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## THE IDEOLOGICAL MEDIA REPRESENTATION OF PUTIN AND ZELENSKY IN BBC PROFILES: A MULTIMODAL CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

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### Abstract

The current study aims to explore the ideological representation of Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky in BBC's online profiles to see how socio-political ideologies are embedded with the help of semiotic resources within images and their accompanying texts. These ideologically loaded media representations are a medium used to build social realities and political opinions of the public. The selected data, nine images and their captions alongside details, are analysed by adopting Machin's framework of multimodal analysis together with Fairclough's model of representation of social events and van Leeuwen's representation of social actors. The analysis rigorously focuses on the conscious choices of the BBC editors in terms of visual and linguistic features of the profiles and embedded structures of power relations which are represented as common-sense social constructs. The findings suggest that BBC's profiles are far from neutral and they have used discourse and semiotic resources to represent Putin as rigid, vastly powerful and a threat, whereas Zelensky is shown as amiable but dauntless in the face of war and political strife.

**Keywords:** *critical multimodal analysis, socio-political ideology, media, BBC, Volodymyr Zelensky, Vladimir Putin*



## Introduction

The ever-evolving world of communication technology is affecting the way linguists, particularly discourse analysts, view, gather and analyze data nowadays because this technological advancement also affects the domains of social interaction and generation of discourses itself (Scollon & Levine, 2004). Going beyond the interaction between *language* and *context* (Nelson, 1998; Paltridge, 2021) discourse has come to include newer conceptions, revolutionizing discourse analysis by introducing alternative approaches (Ng, 2018). Looking farther than formal discourse analysis, critical discourse analysis (CDA) now includes the investigation of social practices, realities, and identities embedded (Gee, 2010) within text and images. Visual communication being a significant domain of Cultural and Media Studies, has been overlooked by linguists up until late twentieth century when it began to come to the analyst's attention that a large part of meaning making and its comprehension lies in semiotic codes other than language itself (Machin & Mayr, 2012), for example, advertisements rely more on their *visual features* to attract the audience than they do on the textual content. Visual images have begun to accompany texts more and more, adding greater cultural implications, subjectivity, polysemy, and new vistas of meaning associations to online discourse which can certainly be studied by using Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Kress, 2013). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that the basic principles of Halliday's (1986) *systemic functional theory* can be used as a basis to create a set of tools to describe and analyse the features of visual communication. There are some major differences between language and images, found at the meaning (first layer) and semiotic levels (Machin, 2016). Unlike language, visuals cannot have a definite predictable code of grammar as communicative intention, specific descriptions, context and perception (visual literacy) are more fluid in terms of visuals than they are in language. Nonetheless, the growing attention paid to images in today's technologically evolving world, requires a set of rules, albeit abstract, to enable the discourse analysts to better understand, interpret and explain events around us. Van Leeuwen (2012) is of the opinion that the merger between critical discourse analysis and multimodality has just begun to emerge as a separate field with its own identity. Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth MCDA) views graphics (pictures, graphs, diagrams) as meaning making medium which involves a set of *choices* which can be revealed alongside their ideological and vested interests (Machin & Mayr, 2012) to *denaturalize* the



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representation of persons and events within particular contexts aimed at achieving particular outcomes.

### **News Websites and Media Representation**

News as a form of *media discourse* has distinguished socio-cultural functions to perform and so it can never be objective in its choice of language because language and its use always depend on context and ideational constraints (Van Dijk, 1985). So, news pieces possess certain structural, linguistic and register based characteristics (Rose, 2012, 2014). The trend to ensure online availability of most forms of information and communication including websites for news agencies and journals (Scollon & Levine, 2004) means that the data have increasingly come to be presented in multimedia formation giving rise to the use of the term *multimodality* across many fields including discourse studies. “All discourse is multimodal” (Scollon & Levine, 2004) since *language in use* is perpetually being impacted, modified and structured by all the many modes of communicating within *contexts*, including text, design, typography, speech, visuals, and gestures. New communication innovations and media technologies have largely transformed the way broadcast news are delivered and produced (Cottle & Ashton, 1999), introducing new ways and journalistic genres, such as blogs and personalities’ profiles, to engage the audience at multiple forums including but not exclusive news bulletins. These technologies and the choice to use them is shaped by social, political and cultural considerations which are deeply embedded within professional and corporate practices, decisions and contexts which can lead to pressurized and somewhat superficial news (Cottle & Ashton, 1999) (and of other items on websites) production and presentation affecting the overall newsworthiness, the corporation’s output, and its impact on the audience.

