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"The war of images": Coverage of Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine in British political cartoon (based on materials from "The Times" and "The Sunday Times")

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Abstract. The relevance of studying political cartoons as a form of visual communication is driven by their capacity to concisely reflect socio-political processes, shape public opinion, and influence the interpretation of the Russian-Ukrainian war. This article aimed to analyse how Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine was represented in British political cartoons published in "The Times" and "The Sunday Times" during the first year of the war. The research methodology was grounded in an interdisciplinary approach combining media studies, visual-analytical methods, and tools of quantitative and qualitative content analysis. This combination captured the specific nature of political cartoons as visual informational products that simultaneously interpret and construct public perceptions. The study demonstrated that British cartoonists actively employed satire to frame the conflict through a clear moral dichotomy of "good and evil". The visual narratives primarily centred on the Russian president as the main instigator, whose image evolved from a self-confident aggressor into a demonised symbol of cruelty and moral degradation, particularly following the atrocities in Bucha. In contrast, utilising the David and Goliath motif, the Ukrainian president was consistently depicted as the archetype of heroic national resistance. Cartoonists actively highlighted the war's global consequences (energy and food crises) and criticised Western political hesitation, the UK's domestic controversies (e.g., the Partygate scandal), and bureaucratic failures in managing the refugee crisis. Quantitative analysis indicated a natural decline in publication frequency over the year, reflecting the media phenomenon of attention fatigue. Nevertheless, the unprecedented concentration of visual satirical materials during the early months secured a definitive victory for Ukraine in the informational "war of images". The practical significance of this research lies in its applicability to studies of media discourse, visual propaganda, and the formation of international perceptions of contemporary armed conflicts

Keywords: Russian-Ukrainian war; British satirical discourse; caricature; visual narratives; visual propaganda; mass media; newspaper

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■ Introduction

The relevance of this study is determined by the growing role of visual media in shaping public perceptions of contemporary political and military conflicts. In this context, political cartoons serve as an important instrument for the media interpretation of events, as they are capable of conveying evaluations, emotions, and ideological meanings in a concise and symbolic form that influences public opinion. The full-scale armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine has become one of the central themes of the international information space, which has also been reflected in the satirical visual culture of leading global media outlets. An important source for examining this process is the British newspapers "The Times" and "The Sunday Times", which are among the most authoritative and influential publications in the United Kingdom and regularly publish political cartoons reflecting current international developments. The cartoons published in these newspapers not only respond to key events of the war, but also construct particular images of its participants, interpret political processes, and reflect Western public attitudes toward the conflict. In this regard, the analysis of such visual materials makes it possible to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms of media representation of the Russo-Ukrainian war and the formation of the international information narrative surrounding it.

Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine immediately garnered significant scholarly interest. Research has explored not only the political and international dimensions of the conflict but also its representation in the media landscape, particularly in political cartoons, which serve as a crucial medium for the visual interpretation of wartime events. The global dimension of the satirical conceptualisation of the Russo-Ukrainian war has been thoroughly examined within a large-scale project by O. Semotiuk (2023), which encompasses a corpus of approximately 4,000 cartoons from over 60 countries. Specifically, in a 2023 study, the author analyses visual rhetoric and the types of text-image interaction, contrasting the international perspective of the conflict with the national visions of the direct participants (Ukraine and the Russian Federation). Building on this macro-approach, O. Semotiuk & Y. Hladyr (2025) explore the phenomenon of "impartial humour". Employing quantitative content analysis, the authors conclude that even when cartoonists feign "neutrality", the visual narrative consistently conveys the perception of the war as a cross-border, global evil. Closely aligned with this global conceptual approach is the publication by L. Morales Domínguez *et al.* (2022). The authors analysed the Western satirical message regarding the Russo-Ukrainian war during the first year and a half of the conflict (from the eve of the invasion to the death of Y. Prigozhin). The study examined 277 political cartoons sourced from the most frequently used platforms worldwide, identifying 33 cognitive subframes.

An understanding of the global and Western perspectives on the conflict is impossible without considering how the direct participants visualise it. Thus, the specific features of enemy representation in Ukrainian satirical discourse have been thoroughly investigated by L. Pytlova (2022). Based on the materials of Perets magazine, the author argues that the primary strategies of Ukrainian cartoons involve the demonisation, mockery, and belittlement of the aggressor (personified by V. Putin) as a means of overcoming public fear. Expanding the analysis of the national context, T. Shevchuk (2023) examined modern Ukrainian political cartoons as humorous creolised texts disseminated via social networks. This research highlights the capacity of satirical graphics to convey complex socio-political messages and actively shape public opinion in an accessible format. A diametrically opposed function is performed by Russian political cartoons. The chronological continuity of this phenomenon is demonstrated by O. Gaiko & O. Chaika (2024), who highlight the systemic use of satirical graphics as a key element of Russia's hybrid warfare and the "Gerasimov doctrine" between 2014 and 2022.

Alongside this, a significant body of research focuses on the coverage of Russian aggression in the media of specific Western countries. A notable example is the publication by O. Snigovska & A. Malakhiti (2022). Analysing the Greek media landscape, the researchers view political cartoons as "creolised texts" and highlight specific stylistic devices (metaphor, irony, animalisation) and manipulative tactics employed in the context of hybrid warfare. The Canadian vector of satirical interpretation of the Russo-Ukrainian war has been explored by E.K. Koliada *et al.* (2024). Using leading Canadian online publications ("Edmonton Journal", "Toronto Sun", "The Globe and Mail", etc.) from 2022 to 2024, the authors analysed political cartoons as an effective tool for building resilience against Russian propaganda. The American satirical discourse is also represented by a series of in-depth studies. Notably, a semiotic analysis of the Russo-Ukrainian war in the political cartoons of the "Tribune Content Agency" was conducted by A. Abbasi *et al.* (2022). The construction of V. Putin's image in the cartoons of the news portal usnews.com is examined by A.N. Soare (2023). An organic addition to the analysis of the Russian president's image within the same publication is the study by the authorial team of N. Nasira *et al.* (2025).

Directly related to the subject area of this research are studies focusing on the British media landscape. In particular, the representation of the Russo-Ukrainian war in the cartoons of "The Week" magazine is the subject of a study by A.V. Karakaş & M. Yılmaz (2023). This research is of special interest, as it opens up avenues for intra-British media comparativism. However, the immediate foundation for this article is a study by R. Kutsyk (2022), in which the satirical graphics of the British newspapers "The Times" and "The Sunday Times" were examined as

an informational mechanism for constructing the image of the Russo-Ukrainian war. That study focused on the first seven days of the full-scale invasion, capturing the initial reaction of the British press: the marginalisation of the Russian leadership's image and the heroisation of Ukrainian resistance. Nevertheless, since these initial findings were based on the narrow chronological time-frame of the onset of open aggression, an objective scientific need arose to extend the temporal horizon of the research to one year.

Consequently, the aim of this article was to conduct an expanded analysis of the specific features of how Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine is represented in political cartoons published by the British newspapers "The Times" and "The Sunday Times" between February 24, 2022, and February 26, 2023. Specifically, the study sought not only to verify previous observations but also to trace the evolution of the publications' multimodal narrative by identifying the primary thematic plots, the dynamics of political leaders' images, and the transformation of symbolic devices through which cartoonists interpreted key events at different stages of the war.

Materials and Methods

The empirical basis of the study consisted of 66 political cartoons (Kutsyk, 2025) published on the official website of "The Times" and "The Sunday Times" during the first year of Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, from 24 February 2022 to 26 February 2023 (The Times, n.d.). The choice of this not entirely "clean" chronological range (one year and two days) is explained by the fact that, for the sake of analytical comprehensiveness, the sample also included cartoons published on 25 and 26 February 2023, which appeared in connection with the anniversary of the outbreak of the full-scale war. The research methodology was grounded in an interdisciplinary approach that combines media studies, visual-analytical and communication methods, and tools of quantitative and qualitative content analysis. This combination was dictated by the specific nature of political cartoons as visual informational products that simultaneously interpret and construct public perceptions of political events. The application of quantitative content analysis enabled the determination of the frequency of war-related materials, their proportion within the overall information flow, and the dynamics of editorial attention throughout the period under study.

The obtained quantitative indicators served only as a starting point for a deeper qualitative visual and thematic analysis, which involved classifying the cartoons by key themes, interpreting the depicted characters, symbols, metaphors, and ideological meanings, and identifying analogies, allusions, and historical parallels employed by the authors. A narrative (plot-based) approach was used to trace how visual imagery reproduced or reinterpreted real military, political, and socio-economic

events and processes. To identify the specific features of the representation of different actors – Russia, Ukraine, and Western states – a comparative method was applied, allowing for the delineation of both commonalities and distinctions in the approaches of cartoonists from "The Times" and "The Sunday Times". The final analytical stage involved contextualising each cartoon within its concrete historical and political circumstances, which made it possible to account for the actual course of hostilities, diplomatic developments, public sentiments, and key debates within the British information space. Taken together, these methods enabled a comprehensive and multidimensional examination of how British political cartoons depict, interpret, and construct the images of Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine and its consequences.

Results

Dynamics of publishing cartoons

Outbreak of Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022 was the largest political catastrophe since World War II. The line of battle engagement along the Ukrainian border stretches for thousands of kilometres, and the number of dead and wounded military and civilians on both sides is estimated at hundreds of thousands, if not more. The consequences of the Russian invasion have impacted not only Ukraine, but also the world, especially Europe. Indeed, an event of this magnitude caused a significant resonance. The world's media literally "exploded" with news reports about Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine. The oldest British daily newspaper, "The Times", and its Sunday edition, "The Sunday Times", were no exception

On 25 February 2022, "The Times" placed particular emphasis on the significance of the event by describing it as "a dark day for Europe". The headline was printed on a black background rather than in the traditional black type on a light page, a design choice intended to underscore the global scale and tragic nature of Russian aggression not only for Ukraine but also for the European continent as a whole. In addition to this striking headline, the central place on the front page was occupied by a photograph of the injured Ukrainian woman Olena Kurilo, who survived the missile strikes in the Kharkiv region (Fig. 1). This image quickly circulated through international media, from Europe to the United States, and became the "face of the war".

