal clothes and shoes, we see him in military clothes and casual sneakers instead of formal shoes. By this he also wants to say that the situation is not everyday and that what he is currently wearing is secondary to the daily destruction of his country, the killing of people and the tragedy that has engulfed his country. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. We see President Zelensky with dark circles under his eyes, a one-day beard, with which he also wants to send a message that he shares the fate of his country, that he works hard and has no plans to abandon his compatriots.

In several speeches, Zelensky holds one of his hands close to his chest. Across many cultures, this gesture is associated with honesty and sincerity. Zelensky's sincerity and honesty is also shown by his open palms. At the end of some speeches, Zelensky puts up a clenched fist to express the strength of the nation and its unity (Kriaučiūnaitė).

Of course, these are analyzes by experts who try to remain unbiased and not mix politics into their analysis. But when we look at the analyzes of experts who are in favor of Putin's regime, we will see how they are clearly different from those of the Western media. Let's take the example of an article published in the online magazine Faktor, whose publisher is AD Media, a company founded by „Alternativna televizija“ from Banja Luka. In it, Zelensky is presented as a bad actor and a political amateur who found himself between two serious politicians (Putin and Biden). Furthermore, it is stated that Volodymyr Zelensky's overall body language shows acting. Every sentence is exaggerated. During each address, Zelensky squints, indicating that he cares more about how he will read the text than what message he will send to his compatriots. They believe that Zelensky has an absolute absence of emotions. The only public appearance in which Zelensky showed some emotion was during his address to the European Parliament. It is noticeable that Zelensky keeps his hands on the table during every address. Hands are placed in front of him. In the "dictionary of non-verbal communication" this would mean surrender. What is

noticeable is that Zelensky always performs in a camouflage suit or some variant of the green color that is characteristic of the army. In this way, it sends the message "help me" and "let's go to war". On the other hand, the article claims that Putin showed strong emotions in the first days of the war. His face showed anger, lack of sleep, red eyes, indicating that Putin had thought about his move for a long time. It was clear that it was not an easy decision for him and Russia. During his first address, Putin kept his hands on the table, indicating that he was calm. Likewise, experts noticed that in Putin's first addresses, his little finger "worked" for him, which indicated a certain emotional tension and concern. Also, Putin is always dressed in a suit. Experts believe that Putin is thereby sending a message that for him this is an operation that will end. Although he is a short and charismatic man, this does not prevent many world leaders from coming to his feet and "worshiping". Psychologists believe that Putin, as a former KGB officer, has perfected his body language (FM Factor, 2022). All these claims, and especially the claims about strong emotions that Putin showed for western media are untrue, because they consider his cold and distant rhetoric the absolute opposite of Zelensky's, who is passionate and emotional, but by no means pathetic (Kišiček, 2022).

Putin's biography

Since the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 Russian president Vladimir Putin has been a part of daily news just like his enemy Volodymyr Zelensky. Putin was a well-followed public figure even before the war in Ukraine. His walk, behavior and speech, the way he treats his subordinates, his care for a healthy life and sports activities, his private life-which he successfully hides for years-these are all topics that the public has always been concerned with. However, since the beginning of the invasion of Ukraine, his performance has been viewed through a different prism, through the

prism of the initiator of another war between two countries in Europe. While some condemn his actions, others admire him. Who is Vladimir Putin?

With an interesting biography, we can say that he is an eternal leader, if not by his service then by his attitude and treatment of people. Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin was born in Leningrad in 1952. During the USSR period, he was an officer of the KGB, which he joined after graduating from law school. In 1998, Russian president Boris Yeltsin appointed him deputy head of the presidential administration, and in the same year, head of the Federal Security Service. In 1999, he was appointed Prime Minister of Russia and after Yeltsin's resignation, interim President of the Russian Federation. He won the elections in 2000 and was re-elected for president in 2004. As he could not run for the presidency again, in 2008 he „gave up“ his position of the president in favor of Dmitry Medvedev and became prime minister – a position he held until year 2012. In the presidential elections of the same year, he again became the president of Russia (Online encyclopedia).

