

Wartimes desinformation counteraction structure

*Associate professor,
Dr. Vladislav Dimitrov
NBU, Sofia, 2023*



**NEW
BULGARIAN
UNIVERSITY**

Intro the problem

Prior to the start of the Russian military invasion of Ukraine, the rating of President Volodymyr Zelensky was not great: since 2021, he began to fall and by the beginning of the war was only 24.6% after winning elections in 2019 with 73%. However, after the Russian attack, Zelensky became a national hero - now his support 9 out of 10 residents of Ukraine.

Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council (NSDC) of Ukraine Oleksiy Danilov emphasizes, "The state system did not crumble due to the fact that on February 24, 2022 the president decided to stay in Kyiv". In Kyiv, according to Danilov, all the top political leadership of the country remained, and outside it - part of the Cabinet, the apparatus of the National Security and Defense Council and other departments. This decision had been taken by security considerations.

By staying in Kyiv, Zelensky has become the leader of a fighting nation, on whom the attention of the whole world has been riveted. A sociological survey by the Ukrainian group "Rating", conducted on February 26-27, 2022, showed that the level of support for the president was 91% - three times higher than according to polls in December.



The team

Zelensky's administration, the president's office, played a key role in Zelensky's system of power. Its functionaries amounted to and the "think tank" of the country's defense.

Among the key figures are the head of the office Andriy Yermak, his deputies Kirill Timoshenko (in peacetime he oversaw the presidential project "Big Construction", as well as regional policy) and Andriy Sibiga (a relatively new person in the team, career diplomat, former ambassador to Turkey (2016– 2021), in charge of foreign policy). Working closely with the office is Foreign Minister Dmitry Kuleba, who is entrusted with the mission of creating an international coalition in support of Ukraine. The main speaker and constant commentator on the presidential policy remains adviser to the head of the office, Mikhail Podolyak (formerly a well-known Kyiv political strategist), he also controls the information policy of the office and advises the president personally.



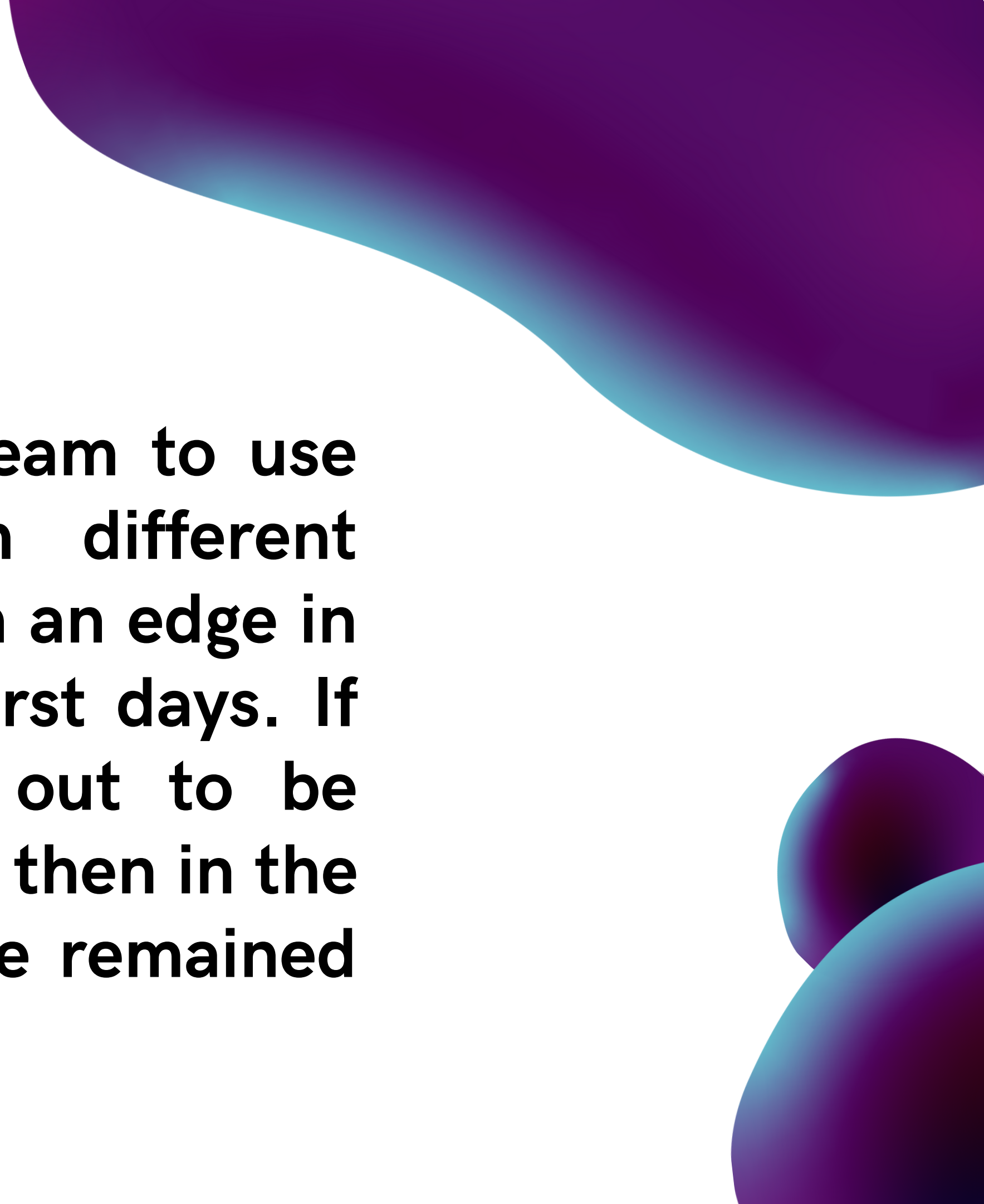
Military part

In a war, the key role, of course, is played by the power bloc, which includes Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Valery Zaluzhny, Defense Minister Alexei Reznikov, head of the SBU Ivan Bakanov and Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council Alexei Danilov.

Zelensky's media strategy

From the very beginning of the war, Zelensky relied on the image of the leader of a fighting nation. German magazine Spiegel attentively analyzed system of images that the Ukrainian president used in his rhetoric addressed to his Western allies.

So, in London, he referred to Churchill's famous speech, in an address to the US Congress he compared the attack on Ukraine with Pearl Harbor and the September 11 terrorist attack, and he called on the German chancellor to destroy the wall between the EU and Ukraine, making a reference to Ronald Reagan's call to Mikhail Gorbachev to put an end to with the Berlin Wall.



The ability of the president's team to use vivid images and work with different audiences provided Ukraine with an edge in the information war from the first days. If militarily, the country turned out to be vulnerable in a number of areas, then in the information space the advantage remained on the Ukrainian side.

Conclusions

The information policy of Ukraine itself, aimed at Russian public opinion in the early days of the war, when messages about Russian conscripts who were captured and photographs of destroyed Ukrainian cities were posted on social networks, could be one of the reasons for the actual introduction of military censorship in the Russian Federation and the adoption of a draconian law " about fakes.

Russian oppositionist Valeria Novodvorskaya on Ukraine's European choice:

- The Ukrainian army is fighting not for the integrity of Ukraine, but for Ukraine to survive. I broke away from our accursed, miserable, slavish, evil Russia. I am telling you this as a native of Russia - I know what is happening here. For Ukraine to eat a little something, dress up, go to Europe and live there peacefully, calmly and happily - like Europeans. As you understand, fascism is not planned there - in Europe.

— Thank you —