

Changing the perception of Ukraine in the European space through war diaries

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Abstract: The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has not only transformed geopolitical realities, but also reshaped cultural and imagological discourses across Europe. War diaries, as one of the most immediate and authentic literary responses to wartime experience, have emerged as a crucial medium for rearticulating Ukraine's self-image and its representation in the European cultural space. This article analyses Ukrainian wartime diaries as imagological texts that mediate between the construction of national identity (auto-image) and the shaping of external perceptions (hetero-image) within European cultural discourse. By documenting daily realities of conflict, resilience and survival, these texts challenge stereotypical narratives of Ukraine as a peripheral or transitional space. Instead, they present a nation asserting its civic values and cultural agency in the face of existential threat. Applying imagological methodology, the study highlights how diaries construct a self-reflective Ukrainian identity while simultaneously engaging with the European gaze. On the one hand, they articulate internal narratives of collective endurance, thereby reinforcing national self-image; on the other hand, they address international readers, influencing external perceptions and reshaping hetero-images of Ukraine within European discourse. The analysis highlights the interconnection between individual testimony and broader cultural representation, demonstrating how personal accounts contribute to collective memory and transnational solidarity. Ultimately, these diaries become powerful cultural artefacts that redefine Ukraine's place in Europe, ensuring its visibility not only as a victim of aggression, but also as a subject of cultural and political self-determination.

Keywords: *wartime diaries; imagology; auto-image; hetero-image; cultural memory; national identity.*



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Introduction

The war in Ukraine has become one of the most significant events in modern European history. Starting in 2014, the conflict culminated with the full-scale Russian invasion in February 2022, which had a profound impact on the geopolitical situation in Europe and the world. In the context of intense information confrontation, alongside official reports and media accounts, personal eyewitness accounts recorded in the form of war diaries are of particular importance. These first-person narratives provide a unique opportunity to understand the war through the lens of individual experience, highlighting the emotional and psychological aspects of the conflict that often fall outside the framework of traditional news formats. In addition, the study of contemporary geopolitical developments offers a valuable methodological framework for imagology, enabling scholars to trace the dynamics of national self- and other-representation under conditions of crisis in contexts of international conflict, migration, and shifting borders, national images are actively constructed, contested, and transformed, revealing both auto-images – how a nation conceives of itself, and hetero-images – how it is perceived externally. Imagological studies benefit from such real-time phenomena by enabling scholars to observe the formation and metamorphosis of national stereotypes and cultural representations. The ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war, for instance, exemplifies how crises accelerate the production and dissemination of national images, highlighting the interplay between political events, media representations, and cultural memory. By situating imagological analysis within the framework of current geopolitical processes, researchers can more accurately trace the mechanisms through which collective identities are articulated, contested, and reshaped in response to global events. The aim of literary imagology is defined by the above-mentioned ground-breaking publication as follows: “It is the aim of imagology to describe origin, process and function of national prejudices and stereotypes, to bring them to the surface, analyse them and make people rationally aware of them” (Beller 67). Imagological research primarily investigates the concept of a nation, focusing on images of others and foreigners. Moreover, the topic of forming the image of a country is one of the most relevant in socio-humanitarian cognition today. An important role in forming the image of countries is played not only by the media, public relations, and culture, but also by literature. (Kulinska 30)

According to Edtstadler K., taking into account the interdisciplinary features of studying the concept of the image of a country, the content of this category in the linguo-imagological aspect is presented in the following optimal definition: an individual mental and cultural formation, which mediates the idea of a certain country and its culture, contains both universal and individual characteristics of its creator, is realized by means of language, can be accompanied by an author’s assessment and emotionally influence the addressee (*New Perspectives* 31). The image of the country in the context of literature involves studying the specifics of the influence of non-fiction works on the perception of a particular state. The image of a country as presented in diaries, which will be under investigation in this research, particularly during periods of crisis such as war, primarily serves as a private document reflecting the author’s personal experience and perspective; subsequently, it may function to influence the audience and shape their perceptions of the

nation. Accordingly, Ukrainian war diaries, created at the beginning of 2022, function as significant historical documents that not only record individual experiences of invasion but also actively contribute to the construction of Ukraine's cultural image. These diaries exemplify the dynamic interplay between individual testimony and collective perception: although grounded in subjectivity, they operate within broader structures of value orientations, archetypes, and socio-political beliefs. Thus, the image of Ukraine articulated in wartime diaries simultaneously reflects the author's inner position and contributes to the external perception of the nation, reinforcing its resilience and identity during a critical historical period.

