Liz Hallgren:

Good morning everyone, my name is Liz Hallgren and I'm a doctoral fellow with the Center for Media at Risk here at Annenberg. I'm thrilled to introduce this morning's first panel entitled "Shakeup," which attends to the period of disruption marking the emerging world order that this symposium has convened to address.

There's no question that we're in a moment of rupture in which longstanding and assumed alliances are fragile, if not completely dissolved, inviting an uncertain future. Media practitioners are at the center of this tumultuous moment, risking their lives to bring us the information we need to address this uncertain terrain. There is perhaps no more salient current example of the rupture of this moment or the media's all important but extremely vulnerable role in it than the Russian invasion of Ukraine that began last spring.

Lucky for all of us, this morning's panelists are experts, not only in Ukraine and the region, but also some of the key issues facing practitioners globally at this moment. So without further ado, I'd like to go ahead and introduce each of them and then we'll get started with their remarks. First up is Yevhen Fedchenko, who is the co-founder and chief editor at stopfake.org, a fact checking website and leading hub on Russian disinformation. He is also the director of the Mohyla School of Journalism at the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy in Ukraine. A hybrid scholar at the Annenberg School for Communication Center for Media at Risk, Fedchenko was also a Fulbright visiting professor at USC's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism.

Next we have Olena Lysenko, who is a documentary filmmaker, producer, fixer and freelance journalist from Ukraine. This year, she is also a visiting practitioner with the Center for Media at Risk at the Annenberg School. Just this year her short film "I Never Had Dreams of My Son" received the special jury recognition award for best documentary short at the 2022 New Orleans Film Festival. And in 2016 she received her PhD in law from Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.

Finally, Dariya Orlova is a media researcher and senior lecturer at the Mohyla School of Journalism, National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy. Dariya studies the transformation of Ukrainian media and journalism, journalists' professional identity and the post-Euromaidan period in Ukraine and media use amongst Ukrainian border populations. Prior to her academic career, Orlova worked as a journalist for the *Kyiv Post* and served as editor of the European Journalism Observatory in Ukraine. This year she's a visiting scholar at the Center for Media at Risk here at Annenberg, and she'll also be teaching a graduate class at Annenberg in spring entitled Media and Journalism in Central and Eastern Europe, Post-Communist Transition and New Directions.

Now I'd like to turn to each of our panelists for their remarks and then we'll open up an audience discussion. Yevhen, would you like to kick us off?

Yevhen Fedchenko:

Good morning, it's a great pleasure to be here. I'll start my time by traveling back to when I [first] entered the profession of journalism. It was the end of the Cold War, the Berlin Wall was no more and Ukraine had been born as an independent state. I thought, "Oh, I'm entering journalism at the most boring time because, as we had predicted the end of history, that's probably the end of journalism [too] because all world problems have been solved before I entered this very important profession." I was very wrong.

Now every day as a journalist and a scholar, I'm probably living through more events than we previously would have had during 10 or 20 years. This leaves us very limited time, not only to live through those events, but also to reflect

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on them. Today I was thinking about how to start this conversation and saw two pieces of news, that, for me, describe the changes in the world order. And they are happening in front of us. One was that seven Ukrainian embassies in the European Union were sent animal eyeballs in bloodied envelopes. This is a signal from a terrorist state [and demonstrates] how the normal state can become the aggressor and then fall into terrorist practices. But that was predictable and easy to say that at some point this would happen.

The second piece of news was much more disturbing because it was coming from the media field, which is very close to me. One of Russia's liberal media organizations was collecting donations for the Russian army and calling them, "Our army, our boys." They were helping the army, which is killing Ukrainians and raping Ukrainians. This is coming from a liberal Russian media organization based in Latvia.

The second Russian liberal media organization, also based in Riga, is sending the message to Ukraine that if you allow the transit of Russian gas and oils through the territory of Ukraine, Russian terrorists would threaten the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant. So in one instance, media are collecting donations for the aggressor army, and in another, they are sending messages from the terrorist state to the state fighting this aggressor.

Enormous changes have happened in politics, in the world order and they are happening in media. How can we respond to those changes? When the war against Ukraine started, and it happened in 2014, my colleagues, my students and I got together at our school of journalism and started to think about what we could do as journalists to respond other than just go fight in the trenches, which a lot of my colleagues did and many of them died.

We decided that we should be fighting disinformation because, from our point of view, this war was completely constructed through

disinformation. If there were no disinformation, there would be no war because this disinformation created the cassus bellis, imagined cassus bellis for this war. They explained it to the world audience and sold it to the Russian audience why they need to support this war.

This war is totally manufactured through media communication-- we see how the normal space of media is usurped by disinformation and propaganda. So this shrinks the scope [of opposition] to where there are very little real media, at least in Russia, who can fight back against disinformation. That's why we decided that we would focus on factchecking. We decided to monitor this phenomena, debunk disinformation and research what we found. We've been doing this through the whole period of about eight years-- stopfake.org.

There are thousands of stories, each of them was literally killing people in this war. Because again, those stories are not just small fakes, which we used to see as factcheckers before. Fact checking was used usually, as you remember, for domestic politics, for elections, for responsibility and transparency of electoral process and other things. We decided to use it for a different purpose, to shed light on all those things which were used, for example, by Russia before February of this year, to explain why Ukraine should be invaded. Because Ukraine does not exist, because Ukraine is not a real state, because Ukraine is a fascist state or because Ukraine is developing weapons of mass destruction. This again connects us to the kind of media and communication woven to the world order, where one country can not only usurp this world order but also is using the means of communication to make those changes irreversible.

This is important because indeed we've seen how those changes became irreversible. We've seen how Russian society changed because of this. We've seen how the acceptances were,

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how they became happy being encapsulated in this bubble which was created for them, and how they did not respond to this aggression by any possible means. Like protest attempts to change the political regime in their country, or at least to be more responsible than those two media organizations, as I described as the beginning of my speech, which became very insensitive to the current moment of this war. And this again demonstrates how huge can be the harm of disinformation because it makes some things irreversibly bad.

We decided that we can be agents of change because we can build resilience among Ukrainians, and that was a huge thing. I believe if we would not have my organization and some other organizations fighting disinformation in Ukraine during this period between the beginning of the war in 2014 until now, I think Ukraine would lose because Russians were really trying to create such an environment where Ukrainians would be not willing to fight back. And they were wrong, because all those efforts to explain the phenomenon of disinformation helped to raise awareness among people of how real information is different from disinformation.

For example, very recently *Internews* published its annual media poll, which they take in Ukraine every year. This year they also included the question of resilience against disinformation. Ukrainians demonstrated absolutely important results because that means that everything we've been doing— explaining, doing media literacy, developing the culture of critical consumption of media— was not all wasted. Around 16% of Ukrainians said that they recognize the brand name of Stopfake. So probably they would not be our regular readers, but this is even not important because I cannot imagine that 10 years ago people would be paying so much attention to the content.

