

Pro gradu – Master’s Thesis

**News from the war in East Ukraine – information warfare or legitimate information?**

**Events of the war in 2014 studied through newspapers and visual history**

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Maisterintutkielmani käsittelee Itä-Ukrainan sodan tapahtumia vuonna 2014, lähestyen aihetta sanomalehtitutkimuksen ja visuaalisen historian kautta. Koen tutkimusaiheen hyvin tärkeäksi etenkin nykytapahtumien valossa, Venäjän aloitettua laajamittaisen hyökkäyssodan Ukrainaa vastaan 24. helmikuuta 2022 suorana jatkona Itä-Ukrainan sodalle. Tutkimusaiheeni valitsin jo ennen Venäjän hyökkäystä. Itä-Ukrainan sota on yksi esimerkki siitä, miten hybridisodankäynti ja informaatiotosodankäynti näkyvät sodankäynnissä. Tutkimukseni on tärkeä, koska Itä-Ukrainan sodan juurisyyt ovat syvällä historiassa, ja gradussani perehdyn osaan näistä seikoista, jotka vaikuttivat sodan syttymiseen. Itä-Ukrainan sota taas on suoraan nykyisen Ukrainan sodan taustalla. Lähestyn aihetta seuraavilla tutkimuskysymyksillä: Mitä sanomalehtien viestintä näyttää vastapuolista ja voiko viestinnän tulkita osaksi informaatiotosodankäyntinä? ja Miten sodan kuvaus on sanomalehdissä muuttunut tutkimusjakson aikana?</p> <p>Tutkimuksessani käytän Venäjän valtion omistamaa venäjänkielistä Ria Novosti -lehteä sekä brittiläistä ja englanninkielistä The Times -sanomalehteä. Tutkin sodan keskeisiä tapahtumia niistä kertovien sanomalehtiartikkelien ja valokuvien perusteella ajanjaksolla 6.4.- 6.9.2014.</p> <p>Tutkimustulokseni perusteella Venäjä ja venäjänkielinen Ria Novosti harjoitti artikkeleillaan ja käyttämillään valokuvilla informaatiotosotaa Ukrainaa vastaan. The Times taas yleisesti arvostettuna sanomalehtenä journalismillaan välitti yleisölleen yleisesti tietoa Ukrainan ja Venäjän välisistä suhteista, geopolitiikasta sekä Itä-Ukrainan sodasta. Journalismillaan Ria Novosti esitti Ukrainan syyllisenä Itä-Ukrainan sotaan ja sitä edeltäneisiin tapahtumiin, kuten Krimin miehitykseen ja Itä-Ukrainan mellakoihin. Sen sijaan The Times esitti Venäjän olennaisena syyllisenä sotaan ja sitä edeltäneisiin tapahtumiin, ja journalisminsa kautta osoitti tukeaan Ukrainalle. Tutkimustulosteni perusteella voidaan päätellä, että Venäjä harjoitti aktiivista Ukrainan vastaista informaatiotosotaa, joka syytti ukrainalaisia, ja Ukrainan valtiota ja hallitusta tapahtumista, jotka johtivat Venäjän toimiin Krimillä ja sodankäyntiin Itä-Ukrainassa. Nämä tulokset olisivat hyödynnettävissä etenkin visuaalisen historian tutkimuksessa sekä Ukrainan ja Venäjän välisten kansainvälisten suhteiden tutkimuksessa.</p>	
Asiasanat – Keywords Informaatiotosota, hybridisota, Venäjä, Ukraina, Itä-Ukrainan sota, visuaalinen historia	
Säilytyspaikka – Depository	
Muita tietoja – Additional information	

## Table of contents

1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Background and <i>Casus Belli</i> .....	6
1.2 Research questions.....	14
1.3 Choices and exclusions .....	15
1.4 Primary sources .....	15
1.5 Methodology .....	17
2. Analysis .....	22
2.1 Occupation of governmental buildings in Donbass.....	23
2.2 Skirmishes around Sloviansk and Kramatorsk airbase .....	27
2.3 The first Minsk protocol (ceasefire) .....	35
3. Conclusions.....	47
3.1 Epilogue: The War in Ukraine 2022-2023.....	54
4. Primary sources and literature:.....	57

## 1. Introduction

In this master's thesis I examine the events of the war in East Ukraine in 2014 through images and written text in articles by using visual history and close reading as my methods. I have conducted the research using Russian government-owned *Ria Novosti* online-newspaper and the British newspaper *The Times* as my research materials. I have examined articles from 6<sup>th</sup> of April until 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2014. *Ria Novosti* is published in Russian and *The Times* in English. I have chosen these two due to my expectations of possibly seeing some differing viewpoints and maybe even agenda behind both newspapers. I also chose *Ria Novosti* due to the fact that it is government-owned and thus it can be expected to represent the Russian government's views. I expect to see variation in results and reporting, and it will be interesting to find out if both have points on which they both agree on. My main focus lies on the representation of the events by both parties. At this point, it is also good to add, that *Ria Novosti* is an online newspaper, which is why it is able to constantly provide information, which is why *Ria Novosti* has reported on the events very extensively. It is also good to note that online newspapers can be edited later, too. *The Times* on the other hand is both a printed and online newspaper published daily. I chose to use the printed edition to make sure articles can't be edited after publishing. I also expected that the use of the printed edition would be simpler. With this in mind, it is important to point out that the two sources publish information in a differing manner, and it causes some variation in the representation of the events.

I see that my thesis will represent recent history, political history, and war history. With the topic being fresh and large it is difficult to categorize my thesis to specific categories. The events I am examining have happened nine years ago, and the war has broadened and become a full-on open war between Ukraine and Russia with massive consequences to the security of Europe and international relations. Thus, the situation lives and changes all the time. It is likely that the War in East Ukraine started a new era of the cold war, which escalated further when Russia invaded Ukraine in 2022 with massive consequences. The war has been studied as a case study in military literature which is why I see that it is useful to examine this topic from the viewpoint of humanities and history, to provide reader with context and roots behind the war. As information warfare tactics have been taken into use in many modern conflicts, I see that it is important to view this topic, too, as an example of an information war and a hybrid war.

The war in East Ukraine has been researched especially from the military perspective and has been used as an example of hybrid warfare and information warfare. The war has also been studied broadly from the perspective of international relations, geopolitical studies and political studies as in for

example how the Donbass region has always been a borderland between Russia and Ukraine and nowadays the stronghold for Ukraine's heavy industry and therefore crucial to both sides of the war. The war has also been studied from western point of view and how it has affected in the Western countries and Finland as well. The nature of the war in East Ukraine has also been examined whether it is a hybrid war, civil war or and interstate war, and these aspects of the war have been studied the most. Romania's Central Intelligence Agency with the support of a NATO program has researched the nature of the war in East Ukraine as a hybrid war and how hybrid warfare tactics have been used in action in that specific war. Volodymyr Kulyk has also researched Ukrainian society and he came into conclusion that in Ukraine ethnicity and language are not entwined when it comes to ethnicity and identity. Some native Russian speakers identify themselves explicitly as Ukrainians, even if their native language would be Russian. Thus, identifying oneself as Ukrainian does not necessarily have the need of being a native Ukrainian speaker. My pro gradu-thesis contributes to the studies of this specific war from the viewpoint of history and visual history and how history of the region and history of Russia and Ukraine has affected the war.

The aim of this study is to research what can be seen through images and articles used in the two newspapers and how they can be interpreted together. Visual history and close reading are my main methods, and I will be using them together. In addition, I have chosen this topic because of its relevancy and because it has not been researched extensively yet in the humanities. I have also developed a deep interest in East Slavic world and culture that stems from my adolescence, which made me immediately choose this topic for my master's thesis when I was given the opportunity. This topic was chosen over a year before the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Considering that Russia began an invasion against all of Ukraine on 24th of February 2022, I find this topic even more relevant and crucial as the invasion can be seen as a direct continuation of the East Ukrainian war per se. I will begin by briefly explaining some background information in this chapter, because I find it crucial for the readers to have some context from early on.

Violent protests began in Ukraine in 2014 when President Viktor Yanukovytsch decided to retreat from the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement, which led to violent protests, also known as *Euromaidan*. Protests escalated to full power in January and February when SBU<sup>1</sup> forces and the special force unit of the Ukrainian police, *Berkut* shot live ammunition at the protesters leading to multiple casualties among them. These events eventually led to the Revolution of Dignity, including the ousting of the President of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovytsch and a new government was under the

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<sup>1</sup> SBU = Служба безпеки України – Security Service of Ukraine, similar to Russian FSB and Finnish Suojelupoliisi

leadership of Arseniy Yatsenyuk. The war in East Ukraine has now lasted for nine years since mid-February 2014. The most active period of fighting and battles lasted for about a year since the annexation of Crimea by Russia in March 2014. The war began shortly after Ukraine's parliament Verkhovna Rada had formed a new, pro-Western government with Oleksandr Turtshynov as acting Head of State and Arseniy Yatsenyuk as acting Prime Minister, which was a consequence and the reason to the escape of ousted President Viktor Yanukovytsch.

Russia, and Russian-backed protesters and separatists presented claims that the new government was fascist and illegitimate.<sup>2</sup> *The casus belli* will be explained later in a larger context. In late-February of 2014 soldiers without insignias or emblems entered Crimea and took possession of governmental buildings such as the Verkhovna Rada of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea in Simferopol, the capital city of Crimea and other important strategic locations such as ports and airfields.<sup>3</sup> The soldiers came to be known as "little green men" or «ВЕЖЛИВЫЕ ЛЮДИ – *vezhlyivye lyudi*» in Russian. The city of Sevastopol, in the southern tip of Crimean Peninsula is rented to the Russian Federation. Sevastopol also holds the headquarters of the Black Sea Fleet, which is why Crimea and control of it is important to Russia. On 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2014 a referendum about joining the Russian Federation was organized, and 96% of votes were in favour of joining to Russian Federation, and thus Crimea became *de facto* a federal subject of Russia known as Republic of Crimea after being independent for few days.<sup>4</sup> The referendum was held amidst the annexation of Crimea and the OSCE<sup>5</sup> did not send observers because it did not recognize Crimea as an independent state. OSCE also declared the referendum as illegal because it was conflicted with the Constitution of Ukraine.<sup>6</sup> The Western world and including the EU condemned Russia's annexation of Crimea and to this day they view that the referendum was not legal and refuse to recognise Crimea as Russian territory.

### 1.1 Background and *Casus Belli*

In late autumn of 2013, the Parliament of Ukraine (Verkhovna Rada) decided to suspend the signing of the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement, which would have been one of the first steps towards Ukraine's membership to the European Union (EU) and further integration into the West. The Rada at the time had a pro-Russian majority of MPs, and the president was also a member of the majority party (Party of Regions). Instead of integrating with the EU, Verkhovna Rada chose to

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<sup>2</sup> Marples D. & Mills F. 2015. 17

<sup>3</sup> Marples D. & Mills F. 2015. 16

<sup>4</sup> Marples D. & Mills F. 2015. 16

<sup>5</sup> OSCE = Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

<sup>6</sup> Verkkouutiset. 14.3.2014

maintain closer ties to Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union.<sup>7</sup> This sparked the violent protests, nowadays known as *Euromaidan* with Maidan referring to “Maidan Nezalezhnosti” the main square of Kyiv and the protest led to the Revolution of Dignity, also known as the Revolution of Ukraine 2014. Protesters demanded the government and the pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovytsch to resign.

Protests occurred especially in West and Central Ukraine, for example in Lviv and, Cherkasy, but mostly in Kyiv, where protesters had formed barricades alongside Maidan Nezalezhnosti and governmental buildings. Protests turned more and more violent towards the end. The protests culminated in the Revolution of Dignity. The Verkhovna Rada passed anti-protest laws in January 2014 which gave the police and authorities means to suppress the protests efficiently.<sup>8</sup> The police and riot police were now able to suppress protests with force, even using live ammunition. Protesting the government’s decision to suspend the EU-association agreement had turned to Ukrainians’ fight for their future and self-determination.<sup>9</sup> The first casualties among protesters happened in mid-January, soon after the anti-protester laws were approved. Security Service of Ukraine (SBU) and police snipers were also reported firing live ammunition both at protesters and protesters’ militia.<sup>10</sup> The police and *Berkut* were also reported using Molotov cocktails and improvised grenades against protesters.<sup>11</sup> *Berkut* was the special force police unit, which was suspended immediately after the collapse of the government of Viktor Yanukovytsch. The government also transported hired thugs known as “titushki” from the provinces into Kyiv.<sup>12</sup> Their mission was to blend in with the protesters, cause disarray and attack them from inside with help of *Berkut* and the police.

The protesting culminated in the events now known as the Revolution of Dignity, which lasted from 18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> of February, and led to the resignation of the government and Yanukovytsch fleeing the country. During this timespan, the European Union was also prepared to impose sanctions against Ukrainian leaders due to the severity of the protests. Peaceful attempts of trying to end the Revolution of Dignity were made through a written agreement between President Yanukovytsch and Ukrainian opposition parties witnessed by Foreign Ministers of Germany and Poland, Frank-Walter Steinmeier and Radosław Sikorski and the head of Department for Continental Europe of the French Ministry of

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<sup>7</sup> Coalition of Rada consisted at the time of Pro-Russian “Party of Regions”, a group of minor parties “Fatherland”, “UDAR” (United Democratic Alliance for Reforms) led by Vitaliy Klichko and nationalist party “Freedom”. The government was led by majority of 210 MPs of 450 that “Party of Regions” had.