Since the declaration of war in Ukraine, many have been analyzing his life and trying to find the causes of his current decisions in his childhood, youth and professional career. This is how political scientist Mark Galeotti¹ analyzed Putin's character for the BBC (Slobodna Dalmacija, 2023). Galeotti points out that Putin's childhood friends said that he was combative, petite but fearless. He trained Judo and had a black belt at the age of 18, which certainly helped him build his character. He showed interest in the KGB at the age of 16 and since then his studies have been focused on preparing for the job of KGB agent. He learned German and worked in the KGB office in Dresden. With collapse of the Soviet Union, Putin leaves the KGB. In 2000 he became the Russian president, but he did not achieve greater cooperation with the West, precisely because he convinced himself that West wanted to humiliate Russia in every

¹ Mark Galeotti is a British lecturer, historian and eriter on transnational crime and Russian security issues.

way. In his intention to be president for life, he was not swayed even by the Bolotnaya protests² that took place against him in the Moscow square and for the organization of which he once again blamed the West.

Putin is known as someone who cares a lot about his own health, he used to talk about the balance of mind and body, how it is necessary to take care of both evenly. During the Covid crisis, he showed great concern for his own health, isolated himself from the public and anyone who wanted to talk to him had to go through strict control – isolation and disinfection, and all this so that Putin would welcome them at the multi-meter table without physical contact (Slobodna Dalmacija, 2023).

The analysis of Putin's behavior sometimes goes so far that experts from different fields try to find the cause of the behavior in childhood or youth. Brenda Connors (Dnevnik.hr, 2015), presented as an expert from the US Naval War College in Newport and head of research of Putin, claimed that Putin has a form of autism, specifically Asperger's syndrome, a form of autism that mostly affects men and causes a more difficult understanding of functioning in society. He has a strong need to control things and events and also a strong focus on one thing, which is a characteristic of people with autism. According to researchers who have analyzed Putin's behavior during five years, the diagnosis cannot be confirmed without more detailed brain analysis (Dnevnik.hr, 2015).

Putin begins the mobilization of the Russian army

The military invasion of Ukraine by Russia began on February 24, 2022. The attack began immediately after the end of a televised address by Russian president Vladimir Putin, who announced that he had ordered a special operation to protect the Donbas region. In his speech Putin said that the aim of these at-

² Protests held in 2012 in Moscow against Putin's return to Kremlin.

tacks is to carry out the denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine and called on Ukrainians to lay down their arms. He states that Donbas asked for help from Russia and it was decided that a special military operation would be carried out to stop the genocide that Ukraine has been carrying out against the people for eight years. He puts Russia and himself as the president in the position of defender of the occupied territory and a priori names Ukraine as the malfeasant – as if Russia has no other interest than defending the occupied territory. Here Putin has positioned himself as a kind of savior who was faced with only one possibility – the mobilization of the army (Al Jazeera Balkans, 2022).

Soon after the announcement of the attack, all the news and broadcast analyzed every detail of the invasion, including the verbal and non-verbal communication of the two presidents during the war. In the informative TV show called *Otvoreno* on Croatian national television on March 28, 2023 the topic was war in Ukraine and information war (HRT *Otvoreno*, 2022). The guests of the show were Assoc. Ph.D. Gordan Akrap, Croatian expert in information science and communication, founder and president of the Hybrid Warfare Research Institute; prof. Ph.D. Smiljana Leinert Novosel, prof. emeritus at the Faculty of Political Sciences in Zagreb; Ph.D.Sc. Zdravko Kedžo, expert in communication at the University of Dubrovnik and expert in the international relations Prof. dr. Goran Bandov, lawyer and political scientist from the University in Zagreb. Professor Leinert Novosel commented on Putin's splenetic, exclusive and conquering communication just before the war.

After that kind of communication came the phase of softening Putin's image, during which he appeared in the company of ordinary people, women, at sports events...doing some usual things and visiting places where the public might not have expected him. Such developments strengthen the decaying atmosphere which, according to the professor Leinert Novosel, is widespread in Russia. Furthermore, commenting on the president's statements in the media, she concludes that there is a vis-

ible conflict between two political cultures: Russia values authoritarianism and authority, obedience and cooperation in an order-execution manner, and President Putin is a metaphor for such a way of communication, while Zelensky has accepted the „Western“ way of communications to the public.

