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"The Perfect Mobilisation Strategy
Doesn't Exist":
The Use of Memes as a Method of
Audience Mobilisation

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Abstract

In a digitalised era, politics and online activism have adapted to a new environment in which social media have become critical platforms of new political participation. In an attempt to mobilise audiences and gather a large support base, activists resort to new measures that help attract attention. One of such unique tools is memes – replicated images that follow a specific pattern and send a clear political message through a humoristic lens. In the past decades, memes have been actively used for political communication both at times of peace and war. The 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine is no exception to this – ravaged by war, Ukraine has been dubbed a “meme nation” given the active use of social media and memes by the country’s activists.

While some academics have explored the role of Ukrainian memes on platforms such as Facebook and X, Instagram – a social media widely used among Ukrainians – has been largely ignored. Through visual and content analysis as well as a self-selection-based survey, this thesis examines the role of pro-Ukrainian Instagram memes in international audience mobilisation. It argues that Instagram memes assist in international community development, serve as information and communication sources, allow for effective agenda-setting, and help gather support for Ukraine. This research provides critical insight into the consistently growing role of digital activism worldwide by showcasing that memes are exceptionally effective tools for online mobilisation of international audiences.

Introduction

The XXI century has been marked as a digital era. Over the past decades, we have witnessed the foundational establishments on which society rests adapt to the changing world by implementing new tools in their primary activities. From education to healthcare institutions, digitalisation has permeated every aspect of our everyday lives (Lupton 2014; Hashim 2018). Since 2005, the number of Internet users worldwide has increased more than five times (Petrosyan 2023). In April 2024, the number of social media users globally reached over 5 billion, representing 62.6% of the total population (Petrosyan 2024). These developments have also changed the dynamics of political engagement and citizen involvement, with online political participation progressively increasing. Political parties globally now engage in new campaigning tactics, such as microtargeting, while social media platforms have become spaces to express one's political standing and partake in discussions (Information Commissioner's Office 2024; Rainie et al. 2012).

Crucially, these developments have also meant that political interaction dynamics and mobilisation tactics at times of mass crises have also changed. In times of conflict, the parties involved in it attempt to sway people's support their way by using a variety of methods – from publishing images of war to appeal to people's sensitivity to conducting extensive factual reports that allow them to fight misinformation. Digitalisation has allowed individuals to share this information and garner support more effectively by targeting greater audiences via the Internet, and in particular, by utilising social media platforms (Van Ingen and Wright 2016: 437; Maryville University 2019). In the past decades, the use of humour has become a new method of non-violent resistance that has been utilised in combatting propaganda and garnering support for a cause – importantly, the use of social media has allowed to make this practice widespread (Sorensen 2008; Korkut et al. 2021). The ongoing Russia's war in Ukraine is no exception to this. Since February 24th, 2022, the world witnessed a spike in pro-Ukrainian foundations and NGOs working towards the goals of increasing international support, providing humanitarian aid and medical care to the individuals affected as well as military assistance to the army. However, the age of digitalisation and technology has opened up new ways to target audiences at home and abroad, with one of these methods being the use of memes.

The use of memes has been studied in the context of other conflicts, such as the Arab Spring (Wafa Abu Hatab 2016), feminist movements in Iran (Khosravi-Ooryad 2023), and the “TikTok Intifada” in the Israel-Palestine war (Divon 2022). The latter studies have come to show that memes can often serve as unique resistance mechanisms that allow to bring attention to the issue at hand and gather support. Some research has also been done in the context of Ukraine. Jennifer Dickinson (2014) has analysed the use of memes on Twitter and Facebook during the 2014 EuroMaidan Protests in Ukraine, showcasing that these platforms were used as important mobilisation and communication tools among protesters. In the context of the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, academic literature shows that the use of memes has allowed to mobilise Ukrainians and garner support (Bilaniuk 2024; Cuppens 2023), frame the conflict in a beneficial perspective and has also functioned as a unique coping mechanism that allows people to process traumatic events (Mozolevska 2024).

In spite of the latter, an important platform has received very limited attention – Instagram. With the popularity of media such as Facebook, X, and TikTok gradually decreasing, Instagram continues to be widespread and used by different age groups (AlJazeera 2023; Kantrowitz 2023). Since the start of the full-scale invasion, pro-Ukrainian organisations such as @SaintJavelin, @Ukraine, @WithUkraine, @Razom, and many others turned to Instagram as a way to garner support for Ukraine and increase mobilisation. Some organisations turned to memes – by sharing the ironic and satirical Ukrainian humour with the rest of the world in combination with informative content, these platforms have gathered thousands of followers. Despite this, most research so far has focused on the first year of the war (Majdzińska-Koczorowicz and Ostanina-Olszewska 2023; Kreps et al. 2023; Faichuk et al. 2023) or only on the very first days (Bracciale and Colombini 2022) or months (Mejova et al. 2024) of the invasion. These previous studies have pointed to the fact that memes have helped Ukrainians cope with traumatic events, build a community, resist the invasion, and inform the rest of the world about the ongoing events. However, it is not clear whether these presumed effects of memes have changed over the past year and whether Instagram memes serve a different purpose.

The objective of this research project is to assess the content of memes being posted by pro-Ukrainian organisations on Instagram, find out how they are tailored to target international audiences, how effective they are in doing so, and how they have evolved since the start of the full-scale invasion. This research project will assess the engagement levels of meme-based

posts on two widely popular accounts – @Ukraine and @SaintJavelin – to understand what content appeals to international audiences the most. A self-selection-based survey will allow to compare the findings and better understand whether memes are effective in garnering international audience support and incentivizing people to donate. The core research question of this thesis is *“What is the role of pro-Ukrainian Instagram memes in mobilising audiences worldwide?”* By answering this question, this project will fill the research gap regarding the mobilisation tactics of international audiences on Instagram, help understand how online community members respond and react to pro-Ukrainian memes, and will allow for future comparisons between different social media platforms.

The following sections of this thesis will discuss the role of social media and memes as tools of political participation in Ukraine as well as around the globe. It will explain the intricacies of Eastern European humour and its importance, introduce the online mobilisation and agenda-setting theories, and showcase how they will be applied to this research project. Through the use of visual and content analysis as well as a self-selection-based survey, the results of this thesis will show that pro-Ukrainian Instagram memes serve the unique purpose of fostering discourse, creating a sense of community, and effectively mobilising international support.

The Social Media Era & Memes as a Tool of Political Participation

To understand the importance of memes as tools of political participation, it is crucial to first address the peculiarities of Eastern European and Ukrainian humour as well as the role of memes in other contexts. Social media and, in particular, communication channels like Instagram have proven to be important platforms in the realm of global politics, but they have also been used by activists in Ukraine since 2014. The following sections will discuss important intricacies of Eastern European humour that allow for Ukrainian memes to stand out as exceptional. The use of memes and their role as tools of political participation, protest, and advocacy both in the global as well as Ukrainian context will be discussed. Finally, the existing studies on the role of memes following the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine will be discussed, providing the necessary background for this research project and further detailing the research gap at hand.

Soviet Political Humour and Its Legacy in Eastern Europe and Ukraine

Post-Soviet states located in the Eastern European region have developed a peculiar sense of humour, often based on satire, sarcasm, and irony. This is an important aspect to address in this research project, as it allows to better understand the memes studied in this thesis, their unique attributes, and their expected effect on the online community. In the states occupied by the USSR, humour was controlled – jokes about politics that could be interpreted even as the lightest critique of the government could result in imprisonment. This gave rise to “anecdotes” – made-up stories with a strong punchline “inspired by some new development” (Chamberlin 1957: 27). These anecdotes would serve as witty ways to express a thought everyone agreed with under the cover of a joke. Chamberlin (1957: 28) writes that one of the oldest anecdotes was based “on the names of the two leading Soviet newspapers, *Izvestiya* (‘News’) and *Pravda* (‘Truth’). The quip went: There is no news in ‘Truth’ and no truth in ‘News’”. These anecdotes would be used to criticise the regime – economic policies which led to mass hunger, censorship, unjustified imprisonments – and would depict leaders like Stalin or Khrushchev as ridiculous fictional characters (idem: 29-30). In the 70s, “the themes of the jokes had finally displayed hostility to the founder of the system, and therefore to the system itself” – they became tools of counterrevolution which allowed to mock the regime, its faults, and its leaders (Lewis 2008: 331).

Aside from the latter, satire also became a popular form of humour – it allowed joking to become a form of “liberation from social and political ideologies and structures” (Klumbyté 2011: 661). Even Gulag prisoners living in the harshest conditions used satire to build a community, spread information, and fight the regime (Belokowsky 2018: 1281, 1300). Magazines like *Fitil* allowed to criticise bureaucracy, management, alcoholism, and other issues facing the USSR through the use of irony and satire (Vorobyeva 2021: 159). In the context of Ukraine specifically, satire journals like *Perets* allowed to subtly criticise the government and its faults (Yekelchyk 2006: 98). Interestingly, Ukrainians are particularly likely to use “self-deprecating humour that belong[s] to the self-supporting type of humour” (Yemelyanova et al. 2023: 17). This allows them to “to laugh at their weaknesses; it fosters the feeling of camaraderie among Ukrainians” (idem: 18).

Dark humour jokes using sarcasm, satire, and irony “were the sources of shared common knowledge about the danger of surveillance and the possibility of persecution, letting others know how the regime functioned and how it could be dangerous” (Astapova 2020: 67). Political humour aimed at institutions and individuals during the Soviet rule transcends to today’s world – as Daniela S. Hristova (2008: 197) writes, these jokes have been adapted to the current political climate and are used to criticise figures like Putin. A particular type of anecdotes – *exposure anekdoty* – “reveal economic shortages or lack of political freedom and civil liberties” in the current regime and can be used to attract “attention to the problematic issue at hand” (idem: 198). For example, one popular anecdote is that of the “battle between the TV set and the fridge” – the message behind the joke is that the Russian government continues to push propaganda “about Russia’s greatness on TV, while fridges remain empty” (Ma 2018). This joke has been widely used to criticise the state of the economy but also in the context of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine (Alyukov 2022: 347, 349). Thus, throughout decades, Soviet-time sarcasm and irony permeated the Eastern European humour culture, allowing for dark comedy to become normality by turning even the most disastrous everyday developments into jokes.

Memes as a Form of Political Participation

The word “meme” first appeared in Richard Dawkins’ book published in 1976, titled “The Selfish Gene”. In the chapter “Memes: the new replicators”, Dawkins (1976: 192) expressed the need for “a noun that conveys the idea of a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation”, thus coining the term “meme”. Despite being a biologist and an ethologist, Dawkins introduced a concept that has become one of the most known characteristics of people’s online interactions and a critical component of different social media platforms. In the context of a digitalised society and the tech-savvy world, memes can be defined as “multimodal cultural artefacts, which are created, remixed and circulated by users across digital platforms” (Rogers and Giorgi 2023: 74).

Unlike popular viral videos, images, and other content found online, memes stand out as a unique form of communication. Their exceptionality is best described by Kate M. Miltner (2018: 414): “if a piece is altered or changed as it is passed along, it is considered to be a meme”. Re-sharing an online post and making it viral on a social media platform is therefore

not enough for it to be labelled as a meme. Given this, memes follow specific patterns and trends that are repetitive but adapted to different contexts (e.g.: the use of the popular “grumpy cat” image reposted online with different texts attached to it to fit a variety of situations).

With digitalisation and technologies becoming increasingly important factors in today’s society, social media platforms have become critical spaces of political participation given their simplicity and accessibility. In the words of Eran Amsalem and Alon Zoizner (2022: 4), “the popularity of social media as sources of political information is constantly growing” and people’s engagement with these platforms is way greater compared to traditional information sources. Similarly, memes are inseparable components of these social media platforms. Miltner (2018) has written that Internet memes have become a critical component of the political participatory culture. This is due to the fact that they “have always been a method of circulating ideas and influencing discourse”, yet in today’s society they are being used even more widely than compared to “the late 1990s and early 2000s” (idem: 413).

The role of memes in different political contexts has received a lot of attention from academics in different fields. In terms of democratic environments, Audrey Halversen and Brian E. Weeks (2023) have delved into the role of memes in the context of the 2020 United States presidential elections. An extensive analysis of survey results that they conducted showed “that sharing political memes is an act of political expression” which can also be used to express anger towards the opposite party (idem: 7). In addition to that, Anne Leiser’s (2022: 237) research conducted via a series of interviews showed that Internet memes “make political discourse easier to understand” and “can help identify people who hold similar worldviews”. Therefore, memes have become critical components of people’s political participation.

A New Form of Protest and Advocacy

Some researchers have focused on the role of memes in social and political movements, including authoritarian regimes where freedom of expression is highly restricted. Sama Khosravi-Ooryad (2023) has examined the “meme-feminism” phenomenon in Iran. Despite the great risks facing individuals who post content of this kind, people in the country are creating memes meant to promote the feminist cause and mock sexists. Her research shows how the strategy of “memeing back” (or “trolling back”) at misogynistic content serves as a unique

method of resistance against oppression and a way to mobilise the community (idem: 5, 17-18). Wafa Abu Hatab (2016) explores the role of memes during the Arab Spring in Syria, Tunisia, Yemen, and Egypt. The author shows that humour is used as a strategy to express communal frustration with the government and unite people for a single cause (idem: 85).