<sup>8</sup> Marples D. Mills F. 2015. 10

<sup>9</sup> Marples D. Mills F. 2015. 10

<sup>10</sup> Marples, D, Mills, Frederick V. 2015. 13

<sup>11</sup> Kyiv Post. 23.1.2014

<sup>12</sup> Marples D. Mills F. 2015. 11

Foreign Affairs, Eric Fournier. Russia was represented by Vladimir Lukin, a special representative of the President. The agreement was supposed to return Ukraine to the Constitution of 2004, meaning to a parliamentary-presidential form of government and thus holding early presidential elections during 2014, and to form a government of national trust. Security forces were also supposed to withdraw from central Kyiv, violence to cease and the opposition to surrender their weapons.<sup>13</sup> Verkhovna Rada voted to remove Viktor Yanukovytsch from office after he escaped Kyiv on 22<sup>nd</sup> of February.<sup>14</sup> The government eventually fell on the same day. After this Arseniy Yatsenyuk formed a new government being its acting Prime Minister and Oleksandr Turtshynov as acting President.<sup>15</sup> Protests and the revolution that followed, took at least 130 lives including protesters and police officers. 107 civilians were later posthumously awarded with “The Order of The Heavenly Hundred”, which can be awarded for patriotism, courage, protection of democracy and civilian freedoms.<sup>16</sup> The Order was established soon after the new government came into power. Acting Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk also became officially the Prime Minister of Ukraine. In the presidential elections of May, business mogul (All-Ukrainian Union Solidarity) Petro Poroshenko<sup>17</sup> was elected President of Ukraine, and he remained in post until 2019, succeeded by current president, former comedian and television actor Volodymyr Zelenskyi. The ousted President Viktor Janukovytsch was sentenced *in absentia*<sup>18</sup> on 24th of January 2019 to thirteen years of imprisonment for being guilty of high treason and collaborating with the enemy powers. The sentence was executed immediately, but Yanukovytsch’ whereabouts are still unknown with him being in exile, possibly in Russia. It is claimed that Yanukovytsch ordered the police snipers to shoot at protesters during *Euromaidan* protests.<sup>19</sup>

Allegations and of the post-2014 Ukrainian government being fascist and neo-Nazi are widely spread in Russian news discourse, broadcast especially on national television which is the main information outlet to many. The notion of fascist has also become a weapon of labelling something unwanted, and Russia and its predecessor the Soviet Union have had a long tradition of anti-fascist discourse.<sup>20</sup> Far-right parties such as “*Pravyi Sektor*” (Right Sector) and “*Svoboda*” (Freedom) are allowed to operate in Ukraine, but their support is low, with “*Pravyi Sektor*” having had only one seat in the Verkhovna Rada after the parliamentary elections in September 2014. Volunteer fighter groups, such as the

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<sup>13</sup> BBC Русская Служба 21.2.2014

<sup>14</sup> Al Jazeera. 22.2.2014

<sup>15</sup> Yle Uutiset. 23.2.2014

<sup>16</sup> Maidan Museum

<sup>17</sup> All-Ukrainian Union Solidarity. Petro Poroshenko is considered an oligarch who gained his wealth through chocolate confections under the brand of “Roshen”. Poroshenko also has business holdings in agriculture, manufacturing and finance. He also owned an influential media outlet prior to his presidency of Ukraine.

<sup>18</sup> as absent

<sup>19</sup> Associated Press. 4.4.2014

<sup>20</sup> Sometimes “the Great Patriotic War” is named “Victory over fascist Germany”



infamous nationalist “*Azov regiment*” have been operating in Ukraine since the war began in 2014, and at the beginning the regiment was not part of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. Azov was and is only one of the many volunteer groups fighting for Ukraine. Since 2014 it became managed by the National Guard of Ukraine.<sup>21</sup> It received volunteers from several countries, and attracted far-right minded fighters, and is claimed to have connections to far-right organizations elsewhere in Europe. However, the regiment has emphasized that it has been working toward the removal of extremism. Hence, the Azov regiment is frequently mentioned in Russian rhetoric, when suggesting or mentioning that Ukraine is a fascist and “a Nazi state.” The Azov regiment used some of the symbolism that Nazis used in their banners and arm patches, such as *Wolfsangel* and Black Sun. The Azov claims that *the Wolfsangel* represents the letter N and I, for Nationalist Idea.<sup>22</sup> The Azov Regiment is nowadays known as the last defenders of Mariupol who retreated to the Azovstal steel plant during the Russian invasion in May 2022, when Azov fighters were eventually forced to lay down their weapons.

Euromaidan and the Revolution of Dignity in 2014 were not the only events which further escalated the conflict. Suspending the new language law of 2012 would have weakened the status of Russian as an official regional language in Ukraine. The new law of 2012 had guaranteed the status of Russian as a regional official language in the eastern oblasts.<sup>23</sup> The largest ethnic groups in Ukraine are Ukrainians and Russians, who are the majority alongside minority groups like Bulgarians, Tatars, Moldavians and Hungarians. The official language of Ukraine is Ukrainian, but Russian is widely spoken and used all over Ukraine. However, there are areas in Ukraine which have significant minorities of native Russian speakers and ethnic Russians. The largest significant minorities are situated in the east and south, like Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts, where almost 40% of the population are ethnic Russians. The Autonomous Republic of Crimea has the largest number of ethnic Russians, 58,3%. Likewise, Odesa and Zaporizhia oblasts in the South and Kharkiv oblast in the East also have large Russian minorities, with about at least 20% of the population.<sup>24</sup>

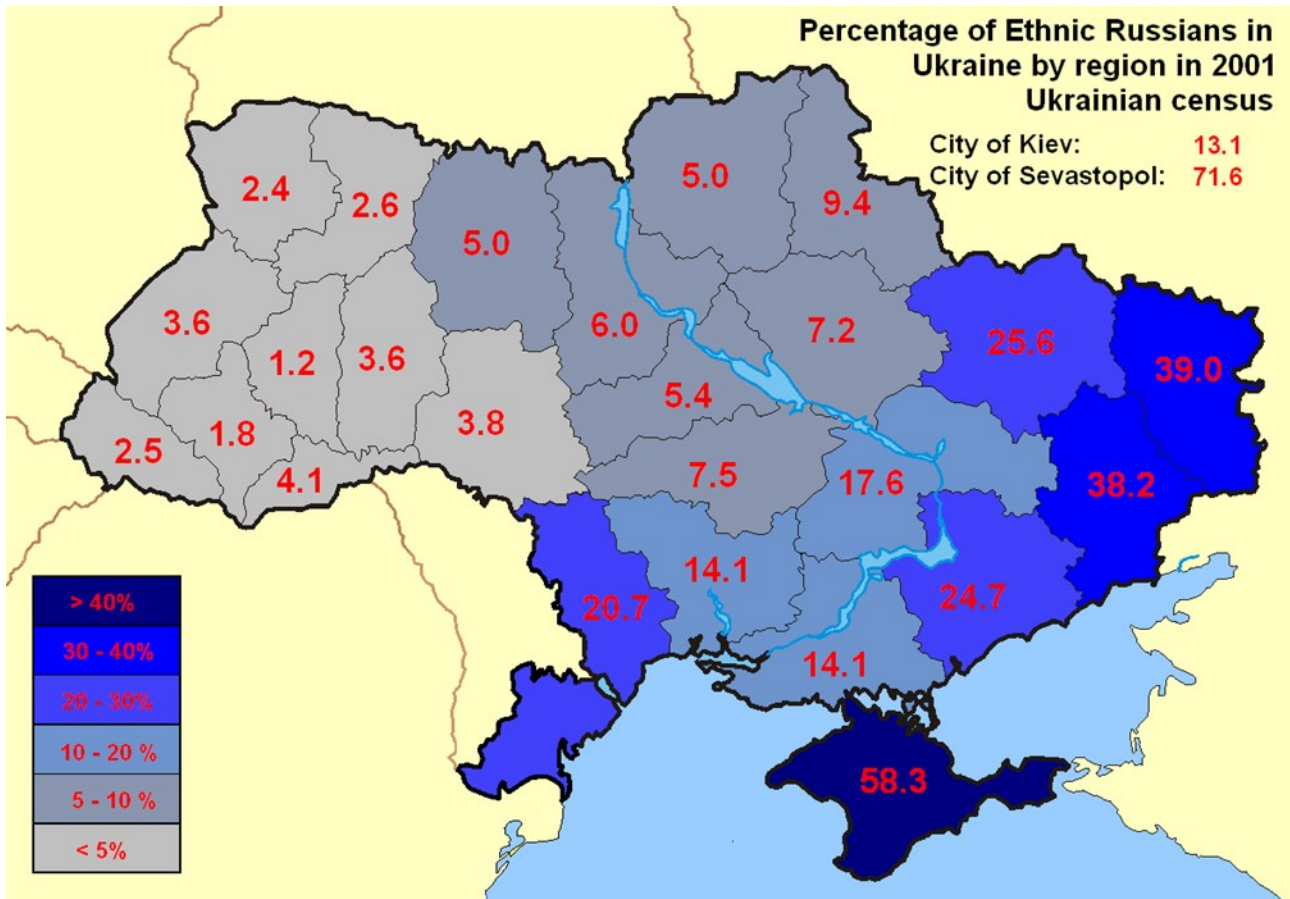
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<sup>21</sup> NGU is the national gendarmerie of Ukraine and internal military troops which was re-established after Crimean crisis in 2014. In wartime it can operate as a regular military force, and has taken part in battles in many fronts and Mariupol. At the moment it fights alongside Ukrainian Armed Forces against Russia.

<sup>22</sup> Yle Uutiset. 29.3.2022

<sup>23</sup> Suomenmaa. 9.5.2022

<sup>24</sup> Ukrainian census of 2001:



Oblast	Percentage
Lugansk oblast	39,00 %
Donetsk oblast	38,20 %
Kharkiv oblast	25,60 %
Zaporizhzhya oblast	24,70 %
Autonomous Republic of Crimea	58,30 %

I will now briefly explain how the language law in Ukraine works in practice. Oblasts, where at least 10% of the population uses a national language (Russian, Tatar, Romanian, Hungarian) as their first language are legally bound to offer public governmental services, such as legal services, health care, service in governmental institutions and education in the regional language.<sup>25</sup> The law also guaranteed the status of the languages and their free use in economic and societal spheres. The acting President of Ukraine vetoed the suspension of the language law, but it did not stop the protest in East Ukraine, especially in Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts, where almost 40% of the population consists of ethnic Russians. For example, the ethnic Russian population was about 48,2% in the city of Donetsk in the

<sup>25</sup> The Guardian, 4.7.2012

2001 census. Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts lie in the east, with Lugansk oblast having 39% population of ethnic Russians and Donetsk oblast 38,2% population of ethnic Russians.

Russian-backed protesters occupying buildings and streets in Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts soon began arming themselves and occupying several governmental buildings, like city and regional administration buildings, police stations and SBU's regional offices. Protesters demanded that the oblasts in question should be declared "people's republics" and occupied buildings were raided by police special units in several East Ukrainian cities, which led to further escalation of protests and clashes between protesters and the police. The Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and The Lugansk People's Republic (LPR) later declared their independence from Ukraine on 11th of May 2014. Neither the United Nations, the OSCE nor the European Union recognise DPR nor LPR as independent states. Ukraine's new government attempted to negotiate with the separatists multiple times offering them several opportunities to lay down their weapons, at the same time being ready and prepared for military intervention. As a concession, acting Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk was ready to offer regional referendums in the Southeast, but only to decide local issues, while separatists aimed for a federalization<sup>26</sup> of Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts from Ukraine thus giving them large autonomy within Ukraine and a guaranteed status of Russian language as a governmental language.<sup>27</sup>



Flag of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic

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<sup>26</sup> Federalisation means large autonomy for regions or regional units. For instance, the United States of America is a federal republic, with 50 states having their own laws and extensive autonomy within the United States.

<sup>27</sup> Kyiv Post 12.4.2014



Flag of the self-proclaimed Lugansk People's Republic

Separatism turned more violent as events progressed and later armed DPR separatists shot at SBU fighters' convoy on their way to Sloviansk, resulting in the death of the first Ukrainian *silovik* SBU Captain Gennadiy Bilichenko. On 15th of April, Ukraine launched an Anti-Terrorist Operation which included all branches of Ukrainian Armed Forces with the aim of suppressing protests and protecting national unity. Full-on battles and skirmishes began on the same day. Ukrainian forces were met with resistance and after skirmishes they were able to capture occupied cities, such as Kramatorsk, which holds an important airbase near Sloviansk and the city of Mariupol, an important port city on the Azov Sea. Violent battles occurred especially in and around Sloviansk, which was in the epicentre of battles and was captured by both sides multiple times, but Ukraine was able to recapture it in July after heavy shelling. After a week-long ceasefire on 1st of July, Ukraine launched its massive retaliation attack, and was able to capture several important cities and strategic locations. Later, on July 17th, Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 from Amsterdam, Netherlands to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia was shot down when flying over Donetsk oblast, by a Russian Buk-missile system. The plane exploded before crashing on the ground and all 298 passengers and crew members lost their lives. Among dead passengers and crew members were Dutch, Malaysian, British, Australian and Indonesian nationals. Separatists granted international observers and investigators safe access to the crash site.<sup>28</sup> However OSCE<sup>29</sup> monitors and Ukrainian ДЧНС<sup>30</sup> officials were prevented from accessing the crash site because they had not agreed to a truce.<sup>31</sup> On 17<sup>th</sup> of November 2022 Dutch court found two Russian citizens and one Ukrainian citizen guilty of shooting down the flight MH17 and all were sentenced to life in prison with all being absent from the trial.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe. 18.7.2014

<sup>29</sup> In Finnish: Etyj = Euroopan turvallisuus- ja yhteistyöjärjestö

<sup>30</sup> Державна служба України з надзвичайних ситуацій (ДЧНС) = The State Emergency Service of Ukraine

<sup>31</sup> The Guardian. 20.7.2014

<sup>32</sup> Yle Uutiset. 17.11.2022

Later in July, Ukrainian troops were able to capture and advance forward into Druzhkivka, Seversk, Artemivsk and even near Lugansk but were later stopped in Ilovaisk and pushed back by massive counterattack performed by separatists and insignialess Russian troops in August. On 5th of September with the presence of the OSCE and Russia, Ukraine and the peoples' republics agreed to a ceasefire after days of peace negotiations. This ceasefire became known as the first Minsk protocol. The protocol included for example points about an immediate ceasefire, the OSCE monitoring of the ceasefire, release of hostages and illegally held prisoners, amnesty for people having connections to the events in LPR and DPR and withdrawal of illegal armed groups, military equipment and soldiers and mercenaries from Ukrainian territory. The ceasefire was broken multiple times by both sides and thus military activity continued, until the second Minsk protocol in February 2015, which also failed and therefore the war continued until the invasion of Ukraine 2022 by Russian Federation. The eventual war in East Ukraine was thus a result of political, economic and social tensions that had brewed in Ukraine for years.



