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Mememes on the Battlements:

A descriptive case study on the North Atlantic Fellas Organization

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1. Introduction

On February 24th, 2022, Russian soldiers crossed the border into Ukraine and began the largest military conflict in Europe since the second world war. One year later, the invasion continues to claim innocent lives and has caused unfathomable suffering and damage to Ukraine and her people. The influence of the war extends even beyond the immediate frontlines, reshaping the political landscape of Europe. For Sweden, the invasion was the final straw that prompted the parliament and Swedish Government to end the 200-year-old tradition of military non-alignment, and together with Finland applied for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on the 18th of May 2022 (Prop. 2022/23:74). To understand and make sense of this conflict is a mammoth task, but it is non the less important if Sweden, NATO, and Ukraine are to come out with a strategic upper hand going forward into the 21st century.

Instead of trying to swallow a mammoth whole it is much more convenient to cut up the monstrosity into bite sized slices, which is exactly what this thesis aims to do. This is a descriptive case study focused on a specific social media community within the digital theatre of the war. The community is known as the North Atlantic Fellas Organization (NAFO) and appears to be a volunteer-driven propaganda movement. This group is organizing and conducting online campaigns and operations with the expressed intent to support Ukraine and assist in its armed struggle. This study aims to investigate if a propaganda analysis framework will provide a useful path for generating future insights about memes in war, and whether the collected NAFO-content function as propaganda according to the framework.

2. Research Question and Purpose of the Study

- If, and in that case, how does NAFO content function as propaganda?
- What will Jowett & O'Donnell's framework say about the collected NAFO content within their context of propaganda?

The purpose of this study is to better understand who and what the North Atlantic Fellas Organization (NAFO) is, and if/how their content function as propaganda. To gain this understanding I will examine NAFO content available on Twitter through Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell's (2019) propaganda analysis framework.

The result of this analysis will support the discussion and conclusion section of this study by allowing the reader to better understand the wider community and the phenomenon that is memes at war. This does not mean that I will try to make generalizable conclusions on anything that is not supported by the empirical material I have set out to collect. In other words, I know that my contribution to the discussion is small, but relevant non the less.

Examining NAFO through the lens of propaganda studies is not given, yet, I have not managed to find any studies that have approached the NAFO-community from this perspective. Using Google scholar and keywords like *NAFO*, *NAFO Ukraine*, and *NAFO Propaganda* (scholar.google.com, 2023), just a few relevant articles were discovered, but none of them adopted a propaganda studies approach (Sharevski & Kessell, 2023; Rakityanskaya, 2023; Brantley, 2022; Budnitsky, 2023). Stantislav Budnitsky's article on the impact of public diplomacy humour in the Russian-Ukrainian war mentions NAFO as an example. This approach is perhaps the closest academic relative to this study.

This will naturally make anyone wonder why I have chosen a theoretical framework made for identifying the structures of propaganda over a theory on public diplomacy (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). Propaganda studies provide a critical lens to understand how information is manipulated, how power is exercised, and how consent is manufactured. Public diplomacy on the other hand is typically understood as an open and transparent method of communication between a government and foreign publics. It involves explaining the policies and positions of a country, promoting its culture and values, and engaging with foreign publics to create a better understanding and positive image of the country (Berridge, 2010). Understandably, both propaganda and public diplomacy can at times be difficult to tell apart from one another, but as I came in touch with the NAFO material, I found it fitting to use Jowett & O'Donnell's framework.

Examining NAFO through the lens of propaganda studies is not given, yet, I have not managed to find any studies that have approached the NAFO-community from this perspective. Although, the NAFO phenomenon have been examined by other researchers from perspectives such as public diplomacy and open-source intelligence. A more detailed account of their contributions will be presented in the literature review section.

Examining NAFO content through a propaganda analysis framework will complement the knowledge already acquired and provide further understanding of a politically relevant issue connected to the biggest armed conflict in Europe since the second world war (Hirsh, 2022).

Jowett & O'Donnell defines propaganda as following: "[...] a deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist" (Jowett & O'Donnell in Vulovic, 2017:66). I find this description of theirs fitting to the NAFO material I have come in touch with. Material that explicitly support the Ukrainian war effort by encouraging fundraising for military materiel. Proclaims to combat anti-Ukrainian or pro-Russian sentiment on Twitter, and establish narratives such as Ukrainian victory is inevitable, and #RussiaIsATerrorState, is to manipulate cognitions. Finally, it appears as NAFO encourage Twitter users to become Fellas themselves to take part in NAFO operations (appendix 1). This points to a deliberate and systematic attempt to affect the war to Ukraine's favour, a common usage for propaganda (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019).

What I find puzzling, though, is why does it appear to be a shortage of studies on NAFO as a propaganda effort? Perhaps the NAFO phenomenon is too new? No, it has been around for more than a year and memes is nothing new to the political sphere of the internet either (Keep, 2022; Makhortykh & González Aguilar, 2020; Wu & Fitzgerald, 2023; Mortensen & Neumayer, 2021; Durham, 2018; Nørgaard Kristensen & Mortensen, 2021; Sharevski & Kessell, 2023; Rakityanskaya, 2023; Brantley, 2022; Budnitsky, 2023).

Is there too much of a taboo connected to the word 'propaganda' to encourage writers to give 'your own side' such epithet? Perhaps, the word propaganda is usually used with a negative connotation describing the manipulation of truth done by authoritarian regimes. That is not necessarily the only truth, history has shown that propaganda is a very potent tool of statecraft for all types of political bodies (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). During the 20th century, writers like Edward Barneys (1928), Jacques Elull (1973), and Noam Chomsky & Edward S. Herman

in 1988 (2008) (among others) popularised and explored the boundaries of the term ‘public relations’, creating a useful substitute to the tarnished word ‘propaganda’.

This separation of ‘bad’ propaganda and ‘good’ public relations makes it difficult to approach a subject like NAFO, especially due to the sensitive topic it relates to – an unprovoked and devastating invasion of a sovereign country. So why not grab NAFO by the horns, challenge the taboo, and examine the data using propaganda as a descriptive word? Since the NAFO-content reflect societies engaged in an actual war it will be beneficial to use a propaganda analysis framework to conduct this study, since propaganda is an acknowledged part of warfare.

Another perspective is brought forth by Aron F. Brantley (2022) who considers NAFO to be an open-source intelligence (OSINT) community, which I find fascinating but too one-sided to explain NAFO’s dynamism. Brantley writes about the blurring lines between combatant and observer and how anyone with internet access can become a war correspondent. If anyone can become an OSINT operator, why could they not be a propagandist too?

The reasoning presented above can, according to Gustafsson & Hagström (2018), be considered a research puzzle, meaning that the motivation of the study comes from a “why x despite y?” query (p. 639-640). Why have NAFO content not been examined as propaganda even though there are indications of it being just that?

Another, but secondary contribution this study will provide is to test the methodological rigour of Jowett & O’Donnell’s propaganda analysis framework and examine how well the model fares when applied to a new empirical case (ibid.). Their analysis model is a broad and general model for understanding and identifying propaganda. It is important to examine the continued applicability of established methods of explanation when a new phenomenon such as NAFO pops up, an argument well supported by Gustafsson & Hagström.

I think that there is more to NAFO than ‘just’ funny dogs, and this study aims to land in results that will encourage future research to generating more insights for the academic discourse on the usage of memes in war. I acknowledge that this study is not extensive enough to claim being representative of how all propaganda in modern conflicts operate, nor will I claim that it is always representative of all NAFO. But it will provide insight to what typical NAFO content can look like, and whether that content bears resemblance to propaganda. It will tell us something about who NAFO are. Again, my contribution is limited – not irrelevant.

3. Disposition and Research Design

To investigate this phenomenon, this thesis employs the theoretical framework for propaganda analysis developed by scholars Garth S. Jowett & Victoria O'Donnell (2019). Following an introduction, the research question and its motivation are presented, and the importance of the study is highlighted. This is succeeded by a review of relevant literature, including studies on propaganda, NAFO and 'citizen soldiers', and the political power of memes.

The section on the methodology and theoretical framework discusses the application of Jowett & O'Donnell's work to the NAFO-content as well as detailing the research process, the data collection, and case selection. This includes a description of the qualitative case study design and limitations of the study. Ethical considerations for the study are also addressed, focusing on the potential moral issues associated with the use and promotion of propaganda techniques.

An analysis of NAFO's content is then conducted using the ten steps of Jowett & O'Donnell's framework. The discussion-section is integrated into each step not to interrupt the fluidity of the arguments.

The final section of the study consists of a conclusion summarizing the study and evaluate how the research questions has been answered, as well as suggesting directions for future research. After the conclusion, the reference list will follow.

4. Literature review

To approach the topic of this study I have divided it into subcategories for the literature review: Previously written academic articles about NAFO, articles on the usage of memes as online propaganda, articles about the general political power of memes, and a short overview of the evolution of propaganda studies.

4.1.NAFO and 'citizen-soldiers'

Aron F. Brantley (2022) approaches NAFO through the lens of intelligence studies, claiming that NAFO is an open-source intelligence (OSINT) community. In his article "Narrative Battles: The Impact Open-Source Intelligence on the Framing of Russia's War on Ukraine", NAFO emerges as a demonstration of the transformation intelligence recognisance has experienced throughout this conflict. Brantley's understanding of NAFO goes beyond the conventional framework of OSINT being just another data-gathering method. He sees NAFO as a thriving and interactive community of practitioners whose voluntary and self sponsored work reshape the terrain of intelligence and, by extension, warfare itself.

Brantley argues that NAFO reflects a critical shift in intelligence landscapes. The technologically enabled assembly of individuals exposes a new, participatory dimension to intelligence. According to Brantley, NAFO is more than an information hub. It is a sociocultural phenomenon, an assembly of globally scattered individuals who engage, contribute, and wield the OSINT they gather to shift perceptions and counter opposing narratives. He sees this unconventional support as a new frontier in the application of intelligence.

These blurred civilian/military lines of participation in the war against Ukraine are topics addressed other authors such as Matthew Ford and Andrew Hoskins (2022), and Simon Hogue (2023).

Hogue's (2023) exploration of how civilians conduct surveillance on Russian forces in Ukraine, highlights the blurring boundaries between the military and civilian spheres. The adoption of surveillance technologies by civilians creates a new breed of "citizen-soldiers," demonstrating the transformative potential of social media in modern warfare. However, Hogue also raises concerns about the risks and ethical implications of this shift, particularly in terms of objectivity, credibility, and potential retaliation.

Ford & Hoskins wrote the book "Radical War: Data, Attention and Control in the Twenty-First Century". They did not mention NAFO particularly but did provide important insights to how a community like NAFO can be put into a wider context.

Ford & Hoskins describe the transformative impact that digitization has on warfare. They posit that every social media user potentially becomes a digital soldier, contributing to a global information warfare. This situation raises complex ethical issues, including the dissemination of half-truths, and outright falsehoods.

Ford & Hoskins argue, like Brantley, that the integration of digital culture has fundamentally changed the way warfare is conducted and how it should be understood. They see warfare as a context-dependent event, influenced by a complex mix of geopolitics, strategic interests, and digital narratives. The NAFO community is a good example of this modern type of warfare where social media users become actors as much as observers.

Ford & Hoskins put special attention to the impact of smartphones and social media in contemporary conflict situations. They recognise that these tools have broadened the access to information, allowing immediate reporting from within conflict zones, which generates a deluge of unverified content. The authors take a rather pessimistic stance against the

implications of communications technologies and argue that this can challenge official narratives, resulting in “narrative gaps” (p. 197).

In sum, Ford and Hoskins portray warfare as a digital field of perception, where the conduct and representation of war have become intertwined.

Filipo Sharevski & Benjamin Kessell’s article “Fight Fire with Fire: Hacktivists’ Take on Social Media Misinformation“ (2023) mention NAFO as an example of “Anti-Misinformation “ops”” (Sharevski & Kessell, 2023:7) with hacktivists partaking in the community’s effort to weaponize memes against Russian misinformation.

Another article where NAFO is mentioned is Anna Rakityanskaya’s “The SUCHO Ukrainian War Memes Collection” (2023). The article discusses the reasoning for archiving and preserving war memes as a part of Ukraine’s cultural heritage. SUCHO stands for Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online and is an online data base aimed for future research and education about the war.

Stantislav Budnitsky (2023) writes about the usage of memes as a medium for public diplomacy. He argues that humours memes are a method of political communication and serves an important role in contemporary public diplomacy.

All three of these above-mentioned articles highlight that there is no ultimate or single way to analyse the NAFO community. They can be addressed through the normative lens of hacktivism, cultural history, and through the political spectrum of public diplomacy. Adding the perspective of propaganda studies is thus not very farfetched.