British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has represented and presumably played a part in the construction and dissemination of national identity throughout the twentieth century and beyond affecting how people interpret what it actually means “to be British” (Hajkowski, 2013), and worldwide over three hundred million people access BBC world according to BBC’s official estimate published on their website. Therefore, we have selected BBC *newsround* profiles of two world leaders, Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky, for multimodal critical discourse analysis to discover BBC’s ideological agenda in the backdrop of Russia/Ukraine war and BBC’s global image as an authentic and somewhat unbiased news agency. In this perspective, this study aims to discover:



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1. How BBC's choice of captions and images for representing Putin and Zelensky differs ideologically and why?
2. What kind of visual features are employed to document the embedded socio-political power structures?
3. On comparing the images for the two presidents which socio-cultural and political ideologies and international affairs-based agendas of BBC come to the fore?

### Literature Review

There is a need to formulate a holistic approach towards building a theoretical framework which would suffice to study critical visual discourse including that of pictures assisted news (Wang, 2014). *Newsworthiness* and news value mainly exist and are continuously constructed within and through discourse (Bednarek & Caple, 2014), their study searches after a discursive approach and combines multimodal analysis with corpus-assisted discourse analysis to discover how news discourses are employed and function to build ideologies and values surrounding specific topics and the overall news itself. Luca (2020) adapted Halliday's systemic functional grammar (1986), Kress and van Leeuwen's insights on image analysis from *Reading Images* and Fairclough's three-layered model of critical discourse analysis (2015) to decode the Brexit related news articles' text and image, a multimodal discourse analysis, to understand journalist's ideological intentions and intended effects on the audience. Images and multimodality have the potential to explicate the underlying and even hidden scenarios of metaphors (Đurović & Silaški, 2017) and metaphoric associations (Machin, 2016). The use of multimodality in certain discourses within specific socio-political contexts is a very significant tool to construct an ideologically embedded *rhetorical impact* (Đurović & Silaški, 2017) through online media-based content.

BBC website is visited by millions of people around the world as an authentic source of information which makes it ideological agendas wider than just affecting and shaping British identity, the global information dissemination makes it a significant target for critical ideological discourse analysis.

### Research Methodology

Ours is a qualitative multimodal critical discourse analysis of online BBC profiles of Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky posted on BBC *Newsround* after Russia-Ukraine war began. Purposive handpicked sampling is the most suitable data collection method for the current study as



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it has the potential to fulfil the main aim of this research, which is to analyze the representational and ideological agendas of a widely read and accessed online international news forum. Due to the limited scope of the study the researcher has chosen BBC as the representative news agency sample. The selected profile pages were both published on BBC *Newsround* website days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Putin's profile was published on February 26, 2022 following which Zelensky's profile was posted on February 28, 2022. Both profiles undergo constant online updates and are open for the online audience to read and review in the comment sections. For this research, the online BBC profiles of Putin and Zelensky were accessed on May 30, 2022. Putin's profile comprises four images, four video links and one hundred and eighty-eight public comments. Zelensky's profile contains five images, two video links and seven public comments. Keeping in view the objectives of the current study, the total nine images from both selected profiles and their accompanying texts/captions have been subjected to Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, Fairclough's framework (2003) of representation of *social events* (exclusion, inclusion, prominence) of persons, language, and forms of activity, and Van Leeuwen's (2008) social actors *role allocation*, active/passive social actors (p.32), *nomination and categorization* (p.40). Machin's (2016) Multimodal Analysis is a social semiotic approach towards visual communication systematically describing the range of available *choices* of color, typeface, style, borders, photographic style, compositional arrangements, context, etc. and how these elements are decided and how signs are used in combination to produce certain effects (person, setting, object, pose).