From fiction to testimony: Kurkov's literary transformation

The war diaries created at the beginning of 2022 represent valuable historical material for documenting and understanding this turning point. Among the various literary works that capture the realities of war, the work of Andriy Kurkov, a renowned Ukrainian writer, holds a special place. His *Diary of an Invasion* is not only the author's personal observations and experiences, but also a broad panorama of life in Ukrainian society under military actions. A. Kurkov was already an established literary figure, the author of such works as *Death and the Penguin* and *The Grey Bees*. His reputation contributed to his war diary attracting significant attention from a European audience. Beginning his entries before the full-scale invasion, he records the growing tensions and anticipation of war, allowing the reader to follow the escalation of the conflict from the very beginning. (Bagmut 92)

The full-scale invasion prompted a significant shift in Kurkov's literary focus. Notably, after the invasion began, A. Kurkov, a fiction writer by profession, turned to the diary genre as a means to record what was happening. He acknowledged that he "cannot write fiction anymore" and consequently redirected his efforts towards non-fiction, diaries, and essays. This personal transformation reflects a broader trend within the Ukrainian literary environment, where many writers have switched from fiction to documentary prose about the war, driven by the need to immediately record the ongoing events. (Gerasimenko 22)

This shift from fiction to non-fiction highlights the profound impact of the invasion, presenting a reality that transcends fictional narratives. The decision of a fiction writer to turn to the diary genre reflects the profound shock of the invasion, suggesting that the reality was so overwhelming that it exceeded the possibilities of fiction. The author himself admitted that after the outbreak of the war, he felt that writing fiction would be "a guilt." (Kurkov 42) This shift underscores the imperative to document the truth rather than fabricate fictional stories in the face of such tragic events. The aim of this analysis is to comprehensively examine *Diary of an Invasion*, exploring its key themes, narrative style, and implications for understanding the war, as well as to explore the contents of the diary, its main topics, its coverage in the European media and its potential impact on European perception of the war.

Diary of an Invasion by Andriy Kurkov is a collection of personal diary entries, essays, and notes covering the period from late December 2021 to July 2022. The entries

begin two months before the full-scale invasion, allowing the reader to witness the gradual increase in anxiety and anticipation of war in Ukrainian society. The author describes his personal experiences, thoughts, and emotions caused by Russian aggression and observes the reactions and behaviour of the people around him. (Bagmut 92)

Narrative content and thematic concerns

Diary of an Invasion was released in September 2022 and is his second most popular book among European readers, after *The Grey Bees* (2021). The *Diary of an Invasion* was such a success that a year later, in 2023, Mountain Leopard Press published a second paperback edition of it in Great Britain, featuring a slightly different book cover design. The writer points out that “[t]he war has made Ukraine more understandable to the world – more understandable and more acceptable as one of the states of Europe” (Kurkov 42). Understanding and acceptance are becoming key concepts when cultures clash and when the cultural and political contexts change dramatically.

One of the key themes of the diaries is the strengthening of Ukrainian national identity in the face of external threats. The writer notes the consolidation of Ukrainian society in the face of an aggressor, as well as the willingness of people to help one another and defend their country. He emphasises the resilience of the Ukrainian spirit. These observations contribute to the formation in the European consciousness of an image of a strong and united Ukrainian nation, which directly contradicts attempts to undermine Ukrainian statehood. The author devotes considerable attention to describing everyday life in wartime conditions.

Ukrainians continue to live as usual. Yesterday I stopped in front of a modern hipster barbershop.... Meanwhile, a Canadian transport plane loaded with weapons was landing at Kyiv airport. This new Ukrainian reality far outdoes my writer’s imagination. I cannot say that I like it. But I accept the reality. (Kurkov 59)

He talks about the difficulties faced by ordinary Ukrainians, about finding shelter, about the lack of food and medicine, about the fear of bombing.

The people of Kyiv have grown suddenly much more attached to the metro, one of the most beautiful and deepest underground systems in the world. The metro is no longer a form of transport—it is ... like something from an apocalyptic movie. The stations are covered with instruction notices. There are living spaces everywhere. (Kurkov 80)

At the same time, he notes manifestations of humanity and mutual assistance among the population. The focus on everyday aspects of wartime makes the conflict more understandable and relatable to the European audience, causing sympathy and empathy for the Ukrainian people.

