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# Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Vision of Ukrainian Nationhood

Jessica Pisano

**Abstract:** Much of the world has come to know Volodymyr Zelenskyy through his wartime leadership, but before electing him president, Ukrainians knew him for over two decades through his career on stage and television. As a showman, Zelenskyy articulated a pluralistic vision of Ukrainian political nationhood that intervened in long-standing tropes about Ukrainian society as divided and polarized. That trope of division had been dominant within Ukraine—invoked by international partners and instrumentalized by the Kremlin—during much of its contemporary independence. This article examines Zelenskyy's stagecraft in the years following Russia's annexation of Crimea and war in the Donbas, arguing that Zelenskyy's work as a showman during this period laid conceptual groundwork for the national unity his leadership has helped achieve during Russia's full-scale invasion.

**Keywords:** Zelenskyy; Ukraine; leadership; identity; belonging.

## Introduction

For two decades before his global fame as a wartime president, his reported bravado and need for “ammo, not a ride” accompanied by actual courage, Volodymyr Zelenskyy was widely known in Ukraine and throughout the Russian-speaking world for his artistry, humor, and moral leadership. If the Soviet period had been distinguished for some above all by its *bezzhalostnost'*—its ruthlessness or pitilessness—and the 1990s by mercilessness of a different sort, as a screen and stage performer Zelenskyy had consistently embodied and articulated humanistic values, telling the truth about politics and everyday life even when the stakes of doing so were high.<sup>1</sup> As a satiric actor, Zelenskyy articulated a way of thinking about national belonging in Ukraine that included space for diverse political identities while promoting patriotism and unity. While to some, Ukrainians' current unity may seem a crisis response that may not survive victory or an inadvertent product of Russian President Vladimir Putin's choices, an examination of Zelenskyy's work as a showman illuminates his sustained efforts to lead Ukrainians and foster societal unity well before Russia's full-scale war.<sup>2</sup>

Although some observers in the West have interpreted their own discovery of Zelenskyy's wartime qualities as his “emergence” as a leader, Zelenskyy has long been known as such in Ukraine—albeit in the realm of artistic, rather than political, performance.<sup>3</sup> Years before his formal presidential campaign or presidential leadership, Zelenskyy articulated a vision of Ukrainian political nationhood from the stage. Even as Zelenskyy's record in governance prior to February 2022 elicited mixed responses from Ukrainians, the ideas about Ukrainian political identity that helped propel Zelenskyy to a landslide victory in 2019 have been resilient in the face of full-scale war.<sup>4</sup> The following pages examine key ideas Zelenskyy communicated as a performer during the eight years prior to Russia's full-scale invasion, analyzing the content of Zelenskyy's stagecraft and the concepts and discursive frames he and his troupe Studio Kvartal-95 used in their show “*Vechirni (Evening) kvartal*” to build a vocabulary of national unity following years of societal polarization.

## Zelenskyy's Approach

Most discussions of Volodymyr Zelenskyy in the context of his wartime presidential leadership note in passing that he is a former comedian, but Zelenskyy was no minor figure in the worlds of Ukrainian and Russian show business. As players in international improvisational comedy competitions (KVN, or Club of the Merry and Resourceful) broadcast on Russian state television, drawing millions of viewers, Zelenskyy and his troupe were familiar to audiences across Ukraine, Russia, and other independent states that had been part of the Soviet Union by the late 1990s.<sup>5</sup>

By 2003, after Zelenskyy's popularity and talent yielded overtures from Moscow to work as a writer for KVN, which he refused, he and his teammates set out on their own.<sup>6</sup> Zelenskyy created his own production company, Kvartal-95, which would go on to produce dozens of television shows and films viewed on Ukraine television and on Russian state television. In 2021, Kvartal-95's show *Svaty* ("In-laws") was the most popular series on Russian state television and on Ukrainian television, where the series attracted 12.8 million viewers and a 24 percent share of Ukrainian audiences that year.<sup>7</sup>