Multimodality may include sounds, language and visuals (Machin, 2016), this research focusses mainly on visuals of two presidents as depicted in their BBC profiles in the backdrop of war and armed conflict between their nations, i.e. Russia and Ukraine. For this purpose, the selected categories of analysis are taken from Machin's model of Multimodal analysis (2016) which include the investigation of typography, iconography (poses, objects, setting, photogenia, participants), iconographic symbolism (cultural and historical conventions and meaning association), modality and social actors (gaze, angle, distance).



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### Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

From Machin's Multimodal analysis framework (2016), the following visual features are selected for the image analysis:

**Typography** depends mainly on meaning transfer and *metaphorical association* (Machin, 2016), the choice of font, design and typeface affect the semiotic system of meaning making within a context and the meaning potential of a news piece. Bold fonts and capital letters can connote a dramatic progress or breaking news as compared to simpler more neutral font and small letters choices.

**Poses** are those *semiotic resources* that carry the meaning potential through *connotations* and the dictionary like *associations* (Machin, 2016) we each hold in our minds, for example, rigid body poses may connote discipline or authority while openness of gestures and body can connote freedom, energy and an urge to connect.

**Objects** are the items that are carried by the represented participants or are shown as a part of their overall personality lying close or attached to the dresses or are shown to be generally used as accessories. Objects can relay *meanings* (Machin, 2016) and in some contexts, their presence is so presupposed and *taken for granted* that one simply expects and perceives them to be a part of the image.

**Settings** contextualize an image by providing background details as to where in which physical setup one must view the image to have been produced, *decontextualized* (Machin, 2016) images denote more symbolic meanings of ideas and concepts rather than documenting the image.

**Photogenia** includes techniques such as framing (setting boundaries or their absence), lighting, distance and focus of the image (Machin, 2016), the interpretation of which largely depends on our socio-cultural connotations.

**Iconographic symbolism** refers to those particular concepts and ideas that come to acquire a socio-cultural meaning of their own regardless of convention and connotative metaphors (Machin, 2016).

**Modality** distinguishes the truth value of images which can occur in many forms (Machin, 2016), it can be naturalistic, abstract or sensory.

**Social actors** are the represented participants or people within the image, the angle of the image, participant gaze - either offers or demands (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006)- and distance from the viewer indicate power structures, and nature of interpersonal relations like remoteness and intimacy (Machin, 2016).



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Color as semiotic code has communicative functions in terms of metafunctions, the value of color lies in its ability to produce grammatical patterns and combinations of meaning, which can be direct or associative (culturally/socially/politically), it can produce different kinds of emotional effects but there are no set rules to study the effects color can produce (Machin, 2016).

### Analysis & Findings

This section presents the analysis of Putin and Zelensky's profiles before being presidents and in pre-and post Russia-Ukraine war context published on BBC from multimodal perspectives. Each figure is analysed and the discussion in the following section relates this analysis with the ideologies propagated by the media.

**Figure 1**

*Representing Putin before being a President*



The typographical features of the text accompanying the images are very significant, simple, bold, black font asking a question followed by white small font used for giving details about the image aim to convey

