STRATEGIES OF PERSUASION IN J. BIDEN’S SPEECHES ON WAR IN UKRAINE

Abstract. The study explores the persuasive strategies employed by President Joe Biden in his speeches regarding the war in Ukraine. It identifies the use of Aristotle’s rhetorical appeals, including ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic), as key elements in Biden’s persuasive communication. The analysis reveals that Biden employs ethos by emphasizing his credibility as a leader and his personal experiences related to the conflict. Highlighting his interactions with world leaders and his visits to Ukraine, he aims to establish trustworthiness and authority on the topic. The study identifies the use of logical appeals (logos) through the presentation of evidence, statistics, and references to authoritative sources. J. Biden reinforces his arguments with factual information to make a compelling case for supporting Ukraine and maintaining a united stance against Russia. The President strategically uses pathos to evoke emotions in his audience employing emotionally charged language, references to emotive incidents, and statements about his own feelings to connect with the audience emotionally. This emotional appeal is intended to mobilize support for Ukraine and condemn Russian aggression. The analysis also highlights the use of various stylistic devices, such as metaphor, metonymy, alliteration, parallel structures, rhetorical questions, etc. to enhance the persuasiveness of the President’s speeches. These devices contribute to the overall impact of his messages.
**Keywords:** persuasion, persuasive strategy, ethos, logos, pathos, J. Biden, war in Ukraine.

**Problem statement.** Persuasion, in its multifaceted linguistic forms, permeates our daily lives. It is wielded by political leaders and the mass media to shape or reinforce our beliefs, while advertising agencies endeavor to entice us into purchasing their products. The realm of persuasion extends its reach into courtrooms, classrooms, and business negotiations, impacting our interpersonal interactions across all social spheres, both public and private [1].

Numerous persuasion theories have emerged to shed light on how attitudes transform when individuals encounter counter-attitudinal statements. These theories also explore diverse approaches to effecting attitude change. For instance, cognitive response analysis posits that individuals inherently strive for cognitive consistency and are swayed by their own thoughts regarding the speaker’s statements [2]. Conversely, other theories emphasize that people are more inclined to accept messages with minimal cognitive engagement, relying on the persuasiveness of the message’s presentation [3]. The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion asserts that effective persuasion hinges on the ability to stimulate thoughtful consideration, known as elaboration likelihood, in the recipient’s mind. The inoculation theory of persuasion suggests that a speaker may introduce a weak version of an argument that can be easily refuted, thereby inoculating the listener against a more robust, opposing claim.

While many facets of persuasive statements, such as their power, and the manner of their presentation, including source characteristics, have been thoroughly examined, there has been a noticeable gap in research regarding the role of linguistic tools in the persuasive process within the realm of political discourse.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** The academic research indicates that politicians employ a diverse array of pragma-rhetorical strategies within their speeches to effectively sway and shape public opinion. Charteris-Black (2004) focuses on the persuasive power of metaphor in political discourse [4], while Kuriata and Kasatkina-Kubyshkina (2022) provide an overview of various stylistic devices such as repetition, simile, and hyperbole [5]. Schoor (2017) argues that political style is a combination of rhetorical, social, and ideological styles, and provides a method to assess ideological style [6]. Khajavi and Rasti (2020) reveal that figures like Barack Obama and Mitt Romney adeptly harness positive self-portrayal, the negative portrayal of others, legitimization, delegitimization, and persuasive techniques as means to capture the attention and support of voters [7]. Li and Guo (2021) focus on the significance of rhetorical intertextuality, encompassing allusion, metaphor, and analogy, in the construction of political identities. The scholars’ work shows how these linguistic devices serve to emphasize discursive authority, establish an aura of authoritative stature, and foster a sense of discursive inclusiveness and democratization [8].
The aim of the study is to gain a deeper understanding of how persuasive communication is used in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war and how political leaders employ rhetorical techniques to convey their messages and rally support for their positions.

Methodology. The researchers use five speeches of the American president Joseph Biden to investigate persuasive strategies employing a systematic and structured approach to analyzing the content and rhetorical techniques used in these speeches. The research utilizes the following research methods: identification of persuasive strategies, which involves identifying and categorizing the persuasive strategies including ethos, pathos, and logos. The contextual and stylistic analysis aims to provide a deeper understanding of how persuasive strategies are employed in President Biden’s speeches.