Map of the conflict area in September 2014. The occupied area is divided to Donetsk People's Republic and Lugansk People's Republic.

## 1.2 Research questions

My research questions are as following.

**What do the images/photographs and articles in the two newspapers show about the opposing sides, and could they be seen as part of information warfare?**

**How have the images and the portrayal of the war in the newspapers changed over time?**

The questions are broad, and therefore I see that it is the best to have only two. What comes to methodology i.e close reading and visual history, I see that my research questions are rather well connected to it, because both emphasize visual history and visuality. However, my study focuses on a rather short period of time, there may not be large changes of within the portrayal of my research period. However, the timespan includes many major events that have had an impact on the war, such as the Anti-Terrorist Operation. I am also deeply interested in what the images show and what the images and written text show together. Images used in newspapers are chosen with deep consideration. Images can also be manipulated or cropped, meaning that something could be left out or added, while something else could be emphasized. Newspapers choose the images with these factors in mind, because using the images in a manner that promotes their narrative is in their interest.

Information is broadcast on several different platforms, radio and television broadcasts, phone calls, even social media. The vast amount of information makes it difficult to verify it, but usually the most trusted actors, whether in press, radio or television broadcasts, have verified information from multiple sources. The information can however be represented or changed in multiple manners, by emphasizing something or leaving something essential out, which is the reason why source criticism is crucial. I expect to see some aspects of information warfare used in my research material. The War in East Ukraine has seen many information warfare tactics from both sides; pro-Ukrainians and Pro-Russian separatists.<sup>33</sup> Pro-Ukrainians and Pro-Russians accuse and antagonize each other, such as of Ukrainians being called fascists and Russians Putinists.<sup>34</sup> “Trolling”, spreading lies, propaganda and false information have been major parts of this specific war, such as Russia spreading accusations of Ukraine’s new government being fascist and illegitimate. Choices of words and the tone of language when referring to the opposing side are also good examples of information warfare, such as using ridiculing or polarizing names or notions about the opposing side and representing them in

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<sup>33</sup> Rantapelkonen, 2018, 179

<sup>34</sup> Deutsche Welle. 9.2.2015

unflattering images. Representing the opposing side in a negative manner is an essential part of information warfare, because planned use and spread of the information simplifies creating a psychological climate where it is easy to support the use of military power.<sup>35</sup>

MBC = MVS	Міністерство внутрішніх справ = Ministry of Internal Affairs
ДСНС = DSNS	Державна служба України з надзвичайних ситуацій = The State Security Service of Ukraine
ЛНР = LNR	Луганська народна республіка = Lugansk People's Republic
ДНР = DNR	Донецька народна республіка = Donetsk People's Republic
СБУ = SBU	Служба безпеки України = Security Service of Ukraine
НГУ = NGU	Національна гвардія України = National Guard of Ukraine
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization

### 1.3 Choices and exclusions

The War in East Ukraine has lasted for over nine years, with more or less active periods of fighting and in 2022 it escalated after Russia's attack against the whole Ukraine. I have decided to cover the major events from the year 2014, which was when the war began and was at its peak. I will be covering the occupations of governmental buildings in Kharkiv, Donetsk and Lugansk in April, and siege and battle of Sloviansk in April-June and first Minsk protocol (September 2014). The amount of chosen events has turned out to be risky and I have had to reduce the amount of events during the process of writing the thesis.

My motivation behind choosing the events is based on their impact on the war itself. The choice of analysing the occupations of governmental buildings in Kharkiv, Lugansk and Donetsk was somewhat natural point to begin, because events soon escalated from the occupations in early April. Including the Anti-Terrorist operation was crucial because it represents the determination of Ukraine to extinguish the protests and their will of protecting national unity. The battle and sieges of Sloviansk are also included because Sloviansk is a major transportation hub in Donetsk oblast and being in control of it is important to both sides. The First Minsk Protocol was an attempt at a ceasefire and a small step towards peace, and I see that it is only natural to conclude my thesis on that event and the representation of it. Nevertheless, the war continues to this day on a much larger scale having claimed the lives of thousands of civilians and tens of thousands of soldiers from both sides.

### 1.4 Primary sources

As provided earlier, I have decided to use the Russian *Ria Novosti* and British *The Times* as my research material. *Ria Novosti* is owned by instances directly managed by the Russian government and the Kremlin, and therefore it can be expected that *Ria Novosti*'s journalism represents the Russian

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<sup>35</sup> Rantapelkonen, 2018, 179

government's views and opinions. I do not have similar expectations of the *The Times*. While *The Times* is British, it does not solely represent the British governments, let alone the whole continent's or Western Europe's views about events, history or opinions. I have chosen these two intentionally, as I expect to see some variation in reporting and representing the events, and in what is being represented, what is shown and told and what is not shown nor reported. The target audience of *Ria Novosti* is mainly domestic but includes also Russian speakers outside Russian borders. The target audience of *The Times* on the other hand is especially the United Kingdom, but it has international readers, too.

*Ria Novosti*'s images are in colour, while *the Times*' images are black and white, because of the database I used. The black and white imagery of *the Times* may have some psychological effects on the audience because coloured and black and white images could be seen and received differently. While this does cause some problems, it is not an obstacle preventing analysing the images in an MA thesis. *The Times*'s articles vary in size and can be either short or large, usually two page wide, and contain much information with tables, and graphs and comparisons, while *Ria Novosti*'s articles may be short containing little information about events including one or two paragraph-long summaries on events that have happened in Ukraine. While infographic graphs and tables would provide fruitful information about military power and military assets of both sides, I have decided to leave them out in this context to avoid excessive information.

*The Times* is considered a respected newspaper and trustful producer of information, especially in United Kingdom. It is also a newspaper of public record, which means that it is authorized by the government to publish public and/or legal notices. Thus, it has the responsibility of being reliable and objective. *The Times*'s political alignment has been viewed as versatile as it has not been clearly pro-Conservative, pro-Liberal or pro-Labour. Nevertheless, *The Times* can be considered to have a centre-right political alignment.<sup>36</sup> In the 2001 and 2005 general elections, *The Times* supported Tony Blair's Labour party, which won the elections easily. In the last election of the Conservative party leader held in 2019, *The Times* publicly endorsed Boris Johnson. It also endorsed the Conservative party in the general elections of the same year.

*Ria Novosti* is owned by a large media group "Россия Сегодня – *Rossiia Segodnya*" that was formed on the order of President Putin in 9th of December 2013. The media group itself is owned directly by the government.<sup>37</sup> The head of the organisation is Dmitry Kiselev, a known supporter of Putin and

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<sup>36</sup> Schäffner C. & Bassnett S. 2010. 35

<sup>37</sup> Al-Jazeera America, 9.12.2013



the chief editor is Margarita Simonyan, who is also known for promoting agenda of the Russian government. The formation of this new media group has been criticized for imposing state control over media sphere to promote more positive view of Russia abroad. However, *Ria Novosti* is a still functioning website and publishes news every day. It can be expected that *Ria Novosti's* journalism represents the official narrative of the Russian government while denying Russia's official involvement in the war.

I searched for my research material using the ria.ru website and inserting the desired date to the URL-address which directed me to online archive of articles from the certain date. For example, 20140415 which was the date when *the Anti-Terrorist Operation* was launched. After that I picked the best, most informative articles with images that attract attention of readers. The image itself does not need to be powerful or specific, but it must fit and support the message the article delivers. Right now, I do not have access to *Ria Novosti's* website, and it is only accessible to me via a VPN connection through Latvia or Poland for example. This is very likely due to the sanctions and bans imposed on Russian media. I found the articles from *The Times* through online archive in the go.gale database. I searched for specific dates, mostly dates on or after major events. In that manner, I found relevant articles with photographs in them. I decided to choose articles with photographs only. Since *The Times* is a printed newspaper, I found most of the articles I intend to use from the issue of the day after a particular event, although there were exceptions.

## 1.5 Methodology

As previously mentioned, my main methods are visual history and close reading. These two will provide the best results when analysing images and text articles. Close reading is a qualitative method that it has become an essential part of humanistic research which usually has concrete written texts as research material.<sup>38</sup> It includes analysing the words, choices of words and language, and attempts to find patterns.<sup>39</sup> Close reading also includes reading the research material multiple times.<sup>40</sup> Elements of close reading can also be used when analysing images, art, videos, multimedia or media content. I have used close reading to examine the texts and images closely, layer by layer, to analyse and interpret what the text tells and an image shows.

Visual history on the other hand conducts an analysis of an image as independent object, an agent, an artefact or as a portrayal of an event with or without context. Researchers of visual history have proved that images wield power and often become symbols of certain events. Visual historian Gerhard

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<sup>38</sup> Pöysä, 2010, 334

<sup>39</sup> Kain, 1998, Harvard College Writing Center

<sup>40</sup> Pöysä, 2010, 338

Paul has written: “Its (visual history’s) exponents advocate understanding images beyond their pictorialness as a medium and as an activity with an independent aesthetic that condition the way of seeing things, shape perceptual patterns, convey interpretations, that organize the aesthetic relationship of historic subjects to their social and political reality and which are able to generate own realities.”<sup>41</sup>

In this thesis, I will treat the images as such as agents or representations of the social and political realities presented in differing manners by both sources. Images and their agents, such as photographers need joint effort to provide the best results, because image is a social, political and visual result of its time at the moment when it was taken, and image agent has needed a specific reason to capture the moment in question. I am interested in finding out why *this* image was captured and why the press decided to use it. Image agents, usually journalists and photographers themselves wield much power, their images can provide evidence, capture emotions, exhibit violence and/or change opinions. Images also carry a narrative by themselves with or without a context, which can be seen, for example on what is emphasized, where the focus of the image is, where the image was taken and why and for what purpose the photograph was taken. Images are captured in a manner that they capture the recipient’s focus, also by focusing on a certain point or aspect in a photograph, and gives subconscious instructions to the recipient on where to focus. Even though photographs and their use in the press and the news have produced several iconic images, the purpose of this thesis is not such. I find it crucial that the images alongside the articles are studied beyond their visuality and pictorialness. I intend to find the purpose of the used image and then analyse it and the article, how and whether they fit together in the same context and how they strengthen the message that the news article delivers.

For instance, the mounting of the Soviet flag on Reichstag in Berlin in 1945 has become the symbol of Soviet victory over Fascist Germany. Among other famous images are the railway leading to Auschwitz Concentration Camp or the gate with “Arbeit macht frei” written on it. As audience see these images, they are usually immediately able to connect the images to the events. W.J.T Mitchell refers philosopher Nelson Goodman as follows: “Pictures are ways of world making, not just world mirroring.”<sup>42</sup> Images are depictions of the realities experienced by various actors. Thus, images are agents that transfer knowledge trough time. Another citation about visual history also makes the point well: “Visual histories allow us to investigate what the past looked like at various points, how

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<sup>41</sup> Paul, Gerhard, 2011

<sup>42</sup> Bleichmar & Schwarz, 2019, 4

picturing the past has shaped us, how these visions will guide us to the future, or whether such temporal distinctions are still useful and operative.”<sup>43</sup>

Images themselves do speak, but written sources are useful and crucial to find out when, how, for whom, why and for which purpose a picture or photograph was produced.<sup>44</sup> While I emphasize the images themselves as independent objects and depictions of the realities at the moment they were taken, I find it crucial that I have the written text articles as a wide context which will ease my work with the thesis and analysis of the images. In my analysis I will proceed in the following manner; First I pick the images I will use, together with the accompanying text. After that I start to analyse the image layer by layer, first taking a quick glance to see which details I notice. After that I begin to look more closely at what I see, what the image shows, what it wants to show. This is crucial, especially in this study because *Ria Novosti* and *The Times* both carry a narrative in images they use, and it is this narrative that I want to examine.

Images are also an essential part of modern warfare and information warfare<sup>45</sup>, and images have had such a large impact that they have affected the result of wars, for instance in the wars in the Balkans in the 1990's. Images taken by the press and amateurs were used as evidence in the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia in cases involving crimes committed against humanity by several actors.<sup>46</sup> The current invasion of Ukraine has also produced some images that have become symbols of the war. For example, the photograph in which an injured woman in labor is being carried on stretchers by policemen and DSNs servicemen from a hospital under artillery fire became a famous, even iconic depiction of the horrors of the war and it has been widely used by international press.<sup>47</sup> How and when these kind of images are used is a major factor, especially in conflict situations where high morale is crucial to prevent desertion and succumbing to the opponent's will. Images, news and the press are also used in information warfare, and therefore it is important to be able to separate propaganda and fake news from legitimized information.