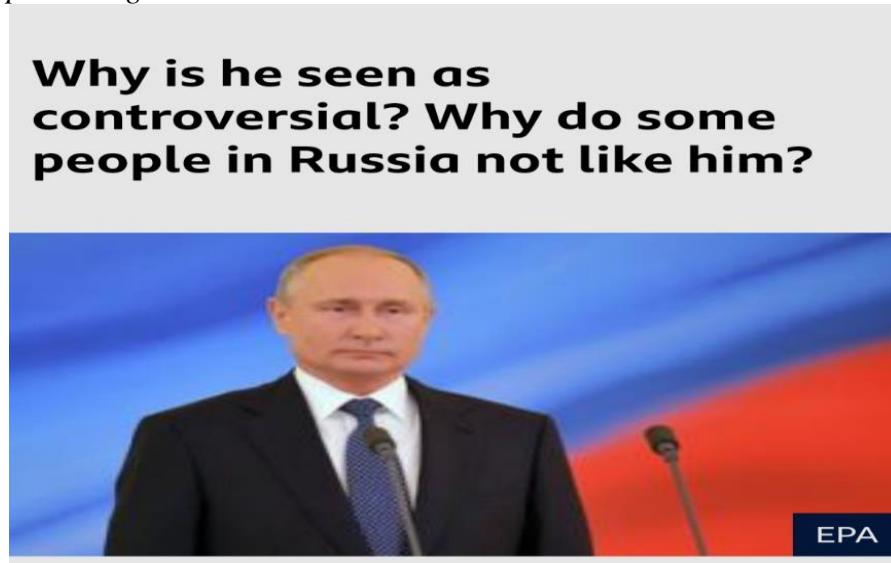


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neutrality. Side *pose*, turned to face the audience with direct demanding *gaze*, pursed lips, rigid and expressionless face, all point towards indifference and seriousness of an authoritative character even as a schoolboy, no *objects* or background detail in the *setting* is included making the face *decontextualized* and *symbolic*. Presence of double *frames* indicate strict boundary division between the face and the rest of the context, separating the boy from audience. Close focused shot, direct *angle*, with an almost *naturalistic modality* in monochrome *colour* further emphasizes the seriousness of the boy's impact on audience and contemporary world at large as the sole *social actor*.

**Figure 2**

*Representing Putin as a Controversial Russian President*



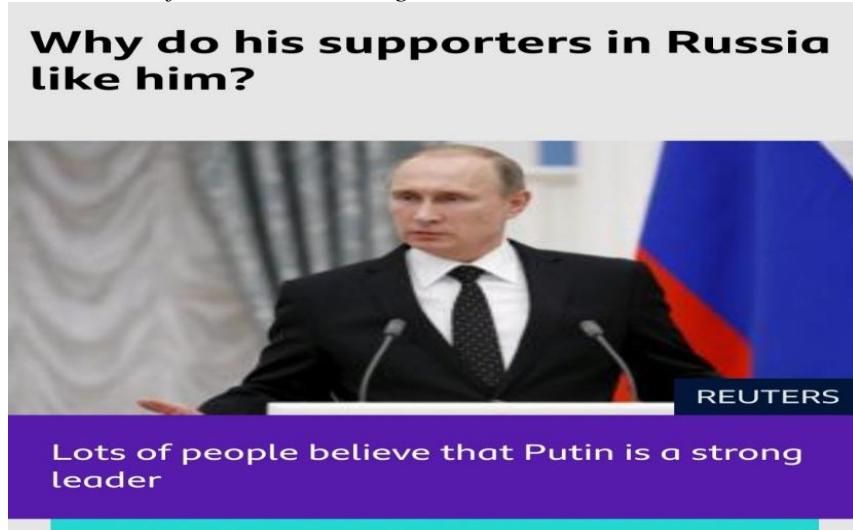
Bold black and Calibri *font* with a neutral impression is used here to ask an ideologically laden leading questions: *why is Putin controversial* (assuming that he is as a fact), and *why do some* Russians dislike him (again *taking for granted* that they do). This shows an attempt on BBC's part to present biased opinion as natural and common-sense way of viewing socio-political realities of Putin's Russia. Rigid body *pose* exerting authority, demanding discipline and obedience, is further complemented by an absence of *objects* which are limited only to an official suit and tools to speak loud (mics) which seem like a natural part of an official nationalistic image's *setting*. The image is *contextualized* by partial Russian flag *colour*



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as the sole background hinting at the *symbolic meanings* that Putin only has part of the whole Russia behind him but that is all that matters to him. Inclusion of *frames* again indicate distance and set boundaries with a brightly lit face and torso and a total exclusion of hands and gestures. The *angle* is direct and the shot is not taken from a distance, with the *iconographic symbolism* of the flag colour indicating political connotations included in the mix of abstract and naturalistic *modality*. Putin being the only represented *social actor* has his *gaze* fixed sternly on the non-represented participants/actors (some of whom dislike him as the accompanying text states), presumably seated in front of him demanding something from them and not from the image's viewer showing remoteness from the global viewing audience as he stands in the position of power.