Ukrainians of all ages followed their show *Vechirnij kvartal*, which aired at prime time on Saturday evenings. In its final year with Zelenskyy, prior to his inauguration as president, *Vechirnij kvartal* was watched by 18 percent of television audiences across the country.<sup>8</sup> A musical revue that leaned heavily on political satire, *Vechirnij kvartal* addressed topics of interest to everyday people, making jokes highlighting the absurdities of contemporary post-Soviet life. Whether playing a hospitalized psychiatric patient pressured to vote for former Ukrainian president Viktor Yanukovych or an apartment dweller waiving a shotgun to threaten a postal worker delivering an electricity bill, Zelenskyy and his troupe invited his audiences to laugh not at the people they portrayed, but at the absurdity of the world as seen through their eyes.<sup>9</sup> There were exceptions, as when they satirized politicians, skewered Russians gloating over the annexation of Crimea, or ridiculed Russians over their stereotypes about Ukrainians.<sup>10</sup> After 2014 Zelenskyy and his troupe used the show to advance ideas about democracy and Ukrainian sovereignty and unity.

From the stage, Zelenskyy and his troupe told stories that follow Aristotelian conventions, leading the audience through a narrative arc that ended in catharsis.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, they suffused that dramatic form with social reflection more typical of modern theater.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to dramatic theater, in which the viewer closely identifies with characters on the stage, and different from modern theater's critical distance from the action on the stage, Zelenskyy engages each member of his audience not *with* the characters, but *as* a character. This move involves the viewer as a political subject, making possible an emancipatory politics that ordinarily is rendered impossible by the structure of dramatic form. In other words, Zelenskyy tells a compelling story—but still prompts the viewer to leave the theater primed to act to improve the world.

International audiences viewed examples of this approach in Zelenskyy's March 2022 presidential speeches before the US Congress, the German Bundestag, the Canadian Parliament, and other national governing institutions. In each case, Zelenskyy delivered appeals tailored to a particular audience, interweaving references to national histories, landmarks, and touchstones, connecting Ukrainian experiences to events international audiences could understand and viscerally feel. Speaking to those audiences, rather than merely showing the audience what is happening to Ukrainians and leaving viewers to marinate in pathos, Zelenskyy also asked his audiences to reach into their own life histories and social memories—for example, September 11, Pearl Harbor, life behind the Berlin Wall—and even to imagine the presently unimaginable, like a Russian bombing of the Ottawa airport or Vancouver under siege—to try to apprehend and emotionally partake in what Ukrainians are now experiencing, prompting his audience to act.

As a showman, Zelenskyy articulated a political vision that consistently emphasized not only freedom and ambition but also responsibility and brotherhood--sisterhood later would become a theme of *Zhinochyi kvartal*, a show also produced by Zelenskyy's company. Zelenskyy preached not loyalty to a leader but fidelity to the idea of Ukraine—and proceeded to offer a vision for that idea that viewers of *Vechirni kvartal* absorbed and engaged with on Saturday evenings and when Zelenskyy and his troupe toured Ukraine and Ukrainians' vacation destinations around the world. Building a vision of Ukrainian nationhood on a foundation of specific values, he and his troupe emphasized the idea that the state has a responsibility to build honest people, and that people have a responsibility to work on themselves. Their version of a ballad illustrating this idea paraphrased biblical ideas as they sang, "It's not worth looking for fault other than in yourself," urged individual responsibility, for "No one will build this country but you," and emphasized personal agency, "It's not important who's in power—old or new / What's important is the order in your head."<sup>13</sup>

### **Divide et Impera**

In a widely read and discussed essay published nearly two decades before Ukrainians would elect Zelenskyy as President of Ukraine, Ukrainian scholar Mykola Riabchuk proposed the idea of "two Ukraines," referring to an historical, cultural, and societal divide in Ukraine between east and west.<sup>14</sup> Despite critical engagement from colleagues, the trope quickly became dominant in discussion of Ukrainian identity.<sup>15</sup> In a 2002 essay, "The Myth of Two Ukraines," Tatiana Zhurzhenko highlighted the trope's omnipresence. Zhurzhenko pointed out that amid the external pressures Ukraine faced by virtue of its geopolitical position, the questions Ukrainians asked each other and themselves had become not "who are we?" but "whose side are we on?"<sup>16</sup>

