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**Emotional appeal of presidential rhetoric during the war period: case of  
President Zelenskyy during 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine**

Master's Thesis

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Emocinis apeliavimas prezidento retorikoje karo metais: Prezidento Zelenskio atvejis 2022 m. Rusijos invazijos į Ukrainą metu [Emotional appeal of presidential rhetoric during the war period: case of President Zelenskyy during 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine]: Master's research work / Oleksandr Kalinchuk; supervisor Prof. Dr. Prof. Dr. Renata Matkevičienė; Vilnius University. Faculty of Communication. – Vilnius, 2022. 61 p. (130,649 symbols) : tables. - - Bibliograph.: pp. 53-61 (102 titles).

The provided research explores the initial role and usage of emotional appeal in presidential rhetoric to seek support in the international arena during wartime. The research is done by case studying the rhetoric of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during the unprecedented Russian full-scale military invasion of Ukraine in 2022. We seek to find how using positive, negative, and distinct sentiments in presidential speeches can convey impactful messages to international audiences in today's modern media environment. The research is done firstly by employing sentiment analysis to detect the presence of distinct emotions toward various audiences in Volodymyr Zelenskyy's speeches during February-April 2022. The content analysis is followed up by determining the rhetorical techniques and devices used for emotional arousal. We found that the Ukrainian President's rhetoric overall had more positive sentiments than negative ones. Upon closer content inspections, we observed that different emotional appeals were used towards each specific audience individually, both domestic and international. Positive sentiments and appeals to trust were used to foster the narratives on unification, partnership, and political confidence. Negative emotions as a natural cognitive reaction towards war were addressed towards the aggressor state and international political actors. Towards the latter, the negativity was done to criticize the political uncertainty and shame for maintaining diplomatic and trading relations with the invading state and boost the decision-making process of supporting Ukraine. As such, we conclude that emotions in political communication act as cognitive reactions toward major political events. They can be used for persuasion in a time of crisis not only to seek political support from other states but also to persuade international actors to block the geopolitical powers of the aggressor state. We conclude that future research should be carried out by extending the analyzed period, including the local language and the initially delivered format. Sentiment analysis should be carried out with a detailed qualitative analysis of the given content.

Keywords: Emotional appeals, presidential rhetoric, political communication, Russo-Ukrainian war

## SANTRAUKA

### **Emocinio apeliavimo taikymas prezidento retorikoje karo metu: prezidento Zelenskio atvejis 2022 m. Rusijos invazijos į Ukrainą metu**

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Pateiktame magistro baigiamajame darbe siekiama iširti esminį emocinio apeliavimo vaidmenį ir naudojimą prezidento retorikoje siekiant paramos tarptautinėje arenoje karo metu. Tyrimas atliekamas nagrinėjant Ukrainos prezidento Volodymyro Zelenskio retoriką beprecedentės Rusijos plataus masto karinės invazijos į Ukrainą 2022 m. metu. Siekiama išsiaiškinti, kaip teigiamų, neigiamų ir išskirtinių emocijų naudojimas prezidento kalbose gali perteikti paveikias žinutes tarptautinei auditorijai šiuolaikinės žiniasklaidos aplinkoje. Tyrimo objektas - prezidento retorika politinių krizių komunikacijoje.

Todėl tyrimo tikslas - nustatyti emocinio apeliavimo naudojimą prezidento retorikoje karinės invazijos metu. Tyrimui išsikėlėme šiuos uždavinius:

- Išanalizuoti emocinį apeliavimą politinėje komunikacijoje;
- Nustatyti politinės ir prezidentinės retorikos specifiką;
- Nustatyti ir išanalizuoti pagrindines politinėje retorikoje naudojamas emocijas;
- Iširti emocinio apeliavimo ypatumus prezidento retorikoje karo metu.

Siekiant išsikelto tikslo, magistro darbo tyrime analizuojamos visos oficialios viešos Ukrainos prezidento kalbos, pasakytus 2022 m. vasario-balandžio mėnesiais. Kalbų tyrimui taikyti sentimentų analizės ir turinio analizės metodai. Sentimentų analizė buvo naudojama siekiant nustatyti esamų teigiamų ir neigiamų nuotaikų poliarizaciją, taip pat skirtingas emocijas adresatų ir adresatų auditorijų atžvilgiu. Turinio analizė buvo naudojama siekiant nustatyti žodžių vartojimo dažnumą ir retorinių technikų bei priemonių buvimą Volodymyro Zelenskio kalbose.

Remiantis gautais rezultatais, buvo padaryta išvada, kad emocijos politinėje komunikacijoje gali veikti kaip pažintinė reakcija į svarbius politinius įvykius, taip pat jos gali suteikti auditorijai reikšmingos informacijos. Sukėlus emocijas galima padidinti įsitraukimą į politinius debatus ir tai gali būti naudojama kaip įtikinimo taktika.

Kadangi šiuolaikinė skaitmeninė žiniasklaida yra poliarizuota ir komercializuota, politinės žiniasklaidos aplinkoje egzistuoja negatyvumo tendencija. Todėl manoma, kad tiesioginis politinių pranešimų perdavimas visuomenei per kontroliuojamus žiniasklaidos kanalus yra naudingesnis ir veiksmingesnis.

Prezidentinė retorika priklauso nuo prezidento oratorinių gebėjimų, sakomų kalbų ir jo charakterio. Karo retorika skiriasi nuo pilietinės retorikos ir labai priklauso nuo karinių veiksmų ir pažangos, aukų, išpuolių ir įvykdytų karo nusikaltimų.

Teoriniu tyrimu nustatyta, kad kreipdamasis į užsienio valstybes individualiai, prezidentas į savo kalbą gali įtraukti bet kurios tautos kultūrinius aspektus, susiedamas tautų istorijas. Tai gali būti daroma siekiant padidinti įtikinamumą, pateikiant bendrą istorinę patirtį arba apeliuojant į bendrąsias vertybes.

Remiantis tyrimo rezultatais nustatyta, kad Volodymyro Zelenskio retorika karo metu pirmiausia rėmėsi pozityviomis, o ne negatyviomis emocijomis. Pasitikėjimas ir baimė buvo naudojamos kalbose tarptautinei auditorijai dažniausiai siekiant politinės paramos Ukrainai ir mažinant Rusijos galias geopolitinėje arenoje.

Emociniam apeliavimui buvo naudojamos tokios retorinės priemonės kaip aforizmai, retoriniai klausimai, analogijos, antitezės, todėl daroma prielaida, kad tai gali rodyti norą įtikinti Vakarų valstybes pasitelkiant intelektualinius argumentus, o ne paprastą faktinį įvykių aprašymą.

Pykčio ir neapykantos valstybei agresorei emocijos pasireiškė pasakojimais apie gėrį ir blogį, krikščioniškąsias vertybes ir Dievą, pilietiškumą ir nedraugiškumą.

Negatyvizmu buvo grindžiama tarptautinių organizacijų ir užsienio valstybių, kurios ir toliau palaikė diplomatinius ir prekybinius santykius su Rusijos Federacija, kritika, kartais sukeliant ir gėdos jausmą. Keliama hipotezė, kad negatyvumas naudojamas siekiant parodyti smurtines karų pasekmes kaip natūralią reakciją į didžiulę nelaimę.

Apibendrinami tyrimą teigiama, kad ateityje reikėtų atlikti tyrimus praplečiant analizuojamą laikotarpį, atliekant kalbų originalo kalba. Be to, reikėtų atskirai atlikti sentimentų analizę konkrečioms kalbas priimančioms auditorijoms ir įtraukti išsamią konkrečios kalbos konteksto ir aplinkos diskurso analizę.

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## INTRODUCTION

Presidents serve as the central political figure of a given nation. As such, they are responsible for governing the branches of power, advocating their political agenda on a state level, and, in theory, representing the people who legitimately elect them. Because of this, they are crucial for communicating common political interests internally with their citizens or externally with foreign representatives. Whether it is a diplomatic establishment of relationships between countries, setting out partnership cooperation agreements, or directly addressing the nation, they are orators. Therefore, they must rely on the oratory art of persuasion - rhetoric.

At the same time, commonly used political communication patterns may not always be utilized and are subject to change during military crises and wars. These events of military conflicts can be distressing and inflict violence, destruction, and global shock on societies.

In current times, no events shocked the civilized world as greatly as the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine on the 24th of February 2022. This unprecedented Russian attack caused the obliteration of Ukrainian cities, the destruction of civilian infrastructure, and the biggest humanitarian crisis in the European continent since the Second World War (UNHCR, 2022). An estimated 17,6 million people required urgent humanitarian needs (OCHA Services, n.d.).

In this stressful environment, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy had the daunting task of persuading Western states to provide political and military support to defend national borders against the Russian Federation's military invasion. For that, Zelenskyy had to rely on the basics of political rhetoric and communication, which in traditional research theory include the appeal to logic (*logos*), the credibility of the speaker (*ethos*), and emotional appeal (*pathos*). These three elements are interrelated; each seeks to increase the orator's persuasion in civil times and during political crises, such as military escalations or wars, when distress is typically at a maximum.

In this work, we will explore how President Volodymyr Zelenskyy used emotional appeal to seek political and military support in domestic and foreign audiences. Many Western states were hesitant to provide Ukraine military aid to keep their longstanding diplomatic relations with the Russian Federation. However, this policy rapidly changed after the initial Russian full-scale invasion, as more support was provided to Ukraine for defense against the aggressor state.

Therefore, the **problem** we want to explore in this research is the role of presidential emotions, which seek to politically persuade prominent actors in international relations during military escalations through public addresses. The case of Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the 2022 Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine could be studied to see how principles and elements of rhetoric are utilized in the international arena in the modern age of digitalized media. It will also help us comprehend

which power of influence presidents hold in modern political communication. The **object** of this work can thus be established as presidential rhetoric in political crisis communication.

In the academic field, the topic of political communication was explored by scholars Savigny H., Blumer J.G., Pfetsch B., Esser F., Semetko H.A., Swanson D., Cap P., Okulska U., Van Aelst P., and others. The studies of rhetoric were done by academics Demirdöğen Ü. D., Cathcart R.S., Kennedy G.A., Schiappa E., Haase F., Griswold C. L., Brickhouse T.C., Smith N.D., Blagard B., and others. Lipsitz K., Geer J.G., Walter A.S., Nai A., Vliegthart R., Lengauer G., and Berganza R studied negativity and cynicism in political communication.

The emotional appeal was explored by authors such as Singer P.N., Dow J., Rabbås Ø., Ingram J., Loseke D.R., Gross K., Tiedens L.Z., Dlugan A. In communication research, studies on emotional appeal can be found in fields such as journalism (Öztin Passerat, 2020), advertisement (Ukaewen & Afolabi, 2022), corporate communication (Read, 2007), marketing (Oeppen Hill, 2020), medicine (Singer, 2022), tourism (Antelmi, 2018), and politics. The former field of politics is highly interconnected with rhetoric. This relation is robust and interconnected to the extent that some researchers suggest that the central aim of political interaction can be considered persuasion (Demirdöğen, 2010).

The **novelty** of the provided topic is that it uncovers the use of sentiments in presidential rhetoric from the perspective of a military-invaded state, which prior to the invasion, had less political and military support from international communities. Prio academic research focused primarily on state leaders' rhetoric from both influential and developed countries, long before modern media digitalization. Typically, war and military invasion were the subjects of justification in these political statements. For example, Stuckey M.E., Neustadt R.E., Edwards J.A., and Windt Jr. T.O. studied the rhetoric of presidents of the United States of America before the rise of the digitalized media environment. Wallace M.D., Suedfeld P., and Thachuk K. analyzed political leaders' rhetoric during the Gulf Crisis. Much was explored on former president of the United States of America George W. Bush and his rhetoric during the "war on terror" by scholars such as Loseke D.R., Kellner D., De Castella K., McGarty, and others.

The thesis **aims** to identify the usage of emotional appeal in presidential rhetoric during the full-scale military invasion. We set out the following **objectives** for the research:

- To analyze the emotional appeal in political communication;
- Determine the specificity of political and presidential rhetoric;
- Indicate the primary emotions used in political rhetoric;
- Investigate characteristics of emotional appeal in presidential rhetoric during war times.

To investigate the emotional appeal, we will use quantitative and qualitative **methods** to assess Volodymyr Zelenskyy's official addresses during February-April 2022. Also, we will observe to which target and receiving audiences the particular speeches were addressed. The quantitative method will include the sentiment analysis by a daily net and individual emotions (positive, negative, and distinct emotions) towards the target and receiving audiences. The qualitative research will consist of content analysis of speeches by investigating the rhetorical devices and narratives built around the most frequent words.

Structurally the research will begin with building the theoretical framework on political communication; political rhetoric and the role of emotional appeal in it; negativity and cynicism in modern political communication; and presidential rhetoric in political crisis communication. Having the proper theoretical foundation, we will focus on investigating the presence of diverse sentiments in Volodymyr Zelenskyy's speeches during the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. In this part, we will concentrate on describing the methodology, research design, data collection, and data coding methods, as well as qualitative and quantitative findings. We will draw conclusions and recommendations for future research based on the received findings and objectives set out in this research.



# **1. THEORETICAL FUNDAMENTALS OF PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC AS PART OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION**

## **1.1. POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND MEDIA COVERAGE: DEFINITION, ROLES, TRENDS**

Political communication is, in its nature, a complex process. In the research field, it is usually analyzed from its initial structural components: politics and communication. However, political communication involves not only the primary transfer of information on political subject matters between its' main actors but also the societal, psychological, economic, and cultural context in which this process takes place.

