



## Regular Article

# Ensuring information security: Countering Russian disinformation in Ukrainian speeches at the United Nations

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## ABSTRACT

Disinformation is one of the major challenges to information security worldwide. Disinformation has also been an important component of the information front of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. This article identifies and describes the mechanisms used to counter Russian disinformation in Ukrainian speeches at the United Nations during the critical period of the first six months after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. Ukraine actively counteracts Russian disinformation through speeches delivered at the United Nations. These speeches focus on explaining preconditions for the Russo-Ukrainian war, delivering first-hand stories of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, revealing the global significance of the Russo-Ukrainian war, discussing further possible outcomes of the war, and calling for further action against Russian aggression and disinformation. These mechanisms were utilized by the representatives of Ukraine at the United Nations in order to reveal Russia's disinformation campaign aimed at international audiences and debunk the respective false narratives about the reasons and nature of the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Besides, these mechanisms were instrumental in ensuring information security of Ukraine and protecting democratic values.

## 1. Introduction

Disinformation is one of the major challenges to information security worldwide. Disinformation implies deceptive content spread with the intention to inflict damage (United Nations. *Countering Disinformation*, n. d.). Disinformation has been widely used with the purpose of confusing and obfuscating different types of audiences at regional and global levels. It can affect various types of political, economic and social spheres. Some of the examples of disinformation use can be related to the business sector, government propaganda, false data, and web-pages on the Internet (Fallis, 2015, p. 401). Disinformation spreading techniques can be used by states and other international actors with the goal of disrupting public policies, polarizing public opinion at a time of crisis and affecting human rights (United Nations. *Countering Disinformation*, n. d.).

Another crucial dimension related to spreading disinformation is information security. The term "information security" is related to the means of protecting different kinds of information from unauthorized access, as well as inappropriate usage of that information (Information Security | European Data Protection Supervisor, 2024, January 29). Thereby, it should be noted that fake news can result in serious economic harm. Global economic loss related to spreading fake news in the

financial and political spheres, in particular, amounted to about 78 billion U.S. dollars by one estimate (What Is the True Cost of Disinformation?, 2022). However, the damage related to disinformation spreading can be both material and non-material, which is much more difficult to assess. Manipulative and false information shared via mass communication channels affects people's ability to think critically. Disinformation can be more detrimental nowadays, because social networking web sites have dramatically transformed communication systems and styles (McKay & Tenove, 2021, p. 703).

Disinformation can affect elections, polarize political debate, and influence societal stability. Disinformation is also an important component of the cognitive dimension of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. Ever since the start of the Russian aggression against Security Council Report, 2024, which included a conventional intervention, scholars state that Russia has also been waging an information war against Ukraine and the Western bloc countries (Golovchenko, Hartmann, & Adler-Nissen, 2018, p. 975).

Over time Ukraine has developed a number of countermeasures in order to ensure its information security and tackle Russian disinformation and malicious propaganda. Information security of Ukraine is defined as an integral part of its national security, the state of protection of state sovereignty and the democratic constitutional system (Ukaz

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Prezydenta Ukrainy № 685/2021 Pro rishennia Rady natsionalnoi bezpeky i oborony Ukrainy vid 15 zhovtnia 2021 roku 'Pro stratehiu informatsiinoi bezpeky' [Decree of the President of Ukraine No. 685/2021 On the Decision of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine dated October 15, 2021 'On Information Security Strategy'], 2021, December 28). A provision on countering disinformation is also included in this Strategy.

One of the diplomatic battlefields of the Russo-Ukrainian war has been the United Nations as a global political and strategic communications space. The Russian Federation has been accused of spreading disinformation via U.N. channels. Maurizio Massari, Italy's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, condemned Russia's attacking Ukrainian civilians, stating that "no amount of Russian disinformation can deny the truth of the matter" (*Deportation, Treatment of Ukraine's Children by Russian Federation Take Centre Stage by Many Delegates at Security Council Briefing | UN Press, 2023*, Retrieved [March 22, 2024]). It was also underscored that Russia clearly was an aggressor in the ongoing confrontation. Andrejs Pildegovičs, representative of Latvia at the annual session of the U.N. Committee on Information, expressed alarm at Russia's disinformation targeting Ukraine as a part of the ongoing war, including hate speech and genocidal rhetoric (*Delegates Call for Greater Linguistic Diversity, Efforts to Combat Misinformation, Disinformation, as Committee on Information Continues Annual Session | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, n. d.*).

The Ukrainian delegation at the United Nations, in turn, has also been active in revealing Russian disinformation voiced by Russia's representatives through the U.N. channels. Dmytro Kuleba, the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, described atrocities committed by the Russian aggressors in the occupied territories of Ukraine during his speech at the 11th Emergency Special Session of the U.N. General Assembly and noted that "Moscow wants war and not peace" (*'We Don't Have a Moment to Lose', Secretary-General Tells General Assembly's Emergency Special Session on Ukraine as Speakers Debate Draft Resolution | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, n. d.*, Retrieved [March 22, 2024]). Thus, the goal of this article is to define mechanisms of countering Russian disinformation in Ukrainian speeches at the United Nations during the first six months after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. It is important to analyze how Ukraine was reacting at the United Nations during the critical initial period of the confrontation in order to guarantee its information security and combat disinformation.

## 2. Literature review

Disinformation has become one of the most serious challenges to information security across the globe. Recent cardinal changes of information production, consumption and spreading have heavily influenced the ways in which people communicate, in particular, information has generally become more transferable (United Nations. Countering Disinformation, n. d.). This process is two-fold, containing both benefits and disadvantages. On the one hand, information has generally become more accessible and readily available. On the other hand, new technological tools allow for large-scale spreading of propaganda and hate speech. In addition, disinformation has been utilized as a part of wider information influence campaigns. In accordance with the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB), an information influence campaign entails such elements as:

- using influence techniques (diplomacy, PR, and lobbying practices),
- affecting public debate (both overtly and covertly through funding particular organizations),
- self-interest (for instance, ranging from affecting decision-making to disrupting a debate on an urgent political issue),
- identifying and weaponizing vulnerabilities (inequality, security, corruption, etc.) (Pamment, Nothhaft, & Fjällhed, 2018).