During the same period, Kremlin and Kremlin-adjacent actors, including some Ukrainian politicians, picked up and amplified the trope, promoting the idea of Ukrainian social polarization as they intervened in Ukrainian elections and Ukrainian public discourse. On television and newspapers and in street demonstrations, Russian politicians, journalists, and other public figures repeated the same talking point: Ukraine was a divided country.<sup>17</sup>

Over the following years, social scientists and journalists in Europe and North America also would regularly publish articles that portrayed Ukraine as two societies, with people in the west of Ukraine oriented toward Europe and people in the east of Ukraine either loyal to Russia or self-identified as culturally Soviet. Conference papers discussed the possibility of civil war, and even American intelligence services concurred, as Yaroslav Hrytsak would later recall in a review of the evolution of this discourse.<sup>18</sup> After the Revolution of Dignity and policies restricting the use of Russian in Ukrainian mass culture amid Russia's first invasion, political elites lined up on either side of the same apparent divide.<sup>19</sup>

In the West, observers long had interpreted the outcomes of Ukrainian elections through this lens, imagining that the reason that many in the south and east of Ukraine had cast ballots for Kremlin-leaning candidates prior to 2014 was because of how they saw themselves culturally, linguistically, or ethnically. Yet many Ukrainians in those regions had turned out to vote for incumbent pro-Russia politicians because they had been pressured to do so at work, at school, and where they lived. The factory towns, large agricultural enterprises, and other institutions that offered opportunities to exert such pressure were more prevalent in the east and south of Ukraine than in the west of the country.<sup>20</sup>

Beyond the halls of academia and government, over time many other Ukrainians also internalized the trope of "two Ukraines," the idea that the history and geography were in some sense destiny and their single state might really be two countries, as Riabchuk had once put it.<sup>21</sup> After all, there were real historical regional variations and disagreements, and evidence of contemporary division was present in everyday life. For example, in the years immediately following the massive demonstrations of Ukraine's Orange revolution, which coalesced in response to documented electoral fraud, members of the same family often couldn't agree about whether protest was a legitimate path to political change.<sup>22</sup>

If a split approximately along the Dnipro had been the dominant framework Ukrainians and others long had used to organize Ukrainians' ideas about their relationships with their compatriots, Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 offered a different way of seeing Ukraine and the world. Both drawing on and articulating a form of national patriotism that was emerging in Ukrainian society following Russia's 2014 invasion, Zelenskyy and his troupe supplied their audiences a language and framework to think and talk about modern Ukrainian political nationhood that broke through dominant tropes of polarization.<sup>23</sup> Like the Ukrainian professional historians who worked on the "historical front" during the same period to provide a framework for a decolonial and constructivist politics and history that emphasized change and fertile engagement among groups rather than an essentialist nation, Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 worked on an artistic and entertainment front to shift how their Ukrainian audiences saw themselves and each other.<sup>24</sup>

From the stage, Zelenskyy and his troupe cultivated a way of thinking about Ukrainian identity that included a diverse range of people and articulated values that were

patriotic and liberal—yet included elements of religious culture and broad humanism that appealed to a wide range of Ukrainians.<sup>25</sup> Their approach provided language and a national concept that russified Ukrainians, who did not think of themselves as nationalists, could use to identify as patriots. In this sense, the televised stage performances of Zelenskyy’s troupe Studio Kvartal-95 can be understood as the kind of “pre-political work” that Czech playwright and president Václav Havel called “the living humus from which genuine political change usually springs.”<sup>26</sup>

### Ex Duobus Ad Plures

In contrast to the binary thinking that dominated Russian official discourse and some analyses of Ukrainian politics, Zelenskyy used an approach to discussing the recent past that reflected a growing understanding in Ukraine of the country as a multicultural polity. In their songs, Zelenskyy and his team reframed Ukrainian identity to focus on recognition and validation of ways of belonging that often did not map onto the categories of analysis social scientists usually used to examine identity. Through lyrics and other elements of performance, Zelenskyy and his team disaggregated elements of the seemingly bipolar world of Ukrainian domestic politics to articulate ideas of Ukrainian identity that focused on a diversity of possible personal and group identities.