Photographs and video footage constitute a substantial part of the informational content concerning events in Ukraine and remain among the most effective means of representing events in their real and dynamic form. At the same time, these are not the only visual materials that attract the attention of the media and the public. A special place belongs to political cartoons, which, despite the development of information technologies and the availability of diverse means of

disseminating information, have not lost their relevance. Due to their emotional nature, relative immediacy, and multi-layered meaning, cartoons are a rather wonderful way to access the past. Acting as a kind of “clues” and markers of social and political dynamics, they often reveal what the past was “in reality” better than any written word. By their very nature, cartoons are not “passive

reflectors” of reality and are never “passively” perceived by readers. On the contrary, they help to crystallise attitudes and express the thinking of broad groups of society in a meaningful and concise way (Scully & Varnava, 2020). It is this ability to simplify and to explain the point that makes cartoons such a powerful tool for spreading and establishing certain stereotypes and images in society.



Figure 1. “The Times” front page from 25 February 2022

Source: Tomorrow’s Papers (2022)

In total, for the period from 24 February 2022 to 26 February 2023, on the official websites of “The Times” and “The Sunday Times” 368 cartoons were published (The Times, n.d.), 66 of which were thematically related to Russia’s full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, including its political and socio-economic consequences (Kutsyk, 2025), which accounted for 18% of the total. At the same time, during the first three months of the war, this figure was much higher and amounted to 47% (41 images out of 88), which was almost half of the total number of cartoons published at that time. However, in the second quarter (from 25 May to 24 June), the percentage of published cartoons on the subject of the study reached its lowest point and amounted to only 6% of the total number (Table 1). In the third quarter, the number

of published cartoons did not change significantly (7% of the total). There was a slight increase in September and October, which was due to the successful liberation of almost the entire territory of the temporarily occupied Kharkiv region by the Ukrainian army and the covert operation to blow up the Crimean Bridge. Later, the number of cartoons remained extremely low, in particular, during the 9th month (from 25 October to 24 November) this figure was 0. It was only as the anniversary of Russia’s full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine approached that the attention of “The Times” and “The Sunday Times” increased again. For example, during the 12th month of full-scale aggression (from 25 January to 26 February 2023), 11 thematic cartoons were published, which amounted to 32% of the total number for the same period (Table 1).

Table 1. Quantitative indicators and percentage ratio of published cartoons related to the Russian-Ukrainian war in "The Times" and "The Sunday Times" newspapers for the period from 24 February 2022 to 26 February 2023

Month	The total number of cartoons	Thematic number of cartoons	Percentage of the total number of cartoons	Total number of cartoons per quarter	Thematic number of cartoons for the quarter	Percentage of the total number of cartoons	Total cartoons for half a year	Total thematic cartoons for half a year	Percentage of the total number of cartoons
1 (24 February – 24 March)	28	23	82	88	41	47	179	46	26
2 (25 March – 24 April)	31	14	45						
3 (25 April – 24 May)	29	4	14						
4 (25 May – 24 June)	31	2	7	91	5	6			
5 (25 June – 24 July)	31	1	3						
6 (25 July – 24 August)	29	2	7						
7 (25 August – 24 September)	31	4	13	92	6	7	189	20	11
8 (25 September – 24 October)	30	2	7						
9 (25 October – 24 November)	31	0	0						
10 (25 November – 24 December)	28	2	7	97	14	14			
11 (25 December – 24 January)	35	1	3						
12 (25 January – 24 February)	34	11	32						
Total	368	66	18%						

Note: the "thematic" group consists of all cartoons related to the Russian-Ukrainian war and its main consequences
Source: compiled by the authors based on R. Kutsyk (2025) and The Times (n.d.)

Thus, the results show that the dynamics of publishing cartoons about Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine in "The Times" and "The Sunday Times" had been declining over the year. After two months of war, the degree of interest in the war dropped sharply and events in Ukraine faded into the background. This change in dynamics was due to the focus of the British media on the internal political problems of the United Kingdom, among which the Partygate political case, the resignation of B. Johnson, and the competition between the main opponents for the prime ministerial seat took centre stage.

The image of V. Putin

Since the first days of Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, British cartoonists have focused on the figure of Vladimir Putin as the main culprit. On 25 February, 2022, the first special cartoon was published, which accumulated popular perceptions of the Russian president and his political and ideological beliefs (Fig. 2). It was created by Peter Brookes, the famous English cartoonist. The cartoon depicts Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the main Marxist theorists, Vladimir Lenin and Joseph Stalin, the communist founders of the Soviet Union, and Russian President Vladimir Putin in a single line. The caption "Back in the USSR" is added to the top of the illustration.



Figure 2. Cartoon by P. Brookes "Back in the USSR" ("The Times", 25 February 2022)
Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

Such analogies are not unfounded and have a rational explanation. Russia's series of armed aggressions against the former "union republics" is a direct indication of V. Putin and his inner circle's desire to construct a new model of a union state similar to the former USSR, where Russia will once again play a dominant role, through force and coercion. The idea of a "revival" of the Soviet Union within the borders of 1991 had been

nurtured in the Kremlin long before the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Back in 2005, in his annual televised address to the Federal Assembly of Russia, V. Putin stated that the collapse of the Soviet Union was the greatest geopolitical catastrophe of the XX century (BBC Ukrainian, 2005). On the eve of the full-scale invasion, this rhetoric reached its peak. On 21 February 2022, in a special video message, the Russian president announced the official recognition of the independence of the so-called separatist puppet quasi-state entities "DPR" and "LPR". But before announcing this decision, V. Putin gave an almost hour-long "lecture" in which he stated that Lenin was the "true" "architect" of Ukraine, that Ukraine "has never had a stable tradition of its true statehood", and that historical Russia is the entire former USSR, the collapse of which occurred due to a series of historical and strategic mistakes by the Bolsheviks and the leadership of the CPSU (Radio Svoboda, 2022).

In P. Brooks's cartoons, V. Putin appears quite self-confident, and his appearance (a naked torso with a ribbon of ammunition fastened crosswise) resembles the main character of the Hollywood action movie Rambo. This image is connected to the real story of 2009. At the time, the main Russian news agencies published a selection of official photos from V. Putin's summer vacation in a remote region of Siberia. In most of them, the Russian president (then prime minister) is shown in military clothing and boots, but in the footage of riding, he is shirtless (Rodgers, 2009). Since then, V. Putin has been associated with the sarcastic image of a "half-naked Rambo", which artists systematically use in their political cartoons. While in the first days of the full-scale armed aggression, the president appeared to the readers as quite confident, this changed later. Due to the massive crimes committed by the Russian army and the systematic shelling of peaceful Ukrainian cities, V. Putin's image was increasingly becoming negative and disrespectful. On 1 March, Russia launched another series of missile attacks on Kyiv. Two rockets hit the Kyiv TV tower and the territory of the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Centre. As a result of the explosion, five people who were passing by were burned alive (Philp & Charter, 2022). This event caused considerable outrage among the public and Holocaust memorial centres around the world (Philp, 2022). In response to the missile attacks on Ukrainian cities, a new thematic cartoon appeared in "The Times" on 2 March (Fig. 3). It was created based on the illustration of the same name *The Road to Homo Sapiens* by Rudolf Zelliger, first published in 1965 in the *Early Man* book (Howell & The Editors of LIFE, 1965). The most famous is its abridged version, where instead of 15 species of primates, 6 are presented (dryopithecus, oreopithecus, ramapithecus, neanderthal, cro-magnon, and modern human). In popular culture, this illustration has been repeatedly used to imitate and parody various types of progress. P. Brooks also decided to adapt it.



Figure 3. Cartoon by P. Brooks ("The Times", 2 March 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

The cartoon depicts representatives of different species of hominids gradually evolving into *Homo sapiens*. However, as they move forward, they look with indignation at V. Putin, who, despite progress, is moving in the opposite direction, leaving a bloody trail behind him. He also holds missiles in his hands. The content of the cartoon not only placed an emphasis on V. Putin's war crimes, but also demonstrated to readers the fact of his personal degradation as a *Homo sapiens*. This is clearly evidenced by the type of walking, which is identified with the way monkeys move. So, in just a week, the British cartoons abruptly changed the image of V. Putin from a "half-naked Rambo" to a "degrading man".

Further growth of criminal actions of the Russian army led to an increase in the "demonisation" of the image of the Russian president. In this context, the events that took place in the city of Bucha, which is located a few kilometres from the Ukrainian capital and came under temporary occupation in the first four weeks of the war, had a great impact on world opinion. According to official reports from the National Police of Ukraine, after the withdrawal of the Russian army more than four hundred bodies of Ukrainian civilians and servicemen killed by Russian soldiers were found here (National Police of Ukraine, 2024). This event caused a significant response in the world media. The event received extensive coverage in the international media. In a feature article published on 4 April, "The Times" emphasised the scale of brutality uncovered after the liberation of Bucha and other towns in the Kyiv region. The newspaper reported numerous cases of mass killings of civilians, torture, the destruction of entire families, mass graves, and sexual violence, stressing the systematic nature of the crimes committed by Russian soldiers. The article also suggested that the targeted killing of men of fighting age could indicate a deliberate policy aimed at terrorising the Ukrainian population and undermining Ukrainian statehood, noting that such actions may meet the threshold of genocide (The Times, 2022b). Responding to similar horrors in Bucha and other Ukrainian cities, cartoonists sought to convey the nature of the criminal actions

authorised by the Russian leadership as accurately and clearly as possible. A striking example was the cartoon created by Norwegian cartoonist Morten Morland, which was published in "The Times" on 4 April (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. Cartoon by M. Morland
("The Times", 4 April 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

It depicts a blood-stained V. Putin, who is walking boldly forward, leaving a bright red trail on the ground. He is carrying a scythe, which is both the main instrument of the crime and a symbol of death. Along with V. Putin, Death itself is represented in the stereotypical image of the Grim Reaper, looking in horror at the crimes committed by the Russian president. Despite the fact that the cartoon contains no text, its story logically leads the reader to conclude that V. Putin has surpassed even Death itself with his actions and the number of victims. P. Brooks's cartoon of 6 April is somewhat similar in its motive (Fig. 5). The author depicted V. Putin against the backdrop of the Russian flag, the red field of which simultaneously symbolises a bloody pond. As in the previous cartoon, the Russian president is stained with numerous splashes of blood and is holding the main instrument of the crime, but this time it is a kitchen cleaver for chopping meat. At the top left of the image, a special caption "Family butcher..." was added to the image, allegorically emphasising that entire families were victims of Russian crimes.