Results and Discussions. Political discourse is a complex and interdisciplinary subject that involves the analysis of the language used in political situations, political communication, and the linguistic means politicians use to affect and control public opinion.

Teun van Dijk highlights that political discourse is not a singular genre but rather a category of genres linked to the social domain of politics [9]. Just as scientific discourse, educational discourse, and legal discourse are associated with the domains of science, education, and law, respectively, political discourse encompasses various genres within the realm of politics. These include government deliberations, parliamentary debates, party programs, and speeches by politicians. Defining the precise boundaries of the political domain can be challenging, as it shares fuzzy boundaries with other social domains. Political scholars offer varying definitions of “politics”, ranging from broad concepts like power and collective decision-making to more specific definitions tied to politicians’ activities.

In his research, Van Dijk opts for a narrower characterization of politics, focusing on political discourse as the communication of politicians [9]. This excludes discourse genres that straddle the boundaries of politics with other domains, even if they aim to influence political decision-making. Conversely, any discourse produced within the domain of politics, such as a bill about education policies, is considered political discourse, regardless of its impact on other domains. Furthermore, the author emphasizes that political discourse is a type of institutional discourse. It only encompasses discourses created in institutional settings like governments, parliaments, or political parties. Informal conversations among politicians outside of their professional roles are not categorized as political discourse. In a more practical sense, discourse is considered political when it serves a political purpose within a political institution, such as governing, legislating, or campaigning.

Persuasion, viewed as both a linguistic and cognitive process, aims to exert a communicative influence on the recipient, ultimately seeking to sway them towards
endorsing specific ideas [10]. Aristotle’s rhetoric posits three essential means for achieving effective persuasion [11]. These three pillars are ethos, pathos, and logos.

Ethos, as defined by Foss [12, p. 29], encompasses the speaker’s credibility, trustworthiness, character, and underlying values. It is molded by three key attributes: moral character and integrity, intelligence, and goodwill. In essence, ethos constitutes an appeal to ethics, serving as a means to persuade the audience regarding the speaker’s character and credibility. As G. A. Kennedy suggests, a speaker should deliver their speech in a manner that fosters the development of their credibility, as listeners readily embrace impartial, unbiased, and reliable speakers [13, p. 38-39].

Aristotle, in his examination of ethos, identifies three facets [14, p. 26]: phronesis – involving practical skills and wisdom; arete – representing virtue and goodness; eunoia – signifying goodwill towards the audience. To establish their trustworthiness, speakers aim to embody these three facets by employing various techniques including a) citing sources held in high regard by the audience; b) utilizing specialized terminology relevant to the speech topic; c) drawing upon personal experiences; d) persuading the audience of their own expertise and competence; e) engaging the listeners in a discussion by addressing them directly and employing inclusive pronouns like “we”, “us”, “our”, along with relevant tags.

Quoting in President Biden’s speech serves as a persuasive technique by adding credibility, third-party validation, emphasis, and emotional engagement to his message regarding the importance of providing military assistance to Ukraine. It reinforces his argument by demonstrating that it is supported by reliable sources and real-life experiences on the ground: “And just a few days ago, the Wall Street Journal quoted a young Ukrainian fighter saying, and I quote, “Without the Javelins, it would have been very hard to stop the enemy pushing ahead.” End of quote” [15].

Referencing a reputable source like the Wall Street Journal, President Biden lends credibility to the statement. The Journal is widely regarded as a reliable and authoritative news outlet, so quoting from it suggests that the information is trustworthy.

The use of expert terminology pertaining to the topic of the talk is a persuasive technique employed by President Biden in this speech to convey authority and expertise on the subject of military assistance to Ukraine. In this passage, he discusses the substantial military aid provided to Ukraine: “The United States alone has committed more than 5,500 Javelins to Ukraine. You’re changing the nation. You really are. Add to that significant supplies from our Allies and partners, as well as many thousands of other anti-tank and anti-air weapons, helicopters, armored vehicles, artillery, coastal defense systems” [15].