For decades following independence, many people in Ukraine had regarded regional and local dialects, including *surzhyk*—that mélange of Ukrainian and usually Russian whose name also refers to an admixture of rye and wheat, as expressions of incomplete education or insufficient nationalization.<sup>27</sup> Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 instead performed musical covers that elevated and recognized Ukrainian linguistic regionalism. Such an approach validated and amplified beliefs in different parts of Ukraine about the value of localism and its relationship to democracy.<sup>28</sup> In a musical number playing on the Russian band Leningrad’s song “In Petersburg one drinks” (*V Pitere--pit’*), Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 sang, “In Kyiv one lives” (*V Kieve--zhit’*). Their lyrics elevated features of different Ukrainian cities--and slyly highlighted the urgency of joining the European Union, noting that England had left a spot open for Ukraine.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, their cover *De Spasibo* (sung to the tune of hit song “Despacito”) emphasized mutual comprehension across national territory and expressed appreciation for diverse regional variations of ways to say “thank you” and “you’re welcome,” validating the lived experiences of the many Ukrainians for whom linguistic variety and richness has long been a part of everyday life in independent Ukraine. In the lyrics of Studio Kvartal-95, Ukrainian nationhood and freedom resided not in homogeneity but rather in a celebration of local identities.<sup>30</sup> Some Ukrainians might have recoiled at Studio Kvartal-95’s celebration of linguistic diversity, as when Yevhen Koshovyi invoked a phrase usually applied to the Ukrainian language: “Our *surzhyk* is a nightingale.” But for the bilingual Ukrainians who followed Studio Kvartal-95, this approach was welcoming and inclusive—and carved space for russophone Ukrainian patriotism.<sup>31</sup>



Kvartal-95's *Zhinochyi kvartal* (Women's Quarter) starring Studio Kvartal-95's Olena Kravets, tackled gendered themes with a mainly female, ethnically and linguistically diverse cast that embodied and articulated a variety of Ukrainian identity practices.<sup>32</sup> *Zhinochyi kvartal* satirized the panoply of contradictory gendered expectations and practices that constitute Ukrainian female identity, creating unity through laughter and recognition of shared challenges and realities.<sup>33</sup>

As president, Zelenskyy took the approach he used on stage further, invoking identities that cohered not only around language or region, but also around individual beliefs and everyday practices that did not always seem political. In his New Year's presidential greeting in 2020, Zelenskyy articulated a plural vision of politics that expanded the categories Ukrainians used to identify themselves and that others use to identify them.<sup>34</sup> Elevating regional identities, he spoke Ukrainian but also pronounced sentences in other languages spoken in Ukraine: Russian, Crimean Tatar, and Hungarian. He then led his viewers through recognizable identity categories and experiences, alighting upon a variegated societal taxonomy. Setting aside concepts ordinarily used in political analysis, Zelenskyy recognized and elevated Ukrainian citizens as individual humans:

Who am I? An agronomist from Cherkasy, a former photographer who defends his country in the east? A former physicist who washes dishes in Italy, or a former chemist who builds skyscrapers in Novosibirsk? Someone who has lived abroad for ten years and loves Ukraine over the Internet? Someone who lost everything in Crimea and started again from nothing in Kharkiv? Someone who learned Ukrainian because it's normal to know the state language. Someone who doesn't want to? Someone who pays her taxes? Someone who breaks the traffic laws? Someone who has a dog? A redhead? A Muslim? Someone who is hearing-impaired? Someone who hates olives? A liberal? An excellent student? Someone who didn't watch Game of Thrones? A sanguine temperament? A vegan? A Capricorn? Someone who doesn't offer his seat on the subway? A blood donor? Someone who refuses to use plastic?<sup>35</sup>