Images can also be used for propagandistic purposes. They can be fitted into certain context, such as large billboards, fliers, news articles, propaganda posters and TV broadcasts. They may have some text along with them, trying to demonize the enemy using both the image and the text together. Sometimes the images can be caricatures, drawn with bright and powerful colours to attract the attention of the viewer. Propaganda may include manners such as demonizing, glorifying and the use

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<sup>43</sup> Bleichmar & Schwarz, 2019, 5

<sup>44</sup> Kleemola & Pitkänen, 2019, 23

<sup>45</sup> Gow & Michalski. 2008. 10

<sup>46</sup> Kleemola & Pitkänen, 2019, 65

<sup>47</sup> BBC News. 14.3.2022

of minorities. All three can be seen especially in *Ria Novosti*'s reporting. For example, *Ria Novosti* used the following phrasing in its article of 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2014: "As a result of clashes on streets, during which protesters used firearms and Molotov cocktails, several people died." The phrase shifts the blame for violence and human casualties toward the protesters. In present day context, the propagandistic images can also be simple photographs embedded in a social media post spreading false information or even lies. The internet is full of all kinds of content and it may be near impossible to separate what's legitimate and what's false. For instance, the images both in *Ria Novosti* and *The Times* may have not been used for propagandistic purposes per se, but some could be interpreted as such. Also, propaganda is a powerful concept, which is why it may be better to examine whether the images as such could be a part of information warfare. I find it an interesting challenge to use these two methods together - firstly, to see images as interpretations of the history of the moment, and as objects to be analysed. In this context, close reading combined with visual history provides me the tools to analyse both the text article and the image linked to it.

To make my master's thesis clearer, I will explain some important actors and their abbreviations in this paragraph. For clarification I will be using governmental figures names in Ukrainian and their Ukrainian abbreviations, such as **MVS**, **SBU** and **ДСНС (ДЧНС)**. I will also refer to the cities in question in their Ukrainian form such as Kiev = Kyiv, Slavjansk = Sloviansk. **MVS** in Ukrainian is an acronym for Ministry of Internal Affairs **Міністерство внутрішніх справ (Ministerstvo vnutrishnih sprav)**, the responsibilities of which are protecting civilian security, ensuring traffic security and control, investigation of criminal offenses, fighting crime and corruption, protecting civilians' rights and security. **SBU** on the other hand is short for **Служба безпеки України (Sluzhba Bezpeki Ukraïni)**, the Security Service of Ukraine, which is responsible for guaranteeing for internal security of Ukraine and investigating internal and external threats to Ukraine. **ДСНС** is short for **Державна служба України з надзвичайних ситуацій (Derzhavna sluzhba Ukraïny z nadzvychanyh sytuatsiy)**, The State Emergency Service of Ukraine, which is responsible for emergency services, such as civil defence, fire extinguishing, fire and technogenic safety, rescue missions, utilization of radioactive waste and protection of the population and territory in emergency situations and in the response and prevention of emergencies. **LPR** and **DPR** are short for the Lugansk People's Republic **Луганська народна республіка (Lugans'ka narodna respublika)** and the Donetsk People's Republic **Донецька народна республіка (Donets'ka narodna respublika)**, self-proclaimed states now recognised by the Russian Federation. These two oblasts are also referred to together as **Donbass**, with Donbass being a geographical term for the basin of the river Donets, which

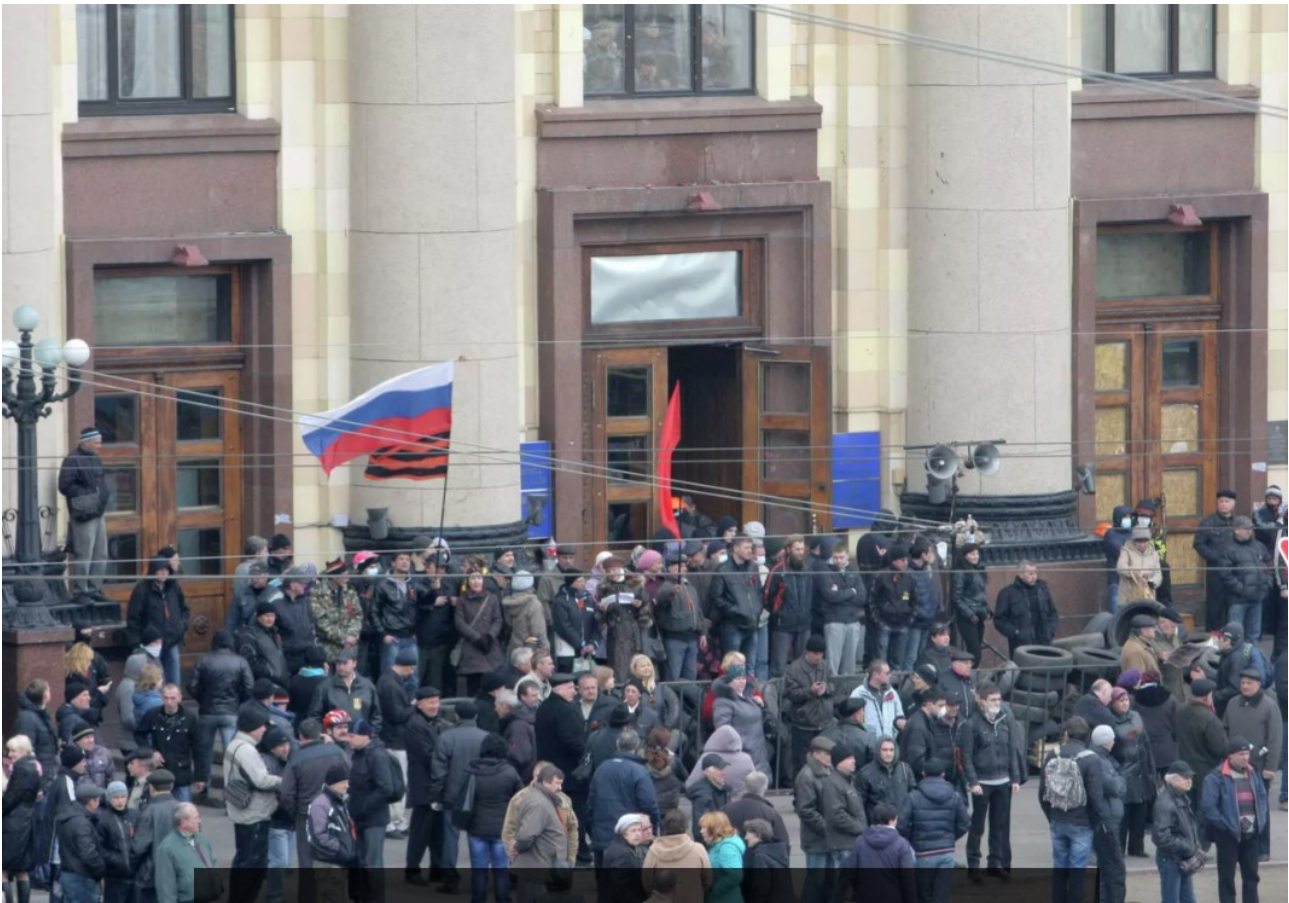
holds several natural resources, such as coal and most of Ukraine's heavy industry. I will also use **LDPR** when referring to the people's republics together.

In the next chapter I will conduct the analysis of the articles and images, in which I will first write a summary of the articles and represent my observations I made from the text articles and the images in them. I will analyse the contents of the article first and the analysis of the image will be conducted after the analysis of the article. I will represent the articles of *Ria Novosti* first and *The Times*' articles after that. The eventual broader examination of my observations will be represented in the concluding chapter, and I will also represent how the war in East Ukraine affected the ongoing Russian invasion of Ukraine that started in 2022 because the war in east Ukraine had directly affected the Russian decision makers to invade Ukraine.

## 2. Analysis

In this chapter I will closely analyse the images and text articles. I will begin by analysing *Ria Novosti*'s articles first, and *the Times*' after. I read the articles thoroughly multiple times and after that I look for key points and points of significance. I will first write a summary about the textual content of the article, and then later analyse the image itself, and present my findings and observations of the article. I will also examine the message that both the article and the image deliver to their audiences. The eventual results and more comparative review the results will be presented in the conclusion chapter.

## 2.1 Occupation of governmental buildings in Donbass



**Ria Novosti 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 “Митингующие заняли здание обл администрации в Харькове”** In English: **“Ralliers took over the building of the Kharkiv oblast administration in Kharkiv”**

This news article from *Ria Novosti* on 6th of April reports that protesters have taken over the regional administrative building of Kharkiv oblast in the city of Kharkiv. *UNN (Ukrainskie Natsional'nye Novosti)* reports with reference to the press service of the regional Ministry of Internal Affairs that protesters entered the building and raised the Russian flag as well as a flag with the colours of Saint George's ribbon on the window of the second floor. Protesters are referred to as “supporters of federalization” and *Ria Novosti* also refers to protesters as activists or «МИТИНГУЮЩИХ» - *mitinguyushchih*. «МИТИНГ - *miting*» meaning a rally in this context. *Ria Novosti* reports that rallies in Lugansk, Kharkiv and Donetsk are organized every Sunday, and reports about the protesters' demands: federalization of the country and organization of referenda about their regions' statuses. Protesters do not support the new appointed governors in East Ukraine, which is why the rallies are going on. *Ria Novosti* reports about the protesters' accomplishments, such as being able to occupy the Donetsk oblast regional administration and the regional office of the SBU in Lugansk. It is also

written that protesters have appointed their own “people’s governors” in Lugansk and Donetsk. *Ria Novosti* also reports that investigations for cases such as “hooliganism” have been opened in Kharkiv and the prosecutor’s office in Donetsk has opened a case for “massive disarray” (массовой беспорядок – *massovoy besporyadok*) due to the rallying.

In the image embedded in the article several protesters are blocking the entrance to a building, with some holding flags. The building is the Kharkiv oblast’s state administration. Most of the protesters seem to be in civilian clothing, but one appear to have a camouflaged uniform, which resembles a military uniform. The protesters also appear to be peaceful. One loudspeaker can also be seen on the right, possibly for delivering speeches or agitating the protesters. The Russian flag and a flag with the colours of Saint George’s ribbon<sup>48</sup> can be seen, and one protester seems to hold a red flag, which could be the flag of the Soviet Union or the flag of the Communist Party. Many protesters have small ribbons on the chests of their jackets. Since the events of 2014, the ribbon has become a mark of loyalty to the Kremlin.<sup>49</sup> Thus the protesters’ pro-Russian stance is shown by wearing the ribbon. Also, the presence of the Russian flag implies the protesters’ sympathies toward Russia. The message of the image and the article is likely that the federalization of the East Ukrainian oblasts has strong support with protesters being ready for action.

In the end of the article further context for events in Ukraine is provided, with written text about political crises such as “Euromaidan” and the “violent” exchange of power of February, consequence of which was the forming of a new government and a change in the administration of MVS (Ministry of Internal Affairs). This paragraph specifically seems to be rather condemnatory of the revolution in Ukraine, having used specific words when referring to Euromaidan protesters and the new government. Euromaidan protesters are referred to as “armed radicals” (вооруженные радикалы). *Ria Novosti* condemns the protesters of Euromaidan for using Molotov cocktails and firearms on authorities. It is also emphasized that the ousted president Viktor Yanukovytsch was forced to flee from Ukraine, fearing for his life. It seems that *Ria Novosti* condemns the new government and supports the deposed government and its president Viktor Yanukovytsch, thus stating that the exchange of power was illegal, referring to it as «насильственный захват власти – *nasil’stvennyj zahvat vlasti*» meaning a violent coup d’état. It is also written that on 27th of February the composition of the new government was authorized, with *Ria Novosti* referring to it as a “government

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<sup>48</sup> Black and orange coloured “Георгиевская Лента” or the Ribbon of Saint George is a relatively new symbol of commemoration of Great Patriotic War (Second World War) and it holds similar symbolism with the British Poppies, a symbol of commemoration to the Great War worn by many on their chests in United Kingdom on Remembrance Day 11th of November.

<sup>49</sup> Open democracy. 1.5.2015.



of national trust” approved by people of the Ukraine, with the protesters in East Ukraine strongly opposing the new government.



#### **The Times 8<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 “Ukraine rebels urge Putin to send in Russian peacekeepers”**

*The Times*’ article written by Ben Hoyle on 8th of April provides an analysis of the events during the week. The article begins by stating that Pro-Moscow protesters have declared a getaway state from Ukraine and are now asking for President Putin’s help. The headline states that Ukraine rebels urge Putin to send in Russian peacekeepers. Acting Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk’s speech is cited in the article with him stating that Ukraine does not allow foreign forces on its territory and will not give in to de-stabilization attempts. Yatsenyuk blames Russia for attempting to dismember Ukraine and to turn Ukraine into ”slave territory owned by Russia”. Yatsenyuk spoke to the public soon after a Ukrainian naval officer was shot in a hostel in Crimea, having become the second Ukrainian soldier to die after Russian annexation of Crimea. Russian media claimed that the shooting was a result of an argument between Ukrainian and Russian soldiers, with the Ukrainian soldiers having been under the influence of alcohol.

Further in the article it is stated that some European countries, such as Ukraine, Latvia and Lithuania have suspended Russian TV-channel broadcasts to prevent misinformation from Russia. It is also reported that “political tourists” from Russia have blended into protesters masquerading as locals in East Ukrainian cities, which was proved when a group of protesters occupied the opera house in

Kharkiv thinking it was the mayor's office. The article also provides some information about Donetsk oblast and the stronger will for autonomy of its population rather than welcoming Russian troops to annex it. A group of activists had written a declaration of independence and agreed on organizing a referendum about joining Russia. One speaker of the protesters called for Putin's help to resist the "junta" in Kyiv. Junta in this context means that Ukraine's new government was not chosen with elections but taken by force. In the end the Russian Foreign Ministry stated that only a non-aligned Ukraine with a guaranteed status for Russian language was viable, thus expressing the Ministry's support to protesters and their worry for the status of their native language in Ukraine.