Savigny (2016) proposed to look at political communication as a field of interaction between governmental agents with institutions (e.g., politicians, legislatures, and elections) and media institutions. According to Blumer (2015), it includes the following distinct features:

- The process is multilevel and comprises social systems, political and media organizations, political and journalistic communicators, active citizens, and surrounding political cultures;
- It regularly involves technological and societal developments;
- It exponentially covers vast numbers of spheres in organizations and activities, which politics affects;
- The actors within political communication are interdependent, and interaction between different institutions is shaped by different logic and purposes;
- The practices and patterns have a regulating nature towards the functional implementation of democracy.

As such, the political communication process is multi-layered, and all the interactions between the actors are independent. Therefore, we should investigate the nature of relationship and communication roles in this process according to actors.

As a distinct field of study, political communication developed with the study of political oratory and political science through the expansion of involved actors and their roles. According to Wolton (1990), scholars first viewed political communication through information transfer from the government to the voting public (also called government communication). Later the public discourses between the politicians in power and their political opponents became more public and prominent for audiences as the media coverage of the discourses increased. It led to the expansion of the political communication field by studying the media's role in the process and its function in public opinion formation.

For Wolton, the discourse between political actors should be considered the principal process of political communication and politics in general. As such, the central functioning role of political communication is to avert the political debates from closing in upon themselves.

Political communication relies heavily on the political discourses between politicians within political institutions. The process, however, is further dependent on the political and electoral systems the individual states have implemented. For example, when comparing televised election campaigns in the 1990s between the USA, the UK, and Germany, the studies (Semetko, 2007) showed the differences in focused themes between the countries. The US election campaigns were proven to be more negative, judgemental in their tonalities, less descriptive, and policy-oriented with a focus on candidates' personalities and opinion polls. In contrast, British televised campaigns were seen as less hostile, more comprehensive, and more issue-and policy-focused. At the same time, German television news was less preoccupied with issues and policy matters and more attentive to political leaders' personalities and personal qualities and their electoral chances.

Media in the political interaction process has a substantial role. Savigny (2016) states that the media's function in political communication is to interpret the political agenda and transmit it to citizens using specific media techniques. Because of that, mass media has also another operational role – to be a mediator of political messages. In response to how mainstream media intermediates messages on a political matter, the political figures are reacting to it with the primary goal of saving and promoting their positive self-image.

Historically the political system, political regimes, and media environments shaped the political communication process in different states asymmetrically. For example, communication academics (Pfetsch & Esser, 2004) mention that the American model of understanding media and politics, the so-called "media democracy", was primarily dominant in theorizing and interpreting political communication. One of the apparent drawbacks of this mindset was the exclusion of the cultural and structural contexts in the research field. In the 1990s, this address changed with increased media globalization and further appearance of independent news sources.

The mediatization of politics has led to the further development of media environments in Western democratic countries. Specifically, European countries reoriented their national media policies to deregulate and open media markets. The United States of America developed in quite another vector, making mass media channels more commercialized. As such, it may suggest that national socio-cultural contexts make political communication inconsistent and diverse.

Swanson (2004) underlines the following trends in political communication:

- Secularization of politics – the change of relationship between voters and political parties, where the latter has to persuade the voters to support a particular candidate or party for elections.

Political institutions lose their powers to globalized corporate institutions, non-governmental organizations, proliferating single groups, protest movements, and voluntary associations.

- Political marketing – major political parties turn to market experts and opinion polling to seek support at election time. The content of campaigns is focused on winning elections while concentrating on the party leader's personality.
- Political news as exposed – mass media became more motivated by commercial values. Because of this, the media environment became more competitive, opening windows for politicians to manipulate news coverage and journalists resisting it. As a result, political news stories provide an increasingly negative view of politics and politicians.

The following trends prove Blumer's point that political communication happens dynamically, especially in the era of the information revolution and digitalization. Because of this, there is no precise pinpoint of when political communication happens. The most comprehensive academic look at it would be to consider that political communication predominantly occupies the periods of governance of the ruling party or leader and elections when the opponents challenge this incumbent's rule.

During these periods, the interdependent relations between politicians, citizens, and media are seen as the most active. Based on that activity, researchers (Cap & Okulska, 2013) also found that political communication includes mainly the following forms of national political genres: political speeches, election posters, policy papers, debates, press conferences, and political interviews. It can suggest that information transfer happens diversely not only in different national political systems but also on different media channels. They use different communication and media channel, and according to the used one, the nature of communication changes.

Today a significant share of media content is produced not only on conventional media channels, like broadcasted television or printing materials but in the digitalized world of the Internet and social media. This change in the media environment also changes how relationships operate in political communication between actors. For example, traditionally, governmental bodies, such as assemblies or parliaments, were the primary locations of political discussion in face-to-face communication. Today political debates are active not only in the live presence but also in the digital world. This shift allows political figures to promote political debates using diverse media channel types provided by today's mass media: offline and online, opinion-leading and following, alternative and mainstream, public service and private/commercial media, mediated and non-mediated (Salgado, 2014). Such an increase in media channel types influences the goals and behaviors of actors in political communication.

Politicians now face a challenge to adjust their communication strategies to the media environment and provide political messages accordingly to receive maximum voter support. Still, for Salgado, the most efficient way to organize political communication would be to view it as a non-mediated process if politicians control the media channels and communicate their messages directly. This way, it would be impossible for journalists to project politicians in a negative light.

As the Internet and social media platforms allow users to express themselves freely, they also open doors for implementing digital communication strategies to criticize and attack political actors. In political debates, it was considered a standard rhetorical practice to point out inconsistencies in opponents' statements and elevate personal characteristics. With the introduction of media in political communication, behavior patterns changed, and emotional appeal to negativity became much more prominent.

For journalists and media, the Internet provides now a barrier-free environment to freedom of expression, where each voice on the political matter can be expressed. However, studies (Van Aelst et al., 2017) conducted on the media's role in political communication show that digital media change the environment of the communication process and the way political actors and users interact with each other. People still turn to conventional media channels while others use social media channels, so media environments are becoming more fragmented and polarised. People tend to follow media channels with similar political views. Notwithstanding, major news providers are also popular among the population, even if they could be incompatible with individual personal views or preferences.

The electorate's views on politics with the media digitalization also changed. Due to the excessive amount of available media communication channels to transfer political messages, politics became in a way a mediatized entertainment for citizens (Swanson, 2004). This shift resulted in politicians' desire to persuade the opponents and the people on media channels by grabbing their attention. With the rise of the Internet and social media, the process became more expressive and decentralized, allowing political opponents to criticize each other statements or even characters.

To recap the prior research, political communication transformed from a one-way communication between governments and citizens to a more complex study of relations and information transfer between governments, politicians, citizens, and journalists. From the research prism, political communication could be seen as a complex multilevel, multidisciplinary study that focuses on how information is transferred between primary political actors.

Media, in this process, acts as a mediator in transferring the political messages from politicians to audiences. Substantially, as people with time became more attracted to mass media and politics, their role in politics and public communication shifted drastically. It no longer plainly transfers the information to the receivers, as it also influences politics by making the process more mediatized.

How the media environment is structured, and functions in the political system can have a responsive effect on the political communication process.

The Internet and social media provide politicians a platform to spread political messages directly to citizens without journalists' intervention. Citizens, institutions, organizations, political figures, and journalists can express themselves publicly with minimal moderation. As such, they may act as one of the primary media channels of political communication and contribute to the functioning of democratic regimes in developed and developing countries (Riaz, 2010).

At the same time, mass media today are highly commercialized, affecting political communication by fighting for citizens' attention in the media. Since journalists, media agencies, and politicians are highly involved in the process, they can turn to various communication tactics involving emotional reactions and triggers. As such, negativity is seen as a trend in digital media and social networks.

Still, politicians' primary goal in political communication is to gain as much of the elector's vote as possible. Citizens and media's attention to themselves could become an object of desire to achieve this goal. As such, they have to use specific principles and rules to communicate their political agenda, fight the opponent's argumentation, and convince the public to turn their viewpoints to them. Often enough, emotional appeal during this interaction is used not only to criticize the personal character or point out the inconsistencies in the opponent's statements but also to grab broader people's and media attention to the conflict.

This process of political influencing can be explained through political rhetoric and emotional appeal, which will be covered in the following subchapter.

## 1.2. RHETORIC AND EMOTIONAL APPEAL AS A MEAN OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION TO PERSUADE AUDIENCES

### 1.2.1. Political rhetoric

Rhetoric is fundamental in conveying political ideas and information within political communication. As the art of persuasion, rhetoric appeared and was exercised as early as Antiquity Greece, and it gradually became more developed and complex in people's daily interactions.

In literature, academics perceive rhetoric as a skill of effective speech (Cathcart, 1991). The main goals of rhetoric may be defined as the persuasion or influence of selected receivers to act, feel or believe the way the speaker desires in problematic situations.

The term derives from the Greek word *rhetorike*, first mentioned in Plato's dialogue *Gorgias*. There it was referred to as "the art of persuasion" and described the civic art of public speaking, which had been developed in law courts, assemblies, and other formal occasions under constitutional government in the Greek cities of Athenian democracy (Kennedy, 1994).

The main elements of rhetoric were formed in Ancient Greece in the 5th Century BC. At this time, sophists were among the first who started documenting how to conduct speeches. Sophists' rhetoric was characterized by a more literary and poetic style of argumentation, and as such, their speeches were filled with alliteration, assonance, rhyme, and paradoxes (Schiappa, 2009). For them, rhetoric was more of a performative act, and the goal of rhetoric was "*to make the weaker argument defeat, the stronger*" (Haase, 2009, p. 34).

Socrates and Plato later confronted the sophists' position on rhetoric. For them, it was an art that required a set of skills and qualities enquired by a rhetorician. As such, a speaker had to know about a specific topic, proper speech structure, and subject matter to win the attention and support of the audience. However, for a better connection with the audience, the speaker also had to know the audience's "soul" and the nature of human beings. Thus, for Socrates, true rhetoric was a philosophical discourse and the art of "*directing the soul by means of speech*" (Griswold, 2020).

Socrates also divided rhetoric types: into rational and irrational. Rational rhetoric or persuasion was seen as merely providing the audience with new information. Oppositely, irrational rhetoric was typical among poets, and rhapsodes, who evoked emotions to create an image of reality. The audience would perceive this alternative reality and thus would relate to the rhapsode.

At the same time, Socrates recognized that appealing to the unpleasant experience of shame may incline listeners to be more vulnerable to listening to reason. He linked shame with wrongdoing and perceived that the person who committed it "*ought not to hide his injustice but bring it out in the*

open” (Brickhouse & Smith, 2016, p. 25). Moreover, in that sense, the main goal of rhetoric was to get the person to reach this state.

Socrates’ student Plato discussed rhetoric’s purpose and basis in *Gorgias* and *Phaedrus*. As such, in *Gorgias*, rhetoric was looked at as a moral instrument and the instrument of politics. In *Phaedrus*, it was described as an art more from the methodological and technical side (Cope, 1864). An important role in Plato’s rhetoric is placed on the perception of arguments by the audience, which is usually a primary receiver of the desired speeches. For him, valid rhetoric requires competent knowledge of the subject discussed, an understanding of logical proof, and a knowledge of human psychology that would make it possible for arguments to be adapted to an audience (Wagemans, 2003).

The study of rhetoric was further developed by its most significant contributor Aristotle with his manuscript *Rhetoric*. In it, he laid down the main general overview, purpose, and definition of rhetoric and divided the art of persuasion into three main elements: the appeal to logic or reason (*logos*), the appeal to values and trust (*ethos*), and the appeal to emotions (*pathos*).

To achieve proper persuasion, Aristotle sets out three forms of proof, which are provided by the speech: proof of the character of the speaker, proof of putting the listener into a particular condition, and proof of the argument itself through demonstration (Dow, 2015).

The proof states that the character’s speaker must be trustworthy through the arguments he presents in his speech rather than his reputational status. The level of a speaker’s trustworthiness relies on understanding (*phrónēsis*), virtue (*aretē*), and goodwill (*eúnoia*), and a lack of any of the mentioned components would make the speaker seen as untrustworthy.

To be persuaded, audiences must go through a mental process of building trust and emotional affiliation. It includes the existence of acceptable argumentation, reputable premise, active conscious listening, and acceptance of conclusions.

As such, the art of rhetoric gradually developed into a logical-based one, and to this day, most researchers follow the principles and grounds set out by ancient Greek philosophers. As Athens was among the first to implement the democratic public debates on political matters, we can explore the direct links between politics, oratory and rhetoric in modern research theory.

Political rhetoric and oratory are usually analyzed from the theoretical framework of three oratory genres: judicial, deliberative, and epideictic (Reisigl, 2008). Aristotle further divided forensic and political oratory as separate political debates (Aristotle, n.d.). He argued that the predominant focus of political debates is to make decisions on the vital people’s interests, which usually can be of broader issues. Because of this, in political oratory, there is no need to prove anything except the debated fact, and speakers are less motivated to talk about non-essential and non-related topics.



In political oratory, speeches are usually the most common form. A regular speech can be defined as an organized verbal chain of consistent speech, which is given by a single person on a particular social occasion for a specific purpose, and addressed to a specific audience (Reisigl, 2008). Speeches are typically texts, usually written beforehand and produced verbally.