**Figure 3**  
*Representation of Putin as a Strong Leader*



Same neutral *font* is used here for yet another ideologically embedded question, smaller font about *lots of people* who do see him as a *strong leader*, slightly open *pose* with a fraction of hand showing in an image which mentions supporters, same lack of *objects* but a more naturalistic and expected background with flag shown partially and dull shade of curtains, all seemingly a part of the image by default. *Setting* is slightly *contextualized* with few background details of a government office setup lacking symbolic meaning except for the iconography of the flag showing nationalistic concern of the president, his supporters and of Russia at large.



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*Frame* sets a boundary for a well-lit image, taken from short distance, focused on torso with sides showing background, with a *naturalistic modality* documenting the event. Putin, the only *social actor* represented in the image has stern expression with his *gaze* fixed on non-represented audience demanding something of them (maybe the undying support they can offer and the caption talks about), *colour* is natural and implies official tones.

**Figure 4**

*Representation of Putin with other World Leaders*



US President Joe Biden met President Putin  
in 2021.

Same *typographical features* continue to be used to ask a seemingly neutral question about Putin's international reputation and affairs. The question is answered with an image from the 2021 meeting between American president Biden, of all the world leaders, and Putin. Putin displays a slightly open body *pose* with close hands, whereas Biden is sitting cross legged, folded hands and rigid body pose, but with neutral face expression demonstrating authority, discipline and remoteness. More *background* than any preceding image is included here, naturalized *setting* with only symbolic meanings being conveyed through the flags of two rival nations but even the flags are the expected *objects* of such photographs taken at heads of the state meetings. This highly *contextualized* official *setting* with



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natural *colour* and two almost equally important *social actors* is an attempt at documenting the event rather than preserving some abstract idea. *Frames* set the leaders apart from the audience and the picture itself is shot from a considerable distance to include both leaders and the background. Both of them are not engaging with the viewers, rather demanding something of the non-represented audience showing remoteness of both presidents from common viewers, with a natural *modality* and non-provocative colour.

**Figure 5**  
*Representation of Zelensky after Russian Invasion*



### **Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has been in the news a lot recently after Russia invaded Ukraine.**

For this image too the neutral bold *font* is used but with underlined emphasis on “Russia invaded Ukraine”, the phrase itself is ideologically loaded and shows the BBC’s opinion on the conflict and whom do they hold the main responsible *actor* for igniting the conflict. The caption itself points towards a stated fact on BBC’s account that Zelensky has gained fame and world’s attention only after being invaded unlike Putin who is always in the news, and so it is Putin who is responsible for Zelensky’s recent rise to fame. They open Zelensky’s profile with an image of him wearing an army jacket, closed, tense, and disciplined body *pose*, showing war and its dominance over all other domains of life and officialdom in Ukraine. The only apparent *object* in the image is the army gear which merges with the overall



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impression of the *setting* that includes nothing but these objects in the background, and the viewer takes it for granted. The background detail only amounts to partially shown men in army fatigues, looking in different directions as if not caring about the photographs and going about their overarching business of defending Ukraine, showing the chaos and brought on by war and hence *contextualizing* the image as taken in an active war zone documenting the war and Zelensky's role in it. The boundaries of the *frame* cut off the background and parts of the faces of the secondary *social actors* in the image keeping Zelensky in the foreground and well lighted. The *iconographic symbolism* indicates the cultural convention of a president's dress code has been altered and Zelensky's disregard of formal suit in favour of army jackets is symbolic of a sitting president whose country is currently under attack. Being the main *social actor* his *gaze* is fixed ahead as if to engage the non-represented audience and to demand something of them rather than the viewer, *naturalistic modality*, politically motivated war-like colour scheme and averted gazes and indifferent poses of the background actors all indicate a documentation of war times and Ukraine's strength.