4.2.Social media as a platform for information warfare

Similar cases to that of this study and the political power of memes has been discussed by various authors; Tillery (2019), Makhortykh & Gonzáles Aguilar (2020), and Wu & Fitzgerald (2023) just to name a few.

Tillery's 2019 analysis of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement offers valuable insight into the use of social media for political mobilization. The BLM movement's genesis on Twitter and its continued reliance on the platform demonstrates the power of social media in sparking and sustaining social movements. Key to this is the usage of hashtags, enabling dialogue, information dissemination, and mobilization for protests.

Makhortykh and Gonzáles Aguilar (2020) offer a different perspective, focusing on the use of memes in political contexts. Their research reveals the use of memes as tools for political

critique, symbolic resistance, and propaganda. While the content of these memes often reflects national contexts, the patterns of their usage demonstrate cross-national similarities. Their study underlines the use of memes as tools for 'participatory digital persuasion,' contributing to political polarization and manipulation of public sentiment.

Wu & Fitzgerald's 2023 examination of the Chinese "Diba expedition" to Taiwanese cyberspace in 2016 presents another facet of the usage of memes war. They describe how the Chinese launched an organized online campaign on Taiwanese servers and forums to encourage Chinese nationalist sentiments and used memes to do so. The authors describe that The Diba expedition was characterized using humour, a blend of hostile and friendly communication styles, and mobilization across multiple social media platforms. Their analysis underscores the potential for social media in fostering nationalism and promoting state-approved narratives, despite the inherent risks of online censorship.

4.3. The political power of memes

Drawing from the analyses on the political power of memes by Mortensen & Neumayer (2021), Durham (2018), and Nørgaard Kristensen & Mortensen (2021), it becomes clear that memes are both a reflection of, and an influence on, our political and cultural landscape. They can act as vehicles for political communication and critique, but their impact is inherently nuanced and double-edged.

Nørgaard Kristensen & Mortensen's 2021 study brings to light the paradoxical nature of memes. While they can critique and challenge populist leaders and discourses, they simultaneously risk amplifying and reinforcing the very ideologies they attempt to criticize. This paradox highlights the complexities of using memes as tools for political critique and underscores the need for a deeper understanding of their societal implications.

The transformative power of memes also extends to photojournalism, as discussed by Durham (2018). The reappropriation of photographs through memes can drastically alter their original intent, often resulting in ethical shifts that can incite backlash. The meme recontextualization can strip photographs of their empathetic power, replacing it with a form that often incites indifference or detachment. Durham uses the photograph of the drowned refugee boy Alan Kurdi as the example for his article and how the picture was used as a meme-component by some internet communities. The ethical considerations Durham raises ought to be considered when one takes part of memes containing images and videos of violence in Ukraine, both perpetrated by and towards Ukrainians.

4.4. Propaganda studies

This section addresses some of the major writers in the field of propaganda studies, highlighting some contributions of the many scholars who have shaped its understanding.

In the 1920's Edward Bernays, dubbed the 'father of public relations,' integrated Freudian psychoanalysis into the field of propaganda. Bernays controversially posited that the manipulation of public opinion was an inherent component of democracy. Jacques Ellul's "Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes" (1965) widened the perspective of propaganda beyond politics, asserting it as a societal phenomenon integral to a technological society.

Two decades later, Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, in "Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media" (1988), introduced a potent critique of the media. They proposed that media often serve the ends of dominant elites, producing 'necessary illusions' for the maintenance of societal order—a theory reminding us that propaganda isn't confined to totalitarian societies but thrives in democracies as well.

More contemporary scholars like Emma L Briant, Margaret H. Roberts, and Lisa Wedeen offer insight into the ever-evolving dynamics of propaganda (emma-briant.co.uk, 2023; Hobbs, W., & Roberts, M., 2018; Wedeen, L., 2015). Briant's investigations into Cambridge Analytica's political manipulations illuminate the sinister capacities of digital propaganda. Roberts' work on Chinese censorship and propaganda underscores the state's capacity to control information and sway public opinion. Meanwhile, Wedeen's research unravels the complex ties between state propaganda, national symbols, and national identity in authoritarian regimes, showing how propaganda can be leveraged to manipulate collective consciousness.

5. Methodology and theoretical framework

This is a descriptive case study with the aim to deepen the understanding of the social media community called NAFO. What a descriptive case study is, is quite self-explanatory. It is a case study aimed at describing and explaining a unique phenomenon where previous knowledge might be lacking (Gerring, 2017).

Achieving better understanding of NAFO is essentially the main research question of this study. I want to examine NAFO content, which, due to the structure of Twitter, is most easily accessed via the dissemination of NAFO related hashtags in posts (Hetler, 2023). The reason for focusing on NAFO's activity on Twitter is due to Twitter being the community's birthplace, as well as being one of their central communication and interaction platform (Feyd, 2023). It is worth noting that the NAFO community utilises more platforms than just Twitter, an example of this

is the r/NAFO subreddit, but as the following discussion will show, the scope of this study had to be limited due to economic reasons (reddit.com, 2023).

A theoretical framework that supports the methodological approach is necessary to approach this topic and analyse the collected data. This is why I have decided to use Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell's (2019) propaganda analysis framework. Their 10-step plan is meant to guide and support analysts in identifying if and how their object of inquiry is propaganda or not (ibid.).

Jowett & O'Donnell's framework will be applied 'as is' on to the data of this study. That means that I will use the ten steps as a checklist and test each step against the material. I will summarize the result of each step under the analysis and discussion section and attempt to make sense of the relations between the data and the framework. I will describe these relations in detail to fulfil the descriptive purpose of the case study, but also to evaluate how well the framework communicates with the material.

5.1. Jowett & O'Donnell's definition of propaganda

Propaganda, as defined by Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, is "a deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist" (Jowett & O'Donnell in Vulovic, 2017:66). The book, which was first published in 1986 is today available in its seventh edition (2019), present a historical overview of propaganda, tracing its journey from ancient civilizations to the current day (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). They note how propaganda has been a common practice in both peaceful and conflict-driven times, underlining its utility in shaping public opinion and morale.

Propaganda, according to the authors, is a craft that necessitates a distinct degree of adroitness in communication. It is not merely a mechanized process, but an art form that requires an adept understanding of the audience, the right moment, and the most effective means of communication. They cite Leo Bogart (1995) who observed that a successful propagandist must possess a keen instinctive judgement, an innate ability to comprehend the way their audience thinks, and a knack for identifying the most compelling arguments that would sway their audience (ibid., p. 17).

However, Jowett & O'Donnell argues that propaganda goes beyond the idea of persuasive communication. According to them, it is a specific type of communication that aims to further

the propagandist's agenda. While its historical utilization may have been restricted to political and military spheres, propaganda in the contemporary context extends to various other arenas such as culture, religion, and business. Its essence lies in its intent - a careful, premeditated manipulation of symbols and messages to convey an ideology, and thereby achieve a specific objective. Propaganda is marked by a deliberation and systematicity that sets it apart from other forms of communication.

The key to understand Jowett & O'Donnell's definition of propaganda, thus lies in their separation of propaganda and persuasion. Persuasion is, according to the authors, inherently interactive and is aimed at fulfilling the needs of both the persuader and the persuadee. The intent behind persuasion is not singularly focused on furthering the persuader's agenda but also considers the needs, preferences, and aspirations of the audience. Unlike propaganda, persuasion does not rely on the regimented manipulation of symbols but rather uses a nuanced understanding of the audience's psyche to achieve a mutually beneficial outcome.

However, these two concepts are not mutually exclusive, and the line between them often blurs. Propaganda utilizes persuasive strategies, while persuasion may sometimes manifest elements of propaganda. The significant difference lies in their end goals. While persuasion seeks to establish a dialogue and is often built on the foundation of mutual understanding, propaganda is a one-way transmission of a pre-designed message with the primary objective of molding public opinion or behavior according to the propagandist's intention (ibid.).

Simply put, persuasion works towards building a common ground, propaganda focuses on achieving a specific agenda, disregarding any mutual benefit. This line between propaganda and not-propaganda is contextual and will thus suit well for answering my secondary research question aimed at discussing the result of the framework.

What might speak against using Jowett & O'Donnell's framework? A counterargument would be that compared with other theoretical frameworks that are specialized on social media and digital content analysis, the model I propose might potentially oversimplify or fail to recognize aspects which a network analysis model might discover (Benkler et al., 2018).

It would be unfair to claim that Jowett & O'Donnell does not address the challenges of digital propaganda at all. They do in the shape of an appendix written by Christopher Bronk, this is a new addition to the seventh edition of the book (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019).

According to Bronk, the internet is a passive but amplificatory arena for realpolitik. Geopolitical struggles play out in the shape of influence operations, spreading of conspiracy theories, and competition between traditional news media and the internet on whom is to dominate the information space. Although Bronk highlights important aspects of the internet as a unruly communication enabler I am unsure if his concerns are dynamic enough to give a fair description of how the internet, or social media, works in contemporary warfare.

The aim of this study is to improve the understanding of who NAFO are by examining a selection of NAFO content, which is why a general and descriptive framework is well suited. The fact that Jowett & O'Donnell's understanding of the internet is not perfectly satisfactory it is no acute issue. This serves as a good indicator that the conclusions made from the second research question will be fruitful and ripe for development.

Additionally, testing Jowett & O'Donnell's framework on new empirical data gives a fascinating bonus, mainly because the framework was not made with social media propaganda in mind. If 'old', established knowledge can be used to understand new data it should be considered a sound method of explanation, and should be able to explain other similar cases too.

To use a broad theoretical framework like Jowett & O'Donnell's rather than a more specialized model gives this study an advantage when it comes to the recreation of the results. It will be easy for other researchers to mimic my approach with other cases in the future and evaluate or continue further inquiry of my results.

5.2. The Theoretical framework

To make the analysis-section more comprehensible, each subsection will incorporate a short description of how Jowett & O'Donnell builds their argument and then this reasoning will be compared to the observations of the collected data.

The first step is the identification of ideology and purpose, which acts as the foundation of any propaganda campaign. Unveiling this cornerstone necessitates discerning the underlying values, beliefs, and goals that drive the campaign, providing a basis for the comprehensive analysis that follows.

Following this, the context in which the propaganda is enacted is examined. This step is inherently multi-dimensional, encompassing the prevailing socio-political environment,

economic conditions, and cultural ethos, among other factors. Contextual analysis is vital as it underscores the conditions that facilitate the emergence and reception of the propaganda.

The third step involves the identification of the propagandist. This stage is concerned with the source of the propaganda – an individual, a group, or a government entity – and their motivations. Understanding the propagandist enriches the analysis by revealing the inherent biases and perspectives that influence the campaign's shape and direction.

Subsequently, the structure of the propaganda organization is scrutinized. This step explores the organizational hierarchy and the flow of command within the propagating entity, assessing the efficiency, capacity, and structure of the organization that shapes and broadcasts the propaganda.

The fifth step is the identification of the target audience. This step probes into the demographic, psychological, and social characteristics of the intended recipients of the propaganda. Unravelling these attributes enables a nuanced comprehension of the propagandist's strategic communication choices.

Next, the framework focuses on media utilization techniques, analysing the choice of media platforms and technologies employed for propagating the message. Jowett & O'Donnell points out that this step has assumed increased significance in the era of digital technology, where media form and use play crucial roles in the reach and impact of propaganda.

The seventh step involves analysis of special techniques to maximize effect. These techniques could involve using loaded language, symbols, emotional appeals, or misinformation, aimed at eliciting desired responses from the target audience.

Understanding the audience reaction to these techniques constitutes the eighth step. It necessitates evaluating how the audience perceives, interprets, and reacts to the propaganda message, providing insights into the campaign's effectiveness.

The ninth step, identification and analysis of counterpropaganda, requires examining the existence and potency of opposing messages. This analysis provides a measure of resistance against the primary propaganda and its potential impact on the campaign's success.

Finally, an assessment and evaluation are carried out to judge the overall effectiveness and impact of the propaganda campaign. This includes both immediate and long-term effects on the target audience and society at large.

5.3.Data collection

According to Internetlivestats.com (2023), platform users' tweet about 200 billion tweets per year and about 6000 tweets per second. Thus, manual data collection from Twitter, even on a limited case such as NAFO, is very resource heavy and difficult to manage without proper AI/or statistics tools. Unfortunately, the choice of whether to use a data collection program or not came to depend on the lack of economic recourses.

While numerous companies offer diverse social media monitoring tools, complete with a free but limited 30-day trial, the full versions of these tools proved being unreasonably expensive. Furthermore, they predominantly focus on monitoring trademark accounts and their viral visibility, which does not serve this study's analytical needs (Hootsuit.com, 2023; Brandwatch.com, 2023; Buffer.com, 2023). The most promising tools that I considered using was Brandwatch.com and Keyhole.co.. Brandwatch.com offered services describes as "Consumer Intelligence" (Brandwatch.com, 2023) and would have been a great data source but I was not able to create an account because I did not represent a commercial enterprise.

