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Why Is Ukraine Winning in the Russo-Ukrainian Information War?

With the expansion of Russia's war on February 24, 2022, ordinary people in Ukraine not only volunteered and sacrificed for their country's war effort, but quickly began describing their experiences to one another while engaging broader audiences—in Western and Central Europe, the United States, as well as Russian audiences—alongside Ukrainian bloggers with a social media presence. The Ukrainian people opened new, virtual fronts. In this existential warfare, Ukrainians have overcome their centuries-old victim complex of the Russian colonialism and are successfully subverting Russian propaganda by the force of intention to win, their optimism and determination to survive, their sharp and full of positive energy humor. And laughter is their mightiest life-affirming weapon in cyberspace and in virtual battles, which have already made a crucial battlefield difference.

A People's Cyber War: Ukraine's Digital Folklore and Popular Mobilization

For Ukrainian civilians, the Russian war on their country began in 2014. Since then, Ukrainians have been at the center of Ukraine's virtual mobilization. Many of them took up real arms in the first days of Russian invasion, and many more engaged in virtual battles. What is new in the history of warfare is the combination of technology and participatory democracy as introducing a new element into war culture—Ukrainian digital folklore, or the direct, sustained engagement of civilians in the Russo-Ukrainian war in ways that span the globe and bring the war quite literally home to every Ukrainian, as well as allowing them to make their war present to a global audience. Therefore, Russia's war on Ukraine is creating something unprecedented in the history of warfare—the ability of ordinary people to influence an ongoing conflict in real time via self-mobilization and virtual conversation. And like other aspects of the war in Ukraine, this people's cyber war has multiple fronts. The Ukrainian folk voices and genres in cyberspace are greatly versatile: from ritual folklore, epic and small humorous genres to children's folklore, remakes of poetry and songs, to post-folklore syncretic art forms such as war posters and memes. The multiskilled voices of ordinary Ukrainians, poets, and artists as the diarists of personal stories publishing their work on public platforms serve as war testimony and battlefield chronicles as well as evidence that people's personal engagement can create vital energy amidst the warfare and influence the battleground.