Figure 6

*Representation of Zelensky before being a political Figure*



Zelensky's life before becoming president features his career as an actor and comedian while Putin was represented with a black and white childhood picture as if before coming to power all he was is a somber, no fun boy. Same old neutral bold and plain *font* followed by a detail of his career as comedian and actor is smaller simpler white font. The image shows Zelensky as engaging with an open body *pose*, energetic and connecting



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with people holding the position of a speaker, an entertainer with the usual objects associated with a comedian, i.e., a mic and a stage with a vibrant colourful background as the natural and expected *setting* for performing. Lighting is natural, *modality* and *colour* scheme is natural, *gaze* is directed towards his non-represented viewers, open hand gestures and civilian clothes all symbolic of a better, livelier and happier Zelensky whose job was to make other Ukrainians happy.

**Figure 7**

*Representation of Zelensky as a Mock President*



Continuing under the same heading one more image is added to show Zelensky's harmless life as an actor, smaller white neutral *font* for subheading details showing "Mr." Zelensky in a TV show. With five represented *social actors*, Zelensky taking the central position, the image is a still from his TV series, *Servant of the People*, in which Zelensky plays the part of the president of Ukraine. In the image, Zelensky has somewhat straight body *pose* with arms hanging loose and a startled and stern expression on his face, the *objects* in the picture denote a house setting with a living room background where Zelensky, clad in a white vest, confronts someone shown partially from back presumably in an official position guessing from his coat's collar, while the rest of the social actors look on and smile at him. The background *setting contextualizes* the image as a



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scene from a drama where Zelensky is playing a part in an informal domestic setting, all the participants have their gazes *fixed* on the actor whose face is hidden from the camera, in a naturalistic *modality*, light and colour are very light and natural. An image, that is in complete contrast with the war zone and official settings of a president's images.

**FIGURE 8**

*Representation of Zelensky after as a Ukrainian President*



*Neutral typography* with a smaller font informs the viewer on how and why Zelensky was elected. He displays an open engaging *pose* showing an urge to interact and connect. Hand gesture is also open and welcoming smile indicates amenability of the elected president towards his nation. Dressed in an official black suit he is the only *social actor* pictured closely from a direct *angle* in bright natural light against the *background* of the symbolic yellow of Ukrainian flag. The *modality* and over all *colour* scheme are natural and it portrays and documents his image very positively.



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**Figure 9**

*Representation of Zelensky as a Ukrainian Commander-in-Chief*



The somber neutral bold *font* heading simply introduces Zelensky as Ukraine's commander-in-chief without any exceptions or comments on how his people like or dislike him and why (unlike Putin's profile) he is not controversial and the detail providing white letters in non-bold smaller font document the event as a press conference on 25 February, 2022, right after *Russia invaded Ukraine*. The *colour*, *light* and *modality* are all very naturalistic and his fixed *gaze* on the non-represented audience is as much demanding as it is giving them information about the shocking and destructive state of affairs his country has suddenly fallen to. Impressing upon the world through his informal dress that he has no time for formalities, the choice of colour for the shirt and jacket show association with his soldiers and the *object* (clothing) does not fit into the natural way of things and expected *setting* and *objects*, i.e., the background wall stating in all capital letters "OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT OF UKRAINE" with a president who is not even dressed as a president to hold a press conference, emphasizing the state of emergency he is in which also shows from his worn out and serious expression and rigid body *pose* unlike the energetic lively disposition of the preceding image.

These choices are not neutral, social relationships of power, ideologies, the nature of (assumed/propagated) social realities, and vested interests are the key elements (Machin, 2016) that played a part in the selection of these images and their features.



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### **Putin versus Zelensky in BBC's Image Representation**

**Typography** for both presidents is largely the same, i.e., simple bold black, hence non-dramatic neutral (Machin, 2016) font for headings followed by smaller white letters in simple font for details or sub-headings, showing that BBC is equally neutral about reporting on the profiles of two rival presidents of European nations, it's the lexical and discursive differences that mark the distinctive ideological portrayal of the two leaders. The only exception is the underlined caption *Russia invaded Ukraine* which is based on a choice of *prominence*.