Zdravko Kedžo said that we can ask ourselves if Putin even thinks that Zelensky is equal to him? In public speeches, he acts as if Zelensky is not a worthy interlocutor, he is talking about a greater and stronger force, alluding to the West, as if he wants to once again set the West as the only opponent he can communicate to (HRT Otvoreno, 2022). International relations expert, Goran Bandov commented on the political content and reach of Russia's messages, highlighting one problem – everything that Putin didn't want, happened to him. In his speeches, Putin sent messages about the possibility of using nuclear weapons, which would lead to nuclear war, creating fear of war in other countries and their unification. Since the declaration of war on Ukraine, the European Union became more united in helping Ukraine militarily, technically and humanitarian, which was certainly not Putin's goal. All these messages were sent quite irresponsible against the interests of Russia itself because they had the opposite effect (HRT Otvoreno, 2022).

The guests on Otvoreno also talked about the winner in the information war between Ukraine and Russia, where it can be said that in the Western countries, Ukraine is winning the propaganda war, which may not be the case with countries such as India and China. Kedžo did not speak more specifically about the winner of the propaganda war, but said that it is clear who is losing in the war – and that is the truth (HRT Otvoreno, 2022).

What we can agree on is the fact that the information war started even before the invasion of Ukraine itself and will continue after the war, which was clearly visible in the speculation about the day when the invasion of Russia will start. It will be interesting to see if after the war the defeated side will try to turn his defeat into a victory through information warfare. Gordan

Akrap pointed out that when listening and receiving information about this war, one should not be in a hurry to accept the news as the complete truth. During the Homeland war in Croatia, there was also a lot of dis- and mis-information. One should be careful because even incomplete true information can be misinformation (HRT Otvoreno, 2022).

Putin's justification of war and focus on the West

In the fall of 2022, Russian president Putin addressed the nation in a fifteen-minute speech (Vijesti.hrt.hr, 2022). Croatian specialist psychiatrist and psychotherapist Ante Bagarić commented on Putin's verbal and non-verbal communication. He states that in his speech Putin wants to convince the people that he is righteous and that what Russia is doing is rightfully and necessary. He presents himself and his people as victims and encourages listeners to fight against the enemy. His speeches show the attitude of a leader, but not one who wants to listen to others, but a leader who makes decisions himself. He has advisers, but their role is only an illusion. Putin can listen to them, but he will decide what to do, regardless of their opinion. It is clear from his speeches that he is ready to convince the public in his truth – in this war Russia only fights for what belongs to it; his goal is not the use of nuclear weapons or mass destruction, he just wants what he thinks is his. Bagarić points out that such communication by Putin leads to the destruction of society and not to the achievement of realistic goals. Putin almost perfectly manipulates a part of the Russian public that has fallen into, as he claims, immature regressive functioning (Vijesti.hrt.hr, 2022).

In his speeches, Putin often focuses on the West, which has become a kind of obsession for him. For everything negative that is happening he blames the West, which he says is collectively led by the United States leading a proxy war against Russia, hitting its economy with sanctions and increasing the supply of advanced weapons to Ukraine. Putin used to point out that there is still a possibility for peace negotiations, but the prospects are

getting weaker as the conflict with Ukraine drags on. It's as if he wants to say that the war does not depend on him, that peace will only come when others give in, so it depends on Ukraine. According to Putin, he is the one who wants peace, but under his terms and he does not see a problem in that either (Global news, 2022). During a meeting with Putin in June this year, a group of leaders from seven African countries discussed their peace plan for Ukraine – a day after their meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Kiev – during the meeting Putin continued to claim that he is ready for negotiations, but it is the Ukrainian side that rejects them (NBC news, 2023).

Putin also spoke about the West's guilt during the BRICS group meeting, which he addressed via video link and where he was greeted with a standing ovation (Guardian news, 2023). It is interesting to mention that it was only in December 2022 that Putin said for the first time about the war with Ukraine that it was specifically “a war” and not “a special military operation”, as he called it until then (DW news, 2022).