The protesters are referred to as "mobs" and "rebels" and pro-Russian crowds are also reported as strongly disagreeing with Ukrainian government. Armed protesters are referred to as separatists or insurgents.<sup>50</sup> Overall, the choices of words and the language of the article is neutral, with plain, well-formed sentences. However, "mob" does carry negative connotations, such as an organization of criminals or a large, angry crowd that can easily become violent with *the Times* presenting the protesters exactly like this.<sup>51</sup>

In the image embedded next to the article, a small group of people wave flags and cheer out loud on a balcony of some sort. Some of them have veiled their faces, probably to protect their identities. The focus of this image seems to be on the man cheering in the middle and holding a flag in his other hand. The man on the front seems to have a military uniform with a tactical vest, helmet and safety pads to provide protection for his limbs and torso. The presence of the two cheering men with one in military uniform brings an intimidating and slightly threatening tone to the image and may indicate future "mob rule" if protesters get what they want. While the exact colours cannot be seen, I assume the flag to be either the Russian or the Donetsk People's Republic flag, since the photograph was taken in Donetsk where support for the people's republics was strong, and Donbass was a pro-Russian stronghold in East Ukraine. The subtext says that pro-Russian protesters have occupied a government building in Donetsk. It is likely that the man with the flag is cheering to a crowd surrounding the building. The message that the image and article deliver is that the protesters' support for autonomy or independence from Ukraine is very strong, with them even being ready to welcome Russian peacekeepers.

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<sup>50</sup> Someone fighting against their country's government

<sup>51</sup> Cambridge Dictionary: "mob"

## 2.2 Skirmishes around Sloviansk and Kramatorsk airbase

The Battle of Sloviansk began almost as soon as Ukraine started its Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO). As a part of the battle, the Ukrainian Armed Forces took control of an airbase in Kramatorsk where Ukrainian army and separatists skirmished and both parties suffered losses. While *Ria Novosti* does not explicitly report on any major battle since the ATO started, it reports on more minor events, such as the skirmish at the Kramatorsk airstrip. This might be because of the reason, that *Ria Novosti* is an online newspaper, able to constantly provide new information, while *the Times* is a printed newspaper, the articles of which must be well prepared before going to the press and being released to the public.



**Ria Novosti 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2014. «Обстановка у аэродрома Краматорска стабилизировалась»**  
In English: **”The situation at the airbase of Kramatorsk has stabilized”**

As a part of this event, I examine the article discussing the skirmish at the Kramatorsk airstrip from *Ria Novosti* on 15<sup>th</sup> of April. The headline states that the situation at Kramatorsk airbase has been stabilized. The article reports that Ukrainian forces were able to seize the airbase from separatists, who suffered casualties. It is also reported that around a thousand peaceful citizens negotiated with Ukrainian Armed Forces. Reports about the events were made by a correspondent from the airbase. At 9pm in the evening, it was reported that the situation at the airbase was stable, and that there were about a thousand protesters and fifty Ukrainian soldiers from different special military units wearing

green and black uniforms. Reports about the number of casualties varied from four to dozens of dead separatists with figures coming from multiple sources. Both sides were reported to have wounded fighters. Separatists had retreated to the city of Kramatorsk and the article states that they managed to capture about a dozen Ukrainian soldiers. It is also stated that Sloviansk is still under the separatists' control. They are reported to have control of the entrances to the city and are focusing their power on defending the city council.

The image in the article shows six young-looking Ukrainian soldiers standing alongside each other after having taken control of the airbase in Kramatorsk from separatists and protesters. The subtext states: "*Ukrainian military near the airbase in Kramatorsk, East Ukraine.*" One of them, the second on the right has a rather new MM14 Ukrainian military uniform, while two have Soviet-based "Butan" patterned uniforms. The three soldiers in the middle seem to have American Multicam-patterned military uniform. The soldier with the MM14 uniform seems to have the newest equipment, such as a new looking tactical vest. Their helmets seem to be made of steel and have no camouflaged hoods in them. All of them are armed with assault rifles which resemble AK-74's or AKS-74's, which is a newer model of AK-47 assault rifle, and the first of which is the service weapon of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. All of them seem to have the same kind of a khaki-coloured tactical vest as well. The equipment of the soldiers seems quite plain; differing military uniforms, assault rifles, tactical vests, steel helmets, and some have probably ammunition boxes on their waists. The soldier on the left looks like he is aiming at the photographer with his weapon, and he and two other soldiers seem to have an object on their backs which resembles an anti-tank weapon. It seems that some of the soldiers avoid looking at the camera, or they are unaware of being photographed. The soldier who has his weapon aimed at the photographer brings a threatening tone to the image and it cannot be said for sure if the soldier mistook the photographer for an enemy soldier. The aimed weapon also makes the Ukrainian soldiers appear as threatening or aggressive, which resembles the official Russian view of Ukrainians' actions in the war.

*Ria Novosti* refers to Ukrainian soldiers as "силовики" "*siloviki*" which means a person of power. Russia's political elite, risen from the military, the police and the security services are often referred to as "*Siloviks*" in the West. *Silovik* in general is a notion that refers to ministries and regimes that hold power to execute military power in the country.<sup>52</sup> While it may be customary to refer to soldiers as *siloviks* because of their position of wielding power, it is an interesting choice of word. Usually «военные» (*voennye* - military), «военнослужащие» (*voennosluzhashchie* - military serviceperson)

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<sup>52</sup> Especially in Russia. *Silovik* is a neologism that refers to all ministries i.e bodies of power that have the authority to execute military power in the country.

and «солдаты» (*soldaty* - soldier) are used rather than «силовики - *siloviki*» which likely are intentional choices of words when referring to Ukrainian soldiers suggesting that they are executing the military power in the country. All the previously mentioned are used in this article when mentioning Ukrainian soldiers. Protesters are referred to as «сторонники федерализации – *storonniki federalizatsii*» or “supporters of federalization”. The separatist militia is referred to as “national self-defence” or “people’s self-defence” «народная само-оборона – *narodnaya samo-oborona*», possibly referring to the insurgents’ position of defending themselves. Separatists are also referred to as militiamen «ополченцы – *opolchentsy*» by *Ria Novosti*.

Two interviews are also included and cited in the article. One interviewee is Russian Foreign Ministry’s representative of human rights, democracy, and authority, Konstantin Dolgov. He states that Kyiv has decided to act against their hopeful speeches about peace, having started a military effort, the consequence of which might be the unfolding of a civil war and the destabilization of the regions in question, maybe even of all of Ukraine. The other interviewee is the acting director of the political science centre “Sever-jug” Aleksey Vlasov. He is cited as not being willing to give an estimation from the viewpoint of a distanced scientific approach. He states that western historiography argues about criteria for civil wars. He states that some see a civil war as having started when the number of fatalities is in the hundreds or even thousands, and five to ten fatalities does not fill the description of a civil war. From his point of view, a single fatality is a sign of polarization that has gone too far, and he sees the situation in Ukraine as such. Thus, in his opinion, a civil war in Ukraine has already begun.

Including these two paragraphs was an intentional choice that expresses the growing concern in Russia about the situation in Ukraine, with citations from an expert in human rights and a political scientist. These kinds of statements might have been used in searching for a justification for the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Civil war is mentioned in both citations, and it could be a sign that *Ria Novosti* was representing the conflict as civil war, although not mentioning the notion in its own written text.

The last paragraph describes the events in the East, reporting that rallies there continue every Sunday with protesters demanding referenda about their regions’ statuses. It is also reported that earlier the acting Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk declared the beginning of a large-scale anti-terrorist operation in the East of the country connected to the unrest in the region. The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs Sergey Lavrov announced that using power, including the army against supporters of federalization was a dangerous progression of events. In his opinion, the people who encourage the

figures of power in Kyiv to this kind of behaviour must be held accountable for their actions thus expressing his and Russian concern about the situation.



Ukrainian forces head towards Slovyansk, one of the cities where pro-Russian



separatists have occupied buildings. The rebels rejected talk of being a Russian fifth column and waved Ukrainian passports

**The Times 16<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 “If the rebels don’t give up their weapons, we will destroy them”**

The article of *The Times* from 16th of April offers a broad analysis of events that happened in East Ukraine during a timespan of a few days. The genre of the text is a report, because the journalist uses idioms, makes interesting choices of words, and describes events rather vividly, which can be seen in the tone of the article itself. The journalist describes the occupations of buildings in several cities as



a “phoney war”.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the choice of word might refer to ancient Russian-Ukrainian rivalry. The headline delivers a powerful statement: “If the rebels don’t give up their weapons, we will destroy them.” and summarizes quite well what the article reports. The article begins with a description of the place where the interview of a Ukrainian General Vasiliy Krutov was being made, and in the same paragraph the journalist describes the Ukrainian general using an idiom “to throw down the gauntlet” to the Kremlin. The journalist probably decided to use this idiom to state that the general in question and the Ukrainian Armed Forces more broadly are ready and prepared for battle. The journalist also describes the decision to begin the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) as Ukraine abandoning tact and reconciliation in favour of escalating military force, thus stating and acknowledging that Ukraine had made an effort for a diplomatic solution to the problem. The Ukrainian general also provides some information about the need to suppress the protests by aggressors in the East. He also shifts some of the blame away from the protesters claiming that they have been severely affected by Russian propaganda and the Russian Military Intelligence GRU, which is an interesting notion.<sup>54</sup> The article in general offers viewpoints from both sides, those of the Ukrainian military and the separatists.

The article refers to separatists as groups of militiamen and rebels. Separatists are said to being determined about their cause, and not afraid of Ukraine’s attack. One protester, named Vladimir Kunho states that they have nothing to lose, which is why they are ready to fight until their last breath. They also expressed doubt that the Ukrainian Armed Forces are ready to move on against them on armoured vehicles. The separatists are met with allegations of being part of a Russian fifth column and having gotten their weapons and equipment from Russians, while claiming that their weaponry was provided by co-operating policemen and retired veterans. They also waved their Ukrainian passports as proof. The “fifth column” idiom is used rather well because it carries the narrative that pro-Russian separatists living in Ukraine are supporting Russia and are willing to welcome Russian troops to help. On the other hand, the interviewed general admits that the army is not capable of using much force, because of the civilian presence and a fear of civilian casualties. Interviewed lower rank Ukrainian soldiers are harsher in their attitudes toward the protesters stating that they are trained soldiers and thus not afraid to open fire if necessary.

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<sup>53</sup> Phoney war was a counteraction to German attack to Poland in 1939, when United Kingdom and France both declared war on Germany. Both France and United Kingdom performed attacks against Germany and German ships. Skirmishes happened both on land and in air, but mostly battles occurred on sea, when the British Royal Navy blockaded German ports, and German ships disrupted commercial ships on the Indian Ocean and the South Atlantic Ocean.

<sup>54</sup> GRU is the Military Intelligence Service of Russia, and it carries out missions both in Russia and outside Russian borders. It has played a role in several operations outside Russian borders, such as having performed cyber warfare in the West. GRU also played a crucial role in the annexation of Crimea and the war in East Ukraine in 2014.

Overall, the article includes interview sections from both sides and some analysis about events and the advance of Ukrainian forces. The article argues that Ukrainian forces are unlikely to be able to perform a massive operation with their limited resources. An analysis by Ben Hoyle is also included in the article. Ben Hoyle was the chief of the Moscow bureau of *The Times* during the East Ukraine war. He presents an analysis that Putin must be desperate to make his popularity ratings grow with the economy situation of Russia being rather poor. He also describes that Russia has a large number of troops ready for battle, in the case of the Ukrainians use heavy force against the protesters, which has prevented the Ukrainians from using full force. The Kremlin is also reported as fearing that a land war in East Ukraine would cause the loss of local support in Russia and maybe even draw NATO into the war. However, after the invasion of the Crimea, Putin's popularity ratings went up.

The subtext under the images states that the Ukrainian army is headed to Sloviansk, an important city and transportation hub in the Donetsk oblast, now occupied by separatists.<sup>55</sup> The main focus seems to be on soldiers on armoured personnel carriers and tanks. Flags of Ukraine can be seen fluttering in the military vehicle convoy. Military uniforms on soldiers seem to be the Soviet-era model "Butan" or "Dubok" in Ukraine, which were later replaced with contemporary pixel pattern military uniform MM14 in 2014, similar to MARPAT used by the US Armed Forces. Some soldiers have the same steel helmets as in the earlier image, while other soldiers manning the armoured vehicles and tanks have tank helmets. Because of the black and white imagery, it is fairly difficult to make interpretations of the images. The armoured vehicles are BTR-90 or BMP-2 Soviet-era armoured military vehicles. It is likely that this image captures and sums up what the written text is stating; the Ukrainian army is heading to Sloviansk, where fierce battles are only to become. The image was probably taken as the military convoy was heading toward Sloviansk. Two flags of Ukraine not only identify the military column but also might represent that Ukraine is defending itself against aggression on its own soil. I believe that this image was used because along with the text article, it shows that Ukraine is determined to protect its national unity and to suppress the protests by force, having attempted multiple times to find a solution by diplomacy. Thus, the message of this image is that Ukraine has taken the threat very seriously and acts after having attempted to find a peaceful solution.

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<sup>55</sup> The image is in half because of the newspaper layout.

## 2.3 The first Minsk protocol (ceasefire)



**Ria Novosti 5<sup>th</sup> of September 2014 «Минское соглашение по Украине: перемирие со многими неизвестными» In English: "The Minsk agreement on Ukraine: A ceasefire with many unknowns"**

The Ria Novosti's article from the 5<sup>th</sup> of September begins with the headline "The Minsk agreement of Ukraine: a ceasefire with many unknowns" The first Minsk protocol marked the first attempt at a ceasefire in East Ukrainian war. The article is long and includes several interviews. It reports that Ukraine, Russia, and representatives of the LPR, DPR and OSCE met in Minsk on 1<sup>st</sup> of September to negotiate about a possible peace. On 5<sup>th</sup> of September the Minsk protocol was signed by all parties and it came into effect at 19.00 (Moscow time) on the same day. A ceasefire would begin immediately, and opponents would stay in the positions they had reached at the moment of the ceasefire came into effect.