When Joseph Biden mentions terms like “Javelins”, “anti-tank”, “anti-air weapons”, “artillery”, and “coastal defense systems”, he demonstrates a deep understanding of military technology and strategy. This manifests his competence and expertise in the area of defense.
Another technique is appealing to personal experience, which is employed by the President in his speech to establish a personal connection with the subject matter and the audience. In the following passage, he mentions the Battle of Kyiv and links it to the need for Congress to pass funding for Ukraine and replenish U.S. weapon stocks: “And I urge the Congress to pass this funding quickly to help Ukraine continue to succeed against Russian aggression, just as they did when they won the Battle of Kyiv, and to make sure the United States and our Allies can replenish our own stocks of weapons to replace what we’ve sent to Ukraine” [15].

The mention of “they won the Battle of Kyiv” implies a shared history and struggle. This shared experience can foster a sense of unity and solidarity between the United States and Ukraine, as well as with the audience. In addition, urging Congress to pass funding quickly and mentioning the need to replenish U.S. weapon stocks, President Biden signals his personal involvement and commitment to the issue. This can enhance the audience’s trust and confidence in his leadership.

Convincing the audience of one’s expertise or competence may be illustrated as follows: “You know, it was nearly one year ago — (applause) — nearly one year ago I spoke at the Royal Castle here in Warsaw, just weeks after Vladimir Putin had unleashed his murderous assault on Ukraine. The largest land war in Europe since World War Two had begun. And the principles that had been the cornerstone of peace, prosperity, and stability on this planet for more than 75 years were at risk of being shattered” [16].

President Biden convinces the audience of his competence in handling the situation and positions himself as someone with a deep understanding of the complex geopolitical dynamics at play. This enhances his persuasive authority when discussing the war in Ukraine.

Including the listeners in a discussion through the use of inclusive language, such as addressing the audience with “you all” and employing inclusive pronouns like “we”, “us”, and “our”, is a persuasive technique that fosters a sense of collective identity and shared responsibility. In the provided example, President Biden creates a sense of unity and shared purpose. It makes the listeners feel like active participants in the discussion and implies that they are part of a collective effort, for instance: “Because you all know — I’ve been saying this a long time — the expectation on the part of Russia is we’re going to break up, we’re not going to stay united. But we are fully, thoroughly, totally united” [17].

Logos is commonly regarded as an appeal to rationality, constituting a method of convincing the audience through logical reasoning. Employing logos, a speaker endeavors to sway the audience by presenting cogent arguments supported by substantiating evidence. In essence, the appeal to logic emerges as a potent instrument of persuasion due to the inherent rationality of human beings, who typically necessitate evidential support prior to embracing a proposition. Consequently, a discourse lacking in logical substantiation and empirical evidence
tends to be perceived as disingenuous, thereby eroding the speaker’s credibility. The means employed to achieve logos encompass two primary approaches:

1) inductive reasoning, which involves the deployment of inductive logic, wherein the speaker offers pertinent examples and employs them to infer a broader statement or conclusion;

2) deductive argumentation, when the speaker provides the audience with general premises and subsequently deduces a specific truth or assertion from them [3, p. 36].

In speeches concerning the Russia-Ukraine war, the President employs various techniques to attain the strategy of logos including a) presentation of empirical evidence; b) use of statistical data; c) assertion of general truths, facts, or axioms; d) reference to authoritative sources; d) appeal to common sense.

The presentation of empirical evidence involves providing concrete, verifiable, and factual information or data to support an argument or claim: “We’ve shared declassified evidence about Russia’s plans and cyberattacks and false pretexts so that there can be no confusion or cover-up about what Putin was doing” [18].

Using this technique adds credibility and persuasiveness to the statement because it suggests that the claims about Russia’s actions are not mere assertions but are supported by tangible evidence that can be examined and verified.

The presentation of empirical evidence in this context reinforces the speaker’s argument by grounding it in factual and documented information: “But the events of the past few years have proven beyond a doubt that America’s security should never be held hostage to events overseas — not a pandemic, not a war, not the politics of — ambition, or other countries” [15].

The use of statistical data in the provided examples serves to provide concrete and quantifiable information, enhancing the speaker’s argument and adding credibility to their statements, for example: “Two hundred and sixty-five people here at this plant are directly employed working on the Javelin program. All told, Lockheed Martin has brought nearly 3,000 jobs to Alabama” [15].