This is a huge change in perception. It was important that we created a huge database of those fake stories, thousands of them. That helps us, through research to predict how kinetic warfare develops. Our organization was a main actor in predicting this incursion in February. Looking at the volume and intensity of the disinformation and the main narrative, we came to the conclusion that we're about to see the huge changes in Russian tactics. And it would not be only about Donbas or Eastern Ukraine. It would be something completely different. Unfortunately we were right.

Another important issue, how can we be agents of change? I said we created a huge archive and we wanted to use the archive for another very, very important thing— justice. Because we believe that those who create disinformation media system in Russia and those who participate in this at all different levels, not only at the very top, but also mid-level and at the bottom should take responsibility for this war.

We try to use those stories we collected as witness accounts of the crimes they committed. And we also see them as partners to war crimes committed by the military inside Ukraine. This is important because without justice, this war cannot be ended. And this is very, very important for every Ukrainian. So from our point of view, this war would not end only when Putin, for example, would say, "Let's stop this war." It would be just the beginning. And I'm not sure we would hear those words anyway. But for us it would mean, as in many other conflicts where people want not just to see the ceasefire and peace negotiations and peace building process, but they want to see justice. So we want to use our materials which we collected to commit that act of justice. And only then would we see the end of this conflict. Thank you very much for your attention.

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Olena Lysenko:

Hi everyone, thank you for the opportunity to speak on this panel. First, I want to put things into perspective. From pre-war to the full-scale invasion, Ukrainian documentary filmmaking was undergoing a renaissance. Here are some of the films that I recommend you watch. Since the tumultuous events of the 2014 Euromaidan revolution and Russian aggression in Crimea, documentary filmmakers started to attract more funding from the Ukrainian State Film Agency and attract more attention at International Film Festivals. So what happened to Ukrainian documentary filmmakers during the full scale invasion?

In the beginning, many of them felt that cinema was meaningless and the most important thing for them to do was to defend Ukraine, and many of them actually joined the Ukrainian armed forces. Other filmmakers decided to join volunteer initiatives helping the army and helping civilians. Eventually they returned to filmmaking and believe that it's their duty to document this war. They say it is important because they need to broadcast events globally to collect evidence of Russian war crimes and ensure that films are there for future generations of artists to have the material to work with.

As for me, I believe that the most important thing is to inform the world about what's going on. I became the fixer of international correspondence for NPR, and I worked with them for half a year. Only then after things got more or less stable, I decided that okay, I actually can come back to film making and think about that.

Widespread artillery, drones, aviation and so on make it really difficult and dangerous to film on the front lines and because of strict rules, filmmakers cannot really spend that much time there. Some filmmakers actually decided to join the Ukrainian armed forces to be able to be with their subjects and cover and film the war

from there. Because everyone has a smartphone now and there is Starlink internet available at the front lines, videos made by soldiers have become a major source of documentation. For example, there are Zoom calls with soldiers in besieged Mariupola and videos taken from phones that belong to Russian soldiers.

For those who decide to film in other parts of Ukraine, there are still a lot of risks because of missiles, chemical drones, curfews, limited supplies of gasoline, electricity, water and so on. In the begining of the war, many filmmakers struggled to find protective equipment as bulletproof vests and medical kits were all in short supply. So what do filmmakers do now? Some filmmakers believe that now, film is not an art form, but also a way to inform the world what's going on.

This film (One Day in Ukraine) was actually the first Ukrainian documentary to be bought by the BBC. Previously, connections between Ukrainian producers and international broadcasters were pretty limited, so this is a good sign. Other filmmakers believe that it is important to speak to a local audience and to think about trauma, how society has changed and to speak directly to your people. This is a good example of that, Babylon '13, they started working on it back in 2014 documenting Euromaidan. They collect stories and local voices that might not get into the news.

Some filmmakers are making short films to help people who lost their homes crowdfund money to rebuild their lives. Another important thing that filmmakers do is cultural diplomacy. They basically protest at major international film festivals. They do special screenings. And during these events they ask festivals to amplify Ukrainian voices in their programs and to rethink their attitude towards Russian culture because Russia is using culture to whitewash their crimes. And also just in general to make room for perspectives of those states that were colonized by Russia.

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What strengths and weaknesses about media practice have emerged during the war? I was thinking about what is different between now and the war in 2014. Now there are more territories that were occupied and then liberated. So, Ukrainian and international journalists and filmmakers have access to these liberated territories. They are able to actually see mass graves and torture chambers. I read an interview with a famous Ukrainian photographer, Yefrem Lukatskyi, he works at the Associated Press, who says that when he take pictures for the news agency of dead bodies, because people read news in the morning with their coffee and their sandwich, you cannot take up close like hardcore pictures. You need to be creative. And I was thinking maybe for documentary filmmakers, it can be that they come up with some other way to document it in more detail. How do you even document this kind of material?

Maksym Nakonechnyi says that ethical frameworks in these kinds of sites are really blurred. You have to come up with how to document. Basically filmmakers self-organize and helped each other through grassroots connections. On a greater level, we have this major documentary film festival called Docudays UA, the country's largest documentary film festival. And it gathers support for the filmmaking community.

When state institutions weren't effective, filmmakers communicated these problems to the international community. Now the state spends all the money to the army. So, basically anyone who is filming something now is either doing it with their own money or through support from European film funds, but it's not always fully covered. It is also hard to work in co-production if your country, Ukraine, cannot pay its part.

Dariya Orlova:

Good morning. I'm very excited to be able to participate in this conversation and my colleagues have already outlined a number of important aspects, but I want to focus a bit more on several other points. When I was preparing this short presentation, I was trying to convey the perspective of a Ukrainian journalist, media practitioner, although I cannot call myself a media practitioner anymore. But I've been doing research on Ukrainian journalists since Euromaidan and I've been trying to see how their professional identity has been changing, what are the issues that journalists have been dealing with. So I should say that I have accumulated some understanding, at least I hope so, of the community of Ukrainian journalists.

While preparing for this panel, I couldn't help but ponder over the very term "shake-up" in the world order. It seems that this sentiment of a crumbling world order is ubiquitous these days, yet it is experienced differently by different groups in different parts of the world. Shake-up in the world order is suddenly different for Ukrainian journalists, who are at the very center of disruption, compared to journalists from other countries.

And this disruption is extremely tangible in Ukraine because you see and you feel and you witness real death, real destruction, broken lives in extreme cases, but totally broken routines for everyone. Over three dozen Ukrainian journalists were killed since February. More than 100 outlets had to shut down or stop their work because of the war. And yet the sense of a total shakeup is not new for Ukrainians.