**Poses** have a greater variance in the representation of Putin and of Zelensky. All of Putin's images, with the exception of figure 4, have rigid body poses including the image of him as a teenage boy, depicting him as authoritative, mysterious and remote throughout his political career and even before he became a politician. Figure 4 is an exception where Putin is seated next to Biden, the frame is large showing full body (unlike all other torso and face only images) with slightly open pose and hand gestures to portray his openness to an equal, a powerful nation's leader, and to the possibility of better international relations between the two. Zelensky on the other hand, does not have a single full body image but his poses vary from energetic, interactively connecting, open body gestures, even smiling face (figure 6, 7) to tense, rigid, closed and somber expression exerting authority, discipline and remoteness (figure 5,8,9). The first type of images portrays his energy before the war and the later kind of poses indicate a serious response in the face of war, whereas Putin remains the same through all events and eras as if the BBC representative is trying to imply that imposing war does not make a difference to him.

**Objects** accompanying the images of both leaders mostly fall under the normal *taken for granted* domain and merge with the background setting in all images. One major difference lies in the war representing dress code. While Putin is shown in formal wear in all images, Zelensky's dress and background shift as he shifts from pre to post war role. Army gear dominates even the presidential office settings and the general impression of the viewer can be that war made no difference to character and role of Putin but it has shifted the domains of Zelensky's life and office.

**Setting** of all images except figure 1 is naturalistic with varying degrees of background details documenting the images. The main difference between the choice of background between the representation of the two presidents is the fact that Putin's images are all set in an official background except figure 1, while Zelensky has been assigned various backgrounds showing



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that he has a dynamic and alive personality, ready to connect and be remote as the situation demands while Putin stays the same callous man in office.

**Photogenia** of all images includes set frames and clear boundaries, both leaders are shown in clear lights, from close distance and are the focus of the images except when Putin shares the focus with Biden in figure 4.

**Iconographic symbolism** is most apparent in Zelensky's army fatigue jackets and green shirts during war time which have come to acquire a meaning of their own. Putin is not assigned any such symbolism, the common conventional symbolism is the flags in background which appear more in Putin's background than they do in Zelensky, hinting at Putin's obsession with nationalistic agendas.

**Modality** of all images is naturalistic except when there is no background e.g., figure 1. The truth value of all images is documented through modality except when Zelensky appears within a drama series and the viewer knows that the image is not a real-life image but from a fictional world, Putin does not enjoy such variation, his personality image is fixed as a stern official.

**Social actors** are mainly Putin and Zelensky themselves, Putin appears as the sole social actor in all his images except when he shares the floor with Biden, creating a general impression of being the sole authority who has a demanding and indifferent gaze and holds immense power. Zelensky appears in the company of other social actors twice and has engaging gaze in images presenting his pre-war presidential victory image (figure 8) and the image from his actor/comedian days (figure 6), impressing upon the viewer that he is just like any other human, engaging and fun to be around, non-authoritative at one point in his life but the stern and disciplined *commander-in-chief* when it comes to defending Ukraine from *invaders*.

**Colour** scheme of all images of both leaders is official and/or natural, except figure 1 which is black and white. The symbolic colour for Putin is the colour of Russian flag which dominates his profile images, and for Zelensky it is the colour of civilian life contrasted by the war-time army gear based colour.

### **Linguistic Analysis**

The titles of both the profiles are significant for critical ideological analysis, the choice of lexical items and their structure is ideological (Fairclough, 2015), topicalization (Yule & Brown, 1986) follows a socio-political agenda and the difference in *nomination* (Van Leeuwen, 2008) is also very apparent. Although both the profiles were published after the Russia/Ukraine armed conflict began, yet Putin's profile does not mention