Statistical data often adds persuasive power to arguments by presenting facts that are less subject to interpretation and ambiguity.

In the following statement, the President uses an axiom (“the whole world changes”) to emphasize the potential global impact if democracies cannot maintain their strength. This adds urgency to the argument, suggesting that it is not just a theoretical concern but something that could have profound consequences: “... democracies require consensus, and it’s hard to get consensus, therefore they can’t keep up with an autocracy — one-man rule. But that’s not going to be the case. If that happens, the whole world changes” [15].

In the following example, the technique of asserting general truths or axioms is used to make the arguments more compelling and persuasive. It relies on the
audience’s acceptance of these widely acknowledged principles to build a persuasive case for action or concern: “Because if you don’t stand up to dictators, history has shown us they keep coming. They keep coming. Their appetite for power continues to grow” [15].

In the given example, J. Biden asserts a general truth about the behavior of dictators since it is commonly recognized that dictators often seek to expand their power and influence over time. Reference to history further strengthens the argument. History is often considered a reliable source of evidence, and by invoking historical examples, the speaker reinforces the notion that this assertion is based on factual observations.

The next technique is employed in the provided statement through the mention of Xi Jinping, the leader of China, as an authoritative source: “Xi Jinping, the leader of China, who I’ve talked — I’ve spent more time with than any other world leader has — over 78 hours on the — either in person or on the telephone with him. And the fact of the matter is he just is straightforward about it. He says that democracies cannot be sustained in the 21st century. Not a joke” [15].

Referencing Xi Jinping as the source of this statement, President Biden lends credibility to the viewpoint being discussed. Xi Jinping’s position as the leader of China gives weight to his statements, making them more influential and persuasive.

An appeal to common sense in the following context is used to encourage the audience to agree with the proposed course of action. It relies on the audience’s common sense and shared values to make the argument persuasive: “What kind of world do we want to build? We need to take the strength and capacity of this coalition and apply it to lifting up — lifting up the lives of people everywhere, improving health, growing prosperity, preserving the planet, building peace and security, treating everyone with dignity and respect” [16].

The statement starts by posing a rhetorical question, which implies a logical connection between the desire for a better world and the actions required to achieve it. It suggests that it is common sense to use the strength and capacity of the coalition to work toward these universally desirable goals.

S.K. Foss defines pathos as an appeal aimed at eliciting emotional responses from the audience [12, p. 29]. G.A. Kennedy further emphasizes the influence of emotions on the listener’s judgment, highlighting their potency as a persuasive tool [13, p. 39].

To establish an emotional connection in his persuasive communication, President Biden employs various techniques, including a) relating personal emotional experiences; b) expressing or alluding to his own emotions and sentiments; c) using emotionally charged vocabulary; d) employing expressive stylistic elements and literary devices, such as metaphors, epithets, personification, metonymy, repetitions, antithesis, aposiopesis, parallel structures, periphrasis, and more. These techniques contribute to creating a compelling emotional appeal in Biden’s discourse.
Mentioning one’s own emotive incidents involves recounting personal experiences or encounters that evoke strong emotions. In the given example, President Biden, recalls a specific moment when he met a World War Two veteran, and this encounter moved him emotionally: “And he saluted me, so I saluted him, and — at the time. And I turned around, and I said, “Thank you for what you did. Thank you for saving — literally saving civilization” [15].

Recounting this emotive incident, the speaker aims to connect with the audience on an emotional level. This personal incident serves to humanize the speaker, making him relatable and showing his genuine emotional response. This persuasive technique is used to emphasize the significance of a war issue by associating it with a deeply felt personal experience.

Stating or referring to the speaker’s own emotions or feelings is a persuasive technique that involves expressing personal sentiments or reactions to a subject or situation. In the provided example, J. Biden discusses the ongoing war in Ukraine and his emotional response to it: “We see on the news every single day the atrocities and the war crimes that are being committed by Russian forces in Ukraine, directed by Vladimir Putin. And it really is gut-wrenching” [15].

The emotional appeal connects with the audience on an emotional level, as it demonstrates that the speaker is deeply affected by the events, which can elicit empathy from the audience who may share similar feelings. Stating or referring to one’s own emotions in persuasion is a way to make the message more relatable, credible, and emotionally impactful. It draws the audience into the speaker’s perspective and encourages them to engage with the issue on a personal and emotional level.