New disinformation themes reflected changes in Russian foreign

policy. In particular, the disinformation narratives changed from historical revisionism, e.g., that Crimea had "always been Russian" (Coy-nash 2021 [4]; Chotiner 2022 [5], as cited in *Disinformation and Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine. Threats and Governance Responses, 2022*, Retrieved [March 24, 2024]) – to false allegations about neo-Nazis in Ukraine's political leadership and U.S. biolaboratories functioning in Ukraine (*Disinformation and Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine. Threats and Governance Responses, 2022*).

Such narratives are aimed at both international and domestic audiences. For international audiences, the goal of the Russian disinformation is to discredit the Ukrainian government and diminish the support provided to Ukraine by democratic allies. Ukraine has long been the object of pro-Russian disinformation influences (Erllich, Garner, Pennycook, & Rand, 2023, p. 79). Such disinformation influences utilized by the Russian political leadership demonstrate information weaponization with the purpose of deceiving and confusing their counterparts (*Disinformation and Russia's War of Aggression against Ukraine. Threats and Governance Responses, 2022*). It should be noted that these disinformation tactics are especially harmful for open societies and democracies in transition.

The start of the Russo-Ukrainian war was hybrid aggression against Ukraine marked by Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014. It was characterized by hybrid nature of the intervention when Russia was denying its direct involvement. Mölder (ed.) (2021, p. 5) looks at Russian influence operations, including Ukraine, in the context of information technologies and types of strategic communications utilized in hybrid warfare and Global Knowledge Warfare. Sayapin and Tsybulenko (2018, p. XV) note that the impact of Crimea's illegal annexation and continued Russian aggression in Eastern Ukraine reverberate beyond Ukraine's territory.

Russia tried to justify its aggression and annexation of Crimea by holding an illegal referendum. Vidmar (2015, p. 365) notes that the secession of Crimea and, generally, Russo-Ukrainian war renewed attention to boundaries of a democratic expression of the will of the people and the use of force to gain control of a territory belonging to another sovereign state. Yet, when the Office of U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) produced a report titled "Ten Years of Occupation by the Russian Federation: Human Rights in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol, Ukraine", Russia disagreed with the document, calling it an "anti-Russia product" (Ukraine: Briefing: What's in blue: Security council report, n.d.).

Later in 2014 Russia also occupied parts of Luhansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine and promoted creation of unrecognized "Luhansk and Donetsk People's Republics". Robinson (2017, p. 86) notes that the war in Donbas, which followed the annexation of Crimea, led to a lot of discussion about Russia's political aims. Robinson (2017, p. 86) arrives at a conclusion that, aside from inciting a rebellion in the East of Ukraine and changing the international order, Russia's goal was to gain control of a process that had originally been out of its control. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine started on February 24, 2022. And in September 2022, Vladimir Putin officially annexed Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhia regions after illegal referenda held in each of the four regions (*The Case for Designating the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Militias as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, n.d.*). This announcement was made even though Russia does not fully control any of these four regions of Ukraine.

It is generally held that Ukraine is winning the information and cognitive war, especially among Western audiences. Ukraine had success in the information war during the first year of the full-scale invasion – in 2022 (*Undermining Ukraine: How Russia widened its global information war in 2023, 2024*, February 29). These results were achieved by a series of critically important initiatives. In particular, Ukraine effectively debunked Russian myths about Ukraine being a failed and undemocratic state and revealed the nature of Russian aggression (Fivenson, 2023).

Ukraine has shown itself to be ready for the disinformation and

cognitive attacks of the Russian Federation. In order to withstand Russian propaganda, Ukraine has employed innovations, specifically, information and communication technologies (ICT), including artificial intelligence. Another important component is the effective collaboration and synergy demonstrated by the Ukrainian government and Ukrainian civil society. These initiatives helped the Ukrainian political leadership and civil society to counteract Russian malicious propaganda and tell the real story of aggression initiated by the authoritarian regime (Fivenson, 2023). Also, they were instrumental in building further resistance to Russian disinformation attacks, including digital resilience.

There are numerous initiatives aimed at countering Russian propaganda and disinformation in Ukraine. Among crucial steps taken by Ukraine to confront Russian disinformation and cyberattacks were adoption of the Information Security Strategy, Cybersecurity Strategy, Concept of Artificial Intelligence and Law on Critical Infrastructure within 2020–2021. The Centre for Strategic Communications at the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine and the Centre for Countering Disinformation at the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine were set up to coordinate disinformation countermeasures at the national level. The Ukrainian Institute at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine has also been active in promoting the national interests and the political image of Ukraine abroad. The first Strategic Communications Forum was held in Kyiv in fall 2021.

Initiatives of the Ukrainian political leadership were complemented by actions of civil society organizations. Ukrainian society has demonstrated a high level of resistance to Russian propaganda. According to the study “Communities’ Resilience through the Lens of Telegram”, Ukrainian identity grew stronger in the face of Russian violence, which especially resonates with the frontline respondents (Stiykist hromad kriz pryizmu Telegramu [Communities’ Resilience through the Lens of Telegram], n. d.).

Social media have been actively employed with the purpose of strategic communication coordination, volunteer mobilization, and reaching different audiences. One of the most frequently used social networks in this regard became Telegram. According to 2022 data, Ukrainians widely used social networks to follow news, and Telegram was the most popular resource (A Knock-Out Blow to Television: How Social Media Managed to Remain the Primary Source of News for Ukrainians, n. d.). Techniques of dismantling disinformation and media literacy approaches were widely utilized by the pro-Ukrainian Telegram channels, especially at the early stages of the full-scale Russian invasion (Stiykist hromad kriz pryizmu Telegramu [Communities’ Resilience through the Lens of Telegram], n.d.).