War breeds death and, at the same time, awakens the humanity in people.

Suddenly, people want to help others, to help those who are in trouble. We have millions in trouble right now. Without exaggeration, we can also say that there are many millions of people who help. The humanitarian centres helping the refugees have a lot of people to help them. These centres are located mainly in schools or administrative buildings. The owners of a number of cars on our street have hung signs in them that say, “If you need to take humanitarian aid or a passenger, call me!” while adding their mobile telephone number.... (Kurkov 77)

Kurkov’s literary style, which combines political commentary, personal reflections and satirical observations, makes his diary both engaging and accessible to a wide audience. His ability to see the unusual in the ordinary attracts readers and helps them better understand what is happening. (Bagmut 93)

The diaries vividly convey the sudden and shocking transition from ordinary life to the surreal and terrifying reality of war in Kyiv. Kurkov describes the initial disbelief and the rapid escalation of events as peaceful life was suddenly replaced by the sounds of air raid sirens, the movement of refugees, and the constant threat of violence. The diary reflects everyday life, filled with fear, uncertainty, and attempts to adapt to new, deadly conditions. Familiar urban spaces, such as the underground, are transformed into shelters and centres of mutual aid, symbolising the breakdown of the usual way of life. The juxtaposition of common, everyday life and the horrors of war creates a powerful sense of surrealism, highlighting the psychological impact of the invasion. His diary vividly conveys the fear, anxiety, loss and trauma experienced by people living under invasion. The author shares his personal experiences of constant threat and the sense of life being divided into periods “before” and “during” the war. (Kulinska 32)

The diary also touches on the long-term psychological wounds inflicted by war. It is a powerful testimony to the human cost of war, going beyond statistics to convey the profound emotional and psychological impact on individuals. This human-centred approach is likely to resonate deeply with readers, fostering empathy and awareness of the suffering caused by the conflict. His descriptions, ranging from disbelief to wartime images, and the transformation of familiar places such as the underground into shelters, vividly illustrate this contrast. This resonates deeply with readers, highlighting the unprecedented nature of the conflict in the heart of Europe. The resilience of the Ukrainian people and their determination to resist the invasion is another topic that demands special attention. The writer highlights the peculiarities of the Ukrainian national character, emphasising the optimism and lack of fatalism. (Hodunok 107)

I thought that my happiness was not material but a state of mind, like the energy arising from eye contact with another person. I am someone who loves and appreciates life, the rays of the sun, the blue sky, the stars of the summer night sky. It comforts me that I have been happy for a very long time and I feel very sad for young people. But I see how they resist the forces that wish to steal their futures from them. Young couples have been married against the barricades placed at the entrances to the city by the territorial defense forces. More than 480 children have been born in Kyiv since the start of the war. Almost all were born underground, in

bomb shelters, on metro platforms, and in the basement areas of maternity hospitals. I want to imagine their futures as bright and full of sunshine. But for this, they must first survive. (Kurkov 84)

The diary vividly shows examples of social solidarity and mutual support among Ukrainians who unite in the face of a common threat. The author also provides numerous testimonies of everyday resistance, demonstrating the spirit of the nation. The diary makes a significant contribution to the formation of a narrative of Ukrainian resilience and national unity, which influences international perceptions of the conflict. Kurkov's authority as a writer allows him to effectively convey this narrative to a global audience, potentially strengthening support for Ukraine. (Hodunok 107)

Imagological framework: auto- and hetero-images representation

A central theme in Kurkov's diary is the formation and reinforcement of Ukrainian national identity. His work projects an image of cohesion, hope, and endurance. This phenomenon can be studied through the framework of imagology, a branch of literary studies focused on national stereotypes and representations. It focuses on the textual strategies and discourses used to create representations of nations, rather than verifying their empirical reality.

However, the modern geopolitical landscape has transformed imagology from a purely hermeneutic discipline into a critical source for analysing modern political processes. Current geopolitical events act as a catalyst for methodological renewal, compelling imagology to broaden its scope. As a result, new conceptual frameworks have emerged to address the analysis of complex cultural phenomena.