The target audience of Keyhole.co turned out to be enterprises and agencies too – not lone individuals. I was able to set up a limited free account, but to be able to track a hashtag back in time I was required to pay the fee for an entire year, which would have cost me about 10 000 SEK (Keyhole.co, 2023).

This is why I turn to a qualitative case study rather than a quantitative and statistical one. This is to make sure that the conclusion of this study remains reliable and valid (Teorell & Svensson, 2020). I will not attempt to make generalizable statements about all NAFO, or all types of memes used in all wars. I aim to discover trends and tendencies within the collected data and try to put it in a greater social and political context.

I used Twitter's advanced search option to limit the content to one central NAFO-hashtag called #NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable to a ten-day period and scrolled through the thousands of posts and replies manually (Twitter.com, 2023). I began writing this thesis in early June 2023, so I decided to collect data from the 1 – 10th of May 2023, because May was the previous month and for chronologicality's sake I chose to start at the first day of that month.

5.4.Descriptive case study

Deciding which case-selection strategy to use is vital to the validation of a case study. It requires the researcher to realise that different techniques have different goals. The researcher needs to have a clear understanding of the nature of her study, meaning that the methodological

considerations is determined by whether the study is explanatory, or aims at identifying causal mechanisms (Gerring, 2017).

This study is explanatory because I want to find answers to how or if NAFO content function as propaganda, I will do this by analysing NAFO content through a propaganda analysis framework to see whether it can tell me anything about the usage of memes in war – I hope the result will generate valid ground for a future hypothesis instead of testing a pre-determined one (ibid.).

This leads on to a crucial question: “Which case, or cases, would best serve my purpose if I conducted an intensive analysis of it?” (Gerring, 2017:53) Going through the various options presented in John Gerring’s book on case study research I concluded that a descriptive case study with a typical case selection strategy would be most suitable for this thesis.

The use of descriptive case studies often face criticism on the generalizability of their results. According to Gerring, descriptive case studies are as a rule less falsifiable than causal case studies due to the lack of a clearly defined population and verifiable criteria to test a hypothesis. But to challenge this criticism Gerring addresses the so-called “two level game” (ibid., 222). He writes:

While methodologists typically focus on problems of generalizability, it is important to bear in mind that the goal of a case study is not limited to developing and testing theories. [...] The reason for this structural ambiguity is that the utility of the case study rests on its double function. One wishes to know both what is particular to that case *and* what is generalizable, and it may be difficult to cleanly distinguish one from the other. [...] In sum, it seems justifiable for case studies to function on two levels simultaneously, the case itself and some broader class of (perhaps difficult to specify) cases. The defining characteristic of the case study is its ability to infer a larger whole from a much smaller part. Yet, both the part and the whole retain some importance in the final product (Gerring, 2017:222,223,225).

This study serves this dual purpose in the sense that it aims to further the knowledge of the larger aspect of memes at war through a specific selection of cases, NAFO Twitter content.

5.5. Typical case selection strategies

The key points Gerring makes of the *typical* case selection strategy is that the goal is to discover a “central tendency”, and “[t]o say that a case is typical [...] does not mean that it is “representative” in the way that a larger sample might be representative of a population.” (ibid:56-57). He concludes that the selected cases ought to be “more representative than, or at least as representative as,” other equally valid alternatives (ibid., 57).

Gerring uses a study written in 1929 as an example to illustrate the motivations behind this type of case selection strategy. Robert and Helen Lynd wanted to find a town which could represent a *typical* midsized American city, according to the criteria they put up to identify this city they finally decided that Muncie in Indiana was the best fit because they found it to be more representative than, or at least as representative as the other available alternatives.

I consider this reasoning to be well suited for a qualitative and explanatory case study. Due to the limitations to my ability to collect enough data to make generalizable conclusions about all NAFO, finding a hashtag that is *typical* of NAFO and analyse a limited sample of that content will be sufficient to ensure its qualitative validity.

5.6. Hashtag selection

The criteria I have made are quite simple: 1) the hashtag should be an explicit NAFO hashtag, 2) It should be central to NAFO activity, and 3), the hashtag should be commonly reoccurring in NAFO related Twitter-feeds.

It is important to point out that I find all the hashtags mentioned below relevant to this study, but I find the first in the left column to be *most* relevant. If I had better resources and access to a potent collection tool, I would have wanted to include them all, and in that case, conduct a quantitative case study.

Typical hashtags related to the research question	Hashtags related to specific operations and fundraisers	General hashtags related to the war in Ukraine	‘Fella-creation’ hashtags
#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable	#Vatniksoup	#RussiaIsATerroristState	#NAFOfellas
#NAFOarticle5	#Vatnik	#StandWithUkraine	#Fellas
	#NAFOdrone	#RussiaIsLosing	#NAFOCatsDivision
	#SquaDrone	#UkraineWillWin	#FellaDelivery

Spending a few hours scrolling through various NAFO related Twitter feeds, I conducted this list of hashtags which appeared to be the most common. I will not go into detail to explain all content of this table, but it is important to point out that they all appear to relate to the NAFO community’s activities.

The natural starting point was of course to type in #NAFO in the Twitter search bar. Although, upon closer examination I realised that #NAFO would not be the most useful hashtag to get good overview of NAFO’s activity. It appeared to me that the hashtag #NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable was most central and widely used to communicate among fellow fellas and signal, what I call, a ‘watchdog’-function. It appeared to me that Fellas connect their posts and memes to the wider community when using this hashtag, and in other cases to alert other fellas about anti-Ukrainian or pro-Russian posts/account and aim their trolling activity and attacks towards said post/account (appendix 1).

I found that this watch-dog function is further enforced by #NAFOarticle5 (mimicking the NATO article 5, “[...] an attack against one Ally is considered as an attack against all Allies.” (nato.int, 2023)), but due to the limitations of my data collection resources, I chose to focus on just #NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable.

Hashtags related to specific operations and fundraisers is probably the second most important group. According to the Urban dictionary, ‘Vatnik’ is a denominational word for Russian or Russia-sympathizer and #Vatniksoup is a movement strongly connected to NAFO but not a NAFO-initiative (Plastic-candy, 2023; Kallioniemi, 2023). The hashtag #Vatniksoup was made

by the Twitter account @P_Kallioniemi in October 2022 to expose influential people who directly or indirectly support Putin's war and propaganda (Smart, J., 2023).

The drone related hashtag in table 1 refers to NAFO's extensive fundraiser to support the Ukrainian armed forces with battlefield drones, which has been officially recognized by the president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky and is frequently addressed by Ukraine's official fundraising coordination pool, the @U24_gov_ua Twitter-account and homepage (@officialNAFO, 2023; @U24_gov_ua, 2023).

The general hashtags are frequently mentioned in the posts I came across and hold important ideological messages but are not uniquely used by NAFO, which would disorientate the data collection. 'Fellas-creation' are NAFO-related hashtags, but they focus on membership initiation for new users and to spread the community. This is of course relevant, but it appears to work more like a support function than the community's main purpose.

6. Limitations of the study

Unfortunately, there are a few obstacles facing this study. The most prominent is the issue of economic recourses that limit my access to larger sets of data, this issue has been discussed in more detail in the above section.

Another possible limitation to this study is the censorship controversies connected to the Twitter platform, blamed on the new company regime under Elon Musk, whom personally, in 2022 proposed a peace plan in which he urged Ukraine to agree to Russian demands. Musk has also appeared personally involved through the decision to have his other company, SpaceX, limit Ukrainian internet access so that he could stop the conflict evolving to "world war III" (Sánchez-Vallejo, 2023; Serwer, 2023; Sommerlad, 2023; Camut, 2023). This engagement of a tech-business billionaire trying to affect diplomatic negotiations to favour of the aggressor and control the availability of an strategic resource such as internet connection is by itself relevant for this study, because it puts the owner of the platform under examination in contrast to the subject of this study. When I began skimming through the NAFO-feeds at the start of the research process I came across posts suggesting that the NAFO-community is being targeted by Twitter to be silenced.

To verify if this is an actual attempt by Elon Musk to silence NAFO via Twitter censorship requires further and critical investigation and is unfortunately way outside the scope of this study. But it is non the less interesting to see that various NAFO users consider it to be a deliberate action made against the community to silence them due to their support of Ukraine.

A potential censorship campaign poses possible issues to this study, in the sense that influential accounts, and posts might not appear in the search-results due to shadow-banning (Sengupta, 2022).

7. Ethical considerations

All research should adhere to the responsibility of upholding good and ethical research practices. The researcher ought to remember her intersectional position as re-enforcer and creator of knowledge. Throughout the writing process she should critically examine any dilemmas that might come with promoting some ideas over others. In accordance with the European Union's ALLEA-codex for good research practises, I have done my utmost to ensure that this study is conducted in an honest and transparent manner to make sure that the analysis is methodically reliable, and the traceability of the sources is upheld (ALLEA, 2023).

In addition to the ALLEA codex, I have identified one primary ethical domain related to the content of this study which ought to be addressed in further detail.

As a student of political science, it is essential to address that knowledge producing discourses is not neutral. How researchers describe and/or recommend the proper use of their accumulated knowledge, in this case propaganda techniques, affects how society conforms to it (Meusburger, 2001). Especially if the study is written to be applicable to decision makers and help guide their judgement.

In democracies, propaganda are important tools of state craft, especially in times of crisis or war (sciencespo.fr, 2023; Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). It can become necessary to manipulate public sentiment to maintain morale and the support for military operations. Some might argue that it is a necessary evil, but this strategy could potentially become a slippery slope. Propaganda techniques can dehumanize the enemy, justify inhumane acts, and understate the real costs of war.

My reasoning is the following: Ukraine, and in extension also NAFO, finds itself in this peculiar position. On the one hand they need propaganda to maintain support and encourage resistance against Russian war efforts. On the other hand, they cannot allow said propaganda to derail from democratic values and de-humanize the enemy to the degree that their own supporters commit unjustifiable acts. If the pro-Ukrainians becomes 'just as bad' as the pro-Russians, it is hard to claim the moral high ground, and the democratic narratives in the propaganda might become less plausible to the audience. While adopting de-humanizing tactics might generate

short-term benefits, they can also have detrimental long-term effects, damaging the very democratic ideals the country is fighting to protect.

It is not this study's intention to present answers to this dilemma, but I think it is essential to address it. I, as a citizen of the European Union and a soldier in the Swedish armed Forces, as well as a student of security studies and political science, is both a spectator and in-direct participant of this war. Which is why I find it detrimental to recognise the severity of this subject and the responsibility that comes with it.

8. Analysis

8.1. Ideology and purpose

Ideology, as Jowett & O'Donnell present it, isn't merely a collection of beliefs, values, and attitudes, but rather a robust framework, guiding perceptions of societal norms. It permeates the understanding of what is acceptable, dictating the 'shoulds' of social interaction. They embrace Kecskemeti's (1973) assertion that the ideology of propaganda offers audiences a comprehensive framework for interpreting their socio-political reality, one that incorporates deeply held beliefs, values, attitudes, and norms (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). The ideology shapes a society's perception of what is acceptable or desirable, often reinforcing and conforming to existing social, economic, and political structures, often assigning roles to various social groups.

Ideology as such is discernible in both verbal and visual expressions, hinting at past conflicts, present value systems, and future aspirations. These references can echo historical symbols, nudging individuals to apply pre-existing ideas to present and future goals.

The purpose of propaganda, then, is twofold: shaping public perception to align with the propagandist's beliefs, and sustaining the legitimacy of the institution from which it emanates. These purposes manifest either as integration propaganda – bolstering the status quo – or agitation propaganda, a clarion call to action, goading the masses from complacency to engagement. In essence, the effectiveness of propaganda hinges on its resonance with the audience, reinforcing pre-existing beliefs, and driving acceptance of new ones. Ultimately, propaganda is an exercise in the conquest of the masses, with purpose as its rudder and ideology as its compass (ibid.).

The first step of this analysis has led me to conclude that the NAFO content represents a case of integration propaganda aimed at preserving the integrity and legitimacy of pro-Ukrainian narratives on Twitter, it is supported by an inclusion/exclusion ideology, and the purpose is to

support the Ukrainian war effort by engaging Twitter users to take a stand in the conflict (appendix 1).

With Jowett & O'Donnell as the guide, I have come to understand the ideology and purpose depicted through the collected NAFO data as following:

The Fella, is a representative of NAFO. NAFO is pro-Ukraine. Being pro-Ukraine is good and desirable for anyone who does not want to be ridiculed online. Because being a Fella means that you are part of an unstoppable juggernaut community of friends that is unbothered by provocation and have superior memes that will force any opponent to silence.