The Russian Federation has been utilizing the U.N. as a tool of spreading disinformation to international audiences. There is a long respective tradition dating back to the USSR period. Sullivan (2021, p. 244) notes that some of the forgeries were exploiting respective vulnerabilities of societies, e.g. KGB-forged Ku Klux Klan booklets handed to representatives of delegations from African and Asian countries before a U.N. debate on the topic of colonialism in 1960. Rodari (2021, p. 111) states that disinformation was utilized by Russia with regard to the downing of MH17 plane in 2014 and refers to a study by Rietjens (2019), as cited in Rodari, 2021, p. 111) who used declarations of the Russian Ambassador to the U.N. as a source. Begley (2017, January 17) refers to a speech by Samantha Power, then-U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., who revealed Russian disinformation spread through this organization. Power noted that the representative of Russia, in response to then-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s statement on the Syrian case not only stated that Russian investigations had found “not a single report of ... violations of international humanitarian law against civilians of eastern Aleppo,” but also blamed the Secretary-General for using “fake news” as a source of information (Begley, 2017, January 17). In 2021 East Stratcom Task Force made a publication titled Disinformation on the U.N. Charter as a Tool of Russian Imperialism (EUvsDisinfo, 2021; June 29). It is noted there that disinformation linked to the UN Charter is frequently used by Russian disinformers, e.g. most of the over 140 cases

on the respective topic in the EUvsDisinfo database are false allegations that the annexation of Crimea was in accordance with the U.N. Charter (EUvsDisinfo, 2021, June 29).

Some of the recent Russian disinformation campaigns were focused on the COVID-19 pandemic. Legucka (2022, p. 33) notes that the U.N. General Assembly, together with Ukraine and Georgia, declined the Russian declaration of solidarity in countering the COVID-19 challenge, which would mean suspension of sanctions, especially since such an issue as Russia’s annexation of Crimea, has not been resolved. Jerónimo and Esparza (2022, p. 1) emphasize that interference of such countries as Russia or China in other states’ elections and organizing cyberattacks has led to creation of units responsible for countering disinformation, while the U.N., in its turn, also attempted to develop a respective strategy to tackle this challenge.

On the diplomatic frontline, Permanent Representative of Ukraine at the United Nations Sergiy Kyslytsya has been actively voicing Ukraine’s political stance in the United Nations and helping reveal Russian disinformation. To this end, Kyslytsya noted that attacks of the Russian Federation were war crimes and violations of the Rome Statute and International Law of the Sea, in particular (Statement of Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya at the UNSC Meeting on Ukraine, n. d.). The goal of these statements was to explicitly demonstrate Russia’ breaching of international legislation. Kyslytsya further noted that it was unacceptable to call Russian occupational troops peacekeepers (Statement of Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations Mr. Sergiy Kyslytsya at the UNSC Meeting on Ukraine, n. d.). It is necessary to further analyze how Ukraine has been confronting Russian disinformation and propaganda on the diplomatic frontline through the United Nations.

### 3. Theoretical Background

The selected theory for the study is critical constructivism. The tenets of critical constructivism are that the world is socially constructed, and so are people and the knowledge that these people have (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 2). Supporters of critical constructivism state that when they produce knowledge their goal is not to decrease the number of variables, but, on the contrary, to increase (Knoble, 1999, as cited in Kincheloe, 2005, p. 2), which serves to create a richer and deeper understanding of the political, social and cultural world. Critical constructivism is, thus, based on the idea that political processes, perceptions and ideas are grounded in social constructs.

An important aspect which interests critical constructivists is the notion of power and its role in societies. Critical constructivists are focused on the role of power related to the above-mentioned processes of social construction. In particular, theoreticians analyze how this process advantages and disadvantages particular social groups and creates respective vulnerabilities (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 3).

Critical constructivism aims to make the voice of marginalized groups heard for wider audiences. One of the key notions of critical constructivism is the development of a nuanced understanding of how power works at micro- and macrolevels to craft our understanding of the world and our functions in it (Tierney & Lincoln, 1997, p. 58). Feenberg (2022, p. 15) approaches critical constructivism as a political philosophy of technology related to the Frankfurt School, Heideggerian phenomenology and Science and Technology Studies. In his studies Feenberg (2022, p. 15) looks into such aspects as democratization of technology, formal bias, and instrumentalization theory.

One of the prominent scholars related to the critical constructivism tradition is Jürgen Habermas. Habermas, among other outstanding scientists related to the Frankfurt School, defended the ideas of progress and modernity and made it a key focus of his normative claims (Allen, 2016, p. 1). Habermas views truth as only possible collectively among people as a result of consensus, thereby one’s participation in such collective understanding is vital as well (Southwell, Thorson, & Sheble, 2017, October 11).

In this regard, it is important to trace how disinformation is viewed through the lens of critical constructivism. Disinformation is regarded as problematic, because it entails deliberate alienation or disempowerment of people (Southwell, Thorson, & Sheble, 2017, October 11). Nieminen (2024, p. 123) notes that the normative ideal of an equal right to decision-making and a public sphere, equally open to all, voiced by Habermas, is farther away today than ever since the Second World War. The actual public sphere is characterized by competing interests embodied by information campaigns, i.e. disinformation aimed at the most vulnerable groups Nieminen (2024, p. 123).

Habermas (2015, p. 4) lays out his theory of communicative action and, particularly, notes that competent speakers know how to base their interactions on validity claims which their interlocutors will find acceptable. While analyzing truth and moral claims, Habermas (2015, p. 4) notes that truth claims are statements about the objective world where all human beings live, and moral claims are related to generally acceptable norms of interpersonal relationships. If truth of a claim is contested, interlocutors shift to a discourse in which they can test the contested claim based on argumentation Habermas (2015, p. 4).

Habermas' approach has been successfully utilized by scientists as a theoretical framework in disinformation and propaganda studies. Buschman (2024, p. 203) uses Habermas' concept of systematically distorted communication (SDC) to approach fake news. This broader framing of systematically distorted communication allows one to state that fake news is a power strategy with a right-wing slant and it creates its own interpretive environment hostile to democratic functioning (Buschman, 2024, p. 203). Ehrenfeld and Barton (2019) note that while social networks today demonstrate many of the qualities that Habermas associates with a healthy public sphere, such as communication is participatory, immediate, and decentralized, there still are questions about the extent to which everyday digital circulation practices correspond to broader democratic aspirations.