This shakeup has been sensed and experienced in Ukraine since 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and instigated armed conflict in the Donbas region, with its death toll around 14,000 casualties over eight years. Russia also made Ukraine a target of its hybrid warfare by

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not only causing deaths and destruction but by systematically trying to belittle Ukraine and damage its reputation.

Despite all this, the discourse globally was not about world scale disruption. It was a disruption for Ukrainians. As a consequence, Ukrainian journalists were experiencing loneliness or even isolation. Russia's full scale invasion this year changed that. While bringing so many critical challenges to Ukrainian journalists, in a way it made some things easier. Though it may sound like a bitter irony.

It has contributed to overcoming the splitting of realities for many journalists. And by splitting of realities, I mean a situation or condition when journalists were witnessing one reality inside Ukraine, all the outcomes of Russia's aggression, all the evidences of non-stop hybrid war, but it was very hard to communicate that reality to the outside world. Now things have become transparent or at least much more transparent, and there is no need to argue that the world has changed or that it has been shaken.

It has become easier for Ukrainian journalists to communicate with the world, but of course not without pitfalls. For instance, social media platforms, particularly Facebook Meta, have made it difficult for many Ukrainian media to disseminate their work coverage over the last month. A recent study showed that a number of outlets, actually half of the surveyed outlets, Ukrainian outlets, have been suffering from limitations imposed by Facebook for sharing what Facebook deems as sensitive content, when in fact those posting content basically reflected the horrors of the actual war. So this leads to the question, the world order has been disrupted as we seem to recognize it, and yet the outcomes of the disruption look like too much to witness. That's a dilemma that we can see in the Ukrainian case.

So interaction with social media platforms is one of the challenges for present day journalism. In Ukraine, social media platforms have become a major source of news for citizens according to surveys. About 70% of Ukrainians say that social media are their top source of news these days, not online media, not television, not the press. Journalists and media have to be there to reach their audiences, yet so much depends on the policy of the platforms, on the algorithms. So this all does raise a question about the changing agency of journalism. What are journalists capable of doing if they have such an intermediary that changes the way they reach people?

That's one of the challenges that Ukrainian journalists have been facing over the last years, and especially now during the invasion. Another crucial challenge for Ukrainian journalists since 2014 when this whole disruption started concerns finding a response to the instrumentalization of fair reporting by maligning actors. So for instance, honest coverage of cases of corruption or some sad vaccine reforms was systematically picked up and amplified by those actors to push through the narrative about Ukraine as a failed state.

How to find a healthy balance? That's the question that has been debated a lot. And that's also what I saw in my interviews with journalists, that they were really struggling to find answers to that question. To be an honest reporter that serves Ukraine, but on the other hand not to lead to some negative consequences for Ukraine, given the potential outcomes of all the discussions about the problems with corruption, et cetera in Ukraine.

Of course, this complex and challenging environment requires reconsideration and perhaps even reinvention to some extent of journalism. There is a need to reconsider and reflect on existing normative assumptions because the world has been changing so quickly, and we can see all this in the hybridization of formats, hybridization of communication. So again, what journalists can

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do, what they should do, what they should stick to in their work. However, of course, it is hard to dwell on those issues when the issue of survival is at stake as it is for many Ukrainian journalists.

There have also been so many operational challenges for Ukraine, because if we look into the context of the last eight years, what we see is the scarcity of resources available for operation for Ukrainian media as an outcome of that. Some of the greatest examples of robust reporting on the war in Ukraine very often were done not by Ukrainian journalists, but by foreign media who have resources that just cannot be compared.

On the other hand, this has made Ukrainian journalists more flexible. Yes, they don't have that many resources, but they are more flexible and they know the audience. So that also opens some opportunities. But the lack of resources has to be noted.

Another important feature that is also a challenge not only for Ukraine, but for other countries is the fast-changing media environment. We all see the growing need to compete for the audience with bloggers, all sorts of non-journalistic media actors. How do journalists find themselves in this complicated environment? These challenges can open some opportunities. This crisis of professional identity can boost new energy to seek answers rather than follow familiar paths.

It is too early to speak about such answers for Ukrainian journalists because the disruption is still very much unfolding. But if a few provisional observations about strengths can be made, that Ukrainian journalists and media have shown over the last eight years. First is the reestablished connection with the audience. Given the scarcity of resources that Ukrainian media have had, they had to find solutions to keep their audience. And they reached their audience to the extent that was not seen before.

They have been experimenting with formats, including formats of online interactivity. Another thing is the flexibility in how they responded to changes in the environment. In response to disinformation, a number of media have been trying to integrate media literacy elements or projects into their program. So you would find Instagram stories about media literacy done by some Ukrainian media showing very inventive things. Sometimes media from other countries have been relying on these media literacy projects that Ukrainian media and practitioners developed in response to disinformation.

Another important thing is reliance on built networks. Because Ukrainian media have been lacking resources, they have to build networks to join efforts and partner with organizations. We cannot ignore the help. The help has been huge from foreign donor organizations who tried to help the small media outlets in Ukraine to provide training on media management, on seeking different sources for findings. So that also contributed to collaboration.

These networks that developed over the last eight years came to be really useful when the full-fledged invasion started this year. For instance, many Ukrainian outlets, just like the case of documentary filmmakers that Olena mentioned, didn't even have very basic things like bulletproof vests or some gear that would be needed for them. They lack training on safety, et cetera. So they managed to get that through the networks that they created before the full-fledged invasion.

So summarizing these lessons that Ukrainian journalism can show, I would say that orientating toward the audience, establishing and supporting networks with other media and organizations and cultivating flexibility, something that I hope can be helpful maybe for practitioners in other countries facing similar challenges. Thank you.

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Liz Hallgren:

Thank you all so much for those insightful reflections. I imagine that our audience is eager to jump in, so I'll go ahead and kick off our discussion with a first question while folks gather their thoughts. Given that this panel is titled Shake-Up, I want to start off our discussion by going back to that important terrifying moment in February of this year when the Russian invasion began, which I think is what this panel identifies as that moment of shake-up.

But many of you also spoke about the 2014 history of violence in Ukraine on behalf of Russia. So I want to think about what that history meant for the Russian invasion in 2022 of this year. The prevailing narrative at the time before it officially began was that it couldn't happen. Olena, in your film you talk about a father of a soldier who says, no one thought it could happen in 2022.

So I'd like to get each of your reactions to the cognitive dissonance of that moment in January & February, 2022, and how Ukrainian practitioners found themselves navigating that moment when the narrative was, this couldn't happen, but yet it had happened before. I'm curious about the practitioner's perspective, how people were preparing or thinking about that moment.