The “Critical Meme Reader II: Memetic Tacticality” book edited by Chloë Arkenbout and Laurence Scherz gathers a list of works discussing the ways in which memes can be utilised to promote cultural, economic, and political changes. In one of the chapters, Manique Hendricks (2022: 192, 199) explores the ways in which memes are used to call out art-based institutions for issues such as inequality in representation and museums refusing to repatriate stolen artefacts to their original places. Another contributor to the book, Tom Divon (2022: 88), analyses the emergence of the “TikTok Intifada” in the Israeli–Palestinian war. The author writes about the fact that the large-scale visibility provided by the platform and the algorithm by which it functions allow “users to become activists” and engage in politics (idem: 91). Divon provides an analysis of how one of the platform features – the ability to do a duet challenge with another user’s video – was used in Palestine and Israel as a form of political debate, “centered on the democratic ideal of dialogue” (idem: 93). These two analytical pieces showcase the variety of ways in which memes can be utilised when promoting a specific cause. Memes become a unique information and communication tool that can reach audiences worldwide and mobilise support for a specific campaign. Therefore, this thesis builds on the latter idea and takes the research further by examining the role of Instagram memes in mobilising international audiences in the context of the war in Ukraine.

The Role of Social Media and Memes in Ukraine

In the context of Ukraine specifically, memes have also been used as a form of political participation and gained particular importance during the EuroMaidan protests. Jennifer Dickinson (2014) has written that the use of Facebook and Twitter became crucial for mobilisation and communication between the protesters in 2014. Aside from that, memes were used as a strategy to spread a political message by depicting Ukraine as a close ally of the European Union and thus attempting to garner international support while opposing the domestic government (idem: 88-89). Humour became used as “a tool to deepen a sense of

belonging to a community”, “a stress-relief factor”, and a mechanism to resist and satirise Russian propaganda (Kyiak 2017: 127).

Following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022, the rise of social media accounts such as NAFO, Saint Javelin, and With Ukraine pointed to the newly re-introduced role of memes in the conflict. As explained in the following sections, to this day, most of the research conducted on the role of memes following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine has focused on several functions – mobilisation, coping mechanisms, communication and spread of information.

In the analysis of the role of memes, some authors have argued that the latter have been serving as a coping mechanism and a unique way to respond to the invasion. The book titled “Dispossession: Anthropological Perspectives on Russia’s War Against Ukraine” contains works written by several authors on the multi-faceted effects of the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In one of the chapters, Laada Bilaniuk (2024) discusses the role of memes as a mechanism of resilience. The author conducts an in-depth analysis of how specific war developments are turned into memes and how differing elements between the Ukrainian and Russian languages allow people to mobilise and build a community. For instance, the statement “Good evening, we are from Ukraine” or the shibboleth “palianytsia”¹ allow Ukrainians to distinguish themselves by using their national language and alphabet and the differing pronunciation of words (idem: 146, 150). With her analysis, Bilaniuk argues that the use of memes that stem from ongoing events and cultural intricacies allows to unify a nation and serves as a unique response to Russia’s aggression. Similarly, Alina Mozolevska (2024: 2) explains how digitalisation has allowed “us to ‘see’ and ‘live’ the conflict” by witnessing all that’s happening online. According to her, “the current war is often defined as a ‘meme war’ and Ukrainians are called ‘a meme nation’” (ibid.). By analysing hundreds of memes posted on Ukrainian and Russian online platforms, Mozolevska comes to the conclusion that memes have become a coping mechanism as well as a way for both sides to frame the conflict in a preferred perspective (idem: 25, 27).

¹ “Palianytsia” refers to traditional Ukrainian wheat bread. However, following the 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine this term “became a symbol, since Russian occupiers are unable to pronounce it correctly. It became a shibboleth, distinguishing friend from enemy without mistake” (Chervonik and Antanasov 2021).

Several authors have focused on the fact that digitalisation and the use of memes have provided unique communication tools and a way to spread information about ongoing events while also fighting disinformation. In their work on the role of memes in the ongoing war, Roberta Bracciale and Junio Aglioti Colombini (2023) have analysed the memes posted on Twitter right at the very beginning of the full-scale invasion. They have argued that this is “the first ‘citizen social media war’” (idem: 9). The authors’ work shows that memes are used as communication devices that allow to connect people with similar positions (idem: 27-28). Similarly, Tessa Cuppens (2023) has argued that online activism has become an alternative response to the Russian invasion as it allows to get rid of the usual top-down approach and provides an opportunity for all online users to become involved in the ongoing events. According to her, memes are unique information tools as they provide news in a more interactive manner and increase engagement when compared to the usual long and dull newspaper articles (ibid). More importantly, it allows to inform the population about important conflict developments in a simplistic manner that is understandable to all (ibid.). Aleksandra Majdzińska-Koczorowicz and Julia Ostanina-Olszewska (2023) have also argued that memes have become a unique way to deal with traumatic events. The authors write that “Humour is a sort of defensive mechanism which assists in undermining the gravity of a situation” (idem: 122). While their analysis showcases that memes allow one to cope with traumatic events and remain resilient, it also proves that memes serve as information tools that help “communicate Ukraine’s need for help from the rest of the world” (idem: 133).

Faichuk et al. (2023) have analysed how specific use of language and terminology that transcends borders can be utilised in memes to achieve a global impact. According to the authors, the use of language such as “little green men” meant to refer to the Russian military forces allows to resonate with different populations, as this terminology has been widely used following the 2014 invasion of Ukraine and is also known abroad in countries like Lithuania, Poland, and the United Kingdom (idem: 265-268). Similarly, Sarah Kreps et al. (2023) conducted an analysis of memes posted on Reddit during the first year of the full-scale invasion. The authors’ work shows that memes are used as persuasion tools both for national and international audiences (ibid.). However, as per the studies conducted, there is limited research done on the ways in which the use of pro-Ukrainian memes affects international audiences.

The academic literature portrays memes as a unique response to Russian aggression given that it allows to tackle disinformation, inform society, helps cope with tragic events, and makes the

online community more politically active. However, some of the aforementioned authors also point to the potential dangers of the use of memes. Mozolevska's (2024: 13) analysis shows that memes are utilised by both sides – on Russian online platforms memes are also used as a way to “re-actualize existing narratives and establish new ones to shape the collective identity”. From the Russian perspective, the use of memes allows to spread misinformation, falsify the reality of the army's success in the war, and garner more support for the government. This has already proven to be the case following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, as pro-Russian Internet users began creating and sharing memes that justify the Kremlin's actions and portray Putin as a hero (Wiggins 2016: 452). Aside from that, Cuppens (2023) has argued that the use of some of the memes is considered to be less productive due to the fact that some memes are perceived as “cringe-worthy” given their outdated design or a niche sense of humour displayed. In addition to that, Majdzińska-Koczorowicz and Ostanina-Olszewska (2023) have warned “that overuse of memes in the context of serious matters can lead to desensitisation and trivialisation of events” (idem: 133).

Assessing the Role of Instagram and Memes after 2022

While the aforementioned works provide detailed and useful analysis on the ways in which memes help aid Ukraine's effort in war, there are several aspects missing in the academic literature. Firstly, as of right now, there seem to be no works analysing the Instagram platform. Most of the academic papers explored in this literature review focus on social media spheres such as Facebook, X (formerly known as Twitter), TikTok, Reddit, and Telegram. This can be considered problematic as some of these platforms, particularly Reddit and Telegram, are considered more niche and are therefore not used by some parts of society, especially the older generations. Simultaneously, applications such as Facebook and X have witnessed a loss in popularity in recent years (AlJazeera 2023; Kantrowitz 2023).

Contrastingly, Instagram seems to be used by a wider range of audiences, including not only Gen-Z but even the older generations, such as the “Baby Boomers” (Sheldon et al. 2021). In the context of the UK, 67% of Gen Z, 72% of Millennials, and 49% of Gen X use Instagram (Xhelili and Crisp 2023). Generally, Instagram's “average median engagement rate per post” is ten times higher compared to Facebook (Chaffey 2024). In Western Europe, more than half of 18-29 y.o. individuals “use social media for news daily” – in states like Italy, Denmark, and

Sweden, roughly 50% of 30-49 y.o. and 30-40% of 50+ y.o. receive their news from social media platforms as well (Matsa et al. 2018). This is particularly important given how popular social media platforms are among online users rallying support for Ukraine – their notability has led to Russia banning Instagram given its prominence in pro-Ukrainian campaigns (Veys 2022; Plusone Social Impact 2022; Sonne and Ilyushina 2022; Statista Research Department 2023). Contrastingly to platforms such as Instagram, in Ukraine “Twitter [X] is incredibly niche for intellectual influencers and TikTok is mostly used by the younger population” (Lokot 2023).

Secondly, aside from the two articles by Faichuk et al. and Kreps et al., there seems to be a lack of research focused on the effect of memes on international audiences. Most of the literature is concentrated on the role of memes in the lives of the Ukrainians and their mobilisation or the influence it has on both, Ukrainian and international audiences. Consequentially, there is also limited information on how the utilisation of memes by some platforms such as With Ukraine allows to promote funding and donation campaigns abroad. In an interview with Christian Borys, the creator of the Saint Javelin platform, journalist Jane Arraf (2022) argues that the use of memes and the production of merch based on it has resulted in a successful donation campaign. However, there is a lack of both qualitative and quantitative analysis on how the use of memes may impact the promotion of funding campaigns for pro-Ukrainian causes.

My research project, which seeks to analyse the role of pro-Ukrainian Instagram memes on international audiences, allows to contribute to the literature in several ways. First, given the fact that the use of memes on Instagram has not been studied at all, I will be able to analyse whether the posts made on this platform have a different effect on the online community and how they compare to other platforms that have already been studied, such as Reddit. This is important given the decreasing popularity of platforms such as X that have been greatly researched in this field and the greater range of users that Instagram has reached over the recent years. Secondly, by conducting an in-depth content analysis of English language memes and creating a self-selection-based survey, I will be able to investigate how individuals worldwide respond to these posts. Importantly, this will allow me to see whether specific memes appeal to people more than others. The use of the survey will allow me to see whether memes or other types of posts about the ongoing war appeal to people more and incentivise them to donate to pro-Ukrainian organisations. My analysis will help to see how Instagram memes stand out,

what is their role in audience mobilisation, which networks appeal to people the most, and whether the content posted has any relation to the success of the donation campaigns that are promoted.

Online Mobilisation & Agenda-Setting Theories

Although the core term in this thesis and its main subject of research is a ‘meme’, the concept of mobilisation is the core frame of the analysis. While past studies have focused on the general role of memes, my research project is concentrated on its mobilising role. This frame of analysis allows to inspect a new perspective in this field of study, understand what audiences are affected, how they respond, and better comprehend the patterns of mobilisation. Over the last decades, online political participation has become an increasingly growing and critically important phenomenon that allows people worldwide to easily partake in political processes. “The Internet undoubtedly provides new opportunities for political engagement that were not previously available” – it not only makes political resources easily available to larger sections of the population, but it also serves as “an interactive medium” (Oser et al. 2013: 92). To succeed in their goal, political activists must obtain the necessary resources to achieve their objectives via the process of resource mobilisation (Jenkins 1983: 532). In the context of the current digital era, online activist groups use their online platforms to access the tangible and intangible resources needed (Sommerfeldt 2011: 430). The same logic applies when considering online pro-Ukrainian activist groups – by utilising their online platforms and social media accounts, these organisations are able to mobilise critical resources, such as donations, international support, and new information dissemination platforms. Simultaneously, digitalisation allows activists to easily develop their support networks by mobilising people online.

The presence of online platforms also allows for a more effective agenda-setting process to take place. Jessica T. Feezell (2018) has argued that social media platforms are particularly important when it comes to influencing individuals’ perceptions of public issues. Crucially, the scholar has shown that when it comes to the inattentive parts of the population, agenda-setting which is promoted via these platforms makes these individuals “more likely to consider those issues [in question] to be important” (idem: 490). People “with low levels of political interest who are most likely to avoid political information” are particularly likely to become susceptible

to the agenda-setting effect (ibid.). Importantly, “social media provide the opportunity to be exposed to information that one would otherwise not actively seek”, making agenda-setting more effective (Wohn and Bowe 2016: 10).

The two theories of online mobilisation and agenda-setting set out an ideal theoretical framework for my research project. With mobilisation being the core aspect of my study, I will be able to analyse how social media platforms allow to set a specific pro-Ukrainian agenda and how international audiences respond to it once exposed. This framework once adapted to my research design will allow me to analyse the extent to which audiences are mobilised, the intricacies of the agenda being set out via the use of memes, and whether the necessary resources to achieve political objectives are gathered successfully via this process or not. Lastly, it will also help me understand how the agenda-setting tactics vary across different social media platforms.

The Use of Visual and Content Analysis & Survey Design

Visual & Content Analysis of Memes and Comment Sections

The research design of this thesis consists of two methods – a visual and content analysis of images and a self-selection-based survey. Two pro-Ukrainian Instagram accounts were analysed in this study – @SaintJavelin and @Ukraine. @SaintJavelin is an Instagram account and “a social enterprise created by Christian Borys, a Canadian who worked as a journalist in Ukraine from 2014-2019” (Saint Javelin n.d.) The company produces Ukrainian-themed merchandise that demonstrates its culture – from apparel featuring Ukrainian dishes to stickers featuring the iconic Saint Javelin image, an illustration of the Madonna holding an anti-tank weapon instead of Jesus in her arms (Borys 2024). The proceeds received are dedicated to aid Ukraine in the war – as of this year, the organisation “has contributed more than US \$2 million to Ukraine’s defence efforts” (ibid.). Similarly, @Ukraine is an account that used to post images of Ukrainian landscapes and cities but following the start of the full-scale invasion, it became an information and donation site. The organisation makes posts about war developments and promotes different donation campaigns that seek to aid the Ukrainian army and help people affected by war. These organisations were chosen due to their similar

popularity and tendency to post both informative as well as entertainment content (memes) online.

All of the Instagram posts made by the two accounts in the period between February 24th, 2022, and March 30th, 2024, were analysed. As of March 30th, @SaintJavelin had 209 thousand Instagram followers, it had made 5,143 posts of which 928 were memes. 18% of all @SaintJavelin's posts were memes – out of these 928 posts, 798 were images while the rest were videos. Contrastingly, as of March 30th, @Ukraine had 220 thousand Instagram followers and it had made 1,311 posts out of which 81 were memes. 6% of all @Ukraine's posts were memes – out of these 81 posts, 79 were images.

Visual and content analysis was chosen due to the nature of the data – the content posted on Instagram is purely based on images and videos. Visual analysis is a research method that allows to “consider in detail the substance and content of an image” (Marston 2020: 609). This technique has been used by academics such as Xinyuan Wang (2016: 58) and Beata Biały (2017: 76-85) to decipher the meaning behind social media posts by examining the symbols and metaphors it represents, understand how such images can be classified, and how they affect online users. By analysing each sample of my study and observing the symbols, visual contexts, political figures, themes, and expressions used in it, this method allowed me to derive a typology of memes and find common patterns and topics among the samples. However, a lot of the memes also use textual information in combination with visuals. To address the engagement levels of memes and understand how their messages affect online users, comment sections and post captions had to be analysed as well. Content analysis is a method that allows to “uncover meaning embedded within a text” (Atkinson 2017: 82). “Content analysis is a way of understanding the symbolic qualities of texts”, thus, by analysing the use of language, tone, and thematic patterns, I was able to interpret and understand people's responses and reactions to memes (Rose 2001: 55).

In the process of visual and content analysis, only the meme images were analysed while video footage was excluded. One fifth (20%) of all memes on the two accounts were analysed. This meant that a sample of 160 @SaintJavelin memes and 16 of @Ukraine memes were analysed (see Annex A). A random number generator was used to select images for analysis and two separate Excel datasets were created. Via visual and content analysis, the images in the datasets were coded based on data patterns and divided into separate categories. This allowed me to

come up with a typology of memes based on the themes and topics that the images represented. Engagement levels were assessed by looking at the number of likes each post had received. Simultaneously, the number of comments on each post was calculated manually to ensure more precise data collection. The contents of the comment sections were analysed separately to allow for interpretation of users' reactions to the memes and to see what kind of discourse would be provoked by the posts.

Survey Design

To gain more direct and detailed information on users' reactions to Instagram memes, a non-probability survey was created using the Qualtrics software. The survey consisted of 23 questions and took approx. 5 minutes to complete. To avoid selection bias, the self-selection-based sampling method was used. The survey was launched on April 8th, 2024, posted on online platforms such as Reddit, LinkedIn and Instagram, and taken down on May 9th, 2024. Respondents were asked to analyse a series of images, indicate their preferences over them, and explain what content they find to be the most appealing. Simultaneously, the survey included questions about donations, asking respondents whether they had ever donated or considered donating to social media-based NGOs such as @Ukraine.ua. The survey refrained from asking for personal information such as names – an option to enter one's e-mail address in case of wanting to withdraw from the survey later was given. To limit the collection of personal data, respondents were asked to indicate their age group, nationality, and country of residence. The list of all survey questions is displayed in Annex B.

In the 31-day span, 155 individuals fully completed the survey. The respondents were from over 29 countries, with some possessing several nationalities, such as Dutch-Bosnian, Brazilian-German, British-Spanish, and others. The majority of respondents were of European nationality, primarily Lithuanian, Italian, Dutch, British, and French. However, some respondents also came from countries such as Brazil, India, Pakistan, China, and Kazakhstan (Table 1).

Nationality	Respondents	Nationality	Respondents	Nationality	Respondents
Australia	1	India	3	Romania	1
Brazil	1	Ireland	2	Russia	2
Bulgaria	2	Italy	26	Slovakia	1
Canada	5	Kazakhstan	1	Spain	1
China	2	Lithuania	46	Switzerland	1
Croatia	1	Malta	1	Turkey	1
Czechia	1	Moldova	1	UK	6
France	5	Netherlands	19	Ukraine	3
Germany	4	Portugal	2	USA	3
Greece	1	Pakistan	1	Multi-national	11

Table 1: A table showcasing the list of nationalities of all survey respondents and the number of respondents belonging to each nationality. Table created by the author of this thesis.

In spite of this, a great part of the respondents indicated that their country of nationality did not match their current country of residence. Table 2 showcases all 21 countries of residence indicated – in some cases, respondents would live in completely different regions compared to their country of birth (e.g.: an Indian respondent living in the United Arab Emirates or a Canadian respondent living in Syria).

Residence	Respondents	Residence	Respondents	Residence	Respondents
Bulgaria	1	Kazakhstan	1	Switzerland	2
Canada	1	Lithuania	31	Syria	1
Croatia	1	Netherlands	55	Turkey	1
Czechia	1	Portugal	2	UK	12
France	3	Pakistan	1	UAE	4
India	1	Qatar	1	Ukraine	1
Italy	27	Spain	2	USA	6

Table 2: A table displaying the residencies of all survey respondents and the number of respondents currently residing in each state. Table created by the author of this thesis.

In terms of age distribution, 79% of the respondents belonged to the 18-24 age cohort, 12% to the 25-34 age cohort, while the age cohorts of 35-44, 45-44, and 55-64 had 3% of respondents each. This data is not surprising given the extensive use of Instagram and social media as a whole among the younger populations. The majority of the respondents also identified speaking

more than 2 languages, with some speaking as many as 6, indicating the sample's multi-national character.

Addressing Personal Biases & Important Individual Factors

Given my national background as a Lithuanian student, I am conscious of the fact that my political stance is not unbiased and must be considered carefully to ensure the validity of the project. My sense of support for Ukraine in its effort to fight Russian aggression and the general interest in this research topic thus stem from my country's history, my patriotic upbringing, and general self-interest given the geopolitical position of Lithuania and the Baltics as a whole. Given this, I expect my data collection methods which are partially based on quantitative calculations as well as survey results which are grounded on other people's opinions to serve as mechanisms that control any potential biases.

Crucially, I believe that my personal background can also serve as an advantage. Having grown up in Eastern Europe, I have a better understanding of the region's sense of humour and the peculiar entertainment culture of ex-Soviet states as a whole compared to an outsider. This should help me conduct a better content and visual analysis of the memes.

Simultaneously, coming from Generation Z, I have been affected by digitalisation throughout my entire life and thus have a great interest in assessing the role of social media in conflicts as a political science student. I have also been exposed to memes since childhood and have seen them evolve, which gives me a knowledge advantage in analysing their effect on the online community. However, this also means that people of my generation are likely to be more familiar with the topic and more interested in answering my survey compared to older individuals who may be less exposed to this content.

Importantly, since the objective of this study is to assess the effect of pre-existent factors via visual and content analysis, my personal bias should have limited effect. Simultaneously, the survey will improve the legitimacy of the project as the results will be based on other people's opinions rather than my own. The participants of this study are likely to be either neutral or already hold pro-Ukrainian views given their engagement with the content produced by the online accounts in question. Since this is not a project seeking to determine what is right or

wrong but rather to determine the effects of pre-existing factors, I expect my biases and personal background to be of limited influence on my study.

Empirical Analysis & Findings

The following sections discuss the key findings of the visual and content analysis as well as the survey results. First, the typology of memes deduced during the visual and content analysis is explained. Second, the engagement levels of posts are assessed, explaining which memes receive the most attention online. Third, the contents of the comment section are discussed, explaining the patterns of engagement and people’s reactions to the memes. Fourth, the results obtained by the survey are assessed and compared to the findings of visual and content analysis. Finally, this section analyses all of the findings all together, comparing them to work done by previous authors.

Typology of Memes

During the visual and content analysis, I analysed 160 meme images from @SaintJavelin account and 16 images from @Ukraine. I looked at the text present in the images, the visuals and symbols used, as well as the items and individuals being represented in different settings. This allowed me to derive a typology of the memes and divide them into 13 thematic categories, displayed in Table 3.

	Meme Typology				
	Russia’s military losses / military strategy weakness	Mocking or ridiculing Putin	Ukraine’s military superiority	Discussion of weapons	Ridiculing Russia, Russians, or Russian culture
@SaintJavelin	34.38%	20.63%	23.75%	19.38%	23.13%
@Ukraine	50.00%	18.75%	62.50%	12.50%	12.25%
	Mocking Russia’s	Intl. organizations	Interaction with the intl.	Mocking other Russian	Asking for military aid

	economy	not doing enough	community	political figures / institutions	/ referring to aid received
@SaintJavelin	3.13%	3.75%	21.25%	9.38%	8.13%
@Ukraine	–	–	12.50%	6.25%	–
	Misinformation, bots, propaganda	Praising Zelenskyy	Pro-Russian figures from the outside world (Musk, Hinkle, Carlson, etc.)	Other (e.g.: historical facts, possible alternative realities, commentators)	
@SaintJavelin	10.63%	2.50%	3.13%	8.13%	
@Ukraine	6.25%	6.25%	6.25%	12.50%	

Table 3: The types of memes deduced via content and visual analysis and the proportion of memes on each account belonging to the categories. Table created by the author of this thesis.

In the case of @SaintJavelin, most memes referred to Russia’s military losses and its strategic weaknesses (34.38%), Ukraine’s military superiority (23.75%), or they were ridiculing Russia, its culture, or its nationals. In the case of @Ukraine, the greatest proportion of memes referred to the military superiority of Ukraine (62.50%), Russia’s military losses and strategic weaknesses (50.00%), or they were mocking Putin (18.75%).

The popularity of these themes points towards some aspects mentioned by academics in the sections discussed before. By boasting about Ukraine’s military superiority and Russia’s military losses, these accounts create the image of a strong Ukraine that is ready to fight and is performing better than the enemy forces. Bilaniuk (2024) and Mozolevska (2024) in their works explain that memes can be used as unique methods of resilience that allow to unify the nation and frame the conflict in a beneficial way. Crucially, Mozolevska (2024: 8) also points to the fact that some memes, esp. those that contain textual information, can be used to “construct diverse ideological messages using the same visual source”. The prevalence of memes that glorify Ukrainian forces and mock Russia and its war effort complement the latter authors’ work. Memes about Russia losing warships in a land war or Ukraine destroying several Russian tanks in one day allow to unify the people by creating a successful image of their

nation. Simultaneously, this strategy allows to spread the message of a victorious Ukraine to international audiences.

Mozolevska's (2024: 7) study has focused on a large variety of online platforms, such as "Vkontakte, Facebook, Twitter [X], and Telegram" but not Instagram. The author derived 7 broad categories of memes which mainly focused on the stylistic aspects of the images, such as whether they used famous movie scenes or historical narratives (idem: 9). In her study, memes portraying "military personalities ([such as] Gerasimov, Zaluzhnyy) and events" were the most common, followed by memes referencing historical narratives. This partially matches the findings of this research project, as memes referring to war developments and the superiority of the Ukrainian Armed Forces were the most common as well. However, memes referring to historical narratives were not common and were designated to the "Other" category (see Table 3). This can be explained by the fact that such posts are too niche – when attempting to mobilise international audiences, stories and facts known globally are used to attract more attention. Thus, this shows that on Instagram memes about war developments, particularly those posted on more internationally known profiles, are also the most common just as on platforms such as Facebook and X, but they usually focus on global references that can be understood by greater groups of people.

It is crucial to note that the large majority of all memes analysed belonged to more than one category (e.g.: a meme boasting about Ukraine's military superiority while also discussing Russia's losses). Given the larger number of memes present on @SaintJavelin account, these images covered a wider set of thematic categories compared to @Ukraine. Regardless of this, both accounts posted the least about Zelenskyy, pro-Russian Western figures, and (in the case of @SaintJavelin) Russia's economy. This is understandable, given that such topics are more niche – individuals who do not follow the news daily and are unfamiliar with international media developments are less likely to resonate with jokes of this kind. Therefore, focusing on memes about military gains and losses serves as a more strategic tactic as it can reach wider audiences and resonate with people more.

Engagement Levels

To assess the popularity of memes, the number of likes and comments on each post was calculated. Table 4 displays the average number of likes and comments received by each post category.

		Engagement Levels per Account			
		Average Number of Likes		Average Number of Comments	
Account Name		@SaintJavelin	@Ukraine	@SaintJavelin	@Ukraine
Type of Meme	Russia's military losses / military strategy weakness	6,029	6,886	60	132
	Mocking or ridiculing Putin	6,206	8,934	93	139
	Ukraine's military superiority	4,797	6,610	47	148
	Discussion of weapons	5,110	6,545	67	139
	Ridiculing Russia, Russians, or Russian culture	6,598	8,888	77	167
	Mocking Russia's economy	2,987	–	21	–
	Intl. organisations not doing enough	8,434	–	124	–
	Interaction with the intl. community	6,221	5,993	122	337
	Mocking other Russian political figures / institutions	7,225	6,356	70	111

Asking for military aid / referring to aid received	6,130	–	89	–
Misinformation, bots, propaganda	6,324	7,376	119	132
Praising Zelenskyy	8,017	8,405	123	123
Pro-Russian figures from the outside world (Musk, Hinkle, Carlson, etc.)	8,993	3,844	246	296
Other (e.g.: historical facts, possible alternative realities, commentators)	5,912	6,049	96	118

Table 4: Popularity of different meme categories in terms of the average number of likes and comments received on each account. Green colours mark the highest number of likes achieved per meme category. Orange colours mark the highest number of comments achieved per meme category. Table created by the author of this thesis.

In terms of likes, posts ridiculing pro-Russian Western figures seemed to be the most popular on @SaintJavelin, followed by posts praising Zelenskyy and mocking other Russian political figures than Putin. This was not the case with @Ukraine – while posts ridiculing Russia and its culture and posts praising Zelenskyy were the most popular, those mocking pro-Russian Western figures seemed to be the least popular.

Mozolevska (2024: 9) writes that pro-Ukrainian memes and humour in general are also “used to voice anxiety or frustration, react to the violence and strengthen ingroup connections”. However, @SaintJavelin and @Ukraine make their posts in English, showcasing that the goal is reaching international audiences. Given the popularity of posts that refer to not just Ukrainian, but also international matters, such as pro-Russian Western figures and international organisations like the United Nations not doing enough, it is clear that **memes are being used to strengthen ties with people across the globe and build a new transnational community.**

In their research, Majdzińska-Koczorowicz and Ostanina-Olszewska (2023: 132) have written the following: “Memes are powerful tools of communication, they can help the reader gain a new perspective on reality and see the connection between apparently unrelated domains”. As visible in Table 4, posts that refer to the international community, international organisations, or pro-Russian Western figures were receiving the most comments. On the surface level, the war appears to be a conflict between two states, yet importantly, other factors such as international aid, support networks, and important public figures play a huge part as well. Such aspects often spark a debate over responsibility and accountability. Consider Image 1 shown below which criticises Germany’s decision to continue buying gas and oil from Russia. This post has received 165 comments. Some users would comment about how it is unfair to ask Germany for more support as it has already done enough and should prioritise the welfare of its own citizens. However, critical comments of this kind are met by other online users explaining that at times of crisis, sacrifice and support are critical – an example of such interaction is visible in Image 1.

Similarly, Image 2 refers to a meme mocking famous businessman Elon Musk’s reluctance to assist Ukraine. This post received 296 comments. A lot of the comments expressed disappointment in Musk’s actions, yet some, such as @user_1 in Image 2, were claiming that as a private business owner Musk has no responsibility in helping Ukraine. This comment received 15 replies in which other Instagram users were criticising the original comment. The comment sections of the posts analysed point to the argument made by Majdzińska-Koczorowicz and Ostanina-Olszewska (2023). Discussions over aspects like Elon Musk’s business plans do not seem to be connected to war at first glance, yet via memes people become exposed to a new perspective – whether they agree with the message of the post or not, they indulge in active discussions and are exposed to new views. This allows **memes to serve as unique tools of communication that can challenge pre-existing belief systems and foster discourse.**



Image 1: Meme no. 25. A post mocking Germany's decision to continue buying gas and oil from Russia. A meme posted by @SaintJavelin on April 23rd, 2022.



Image 2: Meme no. 170. A post mocking Elon Musk's reluctance to help Ukraine. A meme posted by @Ukraine on September 8th, 2023.

The Active Role of Comment Sections

In terms of comments, posts ridiculing pro-Russian figures also received the most engagement on @SaintJavelin. This was followed by posts about international organisations not doing enough, memes praising Zelenskyy, and posts referring to the international community. In the case of @Ukraine, memes referring to the international community received the most comments. They were followed by memes about pro-Russian figures (even though they received the least likes), posts ridiculing Russia, and those boasting about Ukraine's military superiority.

In general, posts on @Ukraine received more likes and comments on average once compared to posts on @SaintJavelin. This can be explained by a couple of factors. First, since the start of the data collection process, @Ukraine had 11 thousand more followers compared to @SaintJavelin. Secondly, @SaintJavelin was created at the beginning of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine and was solely based on the idea of incentivising people to donate. This was not the case with @Ukraine — this page was previously used to post pictures of Ukrainian cities, with the first post being created on November 7th, 2016. Thus, while the average number of likes on the two accounts does not differ much, the fact that @Ukraine has been established for a longer period of time and that the account name refers to the country as a whole instead of a brand name could explain the disparity in the number of comments.

Crucially, the contents of the comment sections are also important to assess, as they differ across platforms. In the case of @SaintJavelin, I have observed a more present **community-building pattern**. Over the years, the number of likes and comments on the @SaintJavelin account progressively increased. In the majority of the cases, the memes would be met by laughing emojis and similar remarks meant to express the fact that the joke was funny. Over time, these comments would develop into a similar strategy between users of using sarcasm and irony to complement the original message of the post (Image 3). The posts would also include messages expressing support for Ukraine – whether these were “Slava Ukraini” statements or the use of the Ukrainian flag or sunflower emojis as expressions of support (Image 4).



Image 3: Meme no. 4. A post mocking the fall of the Russian economy at the beginning of the full-scale invasion. The meme was posted on @SaintJavelin account on March 1st, 2022, and was taken from the @Sputnik_Not X account. Overwhelmingly, the comments here are just laughing emojis and sarcastic statements contributing to the primary message of the post.



Image 4: Meme no. 102. A post referring to a crowdfunding campaign carried out in Lithuania to gather \$250,000 to purchase a marine drone for Ukraine. The meme was posted on the @SaintJavelin account on November 21st, 2022. The comments are made by a large variety of online users coming from different countries and expressing

*support for Ukraine. “Peace da” refers to a Russian profanity “нузда” which translated directly means ‘c*nt’ and refers to a disastrous and horrible situation. The idea behind labelling the crowdfunded drone “Peace da” is to put the enemy forces in a situation of “нузда”.*

The memes continued to have the same entertainment value over time, with comments expressing laughter and contributing to the joke remaining the primary response. However, there was a slight shift in response to some posts – **memes referring to the international community, aid, or criticizing Russia in general were met with negative responses over time.** They would usually state that the US should not support Ukraine as much, that taxpayers’ money is wasted for military aid, or claim that Ukraine spreads misinformation the same way Russia does. These statements were overwhelmingly met by comments expressing support for Ukraine and claiming that the initial comment was wrong. **A clear trend of cause mobilisation is visible – when a post receives criticism or is met by not pro-Ukrainian views, it is immediately followed by a series of replies defending the Ukrainian side** (Image 5, 6). This was also the case for the @Ukraine account (Image 7). Following the start of the full-scale invasion, @Ukraine received more pro-Russian comments (people mocking Ukraine, using Russian flag emojis to express support, etc.). Contrastingly, in the case of @SaintJavelin the number of such comments increased only later on when the account became more established and its engagement increased. However, in both cases, **pro-Russian comments or comments criticizing Ukraine were met with a series of pro-Ukrainian replies, showcasing that users were indeed mobilising in their efforts to support Ukraine on both accounts.**



Image 5: Meme no. 104. A meme originally created by the @UAMemesForces account posted on @SaintJavelin on December 8th, 2022, criticising the fact that Putin used to be named Person of the Year by the Time magazine. A comment criticising both leaders by labelling them as dictators is met by a series of sarcastic responses – these responses in turn receive a high amount of likes from other online users.



Image 6: Meme no. 154. A meme about Russia using misinformation and propaganda posted on @SaintJavelin account on January 30th, 2024. A comment questioning the main message and suggesting that Ukraine uses misinformation is met by a series of sarcastic responses mocking the commentator.



Image 7: Meme no. 171. A meme about Russian military advances and Ukrainian defence posted on @Ukraine on October 11th, 2023. An online user is criticizing the Ukrainian Army's achievements and is met with a series of pro-Ukrainian responses.

Generally, over time a clear trend of political discussions and explanations happening in the comment sections becomes visible. **Firstly, people use the accounts as information sources** – they ask for fellow online users' help in understanding the events to which the memes refer to, and are met with genuine explanatory responses that serve as information sources (Image 8). **Secondly, in case of disagreements, political discussions emerge. In most of the cases, these discourses are respectful and use factual information as the basis of arguments** (Image 9).



Image 8: Meme no. 151. A meme about Ukraine’s military victories posted on @SaintJavelin on December 22nd, 2023. One online user asks what has happened and is met with a brief response summarising the recent developments.

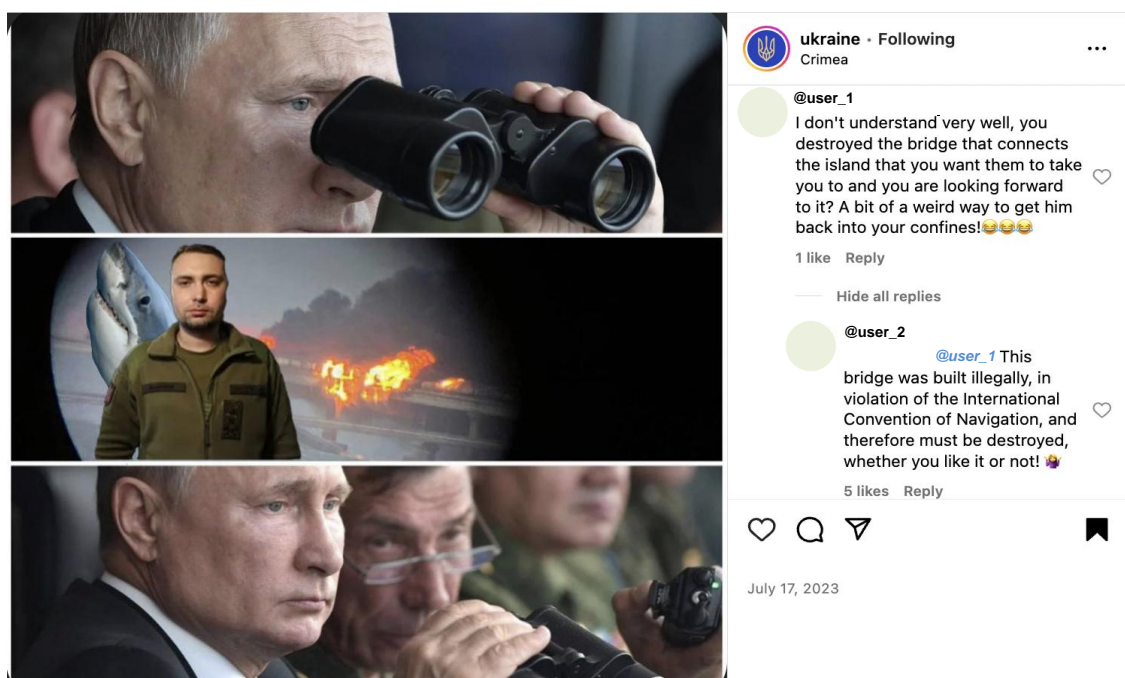


Image 9: Meme no. 167. A meme about the Kerch bridge destruction posted on @Ukraine account on July 17th, 2023. In the comment section, one user questions the strategic value of bridge destruction and whether it is valuable – it is met by another user explaining why the event is important.

Lastly, the final aspect signalling international mobilisation is the presence of foreigners on the accounts. In the case of both @SaintJavelin and @Ukraine, **the number of comments expressing support for Ukraine and written in foreign languages (Italian, Georgian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, etc.) progressively increases over the years.** Simultaneously,

there is a clear trend of comments expressing support for Ukraine from foreign countries – for instance, in Image 10, one online user commented “I’m from Iran, I wish to know Ukrainian [language] and fight for Ukraine[’s] victory”.

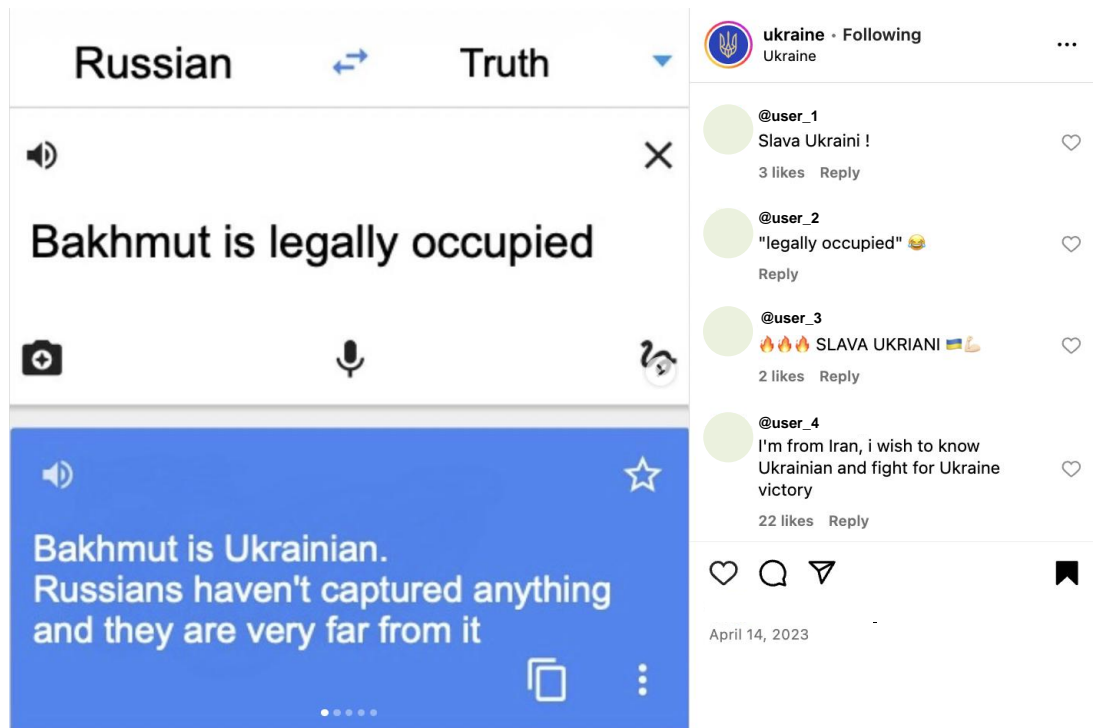


Image 10: Meme no. 161. A meme posted on @Ukraine on April 23rd, 2024. The meme is based on the idea of translating Russian propaganda and misinformation into real facts.

The findings discussed in these sections showcase, that pro-Ukrainian Instagram memes have had a clear online mobilisation effect, as they successfully gathered support from international online users, fostered discussion and a sense of a community, as negative comments were meant by a series of pro-Ukrainian responses. These results complement the work of academics such as Bilaniuk (2024) and Mozolevska (2024) who argue that **memes allow to mobilise people in a war effort and frame the Ukrainian position in a favorable way.** However, they also point to the unique finding of a community-building phenomenon among international online users and not only Ukrainian ones. **Simultaneously, these findings complement the work of Bracciale and Colombini (2023) as well as Majdzińska-Koczorowicz and Ostanina-Olszewska (2023) in showing that memes can be used as important communication and information tools.**

Survey Data Analysis

The respondents were provided with a list of the most popular pro-Ukrainian Instagram accounts (see Annex B). Although 70% of respondents indicated that they do not follow any of the accounts listed on Instagram, 30% said that they do. By far the most popular account was @SaintJavelin, followed by 15% of all respondents. @Ukraine and @UkraineUA (the official Ukrainian Instagram account) came in second and were followed by 9% of respondents each. These results are visible in Chart 1 provided below. @WithUkraine – an account that creates informative posts while also using irony and satire in some of the posts – was followed by 8% of respondents. The least popular accounts were @RazomForUkraine and @PromoteUkraine, the contents of which are mainly focused on promoting donation campaigns and posting information about demonstrations. 3% of respondents also indicated that they follow other pro-Ukrainian Instagram accounts, such as @BlueYellowForUkraine, @United24, and @UkraineSocialistSolidarityCpgn.

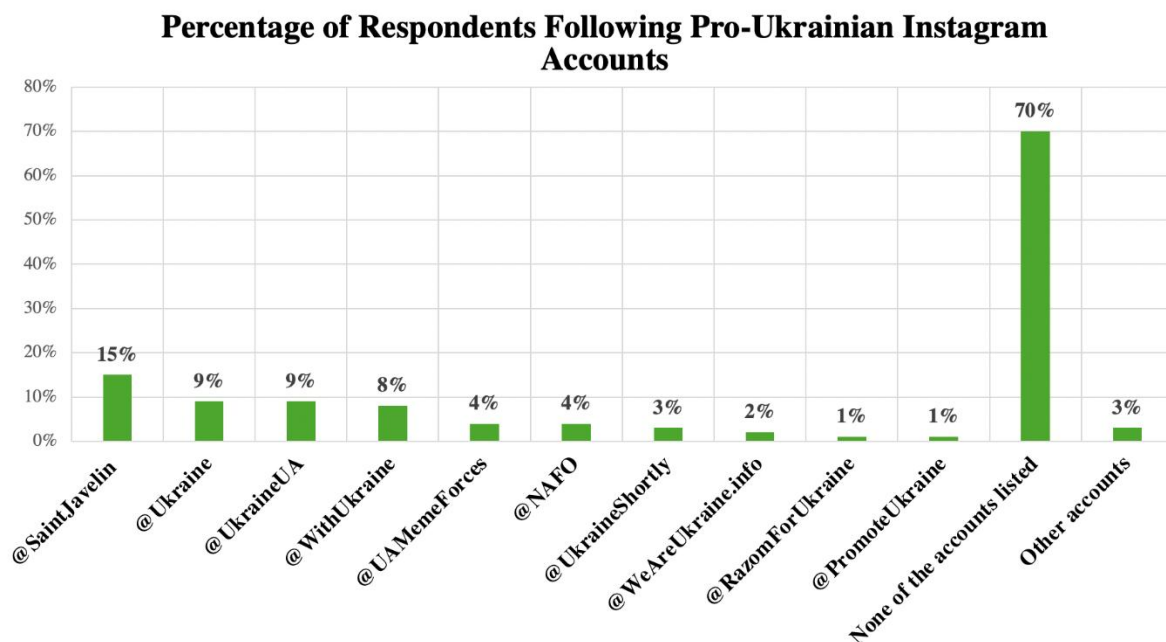


Chart 1: The distribution of following among the respondents with regards to the listed pro-Ukrainian Instagram accounts. Chart created by the author of this thesis.

An overwhelming 79% of the respondents indicated, that they do not follow these accounts on other social media platforms, such as TikTok. Only 7% stated that they follow the accounts listed on Facebook (Chart 2). This is important considering the visibility of these pro-Ukrainian

accounts, as it showcases that Instagram appears to provide these organisations with more reach and that they are less popular on platforms like TikTok.

Engagement with Pro-Ukrainian Accounts on Other Platforms

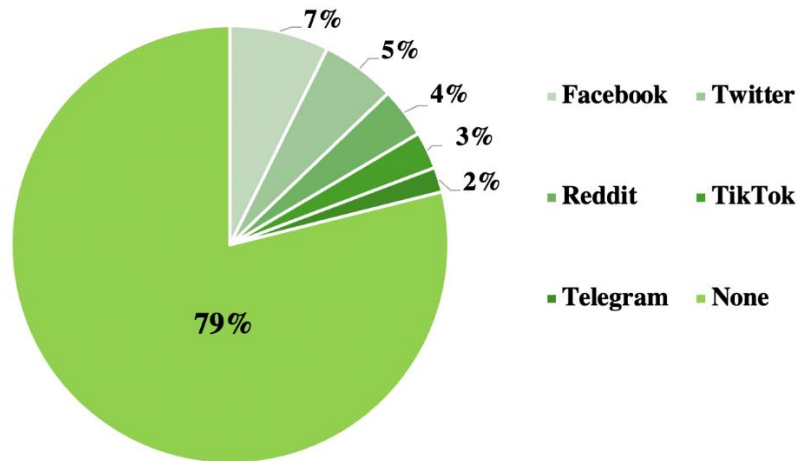


Chart 2: The distribution of respondents based on whether they follow the listed pro-Ukrainian accounts on other social media platforms. Chart created by the author of this thesis.

When asked what factors matter the most when deciding which accounts to follow, 73% considered the extent to which the content posted is informative to be one of the main factors, while the entertainment value provided by the content was chosen by 45% of respondents as another important factor. Some respondents indicated their individual opinions on what matters the most, for instance, the reliability of accounts, commitment to posting, and transparency of information.

The respondents were asked to compare three different Instagram feeds – an account posting solely memes, solely informative content, and a combination of both. 43% ranked accounts with solely informative content as the most preferred, while 30% chose accounts combining informative and entertainment-based content as the most preferred. Respondents were also given visual examples of pro-Ukrainian memes posted online. When it came to memes discussing aid and the role of the international community, 29% preferred memes criticizing the lack of international support for Ukraine followed by images reflecting on Ukraine’s relationship with other international actors. Only some of the respondents ranked memes discussing Ukraine’s relationship with other states (23%) and celebrating international aid (19%) as the most preferred. The stylistic relevance and trendiness of image design seemed to

be the least important aspect. This is an important result as it clashes with the argument made by Cuppens (2023), according to whom some of the memes can be described as ‘cringe-worthy’ and thus ineffective in gathering attention. The results of the survey show that regardless of the meme design, people mainly care about the message behind the post rather than its stylistic aspects.

In the next section, respondents were asked to evaluate memes praising Ukraine’s military success and mocking Russian leadership. Memes mocking Putin or other Russian political figures were by far the most popular (41%), followed by memes reflecting on Ukraine’s military successes or strengths (12%). Most of the respondents (24%) chose memes describing Russia’s military losses as the second-best option. Just as before, the stylistic relevance or trendiness of image design appeared to be the least important aspect.

Following the meme evaluation, respondents were asked to share their general opinions on the role of memes in the war in Ukraine. 20% strongly and 57% somewhat believe that memes benefit the spread of information – only 2% strongly and 8% somewhat believe that they do not. Similarly, 17% of respondents strongly and 44% somewhat believe that memes have helped garner international support for Ukraine, compared to 1% who strongly and 7% who somewhat believe that memes have hindered the process of gathering support. Given that the majority of respondents believe in the positive effects of memes, they were asked to provide explanations of their opinions. Of those who had a positive opinion about memes, 28% said that memes allow to simplify information and make it easy to understand, 27% said that they represent more entertaining sources of information compared to traditional media, and 21% said that they help easily explain the main details of key developments worldwide. One respondent indicated that “comedy is a great way to communicate political/international issues”, while another said that memes increase “exposure to demographics (especially younger ones) that would not read news outlets without the trigger of curiosity created by memes”.

Of the minority of respondents who believe in the negative effect of memes, 52% of them said that memes may become sources of misinformation given the simplicity of complex events, 18% said that they are not detailed and informative enough, while 14% stated that they oversimplify information. One respondent stated that “memes undermine traditional news

sources and convert the tragedies of war into entertainment value”, while another claimed that memes encourage ‘hot takes’ and can thus misdirect actions.

Finally, the respondents were also asked questions regarding donations. Only 27% of respondents had donated to the online organisations listed – out of these, @WithUkraine appeared to be the most popular option, followed by @SaintJavelin, @RazomForUkraine, @Ukraine.ua, and @Ukraine. Individuals who had never donated to the organisations listed were asked to indicate whether they ever considered donating. Out of those who answered “Yes”, @Ukraine appeared to be the most popular considered option, followed by @SaintJavelin, @WithUkraine, and @Ukraine.ua. Respondents were also asked what factors they consider to be the most important when choosing what social media-based organisation to donate to. Legitimacy of the organisation and its contacts (64%), the ways in which the money donated will be used (57%), and willingness to provide data on fundraising money expenditure were considered the most important factors among respondents.

Interpretation of Results & Findings

The core purpose of this research project was to assess the role of memes in international audience mobilisation by analysing the case study of the 2022 Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The main research question of this thesis was “*What is the role of pro-Ukrainian Instagram memes in mobilising audiences worldwide?*” In answering this research question, I conducted a visual and content analysis of memes posted on two pro-Ukrainian Instagram accounts – @SaintJavelin and @Ukraine. I analysed the symbols, political figures, visual and textual aspects of the memes and deduced a typology of them. I also conducted a self-selection-based survey which included 155 participants in total, allowing me to compare the data to the visual and content analysis results while also directly asking respondents about their opinions on memes. This study has shown that pro-Ukrainian Instagram memes are effective in mobilising audiences worldwide as they easily convey the core agenda of the organisation and provide a platform for discussion, serve as information sources, and unite people in a common goal.

Firstly, given the 160 image sample on @SaintJavelin and 16 image sample on @Ukraine, both accounts post the most about Russia's military losses and Ukraine's military superiority. However, on @SaintJavelin posts ridiculing pro-Russian Western figures and posts on @Ukraine mocking Putin are the most popular in terms of likes. @SaintJavelin's posts about pro-Russian Western figures and @Ukraine's posts about the international community receive the most comments. This points towards the fact that memes that refer to the international community in any regard seem to extract the most engagement from online users. This can be explained by the fact that people are more likely to resonate with images that refer to their environment and developments familiar to them at least to some extent. For instance, a post about controversial Western figures such as Tucker Carlson is likely to provoke more likes and comments from international users, as they are likely to be more familiar with the situation referred to. Simultaneously, the findings of this research clash with the argument made by Cuppens (2023), who argues that the stylistic relevance of memes is important, as the images can otherwise appear as 'cringe-worthy'. The survey results show that the **trendiness of meme design was the least important aspect to the respondents of the survey** and the message behind the image mattered the most. This is a critical finding as it shows that **memes are able to foster discourse and serve as tools of communication**. Bracciale and Colombini (2023) as well as Majdzińska-Koczorowicz and Ostanina-Olszewska (2023) have written that since the start of the full-scale invasion memes have been used as sources of information and communication. Their findings are confirmed by my research – even if people's opinions differ, they still partake in a discussion where their views are challenged while at the same time memes manage to provide new perspectives on the conflict.

The survey results show that in the context of Ukraine and the international arena, the most popular memes among respondents were those criticizing the lack of international support for Ukraine and reflecting on Ukraine's relationship with other international actors. This information complements the findings of the visual and content analysis to some extent, as @Ukraine's memes about the international community received the most comments and were the 4th most popular category in terms of comments on @SaintJavelin. The most popular memes among respondents in the context of political figures and military developments were those mocking Putin and other Russian political figures as well as memes about Ukraine's military strengths. Aside from the fact that both accounts post the most about Ukraine's military strengths, memes about Putin and other political figures received very high amounts of likes

on both accounts. Thus, it can be said that the findings of the visual and content analysis are consistent with the survey results.

Secondly, **the analysis shows that accounts using pro-Ukrainian memes were successful in mobilising international audiences** for several reasons. Over time, the engagement levels on both accounts continuously increased, with comment sections becoming more diverse, as people from different countries would partake and often leave comments in their own languages. Amounts of comments expressing support from other countries, via text, use of emojis, or other statements, also gradually increased. Mozolevska (2024) and Bilaniuk (2024) in their studies have shown that memes are tools of online mobilisation as they help build resilience, strengthen the Ukrainian community, and allow it to cope with trauma. However, this research project shows that the online mobilisation effect transcends borders – analysis of the comment sections points to a unique community-building pattern. **People express support for Ukraine from all over the world, partake in discussions, and cooperate to inform one another of the most recent developments.**

At the times during which pro-Russian or not pro-Ukrainian users would leave comments on the posts, they would be met with criticism and extensive replies defending Ukraine, tackling misinformation, and ridiculing the initial comment. This trend points towards **a mobilising and community-building pattern of people cooperating to spread a consistent single message.** However, it also portrays a clear agenda-setting strategy – over time, **people became more willing to express support for messages being posted**, which is visible in the rapidly increasing number of comments over time. This confirms the findings of Mozolevska's (2024) research which shows that memes can be used to frame the conflict in a preferred way. The comment sections also pointed to the fact that **memes were serving as information sources** – if someone did not understand to what events or figures a meme was referring, the people in the comment section would reply with a genuine response. Lastly, the meme-posting platforms enabled online political participation – throughout the years, **online users became likely to partake in political discussions and debates occurring in the comment sections.** A lot of the time the users would also exchange news sources or share their own national experiences, pointing towards international mobilisation and cooperation among people.

The survey results reinforce the idea of memes' mobilising effect, as the majority of the respondents claimed to believe that **memes are effective in garnering international support**

for Ukraine and spreading information about the ongoing events. The survey also showed that while only a number of the respondents donate to social media-based organisations, accounts that use memes, humour, and irony in their content, such as @SaintJavelin, @Ukraine, and also @WithUkraine, receive the most donations or are the most popular options among people considering future donations. These findings strengthen the argument on audience mobilisation – **the use of memes allows pro-Ukrainian organisations to successfully set out and promote their agenda while creating a platform that unites people across the globe and incentivizes them to contribute to the cause.**

In light of the aforementioned content and visual analysis findings and survey results, this research project has shown that **the use of Instagram memes allows pro-Ukrainian organisations to successfully set their agenda and reach a wider audience globally.** Crucially, in response to the main research question, **memes serve the role of information sources, community-building strategies, and political discourse platforms in online international audience mobilisation.** This study has confirmed some of the findings of previous authors in showcasing that Instagram memes work as information and communication tools and allow to promote the cause. However, they also pointed at the **unique community-building trend that happens on an international rather than national level, the effect of bringing people across the globe together, and allowing them to partake in a unique discussion platform.**

Conclusion

Societal & Theoretical Significance of the Findings

This research project on the use of pro-Ukrainian memes in international audience mobilisation sheds a new light on a platform that has not been studied before – Instagram. While prior works have focused on the use of pro-Ukrainian memes in platforms such as X, Reddit, and others, very limited research has been done on Instagram, a media site on which pro-Ukrainian groups not only possess huge followings, but also a platform that has been gaining increasing popularity (Bracciale and Colombini 2023; Kreps 2023). Simultaneously, most of this research has focused on the very beginning or the first half of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This paper has also shown different effects of memes when compared to the aforementioned

alternative platforms and it has also analysed a longer period of time leading up to March 30th, 2024. Researchers have written about how these memes allow to mobilise Ukrainians specifically and build a community among them, how they serve as a unique response and coping mechanism to the Russian aggression, and how they allow to spread information and fight disinformation (Bilaniuk 2024; Cuppens 2023; Faichuk et al. 2023). My research has shown that pro-Ukrainian Instagram memes have additional effects in international audience mobilisation. They provide a political discussion platform on which people can engage, exchange sources, and opinions despite their general standings. They allow people to discuss ongoing developments and ask for help in understanding certain events that are unclear or unknown. Lastly, they serve as international community-building settings in which people can relate to one another and feel united by defending a cause in a team effort. Thus, my research is significant as it allows to better understand the unique effects of pro-Ukrainian platforms on Instagram.

Understanding how the use of memes can be utilised as a form of political participation is important in comprehending current-day politics. With digital platforms becoming increasingly important and widespread, social media begins to play the role of an information source. Therefore, understanding the use of memes on widely popular platforms such as Instagram is crucial to comprehend the changes in political discourse trends and patterns. Research in this field is also critical in assessing the most effective ways for social and political movements to increase their reach and improve effectiveness in agenda-setting practices. In this case, the combination of informative and entertainment-based content appears to be the most effective strategy in gaining international attention. This research project in combination with prior academic work discussed in this paper points towards the increasing role of digital activism and online mobilisation – forms of political participation that are becoming increasingly important and widespread. This means that aside from the benefits discussed, new developments come with their own challenges. As some of the survey respondents indicated, memes can also be viewed as a threat if they oversimplify information, increase public opinion divisions, and depict critical and traumatic events as humour-worthy. These concerns have also been confirmed by some authors, warning that memes can lead to desensitization to important issues and that they can be utilised by both sides (Majdzińska-Koczorowicz and Ostanina-Olszewska 2023; Mozolevska 2024). Thus, in light of this, while the use of memes can be considered beneficial in many regards, it is also critically important to assess their risks.

Limitations & Further Research

Despite the previously discussed findings, this research project has faced a couple of limitations. Firstly, due to a limited time period, I was able to perform an in-depth content analysis only of two Instagram accounts that combine the use of informative and entertainment content. Given the possibility, it would be ideal to assess the engagement levels, contents of comment sections, and posting trends on a larger variety of pro-Ukrainian Instagram accounts. This would allow to complete an improved comparative analysis of the accounts and assess their audience mobilisation patterns. Secondly, given the time constraint, the sample of the survey is not large. Future research could include the creation of a survey that would run for several months and would be shared by different individuals – this would allow to receive a greater and more representative sample of the Instagram user population that would likely be more varied, allowing for more precise results.

An obstacle I endured during my research was the lack of donation data. Most of the online activist organizations do not have the records of their fundraiser campaigns available publicly. I reached out to several of the aforementioned organizations and their teams, including Saint Javelin, Ukraine, With Ukraine, and We Are Ukraine, however, I received no response from these groups. This is understandable given my status as a student and not an established academic researcher, as it means that the incentive to dedicate time in providing data is rather low. Access to donation data could be critical in assessing the success of these organizations – it would allow to see which groups attract the most funding and compare their strategies. Crucially, access to this data would showcase whether the inclusion of memes in content directly contributes to the success of fundraising campaigns. Analysis of the funding flows – which states represent the majority of donations, whether donations come from public or private individuals – would also provide more elaborate insight into the process of international audience mobilisation.

Lastly, for the sake of future research, the findings of this study should be assessed in the context of other political situations. This would allow to see if the informative, community-building, and public discourse incentivising role of Instagram memes transcends borders and works similarly in other states. Simultaneously, such research could test if the combination of informative and entertainment-based content is the most effective engagement-boosting and

mobilizing tactic globally. This is important given the growing online activist movements and the widespread online political participation phenomenon. Not only could such research provide better insight when analysing international individuals' behaviour and response to crises, but it could also indicate what tactics can be utilised by political movements for success.

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Appendix

Annex A

A table showcasing the 160 @SaintJavelin and 16 @Ukraine memes analysed in the process of this research project.

No.	Meme Title / Description	Source	Date	Original Creator	Link
1	"What Gives People Feelings of Power"	Saint Javelin	2022-02-27	@iamnotanartist_	https://www.instagram.com/p/CafoeR5u8jR/
2	"I am once again asking that you line up in a single column so I can blow off your turrets"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-01	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CajHP9FuJjQ/
3	"Putin as Pablo Escobar"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-01	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CajPRC5unEg/
4	"Security services arrest man trying to smuggle \$4.50 out of Russia"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-01	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CakMQEkO7Cw/
5	"Russian generals that have to tell Putin a Ukrainian farmer stole their tank with a tractor"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-02	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CanD8QPuBIV/
6	"When you see Ukrainians getting free AK47's on the news"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-02	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CaneOxruJdU/
7	"Ukraine is iconic"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-04	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CasRXduOB0O/
8	"Never opening the Russian stock market again"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-05	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CatABaYO9R0/
9	"Russia changing Wikipedia data"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-07	X account @Oryxspioenkop	https://www.instagram.com/p/Caz5ADiuCub/?img_index=1
10	"Cope cage - so when do I actually stop you?"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-08	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CalJz7oOcz2/
11	"Tractor instead of the Jaws"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-10	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ca6ci6Bu0EH/
12	"Doge I will take Kyiv in 3 days"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-23	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CbbNgpqLQ7R/
13	"Russia burying four lieutenant colonels in a single day"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-23	Ukraine Memes for NATO Teens	https://www.instagram.com/p/CbbXix_MLh5/
14	"UN is one of the least useful organizations on the planet"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-24	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CbeGaVFM9Eg/
15	"Ukraine working alone"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-24	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CbFDIoLIC5/
16	"Russia as Home Alone burglar"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-26	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cbi9xQsLBKQ/
17	"Zelenskyy next to Putin's casket"	Saint Javelin	2022-03-28	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cbn55hwrhd8/
18	"I bet he's thinking about other women"	Saint Javelin	2022-04-05	X account @oryxspioenkop	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cb-u5ZRO2kZ/
19	"The silent protector"	Saint Javelin	2022-04-06	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cb_j5EksG1Z/
20	"When you find out you're part of a 3-man VDV battalion tactical group headed to the Donbas"	Saint Javelin	2022-04-10	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CcJSEj-LJ8o/

21	"Viktor Medvechuk chained to a table between Putin and Lukashenko"	Saint Javelin	2022-04-13	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CcRPwNBLpvj/
22	"Explaining Russian imperialism to Eastern Europeans vs. to Western Europeans"	Saint Javelin	2022-04-14	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CcWA9d3L0Ck/
23	"Operation Z vs. Operation Ctrl+Z"	Saint Javelin	2022-04-14	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CcWDQy1Lgw1/
24	"Spice Girls asking for heavy weapons"	Saint Javelin	2022-04-21	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CcnRiD6smUa/
25	"FRIENDS: send heavy weapons to Ukraine vs. buy gas and oil from Russia"	Saint Javelin	2022-04-23	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CcrDI4jKVJX/
26	"Darth Putin remains a master strategist"	Saint Javelin	2022-04-24	X account @DarthPutinKGB	https://www.instagram.com/p/CcujeX1sK4i/
27	"If you join NATO we'll nuke you"	Saint Javelin	2022-05-02	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CdDRCPdswfo/
28	"Russian officers showing their commander the weekly territorial gains"	Saint Javelin	2022-05-04	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CdIYKNFsaI/
29	"When you realize it's the 74th day of your 3 day plan"	Saint Javelin	2022-05-08	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CdSHQcQMgPi/
30	"Kourtney Kardashian got married wearing a Saint Javelin dress"	Saint Javelin	2022-05-24	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cd62KnPqC4u/
31	"When the Javelin hits"	Saint Javelin	2022-05-30	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CeKAe9XOfjd/
32	"Russia's best friends come to celebrate Russia day"	Saint Javelin	2022-06-12	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CetWXdKf8S/
33	"Family guy: Okay vs. not okay"	Saint Javelin	2022-06-17	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ce6B_oVMgw-/
34	"Breaking: Ukraine president Zelensky meets with Putin's representatives in Kyiv"	Saint Javelin	2022-06-16	X account @Sputin_Not	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ce4P4IMu3d5/
35	"Grim Reaper Russia being ambushed by Ukrainians"	Saint Javelin	2022-06-22	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfFT-H2O9S-/
36	"High Mobility Anti-Russian System"	Saint Javelin	2022-06-24	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfMQeuar4bE/
37	"What Putin wants to look like vs. what Putin looks like"	Saint Javelin	2022-06-24	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfLo6RAKCdu/
38	"RuZZain Infestation?"	Saint Javelin	2022-06-26	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfRK9uxu_do/
39	"Russian bots in the comment section"	Saint Javelin	2022-06-27	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfTOxWbK0Eu/
40	"Sometimes what a person needs is just one piece"	Saint Javelin	2022-06-28	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfWzicFLzTc/
41	"So when do we leave Kyiv and go back to Moscow?"	Saint Javelin	2022-06-29	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfYw0YcKj-P/
42	"Russian ministry of defense be like"	Saint Javelin	2022-06-30	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfbPsQDrmfj/
43	"Vova, blast those f*ckers"	Saint Javelin	2022-06-30	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cfb81mIL4g8/?img_index=1

44	"Western leftists explaining to Eastern Europeans how they are russophobes"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-05	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfokpKor--p/
45	"Recent statement by Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-06	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfqpWZYqKJR/
46	"Vatniks vs. normal people"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-07	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfsXiS-LAWL/
47	"The perceptions of a Russian soldier"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-07	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CftRUvGKWXz/
48	"Ukraine and Russians"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-07	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CftrKwXK9xB/
49	"Please God let it be Western Europe"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-07	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfuFL75r1rp/
50	"Someone spotted a billboard in Russia saying 'Alaska is ours'"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-08	X account @iAmTheWarax	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cfv2P5VK9AO/
51	"Ukrainian grannies in the eyes of Russian occupiers"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-08	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfwRn3JKroq/
52	"HIMARS greeting their extended family when they arrive in Kyiv"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-08	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cfww13DuP-p/
53	"Jesus sees everything!"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-12	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cf58QAKK8Te/
54	"Russia proudly presents their eco-friendly version of HIMARS"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-12	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cf6Eht5q2GB/
55	"Worst job in the world"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-13	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cf7ckurLkva/
56	"Sweet Jesus, Pooh! That's not honey!"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-13	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cf8jq0vqgOp/
57	"Rubizhne"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-21	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CgSjF9grjMs/
58	"It is easy to be a pacifist, isn't it?"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-26	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cgd3uDJsxRK/
59	"Ukrainian maintenance guy, who barely knows English, getting ready to read another manual of super high tech artillery system"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-27	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CghgOZ0r1Cn/
60	"Russia's imperial ambitions"	Saint Javelin	2022-07-28	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CgikXE7M0sO/
61	"Vladimir Putin - NATO salesman of the year"	Saint Javelin	2022-08-02	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CgwmY4oMD0X/
62	"Mr. Shoigu, are any of these 'destroyed HIMARS' in the room with us right now?"	Saint Javelin	2022-08-04	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cg2eLIZu97w/
63	"Amnesty International ignoring crimes committed by Russia"	Saint Javelin	2022-08-05	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cg5ClkpOQRO/
64	"Putin takes personal control of preparing new air defences"	Saint Javelin	2022-08-11	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/ChIOOqhrByL/
65	"So that's where Merkel's been"	Saint Javelin	2022-08-14	X account @apmassaro3	https://www.instagram.com/p/ChOvWfdMyWz/
66	"Russian liberals on Twitter"	Saint Javelin	2022-08-16	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/ChVV4wjOTvV/
67	"Say the line, Russian defense ministry"	Saint Javelin	2022-08-18	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/ChZPsMyMvkp/

68	"What the hell are you doing?"	Saint Javelin	2022-08-27	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/ChxW3nHuBrG/
69	"2014 vs. 2022"	Saint Javelin	2022-08-30	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch4UE-cMbka/
70	"When do we start winning?"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-01	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ch-Ay4oOh_o/
71	"New UK Prime Minister orders invasion of Rostov and Voronezh"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-06	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CiKfbUVKq0r/
72	"I... love you guys so much"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-08	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CiPaRgzshRs/
73	"The steps of Ukraine launching a counter offensive"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-10	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CiUqiHbKRdA/
74	"Leaving weapons for Ukraine so the West doesn't have to donate"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-12	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CiZmE4OM_ik/
75	"How is our defense going?"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-13	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cicbwejsi0x/
76	"Pentagon, hexagon, octagon, your tank gone"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-14	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cie02sqrobH/
77	"Putin thanking Shoigu for a successful offensive"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-15	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CihN4CuMxk8/
78	"Types of war in Ukraine commentators on Twitter"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-15	Saint Javelin	https://www.instagram.com/p/CihsnMWssoJ/
79	"Russia and Ukraine playing chess"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-16	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cij4JpqMVuo/
80	"Getting mobilised? Just say no"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-21	@VatnikCope	https://www.instagram.com/p/CiwpoKqrIMU/
81	"Putin and Joffrey Baratheon - same energy"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-21	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ciwy3ApLGUk/
82	"Russians come to Antalya and see this"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-22	X account @nakhiba	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ci0i-QyOVJX/
83	"Russian paratrooper in Kherson watching the quality of mobilised men who will soon join him on the front"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-24	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ci4veCqKQ0I/
84	"Serbia won't recognize results of sham referendums on occupied territories of Ukraine"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-26	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ci-HnrPqgNe/
85	"How is mobilisation going?"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-28	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CjDMoe3q7xk/
86	"From Yanukovich to potential nuclear war"	Saint Javelin	2022-10-03	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CjP-oW2qo3T/
87	"The nuclear threatener"	Saint Javelin	2022-10-07	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CjZweRsq690/
88	"Zelenskyy and shashlyk"	Saint Javelin	2022-10-08	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cjc50NJKFb3/
89	"Putin sitting at a long table shaped like the burnt down Crimea bridge"	Saint Javelin	2022-10-11	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CjkK9-tqtR/
90	"Corporate needs you to find the difference between this picture and this picture"	Saint Javelin	2022-10-12	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cjm1C_XqCre/
91	"Russia trying to terrorize Ukraine and Ukrainians' response"	Saint Javelin	2022-10-13	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CjqI_3FqraC/
92	"Thzis big fire... no fire and no big"	Saint Javelin	2022-10-17	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cj0pvHdLfH-/?img_index=1

93	"I don't know how to surrender and at this point I am afraid to ask"	Saint Javelin	2022-10-20	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cj7U1EWMBBE/
94	"Russian microchip"	Saint Javelin	2022-10-27	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CkNk4O4MBBt/
95	"Finns are dying of cold due to cutting ties with Russia"	Saint Javelin	2022-11-01	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CkbDIIAqXRt/
96	"Why do we have hands?"	Saint Javelin	2022-11-07	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CkpyGDhqe6/
97	"If you continue refusing negotiations, we will leave Zaporizhzhia region too!"	Saint Javelin	2022-11-10	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CkxgkKgq1i/
98	"Say the line, Russia!"	Saint Javelin	2022-11-10	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ckxy_CKKHze/
99	"Zelensky's vs. Putin's visit to Kherson"	Saint Javelin	2022-11-14	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ck8YqVBqQuQ/
100	"Two countries, two very different leaders"	Saint Javelin	2022-11-14	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ck9LbPMuJ8-/
101	"Fidesz party and the energy crisis"	Saint Javelin	2022-11-18	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CIQTQ8nqIZT/
102	"Lithuanians crowdfunding a naval drone"	Saint Javelin	2022-11-21	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CIN8IQXK_GX/
103	"Smiling tanks"	Saint Javelin	2022-12-04	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/ClwqNC7L-ay/
104	"Person of the year"	Saint Javelin	2022-12-08	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CI5p1shKai/
105	"Santa Claus is coming to town"	Saint Javelin	2022-12-25	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CmmnrNrLZHQ/
106	"The 62 year old logistics officer"	Saint Javelin	2023-01-04	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cm_Z4w2KZCU/
107	"Zaluzhny and Putin in the Shining"	Saint Javelin	2023-01-25	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cn1ru4NKtK1/
108	"30 minutes at work vs. 10 hours of trolling Russia"	Saint Javelin	2023-01-30	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CoCXV3SKzx0/
109	"Alternate history line, 1994"	Saint Javelin	2023-01-31	@Me_of_EE	https://www.instagram.com/p/CoE6eq3qkIR/
110	"advdonating 545 tanks to Ukraine"	Saint Javelin	2023-02-01	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CoHosnVq9t5/
111	"Ukraine after receiving Western tanks"	Saint Javelin	2023-02-07	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CoXljTsgnw/
112	"Ukrainians meeting aliens"	Saint Javelin	2023-02-14	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Coo2RWLsd-X/
113	"Ukrainian and Russian talking"	Saint Javelin	2023-02-16	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CouWLkQs1eu/
114	"How many Leopards do you need?"	Saint Javelin	2023-02-17	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CowwtsWM09U/
115	"The Sarmat engineer when you ask him why the test failed"	Saint Javelin	2023-02-23	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CpAo0bnst2G/
116	"Belarusian Partisans shot down a military aircraft belonging to a fascist country invading Ukraine"	Saint Javelin	2023-02-28	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CpM57zbsady/
117	"Achievements of Russians over the past 2 years"	Saint Javelin	2023-03-14	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CpxELxrsH-v/
118	"Instagram vs. real life"	Saint Javelin	2023-03-21	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqDj7P3qx42/
119	"That smile, that damned smile"	Saint Javelin	2023-03-27	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqSJj6psZR7/
120	"The Ukrainian patriot operator"	Saint Javelin	2023-03-28	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqVd-XdsDVj/
121	"Happy April's fools day!"	Saint Javelin	2023-04-01	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqFF89K9fc/

122	"Russia at the UNSC"	Saint Javelin	2023-04-02	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqhbCuRqYVR/
123	"Welcome to Russian logic"	Saint Javelin	2023-04-03	@propapalett	https://www.instagram.com/p/CqkL83ZsTGP/
124	"You're literally threatening me right now"	Saint Javelin	2023-04-06	@propapalett	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cqs59aLsLie/
125	"No tanks"	Saint Javelin	2023-05-09	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CsBHmRJMw_J/
126	"Victory Day 2022 vs. 2023"	Saint Javelin	2023-05-09	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CsBQtx5sd8M/
127	"Storm Shadow and the bridge of Crimea"	Saint Javelin	2023-05-15	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CsQ0NugM2Is/
128	"Putin announces another Special Military Operation"	Saint Javelin	2023-05-22	X account @Sputnik_Not	https://www.instagram.com/p/Csi78rcK3EM/
129	"Russians are advancing but there is a nuance"	Saint Javelin	2023-05-22	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Csi9kjqQE/
130	"Where should we launch the offensive?"	Saint Javelin	2023-05-25	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CsqR68qBID/
131	"Thank you, Useless Nations"	Saint Javelin	2023-06-07	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CtLvR3LMdCH/
132	"Kick Russia out of UNSC vs. Sue a Ukrainian who put a sticker on the car"	Saint Javelin	2023-06-23	@Ukraine	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ct0zRbSsnLG/?img_index=1
133	"Civil war vs. civil special operation"	Saint Javelin	2023-06-24	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ct3upS_Mg6Y/
134	"Hey babe wake up, Kerch bridge is burning again"	Saint Javelin	2023-07-17	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CuyenZzMaax/
135	"Putin, Navalny, and Girkin"	Saint Javelin	2023-07-26	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CvKKT9bs95z/
136	"I just wanna talk to Belarus"	Saint Javelin	2023-08-02	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cvb0QUBsEZF/
137	"The 5 stages of grief"	Saint Javelin	2023-08-23	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CwTDzCnrDD6/
138	"Russian air defense be like"	Saint Javelin	2023-08-23	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CwTJ5TyLFsz/
139	"The mugshot we all want to see"	Saint Javelin	2023-08-25	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CwXRAHxMZvC/
140	"Russian village with new loot from Ukraine"	Saint Javelin	2023-08-30	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CwRqneMT4W/
141	"Prigozhin's death causes"	Saint Javelin	2023-08-25	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CwXq8eQsgaD/
142	"Budanov paints the town red"	Saint Javelin	2023-09-13	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxJb4u4MXMY/
143	"Arts and sports are beyond politics!"	Saint Javelin	2023-09-20	X account @United24Media	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxaPSRgs0w0/
144	"We need ideas on how to get the Black Sea fleet back on track"	Saint Javelin	2023-09-26	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxppcKOsBae/
145	"Leopard 2, ABRAMS, Challenger 2 finally all together"	Saint Javelin	2023-09-26	@Ukraine	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxqW0aGsSef/
146	"Prigozhin in the engine"	Saint Javelin	2023-10-31	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CzDtqpBMhn6/
147	"Jackson Hinkle on X"	Saint Javelin	2023-10-31	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CzEVOFEMpS-/
148	"Things that disappear when you need them the most"	Saint Javelin	2023-11-23	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cz_U4ydMt93/
149	"Russia-Ukraine conflict is a proxy war between North and South Korea"	Saint Javelin	2023-12-12	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/C0vz0jdsZR0/