Being a Vatnik is the opposite to a Fella. A Vatnik is pro-Russia and being pro-Russia is bad. A Vatnik is easily offended, have bad memes and is a lonely loser. This is represented by the reoccurring mention of “vatnik tears”, which I have interpreted as one of the Fellas main response mechanisms to de-legitimize anti-Ukrainian content on Twitter (appendix 1:15, 51, 53, 60). Making a Vatnik cry is the play-ground equilibrium of ‘running home to mommy’ – aka. defeat.

I have come to understand that these ‘play-ground street rules’ make up the core of Fella ideology and code of conduct. Anyone growing up around other children knows the fine art of teasing, making the code of conduct easy for anyone to relate to. Hiding behind self-proclaimed stupidity and childishness is a rather efficient method to push the limit of anyone’s temper or patience, because who can claim victory in an argument against a “brain damaged dog”? (ibid. 61)

I would like to argue that this sense of playfulness and, to some, nostalgia is crucial. What the ideology defines as good (Fella) becomes synonymous with fun, carefreeness, and games. While being labelled a Vatnik means loneliness, frustration, and anger. My interpretation of the material concludes that the NAFO-ideology calls upon Twitter users experiences of childhood social structures (Mascareño & Carvajal, 2015). You either had friends and belonged to a community, or you did not. Being singled out as the weak one on the playground meant that you were an easy target for bullying, or being associated with someone who is considered weak by the group made yourself a liable target for harassment too.

This logic can even create an incentive for Twitter users who did not have any previous political affiliations towards either Ukraine or Russia to consider if they want to be ‘in or out’ of the group having fun on the playground (Twitter). My interpretation of the ideology gives three

alternatives to the individual encountering NAFO content. Say nothing and you stay invisible (outside and neutral). Yelling ‘Russia did nothing wrong’ and: ‘NAFO are CIA Nazis’ will attract their attention, ridicule, and make you a legitimate target to bully (fig. 3 and 4). Finally, saying ‘Fellas rule, Vatniks drool’ and back it up with donations to the Ukrainian war effort will instantly make you a recognized part of the community (fig. 3-4; appendix p. 60, 28, 36, 53, 75, etc.).

It is easy to see how this interpretation of NAFO’s ideology connects to the official purpose of NAFO. The purpose of NAFO is explicitly proclaimed on the community’s official website, nafo-ofan.org, and is a reoccurring theme throughout the analysed material: NAFO exists to counter pro-Russian propaganda on social media and support fundraising for Ukraine (nafo-ofan.org, 2023). These actions are supported by ideas like the inevitability of Ukrainian victory. The war is far from over but if both warring parties become convinced that, #UkraineIsWinning and #RussiaIsLoosing are true predictions of the future it might have a positive placebo effect on the battlefield too (Friedman, 2017).

8.2.Context and mythology

To fully grasp the historical backdrop that permeates the Russian invasion in 2022 is a mammoth task, and I have realised that a too ‘state-historical’ focus risks being misleading in explaining the context of NAFO. Social media memory did not exist when the Kievan Rus founded the Russian cultural sphere, nor during the annexation of Ukraine by Russian empress Catharine the Great or when Soviet leader Joseph Stalin unleashed the Holodomor to quench Ukrainian resentment in 1932 (Marston, 2022).

I have determined that for the purpose of this analysis, it is more productive to provide context to the phenomenon of digital memes rather than delving into the intricate political dynamics of Ukrainian-Russian relations. For those unfamiliar with the conflict, I recommend the following titles: “The gates of Europe, a history of Ukraine” (2015) by Serhii Plokhyy, “Girls cutting their locks, a book of memories/the Russo-Ukrainian war” (2020) by Yevgeniya Podobna, and “Ukraine in histories and stories, essays by Ukrainian intellectuals” (2019) by Yermolenko (edit.).

Memes, as suggested by biologist Richard Dawkins, can be likened to cultural genes that reproduce and evolve, becoming vessels for meaning and influence (Keep, 2020). As such, they operate within the framework of societal sentiment and historical underpinnings, shaping and being shaped by prevailing narratives. This relationship between memes and their sociocultural

environment can be seen as analogous to Jowett and O'Donnell's statement that "propaganda is like a packet of seeds dropped on fertile soil" (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019:175). The seeds in this case are NAFO memes and the soil is the sociocultural environment of the war against Ukraine.

Internet memes encapsulate societal ideals and attitudes in the digital realm, serving as an omnipresent digital form of social commentary and critique. A meme's inherent brevity and shareability allow for its rapid dissemination and uptake, positioning it as a potent tool for echoing public sentiment or for propagating specific narratives and ideals. Moreover, their mutability, as Keep (2020) highlights, further amplifies their capacity to mould according to the context, just as seeds adapt to the soil's conditions.

The evolution of the NAFO Fella in the digital age is a witness to how memes mirror the zeitgeist (Keep, 2020). This evolution underscores the extent to which memes reflect the collective consciousness, becoming integral components of storytelling, cultural transmission, and, indeed, propaganda.

Moreover, the myth making properties inherent in memes parallels those found in traditional propaganda. Memes can tap into deep-seated societal ideals, fears, and aspirations, making them effective tools for shaping perception and action (Keep, 2020). They may seem like harmless fragments of light-hearted fun, but their capability to resonate with mass audiences can be harnessed for political, commercial, or social objectives.

Leading the discussion away from the socio-political context of memes in general to the myth of NAFO, the observations I have made in the material concludes that the predominant narrative guiding NAFO is the notion that they act under the protection of 'righteous violence'. The content does not explicitly refer to these exact words but support the claim that the actions of NAFO are legitimate because what the Russian forces and politicians do is unproportioned and morally wrong (Fig. 6).

Righteous violence, or 'just war-theory', is a cornerstone of western Christian state-craft and moral philosophy (The ethics centre, 2016; Evans, 2005). It continues to play a vital role in deciding whether the use of military force is considered justified or not, which can be seen in both the United Nation's charter, the NATO charter, and in the great length authoritarian regimes like Russia goes to morally justify their expansionism (United Nations, 1945; NATO, 1949; Putin, 2023)

The base line of this philosophy is simple enough to be reemerging in most of the world's major religions and political systems: murder is wrong, but if attacked you have the right to defend yourself and/or in the name of justice, take the perpetrator's life. Over the course of history, this personal right to self-protection on the cost of another has been transferred to the symbolic life of cultural bodies, e.g., a monarchy, a nation state, or an ethnic group.

I conclude that the notion of justice is at the core of the myth supporting NAFO's propaganda efforts. I understand said myth as following: Ukraine is the victim of an un-just war, but victory is favoured by the righteous, thus, Russian aggression towards Ukrainian territory, people, and cultural heritage will be punished. Some might understand this reasoning as divine interference of God(s) or as the natural grain of history and that all evil sooner or later will be unmasked.

I find support for this interpretation of the myth in NAFO content referring to Fella vs. Vatnik arguments concerning Ukraine's position in the second world war and the soviet-era mythology about the great patriotic war. The Soviet myth goes that the righteous Red Army defeated the evil German Nazis and liberated the nations that would later be dominated by the Soviet Union until the collapse in 1991, this myth faces strong opposition by the NAFO content who recognise the horrors of German occupation but do not agree that the Soviet Union was a liberator, just another oppressor (fig. 7).

The image (p. 10) shows a Vatnik legitimizing Vladimir Putin's claim that Ukraine is run by a Nazi regime in need of Russian liberation by referencing to the crimes committed on Ukrainian territory during the war. The Fella, @VatniksShallBeBonked, replies with a meme depicting that Ukraine and Poland (currently a vocal Ukrainian ally and former Soviet subject) has atoned for their share of war crimes, while Russia has not.

The second image (p. 30), posted by a Fella on May 9th (the Soviet victory day over Nazi Germany in 1945) depicts a meme that delegitimize the Russian narrative of continuing a righteous tradition to protect the 'weak' and that although the Soviet forces eventually pushed the Nazis back to Berlin, they were never the liberators Soviet history writing claimed to be.

8.3. Identifying the propagandist

Identifying the source of propaganda can often be a complex task, as outlined by Jowett and O'Donnell's third step of analysis:

The source of propaganda is likely to be an institution or organization, with the propagandist as its leader or agent. Sometimes, there will be complete openness about the identity of the

organization behind the propaganda; sometimes it is necessary to conceal the identity to achieve the goals set by the institution. When identity is concealed, the task of the analyst is a demanding one. (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019:176)

Applying this logic to the NAFO material poses somewhat of a problem, especially due to the preconception that propaganda is a top-down and hierarchal enterprise. This notion might be well suited for analysing 'traditional' state sponsored propaganda but is not sufficient to explain the complex nature of online communities.

NAFO members are making fun of the idea that the community is a CIA operation, and I have found no indication in the material I have analysed that NAFO would be the product of either the Ukrainian state or the American government, even though the two are beneficial to its outcome (fig. 8).

Jowett & O'Donnell would probably counter this argument of mine by proclaiming that NAFO is a case of "black propaganda" (p. 25). "In black propaganda, not only is the distortion deliberate, but the identity of the source is usually inaccurate. The deception that is possible on the Internet makes identity very difficult if not impossible." (p. 176) To conduct an identification of the propagandist they suggest the analyst to ask, 'Who stands to benefit?'

But I do not necessarily agree that the benefit of the outcome equals evidence of leadership. Online trolling and meme-communities has a decentralized life of their own that is very difficult to control. The originator of a meme that goes viral usually ends up with no control over it as it starts gaining traction. The most famous example is probably Pepé the Frog who began as a comic strip posted online in the early 2000's and spiralled into an ultra-nationalist symbol associated with Nazism and the Trump presidential campaign (Premo, 2020). The right-wing American populism campaign that brought Donald Trump to the White House in 2016, did not need to explicitly decide which Pepé would go where, they just needed to acknowledge the community behind it and let the 4-chan users do the rest (Jones, 2020).

This is not to say that all viral memes are or become symbols of hate like Pepé the Frog. I would rather want to point out that Jowett & O'Donnell's framework lacks the tools to explain how online communities, or as they put it – the Internet, acts as an unconventional propagandist.

As the framework's third step is structured today it does not allow me to realistically identify who the propagandist of NAFO is.

8.4. Organizational structure

Central to how Jowett and O'Donnell understand the organizational structure of propaganda is the role of leadership. They propose that propaganda organizations typically manifest a robust, centralized leadership style that echoes through a hierarchical structure (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). This leader, be they apparent or otherwise, embodies the organization's ideology and is instrumental in promoting and enforcing it.

The leadership style of a propaganda organization can, according to Jowett & O'Donnell be understood by identifying their long-term goals, specific objectives, and strategies to attract, maintain, and mould members, providing a consistent ideological framework around which the organizational structure can coalesce. I find these criteria useful for this analysis even though I will not be looking for a top-down hierarchy centred around a specific leader.

Similar to what was discussed in the previous section of this study, trying to understand the organizational structure of NAFO by identifying a centralized leadership structure will probably be misleading. Observations made of the available material concludes that NAFO is a decentralized organisation with a flat hierarchal structure (fig. 8; appendix 1: 13). I would rather approach what Jowett & O'Donnell describes as a "leadership style" as a 'community culture' (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019:176). This approach stays true to the author's writing about identifying the organizational structure through its rituals, culture, and rules without presuming that all propaganda enterprises must be run by a single 'master mind'.

Thus, deciphering the community culture involves understanding the membership of the organization. Here, Jowett & O'Donnell distinguish between followers – those in agreement with the organization's goals – and members – those who actively fight for the organization's cause. Crucial questions include: How is membership gained? Is there evidence of conversion? Are there symbols of membership, and what does the adoption process entail?

This analysis concludes that questions like these might be harder to answer when faced with traditional state-sponsored propaganda but are very straight forward when it comes to NAFO. Their official website hosts a simple tutorial for how to become a Fella and the content feed is full of examples for how to do it too (nafo-ofan.org, 2023).

When disseminating the collected material, I realised that the best way to understand the organizational structure of NAFO was to document the membership process by creating a Fella for my self. Which is why the name of the Twitter account I am using for data collection is @TheBonkExplorer.


0. Follower: Retweet and share NAFO content. You do not need to be a Fella to do this.


1. Initiation: Donate any amount of money to your pro-Ukrainian charity of choice.

North Atlantic Fella Organization



Confirmation #8ZN7K8XLL

Thank you !

	NAFO Nothing is Beyond Our Reach Mousepad	165,00 kr
Subtotal		165,00 kr
Shipping		51,00 kr
Total		SEK 216,00 kr

2. Initiation: Make a screen shot of the transaction confirmation and write a post tagged with #FellaRequest. This is to prove that you are willing to support the war effort in more than words.