Putin, in his speeches, addresses the people in the “returned territories” and offers help to the victims in the form of construction of hospitals, schools, residential buildings and roads. He emphasizes unity as the key to success and after the invasion of Ukraine, he often talks about strengthening Russia by merging with Ukrainian regions. He calls the defense of Donbass a struggle for spiritual values and calls for the socio-economic development of the historical regions of Russia. He speaks to his Ukrainian listeners as if joining Russia is the lofty goal of the war, the ultimate prosperity of all being achieved through unity.

Putin as an unquestionable leader

In his communication with other politically powerful people, Vladimir Putin shows superiority. He has a guard of a man that puts himself above everyone and it looks like he does not give

in to anyone. Putin does not stutter while answering the questions and it looks like there is no question that would surprise him, he is characterized by KGB composure. Among many political leaders Putin has met, one has proven to be someone he has shown nervousness in front of. Communication expert Judi James reveals what is hidden in the non-verbal communication between Putin and Kim Jong-Un during the North Korean leader's recent visit to Russia (Mirror.co.uk, 2023). James points out that according to the movements of the two leaders, it can be seen that Kim is more dominant. Putin is insecure and shows this by adjusting his clothes and moving his tongue and lips, suggesting that his mouth is dry or he is nervous. The handshake between the two presidents during their first meeting lasted quite a long time, but both of them showed relief because they finally met. Even in the actual handshake, president Kim Jong-Un shows dominance by extending his hand first and pulling the president Putin towards him. He shows more calmness and security compared to Putin. Perhaps Vladimir Putin has found an *al pari* interlocutor.

However, when he addresses his associates and people who rank lower than him in public life, Putin is more confident and dominant. He showed this more than once, for example when addressing Denis Valentinovich Manturov, the vice president of the Russian government, when he did not hesitate to embarrass him in front of others. Putin reprimanded Manturov for business failures in the aviation sector (Euronews, 2023). This was not the only time he lectured his ministers and members of the government. Two days before the invasion of Ukraine, he acted harshly towards the head of the secret service in Russia, Sergei Naryshkin, during a security meeting on the areas under Russian control in eastern Ukraine. Putin interrupted Naryshkin who was stuttering on several occasions, ordering him to speak openly and express his opinion, which was already contrary to his own, which did little or nothing to influence Putin's decision to invade Ukraine. On his face you could see a certain surprise at the disagreement with the head of the secret service, it seems

as if he was surprised by the fact that Naryshkin opposed him and he was clearly angry. (Guardian news, 2022).

On the day of the invasion of Ukraine, Putin spoke in front of the Russian oligarchs, from whom he was several tens of meters away in the same room. The oligarchs were sitting in front of him as his ministers had recently been – lined up on chairs like children at school in front of the teacher at a big table. Putin explained to them the necessity of attacking Ukraine and assured them that there was no other option but to mobilize the army (Daily Mail, 2022). After the meeting, some oligarchs claimed that it was an unconscious expression of support for Putin. But it was a very good strategic move for Putin. At first, it seemed as if the oligarchs who sat in front of Putin without saying a word and to whom he tells about the invasion of Ukraine are supporting this idea and the decisions made by the president. Putin perfidiously put the oligarchs in a situation in which they send him support without saying a word, without even agreeing to it themselves.

Vladimir Putin also shows his confidence with his sense of humor. Although this is a time in which there is little to laugh at, he deftly responds to the prodding of curious journalists in his own unique way or shows his dominance over others with sharp jokes. Thus, on the eve of the invasion of Ukraine, when there was speculation about the exact day when Russia would attack Ukraine, he used to ask journalists if they knew the exact time of the attack (CNBC-TV18, 2022)?

Furthermore, at the G7 summit, Western leaders mocked his athletic feats and bare torso in public. Boris Johnson suggested that they themselves take off their shirts following the example of Putin. After journalists at a press conference in Turkmenistan in June 2022 asked Putin for a comment about Johnson's joke, he readily and deftly answered them that stripping them off in public would be a disgusting sight and that as leaders they can waste a lot, they just need to work on themselves. In his speeches, regardless of provocations, he is calm and does not

remain indebted to anyone who tries to degrade him in any way (Global news, 2022). Another somewhat comical situation occurred during a meeting on the future of artificial intelligence in July this year. President Putin asked the CEO of Sberbank, Herman Gref, who was present there, if and when he would be replaced by artificial intelligence, to which he replied that he hoped it would not happen in his lifetime. Putin then told him that there is no progress with people like him. After his jokes, it seems that all people to whom the jokes are addressed to can do is laugh and hope for the best (Global news, 2023).

Putin's dominance in public appearances is also demonstrated by the annual speech before the General Assembly of Russia, which lasted a little less than two hours and was held on February 21, 2023. The program of the annual meeting was made by Putin himself, without a break or any other performance, only Putin's speech (The Telegraph, 2023). On the eve of the anniversary of the attack on Ukraine, President Putin addressed members of both houses of parliament and military commanders and soldiers. He gave his speech alone on a rather large and rather distant stage without pompous decorations, only Russian flags stood still. He read the text of the speech from paper, without the modern screens that surround the stage. For the first twenty minutes he spoke calmly, almost the entire time in the same pose with his right hand on the paper and his left leaning on the lectern. He maintained contact with the audience by raising his head and emphasizing certain words and very rarely by hand gestures. After about twenty minutes of speaking, he started to cough, which was not, as it seems, a sign of nervousness, but a clearing of his throat due to a long continuous speech, but he had no water in front of him.

After about thirty minutes, the coughing became more frequent and now he started leaning on the lectern with both hands, it was obviously physically difficult to stand, but he did not show it on his face, his speech became more intense. More often he raised his head from the text and uttered comments that seemed spontaneous and not written down in advance. He started fixing

his clothes, specifically his tie, indicating that he is still thinking about how he looks. It is evident from Putin's attitude that he is addressing someone who is subordinate to him, speaking like a boss but trying to maintain a friendly tone towards his listeners. This speech was also commented on in informative show *Otvoreno* from February 2, 2023 (Hrvatska radiotelevizija, 2023). The guests of the show were, among others, the aforementioned Ph.D.Sc. Gordan Akrap and Prof. Goran Bandov. On that occasion, Akrap commented on the "chamber atmosphere" among the audience addressed by Putin: a deeply thoughtful audience and a too broad speech that includes many groups in Russia. Putin presents himself as a protector of Christian and family values; in his performance he attacks liberal democracy and at the same time he attacks the NATO alliance, and thus he stands up to populists from the left and right, Akrap points out. Prof. Bandov noticed that Putin imposes an alternative truth on the Russians that they themselves do not even believe in.

Vladimir Putin also shows his confidence as a leader in long answers to questions as recently (October, 2023) in Sochi. Putin answered questions from the audience for more than three hours, calm and argumentative. We don't have to agree with his points of view, but his confidence in speaking in public cannot be disputed (Sky news, 2023).

Putin' s doubles

Since the announcement of the mobilization of the army and the attack on Ukraine, Putin has been surprising with his appearance: either by a more aggressive attitude or appearing in public and showing concern for the suffering people – a somewhat different appearance compared to previous appearances, or by avoiding physical contact with his interlocutors. All of that was very much discussed in the media. In August of this year, the Daily Mail reported on Putin's possibility of using a double (Daily Mail, 2023). Proof for that is the recording that spread very quickly in the virtual world. At the aforementioned BRICS

meeting Putin, or his double that was thought to be him (?) looked at his left hand at the watch even though there was no watch there, as if he was confused where it is. It is known that Putin wears his watch on his right hand so that the winding wheel does not blister his hand. Quite confusing situation.

Dr. Valery Dimitriyevich Solovey is a Russian political scientist, historian and former head of the Public Relations Department of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations, who claims that Putin can no longer perform even simple daily tasks such as dressing himself. Therefore it is very likely that his doubles appear in public. In September 2023, Talk TV published a story about whether Putin uses body doubles, given that he behaves differently in public than we have had the opportunity to see in previous appearances. Professor Mark Galeotti, author of the book *Putin's Wars: From Chechnya to Ukraine*, claims that it is 'surprising' that Putin has engaged so physically with the public because we are used to Putin who is sitting at long tables and who is paranoid, avoiding physical contact with interlocutors. After the invasion, we had the opportunity to see Putin driving around Mariupol alone in a car, meeting residents on the streets and entering their apartments, something that the "old" Putin was not used to doing until then (Talk TV, 2023).

