Afterword: Digital Formation of Resistance

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Russia's invasion of Ukraine dramatically reshaped the role and function of social media and technology. Random groups of online users transformed into vibrant digital communities of resistance, united by a shared commitment to Ukraine's survival. The impressive collective resilience of Ukrainian people towards Russia's brutal aggression vividly demonstrates how new technologies and digital spaces empower civil society to defend democratic values in the time of adversity and severe trials. The authors of this volume offer a wide range of views on the Russo-Ukrainian war as a war of technologies and social media, examining the agency of an individual, community, and society in the digitalized war reality.

The Russo-Ukrainian war has accelerated the development and deployment of advanced military technologies, significantly transforming the battlefield into *machine-oriented warfare.* Drones are extensively employed for surveillance, reconnaissance, target acquisition, and offensive strikes. As research within this volume highlights, artificial intelligence plays a crucial role in the navigation and targeting of combat drones. Concurrently, AI-powered tools are instrumentalized to spread disinformation and manipulate public opinion.

Social networks and online platforms profoundly shape public perceptions of war, serving as powerful tools for disseminating information, mobilizing public opinion, and organizing volunteer initiatives. As numerous contributors to this volume illustrate, social media has blurred the lines between civilian and war environments. Following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, social media platforms became spaces for a deeply shared emotional *co-experience of the war*. The reality of war permeates the daily lives of Ukrainians, signaled by air raid sirens at any time of day or night. This constant reminder of hostilities is further amplified by the continuous flow of war-related content on social media.

Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram, the most popular social media platforms in Ukraine, function as vast archives and tools for documenting the war. Consequently, they have become shared spaces for collective responses to Russia's brutality. Through videos and photos capturing the horrific realities of war, eyewitnesses, soldiers, volunteers, and journalists not only share their perceptions of the conflict but also mediate their emotions, evoking emotional responses and reactions from

wider audiences. A seemingly 'ordinary' Facebook or Telegram post about the war in Ukraine can elicit a wide range of emotions – from mourning for the fallen and fury towards the enemy to pride and gratitude for the Ukrainian armed forces and anxieties about the future.

Simultaneously, this shared emotional experience drives social media users towards *collective actions of resilience* and solidarity. As many chapters within this volume demonstrate, digital art, language, and humor are not only powerful tools for mediating the war but also crucial coping mechanisms for both collective and individual experiences of trauma and tragedy. This digital co-experience of war significantly influences offline activism, fostering fundraising efforts, support for the armed forces, and the provision of humanitarian aid to victims. *'Turn your fury into donations'* has become a common motto on Ukrainian social media following Russia's brutal attacks on civilians, such as hospitals, cafes and shopping centers, resulting in numerous casualties. Furthermore, social media, as discursive 'spaces of compassion', has mobilized geographically diverse humanitarian actors, including Ukrainian diaspora communities, enhancing their capacity to expand volunteer networks, transform aid channels, and initiate lobbying efforts within host governments. In this context, national identity fosters a sense of belonging to a specific community and can significantly influence political, social, and cultural aspects of life in host countries. It is not merely a cultural or historical phenomenon but also an important factor within the current political reality, emphasizing the resilience of Ukrainians worldwide and their unwavering desire for freedom and independence.

The Russian aggression has fundamentally altered public perceptions of Russian-Ukrainian relations, leading to understanding of them as a long-lasting genocidal campaign and colonial war. This, in turn, has contributed to the formation of a distinct *'language of the Russia-Ukrainian war'* – an emergence of new concepts and meanings in the Ukrainian language that reflect a Ukrainian perception of the war reality in public discourse, as well as embodying ideas of national identity, history, and memory. Ukrainian media plays a pivotal role in shaping this 'language of war', influencing public perceptions of the conflict and mobilizing societal support for national interests. It also provides valuable insights into how different media actors cover issues of peace and violence, and how public perception, reaction, and engagement with specific evidence, boundaries, and actions evolve. This 'language of the Russia-Ukraine war' transcends the Ukrainian media space, shaping the international narrative of Ukrainian resistance and struggle for freedom. However, there are concerning trends regarding public confidence in the accuracy and credibility of journalistic coverage of the conflict. The decline of qualified, professional, and independent journalism, particularly at the national level, has resulted in increased influence over media coverage by international organizations, state-funded news outlets and businesses, which can have detrimental consequences.

Wars invariably evoke manifestations of national identity within public discourse. Today, Ukrainian media and social networks are actively involved in shaping the collective idea of Ukraine and Ukrainians – the primary target of Russia's aggression. The denial of the Ukrainian language within the Russian Empire, Stalin's repression of the Ukrainian intellectual and cultural elite, the Holodomor (Great Famine), recognized as a genocide of the Ukrainian people, and the ongoing armed invasion, accompanied by discourse and practices that meet the definition of genocide, collectively form a clear picture of Moscow's persistent efforts to eliminate the Ukrainian nation. The war has accelerated the process of historical formation of the Ukrainian nation: Ukrainians are compelled to re-examine their history, re-evaluate the contours of national identity, and envision new pathways for post-war society. The European ideal is deeply ingrained within the minds of Ukrainians and has become a crucial factor in the cohesion of a political nation striving to establish a rule-of-law state within a challenging environment. The civilizational struggle promises to be protracted and perilous for the democratic development of the entire European continent, underscoring the urgent need to isolate and neutralize authoritarian regimes that pose a threat to all peoples striving for freedom.