Using emotionally charged words is a persuasive technique that involves the deliberate choice of language to evoke strong emotions or reactions in the audience. J. Biden uses emotionally charged words to create a vivid and distressing mental image, which elicits feelings of anger, outrage, and empathy in the audience: “The United States and our partners stand with Ukraine’s teachers, its hospital staff, its emergency responders, the workers in cities across Ukraine who are fighting to keep the power on in the face of Russia’s cruel bombardment” [16].

This persuasive technique is effective because it impacts the audience’s emotions, making the message more compelling and memorable. It can influence attitudes, evoke empathy, and motivate people to take action based on their emotional response to the words used: “Putin is inflicting appalling — appalling devastation and horror on Ukraine — bombing apartment buildings, maternity wards, hospitals” [19].

Expressive stylistic techniques and devices serve a versatile function within persuasive communication, amplifying the allure of the message, intensifying emotional resonance, and bolstering its persuasiveness. Their deliberate usage holds the potential to render a message more captivating and efficacious in realizing its
predefined objectives. The analysis shows that Joseph Biden employs alliteration, metaphors, epithets, personification, metonymy, repetitions, antithesis, apophasis, parallel structures, periphrasis, etc.

Alliteration is a stylistic device that involves the repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words in close proximity, for example: “That was the dream of those who declared Ukraine’s independence more than 30 years ago — who led the Orange Revolution and the Revolution of Dignity; who braved ice and fire on the Maidan and the Heavenly Hundred who died there; and those who continue still to root out Kremlin’s efforts to corrupt, coerce, and control” [16].

In this case, it adds a rhythmic quality to the sentence and makes it more memorable. The repeated “c” and “r” sounds draw attention to the described actions, emphasizing the determination and resilience of those fighting against Kremlin influence. This linguistic technique enhances the overall impact of the message and helps to engage the audience.

A metaphor is a figure of speech that involves making a direct comparison between two unlike things, suggesting that one thing is the other to create a vivid and imaginative image, for instance: “He found himself at war with a nation led by a man whose courage would be forged in fire and steel: President Zelenskyy” [16].

President Zelenskyy’s courage is compared to something that is “forged in fire and steel”. The metaphor implies that his courage has been shaped and strengthened through intense trials and challenges, just as fire and steel are used to forge and strengthen metal. It paints a powerful picture of Zelenskyy’s resilience and determination in the face of adversity, highlighting his strong leadership during the conflict in Ukraine. Metaphors like this are used to evoke emotions, create imagery, and emphasize certain qualities or characteristics, making the message more persuasive and impactful.

Employing a metonymy in the following statement, the American president simplifies complex concepts (military aggression and invasion) and makes them more vivid and emotionally resonant for the audience. It adds a layer of rhetorical impact by focusing on the tangible and destructive aspects of the war (bombs and tanks): “One year after the bombs began to fall and Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine, Ukraine is still independent and free” [16].

The phrases “bombs began to fall” and “Russian tanks rolled into Ukraine” are used as a metonymy to represent the entire Russian military presence in Ukraine. It implies that the invasion and occupation by Russian forces are the core threats to Ukraine’s sovereignty and freedom.

Lexical repetition is a rhetorical device where specific words or phrases are intentionally repeated within a passage or speech to emphasize a point, create emphasis, or enhance the overall impact of the message, for instance: “The people of Poland know that. You know that. In fact, you know — you know it better than anyone here in Poland. Because that’s what solidarity means” [16].
The repetition of “you know” is used for emphasis, directly addressing the audience and emphasizing that the point being made is something both the speaker and the audience are well aware of. It creates a sense of shared understanding and solidarity between the speaker and the audience.

In the example given below, the phrases “no one” and “it’s abhorrent” are repeated to emphasize J. Biden’s strong condemnation of the actions of Russia. The repetition serves to reinforce the negative judgment and evoke a sense of moral outrage. It reveals the speaker’s stance that there is no room for ambiguity or tolerance regarding these actions: “No one — no one can turn away their eyes from the atrocities Russia is committing against the Ukrainian people. It’s abhorrent. It’s abhorrent” [16].