150	"Traditional Christmas gift vs. FPV drones for Ukraine"	Saint Javelin	2023-12-18	@SaintJavelin & @UniteWithUkraine	https://www.instagram.com/p/C0_9m3atmzt/
151	"Who would win?"	Saint Javelin	2023-12-22	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/C1KsqXNLSHC/
152	"Why does the steak look like it's about to invade Ukraine"	Saint Javelin	2024-01-04	X account @prizzely	https://www.instagram.com/p/C1q7NGWMr96/
153	"Found the Moskva: Nemo edition"	Saint Javelin	2024-01-15	NAFO	https://www.instagram.com/p/C2HdhHRsoUT/
154	"Me every time I hear someone citing Russia as a source"	Saint Javelin	2024-01-30	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/C2uQnbnMyyy/
155	"Apple Vision Pro vs. x6 FPV Drones"	Saint Javelin	2024-02-06	X account @fermerzpolissia	https://www.instagram.com/p/C3AOzEtMn5r/
156	"Make everyone watch this interview"	Saint Javelin	2024-02-07	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/C3C_65zsgK4/
157	"2 hours of psychosis"	Saint Javelin	2024-02-09	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/C3H6q94Mbyg/
158	"And then we lost a warship in a land war"	Saint Javelin	2024-02-14	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/C3Ui_ObsyJR/
159	"Ukraine has the opportunity to do the funniest thing"	Saint Javelin	2024-03-04	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/C4Fte9HshoC/
160	"Russians advancing, just not our Russians"	Saint Javelin	2024-03-12	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/C4aTOb4MRjG/
161	"Translation of Russian propaganda"	Ukraine	2023-04-14	X account @StratcomCenter	https://www.instagram.com/p/CrBRsb-NYyB/?img_index=1
162	"One more bite for Ukraine"	Ukraine	2022-08-16	Чилик	https://www.instagram.com/p/ChUppULKbgF/?img_index=1
163	"Will Vladimir Putin survive?"	Ukraine	2022-10-08	BBC	https://www.instagram.com/p/CjdtWuqrANL/
164	"Belarusians getting ready to invade"	Ukraine	2022-10-21	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cj-_EWdrjHG/
165	"Defense of the Russian border"	Ukraine	2023-05-24	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CsoDNMENNAM/
166	"I'm pretty tired, I think I'll go home now"	Ukraine	2023-06-26	@SaintJavelin	https://www.instagram.com/p/Ct8qW0fLjPj/
167	"What Putin sees"	Ukraine	2023-07-17	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cuytbw9NsXG/
168	"You forgot to check the latest news from Ukraine"	Ukraine	2023-08-28	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CwfB86Jr0hO/
169	"Military bases on the territory of Russia vs. Ukrainian drones"	Ukraine	2023-09-03	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/CwvIpx4tPjg/
170	"Musk and helping Ukraine"	Ukraine	2023-09-08	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cw7KmF_Lgsc/
171	"Russians thinking they can advance quickly and no one will notice"	Ukraine	2023-10-11	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CyQ_-zGN4WC/
172	"These 'military' targets Russia hits, are they in the room with us right now?"	Ukraine	2023-10-23	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CyvMcszLunA/
173	"Orcs shall not pass!"	Ukraine	2023-11-30	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/C0RvVUzNTTA/
174	"A-50 successfully promoted to submarine"	Ukraine	2024-01-15	@UAMemesForces	https://www.instagram.com/p/C2HvdoeNZec/
175	"Russia's underwater fleet is expanding"	Ukraine	2024-03-24	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/C45u8rTtAg7/?img_index=1
176	"Let's go, in and out, 3 days adventure"	Ukraine	2023-02-24	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CpC7CwgN-oY/

Annex B

A set of 21 questions presented in the self-selection-based survey. By completing the survey, the respondents had to indicate whether they consented to partake. A privacy statement and consent form were attached to the survey – by answering the questionnaire, all respondents confirmed that they had read the documents provided. Annex C provides a separate reference list for images used in the survey. The following questions were asked:

1. Please indicate your e-mail address.

2. Please indicate your nationality.

3. Select your age group.

- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 and over

4. Please list the languages that you speak.

5. Which of the accounts listed below, if any, do you follow on Instagram?

- Saint Javelin
- WithUkraine
- Ukraine Shortly
- Razom for Ukraine
- Ukraine
- Ukraine.ua
- WeAreUkraine.info

- Promote Ukraine
 - UA Meme Forces
 - The North Atlantic Fella Organization (NAFO)
 - I do not follow any of the accounts listed on Instagram
 - I follow other accounts that post similar content (please indicate)
-

6. If you selected at least one of the account names in the previous question, please indicate whether you follow their content on the following social media platforms.

- Twitter
 - Reddit
 - Telegram
 - TikTok
 - Other (please indicate)
-

- I do not follow them on other social media platforms.

7. When choosing which accounts to follow, what factors do you consider to be the most important? (Select several options if needed)

- The extent to which the content posted is informative.
 - Ability to relate to the content posted and the extent to which it's tailored to you and your personal beliefs
 - The creativity and uniqueness of the content posted
 - The entertainment value (e.g.: jokes, memes) that is provided by the content
 - Other (please indicate)
-

8. Have you ever donated to the fundraiser campaigns organised/promoted by any of the following organisations? If so, please indicate which ones.

- Saint Javelin
- WithUkraine
- Razom for Ukraine
- Ukraine

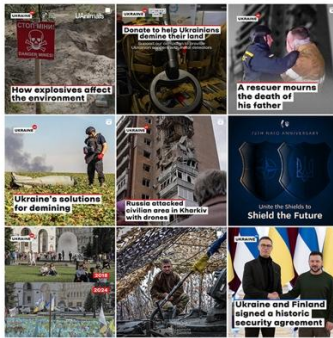
- Ukraine.ua
- WeAreUkraine.info
- Ukraine Shortly
- Promote Ukraine
- UA Meme Forces
- The North Atlantic Fella Organization (NAFO)
- I have not donated to any of the organizations listed above

9. If you answered “I have not donated to any of the organizations listed above” in the previous question, have you ever considered contributing to any of the fundraisers organized by the following organizations? If so, select which ones.

- Saint Javelin
- WithUkraine
- Razom for Ukraine
- Ukraine
- Ukraine.ua
- WeAreUkraine.info
- Ukraine Shortly
- Promote Ukraine
- UA Meme Forces
- The North Atlantic Fella Organization (NAFO)
- I have never considered contributing to any of the fundraisers organized by the organizations listed above

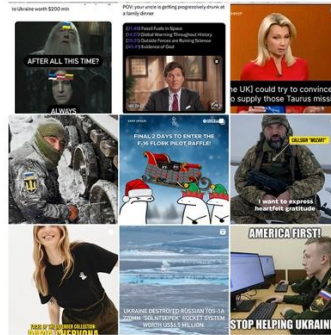
10. Consider the three images of pro-Ukrainian organisations’ Instagram feeds shown below.

Option A



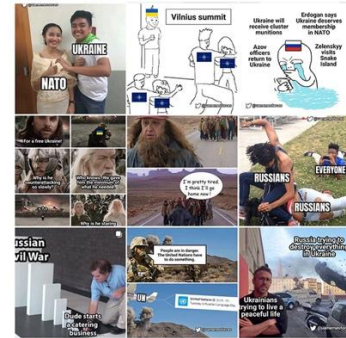
Solely informative content based on real life events and ongoing war developments

Option B



A combination of informative content and entertainment-based content

Option C



Solely entertainment-based content (jokes, funny videos, etc.)

Image 9: Screenshots of three pro-Ukrainian Instagram accounts (left to right) - @Ukraine.ua (S1), @SaintJavelin (S2), and @Ukrainian_Memes_Forces (S3). All screenshots retrieved on March 29th, 2024 (see Annex C).

Based on their appeal to you (i.e.: how willing you would be to follow these accounts), rank the three options according to your preferences.

- Option A
- Option B
- Option C

11. Below you will see a series of memes (reproduced images meant to fit a specific topic) referring to international aid and Ukraine's relationship with the international community. Please indicate which of the two options appeals to you the most.

Option A



Option B



Image 10: Option A (Meme B) is a meme posted by @SaintJavelin Instagram account on March 24th, 2022. Option B (Meme F) is a meme posted by @SaintJavelin Instagram account on May 30, 2022.

- Option A
- Option B

12. Which of the two images shown below appeals to you the most?

Option A



Option B



Image 11: Option A (Meme D) is a meme posted by @SaintJavelin Instagram account on April 23rd, 2022. Option B (Meme I) is a meme posted by @SaintJavelin Instagram account on January 25th, 2023.

Option A

Option B

13. When reflecting on the images you chose, rank the following options according to their importance to you and your personal preferences.

I prefer images referring to and celebrating the international aid received by Ukraine

I prefer images criticizing the lack of international support to Ukraine

I prefer images reflecting on Ukraine's relationship with other international actors

I prioritize the stylistic relevance or trendiness of the image design

14. Below you will see a series of memes referring to ongoing war developments, Russian political figures, and the losses of the Russian army. Please indicate which of the two appeals to you the most.

Option A



Option B



Image 12: Option A (Meme A) is a meme posted by @SaintJavelin Instagram account on March 1st, 2022. Option B (Meme E) is a meme posted by @SaintJavelin Instagram account on May 4th, 2022.

Option A

Option B

15. Which of the two images below appeals to you the most?

Option A



Option B



Image 13: Option A (Meme C) is a meme posted by @SaintJavelin Instagram account on April 14th, 2022. Option B (Meme J) is a meme posted by @SaintJavelin account on September 13th, 2023.

- Option A
- Option B

16. Which of the two images shown below appeals to you the most?

Option A



Option B

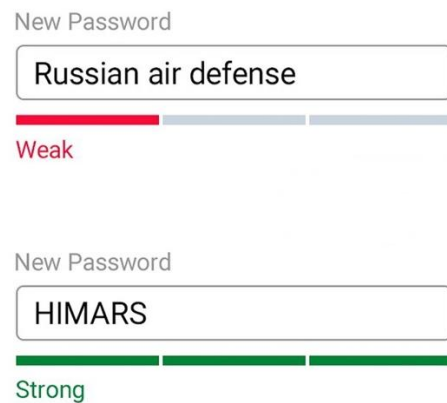


Image 14: Option A (Meme G) is a meme posted by @Ukrainian_Memes_Forces Instagram account on July 2nd, 2022. Option B (Meme H) is a meme posted by @SaintJavelin Instagram account on September 5th, 2022.

- Option A
- Option B

17. When reflecting on the images you chose, rank the following options according to your preferences

- I prefer images mocking Putin or other Russian political figures
- I prefer images describing Russia's military losses
- I prefer images describing Russia's weaknesses
- I prefer images reflecting on Ukraine's military successes or strengths
- I prefer images comparing the strength of Ukraine and Russia
- I prefer images referring to Ukrainian political figures
- I prioritize the stylistic relevance or trendiness of the image design

18. Given the increasing use of memes as a form of political communication, do you believe that memes benefit or hinder the spread of information in regards to Russia's war in Ukraine?

- I strongly believe that memes benefit the spread of information
- I somewhat believe that memes benefit the spread of information
- I do not have an opinion
- I somewhat believe that memes hinder the spread of information
- I strongly believe that memes hinder the spread of information

19. Based on your personal experience and beliefs, do you believe memes have helped or damaged the process of garnering international support for Ukraine?

- I strongly believe that memes have helped
- I somewhat believe that memes have helped
- I do not have an opinion
- I somewhat believe that memes have had a negative effect
- I strongly believe that memes have had a negative effect

20. If you believe that memes have helped garner support and spread information about war in Ukraine at least on some level, select the possible explanations for why that might be the case.

- Memes allow to simplify information and make it easy to understand.

- Memes allow to quickly and easily explain the main details of key developments worldwide
 - Memes are a more entertaining source of information compared to usual news outlets
 - Memes allow to cope with tragic events and find support
 - Other (please explain)
-

21. If you believe that memes have not helped garner support and spread information about the war in Ukraine at least on some level and have therefore had a negative effect, select the possible explanations for why that might be the case.

- Memes oversimplify information
 - Memes may become sources of misinformation given the simplicity of complex events
 - Memes are not detailed and informative enough and thus cannot be taken seriously
 - Other (please explain)
-

Annex C

The following table displays all of the memes used in the survey and their references. The screenshots of pro-Ukrainian organisation Instagram profiles used in the survey and their references are listed separately at the end of the table.

A list of memes used in the survey					
No.	Meme Title / Description	Source	Date	Original Creator	Link
A	“Is this so called ‘military superpower’ in the room with us now?”	Saint Javelin	2022-03-01	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CailXwmON8p/
B	“Ukraine working alone”	Saint Javelin	2022-03-24	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CbfFDIloLIC5/?igsh=MWlzMG5ucHU1ZnR6Ng%3D%3D
C	“Operation Z vs. Operation Ctrl+Z”	Saint Javelin	2022-04-14	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CcWDQy1Lgw1/

D	"FRIENDS: send heavy weapons to Ukraine vs. buy gas and oil from Russia"	Saint Javelin	2022-04-23	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CcrDI4jKVJX/?igsh=MWR3NGI0cGhnOG9jMw%3D%3D
E	"Russian officers showing their commanders weekly territorial gains"	Saint Javelin	2022-05-04	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CdIYKNFsaI/
F	"Lithuanian civilians crowdfunding a Bayraktar in 4 days"	Saint Javelin	2022-05-30	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CeMWbjuOd3i/?igsh=NDBtODJ4ZGgwYjJ3
G	"Russian soldier"	Ukrainian Memes Forces	2022-07-02	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CfhV9xhNcX0/?igsh=MWsyZmNnajh0ZGF1Mw%3D%3D
H	"New password: HIMARS"	Saint Javelin	2022-09-05	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CiH8qsaMpo/?igsh=MTJ3OWNhN3F5NTV5Ng%3D%3D
I	"This baby can fit so many strategic victories in it"	Saint Javelin	2023-01-25	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/Cn15SHmKI p6/?igsh=MXdkZnJwZTcxMDN4Yg%3D%3D
J	"Budanov paints the town red"	Saint Javelin	2023-09-13	Unknown	https://www.instagram.com/p/CxJb4u4MXMY/?igsh=N3M0djFvMW9lNmNi
Screenshots of online Instagram profiles used in the survey					
S1	Screenshot of the online Instagram profile of @Ukraine.ua page. @Ukraine.ua. Instagram. Retrieved March 29, 2024, from https://www.instagram.com/ukraine.ua/ .				
S2	Screenshot of the online Instagram profile of @SaintJavelin page. @SaintJavelin. Instagram. Retrieved March 29, 2024, from https://www.instagram.com/saintjavelin/ .				
S3	Screenshot of the online Instagram profile of @Ukrainian_Memes_Forces page. @Ukrainian_Memes_Forces. Instagram. Retrieved March 29, 2024, from https://www.instagram.com/ukrainian_memes_forces/ .				