Many have previously testified about the unusual behavior of Putin, who was looking at his interlocutors from behind a table that is several tens of meters away from them, (as is the case with the oligarchs just after the meeting with his ministers two days before). Many joked about the long table at which he received officials, which made it impossible for them to come into physical contact with Putin, even if only by shaking hands. There were times when he responded exclusively to online connections. He became more and more isolated. Dr. Samuel Green, a professor at King's College in London, states that he is probably trying to confuse his opponents and hide information where exactly he is (CNN, 2022). Sky news Australia also reported on Putin's doubles (Sky news Australia, 2022). According to this source, Ukrainian Major General Kyrilo

Oleksiyovych Budanov says that President Putin's height and ears have changed. He states that there are visible changes in behavior and manners. Major General Budanov also believes that President Putin is seriously ill. In July, his double may have come to the summit in Tehran. The Russian leader looked awkward as he descended the steps of his presidential plane, Ukrainian sources noted at the time, and said he moved unusually quickly and was more cautious than in previous public appearances. Before taking off his jacket and getting into the limo, he appeared lively as he greeted the group of people waiting for him (Večernji.hr, 2022).

In its analysis of Putin, the Daily Mail analyzed Putin's walk, which is clearly recognizable, a firm step with a minimal swing to the left and stiffness of the right hand (Daily Mail, 2022). Thus, they bring details that show the extent to which Vladimir Putin's right side is stiff, especially his right hand, which was particularly visible at the Victory Day parade, they point out. It is also noticeable, the Daily Mail reports, that at the meeting with President Lukashenko in September of this year he was unusually fidgeting and moving his legs. His walking and posture indicate Parkinson's disease, reports the media. However, these are all speculations that Russia either refutes or keeps quiet.

WION, an Indian English-language news channel also covered this topic (WION, 2023). They broadcast the speech of Dmitry Peskov, the spokesman of the Kremlin, who refutes the idea that Putin has a double. Shortly after the start of the war in Ukraine, the same media reported that MI6 suspected that Putin was dead (WION, 2022). Even media such as Crux dealt with this topic (CRUX, 2023).

In June 2023, Putin allegedly appeared in two places at the same time, he was present at the meeting of the Council of Ministers that began on June 22 at 11:55 a.m. Moscow time, and 20 minutes later he was present at the laying of a wreath on the grave of the unknown soldier in the Alexander Gardens. Ac-

According to Viktor Alksnis, a former colonel of the Soviet Air Force, 20 minutes is enough to get from the Kremlin to the Alexander Garden, but that would mean that the meeting with the ministers lasted only a few minutes. The discussion of this event and the analysis of the time period and the possibility of recording the event in advance and presenting it as a live broadcast on Russian television, was also one of the options in trying to understand the double appearance (CRUX, 2023).

Some say that they saw Putin and his double live, and not only were they together, but Putin honored his double at a solemn event dedicated to the 80th anniversary of the victory of Soviet troops in the Battle of Kursk. The video showing Putin giving awards to the participants of the special operation in Ukraine was shared by Anton Gerashchenko, adviser to the Minister of Internal Affairs of Ukraine, and it quickly spread on social networks. 'Putin's double rewarded Putin's double?' – was the description of the video of the Ukrainian adviser (Jutarnji.hr, 2023). Putin's every step and spoken word is analysed, the possible reconstruction of the face of Putin's doubles to make them look more and more like him... all this shows that there is a narrative of possibility that something is wrong with the Russian president's health, and he certainly does not want to send that picture to the public.

However, it seems that Putin is still a leader that people either like or dislike. Some say he's bad while others disagree, but one thing is for sure – villain or not, Putin has the demeanor of a leader.

Response to the Russian invasion

The war in Ukraine has caused a world crisis on many levels. Ukraine has focused the world's attention, says Prof. Dr. Jan Goldman, Professor of Intelligence, Security Studies at the Citadel, USA, and Editor-in-Chief of International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence. It looks like war in Ukraine has almost instantly restructured global power dynamics. It may seem that the reason for that is partly because of Putin's nuclear

threats and in part because the world has become so more connected in recent years. As Prof. Bandov said, the world became more united, as the opposite of what Putin wanted. Prof. Goldman is saying very similarly: to ward off aggressive superpowers is to create a strong union. The West has made it clear that there is unity among countries and this is something that should make Putin take a step back in this war (Goldman, 2022).