3. Initiation: The post will then be acknowledged by a "Forger" and they reply to your post with the confirmation that your Fella request goes to the symbolic forge where all Fellas are made. Then the new Fella is delivered.



4. Member: A Fella is now born, the follower has become a member. The image is supposed to be used as profile picture as a badge of recognition for other NAFO members.



5. Member: The member is now certified to make memes in the name of NAFO, engage against Vatniks, and partake in "Boosts".



Simply put, anyone who supports Ukraine against the Russian invasion can become a member of NAFO. I would even go far enough to say that availability and fun is the core elements of NAFO's culture. Another equally important observation to point out is that since NAFO is a decentralized organization, it is run on voluntary work by other members. To request a Fella is an open plea, and the Forger can be any member who feels like spending a few hours in Photoshop (nafo-ofan.org, 2023).

The long-term goal for NAFO is, as they express themselves, to counter Russian propaganda (nafo-ofan.org, 2023). The short-term objective is to engage as many active members as possible, which is characterized by #NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable. This requires a sense of agency among the members to feel as if their engagement pays off and is necessary. This is why official recognition by i.e., president Zelensky and commander-in-chief of the Ukrainian armed forces, Valerii Zaluzhnyi, is appreciated (appendix 1)

To keep up the value for strangers online to continue the voluntarism is understandably a high priority if NAFO wants to maintain its members. Thus, I propose that Jowett & O'Donnell's fourth step should be complemented by asking, what does a follower gain from becoming a member?

My own conclusion in the case of NAFO is that the member gains a sense of unity with a community who is fighting a just cause, who is positively reinforcing desired behaviour from members, and most importantly – are having fun doing it. I find support for the notion of positive reinforcement by the community's ability to 'see' and recognize individual members by performing "boosts" (fig 9.).

The case of this NAFO-content would probably pose a curious case for the authors themselves, neither is the community a leadership-focused organization nor does NAFO own or control the platform from which they operate (Sánchez-Vallejo, 2023; Serwer, 2023; Sommerlad, 2023; Camut, 2023; Sengupta, 2022). To better understand the organizational structure of NAFO, it would be fascinating to examine the interaction between online community and political actors and see how the discourse of one effect the other. The case of Donald Trump and Pepé the frog could be used as a guiding example. The complexity of their relation indicate that Donald Trump did not control 4chan, but his messages resonated with that audience, and they reinforced each other for mutual gain (Jones, 2020).

In conclusion, a real-world political player like Ukraine does not need to directly control the organizational structure of a digital propaganda community like NAFO. But the two will

certainly benefit from one another if their messages resonate. It is unfortunately apparent that Jowett & O'Donnell has an out-dated understanding of the digital reality as they address it as "smart phones" and do not enquire much further on what that mean (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019:213).

8.5.Target audience

This step of the analysis concerns the process of identifying the target audience for propaganda. According to Jowett & O'Donnell, the propagandists strategically select their audience based on the potential for favourable responses, which could ultimately aid in furthering their agenda. Modern marketing techniques, including the usage of advanced technology and digital platforms, have made this process increasingly efficient and, at the same time, significantly more nuanced (ibid.).

The authors write that while traditionally propaganda is usually aimed at a mass audience, this is not necessarily the case in our modern, hyper-connected society. Instead, it has evolved to take advantage of various audience forms, from smaller groups to special segments of the population, to cultural elites, to individual influencers. In essence, the traditional one-to-many model has given way to a more sophisticated approach (ibid.).

Jowett & O'Donnell writes: "A target audience is selected by a propagandist for its potential effectiveness." (p. 178) which connects this stage of the analysis to step one – identifying the purpose of the propaganda. One must understand what the propaganda is aimed to achieve if they want to draw conclusions about the target audience.

The purpose of NAFO is to generate support for the Ukrainian war effort and silence pro-Russian sentiment on Twitter (appendix 1; nafo-ofan.org, 2023). Does this aim call for a specific group or a mass audience? I would argue that NAFO is aimed at a specific group: individuals who cherish pro-Western democracy values and are familiar with how to communicate efficiently on social media via 'meme language'.

This conclusion I have drawn from analysing the collected data is, that a potential follower and member should tick all these boxes. Firstly, they need to be familiar with social media platforms like Twitter to be exposed to NAFO content. Secondly, they need to be approachable by the idea of international solidarism in the shape of western democratic values. Finally, they need to be familiar with what memes are and how to communicate through them.

I find support for these claims by the simple observation that Twitter is NAFO's birthplace, the continuous mention of NAFO as an international community that rebukes right-wing populism, and that much of the communication both within community and outwards is done through image conversations in the shape of memes (appendix 1; nafo-ofan.org, 2023; fig. 10).

8.6. Media utilization techniques

Jowett & O'Donnell makes an articulated argument that media techniques used by a propagandist must be scrutinized from a bigger perspective and consider the interconnectedness within the greater field. Understanding NAFO in that case requires the researcher to examine the snow-ball effect which NAFO content has on other types of pro-Ukrainian propaganda. This is unfortunately outside of the scope of this study, but an illustrative example of this interconnectedness can be seen in a video posted by Reuters showing Ukrainian General Valerii Zaluzhnyi wearing a Baby-Yoda patch on his body armour (Epstein, 2023). Baby-Yoda, or Grogu, is one of the main characters of the popular Disney Star Wars series "The Mandalorian" (Favreau, 2019). General Zaluzhnyi wearing this patch on himself in a strictly military context could be interpreted as him personally identifying with the western cultural sphere and that he really likes the Star Wars franchise; or, it can indicate something deeper.

The other main character in the Mandalorian-series is Grogu's surrogate father and a bounty hunter, his main catch phrase is: "This is the way", an indication to the warrior philosophy of his rouge home planet's culture. This phrase is commonly used by NAFO Fellas to validate the expansion of the community. E.g., a Fella encourages other Fellas to follow new NAFO accounts to strengthen the community, as a response to this post another Fella validates the encouragement by answering that post with a meme saying, "this is the way" (Fig. 11).

If a NAFO member familiar with NAFO 'language', sees the picture of General Zaluzhnyi wearing a Baby-Yoda patch at the launching phase of Ukraine's 2023 counter offensive, it tells her something very important. It tells her: "This is the way", and thus recognises the symbolic language used by her community. Simply put, General Zaluzhnyi's patch tells NAFO to continue and step-up their fighting for the Ukrainian cause. Baby-Yoda can be interpreted as a rallying call.

The picture of General Zaluzhnyi was posted the 19th of June 2023, which is outside of the scope of the collected data for this study, but I consider it such a great example of propaganda that I decided to use it as an example. Jowett & O'Donnell writes: "When an audience perceives

the media, what expectation is it likely to have? What is the audience asked to do?” (p.180) I think the above-mentioned example is doing a good job addressing these questions.

Another fundamental aspect of Jowett & O’Donnell’s reasoning about media techniques is its association with controlling the information flow. They argue that orchestrated release of information, often in conjunction with other information, can create false associations, cleverly guiding public opinion and behaviour. Sometimes, propaganda may monopolize the media within a specific area, offering limited opportunity for counterpropaganda or competing narratives.

I would argue that there is a difference between controlling the media and controlling the information flow, Jowett & O’Donnell does not make this distinction. As mentioned previously, neither NAFO, Ukraine or the American government owns Twitter, i.e., the media. Elon Musk does (Zhan, 2022). I argue that controlling which narratives are dominant on social media is a question of visibility and being ‘viral’ enough to drown out opposing sentiments, not an issue of platform ownership.

This support the claim that just because Ukraine and her allies benefit from NAFO propaganda does not mean that NAFO is run by a state-propagandist. They certainly benefit from communicating with one another, but that benefit lies in keeping pro-Ukrainian narratives viral on social media and thus, disallowing the international community to forget about the war.

8.7.Special techniques to maximize effect

Jowett & O’Donnell writes: “Propaganda is too complex to limit its techniques to a short list. Certain principles, however, can be elaborated to assist the analyst in examining techniques. Aristotle, in discussing rhetoric, advised the persuader to use “all of the available means of persuasion.” Goebbels, in discussing propaganda, advised the propagandist that every means that serves the purpose of the conquest of the masses is good” (p. 181)

In short, all measures are welcome if it furthers the cause, imagination is the only limit. The central principles they mention comes down to a list of 11 points.

1. Pre-dispositions of the audience: “Messages have greater impact when they are in line with existing opinions, beliefs, and dispositions. (p.182) Faced with the collected NAFO content, I would argue that these pre-dispositions of the audience are based on the idea that actions on social media have a genuine effect on real life – the ‘internet’ is an extension of our political reality, not a separated and private activity. There are plenty

examples to compare in our recent history, with perhaps the MeToo- and Black Lives Matter movements as the most prominent cases (Martínez, 2021; Tilley, 2019).

Thus, using the already established notion that social media can be an overwhelmingly powerful political tool, NAFO's aim to ridicule pro-Russian narratives will support shaping the actual outcome of the war and help establish Ukrainian victory as an inevitable truth.

2. Source credibility: Jowett & O'Donnell describes this point as how the audience precept the authority from which the information comes (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). I have observed that NAFO members themselves does not attempt to produce information, they react to, and spread non-NAFO information that furthers their agenda. This can be seen across the collected material with these examples just to name a few (Appendix 1; Fig. 6; Fig 12).
3. Opinion leaders: The observations made from the collected material promotes the argument that NAFO is a decentralized organization without a hierarchical leadership structure, that there is no authoritative voice deciding which content is allowed to be posted in the NAFO feed. But I have observed that some accounts were more active during the ten-day period than others, which indicate that they have a greater influence over which content #NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable will be associated with. These accounts are @NAFO_Dragonfly, @NelltheWeaver, @jmsellers04, @INNAfo2023, @20gimsack, (etc.) (appendix 1).
4. Face-to-face contact: I have found no support for real life interactions between Fellas in the analysed material. There is of course a lot of NAFO merchandise and the occasional light-post sticker which indicates that a lot of NAFO stuff can be found in the 'real world' (appendix 1:26, 36, 62, 65, 104). But no indication of Fellas meeting Fellas to recruit new NAFO-members. Although this will probably change after the 11th- 12th of June this year. While NATO is having its summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, NAFO will assemble to a physical summit for the first time, also in the Lithuanian capital (nafo-ofan.org, 2023).

This summit was held the 8th – 9th of July 2023, after the time frame of the collected data, but just like the Baby-Yoda picture, I found it important enough to add as an example of how NAFO continues to blur the lines between the digital and physical world as the organization and the war continues.

5. Group norms: “Group norms are beliefs, values, and behaviours derived from membership in groups. They may be culturally derived norms or social and professional norms.” (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2019:183) Jowett & O’Donnell mentions this technique to create a ‘herd-mentality’ and describes how propagandists might choose to host rallies in a venue deliberately too small for the attending audience so that they get the “impression of a groundswell of support” (ibid., p.183). Whether this technique will be applied to the NAFO Vilnius summit or not is yet to be seen, but I have observed that many memes available in the collected material refer to the notion that the number of Fellas is so great that it is impossible to ever silence NAFO operations – just like Ukrainian victory, NAFO too is unstoppable (Appendix 1)
6. Reward and punishment: What I have observed, the reward and punishment system within NAFO is quite straight forward. You either support NAFO content by promoting other Fellas and NAFO memes, this will reward you with recognition and more followers to your account. If you are a Vatnik and you try to disown pro-Ukrainian narratives, this will get you punished by being targeted by NAFO bullying (Fig. 13).

Jowett & O’Donnell describes this as a non-symbolic action that is performed for its symbolic effect on the audience (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2019). Being publicly recognised as a ‘good’ Fella for the memes they have done, the money they have given to fundraisers or the Vatniks they have reviled, sends a clear message to other Fellas what they need to do to receive the same praise.

7. Communication source monopoly: Unfortunately, there is not much to add about this technique. As mentioned previously in this analysis, NAFO does not control their source of communication, nor does the political parties that benefit from NAFO content, Twitter is a private enterprise (Sánchez-Vallejo, 2023; Serwer, 2023; Sommerlad, 2023; Camut, 2023).

8. Visual symbols: “The analyst should look at the images to examine the visual symbolization of power. Do visual representations have an iconographic denotation of power and ubiquity?” (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2019:184) NAFO’s most central image for communication is the shiba inu meme, a dog that represent NAFO’s understanding of their power and ubiquity (appendix 1). This dog is a Fella, and Fellas are everywhere. I have come to understand the message as following: Russian soldiers are not to rest easy anywhere on Ukrainian territory, nor shall any Vatnik on Twitter.