In both cases, lexical repetition is employed for rhetorical effect. It strengthens the emotional impact of the message and helps to ensure that the audience fully grasps the speaker’s perspective and feelings on the matter. Repetition can also serve to make the speech more memorable reinforcing key points or emotional reactions.

Parallel structures, in the context of persuasion, is a rhetorical device used to emphasize and reinforce key points in a speech or text. They involve presenting similar ideas or phrases in a balanced and parallel manner, often using a repetitive structure for rhetorical effect, for example: “Europe was being tested. America was being tested. NATO was being tested. All democracies were being tested. And the questions we faced were as simple as they were profound” [16].

The parallel structures are an effective persuasive technique because they make the message more compelling, memorable, and emotionally resonant. They help the audience grasp the key points and feel the importance of the issues being discussed.

Joseph Biden uses antithesis contrasting “stronger” with “weaker” and “democracies” with “autocrats”, emphasizing the diverging trends in the world, for example: “President Putin — President Putin is confronted with something today that he didn’t think was possible a year ago. The democracies of the world have grown stronger, not weaker. But the autocrats of the world have grown weaker, not stronger” [16].

Framing the situation in terms of strength and weakness, the President persuades the audience to align with the idea that democracies are on the right side of history and that autocratic regimes are losing ground. The antithesis used in the statement is a powerful persuasive technique because it not only makes the message more engaging but also encourages the audience to consider the sharp contrast between opposing ideas, ultimately leading them to favor one perspective over the other.

Periphrasis adds a rhetorical flourish to the language, making the statement more eloquent and persuasive: “In more than 50 percent of the territory Russia held last year, the blue and the yellow flag of Ukraine proudly waves once again” [16].
Referring to the “blue and yellow flag of Ukraine” symbolically represents the entire concept of Ukrainian independence. The flag is a powerful national symbol that embodies the spirit, history, and aspirations of the Ukrainian people. Mentioning the flag, the American president evokes the idea of independence without explicitly stating it.

Using rhetorical questions, J. Biden engages the audience’s thought processes and emphasizes the significance of the stated principles: “We also faced fundamental questions about the commitment to the most basic of principles. Would we stand up for the sovereignty of nations? Would we stand up for the right of people to live free from naked aggression? Would we stand up for democracy?” [16]

It prompts the audience to reflect on the importance of these values and principles without requiring a verbal response. Additionally, rhetorical questions can create a sense of dramatic pause, allowing the audience to ponder the issues raised before the speaker continues with their message.

**Conclusions.** The research has explored the rich panoply of persuasive strategies employed by President Joe Biden in his speeches on the war in Ukraine. Political discourse, as understood by the authors of the article, serves as a complex domain that requires a deep understanding of linguistic techniques and rhetorical devices to influence and control public opinion effectively.

President Biden’s speeches on the Russia-Ukraine war effectively employ a combination of ethos, pathos, and logos, along with stylistic devices. These strategies aim to influence the audience, obtain international support for Ukraine, condemn Russian aggression, and unite democracies against autocratic forces.

The President adeptly builds the ethos focusing on credibility by citing authoritative sources, using expert terminology, sharing personal experiences, demonstrating his competence, and fostering a sense of collective identity through inclusive language.

Logos, as the appeal to logic, is achieved through the presentation of empirical evidence, use of statistical data, assertion of general truths, reference to authoritative sources, and appeals to common sense. These logical techniques aimed to persuade the audience through reasoned arguments supported by substantiating evidence.

Pathos, or the appeal to emotions, plays a crucial role in J. Biden’s persuasive techniques. He skillfully uses personal emotional experiences, expresses his own emotions, employs emotionally charged vocabulary, and utilizes various expressive stylistic means and devices, including metaphors, epithets, metonymy, repetitions, antithesis, parallel structures, periphrasis, etc. These techniques aimed to evoke strong emotional responses in the audience, fostering empathy, outrage, and engagement.

In conclusion, the study highlights how President Biden strategically uses persuasive techniques in his speeches to convey a strong and emotionally resonant message regarding the war in Ukraine. His ability to effectively employ these
strategies contributes to his influence in shaping public opinion and international actions in response to the crisis.

References: