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"Be brave like Ukraine"
Traditional ethnic and western elements in the pop-culture resistance against Russia's war in Ukraine

On February 24, 2022, the world woke up to terrible news – Russia invaded Ukraine. Since then Ukraine has become the focus of both world news and Google searches. With every day of the war, new images of heroes appeared and started to circulate via channels of pop culture in Ukraine and abroad. These images are represented by different genres – memes, posters, songs, dances, cartoons, films, graffiti, and merch. New heroes came not only from political elites, for instance, president Volodymyr Zelenskyi and general Valeriy Zaluzhnyi, but also from below, from soldiers, volunteers, ordinary citizens, children, and even animals.

The Ukrainian people's resistance stems from national culture, involving elements of Western global trends, and at the same time is a response to Russian imperialist ideology and actions. Using the methodological tools of Multimodal Discourse Analysis within the emerging field of pop cultural linguistics (Werner 2018; Trotta 2018), I will highlight the main trends in resistance against Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine.

Research in this direction started in 2014 (Bilaniuk 2017; Semotiuk 2019) when the conflict appeared. To examine the key tendencies in the popular discourse of the war I will attempt to answer such research questions: 1) How is the self-image of Ukrainians constructed during the full-scale war? Which are the main features of the Ukrainian nation underlined in pop culture? 2) What elements of ethnic culture (artifacts, persons, traditions) are used in the popular discourse of the war to create new images of heroes? 3) How does Western globalised culture respond to Russia's war in Ukraine and how are national and Western elements intertwined in popular discourse? What is the image of Ukrainians in the global arena? Answering these questions will provide a comprehensive depiction of the rhetoric of Ukrainian resistance in wartime and will display directions for further research.

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