The message, interpreted like that, represents the threat of a hunt, especially since Russians and Vatniks alike are depicted like targets. The ‘hidden’ Ukrainian soldier is hunting down his pray with the use of HIMARS and drones. The Russian soldiers will not see it coming until it is too late. NAFO and its Fellas follows suite being their keyboards but dresses up their performance in an aura of silly fun (Fig. 14).

9. Language use: The conclusion on the language use visible in the collected material is that its priority is to support the visual imagery. Most of the NAFO content is structured in the following way: a short statement, a selection of hashtags to connect the post to the right Twitter feed, and a meme amplifying the message (appendix 1). The single picture- Tweet format is the most common in the collected material, there is little room, or need, for writing more than a few phrases or a slogan (ibid.).
10. Music: NAFO does not only communicate through image memes, but there are also plenty of NAFO-made video memes too (ibid.). This is where the musical element is most predominated, although, it is worth mentioning that I have not encountered any particular ‘NAFO-song’ or anthem, which Jowett & O’Donnell points out to be an essential part of most propaganda organizations (ibid.).
11. Arouse emotions: Jowett and O’Donnell’s final special technique discusses the potency of emotional triggers through effective v messaging. They demonstrate that employing emotion-driven language and imagery can significantly impact and solidify the messages. Citing Bogart (1995), the authors observe that while emotional propaganda resonates deeply with less educated audiences, a more knowledgeable audience might

respond better to a balanced and factual representation of events. For instance, during the Cold War, the “Voice of America” did not directly appoint blame, instead, it urged its listeners to form their own conclusions based on the information the radio station provided (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2019:188). This approach aligns with Bruce Wharton's perspective, also presented on the same page, which underscores the importance of steering audiences through a narrative that is not only compelling but also authentic and relatable. By juxtaposing emotionally stirring elements with factual content, the message delivered is not only striking but credible, leaving a lasting impact.

Deciphering whether NAFO relies solely on these emotional appeal techniques is challenging, and it would probably require a case study of its own to paint the proper picture. There are recurring images depicting the severe harm inflicted on civilians paired with text designed to incite the reader's anger, suggesting alignment with the first technique. However, given the vast resources available for fact-checking and geolocation images via open-source intelligence (OSINT), independent social media users can relatively easily verify the authenticity and location of images and videos (The OSINT Curious Project, 2022) Thus, the individual sharing the content on Twitter must consider this reality, which gives credence to NAFO adopting both techniques of emotional appeal.

8.8.Audience reaction

“The most important thing to look for is the behavior of the target audience. [...] The analyst also looks for the audience’s adoption of the propagandist’s language, slogans, and attire. Does the target audience take on a new symbolic identity? If so, how does it talk about the identity? Over time, does the propaganda purpose become realized and part of the social scene?” (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2019:188)

In the referenced quote, Jowett & O’Donnell's proposition rests on the notion that the propagandist and the audience are different and distinct entities. However, what if the propagandist is the audience? Throughout the analysis, I have argued that NAFO is a decentralized community, which means it is run by the actions and engagement of its members (Peter, 2021).

As stated above, the intended audience appears to be the NAFO members. Members, or 'Fellas,' foster a shared narrative and urge each other, as well as potential new Fellas, to adopt specific language, catchphrases, and identifying attire. This adoption extends to tangible merchandise,

available for purchase by account users, and digital manifestations, such as the Shiba Inu dog symbol. The objective behind this is to magnify the spread of NAFO content and to maintain its message, which is to support Ukraine and deride Russia. As demonstrated by the collated material, most users posting NAFO-related content display a 'Fella' as their profile picture and/or adopt a NAFO-related username (appendix 1).

8.9. Counter propaganda

The ninth stage of Jowett & O'Donnell's analysis may not form a lengthy segment of this study, but it nonetheless underscores some interesting food for thought. The authors point out that, “[i]f a counterpropaganda campaign is well organized and carried out, the analyst can apply some or all of the 10 divisions of propaganda analysis to it as well.” (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2019:189).

I consider this statement to be crucial for understanding the collected NAFO material, and for getting a broader understanding of the digital community like NAFO. The official NAFO Twitter account and their subsequent homepage, NAFO-OFAN.org, proclaims to exist to counter Russian propaganda, i.e., describing themselves as a counterpropaganda movement.

Is that what this study has been all along, a *counterpropaganda* analysis? And if so, is it possible to differentiate between propaganda and counterpropaganda in the digital milieu of social media?

In the context of this study, it difficult to decide whether NAFO is ‘regular’ propaganda, and all 10-steps applies, or if it is counterpropaganda. If it is counterpropaganda, Jowett & O’Donnell writes that “[...] the analyst can apply some or all of the 10 divisions of propaganda analysis to it as well” (ibid. p.189). In this case, the result of the analysis confirms that the NAFO community is a counterpropaganda movement since all divisions were not applicable. But I consider that to be a too simple explanation of the NAFO I have observed through the collected material.

8.10. Effects and evaluation

Jowett and O'Donnell's approach to understanding the impact of propaganda centres around whether it accomplishes its intended purpose or not (Jowett & O’Donnell, 2019). To their perspective, if the main goals of the propaganda campaign are reached, it can be considered successful. If it fails, the analyst must investigate the reasons behind this failure.

The authors promote the idea that an analyst must be able to answer a range of questions in different areas to fully understand propaganda. However, they acknowledge that due to the nature of the information, it's not always possible to make a complete analysis immediately. It may take years for new information to emerge, possibly changing previous conclusions. Thus, examining the effects of propaganda is not straightforward. The limitations to the data collection capabilities of this study does not allow for conclusions about the growth or impact of NAFO over time. To make such generalizing claims, a significantly larger dataset would be necessary. This is a rather small conclusion but valid nonetheless as it points to clear routs for future research.

9. Conclusion

The results of the analysis underscore a significant, albeit not entirely perfect, alignment between Jowett & O'Donnell's framework and the amassed NAFO content. The framework has proven useful in discerning recurring themes inherent to a distinct NAFO ideology, a clearly articulated objective, an unconventional organizational structure, and tools to pinpoint the intended audience.

NAFO uses, what I consider, a simple inclusion/exclusion-oriented ideology to draw a stark distinction between the 'good' Fellas (pro-Ukrainian) and 'bad' Vatniks (pro-Russian). It encourages Twitter users to adopt a position in the conflict. This ideology moulds the community's social norms and views of acceptability (Mascareño & Carvajal, 2015). The NAFO content serving as the basis for this analysis is dual-purpose: (1) to combat pro-Russian propaganda using digital media, and (2) to bolster Ukraine by amplifying the narrative of an inevitable victory on Twitter, a global communication titan.

The analysed material shows that NAFO utilizes a systematic set of strategic approaches to achieve its goals. Although this study is not extensive enough to draw conclusions about its success or the long-term effects it will have on the war, it can confirm that the collected material shows that various techniques are systematically deployed by the NAFO members to spread a common narrative – that Fellas rule, Vatniks drool. This, I consider falling well in line with the content being "a deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist" (Jowett & O'Donnell in Vulovic, 2017:66).

This conclusion, drawn from the observations I have made of the collected material, answers the first research question. NAFO content does function as a propaganda, and it is done through the systematic use of memes.

The second question is trickier to answer with a neat single sentence, it requires more elaboration to finalize a proper conclusion. Jowett & O'Donnell's framework has been advantageous in offering a broad overview of the NAFO content. However, it also highlighted some issues when the analysis could not identify the propagandist, thereby failing to gain a comprehensive understanding of the organizational structure. Jowett & O'Donnell emphasize that propaganda always is a top-down, centralized enterprise, but the collected material provides no evidence for this claim (appendix 1). It raises pertinent questions: If NAFO is a decentralized

community with a flat hierarchical structure, does that render all other observations made by the framework irrelevant? Can NAFO, despite being ‘leaderless’, still produce propaganda?

I mean that it can and consider the result of the first research question to support this claim. The data I have analysed shows that NAFO content does function as a propaganda in the majority of Jowett & O’Donnell’s ten steps, except when it comes to the style of leadership - which causes complications to the applicability of the framework.

This is not to say that I consider it necessary to discard the entire framework, but I do find it evident that their preconceptions need to be challenged. Or perhaps a researcher with greater resources will be able to discover information about the leadership of NAFO which at the moment is unavailable to me, falsifying this conclusion. Non the less does the results of my analysis address the validity of the initial research puzzle and made it clear that there is still a lot to learn about NAFO as an organization and the usage of memes in contemporary warfare.

This study has shown that NAFO deserves further investigation and that using a framework for propaganda analysis is well suited to understand the role memes play in war. The study has also pointed out one major limitation that need to be addressed if future research should evolve dynamically. Without access to larger data sets it will be very difficult to make generalizable conclusions about NAFO’s organizational structure and its content’s effect on political outcomes. The issue is not to locate the data, there are plenty of social media tracking tools for this purpose (Hootsuit.com, 2023; Brandwatch.com, 2023; Buffer.com, 2023; keyhole.co, 2023). The problem is financial and is making it very difficult for lone individuals to access. This is why I encourage the Swedish Defence University to invest in one of these services, preferably Hootsuit.com or Keyhole.co, to allow student to collect more comprehensive data.

As for future research, I recommend other researchers to delve deeper into the organizational structure of NAFO, and to evaluate the outcome and effects of NAFO operations on the political reality that shapes the war against Ukraine.

10. Fig. 1-14

Fig. 1: @official_NAFO, 2023-03-08



Fig 2. Screenshots of @NotJustAnyNafo's twitter-feed, accessed 2023-06-08.

NotJustAnyNafo 🇺🇦🇵🇸🇵🇷🇵🇹 retweetade

reshet @the_reshet · 19 h
#NAFOfellas, please type the following in search and let me know if you get any results:

1. "Nona Mamulashvili"
2. "Gamziri"
3. "Georgian Legion"
4. "Mamuka Mamulashvili"

Thanks 😊

#UnitedWeStand

🗨 115 ↻ 49 ❤ 159 📊 71,6K

NotJustAnyNafo 🇺🇦🇵🇸🇵🇷🇵🇹 retweetade

Ximinez @ipa_ftw · 21 h
There is no NAFO in my feed at all this morning. A few replies, but zero tweets. @elonmusk canceled a whole movement.

🗨 110 ↻ 28 ❤ 178 📊 5 112

NotJustAnyNafo 🇺🇦🇵🇸🇵🇷🇵🇹 retweetade

Bilbo Bonkins aka The Bilbo of Consequences #NAFO @ChrisKyiv · 1 d
#NAFOfellas if we can't be found in a search it seems good to me. wWe can work in the shadows. We can find vatniks with keyword searches but they can't find us with our hashtag

🗨 1 ↻ 3 ❤ 13 📊 108

NotJustAnyNafo 🇺🇦🇵🇸🇵🇷🇵🇹 retweetade

Dognerys 🔥 and 🩸 @2ug2ug · 1 d
Please RT so we can figure out the scope of the problem

Eliza @1JessicaEliza · 1 d
How any fellas are shadow banned?

Screen Name
@ 1JessicaEliza Check

OPTION +

Eliza @1JessicaEliza
7991 Following 7407 Followers

Fig. 3 Appendix p. 38, 97, 63

Freizeitgestalter CIRCUS FELLA 🇨🇭 🇺🇸 🇩🇪 🇪🇺 🇷🇺 @20gimsack · May 8
Oh yeah thats true. We have become a serius force.



1 1 4 27

← Tweet

Vatniks shall be bonked @NAFO_Dragonfly

I prefer direct assault.
[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)



Vatniks shall be bonked @NAFO_Dragonfly · May 7
[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)



1 2 35

Fig 4. Appendix p. 48, 64, 89

-  **Robert McNair** @Robert_Mcnair50 · May 8 ...
Why then is NATO defending Ukraine, a non NATO member?
3 2 45
-  **MadAtTheGalaxy** 🇳🇴 🇳🇴 🇳🇴 @MadAtTheGalaxy · May 8 ...
nato is not defending it, nato members are the once gifting equipment to ukraine, there is a difference in this.
3 33
-  **Vatriks shall be bonked**
@NAFO_Dragonfly ...

Yeah, it's more like this.

[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)



1:36 PM · May 8, 2023 · 15 Views

This Tweet is from a suspended account. [Learn more](#)



Vatniks shall be bonked @NAFO_Dragonfly · May 7

...

If so, what Russian Victory Day parade in Kyiv on 9th May 2022 doing, then?

[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)



2



2

60



Darren J Maher M.A. @darrenjmaher · May 7

...

That's soooo fake, everyone knows there is no grass in a russian cemetery.

[#Fella](#)



a ghostly fella @mr_gh0stly · May 3

...

I invade your home, remove your roommates/significant other, hold a vote. Your household voted to hand over the deed to me. Thanks for the property loser.