With time the methods of political oratory changed and shifted from a classical speech in person to a mass audience with a loud voice and formal gestures. The forms of expression also changed to textual and electronic means of communication, informal talk, texts, photography and visual images, maps, cartoons, film, and graphic art (Condor & Tileagă, 2013). Academics point out that this transformation resulted in a blur of distinctions between politics and popular culture, where the former becomes a means to entertain citizens. This form of entertainment can grab ordinary citizens' attention and thus activate their political participation (Blaagaard, 2006).

Additionally, rhetoric became a subject of interest and study for scientists from political communication. Załęska (2012) addresses that rhetoric as a research area of political communication is heterogeneous and can be viewed from three dimensions: rhetoric and politics, rhetoric in politics, and rhetoric of politics. From the view of political analysis, she names three criteria commonly used while addressing rhetoric and politics:

- the way of speaking (reasonable discourses on making good choices within the available possibilities);
- the source (who counts as a politician);
- the theme (any subject concerning human relationships).

Condor, Tilega, and Bilig (2013) view the art of persuasion as a central component of politics, with debates being an essential core of democracy function. They note that the perspective of viewing rhetoric as a single discipline changed in modern days and now includes studies from linguistics, political theory, international relations, communication studies, and psychology.

To recap the provided theories, the primary object of political rhetoric is the discussion of vital interests. Persuasion of other political actors can then be seen as a central goal of political oratory and communication. Actors involved in this process of information transfer are unique and political researchers point to three leading players: politicians, the news media, and citizens (Norris, 2001). Thus, rhetoric is an undeniable core of modern politics and is directly linked to the functioning of democracy in Western states.

In the following paragraph, we will detail how appeal on the emotional level is present in political rhetoric.



### 1.2.2. Emotional appeal in political rhetoric

As stated in the previous research, Greek philosophers considered persuasion to work only if some of the appeals in the speaker's statement and performance are present, and emotional appeal is one of them. The founders of rhetoric thoroughly studied how people receive emotions and their functions in human interactions as part of social factors and as a means to persuade.

Socrates to explain how emotions influence rhetoric looked at it through his own understanding of emotions. Brickhouse and Smith (2016) state that Socrates, while being a rationalist and cognitivist, viewed emotions as cognitions - a part of information transferred between people. They were in many ways caused and based on personal non-rational beliefs and therefore were resistant to reason.

Socrates distinguished the emotions and emotional states according to anger (*thumos*), pleasure (*hedone*), sorrow (*lupe*), love (*eros*), and fear (*phobos*). They were regarded as cognitive states, and any appeal to them he would consider irrational.

For Plato, emotions were seen as the initial part of the formed argument since they are present in people – holders of any possible arguments (Rabbås, 2022). He expanded the understanding of Socrates by looking at emotions not only as a part of the personal character but as an integral part of the community and society's functioning. Emotions appear in the lives of individuals as members of a community, and they are concerned with how the individual relates and should relate to the other members of that community and oneself. Emotions thus present the agents with practical and deliberative options and problems they must deal with. Additionally, emotions were subject to criticism and justification, as they are natural responses to one's perceived circumstances and must be addressed as such.

Aristotle had a similar view to Plato's, but emotions were inherently political for him. He was convinced they could enrich or endanger a political order depending on how they were modulated. For him, emotions were integral to society and involved judgments and perceptions.

Sokolon, having analyzed Aristotle's texts, argues that rhetoric can shape emotional judgments and induce audiences to adopt specific emotions, thus receiving the desired rhetorician response (Sokolon, 2006). Hence, emotions such as anger, love, fear, and shame have a decisive role in societal and political life functioning, as they can be countered against or in favor of established political governments. For example, anger can be directed against tyranny, while love can form a civic friendship and community stability. At the same time, an excessiveness of emotions can pose a threat by corrupting judgment and fostering improper favoritism.

From Ancient Greece, the study of rhetoric gradually transferred to the modern age, and scholars built up the theory of emotional appeal in rhetoric from Aristotle's definition.

For example, in defining *pathos*, Gaglich and Zickel (2018) referred to the author's desire to make the audience to become open to the topic or argument, evoke a set of emotions, and thus agree with the author's claim. Because emotions can make people vulnerable, authors can use this the vulnerable state of the audience to get them to believe that the argument is compelling and persuasive. They state that emotional-based appeal includes the following components:

- Expressive description of people, places, or events which might help the reader to feel or experience those events;
- Vivid imaginary of people, places, or events that guide the reader to feel like he or she sees those events;
- Sharing personal anecdotes which can make the reader feel a connection to, or empathy for, the individual being described;
- Using emotion-rich vocabulary to put the reader into a specific emotional mindset;
- Use the information that will evoke an emotional response by making the audience feel empathy or disgust for the discussed matter.

Including these elements would make the reader capable of getting the feeling or experiences of described events or people, feeling connection or empathy to it, and getting in a specific emotional mindset.

The widespread emotional appeal to an audience can also be encouraged using various rhetorical techniques, for example, episodic storytelling frames, as opposed to the broader thematic frames of the discussions. They can increase persuasion if the individual's story is compelling enough to generate intense emotional reactions from a significant portion of the audience (Gross, 2008).

Another technique is the skillful use of positive symbolic and emotional codes (Losoke, 2009). In that sense, rhetoric works effectively when the most widely held and deeply embraced symbolic codes are being used. At the same time, those whose meaning can be found as one-dimensional, contested, binary, or dramatic are omitted.

Emotions are additionally integrated into political communication and can act as a tool for media, politicians, and citizens to provoke rhetorical changes in political discourse (Cislaru, 2012). As such, the media can construct the emotion of fear to create tension around politically important news, while anger can be easily provoked to meet the similar goal.

Additionally, negative emotional expressions in public discourses can communicate the approval of the speaker's status. As such, people would give more power or status to a speaker who expresses anger than someone who expresses sadness since both emotional expressions communicate different traits (Tiedenz, 2001). Appeal to negative emotions, such as fear, contempt, or disappointment, is also used ubiquitously to associate with the opponent's claims when another human opponent is

present (e.g., in political debates) and the opponent lingers to *the status quo*, which author seeks to change (Dlugan, 2010).

Additionally, in effective persuasion, it is essential not to over-amplify the emotional appeal, as the emotionality of the speaker may overshadow the content. The audience would then convert this act as ingenious and hollow and, as a result, reject the message delivery. As Varpio states, “*When it comes to pathos, a light hand is best*” (Varpio, 2018, p. 209).

The prior research on the classical understanding of rhetoric shows that it has developed in a complex study where cultural, societal, political, and psychological aspects are included. From the period of Ancient Greece, where rhetoric was used primarily to discuss political matters, it expanded to be seen as a tool for political changes, performative acts, and art itself.

Empirical studies showed that there exist differences in the persuasive powers of different rhetorical elements. As such, an appeal to authority (*ethos*) is far more potent than using metaphors or statements undermining the motives of arguing opponents (Blumenau & Lauderdale, 2020). As for emotional appeal, studies found that emotional content does not directly predict persuasiveness. However, the setting of delivered speeches is vital to consider in analysis, as recorded speech on video can have different effects persuasively than a written one. The appeal of emotions would be applied differently then.

Emotions play a crucial role in rhetoric as they devote to the spoken story, making the arguments more persuasive. While being rational and irrational, the role of the speaker is essential, as his trustworthiness, ability to be relatable to the audience, knowledge of the discussed topic, and logical proof -, all play primary roles in persuasion.

Today the study of rhetoric includes different techniques and methods to increase the speaker’s persuasive power and argumentation, for example, sharing personal stories, episodic storytelling frames, emotionally-rich vocabularies, and vivid descriptions. These techniques have to be using everyday language and sign in a modern heterogeneous society and not be over-used so as not to scare off the audience.

Both positive and negative emotions may increase the persuasion levels depending on the context of an argument. However, as the academic review suggests, negative emotions can increase persuasion in political debates as they could give the speaker the power of authority over the opponent.

After we have defined the emotional appeal in political rhetoric, we should shed more light on negative emotions and how this appeal exists in modern digitalized political communication. In the following subchapter, the literature review on this exact subject is provided.

### 1.3. NEGATIVITY AND CYNICISM IN MODERN POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

As presented in the previous theoretical review, the rise of negativity in mass media is one of the dominant trends and effects in political communication. People, as well as politicians, somehow consider discussing politics more negatively than anything else. Mass media, in that sense, not only projects and transfers negative messages to audiences or acts as a sole mediator, but it also has its' share in shaping public opinion. In political communication, the role of mass media in public opinion formation is explained with the spiral of silence theory.

The theory states that people form their opinions on emotionally or morally weighted issues due to an individual's fear of becoming socially isolated (Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, n.g.). People would prefer to remain silent and hide their opinion away if that would expose them to isolation pressure. Moreover, in contrast, those who have the most support in their opinions tend to state them more explicit and louder in public.

The theory states that in this process, mass media has a decisive influence on the formation of public opinion. Thus, if the media is sided with a specific viewpoint of opinion leaders, then the position of this party will have a higher chance of media coverage and conclusively in public opinion.

Although formulated in the 1970s, the spiral of silence theory is still being discussed vastly and tested by scholars. They are eager to understand if similar conditions apply to the modern age with digital media usage in political communication. For example, in recent public opinion research, it was found that nowadays, the relationship between opinion climate perception and political opinion expression is stronger and more robust (Matthes et al., 2017). The research results also showed that these relationships were similar both in a live communication environment and online, proving that people form their opinions and stay silent in each media environment.

The social of silence theory thus can be applied to explain the grounds of the negativity spread in media and its influence on public formations. In another research, Malaspina (2014) found that digitalized media boost individuals' desire to state their opinions on political matters. This activity was evident during the Italian Parliament elections campaign. Due to the anonymity option and perceived empowerment of speaking out about politics on the Internet, users were less inclined to experience the fear of social isolation. At the same time, this communication environment enabled users to turn to negativity and aggression when mentioning politics and political leaders.

Further research explored which factors made people turn to cynicism in online media and digital networks. As such, the intensity of emotions also can set a tone and environment for people to express their negativity online (Masullo et al., 2021). People are willingly more turned on to speak out based on the higher usage of uncivil words and expressions. If the emotional responses of anger and

depression are triggered to intense levels, people are more likely to speak out despite the existing opinion climate. On top of that, negative engagement online is linked to a user's psychological desire for self-presentation and approval of self-worth (Liu et al., 2017).

People would not be engaged in the discussion on media, which proposes the opposite topic, since the media formats it in the first place. At the same time, they engage in public discussions of politics in democratic states.

Media as a mediator not only transfers political information to the public but also gathers opinions from the most active and supported opinion leaders. The popular opinions are then presented to a broader audience and discussed. Those in favor of one opinion – approve it and spread it further, while the ones who do not stay silent search for opinions that follow their line of thinking. The process then begins again in a spiral.

Thus, the spiral of silence theory can explain how media spreads negativity by users and how more people become attracted to it, both in real-life interaction and online. However, the issue should also be addressed in the context of politician's interactions and their campaigns to understand the negativity trend in media.

Negative campaigning and attacks against political opponents, their reasons, the media coverage of it, and public reactions have the attention of communication and political scientists. Today most of the research on negative or emotional appeal in political communication focuses on media coverage, public perception, and political rhetoric, primarily during the election campaigns.

Lipsitz and Geer (2017) define negativity in political communication as advertising or a statement criticizing the opposing candidate. At the same time, they consider that news media, the public, and scholars view negativity differently.

Some of the overviewed reasons for negativity in political campaigning may include the following researchers' findings:

- People expect different content and meaning from political campaigns (Lipsitz et al., 2005). Those actively involved in political life want more substantive and deliberative campaigns and debates on issues. Less involved citizens request more demanding campaigns to evaluate candidates with minimal effort.
- National party systems have a relation to the presence of negativity. As such, the US's two-party system involves more negative campaigning and attacks on politicians' traits. At the same time, the European multiparty system has slightly lower levels of negativity, focusing more on the issues. (Walter, 2014)
- The number of parties affects the chances of political attacks. The campaigns get more negative as the number of running parties increases since the ideological distance in the party system

becomes more extensive and the degree of political conflict at the time of the election grows (Elmelund- Præstekær & Helle Mølgaard, 2014).

- Challengers and the parties located further from the ideological center are likely to go negative campaigning. At the same time, incumbents are more likely to aim for positive campaigns, making them the victims of political attacks (Nai, 2020).
- The period toward elections is connected to the chances of negative campaigning. As such, the closer the elections day, the more attacks and the tonality of negativity among politicians on social media (Gross & Kaylee, 2016).

Understanding the reasons for political negativity campaigns would help to identify when they occur and how the media treats the negativity. Usually, negativity and criticism of opposing political parties or leaders are present on each media channel, whether conventionally broadcasted, printed, or digital.

At the same time, both negative and positive appeals in political campaigns attract the citizen's attention and media coverage. Positive campaigns received more media attention, and enthusiastic appeals were the primary reason for it (Gerstlé & Nai, 2019). At the same time, negative campaigns, where attacks on other political actors and appeals to fear were used, also successfully grabbed media and public attention.

Politicians willingly or unintentionally aware of the pattern of grading media attention with negative or positive statements. With that idea, they are likely to use different media channels to spread negativity. As such, broadcasted radio-, televised, and printed media were found to have similar levels of political negativity presence. However, in live debates, where politicians face each other, the negativity was found to be slightly higher than in other conventional media channels (Walter & Vliegthart, 2010). It can suggest us that on live interaction, political candidates are to respond on the spot, as they cannot prepare all the answers beforehand and thus must exercise their skills for immediate argumentation.

Swanson (2004) saw that because of the clash of politicians and independent journalists to control the media coverage, news on politics and politicians became more negative in their tonality, focusing skeptically on politicians' motives. As such, these journalist practices led to the growing public cynicism and mistrust of political actors and institutions in Western democracies. The mistrust also followed the loss of the public's confidence in their governments.