EU member states strongly condemn the brutal aggressive war against Ukraine. The European Council and the Council of the European Union have been meeting regularly since February 2022 to discuss the situation in Ukraine from different perspectives. In response to the military aggression, the EU drastically expanded sanctions against Russia. Sanctions included a large number of persons and entities on the list of sanctions and introduced unprecedented restrictive measures. The purpose of these measures is to weaken Russia's economic base.

Since Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the EU has imposed 11 packages of restrictive measures against Russia. The first sanctions was delivered on February 23, 2022. The European Union also imposed sanctions against Belarus in response to their participation in the invasion of Ukraine and against Iran, in connection with the production and delivery of drones (European council, 2023). The European union has also taken measures against information operations. On July 28, EU decided to impose restrictive measures against seven Russian individuals and five entities responsible for running a digital information manipulation campaign called RRN. That campaign, which involved government bodies or bodies linked to the Russian state, is based on fake websites that impersonate national media outlets and government websites and fake social media accounts. This coordinated and targeted manipulation of information is part of Russia's broader hybrid campaign against the EU and its member states. They also suspended the broadcasting licenses of media houses RT Arabic and Sputnik Arabic (European council, 2023).

Professor Gordan Akrap presents a very good conclusion for the whole world in the current situation with the war in Ukraine. Only together can we emerge victorious from future conflicts and wars. Regardless of the fact that parts of the security structures failed in their assessment of Russia's aggressive intentions, the NATO alliance shows resilience and readiness for challenges. There is no need to completely change the existing security architecture, but to upgrade it towards the Euro-Asian area as well, in order to prevent the aggressive behavior of certain factors in the international community on a preventive level. We need to make strong efforts, at the national and international level, to strengthen democracy and protect freedoms and society from malicious influence operations (which come from the domain of using kinetic and non-kinetic combat means). Therefore, strengthening democracy, protecting freedom and society is the goal we strive for, Akrap concludes (Akrap, 2023).

Croatia as Ukraine

The war that Russia started against Ukraine in 2022 is not unknown situation for Croatia. In the not-so-distant past, Croatia found itself in a war that it did not start but ended it with the Croatian victory and independence of the Republic of Croatia. As in this Russian aggression on Ukraine, the information operations were also being waged in Croatia. Just as Putin "liberates" the occupied territories and wants to create a Greater Russia, so in the nineties Serbia was determined to create a "Greater Serbia" by getting rid of the Croatian defenders and the Croatian government. During the Croatian Homeland War for independence (1990-1998), the decisive factor in their ideology that guided the Serbian people was homogeneity of the Serbs in the country, which closes the space for other people to coexist. This kind of presentation in the public creates confusion in defining the victim and the culprit. Croatia had to fight with falsehoods

and dis- and misinformation even after the war, during the trial of Croatian generals in ICTY court in The Hague.

The media play a big role in information warfare, however, they are not always at the service of the truth. Their role is to control and monitor the editorial policy. Whoever has authority and power, the media space is guaranteed for them. Such an atmosphere prevailed in Yugoslavia and Serbians continued it during the war. But they couldn't hide the truth, because there is, as Miroslav Tuđman said, social knowledge (Tuđman, 2013a). In these situations it is important who has the informational superiority, then the dominant entity enters the disinformation operation. By publishing disinformation creates a false image of an event. Disinformation consists of fragments of truth to which a false construction is added and then everything is presented as a complete truth (Domović, 2019).

When Miroslav Tuđman talks about the Homeland War and the information operations, he mentions the formation of public knowledge. One of the strategies that shape public knowledge and is at the service of Serbian hegemonic politics is the strategy of producing oblivion. Its basic feature is the promotion of Serbian national interests and national identity. One more strategy of formation of public knowledge is information strategy that imposes itself as an absolute, global, truth. Its advocates have been international factors since the mid-nineties, and its goal was to produce consent and indoctrinate the public. It is called the production of consent that shapes public knowledge, which is created by the dominance of monitored and controlled information. The people are most successfully controlled by thought control.