S.H. Brewster @ModRadical · May 3

Replying to @MillerEP and @SallyMayweather

Donbas democratically voted to leave Ukraine. Do you hate democracy now?

2

5

62

1,684



Devil in Baggy Pants 🇺🇸

...

@in_baggy

In the case of @ModRadical, his "roommate" is his mom and the "home" is her basement. 🤔💀

#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable



2:36 PM · May 4, 2023 · 10 Views

Fig. 5 Appendix p. 61



Vatniks shall be bonked @NAFO_Dragonfly · May 7
[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)

Whatever you hope to gain by debating shibes on the bird app will be lost along with your dignity attempting to pursue it.



Fig 6. Appendix 1 p. 9, 21, 53, 100

 **Nell the Weaver** Нелл ткаля #Fella 🇺🇦 @NelltheWeaver · May 9 ...

Okey dokey megathread fellas- post a screenshot showing the amount of your donation. We need to get to \$700 and then we can have our very own Megathread drone. Please drop your donation directly under this tweet so I can keep a tally for U24 🧡💙 LET'S BUY THAT DRONE!



🗨️ 25 🔄 13 ❤️ 40 📊 4,439 📤

← **1 tweet**

 **MK** 🇺🇦🇺🇸🇷🇺🌻 @ChildOptional · Oct 9, 2022 ...

Russia has the absolute gall to call the Crimea bridge destruction a terrorist attack that killed 3 people. But then this is what they do. 🇷🇺🇺🇸
[#RussialsATerroristState](#) [#RussialsLosing](#)

 **Oriannalya** 🇺🇦🇺🇸 @Lyla_lilas · Oct 9, 2022

It's the hell for the civilians in Zaporozhye :



🗨️ 26 🔄 135 ❤️ 464 📊 📤



☀️ **Sunbro Fella** ☀️ @SunFellaWarrior · May 8

Good night fellas. Keep on the good work 🤝.

[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)



HOW I SLEEP KNOWING THAT I
OFFENDED VATNIKS ONLINE



1



5



70



955



← Tweet



Egor Sugar @SugarEgor · May 2 ·

Oh my fucking god! No, no, NO! Why you fucking do this!?

Marinka, Ukraine



197

801

2,510

132.3K



Vatniks shall be bonked

@NAFO_Dragonfly

Just Mordor being Mordor. 😞

[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)



HOW RUSSIA PORTRAYS ITS ROLE IN WORLD WAR 2



WHAT ACTUALLY HAPPENED



42

135



F-16s

3,000 Tweets



Business & Finance · Trending · Elen

1,000 Tweets

Trending in Sweden · Ulf Kristersson

Trending in Sweden · Trans

2,000 Tweets

Trending in Sweden · Tate

2,000 Tweets

Trending in Sweden · rydström

Trending in Sweden · Malmö FF

2,000 Tweets

Who to follow

Artistical Bonking Felts @artisticalbonking

Планш Вєдмїє #NAFO @planshvedmye

#WeAreNAFO SOFFell... @wearenafo

2,000 Tweets

Technical Services · Private Policy · Content Policy · Accessibility · Support · More · May 9 · 2023 · 8:45



INNAfo @INNAfo2023

Today it will be a very helpful meme in your work, my sweet RuZZniophobes. You'll thank me later 😊 #NAFO #NAFOCatsDivision #NAFOExpansionsNonNegotiable #NAFOfellas #RussiasATerroristState #RussialsCollapsing #RussialsLosing

7:11 AM · May 9, 2023 · 9,111 Views

38 Retweets 4 Quotes 135 Likes

1 Bookmark



Tweet your reply! Reply



INNA... @INNAfo20... · May 9 · This one too 😊



1 4 22 1,065



Bere... @Berenik48... · May 9 · Boost!



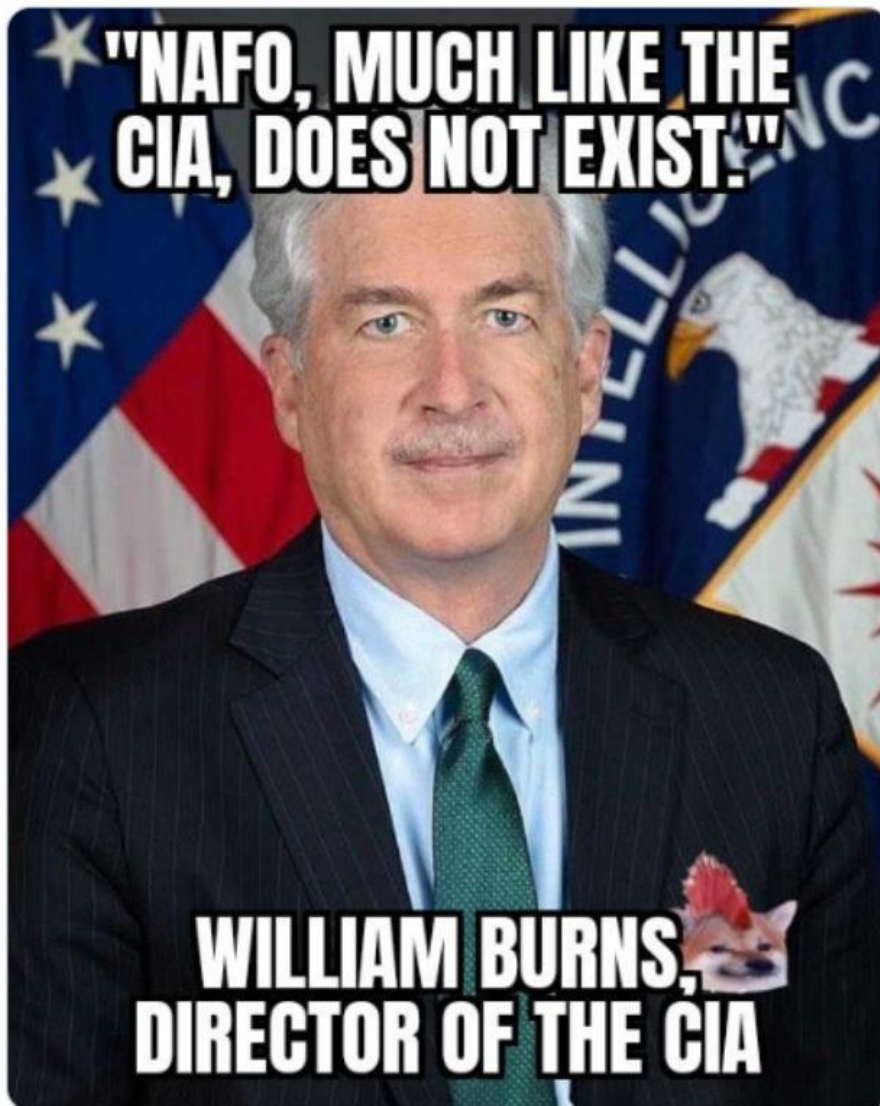
Fig. 8 Appendix 1 p. 47, 55, 82

 **Vatniks shall be bonked**
@NAFO_Dragonfly

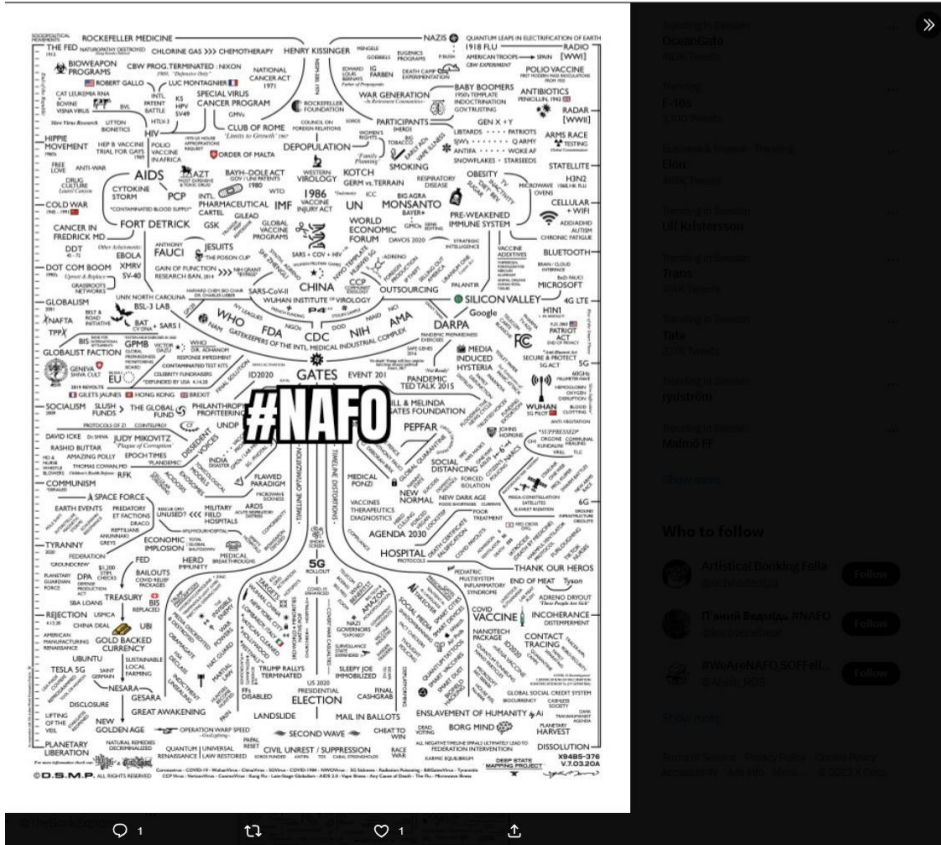
Yeah, we heard such stuff from the West in 1938. Appeasement of evil didn't work then. Never has, never will. NATO is the only guarantee of not being invaded by Russia.

As for CIA, it doesn't exist, it's a hoax, the guy himself said so.

[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)



2:20 PM · May 8, 2023 · 25 Views



Rev La... @REVLM... - May 7 ...
 Putin : "The CIA does not work on behalf of the American people or act in their interests."

Dushant C... @cadu... - May 7 ...
 US is a empire who is run by some people called Deep State. Elections are just showcase material in America. There is no real democracy in US. The real power lies in pentagon.

Vatniks shall be bonked @NAFO_Dragonfly ...
 It is all a bit more complicated than you think, I am afraid. 😬
 #NAFOExpansionsIsNonNegotiable
 12:35 AM · May 8, 2023 · 20 Views

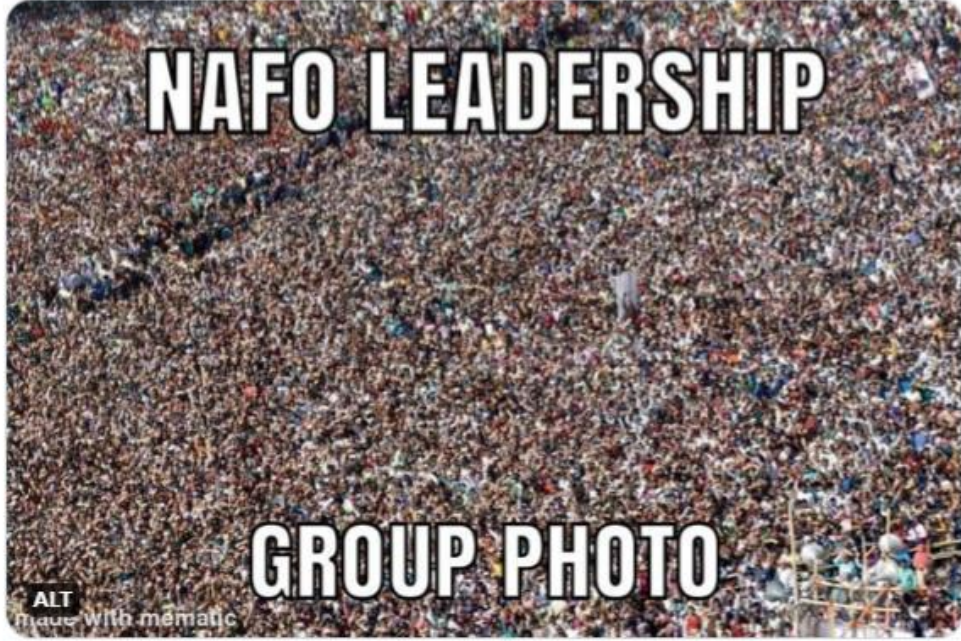
1 Like

Tweet your reply! Reply

Floridanam Fell... @... - May 8 ...
 How much adderal did this take

Margaret @migib2012

Fella is as fella does, let's ask the management.
 Congratulations on your book!
 #NAFOExpansionsIsNonNegotiable



7:56 PM · May 5, 2023 · 26 Views

Fig. 9 appendix 1 p. 4, 5, 24

Vatniks shall be bonked @NAFO_Dragonfly · May 10
Replying to @hoholstani
Aren't you a prime example?
[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)



Monsterpocket @Affenpocker · May 10
I've found a fella with only one following (me lol) [@Wastafarian](#) we can change this cant we 😊
[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)



WastaFari
@Wastafarian_ Follows

We can easily forgive a child who is afraid of the dark; the real tragedy of life is when men are afraid of the light. Prudence Justice Fortitude Temperance
[#NAFO](#)

965 Following 886 Followers

 Followed by Challenger Tank In Ukraine 🇺🇸 🇷🇺, Eliza, and 5 others you follow

51 51 129 5,352



AH-NAFOCALYPSE_NOW @Atfhfms · May 9



Let me add some #nafoboost sauce so that the cause gets a boost, because, that's what we do right, among other things 😊. So that it up ranks your article 5 your request.