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the war following the strategy of *exclusion* (Fairclough, 2003) of a social event that is given *inclusion* (Fairclough, 2003) and *prominence* (Fairclough, 2003) in Zelensky's profile title , it simply topicalizes Vladimir Putin as the opening subject of the title and then asks "*Who is the Russian President, and what does he want?*", emphasizing Putin's *role allocation* (Van Leeuwen, 2008) as an *activized* social actor who holds a position of power and can misuse it to get what he wants as is reflected by the sudden question in the title "*what does he want?*", so the title is leading the viewer to think first and foremost about Putin as a powerful figure who wants something that the world needs to find out to provide or prevent him from achieving. Zelensky's profile title opens with "*Ukraine Invasion*" where the writer has chosen to give topicalization based *prominence* to the invasion and war in Ukraine rather than Zelensky's personality and role in the office, which in turn portrays Putin as the authority responsible for what happened to Ukraine while Zelensky had no role in it. The next part of the title simply asks "*Who is Volodymyr Zelensky?*" with a clear *exclusion* (Fairclough, 2003) of the phrase assigned to Putin, "*what does he want?*" not making the audience think about the agendas and aspirations on Zelensky's part because he does not hold the kind of power that Putin holds to use and abuse his authority to get what he wants. Images of Putin's past and present life have leading questions as headings and image captions: "*What was Vladimir Putin's life like before being president?*" (Figure 1) *why is he seen as controversial? Why do some people in Russia not like him?* (Figure 2), "*Why do his supporters in Russia like him?*" as "*a strong leader*" (Figure 3), and "*How do world leaders feel about Putin?*" (Figure 4), all these titles are working to promulgate the BBC's ideologies about Putin covertly. Throughout the text he is referred to as *president Putin, Putin and Vladimir Putin*, but never as Mr. Putin, there is no reference to his pre-president life in soft, humane terms, whereas Zelensky is referred to as Mr. Zelensky and images from pre-president past show him as lively and normal human being. There is a complete *exclusion* (Fairclough, 2003) of leading questions or any questions from Zelensky's image captions, all his images have statements as their captions about his "*life before politics*" (Figure 6), "*Switch from comedian to president*" (Figure 8), and "*Ukraine's commander-in-chief*" (Figure 9). There is no mention of Ukrainians disliking or supporting him, an utter *exclusion* of world's opinion about him and the word *controversial* is never used for him. All these features lead the researcher to deduce that BBC aims to portray Putin as a controversial and unjust president whereas Zelensky is just a man like any one of us who



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stepped forward and took hold of Ukraine's defence as commander-in-chief when he was forced to face the Russian invasion.

### **CONCLUSION**

There is no neutral documentation (Machin, 2016), and a close analysis of the selected images and their accompanying texts shows this to be the case in many aspects. The semiotic codes and the choices behind them are ideologically motivated even in the case of BBC. The images selected to represent the two presidents varied widely and showed the vested interests of the media corporation. In Putin's profile he was the only social actor represented in all images except the one where Biden shared the frame with him. On the other hand, Zelensky was shown as more dynamic, through various stages of his life and career. The choice of pose, setting, objects, photogenia and social actors all portray Putin as aloof, authoritative, rigid, fixated and unchanged in his views throughout his career, whereas Zelensky is shown in a more positive light as a human, as an entertainer, as a revolutionary president and as a defender of Ukraine against Russian aggression. This kind of biased portrayal suits BBC's larger interests as a British representative media outlet because Britain has taken a very stern anti-Russian stance on the political stage since the war between Ukraine and Russia began. Modality and typography used for both presidents' images is almost similar, but the show of neutrality is challenged when the caption *Russia invaded Ukraine* appears underlined, which does not occur in any other instance. The linguistic and discursive choices such as inclusion, exclusion, nomination and topicalization for both represented participants are less carefully cloaked and the ideologies their analysis unearths clearly show that the profiles are subjective rather than objective, keeping in line with the cultural and socio-political affiliations of Britain, BBC and a large part of the anti-Russian Europe. Putin is the culprit, power crazed man who did not have a normal life, even childhood, unlike Zelensky, he only ever wanted to be a spy and then a dictator, whereas Zelensky is more humane, someone the audience is encouraged to connect with at personal level.

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