Yevhen Fedchenko:

Yes. So right. Basically everybody divided into groups, those who believe that it might happen and those who would love not to believe, but still having all that information on hand, it was obvious that we are at the very beginning of some big shifts. But you are right in terms of this incursion of February was pretty much constructed since 2014, and it was obvious that that would be the logical continuation of that. Because since the very beginning of this war, it was obvious this was not about just annexing Crimea or getting more of Donbas, but more

about bigger imperial ambitions of Russia and what they want.

They want to basically annihilate Ukraine as an independent state. This is the final goal, the final solutions they're seeking. And those who were realistic at that point, they realized that yes, they would go as far as that. And the question was just in preparedness for that, to accept that, because definitely it was a very unconventional truth for many.

And I was going around many capitals since 2014 and explaining all those things. But for many people it was much more comfortable just not to accept it as a reality because these unrealities they've been living in were quite conventional, because they wanted to have business as usual with Russia. They wanted to have just continuity in everything which was around because it was too heavily invested in Russia from many different perspectives, from economics, politics, academia, the cultural field and other things.

So people just did not want to believe in absolutely obvious scenes. And the task of media was to show the truth, to use the facts and show the truth even if people didn't want to believe in that. So those media organizations which were prepared internally for this situation, and my organization was just continued to operate on February 25th and doing the same what we'd been doing on February 23rd.

Because for us, it was obvious that we cannot stop because that's of strategic importance. That's a part of the war, information warfare, and even if we as journalists did not feel that we are fighting an infowar, we were still journalists. As within the bigger picture, this field was as important as were the scenes that were happening on the kinetic side of this war. So our preparedness was absolutely essential, and we invested a lot of efforts in being prepared for this and in continuing our activities as usual.

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Olena Lysenko:

Basically, what I remember from the time is that back in January, one month before the full scale invasion in Kyiv, there were so many international foreign correspondents from all major news outlets, websites from all over the world. And I had a chance to hang out with them and talk with them. And what I felt is that they already accepted the fact that there would be war and there would be a ceasefire.

It was a bit confusing and weird to try to explain to them that it might not be the case because how can you explain that? I mean, you hope for that. But anyways, and also apart from that, even though they're professional journalists, maybe they don't know enough about the country they cover. So maybe my message would be, don't think with stereotypical thinking and maybe talk with local people more.

And also I want to add that for years I was working with and documenting Ukrainian veterans, and the veteran community was absolutely sure that bigger war is heading our way. So that was always my way of thinking, yeah, it's probably going to happen because professional military people were expecting it.

Dariya Orlova:

I agree with your assessment of cognitive dissonance. I think, well, even I personally had this cognitive dissonance because on the one hand, everyone knew that it can happen because it happened before. So if it happened before, why wouldn't it happen? But on the other hand, it still seemed so huge to be true. I mean, at least this full-fledged invasion, Kyiv being attacked, all other cities being attacked. So there was this double thinking, on the one hand, acknowledgement that this can happen, but then also reluctance to believe that it will happen.

As for media practitioners, actually some of them managed to, for instance, move their offices from Kyiv to Lviv before. So there was

preparation of that sort, especially in bigger news organizations. I know that other media organizations had meetings to discuss what they were going to do. They had some plans. But of course there were those who didn't have plans.

But I don't recall any big news media outlet stopping operation even during the 24th of February. So all the major media continued work. And maybe the reason for that is that when you lack resources, but you are used to that lack of resources, you are more inventive and you are more flexible. And I know some very interesting cases when people were writing reports from bomb shelters. Trying to organize calls or connecting with other callers, helping each other. So we've seen many kinds of extraordinary cooperation among Ukrainian media.

Kevin Platt:

I'm Kevin Platt from the Department of Russian and East European Studies. And first of all, I just wanted to say thanks for your presentations and also express respect for the incredible work that you're all doing in your fields. So the problem of proper representation of reality in Ukraine now is clearly a two front war. And you spoke most directly to the extraordinarily important problem of representing the truth and representing Ukraine's story.

I was wondering if you could also speak a little bit to the other front. For a long time, but especially since 2016, there's been tons of work done in the United States, and the problem of epistemic bubbles and the problem of speaking across epistemic divides within, of course, American society it's one thing. I don't think anyone has come up with the answer. How do you speak to someone who listens to the other news network and actually make a fact cross the border and get the proper attention that it needs there?

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Clearly, there are ways in which that conversation is cognate with the conversation across the divide between the emergent epistemic order of the Russian Federation and ways in which it is not. But I was wondering if you could speak to this problem of how to do media in Ukraine and attend to the problem of somehow reaching these captive minds in the media sphere and in the epistemic domain, which has been created, I think quite intentionally and quite carefully, but also quite coherently and quite compellingly for the millions of people who live in it. On the other side of the front, how do you work in Ukraine and think about somehow making inroads incursions into that coherent and quite, I think, inimical and dangerous epistemic sphere on the other side of the border?

Yevhen Fedchenko:

Yeah. I think it's a great question because that's exactly what we needed to do. But till 2014, the situation was the opposite. So Ukraine was absolutely open to any Russian influences. Just to give you one figure, before the start of the war, 82 Russian TV channels were fully available in Ukraine. And each of them was weaponized, including children's programming, sports, music, movies, popular entertainment, whatever.

It was also about the presence of Russian radio, Russian social media, Russian websites. For Ukrainian media it was absolutely impossible to compete because it was a huge media industry, subsidized by the Russian government. And that did not allow any space for any Ukrainian media organization to compete. Then when the war started, it was obvious that if Ukraine would not start doing something, we definitely would lose.

So there were two approaches. First to limit the Russian presence, which was absolutely right. And the sooner Ukraine would do that, it would be better. And we've been always advocating that, because it's not about freedom of speech,

but about the freedom of presence of disinformation.

So Ukraine limited Russian TV channels, and then Russian social media companies in Ukraine. And at the same time, different Ukrainian media organizations started to try to reach out to Russian audiences to talk to them, to explain to them. But it was obvious that at that moment it was already too late. And I have plenty of experience from my family when even I cannot talk to my relatives living in Crimea, for example. So if I cannot talk to my aunt, how can I talk to some huge, big, diverse audience, which was living in Zat for years and years already?

Because in 2014, the disinformation bubble was already in full strength and full force. So obviously it was too late. But I know that some people were still trying to reach out to ordinary Russians, even on February 24th, believing that if they would tell them the truth, everything immediately would change. So the premise was that they just do not know the complete truth, and that's why they do not behave how we would expect them to behave.