Zelenskyy went on to add, "This is each of us, Ukrainians, as we are. Not ideal, not saints, because we're just people, living people, with our flaws and eccentricities." Responses to the address brought an avalanche of appreciation within and especially beyond Ukraine, as many remarked on the contrast between Zelenskyy's warm, human thoughtfulness, and individuality and the uniform, cardboard character of the greetings distributed by the Russian, Belarusian, and Kazakhstan presidents.<sup>36</sup> Some wondered at the fact of such an intervention, asking, in Russian, *Razve tak možhno?*—Is that even possible? But the speech drove home a message Zelenskyy and his team had cultivated from the stage for years: Ukrainians are individuals, not market demographics, and differences among them part of the country's strength.

## E Pluribus Unum

Having produced performances that tried to break apart the dualities that dominated Ukraine's polarized politics, focusing instead on a diversity of constituent identities, Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 used two key focal points to gather individual parts into a coherent whole. For Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95, those focal points were interlocking foils: the actions of Ukraine's own oligarchic political class, which treated Ukrainians as background players, not agents of change, and Putin's political regime and its war against Ukraine. Focusing on issues about which Ukrainians of different political, linguistic, and other stripes could agree, Studio Kvartal-95 used these two themes to articulate the idea of a united popular front.

In artistic work that laid the ground for Zelenskyy's presidential campaign, Studio Kvartal-95 rallied Ukrainians behind frank speech about and criticism of the regional kleptocrats whose assets and activities straddle the Ukraine-Russia border. This critique suffused their musical numbers which described Ukrainian oligarchs as divided between "a body in Ukraine and a soul off-shore."<sup>37</sup> In their parody "I stay silent and smoke," members of Studio Kvartal-95 used a #MeToo leitmotif to recount how Ukraine's political-economic elite had treated the country's population in ways that "Harvey Weinstein and Kevin Spacey could hardly dream of."

Describing the Ukrainian government's sustained abuses of its citizens in areas from educational to health care reform, as well as people's resulting need to constantly go to court to protect their economic interests, the troupe asked, "How to go on? Smoke." After the number, Zelenskyy remained on stage to announce, "Respected powers-that-be, we warn you: *Our* smoking is hazardous to *your* health."<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, in another musical number, the ensemble reminded that same nexus of oligarchic and political power that Ukrainian society could always decide to hold them accountable: "Thank you, elites, for sitting [in our audience], and for the fact that you're not sitting [in prison], you can thank us."<sup>39</sup>

At first glance, such statements could seem to resonate with the speech of contemporary demagogues and leaders of populist movements. But the vision of politics Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 articulated clearly distinguished between earthly authority and a higher one, leaving little room for the idea of a cult figure. In a musical variation on "Hi, God," their lyrics combined religious vernaculars of twenty-first century evangelical Christianity, in which individuals could address the deity directly, offering "respect" and clicking "like" for God, with acknowledgement of a heavenly authority that stood above human affairs. In the face of oligarchs' ongoing predations, Studio Kvartal-95 kept alive the idea of divine accountability: "No one will escape his judgement. He doesn't have electronic bracelets."<sup>40</sup>

Connected to critique of the abuses of Ukrainians by their own government was the war in the Donbas, which also took center stage in Zelenskyy's artistry during this period. The musical number that criticized years of oligarchic capital flight from Ukraine

also implicitly linked the same to political positions regarding Russia's war in the Donbas: evoking then President of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko and his ownership of chocolate company Roshen, Zelenskyy sang that "in the news, they react to the number of dead kids like to an ad for candy."<sup>41</sup>