At the same time, the negativity and cynicism may temporarily be stopped. Swanson (2004) argues that these journalists' practices step down in times of internal or external crises, such as terrorist attacks. Therefore, the trend of growing negativity should be seen as a snapshot of times when the public has a broad political consensus.

Parties, which stand on the opposing ideological spectrum, and their candidates attack each other on digital communication media with emotional appeal. To attract users' attention, political actors frequently criticize opponents through the appeal to emotion, such as fear and enthusiasm. That increases the public's interest in political rivalry and competition (Marcos-García et al., 2021). Scholars also found out that traditional political parties using the Facebook platform appeal to the emotions of fear. In contrast, the newly emerged parties focus the messages on creating the illusion and enthusiasm for political change.

Lengauer (Lengauer, 2011) proposed a methodology to identify negativity in media empirically. According to him, the following aspects should be taken into consideration:

1. Negative tonality of a story - the overall tonality, which can cover negative (e.g. retrospective, concurrent, threatening, disputing, criticizing) and or positive (e.g. focus on political success, achievements of prosperity) aspects and fall in the bad or good news category respectively.
2. Pessimistic outlook in the story - can be framed as either optimistic or pessimistic and can cover one-sided, two-sided, or multi-sided disputes.
3. The story focused on conflict – the depiction of conflicted interests displayed from both sides between individuals, groups, institutions, and political views.
4. The story focused on incapability and misconduct - conflict manifests as a one-way accusation, ranging from critique to allegations.
5. Negative tone towards political actors and their organizations - can differ from unfavorable to favorable, adversarial to supportive, and positive to negative.

The proposed characteristics by Lengauer suggest that negativity is researched in the news media content and can be helpful for detecting emotional appeal in rhetorical content analysis.

Based on the prior literature overview, we can state that there exists a link between negativity in political campaigns and the media. Depending on the national party system, parties or candidates' qualities, and election periods, the negativity in campaigns becomes more intense. With it also comes increased media coverage, as the negative sentiments attract the public. Considering the spiral theory, people then turn more to these sentiments by speaking out, and thus this trend persists.

For politicians, the negativity trend becomes a challenging environment to operate and strategically find common grounds and communicate statements that criticize the political opponents and shed light on their ideal vision of national policy developments. Rhetoric is the viable cornerstone and possible solution for the problematic task in adverse public opinion environments. For them, it is essential to get greater media attention and public awareness, thus possibly attracting more support and approval from the broader electorate. Those political figures who operate the skill of rhetoric can persuade audiences using different rhetorical elements and techniques.

Having defined the role of media in modern political communication, we will investigate how it operates by one of the most public figures in politics – presidents. In the following subchapter, we will define how general emotions and negativity included are used in presidential during political crises.



#### 1.4. PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC IN POLITICAL CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Government leaders are the political actors in political communication who have to utilize rhetoric primarily. They are the ones, who often have to be in communication with the citizens they represent, and address governments, political figures, foreign representatives, and the media.

Presidents, particularly, are the democratically elected figures who politically lead the state. It is in their power not only to be responsible for the stable functioning of governmental institutions by overseeing the policy implementations but also for the stability of communities and people, which the presidents symbolically represent.

In political communication, they are the ones who utilize political rhetoric the most. As Stuckey states, their rhetoric involves "*...more or less equal parts policy advocacy, the creation and maintenance of institutional capacities for governance, the provision of interventional resources, national representation, and civic engagement*" (Stuckey, 2015, p. 70).

Neustadt (1960) proposed that despite having constitutional powers granted by the Constitution and political powers as the party's head, presidents also have the power to persuade the government and influence public opinion. He argues that status and authority, which presidents have in the public eyes, add to his ability to persuade a government of separated institutions sharing powers.

As further developed by Edwards (2008), the president uses rhetoric as a principal tool of governance to shape the public perception of subjects. It is done to win support for various principles, positions, and policies, which potentially can be beneficial in a democratic state.

Windt Jr. (1986), in his studies of presidential rhetoric, mentions four main categories: criticism of single speeches, criticism of rhetorical movements, development of genres of presidential speeches, and miscellaneous articles on various ancillary topics dealing with presidential rhetoric. Single speeches further fall into the categories of inaugural addresses, where presidents attempt to declare the set of new administration's actions and try to articulate the unspoken desires of people, and "crisis" speeches. Presidents usually declare a crisis or confront a crisis with a speech, for example, former president of the United States Jimmy Carter's public address to confront the existence of an energy crisis or President Nixon's speech on the war in Vietnam.

International crises and wars create additional stress for almost all public spheres. Wars bring violence and destruction between states, changing people's lives, government functioning, state affairs, economy, infrastructure, and land use. Government leaders in these demanding times then have to gather all this intel information of the wartime situation, process it, make a critical decision and communicate it to the public for comprehension.

The decision the country leaders may make would consequently affect the events of the conflict either to its escalation or minimization. Furthermore, it would undeniably affect the lives of regular people. Since this political duty requires working in a stressful environment, they have to publicly prove their strategic and analytical thinking, as well as political and administrative dedication and leadership. Furthermore, for that, presidential rhetoric must be utilized consistently and persuasively.

A study (Wallace et al., 1993) demonstrates a direct link between the complexity of information processing and presidential public speeches delivered during the war. In other words, if the information on the war or crisis delivered through presidential speeches is more complex, then the more stressful environment of crisis and war is present. It can thus provide an early warning indicator of those leaders' decisions and actions. At the same time, audience perception and its views on the policy is also a crucial factor in presidential rhetoric delivery. If the state leader does not know the audience's view, he may increase the complexity level of information delivery. At the same time, if a political figure is firmly accountable for the position and committed to defending it, then information delivery becomes less complicated and is perceived easily by citizens.

Communication research shows that the audience of presidential rhetoric would look at the essential information delivered to them and how it is delivered. Also, the president's character or *ethos* is taken into consideration. For example, when addressing the country's issues, presidents have to mention the output information in such a way as to persuade people to a policy change. A comparative study of the presidents' rhetoric of Lithuania and Estonia (Rajala, 2020) found that both presidents similarly used extensive numeric information to describe the economic outcomes in the country, for example, by speaking the language in a manner as regular people generally do. Additionally, the speech length, academic background, political and presidential career, and age were among other reasons that influenced the public perception of presidents' rhetoric.

Audiences react to the characteristics of the president and, at the same time, the integrity of conducted speeches in times of crisis or war. In a discourse-historical analysis of speeches to prepare for war Graham, Keenan, and Dowd (2004), identified the similar communication patterns of state leaders such as Pope Urban II, Queen Elizabeth I, and Adolf Hitler. The findings revealed that in public speeches, they used the following rhetorical patterns: an appeal to a legitimate power source external to the speaker, an appeal to the importance of the national culture under attack, the construction of an evil enemy, and an appeal for unification.

On 11 September 2001, the militant extremist Islamic group Al-Qaeda attacked the population of the United States of America, thus killing almost 3 thousand people. After the terrorist attack, the active president at that time George W. Bush and his administration publicly addressed the American citizens with a speech declaring the "War on Terror". Political and communication scientists

conducted several types of research in analyzing Bush's rhetoric against terrorism and its eventual preparation for the military invasion of Iraq.

Bush's public speeches were filled with the discourse of good and evil. By the context of it, the USA was about to "*eradicate all the evil*", and the conflict was described as a war between freedom and fear, between "*those governed by fear*" who "*want to destroy our wealth and freedoms*" (Kellner, 2007, p. 626) and those on the side of freedom. Bush's rhetoric was exceeded with hyperbolic meanings, and this use of metaphorical communication codes was aimed at a specific audience, particularly the domestic Christian right-wing groups (Kellner, 2001).

At the same time, former president Bush's speech on 11 September was artfully deployed with symbolic and emotional codes. By utilizing the various combinations of structural positions, personal experiences, and political references, the speech had to encourage an American citizen to the emotions of fear, anger, pride, and patriotism. However, the results depended on the receiving segment audience, as some of the citizens could have been more easily dramatizing the evil nature of the enemy. At the same time, other groups could be more sensitive to fear appeals (Loseke, 2016).

Research conducted by De Castella and McGarty (2011) shows how government leaders of the United States and the United Kingdom utilized the emotional arousal of fear and anger in their rhetoric about terrorist attacks. Accordingly, the highest levels of anger and fear appeals were present in their rhetoric after the 9/11 attack and before the War in Iraq. The content and styling were similarly the same as they echoed each other. At the same time, Bush's appeal to fear and anger in the speeches coincided with the declining public ratings for his presidency and support for government policy in military involvement.

In other non-military crises, such as during the COVID-19 pandemic, presidents and government leaders addressed citizens and governmental bodies. Montiel, Uyheng, and Dela Paz (2021) found that their rhetoric was focused on promoting institutional responses and encouraging individual action of citizens to countermeasure the further spreading of the pandemic. State leaders achieved this by mobilizing the government institutions from the upper power levels, enforcing global unity between citizens and international communities with a value of peace, encouraging communal cooperation and citizen participation, invoking national greatness, and assuring responsive governance to accommodate the daily citizen's needs during a crisis.

In summary, rhetoric for presidents is a powerful tool for asserting governance and authority. As such, they can use it to ensure the stable functioning of government for policy advocacy, citizen engagement, national representation, and persuasion of governments and citizens. Presidential rhetoric aims to effectively persuade a wider segment of citizens to support the political agenda.

For that, scholars point out that persuasiveness depends on the complexity of the speeches' texts, length, use of numeric words, and overall information delivery. As such, the more complex the

speech for the public audience, the less persuasive it will be. On top of that, age, political and presidential career, and background also play a role in the public perception of presidential rhetoric.

During national crises or wars, presidents, in their rhetoric, have to rely on emotional appeal, as wars and military conflicts, in their nature, are times of intense difficulty and changes for each state's citizens. As such, they could appeal to fear, anger, pride, and patriotism by constructing narratives on national unity, cooperation, conciliarity, and participation. Additionally, the presence of emotional arousal in rhetoric could hint at the president's rating, as this way, they may find political support from the voting public.

Presidential speeches can also act as tools to seek support and partnership in a geopolitical arena, as government leaders may echo each other in their public speeches when discussing the same war events. They may construct the rhetoric to promote conflict resolution, unification, institutional response, and encouragement for citizens' actions to countermeasure the crisis effects.

Considering the previously described theoretical framework for political communication, political rhetoric, emotional appeals, and its link to presidents, we now have a setup to analyze the topic in detail. The described research methodology, as well as received research findings, will be defined in the following chapter.

## 2. THE USE OF EMOTIONS IN PRESIDENTIAL RHETORIC DURING WAR

### 2.1. EMOTIONAL APPEAL IN ZELENSKYY'S RHETORIC DURING THE RUSSIAN FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE

#### 2.2.1. Research methodology

The analysis of the literature on presidential rhetoric during crises and war shows that it is part of political rhetoric and communication, where different rhetorical techniques and elements are being employed. These include but are not limited to the usage of the discourse on good and evil, appeal to governmental and presidential authority, warning the national culture being under attack, construction of an evil enemy, and appeal to national unification.

The emotional appeal in the war addresses is also present, having played a role of another rhetorical technique of persuasion not only the citizens but governments as well. A negative emotional appeal, specifically to fear and anger towards the enemy, is usually present in the speeches of presidential war rhetoric.

The goals of presidential persuasion in a time of military escalations are not explicitly defined but may be hypothesized as seeking political support for the national military policy and strategy. Presidential addresses are public, so the audience in this persuasion may be internal, e.g., the country's citizens and internal government, and external, e.g., foreign government leaders, neighboring states, and international organizations. Therefore, public addresses by presidents during wartime would have to rely on a wide spectrum of emotional appeals, both positive to ease the crisis and negative to judge the destructive consequences of war.

The prior theoretical research suggests that negative emotions are more likely to increase persuasiveness. Appeal to negativity is evident in the modern media environment, as it is regularly present in political communication during political campaigns, and negative news attracts people's attention. Additionally, the president has a high institutional power, and by appealing to negative emotions, one can prove and validate the institutional and state authority.

Therefore, in this research, we **aim** to identify the usage of emotional appeal in presidential rhetoric during the full-scale military invasion. Which set of emotions are present in the president's rhetoric in addresses to different audiences to seek support during war conflict would then be formulated as a **research question**.

As such, the specific tasks of the research could be defined as follows:

1. To identify the set of negative and positive emotions used in presidential rhetoric;

2. Trace the most used words;
3. To determine the addressing audiences, topics, and context in the use of negative emotional appeal;
4. Identify the sentiment types in presidential rhetoric by the daily net and the audiences;
5. Define used rhetorical devices in presidential rhetoric in relation to the given context.

The hypotheses for the research could be defined as such:

*H1: Negative emotional expressions such as fear and anger are used in the president's public addresses during the war for criticism.*

*H2: Positive emotions such as trust and anticipation are used in the president's public addresses during the war to seek more support from the international audience.*

To test the initial hypothesis, we gathered the researched data from the actual case scenario, where presidential rhetoric consists of emotional appeals. Additionally, the period for the research was focused on rhetoric shortly before and during the war. The public speeches of President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy during the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine provide a possibility to examine how public addresses of government heads might differentiate on a positive, negative or neutral emotional spectrum during the war. The results will then unveil which emotions were prerequisites for the political influence to seek political and military support from other country leaders or international organizations.