But it was wrong. Because all these calls and messages, they were falling into the air. And nobody was paying attention to that because they always could say that, "Everything is relative. That's your truth. "It's like it's your Ukrainian truth. It's like you can have Russian truths and then you can Ukrainian truths and some other truths. And my point was that there can be only one truth and all the rest is just lies. But you can always relativize everything because you just can't do that because it's convenient for you. And that's why all these attempts were unsuccessful. But still, for example, the Ukrainian state-owned TV channel Freedom is producing a lot of content in Russian. And they are claiming that they can reach out to some audiences. But again, our experience was completely different. And since February we basically abandoned the Russian audience per se. So we still continue to produce

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content in Russian, but mostly aiming, either as those Ukrainians who speak Russian, for example, or Russian diaspora living abroad.

Julia Sonnevend:

I'm Julia Sonnevend from the New School in New York. And I'm curious about your view on the Ukrainian president's communication. He has received a lot of praise internationally for running a successful charm offensive on social media and beyond. There is the ongoing PR campaign, the "be brave like Ukraine" developed by a branding agency in communication with the president's office. I'm asking this because it's one thing to fact check Russian disinformation, but there is also the question of how can we put out a powerful narrative that can counter it?

Dariya Orlova:

I will start. One thing that Ukrainian media practitioners managed to achieve throughout those eight years. They had to experiment with approaches, with formats including public diplomacy efforts. Of course we can speak about the president team's communication and his role, the role of his personality, the way he conducts himself, but we shouldn't forget about other actors. It's not only one actor's show, so to say in Ukraine. We have other actors in civil society that have also been driving these efforts to make Ukrainian voices more present abroad, to actually have Ukrainian voices heard. But of course, this factor of personal appeal and the experience of the president's team in media making, media production, it also turned to be helpful.

Asta Zelenkauskaite:

Thank you. Hello, my name is Asta Zelenkauite. I'm an associate professor at Drexel University. So first of all, again, thank you so much for all the work that you've done in this area. So my question is about disinformation. I work on the

topic and I looked at questions of victimization of Russians as a frame, perpetuated as a myth. Scholars from Poland as well have reported this since 2014, and my own research compares Lithuanian news portal comments. So I'm talking about user-generated content, not journalist produced content. And also comparing those frames in the US comments, I saw the same narrative of victimization of Russians, as they're blamed for everything kind of narrative being perpetuated already from 2018. So I was wondering if you saw any of those similar frames, and whether you looked into fact-checking context, if you looked at user-generated content spaces and social media rather than mainstream media.

Yevhen Fedchenko:

Yeah, it's a kind of difficult question because, of course, you would find that type of content on social media because yes, of course Ukrainians would be blaming Russians for either participating in this war or making this war possible. Because this is the responsibility of the whole Russian society, and they should recognize it. And as soon as that would happen, I think it would bring a lot of better understanding of who is supporting this war and who is not. Because just saying that I was not there, that's why I do not share the responsibility is a very weak answer for most Ukrainians. Of course, social media is a main outlet for those sentiments. And not all social media platforms are happy about that. But definitely there should be a balance where Ukrainians can express their feelings. Because I mean, our country is destroyed, literally, in many towns and cities.

There are some liberated towns in the east of Ukraine, whereas there is not a single house where people can live, not a single one. So of course that brings anger and then brings a question of responsibility. And it's a wider question about how the world made it possible, because there was a saying of never again, and

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every time we come again and again that it repeats. So probably there's an idea that this world is organized in a way that allows this. And it's also very important is how we communicate this idea because it's a communicational idea. So, from the point of view of fact checking, of course, again, we concentrate on differentiating what is true and what is not. And definitely emotional content on social media is not our focus. So that's a responsibility of the social media companies per se.

But what we do with social media companies and with Meta, first of all, with whom we work as a third party fact checker, we flag the content which is not true. This is very important because we try to move this conversation from emotional to factual based conversation. That's not always happening. But there is also another extremity. So some people say that you kind of blanketly blame Russians, but then there is another approach when people would say, "Yes, of course there is Russian disinformation, but also then there is of course Ukrainian disinformation and propaganda." And this is, we see the kind of false equivalence built over here again. So we go from one extremity to another extremity, and the worst thing here is to say that the truth is somewhere in the middle because neutrality scenes do not work. They do not prevent future wars.

Sarah Jackson:

Thank you. I'm Sarah Jackson, I'm faculty here at the Annenberg School for Communication. I was thinking when Olena was presenting about the filmmakers embedding with soldiers about the role of agitprop and its connection to truth. And I find that often my students, when they hear the term propaganda, they assume that all propaganda is bad. But of course we know from history that propaganda has often been a method that people who are under attack or under threat or at the margins have used in order to shift politics towards what you talked about, which was justice.

And so I guess I had a question about the filmmakers, I think first, but also I think journalists as well. You all talked about this concept of truth and truth as this sticky, subjective thing. But I wonder if they also see themselves playing a role very explicitly in what might be an agitprop goal. What might be a real clear and explicit desire to shift politics, to shift culture, to shift power, and maybe what you think we could learn. I mean obviously the US has a lot to learn about pretending that truth is an objective thing, but what can we learn from what you all are seeing on the ground there, in that regard?

Olena Lysenko:

Well, I haven't seen actually the shoot in filmmaking. I feel like people continue to work with the same methods as they used to. Ukrainian cinema has this long history of poetic cinema, so it's usually more quiet observational cinema, but all the filmmaking communities now are speaking up in all the cultural events around the world to basically say that Russian culture now has to kind of stay silent and you have to give voice to Ukrainian artists.

That is the ongoing thing with Ukrainian filmmakers. And it isn't coordinated from the state Ministry of Culture, it's just this grassroots movement. And every single filmmaker is making some kind of statement. They tried to reach international media. Actually, we are grateful that American media that writes about cinema actually published those statements. But they kind of self-organized and that was the main thing they did.

Tim Burke:

I'm Tim Burke. I'm at the history department at Swarthmore. I'm really struck listening to a number of the questions and the conversation that you talked about the alignment that you had to try and convince people before the war what was going on and the war convinced them. And it seems to me that media

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professionals around the world struggle with disinformation most when what they're trying to describe is distant from the experience of the people that they're trying to talk to, or is of such a scope that we don't really have the cognitive tools, any of us, to imagine it.

So Ukrainians don't need any convincing. In some sense, the job is easy for filmmakers and journalists in the sense that they're living in the middle of it. It's real. Equally, it seems to me that the intercepts of Russian soldiers' calls home early in the war sort of proved that they didn't need any convincing about disinformation because they were viscerally experiencing how much they'd been lied to about what the war really was.

