

Victory Day: The Kremlin and Kyiv's contrasting messages



Putin addresses Parade. fact checked [here](#)

THE KREMLIN: GRIEVANCE AND STUBBORNNESS

- Putin's speech contained all the traditional themes and disinformation that the Kremlin's propaganda machine has spent years drilling into the Russian people.
- NATO expansionism leaves Russia no choice but to act aggressively:
"NATO is threatening Russia with military infrastructure and nuclear weapons, Russia acted in the only way a sovereign nation could".
- Russia is a unique country and a defender of traditional values:
"Russia has a different character, defending the traditions of all countries against the Western degradation of morality".
- Putin also evoked the memory of the "Great Patriotic War" and the battle against Nazism; directly linking it to the current invasion of Ukraine:
"We have fighters in the Donbas alongside our soldiers so that no one forgets the lessons of the Great Patriotic War [...] we are fighting for the same reason your father's and grandfather's fought".
- **Who is the target audience?**
 - First and foremost is the **Russian people**. Putin recognises the need for popular support as the Ukraine invasion turns into a stalemate. To do so he ties Russia's past to its present, including present day casualties to the current conflict to make any discussion of casualties and, by extension, the war itself as sully the memory of martyrs; in effect weaponising War-time trauma for purposes of indoctrination.
 - The Kremlin's focus on "moral degradation" is a continuing theme among **religious nationalists** globally. While much attention has been given to Christian religious nationalists, the message will also strike a chord with Hindu nationalists in India, who have their own expansionist visions based on warped history and narratives of western-sponsored infiltration
 - Putin's call for "equality" in the international system and "respect for all security concerns" mirrors the **Xi Jinping's** own "Global Security Initiative". Xi is the Kremlin's strongest backer, and Putin is keen to align their rhetoric and strengthen their partnership, even if Russia is the lesser partner.
- **What is more interesting is what was left un-said:**
 - The parade was reduced by 1/3rd of the size compared to the preceding years.
 - Putin failed to articulate his exact war aims; creating an open-ended nature to the struggle.
 - Putin avoided any mention of 'traitors' within Russia. It is possible this is to avoid discussion of criticism of the war, or, more likely, because the constant barrage of Kremlin-media and crushing of independent media means he does not need to.



Zelenskyy address. Watch [here](#)

KYIV: SOMBER BUT HOPEFUL

- President Zelenskyy's address was a microcosm of how Ukraine seeks to maintain an edge in the information war through innovative presentation and tailored speech.
 - President Zelenskyy's presentation style was a stark contrast to Putin's. Zelenskyy walked openly through Kyiv's streets in a khaki combat shirt in a direct address to viewers via close up camera, while Putin, attired in what will be an expensive suit, addressed the crowd from a podium with pre-prepared notes.
 - Their messages were also different. Although Zelenskyy reflected that "darkness" had returned to Ukraine, likened the Russian military's war crimes in the country as akin to Nazism, and directly challenged the Kremlin's "appropriation" of Victory Day, his focus was on the future as much as the past. He also set out clear objectives for Ukraine's military; listing the towns under Russian occupation that would be liberated and Ukraine's "free path" and that "soon, there will be two Victory Day's in Ukraine".
 - Zelenskyy also released his message before Putin's address; drawing media attention away from Putin's address and avoiding giving a post-speech rebuttal, depriving the Kremlin's narratives of legitimacy.
- Overall, President Zelenskyy's presentation was more intimate, more hopeful, and therefore more captivating, utilising a combination of techniques from US President Roosevelt's fireside chats and Churchill's wartime speeches to create a sense of intimacy while projecting the feeling of a communal message that many nations will recognise: defence of sovereignty, struggle and sacrifice and the hope for a better future.