It is reported that in the first meeting the opposing sides laid out their positions. The DPR and the LPR called for Kyiv to recognize their special statuses in exchange for putting in a maximum effort of protecting the national unity of Ukraine. The representative of the OSCE Heidi Tagliavini reported that the protocol consisted of 12 points including the ceasefire itself. The separatists, in turn claimed that according to them, the protocol consists of 14 points. However, this protocol that consists of 14 cannot be found anywhere. The protocol also included points about the withdrawal of heavy weaponry and humanitarian aid. President Poroshenko of Ukraine had already given an order to the general headquarters to cease fire immediately as a result of the negotiations. He also stated that the terms of the protocol would be followed, including strict monitoring of the ceasefire and freeing of prisoners of war (POW). Representatives of the DPR and the LPR also stated their readiness to follow their side of the agreed points.

The article emphasizes the exchange of POW as a major part of the protocol and reports that it will include the exchange of all POW from both sides. It also includes a statement from the Russian ambassador to Ukraine Mikhail Zubarov that the POW exchange will have an effect on thousands of people from both sides of the “intra-Ukrainian conflict”. His choice of word is interesting, hinting at his stance about the war being a civil war rather than a war between different countries, which fits well with what *Ria Novosti* has previously reported. This kind of statement supported the official Russian stance of denying all allegations of being involved in the war. Technical issues and arrangements, such as the locations of exchanges and their documentation of POW exchange must be solved first, according to Zubarov. The representative of Ukraine, former president Leonid Kuchma<sup>56</sup> also stated that both sides had exchanged lists of POWs. The press secretary of the deputy prime minister of the DPR Purgin reported that the timetable of the POW exchange did not have any time limitations. Also the situations of the POW from both sides are reported as Donetsk People’s Republic and Lugansk People’s Republic (LDPR) not having specific lists about their POW in Ukrainian custody and that there are several Ukrainian fighters who are reported as “missing without trace”. The LDPR also had a clear list about Ukrainian POWs. Ambassador Zubarov expressed his suspicion by stating that the prisoner exchange may be successful, the Ukrainians would release a few POW and the rest would probably stay in Ukraine or would not be released. However, that question was not examined yet.

Earlier, a representative of the Ukrainian Council of National Security and Defence Andrey Lysenko had informed *Ria Novosti* about Kyiv’s quick readiness to exchange hostages. Lysenko stated that

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<sup>56</sup> Second President of Ukraine from 1994 to 2005.

the separatists had “hundreds” of Ukrainian POWs and that 200 fighters had been reported as “missing in action”. However, he added that his information could not be verified by credible sources. President Poroshenko had also informed the journalists that the exchange of prisoners could begin already on Saturday, 6<sup>th</sup> of September.

While both sides were negotiating in Minsk, it was reported that the airport in Donetsk was shelled from both sides during the negotiations. Andrey Lysenko then stated that Ukraine would only return fire if the ceasefire was broken by separatists: “If we clearly see that the terms of ceasefire are broken by the LPR and the DPR, and it produces a threat to civilians and to military personnel, then we will return fire.” Lysenko also stated that the Ukrainian side did not exclude the possibility that the separatists would break the ceasefire first. The press secretary of the vice Prime Minister of the DPR Purgin also stated that the terms would be followed, but as soon as one gunshot could be heard from the Ukrainian side, the agreement would be nullified. Both sides had thus expressed clearly their willingness to commit to the ceasefire while also asserting that they would return fire if the terms of ceasefire were broken by the other side; thus both sides were suspicious of the ceasefire succeeding. However, the LDPR expressed their suspicion even more clearly, implying that Kyiv would eventually fire, wording it “as soon as”. Further, ex-President Leonid Kuchma stated that both sides are ready to take the first steps towards achieving peace. He stated that even if the situation was difficult, all sides were on the same page and everyone hoped that the region would achieve peace . He described the meeting in Minsk as meaningful and as a first step of the enormous workload that needs to be done. President Kuchma was sure about the negotiations’ success and that peace would be achieved. Thus, it was acknowledged that the effort was important, despite the suspicion of all sides, as the negotiation held much symbolic value.

*Ria Novosti* had interviewed Russian experts on international matters who all stated that the meeting was meaningful but expressed their suspicions of the ceasefire and of how long it would last. Aleksandr Perendzhiev, an expert in the Association of Military Political Sciences, argued that the ceasefire would only last for a week and that opponents would be using the ceasefire to execute tactical actions.

Mikhail Pogrebinskiy, Director of Centre of Political Investigations and Conflict Studies of Kyiv called the Minsk protocol a “ceasefire without control”. By his words, the agreement consisted of many points, and all of which should be analysed to “judge the viability of the ceasefire”. He stated “I believe that even if possible successes would occur, this ceasefire probably won’t be permanent. I’m not sure that the ceasefire will be followed by productive, sustained negotiations eventually leading to a referendum.”

Andrei Kortunov, General Director of the Russian Council of International Affairs stated that disagreements in internal politics in Ukraine may become the main reason for breaching the terms of ceasefire. “It is already a huge step towards peace. However, from my point of view, there is a serious factor of unclearness. It lies in the fact that neither Putin nor Poroshenko can control what happens on the frontlines in a full measure.” All experts expressed their suspicion about the ceasefire and its success, speculating manners in which the terms would be broken and what the eventual reasons and consequences for the breaches might be. Kortunov’s last sentence described the nature of the conflict as a war that no party could actually control.

The article sums up quite well what had been agreed on in Minsk and what was to be done, and how it was to be done. The article reports that the ceasefire terms will be followed strictly, but it also expresses suspicion about the ceasefire and its duration and effectiveness, and the interviewed experts in particular were suspicious of the ceasefire and its impact on the conflict. Especially the “as soon as Kyiv fires” expression used by the press secretary of the deputy prime minister of the DPR gave a hint that LDPR was even more suspicious of the ceasefire than Ukraine.

In the image can be seen two large military lorries, possibly KraZ lorries of the Ukrainian Armed Forces. The text states that the Ukrainian siloviks are in East Ukraine. There are several soldiers in the image with differing equipment and clothing. The side mirrors of lorries are painted in the colours of Ukraine. Soldiers are scattered around the lorries and there are soldiers on the beds of the lorries, too. Some soldiers are carrying AK-74 assault rifles. Equipment and uniforms are differing, with most having Soviet based “Butan” and one having probably British Woodland patterned uniform. Tactical vests are all different too, with one in olive, one with a desert camouflage patterned and one in black. The constant appearance of differing equipment used by Ukrainian soldiers may just be a coincidence or sheer reality of the situation of equipment used in Ukrainian army. It is also possible that such kind of images are intentionally selected and then used in articles to present Ukrainian Armed Forces as having differing uniforms and equipment. Thus, it was very probably an intentional choice to represent the Ukrainian military as unprofessional with varying equipment gathered from here and there and with some soldiers having possibly bought uniforms of their own.

It is difficult to interpret this image because it does not show anything particularly major. Two military lorries are parked behind each other, and the lorry in the front has side mirrors painted in the colours of Ukraine, and it also has flags of Ukraine painted on its doors. The lorries are parked in front of a crosswalk. The soldiers do not seem to be aware that they are being photographed, but the soldier in the front with an assault rifle and a Velcro patch with the Ukrainian flag on his tactical vest seems to be walking toward the photographer. The soldier in the middle with his back turned to the

camera seems to be very close to another soldier holding an assault rifle in front of him. The soldier in front of him has his eyes shut and pointed towards the ground and holds his assault rifle with one hand. It remains unclear what they are doing. It may be possible that the soldiers have just arrived somewhere and that is the reason they appear to be disorganized with some on the ground walking around and others sitting and standing on the bed of the lorry. The focus in the image seems to be on the lorry and the soldier walking in front of it. The message that the article and the image deliver together may be that the ceasefire and its effects are very unlikely to last. The disorganized movements of the soldiers may deliver a message that neither the soldiers nor politicians have a clear picture about the situation and the future of the war, which is why they remain in East Ukraine. It also messages that the Ukrainian military is disorganised and chaotic.



Hours before the ceasefire came into





SERGEY PONOMAREV / NEW YORK TIMES / REDUX / EYEVINE

force, refugees from around eastern Ukraine were waiting to board a bus on the first stage of their journey to resettlement in southern Russia

**The Times. 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2014 “Victory for Putin as truce secures rebels’ hold over eastern Ukraine”**

The extensive article from *The Times* on 6<sup>th</sup> of September reports about the ceasefire as “Victory for Putin as truce secures rebels’ hold over eastern Ukraine”. Using the word “truce” is accurate, and later on in the article the peace deal is referred to as a ceasefire. However, at the moment when the article was published in the paper on 6<sup>th</sup> of September, the ceasefire had already come into effect, on 5<sup>th</sup> of September at 18.00 o’clock. The image is in two parts because of the layout of the newspaper. The article is written by Ben Hoyle and Deborah Haynes, with the former of which providing an

analysis of the situation and the humiliating effect of the ceasefire on President Poroshenko. The article is long and includes shorter sections, including an interview of a British businessman leaving his luxury home in Donetsk and an analysis by Ben Hoyle.

The article sums up the events that led to the ceasefire, including the pro-Russian rebels' counteroffensive that "turned the tide" and forced Kyiv to accept a ceasefire and its terms, which are not favourable to Ukraine. In the article it is reported that the ceasefire will begin on 6pm and will include prisoner swaps, the introduction of humanitarian aid, international monitoring, and the withdrawal of heavy weaponry from eastern Ukraine.

In the article President Poroshenko is reported as saying that the human life is the most valuable thing and that everything possible and impossible must be done to terminate and prevent bloodshed and put an end to people's suffering. *The Times'* article does not specify the details of the 12-step peace plan. The article reports that Moscow denies that it organizes the pro-Russian insurgency, but *The Times* also adds that the most prominent insurgent leaders are Russian individuals and that Nato has presented claims that thousands of Russian soldiers are fighting in Ukraine. It is also reported that no agreement had been made about the status of rebellious regions which was interpreted to mean that it is very likely that Russia's grip on the territories will grow firmer. Lugansk separatist leader Igor Plotnitsky is quoting as saying that the ceasefire "doesn't mean that our course for secession is over". This gives a hint of the insurgents' stance about the ceasefire suggesting continuation of the war in future.

Some Western leaders' opinions and views have also been included, with US President Obama saying that he was hoping that the ceasefire would hold but being sceptical "based on past experience – it has to be tested". The article also reminds the reader about the previous ceasefire, which was unilaterally proposed by President Poroshenko in June and collapsed after Ukrainian troops had claimed that they were fired on more than 100 times in ten days. The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, David Cameron had also stated that the truce was good news, but the EU sanctions against Russia would go on anyway with him stating that "We can always remove them". British General Sir Adrian Bradshaw, the most senior commander of Great Britain in Nato had said that "there was some deception and deceit" from the Russian side. He added that "The reality on the ground is that Russian regular armed forces are being employed on the territory of Ukraine in support of this separatist movement. That is a hugely serious issue for Europe and for the wider world and it is certainly a hugely important issue for Nato." The article also reports that the Estonian government had presented claims that unknown people from Russia had crossed the border and kidnapped an Estonian policeman at gunpoint, having jammed radio transmissions and used smoke grenades. Russia had

claimed that the man was captured on Russian soil and was suspected of being a spy. The policeman was not named in the article, but his name was Eston Kohver, an Estonian policeman working for the Estonian Internal Security Service.<sup>57</sup>

Further in the article is a summary about the events and the situation in Southeast Ukraine which also includes interviews with civilians and soldiers from both sides. The article reports that a few mortar attacks caused damage to civilian infrastructure in Donetsk soon after the ceasefire came into effect. An interviewed pensioner named Lidia expressed her disappointment about the ceasefire saying “I have no hope. Poroshenko is a traitor, he makes promises but he’s just lying.” She is referring to Poroshenko’s promise in mid-August to end the insurgency and bring peace into the region. The article reports about the situation and the consequences of shelling around Donetsk oblast, including the port city of Mariupol and its outskirts.

As a result of the ceasefire, Ukrainian soldiers had retreated from their positions and were now prone with their rifles aimed at rebel positions. An interviewed Ukrainian military doctor with the National Guard, Colonel Oleg Mikhailik, said that three civilians had been killed by Russian Grad rocket fire so far and stated that two of them had been children from a village near Mariupol. He was described to be sitting at the back of an ambulance with an AK-74 assault rifle on his lap. He said that he had not fired it and stated it was a necessary attribute adding that if the enemy sees a Red Cross car, the enemy will shoot at it first. The article presented bullet riddled ambulances supporting his claim. The founder of the infamous Azov regiment known for its Neo-Nazi rhetoric, Andriy Biletsky recounted a night of heavy fighting on the previous day stating that “it was an artillery duel – we were fired at all night. The enemy was 5km away from the city. Now they are 20km away.” He was hopeful of the ceasefire not lasting, stating “The enemy is still on our territory. As soldiers, we will obey orders [to stop shooting]. As citizens, we will not admit to this ceasefire” The interviewer asked: “Did he mean guerrilla war?” and received an answer “We will see.”

Ben Hoyle wrote a separate section in which he reported that a Briton named Richard Spinks had to flee from his \$6million luxury home in Donetsk due to a rebel gang attacking it. Spinks, the chief executor of Active Energy, owned a wood-working business which exported Ukrainian wood products. He had already fled to West Ukraine with his family, but he learned later that DPR rebels had taken over his house, which had earlier been hit by artillery fire. He had to negotiate with the rebels about “guarding” the house from rival groups. He admitted: “It is a protection racket”. Now

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<sup>57</sup> Kohver was detained on 5th of September in Luhamaa, Estonia. The kidnapping caused a scandal in Europe and Kohver was sentenced to 15 years in prison in August 2015. In September 2015 he was exchanged for Aleksei Dressen, an Estonian Internal Security Service officer sentenced for high treason for cooperating with the Russian FSB.

that the ceasefire was in effect, it had entrenched the rebels' position. Spinks stated: "My house is in the DPR full stop. There's my house completely gone." He had no confidence in the ceasefire: "Trust me, I've lived in this region for 23 years and know it backwards. I'm telling you, this is not the end [of the insurgency]."