What I wonder about, I guess, is the thing that we've learned over time is that the people that we presume know the most sometimes know the least, and that's the people at the heart of power. In the case again of the Ukrainian government, that's not the case because they're also staying in the middle of it. So it's visceral and real and they're experiencing it. But what I wonder about, I guess, is Russian power. And it may not be an accident that we got the idea of a Potemkin village from Russia, although that may actually be a false story, but it's a good metaphor.

So, as you think about this as media practitioners, the people who are behind the war are making decisions all the time about what they wanted, whether they're getting it, how the war is going. It's harder than even than speaking, say, to the Russian public to imagine speaking to Russian power. But, as you think about that, do you think that the people who are responsible agents of the war actually know what all Ukrainians know? I mean, where do people who are responsible for the war understand what's really going on and where do they maybe have less information than anybody on the battlefield?

Dariya Orlova:

Thank you. That's a very good question. Well, the reality shows that they don't understand Ukraine and Ukrainians, that's for sure. And probably that's not because they have lacked facts or knowledge about Ukraine. It's rather that their framework of thinking about Ukraine, it's so strong that it doesn't allow actual facts penetrating into that framework. So when you talk about this bigger notion of there's so much information about everything, it's so hard to digest. We don't know about the world, we don't understand the world. Very often we don't understand the world because of these preexisting frameworks, because it is so cognitively and emotionally costly to change the idea, the opinion that people tend not to do that. So it's very hard to get through those frameworks.

Yevhen Fedchenko:

I think that they've been building the system of disinformation for such a long period of time that they became the very first victims and biggest victims of this by creating a parallel world. Their decision making process has been based on an absolutely non-existent reality. So they did not pay attention to any intelligence gathering on Ukraine, on any attempts to understand Ukraine. It was just a normal kind of imperial, paternalistic approach that we know better who you are. And that played a very kind of a bad joke with them, because they've been expecting the Ukrainians would be throwing flowers on their tanks, and they were absolutely open about this, that meant that they knew absolutely nothing about Ukraine. And that was just a system of what would sink in, which was a substitute again for understanding and expertise and intelligence gathering.

And that's why I would say Ukrainians know better about Russia than Russians know about Ukraine, and I think they continue living with this kind of paradigm they built for themselves. This is good for Ukraine because that allows

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additional chances to be effective and successful in this war. And also Russian corruption is another assistance to Ukraine because we see how the Russian army was just disintegrating. It still has some military capabilities, but their effectiveness proved to be non-existent. And so those two sins I think contributed to a much better performance of Ukraine, even when we had absolutely huge pressures during the very first days of this war. Still those two factors, underestimation of Ukraine or non-recognition of the existence of Ukraine, at large, played a very important role to save some time and keep momentum.

Olena Lysenko:

It just proves it's another example how this other struggle is anti-colonial. I just reminded myself how much more conversation among Ukrainian artists and intellectual historians is that it's actually Ukraine that used to be a colony and we have to break from this imperial occupation by Russia of our culture. And just to add to my previous answer, the international community does not always understand what Ukrainian artists pick up about this colonial struggle of ours. The usual question would be, "What? Wait, you want to cancel Russian culture? So what about Dostoyevsky?" Our answer would be, "Yes, you know Dostoyevsky but do you know any Ukrainian author? Did you actually read any Ukrainian author or listen to Ukrainian music?"

Chenshu Zhou:

Thank you. My name is Chenshu Zhou, I'm an assistant professor in film and media studies here at Penn. I actually have two questions. So one for Dariya and one for Olena. One detail that Dariya mentioned that really struck me is about Facebook's censorship that certain images are deemed too sensitive to be posted. I'm wondering if you can talk more about how social media platforms shape the reporting of war and shape the knowledge of war that can
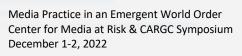
come to the public, who gets a lot of news from social media these days.

Also maybe from the practitioner's point of view, what may be some of the things that media practitioners can do to leverage social media platforms? I was thinking about Kiwi Chow's example yesterday about the live streaming that really impacted him. So about the war in Ukraine, I wonder if you know about examples or incidents where people creatively used social media to maximize their message. And then for Olena, you talked about different kinds of media, there are documentary, there are short films you mentioned, there are also just social media videos. I guess my question is what is documentary nowadays? How would you deal with these traditional boundaries between different kinds of time-based media?

Dariya Orlova:

Thank you for a very good question. My impression is that Ukrainian media are still finding, looking for solutions, and there is more conversation on that and there is some kind of exchange of tips about what to do between media newsrooms. So Ukrainian users have also been quite creative. They come up with new words, those that wouldn't be recognized as hate speech, for instance, in the commentary. Because very often this recognition of hate speech can be debated because if there is a discussion of the role of Russian society and it is quite polite discussion, but then someone still flags it as hate speech. So it really opens questions for debate. What is hate speech? And very often these flags are not accurate, I would say. So users have been trying to be creative to come up with new terms, even inventing new words.

As for media, as far as I know, many are still struggling and some of them actually decided that they wouldn't post some of the content that Facebook recognizes as sensitive. And they feel bad about that because they feel that they deprive their audience of some important

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things or visuals. But they also still want to be on Facebook and they want to be visible. So they give up some of their content. Others try to be creative, but what I've noticed is that there is more discussion on that and exchange of editorial practices. So maybe they will come more with creative solutions.

Olena Lysenko:

Yeah, thank you for your question. I think first of all, I showed in the first slide those posters of the films and most of them were about the war. So, when you talk with Ukrainian filmmakers, they feel like, "I already made my big film about the war. I now need to come up with some new creative way to again tell the story about the war." And in many interviews, filmmakers actually say it's like, "I was so hoping to finally leave this topic and do something else." I mean of course it's terrible that the war started, but also from a creative perspective you kind of get limited again by this topic that you have to work with.

I think the most creative example is a documentary film called *The War Note*. It's a full-length documentary composed only from videos made by soldiers at the front line. There is no commentary, they just edit. They just stick short videos, a lot of them are vertical into this narrative. And I think it can be a very creative way to tell stories. You can see how the soldiers feel and because they are filming their fellow soldiers and they're more open and this is more like a friendly environment, if you will.

Elizabeth Kassinis:

Hi, thank you very much. I'm Elizabeth Kassinis and I'm a visiting fellow at the Perry World House and also the director of an NGO in Cyprus that actually deals with the outcome of situations like in Ukraine with the movement of people. And, thank you. It's so much food for thought. I was sitting here thinking about whether you all had any reflections on how even non-media practitioners might effectively

counter the misinformation that gets distributed in such a decentralized manner across social media platforms that changes people's lives and makes them undertake decisions. I'm looking at it from the migration perspective.