The conflict in Ukraine serves as a prime example of how current crises provide a practical opportunity for imagological analysis. The war has redrawn physical borders and restarted symbolic battles over cultural identity, has forced Ukrainian writers to re-evaluate their identity, language, and allegiance and has reactivated older stereotypes of Eastern Europe in Western media and literature. (Gerasimenko 29)

For imagology, this demonstrates how quickly political crises can reshape literary images of a nation and how these images circulate globally to reinforce or challenge cultural stereotypes. The discipline is positioned to investigate the ways in which nations are conceptualised in times of crisis, while also examining how literature operates simultaneously as a form of testimony and as an active participant in processes of geopolitical change. (see Edtstadler)

In imagological research, auto-images and hetero-images serve as key analytical categories for understanding how national identities are constructed and represented. An auto-image refers to the way a nation or community perceives and portrays itself, often emphasising values, traits or historical experiences that are considered central to its identity. By contrast, a hetero-image reflects how a nation is represented by others, frequently shaped by stereotypes, cultural prejudices, or geopolitical interests. The interplay between auto- and hetero-images is crucial for studying identity formation, as it

reveals both self-perception and external perception, as well as the tensions that arise between them. (see Beller, Leersen)

The following quotes reflect the auto-image of Ukraine – how Ukrainians perceive and represent themselves as a nation.

Each December 31, ten to fifteen minutes before the onset of the New Year, the president congratulates Ukrainian citizens on TV. This Soviet tradition easily took root in Ukraine... Until 2015, many Ukrainians listened first to the congratulations of President Vladimir Putin... After the outbreak of the war in Donbas and the annexation of Crimea, Russian TV channels in Ukraine were turned off, and with them, Putin's New Year greetings. (Kurkov 15)

This highlights Ukraine's transition from a shared Soviet cultural space to a distinct national identity. While Ukraine initially adopted and participated in Soviet rituals, after 2014–2015, the political break with Russia triggered a symbolic rejection of Russian influence. The auto-image here emphasises Ukraine's growing self-differentiation and sovereignty.

Ukrainians almost never get depressed. They are programmed for victory, for happiness, for survival in difficult circumstances, as well as for the love of life. (Kurkov 11)

This presents Ukrainians as a resilient, life-affirming nation, capable of enduring hardship without surrendering to despair. The use of words like “programmed” suggests an inherent national character – one that embodies strength, survival, optimism, and a joy of life. In imagological terms, this is a self-stereotype of endurance, showing affirming Ukrainians' capacity to withstand hardship and fight for their values. “Ukraine will either be free, independent or European, or it will not exist at all” (Kurkov 91).

This reflects an existential self-image of Ukraine as inseparably linked to freedom and Europe. The statement reveals that national survival is related to independence and European integration. The binary framing – existence as European and free, or non-existence – underscores the depth of Ukraine's self-perception as a nation striving for dignity, autonomy, and alignment with Western values.

Overall, these quotes construct a collective auto-image of Ukraine characterised by a historical shift: distancing from the soviet/Russian past, by resilience and vitality: ability to endure suffering with optimism and by existential orientation: defining survival through freedom and European integration. Thus, Ukraine's auto-image emerges as that of a nation that rejects external domination, affirms its inner strength, and ties its future existence to independence and belonging to the European cultural and political sphere. (Bagmut 95)

The following two quotes reveal a striking imagological contrast between the Ukrainian auto-image and the hetero-image of Russia. Together, they form a relational system of cultural self-definition, where the identity of one group is often constructed in opposition to another.

<i>Ukrainians are individualists, egoists, who do not like government or authority. They think they know how to organize their lives, regardless of which party or force is in power in the country. If they do not like the actions of the authorities, they go out to protest. Any government in Ukraine is afraid of the “street,” afraid of its people.” (Kurkov 89)</i>	<i>Most Russians, loyal to authority, are afraid to protest and are willing to obey any rule the Kremlin creates. Now they are cut off from information, from Facebook and Twitter. But even when they have access to alternative views, they prefer to believe the official ones.” (Kurkov 89)</i>
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The Ukrainian self-representation foregrounds individualism, resistance to authority, and civic activism. Ukrainians are described as politically active and socially empowered, capable of influencing the state authorities. Imagologically, this constitutes a positive self-stereotype of agency, grounded in democratic ideals and the belief in the sovereignty of the people. In contrast, the hetero-image of Russia portrays Russians as submissive, passive and loyal to authority. The depiction constructs Russia as a society marked by conformity, obedience, and state control. Unlike Ukrainians, Russians are often described as being unwilling to resist power, either due to fear or a voluntary acceptance of official narratives. This hetero-image underscores a negative stereotype of passivity and ideological subordination, reinforcing Ukraine’s democratic self-image through contrast (Hodunok 108).