Figure 5. Cartoon by P. Brookes "Family butcher..."
("The Times", 6 April 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

An important feature of the Kremlin's military strategy is its large-scale destructive nature. In April-May 2022, Russia moved its main forces to eastern and southern Ukraine. It was here that the biggest battles the world had not seen since World War II would begin and continue to be fought. At the end of May 2022, fierce fighting took place on the outskirts of Sievierodonetsk. At the time, it was the only part of Luhansk region that continued to be under the control of the Ukrainian government. On 27 May, despite the defensive actions of the Ukrainian army, Russian troops managed to approach the outskirts of the city and gradually move into the centre. On the same day, Sievierodonetsk Mayor Oleksandr Stryuk said that about 90% of the housing stock was damaged, 60% of which was beyond repair (Ukrinform, 2022). The total destruction of cities in eastern Ukraine caused a new cartoon by P. Brooks to appear on 28 May (Fig. 6).



Figure 6. Cartoon by P. Brookes "I've taken another prize city! What city!" ("The Times", 28 May 2022b)
Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

The story is focused on the ruins of a Ukrainian city. Among the destroyed buildings and bodies of civilians is a Russian tank with a "Z" militaristic symbol. On top of it, there is a half-naked V. Putin, who is standing with his bloody hands, showing a gesture of victory and confidently claiming that he has "taken another prize city". At the same time, one of the Russian generals (probably S. Shoigu) looks out of the hatch of the tank and, looking at the area through binoculars, asks the Russian president, "What city?". The story of the cartoon is a sharp irony of the so-called Russian "liberation" of Ukrainian cities, which in fact ends in their total destruction. This situation is a consequence of V. Putin's irresistible desire to seize new territories at any cost, sparing neither technical nor human resources.

Thus, British political cartoons consistently constructed a strongly negative and increasingly demonised image of Vladimir Putin as the main culprit of the Russian-Ukrainian war. While at the initial stage of the invasion, he appeared as a self-confident aggressor, the subsequent course of events, mass war crimes, and the

destruction of Ukrainian cities led to the transformation of this image into a symbol of cruelty, moral degradation, and death. To achieve this effect, cartoonists actively employed such artistic techniques as irony, sarcasm, grotesque, historical analogies, allegories, and symbolic imagery. Through these satirical and visual-symbolic means, the authors not only reacted to the ongoing events of the war but also articulated a clear moral assessment of the actions of the Russian leadership.

Visual and symbolic representation of V. Zelenskyy and V. Putin in political cartoons

One of the important consequences of Russia's full-scale armed aggression was the transformation of Ukraine's image. The aggressive nature of the war and the strong resistance of Ukrainians became an example for many of them of a desperate struggle for freedom and democratic values. This led to the strengthening of Ukraine's international image. However, the changes concerned not only its overall image, but also individual political leaders. In this context, it was V. Zelenskyy's image that underwent the most dramatic transformation. The 2019 presidential election, marked by V. Zelenskyy's entry into the second round and his landslide victory (73.22%) (Central Election Commission of Ukraine, 2019), attracted significant international attention due to his prior career as a famous comedian and showman. He gained fame at Kwartal 95 Studio and in the 2015 political comedy TV series "Servant of the People", where he played a history teacher elected president (Servant of the people, n.d.). Major global media highlighted his background in headlines such as "Hoping for peace, Ukraine's voters appear likely to elect a comedian as president" (Troianovski, 2019) and "Comedian wins landslide victory in Ukrainian presidential election" (Walker, 2019), emphasising the "comedian" label and reflecting Western scepticism about Ukraine's choice.

After the outbreak of Russia's full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022, the international community's position on V. Zelenskyy changed dramatically. On 25 February, "The Washington Post" reported that the US government was ready to help the Ukrainian president leave Kyiv to avoid capture or assassination by advancing Russian troops, but he refused the offer (Harris *et al.*, 2022). Although the media reported that the President of Ukraine remained in Kyiv, rumours about his possible escape continued to circulate in Ukrainian society. These speculations were dispelled after V. Zelenskyy recorded an evening video address near the Presidential Office in Kyiv together with key representatives of the state leadership, demonstrating that the country's political leadership remained in the capital and continued to coordinate the defence of the state (Hromadske, 2022). The video message and the decision to stay in Ukraine significantly strengthened V. Zelenskyy's political rating. According to a poll conducted by the Sociological Group

Rating as of 26-27 February 2022, 91% of Ukrainians supported the President's actions (Rating Group, 2022). The firm and determined position of the Ukrainian president was widely praised by Western leaders and the media. In particular, "The Washington Post" emphasised that Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who had previously been known as an actor and comedian, emerged during the war as an effective wartime leader whose decision to remain in Kyiv and actively communicate with society strengthened both domestic support and international sympathy for Ukraine (Pietsch & Westfall, 2022). Thus, V. Zelenskyy's image has been transformed from a "comedian president" to a "leader president". Such changes were vividly reflected in M. Morland's cartoon published in "The Times" on 1 March (Fig. 7).



Figure 7. Cartoon by M. Morland "My demands" ("The Times", 1 March 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

V. Zelenskyy appears to the readers in an olive military uniform with his hands clenched into a fist. Opposite him, on top of a pile of broken Russian equipment, V. Putin stands and reads out his demands. The main leitmotif of the story is the emphasis on the size ratio between the two politicians. V. Zelenskyy is portrayed as a "great leader" who confidently confronts the Russian president without hesitation. Instead, V. Putin is portrayed as a "little dwarf" who, despite the situation at the front, namely significant losses of personnel and military equipment, continues to make his demands. P. Brooks' cartoon from March 8 is quite interesting in its content (Fig. 8). Structurally, the image is divided into two stories. The first depicts V. Putin on a tank, which is aimed at an unarmed V. Zelenskyy. But this situation does not frighten the Ukrainian president, who confidently confronts it. In the second part, V. Zelenskyy bends the cannon of a Russian tank into the shape of the Latin letter "Z" with his bare hands, causing considerable surprise to V. Putin. The story of the cartoon mocks not only the "power" of the world's second army, but also the Kremlin's propaganda symbols, as evidenced, in particular, by the ironic "'Z' is for Zelenskyy..." caption.

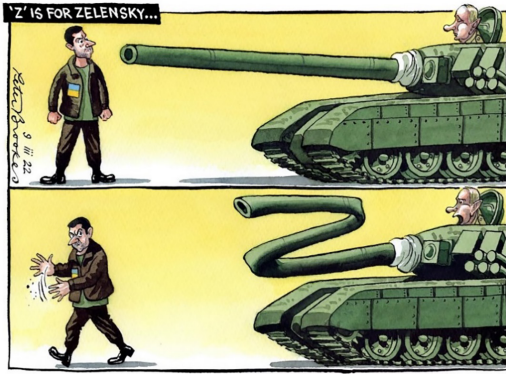


Figure 8. Cartoon by P. Brookes "'Z' is for Zelensky..." ("The Times", 8 March 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

It is worth clarifying that from the first days of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Russian military equipment has been marked with various symbols in the form of individual Latin letters: "Z", "V", "O", "X", and "A". Among all the symbols, the letter "Z" is the most widely used. Very soon, it became the main militaristic symbol in Russian propaganda and was used by Russian civilians in rallies and flash mobs as a sign of support for the invasion. There is no consensus on the real meaning of these symbols. The most popular theory used by military experts is that they were written in accordance with specific areas where Russian troops are usually deployed, for example, "Z" could mean "zapad", i.e., west in Russian. Others believe that the letters were painted to avoid friendly fire (Sauer, 2022). In the context of the confrontation between the images of the Ukrainian and Russian presidents, M. Morland's cartoon published in "The Sunday Times" on 27 March is extremely telling (Fig. 9). Its plot is based on the Old Testament biblical story of the struggle between David and Goliath. In M. Morland's cartoon, V. Zelensky plays the role of David, while V. Putin is Goliath. The image of the Ukrainian president is presented quite modestly: he is dressed in a light summer tunic, wearing no shoes, and holding a sling, one of the oldest primitive weapons. At this time, the Russian president appears to the readers as a giant, reminiscent of a Roman legionnaire. He is well equipped and armed: his head and body are protected by a strong metal helmet and armour. Putin holds a large long sword in his right hand and a shield with the propaganda symbol "Z" in his left. It is quite clear that the forces of the parties are not equal.

The appearance of M. Morland's cartoon was preceded by an extraordinary NATO summit held on 24 March 2022, in Brussels. At the meeting, V. Zelensky addressed the Alliance members via video link. He asked for hundreds of tanks and jets, saying that his country needed them to survive. However, French President Emmanuel Macron has ruled out this possibility because of fears that it could draw NATO into a direct conflict with

Russia. He said that this issue is a "red line" and the Alliance does not want to become "complicit" (Swinford & Waterfield, 2022). As a result, the summit did not adopt any specific decision that could really help Ukraine in its military confrontation with Russia. That is why M. Morland's cartoon depicts NATO holding a sword with the Alliance's emblem in one hand and pouring stones for V. Zelensky's sling with the other. Such insignificant, literally primitive assistance is surprising to the Ukrainian president: with his gaze, he clearly demonstrates that this is not enough to bring down Goliath. It cannot but be noted that among all the cartoons, this one most accurately conveyed the symbolism and nature of the armed conflict between Ukraine and Russia.