People undertake journeys based on misinformation that comes from trafficking networks, from human smuggling networks, and they end up in these terrible circumstances. And we are challenged to fight... You said wishful thinking. It is true that a lot of people have this wishful thinking that if you get to Europe, for example, in our context, if you can get to Europe, a baby born in Europe is a European citizen. This is not true. I can't tell you the amount of people who end up on our front door, pregnant women who have made this based on terrible misinformation. And so I was just wondering if, taking the lens out a little bit, do you have any reflections on how to deal with this?

Yevhen Fedchenko:

Migration is one of the key narratives of disinformation. For example, portraying Ukrainian migrants in countries where they fled is one of the biggest narratives which we try to counterbalance right now because the aim is basically to split the local communities which accept them from those migrants and to create conflicts. Because that's what Russian disinformation is mostly doing. They are creating conflicts. They're looking for potential clashes within each society or micro group within society, and they make them bigger by repeating the same lies.

We had a lot of stories targeting Poland, Germany, Spain, countries which took the most Ukrainian migrants. Some of the stories are absolutely ridiculous, like Ukrainians were trying to burn the Russian flag but instead burnt the house of the Germans who had accepted them. The stories might look funny at first but

they have a lot of ramifications for building trust or ruining trust between communities.

How do we tackle that? There is no difference between dealing with a big war like Russia's war against Ukraine or dealing with a separate crisis, like a financial crisis or a food crisis. The approach is the same. First, early detection really helps, if we intervene later, we would be much less successful. It is also very important to determine the main maligning actors at the earliest stage and then to monitor their activities and let them know that you are monitoring whatever they're doing.

It is important to approach this holistically. If it's Russia's war against Ukraine, you cannot solve this problem just within Ukraine. It's a global issue. It's a global system, which by the way is still flourishing beyond the countries that sanctioned Russian disinformation, like European Union countries, United States, Canada, Australia. If we go to the Global South, the Russian disinformation is working now on increased capacity because they see this is an audience where they can be very successful. This is a huge audience with a lot of political implications and economic implications, which they exploit to the fullest extent.

It is essential to connect information warfare to kinetic warfare. If we cannot dismantle the Russian disinformation system or the systems of any other authoritarian country using the Russian playbook, we will have a huge problem on a global scale.

Yuval Katz:

Thank you very much for this wonderful presentation. I was really struck by one comment that you made about the fact that once the kinetic war is over, the war is not really over, it'll take years to get to peace and reconciliation. So I'm wondering if you can reflect a little bit more about this idea of documenting and creating an archive for a national project of healing, not necessarily with

the Russians, but internally. What does it mean for you to document for Ukrainian journalists and documentarians to document these things so that in the future there can be some kind of a process of healing?

Yevhen Fedchenko:

Actually we don't have any problem inside Ukraine. We don't need a kind of internal healing. When I was saying that we collect all those evidences, we want to prosecute them not inside Ukraine, but internationally. And probably there can be the precedent of the Rwanda International Tribunal might be used here as well because if you remember, that was the very latest instance when journalists sent editors, who were also a part of the prosecution alongside those who perpetrated genocide in Rwanda. So we want to do the same, but done internationally in the creation of a special court, which would be specifically looking into this side of Russia's war crimes.

Olena Lysenko:

Regarding the international filmmaking community, DocuDays Film Festival, the one that I mentioned, created this project like the archive and they call on regular people to send them videos, what they witnessed just to preserve it so it wouldn't disappear. It's like one of the examples of these grassroots moments. And they collaborated together with Oleksandra Matviichuk, the Ukrainian human rights activist who received the Nobel Prize this year. So it's just one of the examples of activism that people do. But the main aim for that is, as you have mentioned prosecution, it's to keep it as evidence for an international criminal court.

Bob Walter:

Bob Walter from Van Pelt Library. Many of us, in order to follow the military aspects of the invasion, have been using a website run by the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) in

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Washington DC, and they monitor a lot of Ukrainian news sources and so forth. But also interestingly, they monitor these military bloggers that are embedded in the Russian army, and they do this I think partly because they feel the Ukrainian sources sometimes self-censor, ongoing military operations in order not to compromise them. Whereas the Russian bloggers aren't obviously under that kind of concern.

Interestingly, the Russian bloggers seem to be more and more critical of the Russian army, and in fact have begun to criticize even Putin and I just wonder if they feel they're beginning to see cracks in the Russian information space about the war. From your perspective, do you have any comments on this? If this at all resonates or you think it's overblown, or what do you think of these military bloggers who are, to be clear, ultra-nationalists, criticizing Putin for not prosecuting the war effectively. They are a hundred percent in support of the invasion, but they are critical even of Putin. And Putin seems to be tolerating this criticism, perhaps for political reasons or it's difficult to know.

Yevhen Fedchenko:

It's a good question. Frankly speaking, those bloggers, how you called them, are mostly intelligence officers who are embedded with Russian media and at the same time with Russian military. So very often you cannot definitely say who they are. But I understand why information from their blog is republished because it's a good way of gathering intelligence as well. But again, and by the way, many of them are also sanctioned because they're belonging to the armed forces. But as for should we trust all those signals they're sending of this kind of collapse, of this unity? I'm very doubtful about that because of course there are more bellicose camps too. I mean this is a normalcy within Russia now. If you watch any TV show on any of their TV channels, they're openly talking about the need for more
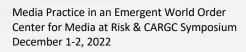
effective genocide of Ukrainians. About using nuclear capabilities not only against Ukrainians but against any European country, the United States.

So it's a normalization of this kind of permanent war conversation. It's already a norm, not some kind of deviation from the norm. Unfortunately, it is a norm within the Russian media. And why the Russian society, they really demand more effective killing of Ukrainians because they do not want this war to be very long and effective as they see it. So they want efficiency from the Russian government, meaning killing more Ukrainians. So from this point of view, all those bloggers, they just kind of reflect grassroots feelings existing in Russian society but also the feelings among top brass military within the Russian armed forces intelligence and all those who are already heavily invested in this war. And for them it's very difficult to withdraw without losing their leading position within Russian ruling elites and regime.

So for them, this war is also kind of a normalcy and they will conduct it as long as they can. And those military bloggers would definitely support all that. But they are absolutely open about what they're doing over there. So for example, some of them are participating in the interrogation of Ukrainian prisoners of war, for example. They are again open about that. So that's a war crime. They're committing a war crime according to Geneva Conventions.

Jing Wang:

Well, thank you. We talk a lot about professional journalists and agencies. We also talk a lot about citizen journalism. How about somewhere in between the mediating people like the Bellingcats for instance. They have been playing a really crucial role along the process. And I wonder how do you look at this open source intelligence? And how do people, during this process, participate in feeding information to the professional news agency but also kind of become a bridge between these two spheres?