Musical numbers focusing on the war in the Donbas emphasized national unity, as Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 used allegory to describe Ukrainians' struggle to choose their own way notwithstanding Putin's wishes. In "Hold Me, Motherland," Studio Kvartal-95 members sung in unison of a twenty-five year old with "heaven-colored eyes" who could not break free of the liar who always found her, no matter what path in life she chose.<sup>42</sup> Their parody "My Girl" told of the early years of Russia's war on Ukraine with lyrics about a village boy in a place where "the fence was only on paper" and the girl he loved—and the "strange fellow with a judo wrestler's gait" who wanted to dance with her. As part of the performance, background dancers held popcorn as in a cinema, the outside world regarding the drama as entertainment. Articulating a unified, inclusive vision of Ukrainian identity, "My Girl" prompted roars of audience approval when Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 member Yevhen Koshovyi used terms of endearment ranging from western Ukraine ("my Banderovka") to the Russian-speaking Donbas ("my little miner").<sup>43</sup>

Zelenskyy also encouraged Ukrainian unity from the stage as he and Studio Kvartal-95 validated Ukrainian people's pain in the face of Russia's war in the Donbas and their sense then of having been abandoned by the Western world and international community. Singing of "European 'brothers' who traded us for gas," Zelenskyy and his troupe told evocative stories ending with catharsis that conveyed experiences of loss shared by their compatriots.<sup>44</sup> In November 2014, singing of the war's impact on children and on the mothers of soldiers in both Ukraine and Russia, their lyrics told of a young daughter in blue and yellow ribboned pigtails and a flowered sundress, a rabbit under her arm, and "a smile like the sun," asking "Dad, when are we going to wake up?"<sup>45</sup>

Zelenskyy reminded Ukrainians to remember, amid their disagreements, that a foreign power was actively trying to turn Ukrainians against one other. Working from the stage to keep Ukrainians' eyes on the source of their troubles, Zelenskyy and members of Studio Kvartal-95 sang a variation of a song by the Russian band DDT that told of having "lit all the candles in all the churches, save for one." In Studio Kvartal-95's version of the song, the dedicatee of the unlit candle was unmistakable: "For the one who made Ukraine go to war / For the one about whom they sing in Kharkiv football fans' songs."<sup>46</sup> In televised performances, the camera would focus on Zelenskyy, his face screwed in visible anger, pain, and defiance, as he sung of "the one who so generously handed out lead to our boys."<sup>47</sup>

In their work to project the idea of Ukrainian national unity, Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 connected that unity with territory, enjoining audiences to "look up Ukraine in Google" and "search for Ukraine on the map" because Ukraine would not become part of anything else.<sup>48</sup> In contrast to the imperial imaginaries of Soviet songs that blurred boundaries

projecting a “boundless” expanse “from Moscow to the very reaches,” Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 traced the geographical features of a sovereign state clearly and concretely in song, naming specific elements like the Dnipro river, the Carpathian mountains, and the Crimean peninsula, of which they sang, “Let them repaint the colors for a time / But it will never become ‘Rasha.’”<sup>49</sup> In a televised performance in 2014, as Zelenskyy and his troupe sang, background players traced the outlines of Ukraine, including Crimea, on a white board as children came onto the stage to fill its contours with yellow and blue fingerpaint.

Seeking to convince their audience to set aside their differences and live together, Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 sang a cover anthem “I sort of love my motherland” that spoke in far more positive terms about Ukraine than Russian band AnimatsiYa’s original lyrics about Russia, expressing the adult love for country that recognizes the beloved’s quirks and contradictions and loves nonetheless. Of Ukraine, they crooned, “Her head is sometimes a total mess,” but “I love her like a fool.”<sup>50</sup> In another number, asking “And do you remember?” (*A pam’iataiesh?*) they articulated narratives of shared experience that admitted mistakes and imperfections. For example, of Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko, they sang, “those hands didn’t steal at all...but they didn’t build the country either.”<sup>51</sup> Departing from the this-or-that thinking that defined Ukrainians for each other as left or right bank, east or west, mainly Ukrainian or Russian-speaking, Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 acknowledged dissension and imperfection to create a “we” that could include all Ukrainians.