The research methods used in the case study research are the following:

- Case study. The case study method provides an in-depth investigation of a particular communication issue method with a special focus on real-life context. This method is used as it provides an opportunity to analyze the phenomenon in detail which happens naturally in social and political environments. Some of the limitations of the case study method may include the non-usage of statistical data and inconsistency in clearing out the research process if the methodology is not clearly defined (Mairescu-Murphy, 2020).
- Sentiment analysis. The natural language processing method implies the emotional tone's identification in a body or text. The process is done through data mining, machine learning, and text mining. It is helpful in defining the polarity, subjects, and opinion holders in texts. Some of the drawbacks of this method may include the misidentification of neutral statements and the inability of machines to recognize the tone and context of textual data (TechTarget, 2021).
- Textual content analysis. This method provides an opportunity to identify and trace occurrences of specific messages and message characteristics stated in the text. The process utilizes the selection of text, determining the selection of texts to code, and classifying the content into creative categories (Frey et al., 1999). Textual content analysis has advancing sides, such as

using qualitative and quantitative methods and using already available authentic information, which is relatively inexpensive. At the same time, this method may be more time-consuming and subjective, use a reductive approach and ignore the data's context (Barkley, 2021).

In our methodology the quantitative content analysis detects the text's most frequent use of words. We used it to analyze the content of which words were operated the most and thus potentially had more meaning. For the qualitative content analysis, we processed the most frequent use of rhetorical techniques, repeated rhetorical elements, and built narratives that came during speeches.

### **2.1.2. Research design**

The case study research is designed with the inclusion of both quantitative and qualitative parts. The quantitative part consists of sentiment analysis to identify the emotions addressed toward the target and receiving audiences. In this part, we analyze the presence of sentiment types according to positive and negative ones and distinct emotions.

The second research part is followed by a qualitative content analysis, where the main objective is to identify emotional appeals within the political context. It was done by analyzing the speeches' content on the most frequent word use and the presence of various rhetorical devices and techniques used for emotional triggering.

For the primary analysis we took the period of all public addresses of Volodymyr Zelenskyy from February 2022 - April 2022. It covers the whole first phase of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. As military fronts were opened on 24 February 2022 by Russian President Vladimir Putin with the announcement of a "special military operation", the attacks were launched on Northern, North-eastern, Eastern, and Southern parts of Ukraine. By the end of March, after having not achieved the initial operations tasks of taking the capital of Kyiv, Kharkiv, Sumy, and Chernihiv regions primarily, the Russian government announced that the first phase of the "military operation" was finished (Aljazeera, 2022). As a result, the Russian troops left the Kyiv, Sumy, Chernihiv, and partly Kharkiv regions, thus closing the Northern and Northeastern fronts and ending the first phase of the Russian invasion.

The first public speech on the possible conflict escalation from the Russian Federation was delivered by President Volodymyr Zelenskyy at the Munich Security Conference on 19 February 2022, 10 months after the initial build-up of military equipment and troops on the border of Ukraine (Reuters, 2021). The next public address was followed on the day of the Russian invasion on 24 February 2022. Afterward, the Ukrainian president made public addresses every day, usually two and a maximum of four times per day.



The last covered speech within the research analysis was delivered on 09 April 2022. On this day, the United Kingdom's Prime Minister Boris Johnson met face-to-face with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy during an unannounced visit to Kyiv. As was stated by Boris Johnson's spokesperson, the prime minister was using the unannounced visit to set out a new package of financial and military aid (Harding & Skopeliti, 2022). The British leader's visit to Ukraine may be viewed as not only a significant political one but a symbolic one as well. This way, Boris Johnson could signal to other Western leaders that visiting Ukraine is possible and that sending military and financial aid to Ukraine is of utmost importance.

### **2.1.3. Data collection and data coding:**

The research data set consists of the period of investigation, the number of speeches analyzed, the date of the provided speech, the speeches' text, and the receivers to whom the speeches were addressed. As such, the research sample size consists of 93 speeches, and the number of words used in the speeches totaled 5,693 entries.

They were extracted and collected from the official web page of The Presidential Office of Ukraine (<https://www.president.gov.ua/en>). Because of the international nature of the war, the transcribed texts of all the president's speeches are accessible in English translation.

After going through each speech, the additional variables to identify the target and receiving audience were applied. To identify the variable of the target audience, we followed the beginning of the speech, where Zelenskyy would formally address the audience to whom he was talking.

Identifying the receiving audience requires a more complex approach since this detection process is highly context depended. As such, during the speech, additional messages were spoken out indirectly to other audiences, for example, in the form of approval, gratitude, and criticism towards other government leaders, organizations, or foreign citizens for their political passiveness or ingratiating the Russian side. There are also instances where in the middle of the speech, Volodymyr Zelenskyy begins to address the Russian or Belarussian people by switching to the Russian language. It is also presumed that other than initially intended group audiences may have received the speeches' messages when publicly addressed to international organizations or state parliaments. These groups could be, for instance, the organization's member states, neighboring countries, and international organizations.

The sentiment analysis method was administered with text mining tools to evaluate the emotions within the textual-based data in a time-efficient way. Considering that R Studio provides an opportunity for meaningful text-based data analysis based on a machine-learning application, the downloadable package "tidytext" was employed (Silge & Robinson, 2017). The "tidytext" provides



an opportunity to handle the big textual data for analysis by tokenizing the text or a word per table row. Other packages were additionally employed within the use of "tidytext" were "dplyr", "tidyr", "broom". Furthermore, for data cleaning, the packages "tidyverse" (Wickham & Grolemund, 2017) and "stopwords" (Benoit et al., 2021) were additionally relayed. The "tidyverse" package was used for a base data analysis in R studio with a set of packages using the same philosophy of functionality and language. The "stopwords" package provides the ability to detect and delete the stopwords from the data in text analysis, which we used for clean-up of the textual data.

The following methods were applied while using "tidytext" package:

- Counting the frequencies of word usage and visualizing it in a word cloud format (with additional use of "wordcloud" package);
- Using the general-purpose sentiment lexicons, which are based on single words:
  - Bing - to spread the words in positive and negative categories;
  - NRC - to categorize the words into categories of positive, negative, anger, anticipation, disgust, fear, joy, sadness, surprise, and trust;
  - AFINN – to score the words on a scale between -5 and 5, where a negative score indicates negative sentiments, while a positive score indicates positive ones.

The established data results were then visualized in charts and graphs. The research data results will be presented in the following chapters, starting with the quantitative research results and followed by the qualitative one.

## 2.2. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH RESULTS

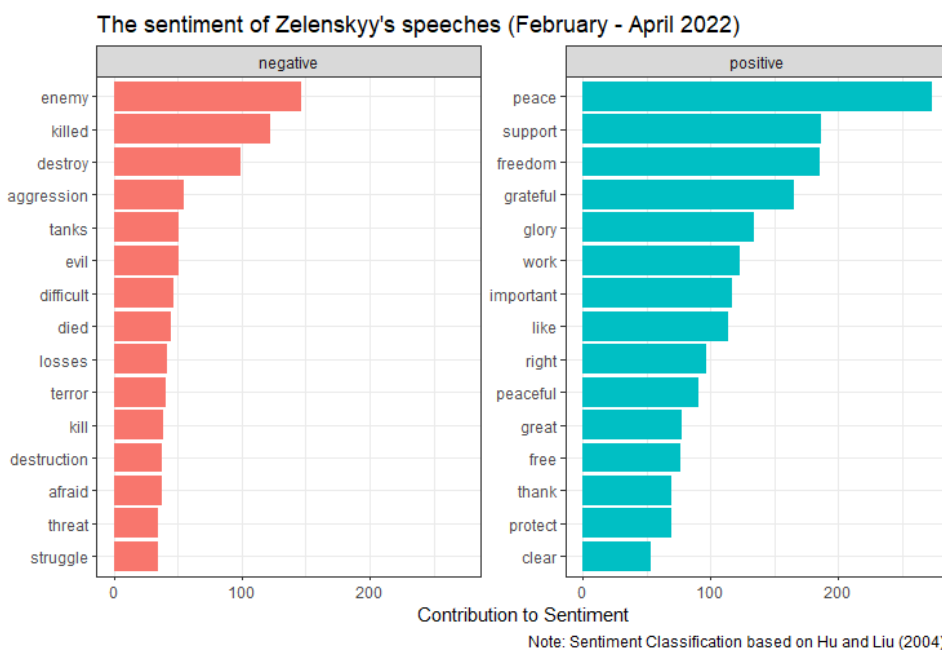
The quantitative analysis is divided into two paragraphs to separately investigate the correlation between negative and positive sentiments and distinct emotions present in rhetoric.

### 2.2.1. Negative and positive sentiments

After applying the Bing lexicon to detect how polarized the speeches were, the sentiment analysis showed an uneven spread (**Figure 1**). By the usage of frequencies negative emotional sentiments were falling behind positive ones. The word usage of positive sentiment was detected with higher overall usage than the negative range.

The most consequently used words with over 100 mentions with negative sentiments were “enemy”, “killed”, and “destroy”. Afterward, the frequency of negatively assigned terms mentioned in this category decreased by double and continued to fall gradually.

On the other hand, positive sentiments were presented to with higher regularity usage. As such, there were eight instances where the positive words had more than 100 mentions, specifically “peace”, “support”, “freedom”, “grateful”, “glory”, “work”, “important”, “like”.



**Figure 1. The sentiment of Zelenskyy’s speeches (February – April 2022).**

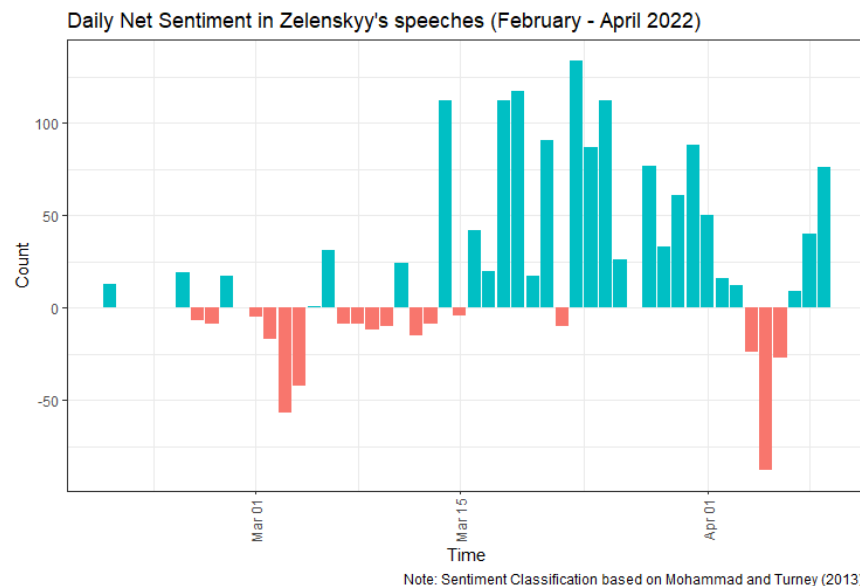
**Figure 2** visualizes the results of conducted sentiment analysis with the AFINN lexicon by a daily net. Throughout the first days of the invasion until the end of February, the sentiments were dominantly positive, with the total sentiment count value reaching up to 24 rates. From March

onwards, overall sentiments reduced to more negative, reaching -53 at the lowest drop, where it slightly increased to positive.

The negative trend, however, stayed the same until the 14 of March. From this day onwards, the overall sentiments reached the highest peak at the 155-rate maximum. It remained stable until a sudden drop on 03-08 of April, presumably after uncovering the Russian war crimes in Bucha. Afterward, the trend reversed and returned to a positive one, as in the second half of March.

Overall, the results presented on the graph imply that daily the sentiments in Zelenskyy's speeches had significant negative and positive implications during the first phase of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. However, the general trend is that positive sentiments maintained major.

The data received from the analysis using the Bing sentiment lexicon further supported this argument. Positive word uses within the presidential speeches in total count prevailed over the negative ones.



**Figure 2. Daily Net Sentiment in Zelenskyy's speeches (February – April 2022).**

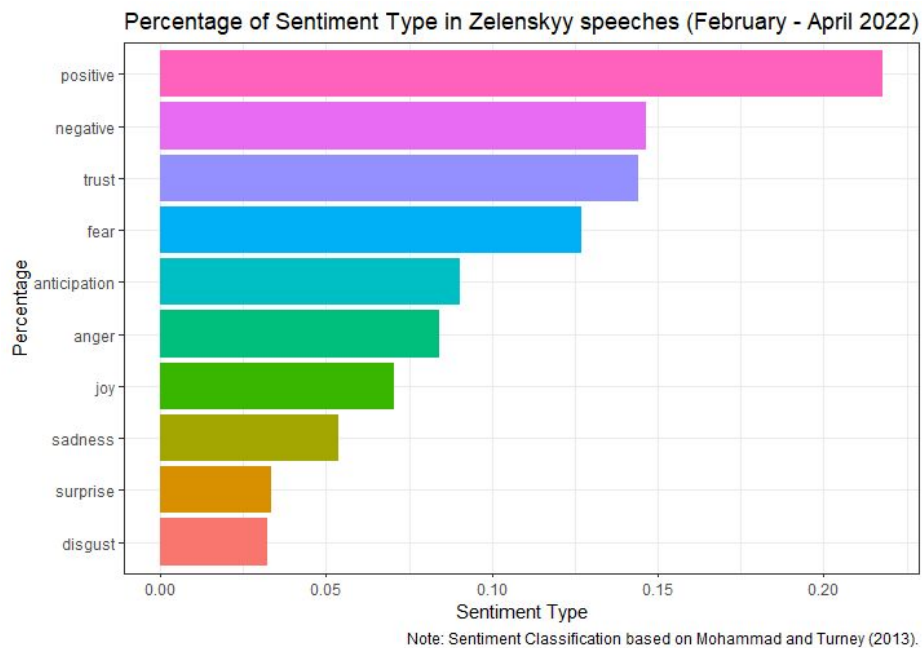
### 2.2.2. Distinct emotions

So far, the appeal to positive emotions seems to be more prevailing in Zelenskyy's speeches than the negative ones. However, analysis using another lexicon on the data provided more interesting and detailed results on specific sentiments.

By applying the NRC lexicon to all of the data, the results were striking (**Figure 3**) and came up with the following positions of sentiment type percentage: positive (0,223), negative (0,148), trust (0,147), fear (0,135), anticipation (0,082), anger (0,078), joy (0,065), sadness (0,055), surprise

(0,034), disgust (0,033). The positive sentiments were seen as dominant and prevailed over negative ones again.

Negative and trust were present on a corresponding level, after which the sentiment of fear came. Gradually the emotional appeal then fell from anticipation and anger to joy and sadness. Surprise and disgust were seen as the most irregular of all the sentiments.



**Figure 3. The distribution of sentiment types in Zelenskyy’s speeches (February-April 2022).**

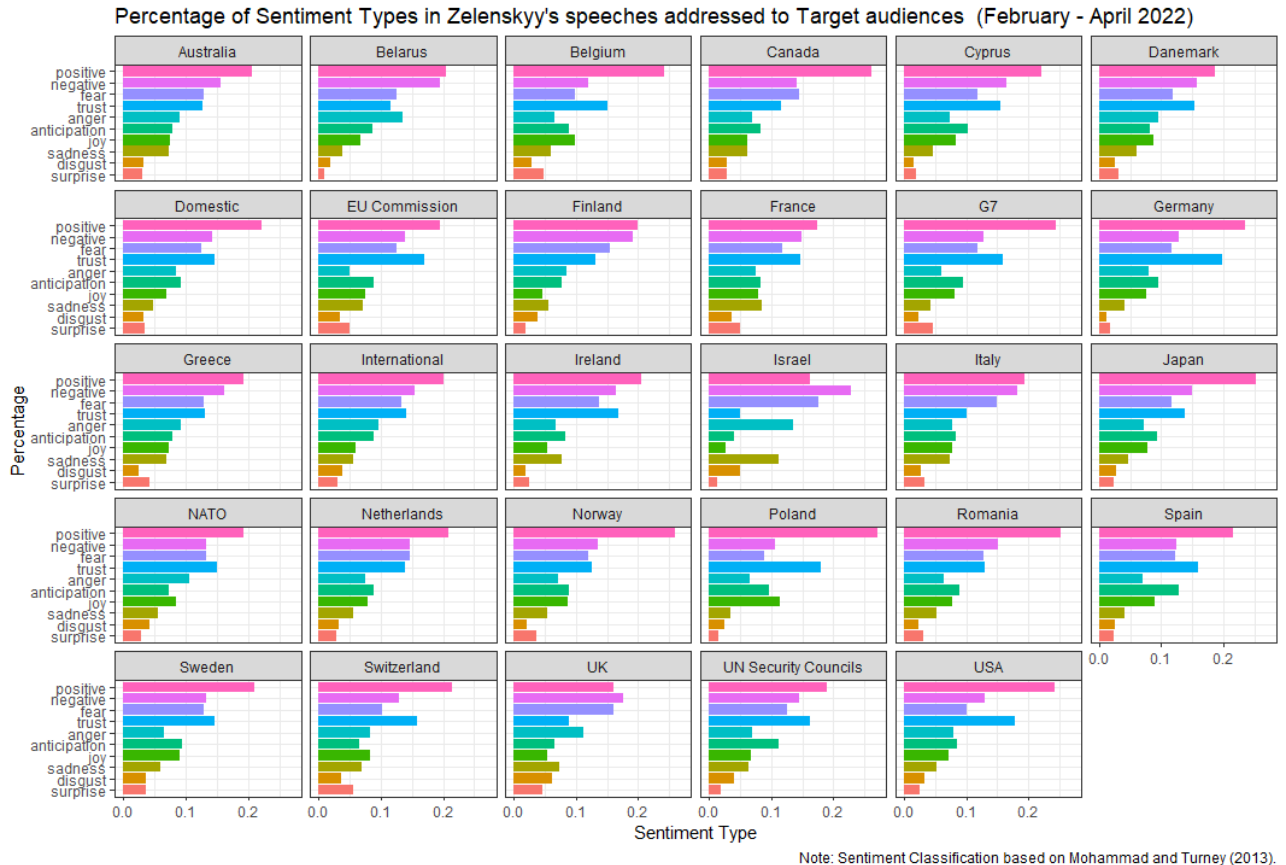
The further NRC lexicon application by the target audience provided more detailed results (**Figure 4**). The results show that appeal to positive emotions was more frequent in most countries and international organizations. Positive sentiments were going hand in hand with negative emotions for the countries like Australia, Belarus, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Finland, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, and Romania. Another frequent use of positive sentiments was followed with the emotions of trust, as evident by examples of Belgium, Germany, the Group of Seven (G7), France, Denmark, Canada, Ireland, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden, the United States of America, and the United Nations Security Council.

Similar trends of positive appeal were seen in Zelenskyy’s addresses to International and Domestic audiences. Conversely, the levels of positive emotion, trust, and anticipation in addresses to Ukrainian citizens were higher.

Negative sentiments were dominant over other in only instances when Zelenskyy addressed Israel and the UK. In addition, fear was also dominantly present in the mentioned addresses. In countries such as Belarus, Finland, and Italy, the negative and positive sentiments were closely coupled, while positive sentiment prevailed.

Fear was also leading in speeches towards the target audiences of Israel, the UK, Australia, Finland, Canada, Netherlands, and NATO. The appeal to anger was secondary for most target audiences, except for Belarus, Israel, UK.

Sentiments, such as anticipation, disgust, sadness, and surprise, mostly fell behind by other sentiments. The only exception, where the contrary is evident, is the speech to Israel. In the address to the Israeli Knesset, the appeal to sadness was more frequent than to any other audience.



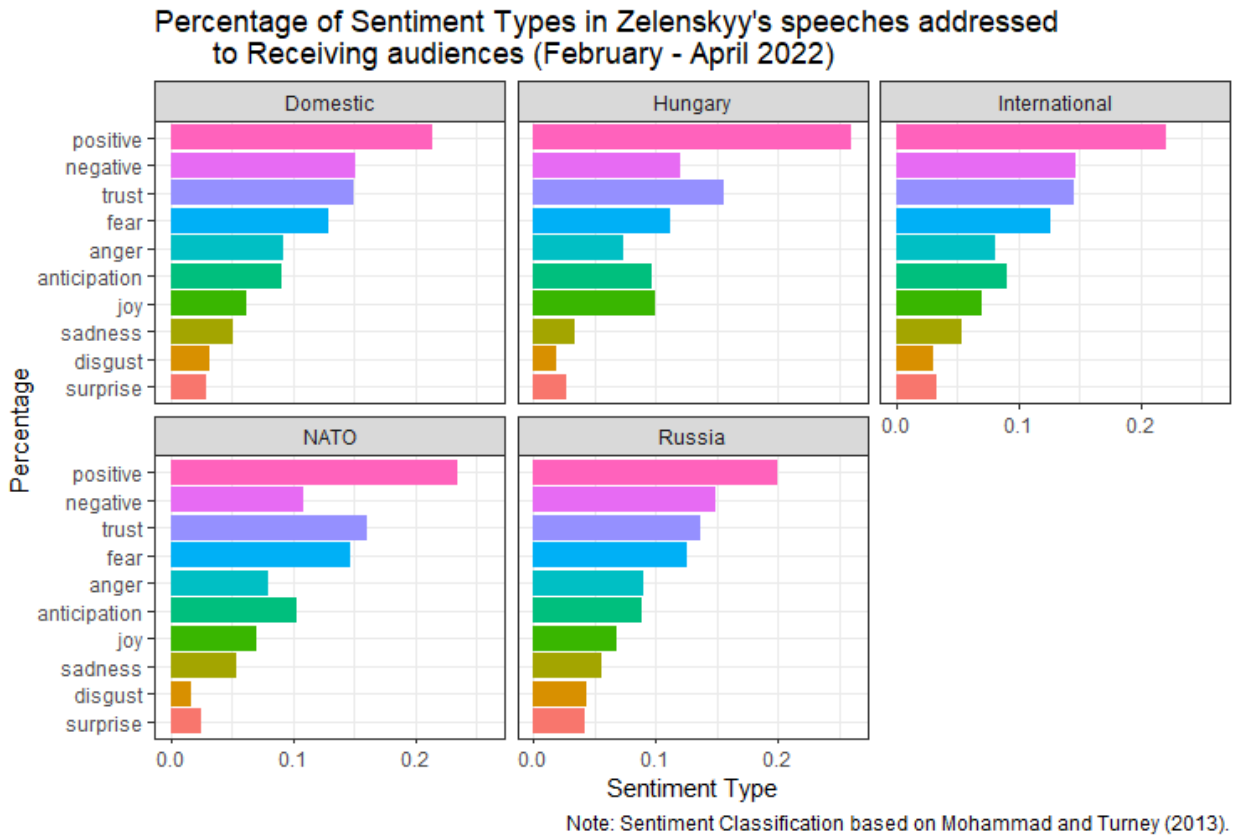
**Figure 4. Percentage of Sentiment Types in Zelensky’s speeches addressed to Target audiences (February – April 2022).**

Volodymyr Zelensky’s speeches to the receiving audience were also analyzed using the NRC lexicon (**Figure 5**). Short but precise messages hinted towards other states and organizations were again dominant with positive sentiments. The negative emotions were also distributed for the secondary messages towards International and Domestic groups.

A few instances of addresses towards initial invading and supporting the invasion states, particularly Russia and Belarus, show that they were mostly positive. Still, negativity, trust, and fear were also present in the detected speeches.

In the same speeches where addresses were made to the Hungarian government, the appeal to trust was leading against fear and negativity. At the same time, the overall mood of this sentiment appeal is featured in domestic and international audiences, which could have blurred the results.

The sentiments were based more on trust and fear when addressing NATO in the speeches. Negativity came on the same level as anticipation, but it was outweighed by Zelenskyy’s appeal to trust and fear at the same time.



**Figure 5. Percentage of Sentiment Types in Zelenskyy’s speeches addressed to Secondary audiences (February – April 2022).**



These topics were, therefore, an essential part of President Zelenskyy's addresses and subjects of persuasion to seek political support from different audiences using emotional appeals. However, overall, even during a military invasion period, it seems that positive appeals were more meaningful in persuading Western countries and international organizations to provide support against Russia.

Further content analysis revealed how these topics were outspoken in the speeches using rhetorical devices. Considering the speech at the Munich Security Conference shortly before the invasion was insightful, as it allowed us to trace how the speeches' structure and used devices changed before and after the invasion. Based on this, it was possible to spot similar techniques and devices used for emotional appeal and logical reasoning.

As such, the first public speech of the Ukrainian president on the war was given at the Munich Security Conference five days prior to the invasion. It reflects the dominance of political tension and military preparation present at that time. The speech is structured with a narrative reflecting these settings, and some noticeable rhetorical devices were used. As such, the analogy added with rhetorical questions was drawn on comparing the somehow passive political situation at that time in Europe with the consequences of the Second World War. Thus, rhetoric appeals to fear, linking a military war scenario with a similar negative historical outcome.

Another pattern can be seen in the usage of aphorism to point out that a possible Russian invasion would break world security: *"The world says it doesn't want to fight, and Russia says it doesn't want to attack. Someone is lying...The architecture of world security is fragile and needs to be updated...This is a cough syrup when you need a coronavirus vaccine"* (President of Ukraine, February 19, 2022).

As such, the speech is presented with a criticism of the ineffectiveness of the United Nations and most international governments on failed promises to keep peace and global security. For example, the irony was used to point out that the German government, prior to the invasion, provided Ukraine with a few thousand helmets instead of weapons as was requested: *"We will defend our land with or without the support of partners. Whether they give us hundreds of modern weapons or five thousand helmets"* (President of Ukraine, February 19, 2022).

Rhetorical questions are also used, leading the listeners to wonder why Ukraine went through the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 if the EU and NATO were passive towards political movements in favor of Ukraine. Here the antithesis is used: *"We are told: the door is open. But so far authorized access only"* (President of Ukraine, February 19, 2022).

Additionally, an appeal to his presidential authority and power is present. Zelenskyy deliberately points out that he, as a president, commissioned the consultations of the Budapest Memorandum for the first time.



After the initial Russian invasion on February 24 and the following week, the rhetorical patterns of Volodymyr Zelenskyy changed. Speeches during this first week could be characterized as less structured and more unmethodical. They also provide more informational value since most content summarizes critical news and events related to military attacks and defenses. Political statements were also present, addressing both domestic and international communities and the Russian and Belorussian sides.

As such, the heroic narratives were present based on the work of the Ukrainian Armed Forces and territorial defense units. The emotional part described the severe consequences of the Russian shelling, such as the destruction of technical infrastructure, residential and medical buildings, the number of civilian casualties, and children's death. To reassure confidence for the domestic audience, Zelenskyy employed a narrative with metaphors on the unification of Ukraine and that Ukraine would defend itself.

