

North Atlantic Fella Organization in the meme war

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Abstract

This presentation discusses the North Atlantic Fella Organization (NAFO) and its use of humor in a meme war. I'm a member of this leaderless collective supporting Ukraine with donations and countering (pro)-Russian posts on Twitter. Being an online activist during a war is more than just hammering the keyboard. It is an emotional, embodied experience. We laugh and cry together. Thus, the method used is evocative autoethnography and the material consists of tweets and memes. Autoethnography is an "insider"-ethnography that is often, but not exclusively, used to study lived experiences.

My aim is not to systematically analyze my entire material but to discuss the role of emotions and the use of shitposting. Shitposting, i.e., ironic engagement, mockery with provocative or vulgar humor, originates in 4chan and is mainly associated with AltRight trolling. But, for example, Anonymous has used it to troll ISIS (Mortensen & Neumayer 2021, McCrow-Young & Mortensen 2021). Studies on shitposting, however, miss the insider perspective, i.e., the emotions and learning curve involved in acting as a keyboard warrior for a country you may or may not have any personal connection to.

Further, satirical memes can be seen as a form of political humor. They also resemble war propaganda's way of demonizing and ridiculing the enemy. Mockery makes the enemy feel less dangerous and disturbs its spectacle of violence. Humor is also important for community building. NAFO is its own inside jokes, often related to the evolution of the collective. "Being in the know" fosters a feeling of togetherness.

Keywords

Ukrainian War, North Atlantic Fella Organization, shitposting, autoethnography

Bio

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