Stahl (2006, p. 83) studies the notion of information and the opposing notion of disinformation from a critical research perspective. Following Habermasian tradition, Stahl (2006, p. 83) aims to determine what information and truth can mean for critical studies and demonstrate that these notions are not value-neutral. Chambers (2021, p. 147) posits that Habermas' idea of democracy as truth-tracking suggests an important paradigm for analyzing and countering fake news, while Williams' virtues of accuracy outline the citizen virtues needed to combat fake news. It is viewed as crucial because citizens become more epistemically accountable consumers of digital information Chambers (2021, p. 147). Therefore, critical constructivism is a viable theoretical framework for approaching disinformation studies, deconstructing manipulative narratives and analyzing countermeasures of tackling disinformation.

#### 4. Methods

The utilized method is qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is a group of systematic, rule-guided techniques utilized to analyze the contents of textual data (Mayring, 2000, as cited in Forman & Dam-schroder, 2007, p. 39). Mayring (2014, p. 6) characterizes qualitative content analysis as a mixed methods approach that includes both qualitative and quantitative analysis steps. Qualitative content analysis is frequently utilized in case of dealing with qualitative data (Elo et al., 2014, p. 1). Graneheim, Lindgren, & Lundman, 2017, p. 29) note that qualitative content analysis is an autonomous method and can be utilized at different levels of abstraction and interpretation of meaning.

Qualitative content analysis has been widely and productively used in social sciences. Quantitative dimension of the analysis involves looking at frequencies of certain words and phrases in text and making inferences on this basis respectively. Qualitative dimension of the analysis involves identifying certain themes in the selected content. Through analysis, themes are identified through a set of rigorous procedures. The process of identifying themes in content is iterative and

recursive. Thematic analysis can be characterized as a method of studying qualitative data in a textual form such as a transcript or speech, thus the focus of this paper is on finding common themes, i.e. frequently repeated concepts and ideas (Caulfield, 2019). Thematic analysis is determined as a method with numerous applications across various theoretical approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6, as cited in ScienceDirect, n.d.). Then conclusions are drawn based on the results of both quantitative and qualitative aspects of the analysis.

Qualitative content analysis is helpful in analyzing political speeches. There are various approaches to conducting thematic analysis, but the most common utilize a six-step process, as follows: familiarization with data, coding data, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and writing up the results (Thematic Analysis, n. d.). These steps can help a researcher retain neutrality and objectivity. This process can be instrumental in avoiding confirmation bias when writing up the research conclusions (Caulfield, 2019). Another advantage of thematic analysis is its wide applicability to different kinds of research, and particularly, to qualitative studies. Thematic analysis is a method noted for its flexibility and adaptability to various types of studies (Caulfield, 2019). Thus, qualitative content analysis appears to be an appropriate approach to studying disinformation, particularly, for defining mechanisms of countering Russian disinformation in Ukrainian speeches at the United Nations after the start of the full-scale Russian invasion.

#### 5. Research question

The research question of this study is as follows:

RQ1. What mechanisms of countering Russian disinformation were utilized in speeches of the representatives of Ukraine at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) during the first six months after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine?

#### 6. Research Design

Theoretical foundation of the study is critical constructivism. The selected method is qualitative content analysis. The selected texts are five speeches delivered by representatives of Ukraine at the UNSC and UNGA during the first six months after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine (please see Supplementary materials). This timeframe was selected due to the crucial initial period of the full-scale Russian invasion and the critical importance of ensuring the information security of Ukraine on the diplomatic front during the first months of the confrontation. The speakers are Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the U.N. Sergiy Kyslytsya and the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Four of the speeches took place at the UNSC, and one speech at the UNGA Emergency Special session. The time frame is February–June 2022.

As to the quantitative aspect of the analysis, the author has utilized NVivo and Lexicoool tools in order to calculate the most frequently used words and collocations in the selected speeches. These tools illustrate the importance of particular notions in the selected content through identification of word use frequencies and visualizations.

As to the qualitative aspect of the analysis, the selected approach to coding was inductive coding. Inductive is a method of coding that allows themes to emerge from the data, which is defined as "open coding" (Jones, n.d. Retrieved [March 22, 2024]). Inductive coding is characterized as an idealist approach to data (Elliott-Mainwaring, 2021, p. 628). With open coding a researcher defines themes in the course of the selected data analysis. It is a recursive process which presupposes a lot of revisions and readjustments, yet it can be more comprehensive than deductive coding when a set of codes is predetermined (Jones, n.d.. Retrieved [March 22, 2024]). Using inductive coding allowed codes and subcodes (child codes) to emerge from the data, and these codes were

grouped into a few major themes that emerged.

## 7. Contribution to social science field

This study contributes to the field of social science in the realm of international relations and political science. The research study furthers the field of international security studies, in particular, information security and countering disinformation. It helps to study the topic of disinformation which is one of the major challenges to information security worldwide. It assists in determining how to address disinformation which impacts societies' stability. It is instrumental in tracing how disinformation can be spread via international organizations for the purpose of confusing and deceiving international audiences. It also helps to analyze the issue of power and language in political addresses, and how these mechanisms can be used by authoritarian countries in international organizations.

The study adds to the field of analyzing hybrid and information warfare strategies, particularly, in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war. It helps to reveal the real reasons of Russian aggression against Ukraine and the way in which Russia weaponizes information against open societies. It helps to track how Russia spreads disinformation via diplomatic channels, such as international organizations, particularly, the U.N.

It also helps to study disinformation as a component of the cognitive dimension of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. In particular, it helps to analyze how Ukraine developed countermeasures in order to ensure its information security and tackle Russian propaganda, namely on of the diplomatic battlefield of the Russo-Ukrainian war – the U.N. Thus, it contributes to the social science field by helping to define mechanisms of countering Russian disinformation in Ukrainian speeches at the U.N. during the critical initial period of the confrontation – the first six months after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. It can also be useful in tracing and preventing such instances in the future. This research study is also instrumental in revealing how states can counter disinformation in the context of political asymmetry.