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Yevhen Fedchenko:

Basically it's a shakeup we're living through because all intelligence has become open, and the difference is just t who can use it effectively and who still ignore it. Bellingcat was one of the first. My organization is also working with open intelligence and Russia calls us a private intelligence company, because they really still do believe that intelligence belong to intelligence agencies. So knowledge belongs only to those who can have access to it, but now everyone can have access to anything, just a question of where are you looking for it, how you look for that and what you do with that intelligence.

Another example is how US intelligence agencies were sharing a lot of data they'd been receiving on the Russian incursion into Ukraine. So it will all become open domain. It's absolutely unprecedented. It used to take years and years before they opened it up, and it was immediately available almost in real time. And that's exactly what is happening with media. Because media actively have been using that data and it become a part of their report. And so the phenomenon of this war, to some extent, was that we knew everything about this incursion even before it started.

Liz Hallgren:

I wonder, Olena, if you had anything to add here as well? I'm thinking maybe less so in the case of intelligence, but more just the ecosystem of the western journalist to descend upon Ukraine at the beginning of February, and then the role of a fixer, for example, or these kinds of in between roles of folks who maybe are not citizen journalists, but are not perhaps documentarians who became fixers. And so thinking about what that ecosystem shift looked like.

Olena Lysenko:

When the full scale war started, there was a huge urge for people were searching for fixers everywhere. And this, I was doing this sort of thing since 2014 though I prefer to call myself a local producer because it's a little bit more than just translating. But it definitely affects your reporting because all the journalists ask for a lot of insights about politics, so I would say, you should talk to this politician or that politician. I would offer topics to them. So the person that they choose as a fixer will actually influence their reports, and yeah, it sounds a bit strange if you think about it, but it's indeed the case. And now after a while, some of the big international media have opened their bureaus in Kiev. So now they they don't need fixers, but they kind of created the local team, which is super important. But in the beginning they were people of any profession who knew English.

Barbie Zelizer:

Barbie Zelizer. Thank you so much for sharing everything with us today. I seem to feel that there's a tension in all of your remarks that I think we also hit on last night. Which is between the here-and-now, and the there-and-then. So whether you're talking about in Ukraine versus the world versus the international public, whatever that might be, or whether it's about documenting for now or archiving for later, there's a switch point that each one of you has referenced and has referenced repeatedly with the questions. Can you identify what that is? Can you identify what is the point at which you can get out of the very small spatial temporal intersection in which you're operating, and think more broadly, and over a longer span of time?

Dariya Orlova:

Oh, that's a tough one. Because even being able to answer that question would require the need to be out of that, in one way. So, right now, it is too concentrated, too fast, too dynamic, and

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too multidimensional. So it takes time to get oriented to that. But I agree also that the broader question that these days then, now, there, here, is so confusing and that requires extra thinking. And so I cannot answer in a more coherent way at this point. But that's an honest answer.

Yevhen Fedchenko:

If I may add a little bit. You are right, from that point of view that everything that we do now would have some implications for the future and ramifications. And I really do believe that this war would have consequences not only for Ukraine and for Russia. But that would definitely bring some changes to the world order. I mean, I am not too naive to say, "oh, everything would be changed." And again, we would come to this threshold of "never again." But definitely what we see is that the old institutions on which the global order was based are not working any more, like the United Nations, European institutions like OSC, the European Union demonstrates a new approach to power. So this is what was not there. So this is kind of a victory for the European Union. We also seen a lot of solidarity, which never was there.

So literally millions of Ukrainians were embraced in different countries at a very short notice, without asking too many questions, just because of solidarity. We've seen the collapse of some institutions, but we also see the strengthening of other institutions. Like I mentioned already, intelligence agencies kind of reinvented themselves because many people were thinking that we would not need them anymore. We also see the reinvention of media as well in covering conflicts. So definitely this would change many things, but what we don't know or how soon it might happen.

It also, again, brings us to the question of justice, which is very important and that's what people want at the end of every conflict. I think that some of these old approaches would not
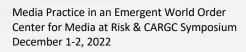
work anymore. For example, now we see how some European countries want to sit Ukrainians and Russians together and say, "you should start conversation." Because they think that this war was because there was not enough conversations. So if we would sit and talk anymore, that would definitely kind of solve all these problems and we would have flowers instead of killed children. It's not working anymore. But still there are institutions and governments who still believe in this kind of conversation. But sometime conversation is just cheap talk. So it really needs a conceptual shifts in the perception of the world system, rather than just masquerading and say, "okay, let's have a conversation and we will solve everything" because we know it's just not true.

Rahul Mukherjee:

I'm Rahul Mukherjee, Penn Cinema studies. I was very taken by your point about information war or cyber war and the kinetic war. And I was thinking about Ukrainian media scholars, Svetlana Matvienko's work on thinking through nuclear war in relation to cyber war and kinetic war. Particularly the way in which the siege of the Zepozia and Chernobyl nuclear plants and how it played out in the media—in a certain kind of frenetic terror and fear across the media across the world. And the way the Russian forces sort of managed it as a kind of media event. And I'm curious, given how Olena has also mentioned the nuclear infrastructure sighting in Ukraine, if you could speak to the position of nuclear war in that sense, but also if any of you could discuss a bit about the challenges of reporting from the sites of these nuclear plants which are under siege.

Yevhen Fedchenko:

This is a great question because that's exactly how Russia wants to use terrorist tactics to terrorize the world, because nuclear facilities are those things which would influence anyone, and impact beyond their kind of geography of

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this war. And they know that what people would be scared of, and that's why they're using it because they want to use its psychological effect. And that's why they seized the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, and then the Parisians are still keeping it. And now as I said at the beginning, they want to trade it. Which is again, a terrorist tactic. They want to trade something for relieving people from not being killed on a mass scale, if we talk about the nuclear installations. But I think this is not going to work because first of all, there is already a kind of understanding that this is a terrorist tactic, which they want to use to translate into diplomatic bargaining.

If we tare talking about the corrupt system of Russian oligarchs, the last thing I'd think that they would be willing to do is blow up the world along with all their assets and their children's assets. This is a unique situation where you might expect the rational approach from them. The answer should be, again, the global pressure on Russia that this is kind of a red line and they cannot cross it because otherwise they would have consequences. This was already expressed many times in different forums, by very different governments. And I think it was the right approach because this is definitely the red line.

As a person who lived through the Cold War and Chernobyl, I'm still here, so there are many situations in which Russian nuclear and Soviet nuclear power can go wrong. But still I am alive. This is a good signal to all of us to be firm and do what Stanley Kubrick suggested, how to start loving the nuclear bomb.

Liz Hallgren:

Okay, well on that note, I think that's a great place for us to close out. I know we could continue this conversation, and the good news is we can, because lunch is next upstairs. So just I wanted to thank our fantastic panelists and thank you all for your incredible engagement and see you at lunch.

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