When addressing the international European audience, the analogy was used again to compare the ongoing war with the Second World War. The appeal to fear and threat for the European community was visible as well: *"This is not just Russia's invasion in Ukraine, this is the beginning of the war against Europe. Against the unity of Europe. Against elementary human rights in Europe. Against all coexistence rules on the continent"* (President of Ukraine, February 25, 2022). These addresses were possibly made to point out the European government's insufficient use of political and administrative resources to stop the aggression. Otherwise, the military actions would spread out further in the continent.

Another thing is the addresses towards Belarusians and Alexander Lukashenko, to whom he spoke only once separately. Narratively they were done in Russian and mentioned the reassurance of not joining the military invasion from Belorussian territory and guarantees to negotiate with the Russian side. These statements were not rich in emotional impact and follow a relatively straightforward explanatory manner. It is possible to trace that Zelenskyy tried to appeal to Belorussian political conscience and raise the awareness that Russian leadership uses Belorussian territory as a ground for rocket launches. It was also proved by addressing them as neighbors and brothers. Rhetorically he uses intransitive antithesis, such as: *"You slept, Belorussian brothers. And we woke up. But you are still sleeping. And we haven't gone to bed since that moment"* (President of Ukraine, February 27, 2022). Emotional appeal is also present through an analogy by comparing how Russia attacked Ukraine as Nazi Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941.

During the first week of the invasion, the addresses to Russian soldiers were also present. In these addresses, Zelenskyy declared to troops to surrender themselves peacefully, leave the battlefields, not trust the Russian propaganda and think of their mothers and children. In doing so, he potentially tried to appeal to their inner logic, trust, and reason to question the political ground for the war. In

these instances, the speeches had rhetorical questions about why the military action continued if Western states imposed sanctions, closed the sky for civilian airlines, and the number of dead Russian soldiers became higher than in the Soviet-Afghan war.

From March, the rhetoric shifted to more confident and structured, and speeches became filled with a formalized introduction specifying the target audiences. These introductions usually were filled with expressively rich adjectives and approving statements and mainly addressed to the domestic audience. Such examples include: “*Peaceful people of a belligerent state!*” (President of Ukraine, March 07, 2022), “*Great people of a great country!*” (President of Ukraine, March 04, 2022), “*Good health to you, dear Ukrainians! Strong and kind! But – kind NOT to enemies*” (President of Ukraine, March 03, 2022), “*Brave Ukrainians of the unconquered country!*” (President of Ukraine, March 09, 2022).

To the Ukrainian audience, the positive sentiments were dominant, as in rhetoric, Zelenskyy appealed to national unity and brotherhood, as well as affirmation of the victory of Ukraine. Ukrainians became “*My dears*” (President of Ukraine, March 02, 2022), and he called for national love and caring for family, close friends, and brothers in arms. As such, he mentioned that the whole world was admiring Ukrainian effectiveness during the invasion “*from Hollywood stars to politicians*” and that “*Ukrainians, are a symbol of invincibility...the best people on earth at any moment*” (President of Ukraine, March 02, 2022). This appeal suggests the leader’s desire of him as a president to evoke national unification in distressing wartime. Rhetorically he uses epithets and metaphors to describe “*Heroic resistance*” and that Ukrainians fight a “*powerful enemy that outnumbered us...But which is thousands of light years away from normal people who have dignity*” (President of Ukraine, March 04, 2022).

At the beginning of March, the appeals to God and the moral values of Christianity were present. The use of God in sentences was filled with rhetorical devices, like metaphors, asyndeton, aphorisms, and anaphora. For example, on Forgiveness Sunday, the rhetoric was reverted to state that God and Ukrainians would never forget the war crimes Russia conducted: “*We. Will. Not. Forgive. Hundreds and hundreds of victims. Thousands and thousands of sufferings. And God will not forgive. Not today. Not tomorrow. Never. And instead of Forgiveness, there will be a Day of Judgment*” (President of Ukraine, March 06, 2022). In addition, the appeal to God was personified, and Zelenskyy connotated that Russians would have to answer for war crimes in front of God: “*They enjoy the fact that God does not give an instant rebuff. But he sees. And he answers. Answers so that you cannot hide. There is no such bunker to survive God’s response*” (President of Ukraine, March 06, 2022). This appeal may suggest the desire to invoke feelings of anger and hatred towards Russians.

At the same time, he threatened Russian soldiers that their lives would be taken if they continued to fight. In this sentence, Zelenskyy again appealed to common sense and the absence of logical reasons for the invasion by asking them the motives and reasons for their fight and possible death.

Also, the appeal was done more formally and less emotionally to soldiers and Russian citizens as these few instances are not filled with rhetorical devices. In these instances, Zelenskyy asked not to be politically silent and fight for national freedom and country; otherwise, their country would come to shame, poverty, and years of isolation.

A dominant analogy was also present in Zelenskyy's speeches about the Holocaust and the genocide committed against Jews. The first instance of that can be traced in a speech given after the missile strike on the Kyiv TV tower and Babyn Yar, a site massacre of Jews during World War II. In his speech, the narrative was constructed to compare Russian military actions to Nazi crimes of the Second World War and the crimes against humanity. These addresses were done with epithets, rhetorical questions, and connotations towards the brutality, cruelty, and evilness of the Russian military actions.

After the Chornobyl Nuclear Power Plant was occupied and Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant was attacked, Zelenskyy, for the first time, named Russia a nuclear terrorist. Later, the narrative of addressing terrorism became dominant and was present in speeches to an international audience, specifically to those who still maintained trading relations with Russian Federation. These instances may suggest invoking fear and shame for trading with a terrorist state.

As such, Zelenskyy uses aphorisms to ask Western states and international organizations to be responsive, implement more severe sanctions, and boycott Russian imports: *"If they do not want to follow civilized rules, they should not receive goods and services from civilization. Let the war feed them"* (President of Ukraine, March 07, 2022).

One of the main points of Zelenskyy's rhetoric was made towards Western allies to persuade them to provide more weapons and military equipment. The use of criticism and negative appeal was present with regard to the long waiting time for a political decision. In this instance, Zelenskyy would again build the narrative using aphorisms and hyperbole to state that this help would help not only Ukraine but the world and humanity in general: *"A pause without a decision has become simply deadly"* (President of Ukraine, March 09a, 2022). To address the long waiting time he would also turn to sarcasm for criticism: *"So when will the decision be made? Listen: we have a war! We do not have time for all these signals. This is not ping pong! This is about human lives! We ask once again: solve it faster. Do not shift the responsibility, send us planes"* (President of Ukraine, March 06 b, 2022).

On March 04, the summit of NATO took place, where the decision of a no-fly zone over Ukraine was not agreed upon. The Ukrainian President addressed this by calling the summit weak,

underconfident, and confused. NATO thus was criticized for allowing Russians to further bomb Ukrainian cities, and the questions were raised if NATO countries could protect themselves. In a separate speech at the NATO summit, Zelenskyy used anaphora to point out that Ukraine was fighting during the whole month “*of heroic resistance. A month of the darkest suffering. A month of unpunished destruction of the peaceful state*” (President of Ukraine, March 24a, 2022). This criticism had also been made to warn that NATO was politically afraid to act against Russia and that Russia would not stop on Ukraine and move further to the Baltic states and Poland.

At the Group of Seven summit, Volodymyr Zelenskyy’s rhetoric utilized rhetorical devices to possibly shame the Russian Federation publicly. As such, he pointed out the usage of forbidden by international law phosphorus bombs against civilians in Ukraine, how many people were deported and how the destroyed cities “*resemble the set of a post-apocalyptic movie with hundreds of burned and shot cars*” (President of Ukraine, March 24 b, 2022). The usage of the aphorism was also present in statements such as: “*War criminals should be left without money at all*”, and “*freedom must be armed. Life must overcome death*” (President of Ukraine, March 24 b, 2022).

The public speech in the United Nations Security Council is also noticeable from the perspective of public outreach. Because of this, it was rich in metaphors, aphorisms, anaphors, rhetorical questions, euphemisms, and antitheses. The speech began with formal descriptions and details of war crimes which Russian soldiers had conducted in Bucha. Here, describing the tortures, rapes, and murders of civilians he possibly asserted the image of the brutality of the war. The narrative then was shifted to state that these wrongdoings had been conducted by a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, Russia, which metaphorically “*destroys the internal unity of states. Destroys state borders...Inflames wars and deliberately wages them in such a way as to kill as many ordinary civilians as possible*” (President of Ukraine, April 05, 2022). Rhetorical questions were used to ask why the United Nations did not intervene. Aphorisms were also present in sentences like “*Geography may be different, but cruelty is the same*” or “*If the biggest is punished, everyone will be punished*” (President of Ukraine, April 05, 2022). Anaphora was also present to prove the point that Russian soldiers had committed all military crimes deliberately. Euphemisms were seen in a sentence like “*Russia wants to turn Ukrainians into silent slaves*” (President of Ukraine, April 05, 2022). Antithesis was used in a sentence where Russia “*...turns the right of veto in the UN Security Council into a right to kill*” (President of Ukraine, April 05, 2022).

Towards the EU, most addresses were done in logical appeal to accepted values shared between the EU and Ukraine, such as freedom, democracy, partnership, and friendship. In the speech to European Commission, he used storytelling techniques to personalize the experience of Ukrainians, when the invasion began on February 24. When addressing individual states, Volodymyr Zelenskyy personalized the countries with the political leaders they represent, such as France with Emanuel

Macron and Hungary with Victor Orban. When addressing Hungary, he drew an analogy comparing how the massacre of Jews during the Second World War happened similarly in Mariupol and that ‘Shoes on the Danube Bank’ were the same shoes in Mariupol. He ironically said, *“The Russian military killed journalists. Although they saw the inscription “Press” on them. They may not have been taught to read. Only to kill”* (President of Ukraine, March 25, 2022). Rhetorical questions and anaphora were present to point out that the Ukrainian and Russian worlds were different in their nature. Thus, most addresses towards the EU as other European states were positive and relied on the appeal to trust and logical reasoning.

The quantitative analysis using machine learning showed that the most negative sentiments were addressed in the United Kingdom and Israel. It is then required to dive in deeply to explore the content of the speeches.

In the speech to Knesset, the Ukrainian President again appealed to analogically compare the history of Jews and Ukrainians. Zelenskyy focused on similar tragic experiences of genocides. He also quoted the expressions of Golda Meir, a former prime minister of Israel, who had been born in Kyiv. Thus, he tried to appeal to a common link, which Jews would find acceptable and relatable, by imploring to a respectable national politician. Appeal to the war experience is seen through the repetition of words and removal of conjunctions: *“This is a large-scale and treacherous war aimed at destroying our people. Destroying our children, our families. Our state. Our cities. Our communities. Our culture”* (President of Ukraine, March 20, 2022). He asked for a missile defense system by reverting the question as not a matter of political interests between the states but instead between good and evil. Rhetorical questions were also used to question why Israel acts indifferently compared to other states. In the end, however, the appeal was made towards finding a partnership between the states by saying *“dear brothers and sisters”* (President of Ukraine, March 20, 2022).

Similarly to the speech in Knesset, the address to the United Kingdom was also rich in rhetorical devices. It started with talking about the first weeks of the *“fearce war”*. The analogy was then drawn to the historical events both nationalities shared in common – in this sense, he compared the unprecedented Russian invasion with the Battle of Britain. Here Zelenskyy utilized euphemism when telling about the battle on Zmiinyi Island in the Black Sea, when the border guard had told the Russian warship to leave *“As firmly as one cannot say in the parliament”* (President of Ukraine, March 08, 2022). With that, he proceeded to mention, *“and we felt the power. Great power of our people who will persecute the invader to the end”* (President of Ukraine, March 08, 2022). A comparison was used to state that Ukrainians held Russian military prisoners in civility and humane conditions while Russian troops openly fired at people and residential buildings. Narratively the speech focused on Russian weapons, by repetitions of the words without conjunctions: *“Bombs, bombs, bombs, again bombs on houses, on schools, on hospitals”* (President of Ukraine, March 08,

2022). His narrative proceeded by factually describing the Russian war crimes and what Russians have attacked – Babyn Yar, churches, nuclear power plants, and a children’s oncology hospital. He went on to say that a child had died from dehydration and vividly described the children’s deaths: *“In 13 days of the Russian invasion, 50 children were killed. 50 great martyrs. This is dreadful! This is emptiness. Instead of 50 universes that could live, they took them away. They just took them away”* (President of Ukraine, March 08, 2022). In the speech, the appeal was also made by referencing famous national figures, such as Shakespeare and Churchill. Because of this, Great Britain was mentioned as *“the civilization of great countries”* (President of Ukraine, March 08, 2022). The speech ends with an admirable request to *“Do what the greatness of your state and your people obliges to”* (President of Ukraine, March 08, 2022).

Coming back to the hypotheses, we can conclude the following aspects.

Hypothesis *H1* stated that negative emotional expressions such as fear and anger were used in the president’s public addresses during the war for criticism. The statements after analysis can hold true to them, as evidenced by the received results. A negative appeal in Zelenskyy’s rhetoric came second after the positive sentiments and was present in the contexts of criticism towards other states and international actors. Interestingly, the anger and fear were mainly utilized towards international organizations and governments, which then did not implement political counter-measurements against Russia for their invasion. Negativity came from the war crimes committed by Russian soldiers and could be seen as proof of stronger persuasion of Western countries and international organizations to military support Ukraine and cut Russia’s involvement in the geopolitical arena.