## 8. Limitations

Among limitations, one can note strong presence of the author in the research and interpretative nature of the study related to respective characteristics of qualitative methodology. This aspect is closely linked to human analysis employed in the study. Another important limitation is the content sample, which consists of a limited number of speeches. A limitation is also generalizability of the study, which is generally hardly possible in case of qualitative research.

In order to address the first limitation, the author has conducted a thorough literature review of relevant studies in order to justify choices by addressing respective scholarly literature. The author has selected a trusted method used in similar cases, namely, the qualitative content analysis, and utilized a rigorous procedure of the content analysis. The author has utilized the NVivo and Lexicoool instruments and included both qualitative and quantitative aspects of the analysis.

As to the second limitation, the author is focused exactly on the period of the first six months after the full-scale invasion, which was the critical initial period of the confrontation. The number of the respective speeches at the U.N. was limited to five during this period, therefore namely this sample was selected. The author analyzed the content of the available speeches in depth in order to achieve the set goal of the research.

As to the third limitation, it is related to the very nature of qualitative methodology. The author has selected this very method in order to study the topic of countering disinformation in political speeches in the U.N. in depth. The research findings can be helpful for further studies of disinformation and development of respective countermeasures.

## 9. Results

Based on NVivo analysis results, the most frequently used words in the speeches are, as follows, “Ukraine”, “Russian”, “Russia”, “security”, “nations”, “war”, “united”, “council”, “Ukrainian” and “peace”. Respective data visualizations are presented below (see Fig. 1).

These findings are supported by the results of the analysis based on Lexicoool tool (see Fig. 2). The most popular words and word combinations in the speeches are as follows, “security”, “Ukraine”, “Russian”, “Russia” and “war”. Among two-word combinations, the most popular is – “the Russian” and among three-word combinations, the most popular is – “the United Nations”. These findings can be explained by importance and relevance of the political topics being discussed, such as international security, the United Nations and its role in ensuring peace, Ukraine and Russia as the warring parties in the ongoing confrontation. Based on the analysis results by both NVivo and Lexicoool tools, the most salient words and word combinations in the speeches are “Russia”, “Russian”, and “the Russian”, which can be explained by the necessity to deal with this political actor and the urgency to confront the representatives of the Russian Federation at the United Nations and counter Russian disinformation. These results will be further analyzed in the Discussion section of the article.

As to the speakers representing Ukraine, the largest of portion of the selected speeches were delivered by the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations Sergiy Kyslytsya, both at the UNSC and UNGA. The President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy delivered a speech at the U.N. Security Council meeting on April 5, 2022. The word count of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's speech is 2130 words, while Sergiy Kyslytsya's speech is 7265 words. The focus of Volodymyr Zelenskyy's share of the speech was on his first-hand impressions from the trip to the town of Bucha, in the Kyiv region, recently liberated from the Russian troops and the portrayal of numerous war crimes committed by the Russian Armed Forces there since the start of the full-scale invasion. The President of Ukraine revealed the violent details of the Russian aggression and their real goal of occupying Ukraine, and he urged the United Nations to confront this rampant breach of the international security system.

As to qualitative thematic analysis of the speeches, there are 69 codes and 344 references in the data (please see the codebook attached in Supplementary Materials). Five themes emerged from the data to answer the research question as to what mechanisms of countering Russian disinformation were utilized in speeches of the representatives of Ukraine at the United Nations during the first six months after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine.

In particular, the first identified theme is “explaining preconditions for the war”. The four codes identified in this theme are as follows: “comparing Putin's Russia to Hitler's Germany”, “Russian and Soviet crimes against Ukraine”, “Stalin and Hitler crimes against Ukraine”, and “Stalin's crimes against Ukraine” (see Table 1. Identified Codes and Themes). The dominant code in this case is “comparing Putin's Russia to Hitler's Germany” (14 references). A dominant code is the code with the highest number of significant information related to it ([Grouping Codes into Clusters \(Module 4, Lesson 2\), n. d.](#)).

For example, Ukraine's representative Sergiy Kyslytsya issued debunking statements such as, “Russia's course of action is very similar to what its spiritual mentors from the Third Reich employed on Ukrainian land 80 years ago” ([United Nations A/ES-11/PV.1 General Assembly Eleventh Emergency Special session 1st plenary meeting, Monday, Feb. 28, 2022, p. 5](#)). Also “however, as happened after the defeat of Nazism, when its supporters were taken to Holocaust sites to break their denial and open their eyes wide, the time will come when the supporters of Putinism will be taken Ukrainian cities and villages burned to the ground” (United Nations S/PV.9008 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 9008th meeting, Tuesday, Mar. 29, 2022, p. 23). And the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy also delivered a debunking statement at the U.N. Security Council meeting: “I would like



**Table 1**  
Identified codes and themes in the selected U.N. Speeches.

Theme	Number of Codes	Identified Codes per Theme
Explaining preconditions for the war	4	comparing Putin's Russia to Hitler's Germany, Russian and Soviet crimes against Ukraine, Stalin and Hitler crimes against Ukraine, Stalin's crimes against Ukraine
Telling first-hand stories of Russian aggression against Ukraine	33	Russian aggressive actions against Ukraine, calling on Russia to stop the aggression, danger for Europe as well, Donbas occupation, forcible conscription of men in Donbas, fighting for global peace, food security issues, blocking Ukrainian sea ports, forcible deportation of Ukrainians to Russia, forcible deportation of Ukrainian children, hybrid war tactic, propaganda system, Mariupol siege, nuclear threat, Putin's responsibility for the war, revealing Russian manipulations, revealing Russian disinformation, Russia deceives its own soldiers, Russia attacking civilians in Ukraine, Russia attacks Russians, Russia breaks international law, Russia broke Minsk agreements, Russian colonialism and imperialism, Russian looting, Russian society is passive, Russian terror, Russian war crimes, Bucha, cultural genocide, Russian terrorism, sexual crimes of Russian soldiers, Ukrainian internally displaced persons (IDPs) because of Russia, Ukrainian refugees because of Russia
Revealing global issues pertaining to the war	10	Fighting for democracy, global impact of the war, global responsibility for the war, global security, holding aggressors accountable, U.N. malfunctioning because of Russia, Russia's seat in U.N. is illegitimate, U.N. malfunctioning because of Russia and Belarus, UNSC malfunctioning because of Russia, U.N. support of Ukraine
Discussing outcome of the war	10	holding Russia accountable for war crimes, negotiations with Russia, security guarantees for Ukraine, security for Ukraine, Ukraine defending itself, deputinization, Russians suffering losses, Ukraine will win, Ukraine wants peace and restoration of its borders, Ukraine's future plans
Calling for further action against Russian aggression and manipulations	12	calling for international support, calling for humanitarian assistance, calling for military support of Ukraine, calling for U.N. support, need for U.N. reform, need for UNSC reform, Ukraine's contribution, calling for OSCE support, calling for Russia to stop the war, expressing gratitude for international support, expressing gratitude to speakers, expressing gratitude to the U.N.