Figure 9. Cartoon by M. Morland ("The Sunday Times", 27 March 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

Thus, cartoons framed the confrontation between Volodymyr Zelensky and Vladimir Putin as a central symbolic narrative of the Russian-Ukrainian war, through visual contrasts in size, posture, and attributes, as well as through exaggeration, irony, and historical or biblical analogies – most notably the David and Goliath motif – cartoonists constructed a clear dichotomy between the two leaders. Zelensky was depicted as the embodiment of resistance, determination, and moral legitimacy, while Putin appeared as the aggressor whose military power did not ensure moral or political superiority. At the same time, these images emphasised the asymmetry of the conflict, frequently portraying Ukraine as a smaller but resolute force confronting a much larger opponent. In this way, the cartoons not only reflected the transformation of Zelensky's international image from a "comedian president" to a wartime leader, but also visually articulated a broader narrative of moral and political confrontation between Ukraine and Russia, aggression and the defence of freedom.

Response of the West and support for Ukraine

On the eve of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine, Western leaders repeatedly warned V. Putin about imposing powerful sanctions on Russia if it escalated the conflict.

But these words are of little consequence to the Kremlin, which has long been planning a large-scale armed aggression and was ready to take risks to achieve its geopolitical goals. In this regard, a popular topic of discussion in the British press was the question of the West's response to Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine and the effectiveness of the sanctions imposed. It should be noted that cartoonists were very sceptical about their effectiveness. For example, on 26 February, "The Times" published a cartoon by P. Brooks (Fig. 10) depicting US President Joe Biden, French President Emmanuel Macron, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. All of them are using symbolic gestures and "sanction" flowers to try to stop Russian President Vladimir Putin, who despite this, confidently continues to drive his tank with a smile on his face. Thus, even in the early days, the cartoonists stated the obvious fact that the West's actions were not decisive enough and the sanctions imposed were not able to stop the invasion. In addition, Kremlin was prepared for such a scenario. V. Putin and his entourage understood that even if tough sanctions were imposed, their effect would be felt only later, and therefore the Russian economy would have enough time to adapt, which actually happened.



Figure 10. Cartoon by P. Brooks "Sanctions" ("The Times", 26 February 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

Despite the limited immediate impact of sanctions, Russia's invasion strengthened cooperation between Ukraine and Western countries, which became the main providers of financial and military assistance. This support enabled Ukraine to stabilise the situation and continue resisting Russian aggression. However, the issue of supplying heavy weapons remained contentious. In January 2023, ahead of the Ramstein meeting, debates focused on the transfer of German Leopard 2 tanks. Initially, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz opposed the decision, later linking it to the possible delivery of American Abrams tanks, while the United States also hesitated to make a commitment (The Times, 2023). Germany's cautious stance was influenced not only by fears of escalation with Russia but also by historical sensitivities connected with the legacy of the Nazi regime. The issue was

resolved after intensive discussions among allies. On 25 January, Joe Biden announced that the United States would provide 31 M1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine, while on the same day Olaf Scholz confirmed the delivery of 14 Leopard 2A6 tanks (Moody *et al.*, 2023). The positive decisions of NATO members to provide tanks to Ukraine were reflected in several cartoons. The first, by P. Brooks, depicts a German Leopard targeting Putin. The latter looks quite upset about this (Fig. 11).

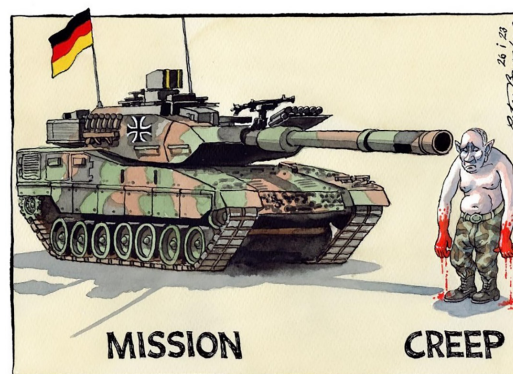


Figure 11. Cartoon by P. Brooks "Mission. Creep" ("The Times", 26 January 2023)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

The author of the second is the artist Ella Baron. The cartoon depicts V. Zelenskyy rolling up his sleeves and leading a column of tanks provided by Western partners (Fig. 12).



Figure 12. Cartoon by E. Baron "All behind you, Zelensky. After David Low" ("The Sunday Times", 29 January 2023)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

This story is an allegory for the previously known David Low's cartoon "All behind you, Winston" (Langworth, 2020). Thus, E. Baron not only made pointed reference to the strengthening of Ukraine's military and technical forces, but also highlighted V. Zelenskyy's leadership image, comparing him to the figure of Winston Churchill, who enjoyed considerable political authority and popularity during World War II. While the problem

with tanks was resolved positively for Ukraine, the matter of providing aircraft remained open. The acquisition of fighter jets could greatly influence the course of the war in favour of the Ukrainian army, as it would make it possible to conduct effective and targeted air strikes, as well as to deter Russian aircraft far from the Ukrainian border and thus protect cities and villages from bombing. Despite V. Zelenskyy's numerous requests on the eve of the anniversary of Russia's full-scale armed aggression, the allies remained unwavering on this matter. The absence of a positive solution for Ukraine has led to the appearance of another thematic cartoon in which P. Brooks mocks the indecision of European political leaders (Fig. 13).



Figure 13. Cartoon by P. Brookes "Fighter jets? No!" ("The Times", 10 February 2023)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

It depicts V. Zelenskyy asking R. Sunak, E. Macron, and U. von der Leyen whether there will be fighter jets. The latter, although they answer "yes" many times, end up with one big "no" word. However, it should be added that minor concessions were made on the issue of supplying Ukraine with aircraft. On 8 February 2023, it was decided that the UK would train Ukrainian pilots to fly fighter jets, because, as the newly elected British Prime Minister R. Sunak said, "the first step in being able to provide advanced aircraft is to have soldiers or aviators that are capable of using them" (Swinford *et al.*, 2023). An important event in the context of establishing close relations between Ukraine and the West was the unexpected official visit of US President J. Biden to Kyiv on 20 February 2023. It was the first visit of a US president to Ukraine since 2008, and the first time a sitting US president visited a war zone not controlled by the US military. Details of the visit of J. Biden was kept completely secret and prepared for several months (Baker & Shear, 2023). Of course, an event of this scale immediately aroused considerable interest among the world community and the media. "The Guardian" called it perhaps the most significant visit by a US president to a European country since the end of the Cold War (Harding, 2023). "The Times" cartoonists also did not stand

aside. The next day, after J. Biden's visit, a corresponding thematic cartoon by M. Morland was published (Fig. 14).



Figure 14. Cartoon by M. Morland "Z. Special military operation" ("The Times", 21 February 2023)
Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

The main character of the story is V. Putin, who looks angry and tries to throw a large cake at the TV. The reason for his anger is, of course, the meeting of J. Biden with V. Zelenskyy. Interestingly, the cake is not an ordinary one, but a festive one. Its lower tiers bear the militaristic symbol "Z" and the propaganda euphemism "Special military operation". At the very top is a single candle, symbolising one year of full-scale aggression. The story of the cartoon is told in such a way as to place the emphasis on the important symbolic significance of J. Biden's visit to Ukraine on the eve of the anniversary of the invasion. In this regard, it is appropriate to recall the words of Polish Ambassador to the EU Andrzej Sadoś, who rightly stated, "It is a timely, symbolic and historic visit which shows that the free world stands with Ukraine" (Melkozerova, 2023).

The analysis of British political cartoons demonstrates that the West's response to Russia's invasion and the subsequent support for Ukraine has become a central narrative in visual media. Cartoonists highlighted the initial ineffectiveness of sanctions, portraying Western leaders as symbolically attempting to restrain Putin while he continued the invasion unabated. Simultaneously, cartoons reflected the gradual strengthening of Ukraine's military capabilities through Western aid, notably the supply of tanks, and visually reinforced Zelenskyy's leadership and strategic role. At the same time, the continued delays in providing fighter jets were depicted satirically, emphasising Western indecision and the limitations of their support. Key political events, such as President Joe Biden's historic visit to Kyiv, were also captured in cartoons, symbolically portraying the alignment of the free world with Ukraine and the increasing isolation of Russia. Overall, these visual narratives not only illustrated the dynamics of international support but also framed Ukraine's defence as both a military and symbolic struggle, highlighting the critical role of Western assistance in shaping the course of the conflict.

Boris Johnson, Partygate, Ukraine and the war

Frequent trips to Ukraine by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson sparked lively debate in the British press. The increased attention to these visits was largely driven by their political context, particularly the so-called Partygate scandal. Johnson was accused of violating COVID-19 lockdown restrictions during the pandemic in 2020-2021. At a time when most British were forced to stay at home, some representatives of the government and the ruling Conservative Party organised several holiday gatherings at Downing Street. This situation caused a wave of public outrage, and political opponents demanded that B. Johnson be held accountable for violating the law. However, Russia's full-scale armed aggression pushed this issue to the back burner. The main focus of Johnson's and the British politicians' attention was on the events in Ukraine. Moreover, relations between the British and Ukrainian governments have become very close. Showing his continued support, on 9 April, B. Johnson made his first official visit to Kyiv since the invasion, where he personally met with V. Zelenskyy (Swinford & Waterfield, 2022). Their relationship became so close that the British Prime Minister visited Ukraine twice more after that. British society was critical of Johnson's frequent trips. His political opponents and the media widely claimed that he was hiding behind the war in Ukraine and thus seeking to avoid responsibility in the Partygate case. Sharp public criticism led to a series of cartoons published in "The Times". The first of them appeared in March. However, the most striking is the cartoon by P. Brooks which was published on 20 April (Fig. 15).



Figure 15. Cartoon by P. Brookes "Human shield..." ("The Times", 20 April 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

Its appearance was preceded by several events. On 12 April, the London police issued 30 official fines for violating the rules during the COVID-19 pandemic. Among those who received them were B. Johnson and R. Sunak. After that, some members of the opposition parties, including Leader of the Labour Party Keir Starmer and the first ministers of Scotland and Wales, demanded that they resign (Scott, 2022). B. Johnson's response to the criticism and the fine was an official statement to

parliament on 19 April, in which he apologised for violating quarantine rules. However, his words did not inspire much confidence either among representatives of opposition parties or the media. On the same day, "The Times" wrote, "What he did do was try to deflect attention from his own behaviour by burying his apology in a wider statement on the latest developments in Ukraine, thereby further signalling that he considered questions regarding his honesty as self-indulgent at a time of international crisis" (The Times, 2022a).

In fact, these words were the reason for the appearance of P. Brooks' cartoon. It depicts B. Johnson sitting in the British Parliament and shielding himself from the "attacks" of his colleagues with two shields. Each of them is painted in the colours of the Ukrainian flag, and in the foreground is V. Zelenskyy, who, with his arms crossed, has a rather stern and indignant look. This cartoon's story very successfully reflected the point of view that the then British Prime Minister was using Russia's war against Ukraine as an argument for his own justification and staying in power. However, B. Johnson failed to "extinguish the fire" of public discontent. Therefore, on 7 July 2022, he officially announced that he was stepping down as Prime Minister and Leader of the Conservative Party. Two months later, on 6 September, Liz Truss became the new Leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister of Great Britain. Thus, the Russian-Ukrainian war appears not only as an international conflict but also as an important element of the United Kingdom's domestic political discourse. In this context, the image of the war in Ukraine was used by cartoonists as a means of satirically interpreting the political crisis surrounding the Partygate scandal and criticising Boris Johnson's attempts to appeal to the international situation to reduce pressure from his opponents.

The failure of the "Blitzkrieg War" and Ukraine's military success

On the very first day of Russia's full-scale invasion, many people had a key question: how long Ukraine would stand against. It is known that the Russian army ranks second in the world after the United States in terms of its military and technical capabilities. According to the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), in 2021, the number of servicemen in the active Russian army was 900 thousand, while in the Ukrainian army there were only 209 thousand (Chapter five: Russia and Eurasia, 2021). From the point of view of the ratio of military forces, Ukraine's confrontation with such a giant is tantamount to a defeat. This was the opinion of many Western experts and politicians in the first days of the invasion. Despite the pessimism, events in Ukraine took an unexpected turn. The armed invasion provoked a massive wave of patriotism and unprecedented cohesion among Ukrainian society. Ukrainians at all levels began to resist. In the first days of the full-scale war, the number of people willing to enlist in the territorial

defence far exceeded the number of weapons available in military centres. The Russian command clearly did not expect this. In addition, the first days demonstrated the disorganisation and low manoeuvrability of the Russian army. As a result, a new reality has emerged in which Ukraine has not only resisted, but also demonstrated the ability to actively counter the Kremlin's aggressive plans.

This course of events was immediately reflected in a British cartoon. In this context, the most eloquent is the cartoon by P. Brooks published on 31 March 2022 (Fig. 16). The creation of the cartoon is connected to an important phase of the full-scale war – the retreat of the Russian army from Kyiv. On 29 March, Russia's Deputy Defence Minister Alexander Fomin officially announced that Moscow would "sharply reduce military activity" in the Kyiv and Chernihiv fronts (Hodge *et al.*, 2022). At the same time, the Ukrainian military launched a series of counteroffensives that resulted in the liberation of the cities around the Ukrainian capital. Among them were Bucha and Hostomel, which suffered the most from the Russian occupation (Clark *et al.*, 2022). As a result, the Kremlin's plan to "capture Kyiv in three days" completely failed, and the Russian army suffered significant human and technical losses.



Figure 16. Cartoon by P. Brookes "The 'Retreat' from Kyiv... I feel a right tit!" ("The Times", 31 March 2022)
Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

In the foreground of the cartoon, V. Putin is shown leading a long convoy of Russian military equipment. According to satellite images, it stretched for 64 km (Ali & Stewart, 2022). Despite its "grandiose" appearance, the convoy failed to reach Kyiv. Among the main reasons were problems with logistics, lack of food and fuel, and low morale among Russian soldiers. It is worth noting that the story of the cartoon is a satirical allegory on the "Napoleon's retreat from Moscow" painting by German artist Adolf Northen. Therefore, the Russian president is depicted on horseback, and instead of a modern military uniform, he is wearing a long greatcoat modelled after the XIX century, and he is wearing a "Napoleonic" hat. Obviously, the events in Ukraine evoked direct analogies for P. Brooks with the French Napoleon's march on Moscow in 1812, which also ended in retreat.

In the war with Ukraine, Russia has used not only ground and air forces, but also the Black Sea Fleet. It was with its help that the Kremlin managed to block the entire northern Black Sea region, including the main Ukrainian ports through which grain and other food products were exported, for a time. For a long time, it was believed that Ukraine would not be able to break through this blockade, as the Ukrainian army did not have the necessary technical means to do so. However, on 13 April, an unexpected event occurred that caused a significant resonance. On this day, the Ukrainian Navy launched two Neptune cruise missiles at the cruiser Moskva, the flagship of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. The ship sank as a result of the damage and difficult weather conditions. On the evening of 14 April, the Russian Ministry of Defence officially recognised the sinking of the Moskva (Parker & Brown, 2022). This is the largest loss of the Russian navy since World War II. In their editorial leader, the editors of "The Times" stated, "The sinking of the Moskva, the guided-missile cruiser that was the flagship of Russia's Black Sea Fleet, is a humiliating symbolic defeat, bolstering Ukrainian morale and stoking huge anger and demands for revenge in Russia" (The Times, 2022c).

"The Sunday Times" published a special cartoon on 17 April in response to this event (Fig. 17). Since Western Christians celebrated Easter on this day, M. Morland made the Easter bunny the main character of the story. In his paws he holds a basket of blue and yellow eggs, which are analogous to Ukrainian anti-ship missiles Neptune. In the background is the cruiser Moskva, which was hit by an Easter egg and is sinking to the bottom of the sea.



Figure 17. Cartoon by M. Morland ("The Sunday Times", 17 April 2022)
Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

In the context of the failure of the Russian government's military plans, it is worth mentioning another cartoon by P. Brooks, which was published on 12 May (Fig. 18). It was triggered by a joint statement made by Finnish President Sauli Niinistö and Prime Minister Sanna Marin that their country must apply for NATO membership without delay (Grylls & Brown, 2022). It should be added that this decision was prompted by Russia's

full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine. The Russian leadership's response to the Finnish government's statement was not long in coming. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, "Finland's accession to NATO will cause serious damage to bilateral Russian-Finnish relations and the maintaining of stability and security in the Northern European region. Russia will be forced to take retaliatory steps, both of a military-technical and other nature, in order to neutralise the threats to its national security that arise from this" (Sobenko, 2023).



Figure 18. Cartoon by P. Brookes "I'm warning you, Finland!" ("The Times", 12 May 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

Russia's statement was the reason for the appearance of P. Brookes' cartoon. It depicts a Ukrainian farmer pulling a broken Russian tank with the help of a tractor. V. Putin looks out from his hatch, who, despite his losing position, threatens Finland. Interestingly, the story of cartoon is based on real events that took place in the first weeks of the full-scale invasion. For example, in March, videos appeared in the Ukrainian information space showing ordinary Ukrainian farmers on tractors pulling almost undamaged Russian military equipment (Radio Free Europe. Radio Liberty, 2022). These images quickly spread around the world and turned into Internet memes. The following jokes were made about Ukrainian farmers, "Never ask a woman her age, a man his salary, a Ukrainian farmer from where he got his anti-aircraft system"; "After 12 days of stealing Putin's tanks, Ukrainian farmers are now unofficially the fifth-largest military in Europe" (Holl-Allen, 2022).

Ukrainian farmers have become a new symbol of resistance to Russian aggression, as they have tried to remove Russian equipment from the roads and fields despite active hostilities and threats to their lives. This situation, which is comical on the one hand and quite realistic on the other, has once again demonstrated the weakness of the Russian army and the failure of its main military objectives. Therefore, it is not surprising that in his cartoon, P. Brookes used this particular image to ridicule Russia's threats to Finland. After the sinking of the cruiser Moskva, the next military success of the Armed Forces of Ukraine was an effective counteroffensive

operation in the northeast on 6-12 September 2022, which resulted in the liberation of almost the entire territory of the Kharkiv region. It should be added that the Russian authorities have not provided any official explanation for their defeat on this sector of the front. Moscow's silence has even caused considerable anger among some pro-war commentators and Russian nationalists on social media. Some have called on President V. Putin to make immediate changes to ensure the final victory in the war (Polityuk & Balmforth, 2022).

Another fact of the failure of the Kremlin's military plans was vividly reflected in an ironic cartoon by P. Brookes published in "The Times" on 14 September (Fig. 19). The image consists of two consecutive scenes: first, V. Putin lights a cannon and orders "Take that Ukraine!", but after the shot, the recoil effect is triggered and the cannon rolls over the Russian president and crushes him to the ground. Later, commenting on his cartoon, P. Brookes said, "The Russians were taking a hammering, as opposed to being the superpower that swallowed Ukraine. Maybe Vladimir Putin still thinks he can do it – you never know what's inside his head. But his invasion was backfiring like a cannon" (The Times, 2022d).

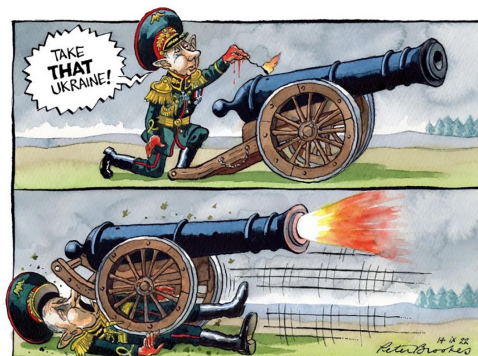


Figure 19. Cartoon by P. Brookes "Take that Ukraine!" ("The Times", 14 September 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

After the successful counteroffensive operation to liberate the Kharkiv region, the military successes of the Ukrainian army did not exhaust. On 8 October, the Security Service of Ukraine conducted a covert special operation that severely damaged the Crimean Bridge. The explosion of a truck filled with 21 tonnes of explosives collapsed two half-sections of the roadway and damaged a railroad track (BBC News Ukraine, 2023). The destruction of the Bridge is of strategic importance to Ukraine, as since the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion, it has been actively used by Russia to transfer military equipment, food and manpower to Crimea and from there to the southern theatre of operations. In addition, the Crimean Bridge has become a formidable ideological tool that Russia actively uses in its propaganda. Its opening in 2018 was considered one of V. Putin's greatest achievements. Back in 2016, the Russian

president said that the construction of the Bridge was a "historic mission" (Horchynska, 2016). Its construction was to solve not only logistical problems, but also to become one of the key factors for the final "unification" of the occupied Crimea with Russia. Therefore, the destruction of the Crimean Bridge is also symbolic for Ukraine. Given the importance of the event, on October 10, a corresponding thematic cartoon by M. Morland was published (Fig. 20). It depicts a long conference table that was heavily damaged by the explosion, as indicated by the smoke columns. V. Putin also fell to the floor from the blast wave. It is interesting that in the cartoon the analogue of the Crimean Bridge is a table. This comparison is not accidental.

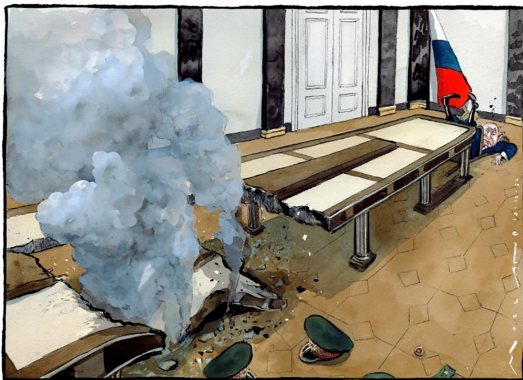


Figure 20. Cartoon by P. Brookes "Take that Ukraine!" ("The Times", 14 September 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

On the eve of the full-scale invasion, V. Putin began holding one-on-one meetings with foreign dignitaries at a giant oval table about five meters long. At the same time, the Russian president and the guest were sitting opposite each other at the farthest ends of the table. From the outside, this situation looks quite strange and ridiculous. Among all the meetings held, the most memorable was the visit of E. Macron, who arrived in Moscow on 7 February to prevent a future war between Russia and Ukraine. After five hours of talks, the French president failed to get any public concessions from V. Putin. Although this meeting was not destined to become historic, thanks to the long white table, it quickly turned into an Internet meme. Political experts and journalists speculated that this format of the talks and the table itself were a demonstration of force to "subdue" Macron, or perhaps even a physical expression of disdain. There is also a version that V. Putin tried to avoid contracting COVID-19 in this way (Holmes, 2022). Regardless of the real reason, the table has become another symbol of Russia's "geopolitical game". It is therefore not surprising that the cartoon used it as an analogue for the Crimean Bridge. In concluding the discussion of Russia's military failures and Ukraine's success, reference should be made to M. Morland's cartoon, published in "The Sunday

Times" on 26 February 2023 to mark the anniversary of the full-scale invasion (Fig. 21). It depicts Putin in a Soviet military uniform, keeping a bear on a chain, striking it with a baton and forcing it to perform a "victory dance". However, as you can see from the story and the crossed-out days of the calendar on the wall, the animal fails to complete it successfully.



Figure 21. Cartoon by M. Morland "The victory dance" ("The Sunday Times", 26 February 2023)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

It is worth noting that the image of the bear in the cartoon has a symbolic meaning, since in history and culture, its image is most often used as an allegory for the Russia. In Western European discourse, it is associated with savagery, insatiability, backwardness, etc. However, in Russia itself, such a zoomorphic allegory has taken on a positive connotation. The image of the bear is perceived by Russians as a manifestation of strength, durability and indestructibility. Moreover, today this animal is the main symbol of United Russia, which is the dominant political force. Therefore, it can be concluded that the story of M. Morland's cartoon best reflects the fact that Russia's strategic military objectives, which it planned to implement through armed aggression, have failed.

The analysis of British political cartoons reveals that the failure of Russia's "blitzkrieg" strategy and Ukraine's unexpected military successes became a central theme in the visual interpretation of the war. Cartoonists ironically depicted the retreat of Russian troops from Kyiv, the sinking of the cruiser Moskva, Ukrainian counteroffensives, and other events that demonstrated the weakness of Russia's military machine and the collapse of the Kremlin's plans. Through satire, historical allusions, and symbolic imagery – such as Ukrainian farmers, the damaged Crimean Bridge, or the allegory of the Russian "bear" – artists highlighted the contrast between the ambitious rhetoric of the Russian leadership and the actual battlefield outcomes. In this way, the cartoons constructed a narrative of the war in which Russia's initial military superiority did not guarantee success, while Ukraine's resistance emerged as a symbol of unexpected effectiveness and strategic resilience.

Ukrainian refugees and the British government's migration policy

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine has triggered one of the largest migration crises since World War II. Millions of Ukrainians were forced to leave their homes and move westward in search of refuge. In the first month of the war alone, more than 3.6 million refugees left Ukraine and went abroad. An additional 6.5 million people were internally displaced (Operational Data Portal, 2022a). In six months, this figure reached an even higher level. Thus, according to a report prepared by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, as of 26 August, the number of Ukrainian refugees exceeded 6.6 million. In total, 11.5 million people have been displaced from Ukraine since 24 February, of whom only about 5 million have returned (Operational Data Portal, 2022b). It is clear that this global crisis has become one of the main topics discussed in the media. Cartoonists have also paid their attention to this problem. The first cartoon in this context was published in "The Times" on 28 February (Fig. 22). It depicts Priti Patel, the British Home Secretary, who, despite the difficult situation and the fire in the house, asks a mother and child an absurd question: "Are you willing to pick fruit?!" Its formulation is no accident. From the first days of the war, some Ukrainian refugees went to the UK. However, it has the most stringent visa requirements among European countries. Therefore, in the early days of the war, only close family members of British citizens could enter the country. This government policy immediately met with sharp criticism. On 26 February, Yvette Cooper, the Shadow Home Secretary, wrote on her Twitter page, "Ukraine is under fire. People are fleeing war. Yet Home Office still applies normal visa restrictions inc salaries, language, close relatives This isn't solidarity w Ukraine, it's immoral. Govt must urgently provide simple sanctuary route to UK for Ukrainians who need our help" (Cooper, 2022a).



Figure 22. Cartoon by M. Morland "I said, are you willing to pick fruit?!" ("The Times", 28 February 2022)
Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

The political debate was further intensified after the words of Kevin Foster, the Minister of Immigration, who on the same day in a tweet (later deleted) suggested

that Ukrainians apply to come to the UK under the seasonal worker scheme for fruit and vegetable picking (Wheeler *et al.*, 2022). This statement provoked another huge scandal, and therefore became the main reason for the appearance of M. Morland's cartoon. In this regard, the already mentioned Y. Cooper emotionally noted, "My God. People are fleeing war in Europe, the like we haven't seen in generations, in search of swift sanctuary. Yet the immigration minister says the answer is they should put in an application to pick Britain's fruit & veg" (Cooper, 2022b). Despite the criticism, the British government refused to simplify the entry procedure for refugees, arguing that it was a security issue. Home Secretary P. Patel said that visas are crucial to prevent Russian troops and extremists from coming to Britain (Dathan & Zeffman, 2022). In order to somehow address the situation, on 6 March, P. Patel said that she was considering creating a third humanitarian route that would go beyond the existing family and community sponsorship schemes, which allow Ukrainians to enter the UK without having any family ties. However, this statement was denied by B. Johnson, who noted that the new route actually meant the previously announced sponsorship programme (Dathan & Smyth, 2022). This inconsistency and chaotic nature of the British government's actions has increasingly drawn criticism from the media. As a result, on 8 March, "The Times" published a new cartoon (Fig. 23). The picture shows Ukrainian women and children trying to pass through the British humanitarian corridor, which is getting smaller and smaller every time they get closer to the door.



Figure 23. Cartoon by M. Morland "Humanitarian corridor..." ("The Times", 8 March 2022)
Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

Numerous bureaucratic procedures added to the difficulties of Ukrainian refugees. This issue was most acute in the French city of Calais, which is the closest crossing point across the English Channel from continental Europe to Britain. The geographical location of the city has led to the arrival of hundreds of Ukrainian refugees who were looking for the fastest way to get to the United Kingdom. However, upon their arrival, they faced a major problem: there was no visa centre in

Calais. P. Patel refused to open it here, arguing that it would be used by smugglers and would attract other migrants trying to get to the UK (Dathan *et al.*, 2022). Consequently, hundreds of Ukrainian refugees were told to travel to Paris or Brussels, which are hundreds of kilometres away from Calais, to obtain visas (Easton, 2022). In addition, on 7 March, Home Secretary P. Patel twice stated that she had allegedly established a visa centre on the way to the French port. However, the information provided was not true. No visa centre was established at that time. Such actions of the government caused another round of criticism from various political circles. The next day, the Home Secretary admitted that the statement was false, noting that the plan was only in the works and that the new facility would probably be located in Lille (about 120 km from Calais) (Woodcock, 2022). In response to the events in Calais, a special cartoon by P. Brooks was published in "The Times" on 10 March (Fig. 24).