The article concluded with Ben Hoyle's analysis of the humiliating terms of the ceasefire to Kyiv's leader. Hoyle began by stating that the hardest work for Poroshenko was only to begin from the truce, since if the truce held, the deal that he signed would look like a humiliating capitulation for himself and Ukraine, because the terms were dictated by the Kremlin and separatists. Earlier Poroshenko had declared that he would not negotiate with terrorists, which meant that he betrayed his promise to the public and the Ukrainians. The deal was formed with the help of other European countries, and the deal implied that international community had allowed a sovereign state to be invaded and allowed Moscow to entrench a frozen conflict in Ukraine, which gave Russia a lever to destabilize Ukraine even more. The Prime Minister of Ukraine, Arseniy Yatsenyuk had said that Putin's aim with the peace process was "to ruin Ukraine and restore Soviet Union". President Poroshenko on the other hand decided that peace was much more important than idealistic considerations of a Ukrainian victory. Hoyle added that the peace deal was needed to organize credible parliamentary elections in October, which would show if Poroshenko was able to convince Ukrainian voters. Hoyle reminded his readers that in mid-August Kyiv had assured Ukrainians that the insurgency would be defeated soon, but the promise was exposed as pure fantasy when massive counterattack made by separatists and thousands of Russian soldiers and hundreds of Russian tanks and vehicles was successful. As a consequence, Ukrainian forces were smashed around Donetsk and Lugansk with hundreds of killed and captured.

By his actions Putin had showed that he would not contemplate a military victory for Kyiv, but on the other hand he had been looking for a face-saving exit strategy for months. Hoyle added that as a result of Putin's actions, a decade of diplomatic gains in relations with the West had been sacrificed, international confidence in Russian economy was crushed and nationalism in Russia ran rampant. There also never had been never public support for a war inside East Ukraine. Hoyle concluded his analysis by stating that Putin had been vying with an unsure European Union for influence over the whole of Ukraine, which probably referred to Ukraine's decision not to sign the Association agreement with the European Union and maintaining closer ties with Russia instead. Hoyle finished his analysis with "Now his (Putin's) war has driven the vast majority of the country (Ukraine) into the arms of West for the long haul." The finishing sentence of Hoyle's text was powerful at the time

when the article was published, and it has become true as of 2022 and 2023, with Ukraine receiving material and military support from the USA and Western Europe.

In the image accompanying the text, there is a group of refugees ready for evacuation to southern Russia according to the caption. Plausibly the destination of the evacuation is Russia because it is the closest neighbouring country, and fleeing to West Ukraine could have meant that the evacuation route would run through a war zone. If the refugees were already in an area controlled by separatists, it could have been unsafe to evacuate to West or Central Ukraine. The refugees were gathered in front of the Soviet-era evacuation buses hours before the ceasefire came into effect. The focus of the image seems to be on the two children in front of the buses, among plastic bags packed full of clothes. The yawning girl wearing a dress on the left seems to be completely oblivious to the situation and the boy in shorts and a t-shirt on the right seems to be shaking his head in confusion. The weather is warm, according to the refugees' clothing. The refugees, women, men, elderly, and children are gathered around the buses with some crouching on the littered ground and some leaning against the buses. Visible expressions on the adults' faces seem to be nervous. The black and white format and its effects on the shades complicate the analysis a lot.

The appearance of the children in front of the image is not a coincidence, the aim behind the choice of this image is to emphasize the suffering of the civilians, especially children. Children and their presence in images taken in war torn areas usually attract the attention of the viewers quite well and they are often used in media. Several images of this kind have become iconic, for example the Vietnamese girl burnt by napalm during the Vietnam War. The luggage packed in plastic bags may also indicate that only essentials were packed, implying haste and the need for a quick escape. The purpose of this image and the article is to bring into attention that the future in Eastern Ukraine is so uncertain, that escape to a safer area is much better solution than staying and hoping that the ceasefire would hold. Russia has welcomed refugees from East Ukraine with open arms. There seems to be a message the British and West European audience that the life in the war-torn area has grown such unbearable and uncertain, that escape is the best choice. Overall, the image signals to the audience that the biggest victims of the war are the civilians, especially children. And even though the ceasefire is coming to effect possibly guaranteeing the security of civilians in the war-torn area, the refugees in this image still chose fleeing as a safer option than trusting a ceasefire of which all the actors are suspicious.

The article and the image together message that the future and security of the conflict area is not guaranteed and that the refugees in question decided to flee to a safer area because of the ceasefire being fragile and incapable of promising a lasting effect. The ceasefire will also probably guarantee

a safe passage to Russia for the refugees. In a larger context the message could be that the ceasefire is temporary and will not have a larger impact. The interviewed civilians, experts, politicians, and soldiers all agree that the ceasefire is not going to have a major impact on the war and that the war will eventually continue.

### 3. Conclusions.

In this chapter I will first present my observations and interpretations of the articles and images. I will begin by explaining what kind of language the both newspapers used and how they referred to the opposing sides and what kind of words they used about key factors, such as the Ukrainian government, the Ukrainian Armed Forces, politicians, the war itself, separatists, protesters and such. The research questions will be answered in this chapter as well. I will also examine what both newspapers included and excluded, how similarly or differently they reported about the events examined and what aims did their reporting served.

In general, the language that both newspapers use was factual text. However, both newspapers used certain chosen words when referring to the opposing sides or actors in the war and behind it. Also, the genre in *The Times*' articles varied, with some of its articles being more descriptive than *Ria Novosti*'s. The language in *The Times* was vivid and used idioms in certain articles. When comparing the language that the both newspapers employed when referring to the opposing side, it is clear the choices of words were intentional and expressed opinions: *Ria Novosti* did not write about protesters as protesters but rather as «МИТИНГУЮЩИХ - *mitinguyushchih*» or «сторонники федерализации – *storonniki federalizatsii*» especially in the article from 6<sup>th</sup> of April. The first means a rally, a group gathered, and the second refers to a supporter of federalization, thus meaning a supporter of larger autonomy in East Ukraine. Protesters were represented as peaceful and non-threatening, and Russian and Pro-Russian symbols could be seen, with ribbons of St. George, flags of Russia, St. George and possibly the Soviet Union or the Communist party in the image. Ukrainian soldiers on the other hand were referred with a variety of words, such as *siloviks* (executioners of power), military servicepeople, soldiers and military. *Silovik* is the most common word used when referring to Ukrainian soldiers. Separatists were referred to as insurgents, militiamen, rebels, national self-defence or people's self-defence and separatists. The choices of these words were intentional, because they asserted the position of power and how it was executed. In *Ria Novosti*, Ukraine was described as the aggressor and people's republics and separatists as defenders and underdogs.

*The Times* used neutral language but included condemnatory words when referring to the pro-Russian protesters. In the article from 8<sup>th</sup> of April, protesters were referred to as “rebels”, “mobs” and “pro-Russian dissents” representing them as angry crowd, fighting for their rights and easily becoming violent when provoked. Such an image was used in the article, with the two men aggressively cheering on a balcony with a flag and one protester having military equipment. *Ria Novosti* did not report about any “political tourism” while *The Times* pointed out in the article from 8<sup>th</sup> of April that there were claims about it happening and provided proof of it. It is an interesting notion because Russia was

willing to strictly deny its involvement in the events, which was its official stance when accused of being involved in the annexation of Crimea. On the other hand, the second article from the 16<sup>th</sup> of April employed more colourful language, which was probably likely because of the genre of the text was that of a feature report, where the use of language is more free and vivid than in news articles. The use of idioms, choice of words and the vivid manner of writing made this article stand out from the others. *The Times* in general offered views from both sides, from the Ukrainian government and military and the separatists, while *Ria Novosti* offered a greater voice for the protesters in its articles and often wrote in a condemning manner about Ukrainians with few exceptions. *Ria Novosti* also reported in the article from 6<sup>th</sup> of April about the Ukrainian justice system having opened several cases against the protesters due to the rallies thus probably representing them as disturbing public order. The language and choices of words in *Ria Novosti's* articles condemned the new government and Euromaidan protesters, referring to them as “armed radicals” «вооруженные радикалы – *vooruzhonnye radikaly*» and accusing the protesters of having used Molotov cocktails against the authorities, which was claimed to have caused dozens of civilian casualties. The blame was thus shifted to the Euromaidan protesters. The events of 22<sup>nd</sup> of February or the Revolution of Dignity were referred to as a violent coup d'état «насильственный захват власти – *nasil'stvennyj zahvat vlasti*», thus echoing Russia's stance and view of the events.

To answer my first research question is difficult which was **“*What do the images/photographs and articles in the two newspapers show about the opposing sides, and could they be seen as part of information warfare?*”** but it seems that the use of all these photographs was intentional in the case of both newspapers, and they summarised rather well what was written in the text provided with them. The images concretely showed what was written in the articles in each case. *Ria Novosti's* article from 6<sup>th</sup> of April showed a group of standing protesters waving a flag of Russia and a flag with colours of Saint George's ribbon and other pro-Russian symbols, thus presenting the protesters' support for larger autonomy and their pro-Russianness. Protesters were presented standing in front of the regional administrative building, portraying them as not causing unrest or disarray while Ukrainian justice system had opened cases against the protesters for causing “massive disarray”. In its article from 8<sup>th</sup> of April, *The Times* used an image where a group of protesters was aggressively cheering possibly to a crowd and waving a flag on a balcony of a governmental building, which fitted in well with the text of the article and represented some of the protesters as welcoming Russian peacekeepers to the region. Identifying the flag is difficult, but because it had dark colours in the bottom it may have been a flag of Russia or of the DPR.



*Ria Novosti's* article from the 15<sup>th</sup> of April showed a group of Ukrainian soldiers near the Kramatorsk airbase in differing military uniforms with their equipment easily identifiable. The use of that image represented the equipment of the Ukrainian military as differing and plain, and which has caused them to use any military uniforms available. The soldiers appeared to be very young as well. Generally, the image made the Ukrainian Armed Forces appear as unprofessional and threatening to civilians. A Ukrainian soldier aiming his assault rifle at the photographer made the image and the Ukrainian soldiers seem threatening, and the contents of the article represented the Ukrainian military as having caused casualties to protesters and separatists, thus strongly supporting the image. *The Times's* report from 16<sup>th</sup> of April displayed a Ukrainian motorized military convoy on their way to Sloviansk. It showed soldiers on armoured military vehicles with Ukrainian flags fluttering from the vehicles. It may be something taken for granted, but the use of this image represented Ukraine's determination to defend their own country by all means possible after having attempted to solve the protest and unrest diplomatically, as stated in the article by a Ukrainian military official. The serious faces of soldiers could be interpreted as indicating their determination to fight and defend their own territory. The use and representation of symbols, such as flags and ribbons could be seen as part of information warfare, boosting morale and representing the groups as under certain symbol, whether a flag of Ukraine, Russia or Saint George. Thus, their political stances could be identified through the symbolism used in the images, which is a part of information warfare, representing the enemy in a non-flattering manner.

*Ria Novosti* reported about the Minsk protocol rather neutrally in the article from 5<sup>th</sup> of September employing neutral factual language without condescending expressions or choices of words. The article did not include any summaries of previous events in East Ukraine, unlike in the first two articles. The headline "The Minsk agreement: A ceasefire with many unknowns" summarized the article well, representing all parties' suspicion of the ceasefire. All Russian and Ukrainian experts that *Ria Novosti* interviewed were suspicious of the eventual success and duration of the ceasefire. Russian experts expressed their suspicion in a much stronger manner than Ukrainians. Allegedly, the Ukrainian effort and President Poroshenko's actions when ordering the ceasefire showed that Ukraine had made a concrete effort by ordering all troops to cease fire immediately and stay in their positions, while both the LPR and the DPR had stated their readiness to follow the ceasefire. This could be interpreted that as *Ria Novosti* reporting that Ukraine had taken the greater responsibility and thus admitted its greater involvement and guilt. Separatists were very suspicious of the ceasefire succeeding, and the statement "as soon as any gunshot can be heard from Kyiv, the agreement will be nullified" revealed a lot, and speculated that Ukraine would eventually break the ceasefire.

However, former President of Ukraine Leonid Kuchma voiced his hopes that an effort has been made, and a journey towards peace has been started. The use of an image with Ukrainian soldiers and military vehicle implied that, despite the ceasefire, Ukrainian military activity and presence would continue behind the agreed positions and the uncertainty of the situation could be seen in the disorganized movement of the soldiers.

*The Times* on the other hand reported about the ceasefire on 6<sup>th</sup> of September as an unsure measure without lasting effect, and a huge humiliation to Ukraine and its President Petro Poroshenko, especially if the ceasefire held, because President Poroshenko was basically forced to agree to the deal and the terms were dictated by separatists and Kremlin. The article was written around the headline: “Victory for Putin as truce secures rebels’ hold over eastern Ukraine.” The article suggested the reader that President Putin benefits from the ceasefire the most with the ceasefire securing Pro-Russian separatist control of the area. However, both articles agreed that the ceasefire and its effects would probably fail, with *The Times* presenting interviews of military representatives from both sides in which they expressed their dissatisfaction with the ceasefire, hinting at a continuation of the conflict in the future. *The Times’* article included views from important Western leaders, such as the President of the USA Barack Obama, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom David Cameron and most senior British officer in Nato, Sir Adrian Bradshaw, who all expressed their suspicion of the ceasefire lasting, with the latter stating that Russian military forces were present on Ukrainian soil. David Cameron had also said that the sanctions imposed by the EU on Russia would go on, explaining that they could be removed if progress could be seen. Interviewed Ukrainian military and separatist force officers and military leaders also expressed clearly that the war not over yet.