One of the examples of this strategy is the speech about the military police operation "Oluja" (Storm). The media strategy of producing consent to "Oluja" as a joint criminal enterprise had the goal of exaggerating the crimes committed by the Croatian army and police during the Homeland War. Furthermore, its goal is to accuse the Croatian government that during the

Homeland War, the rule of law did not function because it prosecuted only the crimes of the aggressor and not the crimes of the defense. The goal was to accuse the Croatian political and military leadership of covering up crimes committed by members of the Croatian army and police; to accuse President Tuđman and the political leadership that the goal of "Oluja" was the ethnic cleansing of the then so-called SAO Krajina. All negative articles written about "Storm" aimed to control the public with controlled information or manufactured consent. In Croatia too, not long after the Homeland War, the media implemented a strategy of manufacturing consent. Tuđman notes that the media were, and still are, foreign-owned. Their goal was to force Croatian official institutions to accept international interpretations of reality as the official definition of reality (Tuđman, 2013b).

Serbian President Milošević knew very well the power of the media and therefore he uses it as one of the foundations of his political power. Taking power in Serbia in 1987, Milošević also took over the influence on the mass media. The methods were simple and efficient – the idea that all Serbs should live in one country was constantly and consistently spread in the mass media and in all possible ways. The journalistic power of the Serbian mass media was strong. No one could believe, especially the Western world, which is used to media freedom, that a blatant lie was constantly being spread without any scruple. The consistent spread of lies casts doubt on the truth, so the lie begins to be checked with the motto: Maybe there is some truth in it. The goal has been achieved – we are no longer talking about the truth, but about the fabricated message sent by Milošević's propaganda machine. The world media is not naive, but it took time to change the media image that has been persistently and consistently created for decades. The genocide of the Croats, the separatism of the Slovenes and the secession of Kosovo are stereotypes that were present in the world public and that were fueled by Milošević's media campaign (Malović, 1999).

According to the American official doctrine, there are four instruments and sources of national power: public diplomacy, information, military and economy. According to public diplomacy, the use of the soft power of the state – the successful use of media and information – is more effective than war. Public diplomacy is the action of a sovereign country towards the public in other countries. The strategic goal of public diplomacy is to ensure informational superiority and dominance of one's own information. That is why it is very important to win in information operations in a conflict between states. We can see how serious the consequences of media and information operations can be from the reaction of Russian army colonel Tsymbal, who warned in September 1995 that Russia considers intensive media and psychological operations conducted by the West towards its public as an act of aggression, which will respond even with nuclear weapons (Tuđman, 2009). And today we are listening about nuclear weapons from Russia, even if only talk of weapons testing (Sky news, 2023).

Conclusion

As with all other topics related to the war between Russia and Ukraine, media reports on this topic offer different views. Thus, the media sympathetic to Putin's regime will say that in his public appearances, Zelensky acts badly, is devoid of emotions, and will call him an amateur who found himself in the role of president between the two giants: Putin and Biden. While on the other hand the western media offer huge amount of articles about the communication between the two presidents, and most of them look favorably on Zelensky, marking him a good guy compared to the evil Putin. Media-wise, this war is turning into a specific „reality“ show in which virtuality and reality are intertwined (Klun, 2000). This article offers an analysis of verbal and non-verbal communication of two presidents of countries at war, both with the same name, both graduated law, but their crisis communication is completely opposite to each other. In con-

clusion, we cannot say which of them is "correct" or "better", but we can say that, from the aspect of information and communication sciences, one of them is characteristic to the Eastern and the other to Western world. For the Western world, the president of Ukraine, Zelensky, is a hero, a star, a warm and friendly man of the people, while for the Eastern world, Putin is the embodiment of a leader, calm and composed, a fighter for the rights of the Russian people and a "savior" from the West.

What will certainly be interesting is to see what the post-crisis communication of these two leaders will look like, because as has been emphasized, every crisis, no matter how devastating and long it is, comes to an end. How will the Russian and Ukrainian people look at these two leaders when they start counting their victims, when indictments are brought for war crimes, for destruction and other situations that await these two countries after the war ends. Croatia certainly has experience with that period, the period when victims on both sides of the border wondered if everything was worth it and what they were fighting for.

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