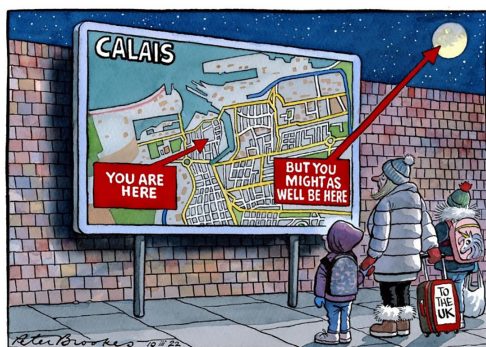


Figure 24. Cartoon by P. Brooks "To the UK. Calais. You are here. But you might as well be here" ("The Times", 10 March 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

The illustration depicts a woman with two children looking at a billboard with a map of the city. Two text explanations are marked on the map, indicating an ambiguous location. The first arrow states that "you are here", i.e., in the city centre near the port, and the second arrow, going beyond the billboard, points to the Moon. With this story, the author of the cartoon, P. Brooks, sarcastically emphasised that Ukrainian refugees would be able to get to the Moon rather than to the new visa office in Lille. Despite public criticism and debate, the British government has never been able to quickly resolve the issue of legal border crossing by Ukrainian refugees.

The analysis cartoons show that the problem of Ukrainian refugees became a significant subject of public debate in the United Kingdom during the first months of the war. Cartoonists critically reflected the British government's cautious and often inconsistent migration policy, drawing attention to strict visa requirements, bureaucratic delays, and the difficulties faced by Ukrainians seeking refuge. Through irony and visual symbolism,

these cartoons emphasised the contradiction between political declarations of support for Ukraine and the practical barriers encountered by refugees. In this way, the cartoons not only reflected the scale of the migration crisis but also contributed to the public debate about the effectiveness and moral responsibility of the British government's migration policy.

Energy and food crisis

The problem of refugees was not the only one that Europe and the world faced after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Fears of a disruption in Russian supplies led to a sharp rise in the price of oil and gas. During the first week, the price of oil rose by 10% to over USD 118 per barrel, which was a record since 2013. On 2 March, gas prices in the UK jumped 38%, more than ten times higher than a year earlier, and reached 463 pence per therm (Gosden, 2022a). On March 5, as Russia intensified its missile bombardment of Ukraine, the price already exceeded 500 pence per therm (Gosden, 2022b). The energy crisis put the British government in a difficult position. On 23 March, Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak was to officially address the public to propose the main ways to resolve the situation. It was the preparation of the spring economic statement that served as grounds for the story of M. Morland's new cartoon published on 14 March (Fig. 25). It depicts an exhausted R. Sunak sitting in front of the fireplace in his house and asking the relevant question: "Have you seen the gas prices?" At the same time, he has a large number of drafts of the spring economic statement next to him, which he burns one by one. The cartoon showed the complexity of the problems faced by the British Chancellor of the Exchequer.



Figure 25. Cartoon by M. Morland "Have you seen the gas prices? Spring statement. Draft 86" ("The Times", 14 March 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

To resolve the situation at least in the oil market, B. Johnson decided to appeal to Saudi Arabia to convince it of the need to increase production. On 16 March, he arrived on an official visit and met with Crown Prince

Mohammed bin Salman. However, this trip caused a wave of criticism from political and public observers. The main reason was systematic human rights violations in Saudi Arabia. In particular, on Saturday, three days before Johnson's arrival, 81 people were executed in the country. All of them were convicted on charges including terrorism and holding "deviant beliefs". Human rights organisations claimed that many of them did not have a fair trial. Moreover, even on the day of Johnson's visit, three men were executed in Saudi Arabia. Sir Keir Starmer, the Leader of the Labour Party, accused the British Prime Minister of simply "going cap in hand from dictator to dictator" (Zeffman *et al.*, 2022). Since the issue of relations with Saudi Arabia caused heated discussions, "The Times" published two thematic cartoons. The first depicts B. Johnson, who, despite the fact that he is drowning in a river of blood, holds a container of fuel and addresses the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, calling him a "lifesaver" (Fig. 26).



Figure 26. Cartoon by M. Morland "You're a lifesaver!" ("The Times", 15 March 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

In another cartoon, the British Prime Minister is represented as a nodding donkey, kneeling with his head bowed before Muhammad bin Salman and his associates, who are holding bloody sabres (Fig. 27).



Figure 27. Cartoon by P. Brookes "The nodding donkey..." ("The Times", 17 March 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

The COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine have dealt a significant blow to the food market. At the end of March, "The Times" reported that according to the Office for National Statistics, inflation in the UK hit a 30-year high with average prices 6.2 percent higher than a year ago (Ellson, 2022). The press noted that due to rising food prices and increasing tariff, British families having low incomes are forced to give up things that were once part of their daily routine, including fresh food (Beal & Gibbons, 2022). A cartoon published by P. Brooks on 26 March was a reaction to the cost-of-living crisis (Fig. 28). It depicts Putin clutching a mother and a small child with bloody hands, pointing a gun barrel at them and asking: "You live. The price? Ukraine...". Obviously, with this story, P. Brooks tried to appeal to the moral feelings of the British people and lay stress on the fact that their economic difficulties cannot be compared to the difficult situation of Ukrainians, who are forced to pay the highest price every day, i.e. their own lives.



Figure 28. Cartoon by P. Brookes "Cost of living crisis... You live. The price? Ukraine..." ("The Times", 26 March 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

Inflation in the UK continued to grow exponentially. In April, it reached a 40-year high of 9% (Nachiappan, 2022). On 16 May, Andrew Bailey, the Governor of the Bank of England, commenting on the situation, publicly stated that the UK is facing an "apocalyptic" rise in food prices. According to him, the main reason for this is Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which has enough food in stock but is unable to export it now. A. Bailey's words about "apocalyptic" inflation caused a lively discussion in the media and criticism of the British government. He was accused of hyperbole, irresponsibility, and an attempt to divert attention from the Bank's efforts to propose effective ways to fight inflation (Smyth *et al.*, 2022). E. Bailey's words and the lively public response inspired P. Brooks to create a cartoon based on biblical motifs (Fig. 29).

It depicts the four horsemen of the apocalypse, who personify the characters from the sixth chapter of the Book of Revelation by John of Patmos in the New Testament. One of the horsemen asks, "What's for dinner?" and

the other replies, "Horse!" These words frighten the horses a lot, as evidenced by their wide-opened eyes. With this story, P. Brooks not only emphasised the issue of rising food prices, but also skilfully brought the public's lively response to the "apocalyptic" statements of the Governor of the Bank of England into focus (Smyth *et al.*, 2022).

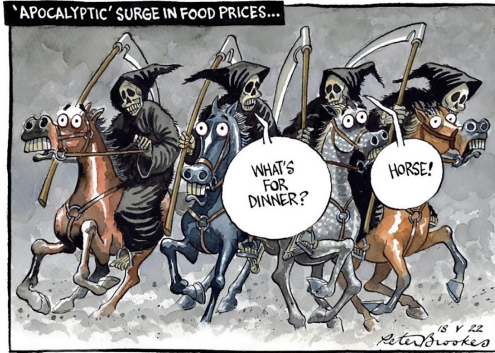


Figure 29. Cartoon by P. Brookes "Apocalyptic surge in food prices... What's for dinner? Horse!" ("The Times", 18 May 2022)

Source: R. Kutsyk (2025)

Thus, the analysis of cartoons shows that the growth of the energy and food crises was interpreted by the artists not only as economic difficulties but also as direct political challenges caused by Russia's war against Ukraine. Through satire, irony, and symbolic imagery, cartoonists depicted rising energy prices, inflation, and the deterioration of living standards, while also criticising controversial steps taken by the British authorities, particularly attempts to establish energy cooperation with authoritarian regimes. Particular attention in the cartoons was given to the moral dimension of the crisis: economic difficulties in the United Kingdom were contrasted with the far more severe consequences of the war for Ukrainians. In this way, visual narratives shaped the perception of the global nature of the consequences of Russian aggression and emphasised the especially dramatic situation of Ukraine, where the issue of the cost of living effectively turned into a matter of life and death.

Discussion

The findings of this study align with broader global trends in the satirical conceptualisation of Russia's full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine, as demonstrated in the works of O. Semotiuk & Y. Hladyr (2025) and L. Morales Domínguez *et al.* (2022). A common feature across all political cartoons is the interpretation of the Russian-Ukrainian war primarily as a global evil. Even when authors attempt to remain neutral, complete impartiality is impossible to achieve, as humour inherently contains a moral evaluation. A clear confirmation of this is the societal stance of the Global South countries. Although on a political level Arab states attempt to maintain the status of geopolitically "detached" observers, an analysis of

their cartoons O.A. Al-Dala'ien *et al.* (2022) demonstrates that the consequences of the war inevitably affect them as well. The food crisis, energy collapse, and the refugee problem emerge as universal themes in visual narratives, convincingly proving the all-encompassing nature of the conflict and projecting it as a global threat.