The comparison of these images reveals a dualism, an opposition that is common in imagological discourse. This contrast reflects not descriptive differences but a deeper identity construction. Ukraine’s self-image as free, independent, and European is sharpened by positioning Russia as its opposite – authoritarian and submissive. These quotes illustrate how auto- and hetero-images operate in dialogue, shaping national self-understanding through contrast. Ukraine portrays itself as an active, independent, and resistant nation, while Russia is depicted as submissive and authoritarian. In imagological terms, Ukraine’s identity is expressed through opposition, affirming its European trajectory while distancing itself from Russian political culture. (Hodunok 108) Thus, Kurkov’s work constructs an image of Ukraine that resonates with European readers, thereby shaping Western solidarity and political support.

Reception in the European cultural space

To highlight the prominent role of Kurkov’s work among the European community, it should be noted that many media representatives expressed their thoughts and perceptions of the diary. Even one of the world’s leading media, *The New York Times*, called Kurkov “one of Ukraine’s most important voices.” This recognition demonstrates the profound impact of his work, which goes beyond the conventional reporting to offer deep, human insights into a nation. Reviewers have noted that Kurkov’s ability to connect personal experiences with the broader context of events makes his narrative not only informative but also deeply emotional and compelling. Andrey Kurkov’s *Diary of an Invasion* has profoundly affected Western readers and critics,

offering an unparalleled glimpse into Ukraine during the months of the full-scale invasion. Andrei Kurkov's *Diary of an Invasion* and his broader commentaries have achieved extensive media coverage in major English-language news outlets.

Notable mentions include reviews and articles in *Daily Mail*, *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The Financial Times*. The specific citations from prominent Western media outlets cover the core reasons for its widespread acclaim, emphasising its importance, humanity, and Kurkov's unique perspective.

1. "Immediate and important ... This is an insider's account of how an ordinary life became extraordinary" – Helen Davies, *The Times*

Helen Davies's review for *The Times* precisely identifies two crucial elements: the book's dynamism (its real-time chronicling of events) and its significance as an "insider's account". This highlights that the diary is not a retrospective analysis but a living record. This phrase conveys the sudden, dramatic shift in reality for millions of Ukrainians, providing a relatable entry point for foreign readers into the immense changes caused by the invasion.

This quote emphasises how Kurkov's work humanised the conflict for Europeans. It moved the war from abstract geopolitical headlines to a deeply personal narrative, fostering empathy by showing how ordinary lives were irrevocably altered, but also how ordinary people faced extraordinary circumstances with resilience.

2. "At first, we did not understand what war was. You can't understand it until you see it and hear it. [...] A vivid, moving and sometimes funny account of the reality of life during Russia's invasion" – *The Times*

The first part of this quote, a direct line from Kurkov's book, underlines the profound psychological shift and the incomprehensibility of war until it is personally experienced. *The Times* then characterises the book as "vivid, moving, and sometimes funny." This highlights Kurkov's masterful ability to mix emotions and observations. The vivid nature speaks to dynamic events, moving to the emotional impact, and is humorous in its portrayal of coping mechanisms and the absurdities that persist even in wartime. This balance prevents the narrative from being solely grim, making it more authentic. (Bagmut 94) For European readers, it confirmed the diary's purpose: to provide the sensory and emotional reality of a conflict that they were seeing only through screens or official reports.

3. "No one with the slightest interest in this war, or the nation on which it is being waged, should fail to read Andrey Kurkov" – *Daily Mail*

This is a strong call to action, positioning the book as essential reading. *The Daily Mail* emphasises the book's indispensable nature for anyone seeking genuine understanding, not just of the conflict itself, but crucially, of the nation of Ukraine and its people. This quote suggests that Kurkov provides a unique perspective, making the book a vital resource for informing the world community.