## Conclusion

Performing mainly in the Russian language for russified Ukrainians, Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 articulated for their audiences an idea of Ukrainian national identity that broke through long-standing societal polarization and interference from Russia to create a space in which Ukrainians could find an idea of multicultural patriotism and community, a mirror image of the robust civil society that had developed in Ukraine during the same period. While others have noted Zelenskyy’s ordinariness, describing him as a reflection of the society in which he lives, this article has highlighted the ways Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 intervened and led in Ukrainian mass culture, providing a vocabulary and concepts for articulating an inclusive vision of Ukrainian political nationhood.<sup>52</sup>

The ideas Zelenskyy and Studio Kvartal-95 articulated from the stage did not attempt to sort out a shared national past through power-laden competition among different groups’ versions of history. Instead, setting their audience’s eyes on a shared horizon, they abandoned the analytical categories social scientists use to sort people’s identities and recognized the possibility of fostering unity by validating a great diversity of possible taxonomies that could be used for thinking about belonging. In Zelenskyy’s vision of politics, recognition of diversity also included an embrace of agonism, a radical acceptance of messiness and disagreement in democratic society, a willingness to look with humor and understanding upon human frailty, and a recognition that strength is to be

found in variety: that a social fabric woven of many different visible threads can be more flexible and resilient, and more resistant to damage than an undifferentiated weft.

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## Endnotes

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43. Jessica Pisano, “Trump says he was looking for corruption in Ukraine and where President Zelenskyy was known for mocking corruption in Ukraine,” *The Monkey Cage*, *The Washington Post*, November 14, 2019; and “Devochka moia - Novyi rep ot Vovana i Zheki,” November 11, 2017; [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s03t00D4szw&list=RDs03t00D4szw&start\\_radio=1&t=0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s03t00D4szw&list=RDs03t00D4szw&start_radio=1&t=0).

44. “V natiashenii nervy - Vechernyi kvartal,” November 10, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7m932B5mMfc>.

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46. The song to which they referred, which rang out in stadiums during football games beginning in 2014, was composed of a single lyric: “Putin is a d#&khead, la-la-la-la-la-la-la.” For example, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2\\_Rl\\_idM0eI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_Rl_idM0eI) and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54bTUKaVqLs>.

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For multiple notes referencing the same work, please use the following shortened note form after the first reference.

Feldman, *Germany's Foreign Policy of Reconciliation*, 73-78.

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### CONTENTS

#### Russia's Grand Strategy toward the West

Thomas Graham.....1

#### The Domestic Foundations of Russian Foreign Policy

Peter Rutland.....16

#### Lessons From Syria: What We Can Learn About the Russian Way of War

Nikolas K. Gvosdev.....32

#### 'Terrorist Recruiters' Versus 'Terrorist Slayers': Weaponizing Syria in Russian Information Warfare

Eszter Szenes and Mark W. Perry.....47

#### The Aftermath of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War: Appeasement of Russia and the War in Ukraine

Lasha Tchantouridzé.....77

#### The Russo-Chinese 'Strategic Partnership' Enters a New and Dynamic Phase

Lyle Goldstein and Vitaly Kozyrev.....95

#### Not Your Father's Disinformation: Emerging Technology, Social Media Advances, and the Growth of Smart Disinformation

Mary Manjikian.....130

#### Bosnia and Russia: The Implications for European Security and US Interests

Nadina Ronc.....148

#### Russian Information Operations: The Kremlin's Competitive Narratives and Arctic Influence Objectives

P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Troy Bouffard, and Adam Lajeunesse.....161

#### Volodymyr Zelenskyy's Vision of Ukrainian Nationhood

Jessica Pisano.....187

#### Borderland No More? Shifting Security Dynamics in Ukraine

Angela Kachuyevski.....199

### STUDENT RESEARCH

#### The Yugoslavia Civil War and the Allies in World War II

Caleb M. Reilly.....211

#### Evaluating the Value of US Diplomacy Through Strategic Ambiguity

Ethan Owens.....225