The analysis of "The Times" and "The Sunday Times" demonstrates that British political cartoons construct the Russian-Ukrainian war as a fundamental clash of civilisational values. Events are consistently portrayed through the dichotomy of "good and evil". The visual construction of the confrontation between V. Putin and V. Zelenskyy serves as the central symbolic axis of the British satirical narrative. The consistent demonisation of the Russian president, whose image has evolved from a self-confident aggressor into a symbol of death and the "family butcher", closely aligns with the strategies of mockery and belittlement identified by M. Yatsyurska (2015) and L. Pytlovana (2022) in Ukrainian satirical discourse. Interestingly, within the British media landscape itself, both solidarity and a certain variability in image construction can be observed. As the findings of A.V. Karakaş & M. Yılmaz (2023) indicate, a similar personification of responsibility for the war and the visualisation of V. Putin as an isolated and suspicious dictator is also conventional for another British publication – "The Week" magazine. The Russian leader is depicted as an isolated, paranoid dictator (the long table metaphor), who is detached from reality and conceals military failures (such as the sinking of the Moskva cruiser) behind a smokescreen of propaganda. Furthermore, both studies record the active use of the animalistic bear metaphor to demonstrate how the Russian military machine has become "stuck" and failed in Ukraine. At the same time, the results of the present study reveal a distinct divergence in the representation of the war and Ukraine. In "The Week", significantly less attention is paid to the mass atrocities committed by the Russian leadership, and Ukrainians are more often portrayed as helpless victims of a tragedy. Conversely, the artists of "The Times" and "The Sunday Times" articulated the asymmetry of the conflict differently – they made every effort to expose the most heinous war crimes of the Russian president and frequently employed the David and Goliath motif, transforming the Ukrainian people and V. Zelenskyy into an archetype of heroic resistance and moral legitimacy.

The aforementioned narratives starkly contrast with Russian visual propaganda, which depicts Ukraine as a weak, dependent, or disoriented state allegedly used by the West for its own interests, while Russia acts as a "protector-bear" or an "older brother", which is directly aimed at legitimising the aggression and hyperbolising the threat from the "hostile West". As noted by V. Kotala (2017) and M.I. Drahan (2025), Russian cartoons are characterised by complete congruence with state propaganda media narratives, reproducing the same messages disseminated through television, news outlets, and

social media, including the “demonisation” of Ukraine, the denial of Russian aggression, the romanticisation of the imperial past, and the justification of war crimes under the guise of “protecting Russian speakers”. A similar anti-Western perspective is actively echoed in the media sphere of Russia’s strategic allies. Specifically, S. Zhabotynska & O. Ryzhova (2022) demonstrate in their study of multimodal narratives in the Chinese newspaper “Global Times” that, despite Beijing’s officially declared neutrality, Chinese visual propaganda systematically aligns with Russian ideologemes. The cartoons in this publication completely ignore the humanitarian consequences and Russian war crimes, focusing instead on discrediting the US and NATO expansion as the true culprits of the conflict striving for global hegemony.

It should be particularly noted that a defining feature of the British satirical discourse is its deeply introspective and critical nature regarding the policies of the West itself. While E.K. Koliada *et al.* (2024) show that other Western media frequently used cartoons primarily as an instrument of resistance against external Russian propaganda, “The Times” and “The Sunday Times” actively leveraged the context of the war to critique domestic political failures. The scepticism towards the actions of the allies fully aligns with the conclusions of A.V. Karakaş & M. Yılmaz (2023), who identify a persistent image in the British media of NATO as a passive “lifeguard” refusing to assist non-Alliance members. Notably, cartoonists from both publications articulate the issue of the West being distracted by its own domestic problems amidst the tragedy in Ukraine. However, while in *The Week* this contrast is built predominantly on the critique of American politics (focusing on pandemic disputes in the US or the actions of former President D. Trump), the examined “The Times” and “The Sunday Times” pursued a path of acute national self-criticism. The intertwining of the conflict with the Partygate scandal, delayed aid, and bureaucratic hurdles for refugees illustrates that the war was deeply integrated into the UK’s domestic agenda, and global crises were viewed as direct moral tests for the British government itself.

Summarising the results of the comparative analysis, it can be asserted that the British satirical discourse (exemplified by “The Times” and “The Sunday Times”) occupies a unique niche in the global informational landscape of the Russian-Ukrainian war. In contrast to the propagandistic narratives of autocracies (Russia and China), which construct a distorted reality, and the detached stance of the Global South, British political cartoons perform a complex dual function. On the one hand, they serve as an uncompromising instrument of moral solidarity with Ukraine, articulating the responsibility of the aggressor and heroising the Ukrainian resistance. On the other hand, they remain an indicator of a mature democratic society capable of utilising an international crisis as a mirror for poignant national self-criticism. Thus, visual metaphors do not merely document the political chronicle of the war; they

forge core value orientations, ultimately cementing in the mass consciousness of the Western reader the perception of this conflict as a defining, existential struggle for the future of European democracy.

■ Conclusions

The analysis demonstrated that Russia’s full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine was comprehensively and multifacetedly covered in British political cartoons. To enhance the impact of the depicted stories, cartoonists employed a wide range of artistic techniques, among which the most prominent were grotesque, parody, irony, sarcasm, hyperbole, personification, and analogies of a political, historical, and biblical nature. The visual narratives primarily centred on Russian President V. Putin as the main culprit of the events. He was assigned a series of dynamic images that evolved as the war unfolded. In the first days of the invasion, he appeared to readers as a “half-naked Rambo” confidently committing an act of aggression. However, with the subsequent increase in war crimes committed by the Russian army, the image of the Russian president took on a pronounced disparaging form: cartoonists emphasised V. Putin’s personal degradation and the loss of basic human qualities. The atrocities in Bucha further reinforced the “demonisation” of his image, where he was compared to Death himself and labelled the “family butcher”. A direct counterpoint to this negative portrayal was the highly positive image of V. Zelenskyy. The readers of “The Times” and “The Sunday Times” saw the Ukrainian president as a “great leader” who courageously confronts Russia’s armed aggression.

It is worth noting that alongside the primary focus on V. Putin’s image, the heroism of Ukraine, and the mass atrocities committed by the Russian army, the cartoonists also extensively highlighted the broader global consequences of the war, particularly the escalating energy and food crises. Furthermore, in their effort to convey the complexity of the ongoing political processes as objectively as possible, the authors did not hesitate to actively critique the West. The most heavily criticised aspects included the lack of decisive action by Western leaders to counter Russia’s aggression, Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s attempts to evade domestic responsibility amid the Partygate scandal, and the British government’s bureaucratic inability to quickly resolve the Ukrainian refugee issue. The analysis of quantitative indicators revealed that despite the significant total number of cartoons published in “The Times” and “The Sunday Times”, the editorial attention to the full-scale invasion decreased sharply over the year. This trend, however, has a logical explanation. First, it reflects a well-documented media phenomenon of attention fatigue, where societal interest in protracted conflicts gradually diminishes over time. Furthermore, it is essential to consider that a political cartoon is a highly concentrated, unique media product rather than a mass-produced news item. Therefore,

its primary value lies not in publication frequency, but in its capacity to succinctly and accurately capture the most pressing and controversial socio-political phenomena.

Considering these factors and the unprecedented density of publications during the first two months of the invasion, it is evident that the Ukrainian issue has never before received such extensive attention in the history of British satirical graphics. Given the intense informational warfare waged by Russia in Europe, this represents a significant informational success. Ukraine emerged in the mass consciousness of the British public not as a geopolitical appendage of the Russian sphere of influence, but as an independent state with a resilient civil society fighting for European democratic values. By firmly establishing Russia as the primary antagonist of modern Europe and framing the conflict through a clear moral dichotomy, the British satirical discourse consolidated a definitive victory for Ukraine within the visual media landscape. Future research should expand the

chronological scope to subsequent years of the conflict to trace the evolution of visual narratives under conditions of a prolonged war and political change in the United Kingdom, conduct comparative analyses between conservative ("The Times") and left-liberal ("The Guardian", "The Independent") British media to assess the impact of editorial ideology on war representation, and examine the reception of political cartoons in digital environments and their interaction with contemporary visual folklore, particularly internet memes.

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«Війна образів»: висвітлення повномасштабної збройної агресії Росії проти України у британській політичній карикатурі (за матеріалами «The Times» та «The Sunday Times»)

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Анотація. Актуальність вивчення політичної карикатури як форми візуальної комунікації зумовлена її здатністю лаконічно відображати суспільно-політичні процеси, формувати громадську думку та впливати на інтерпретацію російсько-української війни. Метою статті був аналіз того, як повномасштабна збройна агресія Росії проти України була репрезентована в британських політичних карикатурах, опублікованих у «The Times» та «The Sunday Times» протягом першого року війни. Методологія дослідження ґрунтувалася на міждисциплінарному підході, що поєднував медіастудії, візуально-аналітичні методи, а також інструменти кількісного та якісного контент-аналізу. Така комбінація відображала специфіку політичної карикатури як візуального інформаційного продукту, що одночасно інтерпретує та конструює суспільне сприйняття. Дослідження продемонструвало, що британські карикатуристи активно використовували сатиру для фреймування конфлікту через чітку моральну дихотомію «добра і зла». Візуальні наративи насамперед зосереджувалися на російському президенті як головному ініціаторі війни, чий образ еволюціонував від самовпевненого агресора до демонізованого символу жорстокості та моральної деградації, особливо після звірств у Бучі. Натомість, використовуючи мотив Давида і Голіафа, український президент послідовно зображувався як архетип героїчного національного спротиву. Карикатуристи активно висвітлювали глобальні наслідки війни (енергетичну та продовольчу кризи) і критикували політичну нерішучість Заходу, внутрішні суперечки у Великій Британії (зокрема скандал Partygate) та бюрократичні провали у вирішенні проблеми біженців. Кількісний аналіз вказав на закономірне зниження частоти публікацій протягом року, що відображає медійний феномен «втоми від теми». Тим не менш, безпрецедентна концентрація візуальних сатиричних матеріалів у перші місяці забезпечила беззаперечну перемогу України в інформаційній «війні образів». Практичне значення цього дослідження полягає в можливості його застосування для вивчення медіадискурсу, візуальної пропаганди та формування міжнародного сприйняття сучасних збройних конфліктів

Ключові слова: російсько-українська війна; британський сатиричний дискурс; політична карикатура; візуальні наративи; візуальна пропаганда; засоби масової інформації; газета