Woof!

#NAFO

#NAFOfellas

#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable



1



3



29



NAFOCOG @NAFOCOG · May 9



Much appreciated! 🐶



Fig. 10 appendix 1 p. 21, 34, 81

Tweet

mike swiental @GREEKGOD7777 · Oct 9, 2022
you are the fascist for promoting terrorism

Diddums @Diddums6 · Oct 9, 2022
You are the fascist promoting and supporting the Russian fascist regime as it rapes, murders, bombs, steals, ethnically cleanses and pillages its way across a sovering state. You support that - you are the fascist love. Own you fascism.

mike swiental @GREEKGOD7777 · Oct 9, 2022
NO- YOU are the Fascist that goose steps behind a little Nazi dictator that just asked NATO to start a NUCLEAR WAR with a first strike on Russian and who also orders terrorist bombing attacks that also kill innocent people

The Jolly Bonker @badger65256 · May 7
silly outlier bootlicker ... its only outlier making nuke threats

mike swiental @GREEKGOD7777 · May 8
9,033 as of today

The Jolly Bonker @badger65256 · May 8
Shame theres no room for you in the crock... you would be right at home...

Tweet

Botschaft der Russischen Föderation @RusBotschaft · May 6
Stellungnahme des russischen Botschafters in Deutschland Sergej Netschajew zum für den 8./9. Mai in Berlin erlassenen Verbot von Symbolen des Tages des Sieges im Großen Vaterländischen Krieg

Entschieden ablehnend stehen wir der Entscheidung der Berliner Behörden gegenüber... [Show more](#)

Vatniks shall be bonked @NAFO_Dragonfly
You are willingly serving a terrible evil, Your Excellency. What a shame... [#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)

10:21 PM · May 8, 2023 · 3 Views

Professor Fella Snape @FellaSnape · May 5
Get in, loser!
We're going to destroy moscovial
[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)

2 32 378

Fig. 11 appendix 1 p. 82; Commander-in-Chief of Ukraine's Armed Forces/Handout via REUTERS (Epstein, 2023)



Fig. 12 appendix 1 p. 7, 8, 12

← **Tweet**

 **Silk Road**  @RamiSteele · May 9
Chechen are in bakhmut now!!



0:02

786 206 830 159.1K

 **Vatniks shall be bonked**
@NAFO_Dragonfly

Chicken marching towards the fork. Nothing more.
[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)

Countries with a chicken on their flag...



shouldn't attack countries with a fork on theirs.

10:09 PM · May 9, 2023 · 174 Views

15 Likes

← Tweet

Ronald van Keekem @206Ronald · May 9
Polish Generals Finally Admit the Obvious
sonar21.com/polish-general...

by Mike Krupa
May 9, 2023

#Poland #Ukraine #Russia #NATO



To the surprise of many, voices of sanity are finally beginning to break through in the right media atmosphere in Poland as it relates to the war in Ukraine. In a country that has been at the forefront of supporting the regime in Kiev and whose state institutions do not shy away from vigorously prosecuting refugees on the official propaganda line, whereby Moscow is the Evil Empire, Vladimir Putin is Adolf Hitler and Volodymyr Zelensky is (plus other) Winston Churchill, such a change in tone coming from representatives of the Polish military elite is indicative of a turning point. What is more, these are not the pronouncements of some antiwar dissidents, but of the entire de facto circle of the Polish military elite.

rzypczak

2 1 3 3M

Yann Fella van Rijssel @Yann_rijssel

The obvious is that ruSSians are nazis, that their propaganda spread by useful idiots is ridiculous and that they are losing the war they started.
#ukraine #RussiansATerroristState #RussiansANaziState
#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable

FIGHT
DESINFORMATION & PROPAGANDA
LIKE IN THE POST ABOVE

ENLIST TODAY

#NAFO
#FELLAREQUEST

← Tweet

ayden @squatsons · May 9
If you think Russia not having tanks in the Parade means that they're running low or are out you are huffing the most intense Copium/Hopium hybrid.

We literally saw this yesterday...



1,073 836 5,190 543.4K

Vatniks shall be bonked @NAFO_Dragonfly

Soon, soon enough. 😊
#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable

HOW DO YOU CALL A RUSSIAN TANK BRIGADE RETURNING FROM UKRAINE?

INFANTRY PLATOON...

7:10 PM · May 9, 2023 · 323 Views

1 Retweet 20 Likes

Fig. 13 Appendix 1 p. 17, 28, 33, 38, 60, 100

Kevin Softcock @Kevin_Rockcock · May 9
Sabrina @Sabrina3811857 · May 9
Liked, retweeted, boosted and followed



1 retweet, 3 likes, 21 likes

AH-NAFOCALYPSE_NOW @Athfms
Followed and all sorts of civilities to a nice person.
#NAFO
#NAFOfellas
#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable



Tweet

208 replies, 122 retweets, 618 likes, 25K likes

Grep Holguin @GrepHolguin

Algorithmics try to slow down us but #NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable

11:55 AM · May 9, 2023 · 74 Views

1 Retweet 3 Likes



AH-NAFOCALYPSE_NOW @Atfhfms · May 8

Hold on please.

#NAFO

#NAFOfellas

#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable



🗨️ 🔄 ❤️ 1 📊 30 📌



AH-NAFOCALYPSE_NOW

@Atfhfms

In the ancient times when the historic Buddha was around, some say we were given some dependable advices.

#NAFO

#NAFOfellas

#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable



9:14 PM · May 8, 2023 · 13 Views

← Tweet

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Valentin for Ukraine#NAFO 🇩🇪🇪🇺🇬🇧🇫🇷🇮🇹🇵🇱🇷🇺 ... @Nitnelav... · May 7 ...



1 2 31

This Tweet is from a suspended account. [Learn more](#)

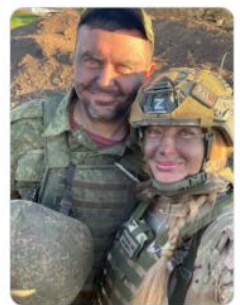


Vatniks shall be bonked @NAFO_Dragonfly · May 7 ...
[#NAFOExpansionIsNonNegotiable](#)





ZOKA @200_zoka · May 3



149 88 1,820

A NAFO Birdfella with a Ca...
@jmsellers04

Which one will she be? #nafo #fellas
#nafofellas #wearenafo
#nafoexpansionisnonnegotiable
#russiaisanazistate
#russiaiscollapsing #russiaislosing
#russiaisaterroriststate
#russianwarcrimes

4:12 AM · May 3, 2023 · 83 Views

4 Likes



Tweet your reply! [Reply](#)

[Show more replies](#)

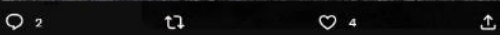
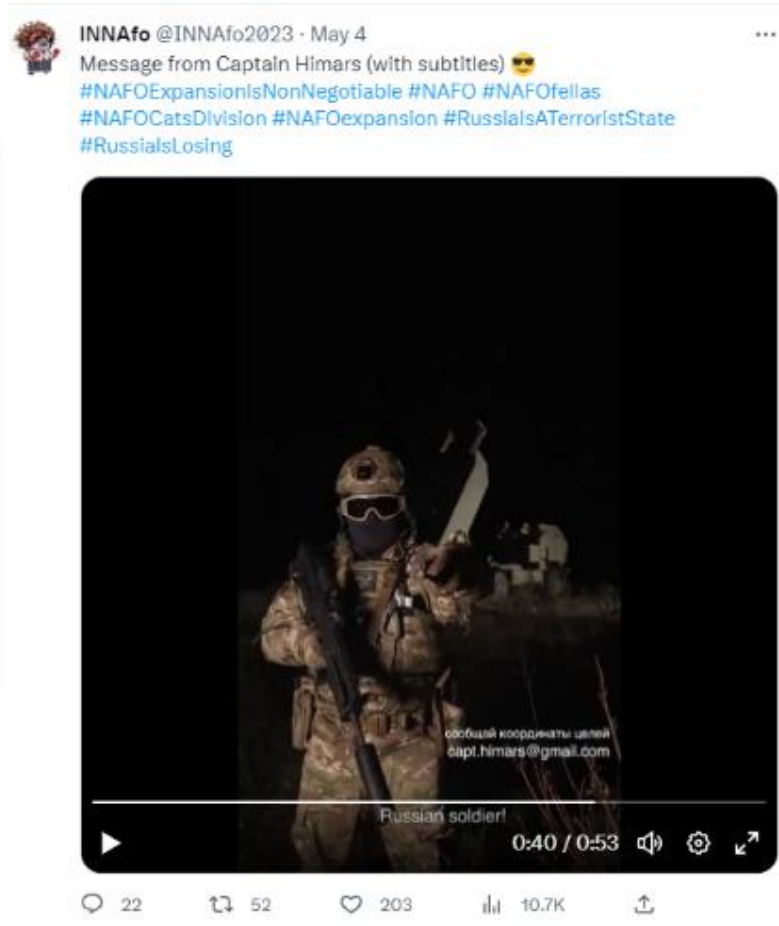
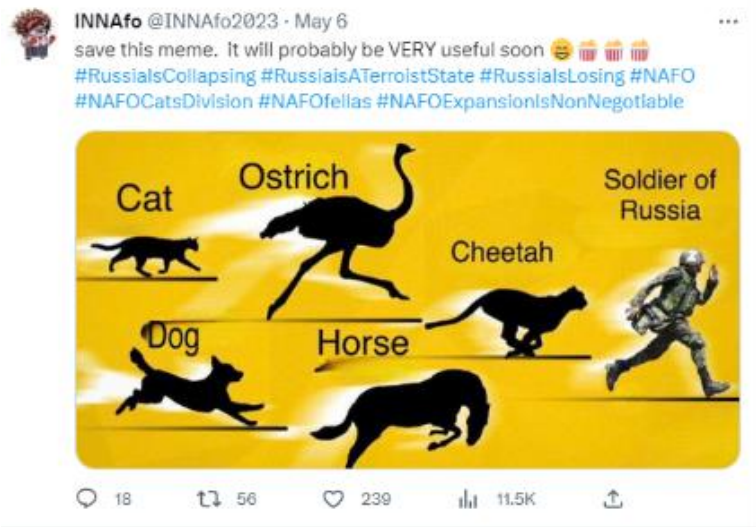
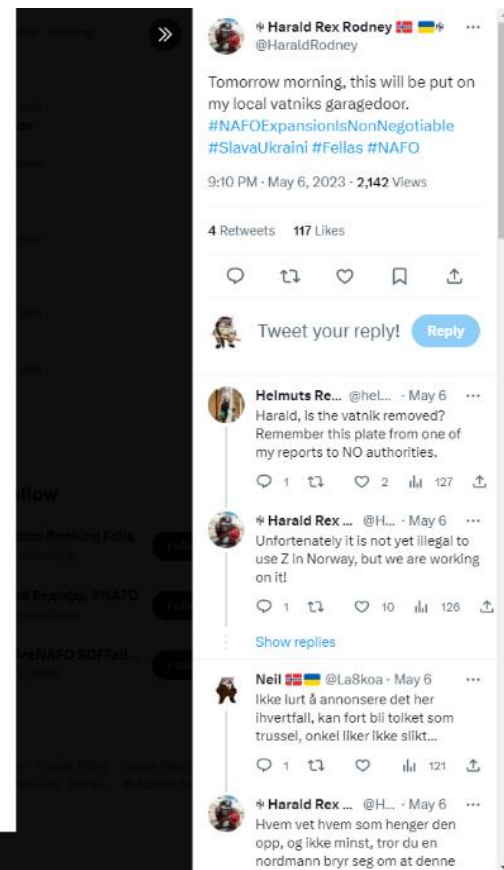


Fig. 14 appendix 1 p. 73, 74, 90



Ми знаємо, хто ти і де живеш.
 Мы знаем, кто вы и где вы живете.
 ہم جانتے ہیں کہ آپ کون ہیں اور آپ کہاں رہتے ہیں
 We know who you are, and where you live.



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