4. "Andrey Kurkov [is] one of the most articulate ambassadors to the West for the situation in his homeland." – *Spectator*

The quote directly labels Kurkov as a key figure in cultural diplomacy. The European community recognises his ability to clearly and effectively communicate the complexities of the situation in Ukraine to a Western audience, using his literary skill. In

the same way, this highlights Kurkov's significant role in shaping international perception directly. It means his voice was recognised as authoritative and representative of Ukraine, making his diary a powerful tool for informing and influencing European opinion about the country.

5. "Kurkov, an internationally lauded novelist, is strongest when he writes on cultural matters. And this, he demonstrates convincingly, is a cultural war" – *Irish Times*

The Irish Times connects Kurkov's literary strength (as an "internationally lauded novelist") directly to his insights into the conflict. It emphasises his particular brilliance when addressing "cultural matters" and, importantly, concludes that the war itself is fundamentally a "cultural war". This highlights the book's contribution to understanding the deeper ideological and identity-based roots of the conflict, moving beyond purely geopolitical or military analyses. It positions Kurkov as a vital interpreter of Ukraine's cultural resistance.

6. "With the sort of eye-witness detail missing from even the most rigorous newspaper account, this book makes for essential reading." – *Metro*

This review positions the diary as superior to conventional journalism in terms of detail and immediacy. This quote reinforces the diary's role as a critical supplementary source for understanding the war. This makes the book "essential reading" by providing a level of intimacy and specific observation that broad news reports simply cannot capture, allowing readers a deeper, more personal understanding of the essence of the war.

7. "Probably the first important literary work to emerge from a conflict that appears likely to alter the course of world history, *Diary of an Invasion* is a thoughtful and humane memoir by one of Ukraine's most prominent living authors." – *Sydney Morning Herald*

This quote positions the diary as a historically significant literary work, not just a news report. Calling it "probably the first important literary work" underlines its pioneering role in capturing the essence of the conflict from a personal perspective. It also emphasises its "thoughtful and humane" nature and Kurkov's prominence. It is worth noting that the diary's role in shaping the long-term historical understanding of the war is also highlighted here. It declared to the global intellectual community that this was a conflict of profound historical consequence and that this work was an essential primary source for future understanding, thereby elevating Ukraine's place in the narrative of world history. (Hodunok 109)

Personal narratives of war as mechanisms of cultural and political engagement

War diaries written by Kurkov made a significant impact on international perceptions through several mechanisms: authenticity and credibility, since personal diaries offer firsthand testimonies, providing an authentic and often realistic portrayal of the war that stands in stark contrast to official reports (this inherent authenticity builds trust among readers and deepens their engagement with the narrative) and a fostering of empathy and solidarity, because, by immersing readers in the lived experiences of Ukrainians, this narrative serves as a powerful tool for developing empathy. Reflection on

the daily challenges faced by Ukrainians significantly increases sympathy and willingness to support aid, both humanitarian and military. (Bagmut 97)

War diaries function as a powerful mechanism for cultivating what can be termed “affective empathy” in international audiences. Unlike abstract news reports that might convey statistics or strategic analyses, these personal narratives provide granular, human-scale details of suffering, resilience, and daily life under conflict. Cultural products, such as war diaries, are not merely reflections of events but active agents in shaping international emotional responses. (Kulinska 33)

Conclusion

The analysis of Andrey Kurkov’s *Diary of an Invasion* reveals its significant role in shaping the European perception of war. These personal testimonies offer a unique and in-depth look at the conflict that goes beyond official reports and news reports. This work became a powerful cultural phenomenon that significantly transformed the perception of Ukraine on the international stage. Thanks to his personal, authentic and deeply human narrative, European and global readers were able to see Ukraine not as a distant conflict, but as a living, unbreakable nation fighting for its freedom, culture and European values. Kurkov’s book “humanised” the war, destroyed stereotypes and mobilised empathy and support, becoming an indispensable testimony to this turning point in history.

This study of Ukrainian war diaries provides insights into the power of personal narratives in geopolitical contexts. These narratives are not merely historical records; they are active and dynamic sources of cultural diplomacy and information warfare. They possess a unique capacity to humanise conflicts, mobilise empathy, and influence public and policy responses in an increasingly interconnected and information-saturated global arena. The future of international perception of Ukraine will undoubtedly continue to be shaped by the ongoing dialogue between these personal stories and evolving geopolitical realities.

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