in Ukraine, Russia attacks Russians", "Russia breaks international law", "Ukrainian internally displaced persons (IDPs) because of Russia", "Russian terror", "Ukrainian refugees because of Russia" and "Russian society is passive" (see Table 1. Identified Codes and Themes).

The dominant codes in this case are "Russian aggressive actions

against Ukraine" (22 references), "revealing Russian manipulations" (17 references), "food security issues" (17 references), and "revealing Russian disinformation" (15 references). The dominant codes reflect the most urgent and crucial aspects of the political agenda discussed by the representatives of Ukraine, specifically Russian aggression, manipulations, and disinformation, as well as food safety threatened by the ongoing hostilities.

As a further illustration, Ukraine's representative Sergiy Kyslytsya made the following statements: "the internationally recognized borders of Ukraine have been and will remain unchangeable, regardless of any statements and actions by the Russian Federation" (United Nations S/PV.8970 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 8970th meeting, Monday, Feb. 21, 2022, p. 13), and "we are aware that the entire world is deeply concerned about the disruption of food supplies from Ukraine, as one of the major food exporters" (United Nations S/PV.9008 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 9008th meeting, Tuesday, Mar. 29, 2022, p. 22).

Ukraine's representative directly addressed disinformation voiced by top Russian officials, e.g. "when we listen to Putin saying that he will not use trade routes to attack Odesa, we should not forget that he is the same person who told Germany's Chancellor Scholz and President Macron of France that he would not attack Ukraine, just days before launching a full-scale invasion" (United Nations S/PV.9056 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 9056th meeting, Monday, Jun. 6, 2022, p. 25), as well as "let me quote from the interview, which the representative of Putin (Vassily Nebenzia, Russia's Permanent Representative at the U.N.) wanted to use for his own purposes. These are the words of the woman he mentioned: "Sometimes Russian soldiers sent dry rations to the basement, and then, after lowering those rations, they tossed grenades into the basement". He wanted to quote that interview" (United Nations S/PV.9011 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 9011th meeting, Tuesday, Apr. 5, 2022, p. 28). Sergiy Kyslytsya revealed distortions and manipulations in the speeches of top Russian politicians aimed at justifying the invasion of Ukrainian territory and undermining Ukraine's stance in the international arena. Ukraine's representative at the United Nations emphasized such predatory aspects of Russian foreign policy, as aggression against Ukrainians, using disinformation to confuse and deceive other international actors, threatening and undermining global food security to achieve their policy goals through blackmail.

The third identified theme is "revealing global issues pertaining to the war". Ten codes were identified in this theme. These codes are as follows: "fighting for democracy", "global impact of the war", "global responsibility for the war", "global security", "holding aggressors accountable", "U.N. malfunctioning because of Russia", "Russia's seat in U.N. is illegitimate", "U.N. malfunctioning because of Russia and Belarus", "UNSC malfunctioning because of Russia" and "U.N. support of Ukraine" (see Table 1. Identified Codes and Themes). The dominant codes here are "U.N. malfunctioning because of Russia" (20 references) and "UNSC malfunctioning because of Russia" (14 references). These dominant codes indicate the importance of discussing Russia's violations of the U.N. Charter and the respective limitations of the work of the organization and the UNSC, in particular.

As an illustration, Ukraine's representative Sergiy Kyslytsya made such statements as: "today the entire membership of the United Nations is under attack — under attack by the country that occupied the membership of the Security Council in 1991 bypassing the Charter of the United Nations; the country that occupied the parts of the territory of Georgia in 2008; and the country that occupied parts of Ukraine in 2014" (United Nations S/PV.8970 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 8970th meeting, Monday, Feb. 21, 2022, p. 13). And the President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy during his speech at the meeting of the UNSC emphasized that "we are dealing with a State that is turning the veto in the Security Council into a license to kill, which undermines the whole global security architecture" (United Nations S/PV.9011 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 9011th meeting, Tuesday, Apr. 5, 2022, p. 9). In this case, the main idea the speakers are underscoring is

that the United Nations as an organization is not able to function properly because of the Russian Federation's rampant violations of international law, specifically, the U.N. Charter, which set a dangerous precedent for other global political actors.

The fourth identified theme is "discussing outcome of the war". Ten codes were identified in this theme. These codes are as follows: "holding Russia accountable for war crimes", "negotiations with Russia", "security guarantees for Ukraine", "security for Ukraine", "Ukraine defending itself", "de-Putinization", "Russians suffering losses", "Ukraine will win", "Ukraine wants peace and restoration of its borders" and "Ukraine's future plans" (see [Table 1](#). Identified Codes and Themes). The dominant codes here are "holding Russia accountable for war crimes" (13 references) and "Ukraine wants peace and restoration of its borders" (10 references). These codes indicate the importance of bringing the Russian Federation to justice and restoring the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine.