To answer my second research question which was: “***How have the images and the portrayal of the war in the newspapers changed over time?***” It is quite clear that the imagery and in the text articles made of *Ria Novosti* can be seen as information warfare with *Ria Novosti* using mainly military-themed imagery and nearly always representing the Ukrainian military in them, with the first article having an image with protesters in it. The protesters were represented as a peaceful crowd under pro-Russian symbols, who blocked the entrance to the Kharkiv oblast regional administration. The Ukrainian Armed Forces were shown in poor, differing equipment, making them seem unprofessional and the constant representation of the Ukrainian military was also a message to the audience that the main culprit in the conflict was Ukraine and its Armed Forces. Ukrainian soldiers were also represented in a threatening, violent manner especially in the article from 15<sup>th</sup> of April. The separatist militia was not represented in the images at all in either newspaper’s articles, with both instead presenting either Ukrainian Armed Forces, protesters or civilians and refugees. *The Times’* article

from 8<sup>th</sup> of April represented protesters cheering on a balcony with one protester having a military uniform with tactical equipment. Protesters appeared aggressive in the image, and the military uniform emphasized the aggressive tone of the image and the aggressiveness of the protest in the region. Thus, the lack of broader representation of the separatist militia makes comparing the equipment used by both sides rather difficult, giving the audience somewhat one-sided visual representation of the military opponents, where only the Ukrainian Armed Forces is properly represented in the imagery, and the separatist militia is left out. Civilians and refugees were represented in the imagery used by *the Times* in the last article analysed here. The choices of words when referring to the Ukrainian government and military were condemning, especially in the summaries in *Ria Novosti's* articles. *The Times'* reporting is difficult to see as information warfare, because it reported about the events objectively but used some condemning words when referring to separatists and protesters as “rebels” “mobs” and “dissents”. *The Times* also emphasized the aggressiveness of the protest, especially in the article from 8<sup>th</sup> of April, presenting the protesters as welcoming Russian peacekeepers to East Ukraine, and the use of image with aggressive protesters on a balcony supported the thesis of the article. In the article from the 6<sup>th</sup> of September, *The Times* represented a group of refugees waiting for evacuation to begin, with the content of the article describing the humiliating effect of the ceasefire on Ukraine and its leader. The article also described that the ceasefire was likely to fail, and all interviewed civilians, businessmen, political leaders and fighters expressed their disappointment with beginning of the ceasefire or their doubts about its success very clearly. The message as a whole was that the fighting would continue, which was expressed by both sides and supported by the use of an image, in which the refugees chose to escape the war torn area.

*The Times'* articles expressed some sympathy toward Ukraine acknowledging Ukraine's difficult position because the opponent was obvious but official claims could not be made due to the lack of concrete evidence. Its language and representations were quite neutral toward Ukrainians while the tone of the language when reporting about separatists and protesters included condemning words, such as pro-Russian dissent, rebels and mobs. Events were described and reported rather objectively in *The Times*, with reporting views from both sides of the war. Ukraine was represented as the underdog in the war because of the uncertainty of the opponent, Ukrainian fear of using excessive power, and strong Russian support for the insurgents. The poor equipment and strength of the Ukrainian military was also given attention, especially in the 16<sup>th</sup> of April article. Ukraine was in a difficult position which prevented it from using all possible military power as early as April, because of the fear of Russian military intervention and civilian casualties. *The Times* brought up points about

Russian indirect and direct involvement in the war through military officials and statements made by political leaders. *Ria Novosti* represented clearly Russian dissatisfaction toward Ukraine's new government and Ukraine's military action against the insurgency and rebellion. *Ria Novosti* gave much more attention to the protesters and insurgents views and expressed its support and sympathy for the rebellion through language and its choice of words. *Ria Novosti* also clearly expressed the Russian government's negative views about *Euromaidan, the Revolution of Dignity and the Anti-Terrorist Operation* using notions such as "violent coup d'état", "armed radicals". However, using the word "*silovik*" when referring to Ukrainian soldiers and the Ukrainian government was correct in itself, but the word bears a negative connotation. *The Times* represented Ukraine as the underdog where *Ria Novosti* represented the separatists and protesters as the underdogs, which is interesting and stems from different viewpoints and sympathies for different sides.

Aims of reporting:

I see that *Ria Novosti*'s reporting about the events had the aim of attracting wide attention from Russian and Russian-speaking audience and representing the war more as an internal conflict within Ukraine or as a civil war that threatened ethnic Russians and Russian speakers outside Russia's borders with persecution, racism, and discrimination. The language and choice of words were negative and condescending toward the Ukrainian government and military, and Ukraine was portrayed as the aggressor, allegedly having made little or no effort in finding a peaceful solution with *Ria Novosti* not mentioning that Ukraine had made a good deal to solve the protests diplomatically and peacefully. Russia had presented itself as a mediator and multiple times expressed worry over the events leading to the war and the escalation of it. Officially Russia had acted very concerned about the situation despite its indirect involvement since the very beginning. Russia had denied all allegations of supporting separatists and separatist militia and such allegations were not even mentioned in *Ria Novosti*'s articles. *Ria Novosti* represented ethnic Russians and the Russian speaking population in East Ukraine as victims of the new government, the Ukrainian Armed Forces, Ukrainian legislation, and their actions. The newspaper itself condemned the shift of power in Kyiv as a "violent coup d'état", condemned the suspension of the language law of 2012 and expressed support for former President Viktor Yanukovych emphasizing that he was forced to escape fearing for his life.

*The Times* on the other hand did not seem to have similar aims in reporting about the war. Since *The Times* is a newspaper of public record, it has the duty to be neutral and report objectively despite its centre-right political alignment. *The Times* offered a voice to all parties involved in the war, and it is likely that *The Times* was willing to report on the war and the reasons behind it objectively. In

addition, *The Times* published articles explaining the roots behind the conflict, how it affects the region, Russian-Ukrainian relations and international politics as well. *The Times'* articles also gave the readers context and history behind the conflict and educated the readers about the East Ukrainian question. *The Times* also had correspondents and experts explaining and giving information to readers, who may have not been familiar with Eastern Europe, Russia and Ukraine. Especially towards the end of the period I am researching, *The Times* emphasized civilian suffering and the impact of the war locally and internationally.

The portrayal of the war and the images did not change much during the examined period. Ukraine was made to appear as responsible for the war especially by *Ria Novosti's* reporting. Ukrainian attempts to solve the protest and separatism diplomatically in the early stages were not mentioned clearly or at all. Ukrainian responsibility for the war was emphasized especially by the condemning representation of the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the reporting and imagery of the articles. *The Times* represented the Ukrainian government and the Ukrainian Armed Forces neutrally reporting Ukraine as having made a good deal of effort to solve the separatism peacefully, but eventually having had to take action in order to suppress the separatism and attempts to dismember the country. Ukraine's limited military resources were given attention, too. *The Times* started to emphasize civilians' suffering toward the end of the time period by using an image of refugees who were escaping from their homes. The ceasefire was described as humiliating to President Poroshenko. In the last article examined here, *The Times* included an interview with British General Sir Adrian Bradshaw who was rather sure about direct Russian involvement in the conflict, stating that it was clear that Russian soldiers were fighting on Ukrainian territory against Ukrainians. General Bradshaw did not present any proof for his claims. However, his title and position itself as the most senior British officer in the NATO alliance gave weight to his statement.

In general, *Ria Novosti's* articles made the war appear to be a result of the people of Ukraine abandoning closer relations with Russia through Pro-European Euromaidan protests, which escalated in the Revolution of Dignity followed by the ousting of the Pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovytsch, Russian annexation of Crimea to protect its ethnic Russian and Russian-speaking population and the replacement of the Verkhovna Rada with a pro-European government viewed as fascist and unlawful by Yanukovytsch and the Kremlin. The attempted suspension of the language law of 2012 and the eventual vetoing of the suspension of the law sparked the protest in East Ukraine which quickly escalated into violent protest that Ukraine defiantly decided to suppress, eventually by a massive military operation, thus starting an open war against pro-Russian separatists. *The Times* on the other hand assigned much more responsibility for the war to Russia and to pro-Russian protesters

and separatists emphasizing Ukrainian attempts at finding a peaceful solution to the protest. *The Times* also suggested that Ukraine ended up with no other option than to protect its national unity and territorial integrity by launching the Anti-Terrorist Operation against Pro-Russian separatists and subsequently also against un-uniformed Russian troops who came to help the separatists.

Having reached the end of the period that I am examining, I have come to the conclusion that the first Minsk Protocol was only an attempt to stop the fighting temporarily and that it was a humiliating experience for Ukraine and President Poroshenko. The terms were dictated by the Kremlin and under the pressure of major European powers such as France, Germany and Russia, Ukraine had to agree to the peace deal while all sides were highly suspicious of the ceasefire and its chances of success. Soldiers interviewed from both sides openly admitted that the ceasefire did not stop the fighting but as soldiers they were bound by their orders to obey their superior officers. The interviewed Mr. Spinks' statement in *The Times* article from 6<sup>th</sup> of September also supported this claim; the fighting would not end with the ceasefire. Both *Ria Novosti's* and *The Times'* articles expressed scepticism about the success of the ceasefire and its effects, and everyone interviewed was rather sure that the ceasefire would not last and that the war would eventually continue. However, the articles in the two papers represented some hypotheses and propositions of how the war could be stopped.

By the year 2021, the war in East Ukraine had caused tens of thousands of casualties. The estimate in total was about 54,000 casualties with Ukrainian Armed Forces having 4,400 soldiers killed and up to 14,200 soldiers wounded. Separatist militia losses were estimated as 6,500 fighters killed and up to 16,200 fighters wounded. Civilian casualties were estimated as 3,404 killed and 7,000-9,000 wounded.<sup>58</sup> It is estimated that over one and a half million Ukrainian refugees had fled the war-torn areas to other parts of Ukraine and that one million had fled to the Russian Federation.

### 3.1 Epilogue: The War in Ukraine 2022-2023

As a direct continuation of the war in East Ukraine, Russia launched “a special military operation” against Ukraine on 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022. I find that writing a brief epilogue on the Russian invasion of 2022 is important, because it is entwined with the war in East Ukraine, and its *casus belli* is linked to what happened in East Ukraine. Indeed, the current Russian invasion of Ukraine could be seen as a direct consequence of the war in East Ukraine.

On 24<sup>th</sup> of February 2022, the Russian Federation launched a massive attack against Ukraine from the east, north and south. President Putin had declared earlier on the morning that Russia had no other

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<sup>58</sup> United Nations. Office of the High Commissioner for human rights. 27<sup>th</sup> of January

option than to launch a “special military operation” with the aim of purging Ukraine from Nazism, saving ethnic Russians in the Donetsk and Lugansk oblasts from genocide and “dethroning the fascist and junkie” government.<sup>59</sup> The attack itself was massive and could be seen as having started a new era in global and European history. As a consequence of the attack, millions of Ukrainian refugees fled Ukraine to neighbouring countries or to West and Central Ukraine.

Artillery was fired from Belarus, Southern Russia and the Crimea. Ballistic missiles hit several major cities, such as Kyiv, Odesa, Dnipro, Kharkiv and Kramatorsk, all in different parts of Ukraine.<sup>60</sup> The Ukrainian Armed Forces were able to prevent Russian forces from advancing into Kyiv, but Russians were successful on the Eastern and Southern fronts, where they occupied large parts of Kharkiv oblast in the northeast, and later in the spring also Kherson and Zaporizhia oblast in the South. However, Russian forces began to suffer major casualties, and low morale and numerous problems with logistics caused some troops to surrender to Ukrainian forces and even to civilians. The Ukrainian Armed Forces proved its capability of defence and was able to cause major losses and casualties to the Russian forces – and continues to do so.

As a consequence of the attack, Ukraine has received the immediate support of the EU and the United States of America. At first the support included military rations, field hospitals as well as tactical and medical equipment. However, the support soon also came to include different kinds of weaponry, anti-tank missiles, tanks, heavy artillery and military education. Many East European countries provided Ukraine with their old Soviet-based weaponry that Ukrainians knew how to operate, such as tanks, armoured vehicles and artillery. In the autumn of 2022 Ukraine received more modern weaponry, such as HIMARS artillery systems and American M270 rocket systems. As of spring 2023, several European countries have decided to provide Ukraine with modern heavy weaponry such as German Leopard 2A4 and Leopard 2A6 battle tanks. The United Kingdom had earlier sent Challenger 2 tanks and United States of America had sent 31 M1 Abrams battle tanks Finland had also announced that it would provide six Leopard 2 R tanks for minesweeping. Countries such as Poland and Slovakia have decided to send MiG-29 fighter jets to Ukraine.

With the conflict in Ukraine having escalated to a full war between Russia and Ukraine, information warfare has become a much more prominent aspect of it than ever before, with new information coming from all kinds of sources, which can be hard to verify. Information, or the lack of it, is a part of warfare and it is used to boost morale on all sides, be it the attacker, defender or bystander.

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<sup>59</sup> Yle Uutiset. 24.2.2022, TASS. 24.2.2022

<sup>60</sup> The New York Times. 24.2.2022, Yle Uutiset. 24.2.2022

Differing information was given by both sides already during the war in East Ukraine, but now the information varies even more than before. Thus, information warfare, and representation of the enemy either boosts morale or lowers it. I am interested to see how the current situation and Russian invasion of Ukraine will end up, and what the status of the Donbass region will be after the war is over. Since the war in Ukraine began, the whole situation and the future of Europe, and Ukraine is uncertain. The radically changed geopolitical situation also changed the Finnish public opinion radically, which led the country to abandon its military neutrality by applying to NATO together with Sweden on 17<sup>th</sup> of May 2022. At the moment when this thesis is being written, Finland's NATO application has been ratified by all member states of the alliance and as of 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2023, Finland became the 31<sup>st</sup> member of NATO, thus making history especially in Finland, known for its long tradition of neutrality. Now that the war has lasted for more over a year, the geopolitical stability and security of Europe is at stake, as Ukraine is deterring a massive invasion from Russia. The damage caused to Ukraine, its civilian and military infrastructure is measured in billions of dollars and the reconstruction of Ukraine will last for years to come. The war in East Ukraine was only the beginning for a much bigger invasion. This time Ukraine's enemy was clear and defiant in its actions having brought the biggest war since the Second World War to the European continent.



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