As for the *H2* hypothesis, we can see that positive emotions used to seek support from the international audience hold partial truth. The research outcome depends on the addresses’ target and receiving audiences and the political side they took. Additionally, it also depends on the type of analysis used. For example, in addresses to NATO, the United Nations Security Council, and the Group of Seven summits, the sentiment analysis provided more results with an appeal to trust. At the same time, closer inspection revealed that criticism was apparent. Thus, the positive appeal did work mainly for the Western audience, but it usually came hand in hand with negative sentiments.

So far, the qualitative analysis showed that the rhetoric of Zelenskyy before and after the invasion gradually shifted. When providing answers to the research question, we hint that the president’s rhetoric by the narrative and the emotional appeal was done using various rhetorical devices. With the analysis of daily net and closer content analysis we can see that speeches could be also grouped by time periods, where the narrative was built to appeal towards democratic and sovereignty values, military and political support, and informational coverage of the military actions and other states.

As such, it is additionally possible to group the speeches for the analyzed period of February-April 2022 into three periods according to the settings in which they were provided:

1. before the invasion;
2. the first week of the invasion;
3. continuing period afterward.

As such, the first period before the invasion could be characterized by having rather precautionary statements by Zelenskyy toward the international target audience. He applied an analogy to the Second World War and a criticism filled with irony, aphorisms, and antithesis. Hypothetically, this way, the intention was to make European countries and international organizations not stay aside and become more politically involved in the possible military escalation from Russian Federation. Aphorisms were dominant, focusing on criticism towards the Western audience to possibly inflict fear and military threat. On the contrary, an appeal to presidential powers was also present to show that as a state leader, he can assert political confidence in the international arena.

The second period is more disorganized, suggesting that speeches were written at a faster pace in a stressful environment caused by the invasion. Emotional appeal is done using a broad spectrum of emotions to reach different audiences. The use of metaphors, analogies to the Second World War, antithesis – all of the mentioned devices can suggest also the desire to get the fear from the European audiences and the trust of Belarussian and Russian soldiers to peacefully surrender.

As military actions became more severe after the first week the rhetoric changed. The appeal to Russian soldiers and Belarussians was made through fear and anger by mentioning God and Christian values and comparing their war crimes with the Nazi regime.

The most common rhetorical devices during this time are analogy, irony, and metaphors. These addresses also suggest that Zelenskyy pursued the attention of Western countries to receive increased military and political support.

The third period is characterized as having more organizational structure in the public addresses. Emotional appeal again varied significantly according to audiences. Usage of aphorisms, antithesis, metaphors, anaphora, euphemisms, and rhetorical questions was used both for criticism of Russian actions and to provoke shame in Western states for slowly taking political decisions and continuing to conduct business with Russia. At the same time, addresses to the supporting states, such as the European Union or the United Kingdom, hint at the appeal to positive emotions and trust.

## CONCLUSIONS

As we summarize the conclusions on the emotional appeal of presidential rhetoric during wartime, we should provide detailed answers to the objective from the research introduction.

In the introduction, we set out **to analyze emotional appeal in political communication**.

Thus, emotional appeal in political communication is directly linked to the idea that the goal of political communication is persuasion. *Pathos* is integral in persuasion, and appeal to it is evident in everyday interactions between political figures, citizens, and media.

Based on our case study we can see that emotional appeal in political communication is highly integrated in modern society. Theoretically, it acts as a cognitive state, a reaction towards the political events happening in the state. At the same time, emotions together with other rhetorical elements can bring meaningful information to the recipients. This way it would be possible to increase political persuasion among the people since they are the initial holders of emotions. For the receiving audience, it would also ease the process of finding relatability with the speaker and accepting the provided argumentation.

Today's digital media environment allows transferring the information of political debates through diverse media channels both live and online. Citizens can receive it faster and at any given moment. However, because of it, the digital media environment is highly polarized and commercialized. To stay visible, media journalists and politicians ought to fight for citizens' attention. As negative emotions attract attention it explains the dominant negativity and cynicism among politicians and citizens during election periods.

As explained by the spiral of thoughts theory, media plays a key role in spreading the most expressive political statements, especially if they are filled with emotional and negative statements. As such, emotions set the overall tone of political debates and guide the decisions, politicians make regarding winning media and voters' attention.

Emotions therefore can also act as an arousal and triggers for engagement in political debates and could be also used for persuasive tactics on voters and other political figures.

The second objective was to **determine the specificity of political and presidential rhetoric**.

The specificities of political rhetoric can be found in classical Greek philosophers' understanding of rhetoric. It is centered around the idea that political rhetoric involves public discussions and finding means of persuasion to reach vital common interests of a given society. The validity of political discussions and the ability to persuade in them rely heavily on rational, logical assumptions, acceptable argumentation, the trustworthiness of the speaker, and involved audiences' perceptions.



Still, as far as modern presidential and political rhetoric goes, communication through a controlled media channel with the public should be seen as the most effective, since it allows politicians to convey their messages directly with no mediator in between. Media journalists, as initial mediators of political information, can deform the messages based on the trending negativity in media and the spiral of thoughts theory. Here we can agree with Salgado (2014), as our case study findings could have provided different results had we analyzed the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine from the perspective of political mass media.

Presidential rhetoric relies heavily on the president's oratory skills since presidents have the power to persuade governments and influence public opinions. Presidential speech then becomes a form for political information transfer by advocating the political agenda and declaring national crises. It also acts as a tool for changing diplomatic relations with foreign governments and international public actors by publicly criticizing them, as seen in many statements of the Ukrainian president towards international organizations.

Through speeches, they can display how stressful the national environment is based on the complexity of given information and negative emotional appeals. The public then evaluates it based on used rhetorical devices, verbal formulation, and organization of politicians' speeches. Additionally, the public perceives the *ethos* of the president, based on political authority one holds in the state. That is why incumbent presidents have the option to appeal to their power authority in increasing their persuasiveness, as seen by Zelenskyy's addresses.

It is essential also to note that political and presidential rhetoric during the peaceful civil times differs in tonality and narratives, as evidenced by the received research results from our case study and literature review. As such, both presidential rhetoric and political rhetoric, in general, is highly interconnected with the context of major political events, as well as cultural and social characteristic in the country. That is why political rhetoric during elections and the ongoing war would differ tremendously. For example, the analysis of daily net sentiments in Zelenskyy's addresses deduced that emotional appeal in presidential rhetoric depends on military advances on battlefields and major committed war crimes. In our case, it was the siege of Mariupol, the unveiled evidence of mass destruction in Irpin, Borodyanka and the massacre in Bucha.

In addresses to foreign states, cultural aspects play a vital role as presidents conducting their speeches can link their stories between different nations by providing analogies and shared historical experiences or values, as seen in Zelenskyy's addresses to the European Commission, the parliaments of the United Kingdom and Israel. To further improve the persuasion, one can use phrases from important foreign political figures by tying them to the modern political context.

Our third objective was **to indicate primary emotions used in political rhetoric.**

Based on the conducted research, we see that for persuasion politicians can employ a different set of emotions depending on the subject discussed and the target audience. The easiest solution would be to recognize that both positive and negative emotions have their place in political rhetoric and can be utilized to serve various purposes. For example, in our case study, Volodymyr Zelenskyy operated primarily with positive sentiments despite performing presidential duties under a stressful environment caused by a full-scale Russian military invasion. It can hint that this way it was done to show civic friendship and partnership reliance, inserting confidence of supporting the side of Ukraine in the Russo-Ukrainian war would benefit the global security structure and individual countries in general.

Positive emotions in political rhetoric are also closely linked with the emotion of trust, which can be addressed for building international partnerships and maintaining diplomatic relations.

At the same time, an appeal to negativity can be used primarily to criticize opposing political powers and positions. That goes in line with the modern negativity trend in mass media and negative political campaigning.

The emotion of fear also follows negativity. Fear can be constructed narratively to create tension around major news and condemn the passive political position or ineffective decision-making during a crisis. Thus, appealing to the emotion of fear can provoke the audience to have more confidence in choosing a supportive policy.

Another emotion to follow negativity is the cognition of shame. It was observed in Zelenskyy's speech when he proclaimed the Russian Federation as a terrorist state for the military attacks they conducted on civil infrastructure and nuclear facilities. Similarly, the emotion of anger can be compelling in political rhetoric to provoke the audience to action against opposing political power. For that to happen, however, an appeal has to be followed with the narrative of presented injustice, as we can trace in Zelenskyy's appeal using anger towards Russian soldiers for conducting war crimes.

Appeal to emotions such as surprise, disgust, and sadness can also be present in political communication, but to a lesser extent. That conclusion may lie in the fact that our conducted study did not provide a meaningful answer on how they were used in political rhetoric on war.

Our fourth and final objective was **to investigate the characteristic of emotional appeal in presidential rhetoric during war times.**

As such, from our results we conclude that the president addressed dominantly with positive emotions despite the military attack against the nation. It can suggest that this way president for higher persuasion can display the ability to be confident as a state leader. For domestic audiences, presidential rhetoric can consist of appeals to patriotism, the heroism of militaries and citizens, brotherhood, and national unification. Similarly, appeal to positive emotions can also be used

towards foreign governments. This way, it would increase the chance of persuading the foreign states to provide political support and, as such, military, financial, and humanitarian aid.

Negative emotions in a time of national distress are also being operated. However, in rhetoric, they do not seem to be prevailing. We may suggest that negativity, in general, can be reached not only to criticize the aggressive state or passively involved states but also to stress the destructive consequences of each war. Negativity this way can act as a natural reaction to violence and destruction from the war.

The appeal to fear, in that sense, would be considered also prevailing, as seen in our sentiment analysis. In addition, In rhetoric, this reaction can be shifted to trigger emotions of other actors on international arena. This way it would be possible to ask not only to aid the specific country, but also to persuade other international actors to cut powers of the aggressive state in the geopolitical arena as seen with Zelenskyy's requests to implement more severe sanctions against the Russian Federation.

In our case, the analysis of Zelenskyy's presidential rhetoric also showed that addresses to most international audiences were filled with rhetorical devices, such as aphorisms, rhetorical questions, analogies, and antitheses. Instead of vivid descriptions using epithets or metaphors to produce emotional appeal, the speeches of Volodymyr Zelenskyy had a significant amount of rather intellectual and logical processing of the surrounding political and cultural context. This suggests that Western audiences would be more persuaded by information presented on high-intellectual reasoning instead of plain factual descriptions.

Anger and fear were also visible in presidential rhetoric on war. Here an analogy can be drawn between the war rhetoric of George W. Bush and Volodymyr Zelenskyy, as both had in common the constructed narrative on good and evil, civil and uncivil, appeal to Christian values and God, filled with vivid descriptions of dreadful consequences of war. In the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war, these appeals were again used primarily towards international audiences and Western partners. By sharing the inner feelings of anger and hatred towards the Russian state, the emotions could further be transferred to other audiences, thus faster activating their initial decision for foreign aid.

Emotional appeal is again proved to be context dependent on the military advances of the war, and rhetoric during this period can change. As we have discovered, emotions in Zelenskyy's rhetoric were appealed differently before the 24th of February 2022, during the first week of the Russian invasion, and afterward. For example, in addressing the international audience at the Munich Security Conference, the appeal to trust was low, as mostly criticism prevailed. After the invasion, appeals to trust became much more frequent and symbolized the partnership between Ukraine and Western states. On the contrary, emotional appeal toward Russian soldiers and the Belarussian side during the first week of the invasion was mainly preoccupied with building trust, asking for an unarmed

surrender to save a life, and appealing to logical reasoning and possible negotiations. The emotional appeal shifted towards negativity and anger with the more committed war crimes in Ukrainian cities, further invasion of Ukrainian territories, and destruction of civil and critical infrastructure.

These findings suggest that emotional appeal in presidential rhetoric on war is intentionally different towards unique political actors. In other words, particular political audiences would receive information on war and a request for aid individually. Therefore, in individual addresses, the political and cultural context is taken into consideration for political persuasion. However, positive emotions are mostly perceived as more effective in persuasion than negative emotions of fear or anger.

Having provided answers to the research objectives, we can finalize that the gathered insights may be vital for presidential and political speechwriters and specialists in strategic communications. The summarized conclusions may be beneficial for politicians in conducting a speech with persuasive political rhetoric and win the support of target audiences on an emotional level.

Additionally, the research may come in handy for political science and communications scholars. For future research, it would be recommended to increase the analyzed period of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. Extending the more prolonged period may show how the president can further persuade in seeking political aid within a prolonged period when emotions are settled compared to the first months of the war. Additionally, phrases and addresses towards individual receiving audiences should be analyzed separately from the speech, as with our case, sentiment analysis could have been more fruitful.

The issue of context-dependency in a case study, content analysis, and sentiment analysis should also be addressed. Presidential speeches have main reasons, arguments, and target audiences and are primarily performed verbally. In the future research, the presidential speeches should be analyzed from the perspective of the local language, while also taking into consideration the original format of their delivery. Non-verbal communication, tonality, and pronunciations of presidential speech could inflict different meanings than initially intended in the written form of the speech. That limitation should be taken into account in the upcoming research.

On top of that, some limitations became visible after a sentiment analysis. The machine learning lexicon applied in our studies were limited to applying sentiments to specific words but not the whole phrases, tone and the context surrounding them. That is why a conclusion on positive sentiments can be drawn from the fact that the machine learning method took into evaluation only individual words. At the same time, most of Zelenskyy's speeches were formal, straight, and had less detailed descriptions or adjectives. Because of it, sentiments could be falsely analyzed by "tidyverse" package as positive. Utilizing another lexicon dictionary with a detailed study of speeches' context in future studies might unveil differences from our gathered findings since the contextual setting of the provided speech does indeed matter in rhetorical analysis.

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