Ukraine's representative Sergiy Kyslytsya made statements such as: "the political leadership of the Russian Federation shall bear full responsibility for the outcomes of the decisions taken" (United Nations S/PV.8970 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 8970th meeting, Monday, Feb. 21, 2022, p. 13) and "we do not owe anyone anything, and we will not give anything away to anyone. There should be no doubt whatsoever, because it is not February 2014" (United Nations S/PV.8970 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 8970th meeting, Monday, Feb. 21, 2022, p. 13) and "Ukraine will win on its territory and the entire world will win, despite the threats that the criminal and liar throws in the face of the Security Council" (United Nations S/PV.9011 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 9011th meeting, Tuesday, Apr. 5, 2022, p. 29). In this case, Ukraine's representative emphasizes that holding Russia accountable for its war crimes is of paramount importance. Aside from that, Ukraine's representative underscores the difference between the period of the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022 and the period of the annexation of Crimea in 2014 when Russia used hybrid warfare tactics and denied its involvement in the hostilities in Ukraine.

The fifth identified theme is "calling for further action against Russian aggression and manipulations". Twelve codes were identified in this theme. These codes are as follows: "calling for international support", "calling for humanitarian assistance", "calling for military support of Ukraine", "calling for U.N. support", "need for U.N. reform", "need for UNSC reform", "Ukraine's contribution", "calling for OSCE support", "calling for Russia to stop the war", "expressing gratitude for international support", "expressing gratitude to speakers" and "expressing gratitude to the U.N." (see [Table 1](#). Identified Codes and Themes). The dominant code here is "calling for U.N. support" (21 references). This code signals the crucial importance of the international community's support, in particular, the United Nations for Ukraine's political and military success in the ongoing confrontation.

As an illustration, Ukraine's representative Sergiy Kyslytsya stated "the General Assembly should be vocal in demanding that the Russian Federation stop its offensive against Ukraine; in recognizing Russian actions as an act of aggression against a sovereign and independent State; in demanding that Russia immediately, completely and unconditionally withdraw its forces from the territory of Ukraine" (United Nations A/ES-11/PV.1 General Assembly Eleventh Emergency Special session 1st plenary meeting, Monday, Feb. 28, 2022, p. 6) and "now we can save Ukraine, save the United Nations, save democracy and defend the values in which we believe and for which Ukrainians are fighting and paying with their lives" (United Nations A/ES-11/PV.1 General Assembly Eleventh Emergency Special session 1st plenary meeting, Monday, Feb. 28, 2022, p. 7). One of the key aspects emphasized in this regard is a call for continuing to reform the United Nations. The speaker underscores that the military intervention in Ukraine is an unprovoked and unjustified attack on a democratic country, which should not be tolerated in a rule-based system of international relations.

## 10. Discussion

As to the quantitative aspect of the analysis, it should be noted that, interestingly, Ukraine was frequently discussed, and the term "Ukraine" was widely used by the State Duma (the Parliament) of the Russian Federation. Based on the findings of a study conducted by the OPORA Civil Network, from January 1, 2014 until the start of the full-scale Russian aggression in February 2022, Ukraine was mentioned more than 7000 times in the Russian Parliament, which testifies to Russia's deep interest in Ukraine (Fascists, Nazis, and NATO — What They Discuss in the State Duma of the Russian Federation, n. d.). Most certainly, domestic political speeches are different from speeches presented at international organizations. And, yet, it is interesting to note that top officials of the Russian Federation had been actively discussing Ukraine since the very start of the aggression in 2014 and kept doing that after the start of the full-scale invasion. After the start of the full-scale Russian invasion, members of the Russian Parliament mostly repeated narratives that had already been spread by propagandistic media (*Fascists, Nazis, and NATO — What They Discuss in the State Duma of the Russian Federation, n. d.*). The Russian Parliament's focus on Ukraine also partly contradicts hypocritical Russian narratives denying the plans of a full-scale military intervention of Ukraine prior to February 24, 2022.

As to the qualitative aspect of the analysis, the five major identified themes in the speeches of the representatives of Ukraine at the UNSC and the UNGA during the first six months after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine are as follows: "explaining preconditions for the war", "telling first-hand stories of Russian aggression against Ukraine", "revealing global issues pertaining to the war", "discussing outcome of the war", and "calling for further action against Russian aggression and manipulations". These themes reflect the importance of the discussed topics and the mechanisms utilized by Ukraine's representatives at the United Nations to counter disinformation spread by the members of the Russian delegation.

Regarding the first theme, "explaining preconditions for the war", Ukraine's representatives used analogies with the Second World War, in particular, mentioned parallels between policies of Stalin, Hitler, and Von Ribbentrop with the action of the current Russian political elites. The goal was to reveal the aggressive nature of Russian foreign policy and inhumanity of their conduct of war, such as unprovoked violence and attacks on civilians in Ukraine. It was especially urgent for the representatives of Ukraine at the United Nations to use the Second World War references in order to debunk false Russian narratives about alleged Nazism in the Ukrainian government and armed forces.

Usage of analogies with the Second World War period is especially evocative and critically important in view of the widespread Russian disinformation about alleged Nazism and neo-Nazism in Ukraine. For instance, the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation at the United Nations Vassily Nebenzia, in the same speech of 5 April 2022 stated, "we are told that there can be no Nazis in Ukraine. However, we know perfectly well that they are there and that, unfortunately, they are running the show" ([United Nations S/PV.9011 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 9011th meeting, Tuesday, Apr. 5, 2022](#), p. 15). Such Russian propaganda is intended to discredit the Ukrainian government, as well as its armed forces and, thus, diminish support provided to Ukraine by the global community, including key transatlantic partners. For this reason, it is highly important to counter and debunk these falsehoods and malicious narratives, which is carried out by the representatives of Ukraine at the United Nations.

The second theme, "telling first-hand stories of Russian aggression against Ukraine", encompasses the most critical aspects pertinent to revealing the nature and characteristics of the Russian aggression. Interestingly, this theme has the highest number of codes which testifies to its significance for the speakers and their goal of debunking Russian disinformation at the United Nations. The speaker deconstructs Russian manipulation aimed at discrediting Ukrainian political leadership and

its very statehood, as well as violating the territorial integrity of Ukraine. To this end, the speaker employs irony. Another important narrative of the Russian propaganda debunked in this case is threats to food security.

To underscore falsehoods in the Russian speeches the representative of Ukraine utilized such statements as “removed from reality” ([United Nations S/PV.9056 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 9056th meeting, Monday, Jun. 6, 2022](#), p. 25); revealed outright lies, e.g., “Putin said he would not attack Ukraine” ([United Nations S/PV.9056 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 9056th meeting, Monday, Jun. 6, 2022](#), p. 25); and emphasized the Russian representative’s misquoting, e.g., “he wanted to quote that interview” ([United Nations S/PV.9011 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 9011th meeting, Tuesday, Apr. 5, 2022](#), p. 28). Additionally, the speaker used the rhetorical trope of irony to be more compelling for his audience, e.g., “all of Putin’s fairy tales” ([United Nations S/PV.9056 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 9056th meeting, Monday, Jun. 6, 2022](#), p. 25).

Another interesting technique that Mr. Kyslytsya utilized is an ironic coinage “de-Putinization”, which implies the process of delegitimizing Vladimir Putin’s political power. For example, “for the sake of people all over the world, especially those depending on grain supplies from our region, and for the sake of the people of Russia, which should return to the family of democratic nations following its de-Putinization” ([United Nations S/PV.9056 Security Council Seventy-seventh year 9056th meeting, Monday, Jun. 6, 2022](#), p. 26). This term is an allusion to alleged “demilitarization” and “denazification” of Ukraine declared by Vladimir Putin as goals of Russia’s “Special Operation” ([How Has the Kremlin Changed the Goals of the War against Ukraine? | Center for Countering Disinformation, Feb. 20, 2023](#), Retrieved [March 24, 2024]). The “Special Operation” is a euphemism for the war against Ukraine.

As to the third theme, “revealing global issues pertaining to the war”, Ukraine’s representatives reveal Russia’s violation of the U.N. Charter and demonstrate that these violations are detrimental for the functioning of the United Nations, in particular, the U.N. Security Council. One of the manifestations of these violations is Russia’s abuse of its veto right at the UNSC. Russia’s manipulative use of the veto right signals acting in self-interest and justifying the aggression against its immediate neighbors, such as Georgia and Ukraine.

Regarding the fourth theme, “discussing outcome of the war”, the speaker stresses the importance of keeping the Russian Federation accountable for its unprovoked violence against Ukraine. Also, Ukraine’s representative indicates the different war tactics that Russia uses – from a hybrid warfare approach to the Crimean annexation in 2014 to an overt military campaign and full-scale invasion in 2022. It is crucial to restore the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine and make sure that international law is observed in the future.

As to the fifth theme, “calling for further action against Russian aggression and manipulations”, Ukraine’s representatives emphasize the importance of continuing international support for Ukraine and employing the available U.N. mechanisms for withstanding the Russian aggression. One vital topic discussed in this regard is the necessity of carrying out the U.N. reforms. Ukrainian representatives stressed that Russian aggression poses a threat to open societies and democracies, and that it should be effectively countered. These mechanisms employed by the representatives of Ukraine emphasize the importance of debunking false Russian narratives about the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war and telling international audiences the truth about the reasons and nature of the Russian aggression against Ukraine through the U.N. channels. The speaker calls for support of the international community and the United Nations in countering Russian aggression, falsehood and disinformation, as well as safeguarding democratic countries from further attacks.

## 11. Conclusion

Ukraine actively counteracts Russian disinformation through the United Nations. In particular, the mechanisms of countering Russian

disinformation in the Ukrainian speeches at the United Nations during the first six months after the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, are as follows: explaining preconditions for the Russo-Ukrainian war, delivering first-hand stories of the Russian aggression against Ukraine, revealing global issues pertaining to the Russo-Ukrainian war, discussing further possible outcomes of the war and calling for further action against Russian aggression and manipulations. These mechanisms were utilized by the representatives of Ukraine at the United Nations in order to reveal Russia’s disinformation aimed at international audiences and debunk the respective false narratives about the reasons and nature of the Russian aggression against Ukraine.

Based on the NVivo and Lexicool analysis results, the most frequently used words in the speeches are, as follows: “Ukraine”, “Russian”, “Russia”, “security”, “nations”, “war”, “united”, “council”, “Ukrainian”, and “peace”. Among two-word combinations, the most popular is “the Russian”, and among three-word combinations, the most popular is “the United Nations”. These results can be explained by the high importance and urgency of the topics placed on the U.N. political agenda, such as international and global security, the United Nations and the role of this organization in ensuring global peace and stability, and Ukraine and the Russian Federation as the adversaries in the ongoing confrontation.

In order to draw attention to brutality and inhumanity of Russian leadership’s actions against Ukraine and democratic countries, Ukraine’s representatives at the United Nations use references to the Second World War and include parallels to Hitler’s, Stalin’s, and Von Ribbentrop’s policies. The speakers emphasize such predatory aspects of Russian foreign policy as aggression against Ukrainians, and using manipulations, disinformation, and deception in order to confuse international audiences. In addition, the Russian Federation manipulated food security issues in order to achieve their policy goals through blackmail.

Ukraine’s representatives have been stressing that the United Nation’s capacity to function properly as an organization is limited because of the Russian Federation’s rampant violations of international law, particularly, the U.N. Charter, which set a dangerous precedent for other global political actors. Members of Ukraine’s delegation to the United Nations emphasized that holding the Russian Federation accountable for its war crimes was of paramount importance. Besides, Ukraine’s representatives stressed that it was crucial to restore the territorial sovereignty of Ukraine and make sure that international law was observed in the future. Ukraine’s speakers have been calling for the support of the international community and the United Nations in countering Russian aggression and disinformation, as well as upholding human rights and safeguarding democratic countries from further possible attacks. These mechanisms have been actively employed by Ukraine’s representatives in their speeches at the United Nations in order to debunk Russian disinformation, ensure the information security of Ukraine, and protect democratic values.

## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Anna Taranenko:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization.

## Declaration of competing interest

I, Anna Taranenko, hereby declare that there is no competing interest pertinent to the present research study.

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaoh.2024.100987>.

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