

Media Objectivity and Bias in Western Coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict

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Abstract

The present study seeks to identify if journalistic objectivity is compromised in the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war and how the various media bias practices are incorporated into news reports. It provides a critical analysis of the portrayal of conflicting sides of the conflict in Western mainstream media, examining how the "us" versus "them" narratives were constructed and how the produced discourse aligns with the principles of peace journalism. The study uses a combination of critical discourse analysis, semiotic, and narrative analysis methods as well as quantitative content analysis to achieve its objectives. Analyzing the content of twelve articles sourced from BBC and CNN, published across two distinct time frames, reveals that Western media coverage disproportionately represents the Ukrainian perspective, with the Russian standpoint largely marginalized or stereotypically characterized. The findings indicate that Western media also normalize or trivialize the role of neo-Nazi organizations in the conflict while downplaying potential war crimes committed by the Ukrainian side. Quantitative content analysis of 99 articles according to criteria adapted from Galtung's model finds a discernible dominance of war journalism over peace journalism, thus propagating divisive narratives. Comparative findings for each digital outlet suggest that the BBC adopts a more aggressive war journalism modality than CNN. The research advocates for a critical reflection on media coverage, the challenging of media biases, and a strive for a more balanced, peace-oriented portrayal of conflicts.

Keywords: *peace journalism, objectivity, media bias, Russian-Ukrainian war, BBC, CNN*

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1. Context/background

The war. Since the most tense moments of the cold war, our humanity has never been so close to nuclear escalation (Science and Security Board Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2023). Political conflicts, territorial disputes, ideological differences, arms races, and nuclear proliferation concerns are pushing us to the edge of catastrophe. The risk of nuclear war raises deep and complex moral and ethical issues, cutting to the core of what we value most as human beings and as a global community and what possible mistakes have led us to this point.

The mass media frequently assumes a crucial part in the conflicts of today. Ever since Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2013) introduced the concept of diffused war which can be seen as the spread and amplification of conflict through media channels, it has become apparent that the rising complexity of the media landscape is affecting the way in which wars are waged. With the proliferation of digital media devices and social networks, the Russian-Ukrainian war apparently has already become one of the most heavily mediated in human history. Digital media has given rise to a more dispersed and fragmented conflict environment where it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, and where the boundaries between the physical and virtual worlds are becoming increasingly blurred.

These changes have significant implications for how we understand the role of the mainstream institutionalized media and its role in reporting on contemporary conflicts and how these changes affect our understanding of media objectivity as a concept and set of professional norms and ideals, truth, and how media correspond to the public interest and the ideas of democracy. The inquiry at hand is whether the media participates actively in perpetuating conflict and bears responsibility for escalating violence, or conversely, whether it contributes constructively to conflict resolution and the reduction of violent behavior.

On the 24th of February 2022, the Russian military crossed the Ukrainian border. The war has become a tragic result of the long-lasting tensions between Russia and Ukraine whose relationships have turned into the most radical phase since the political crisis during *Euromaidan* 2014. The loss of social consensus and the long-lasting civil war in the East of Ukraine, territorial disputes, proxification of the conflict, paranoid unwillingness to find a compromise, and failure of diplomacy, led to an unfolding humanitarian disaster

(International Committee of the Red Cross, 2022; The Council on Foreign Relations, 2023; UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, 2023), that took place at the beginning of 2022 and resulted in devastating warfare, widespread destruction of Ukrainian civil infrastructure, and an unprecedented displacement of millions of people both within and beyond Ukraine, leading to the largest refugee crisis ever witnessed outside the country. All these processes were accomplished with the media involved and took a central role in some of them.

Since the war has been called a ‘full-scale invasion’ in Western discourse and ‘the special military operation’ in Russia, the formation of highly polarized media poles, characterized by obvious dissonance, was most evident in the discourses emanating from Russian and Western perspectives. On both sides (Russian and Western), the governments deployed wide censorship campaigns banning media outlets whose points on the conflict contradict the main power narratives which reduce the ability of people to access and analyze information from all perspectives. Ukraine has banned local TV channels that have been blamed for “Russian propaganda” (dw.com, 2021), EU banned state-owned Russian TV channels RT and Sputnik on the basis of “systematic information manipulation and disinformation by the Kremlin” (Council of the EU, 2022). Russia's media environment also created conditions for broadcasting only one-sided information about the conflict, its causes and its course (Newman et al., 2022), banning local liberal media such as "TV Rain" channel and "Echo of Moscow" radio station on the basis of “publication of false information about the actions of the Russian army in Ukraine” (Pinchuk, 2022; Gessen, 2022).

Since the Western countries acknowledged and supported the new Ukrainian government that came into force during the *Euromaidan*, and in the following escalation process, the mainstream Western media and politicians took an openly anti-Russian stance, which affected the way of information being presented in favor of a prospective new Ukrainian agenda and consequently reflected in public opinion. A situation has arisen when a distinct vector of news agenda formation has lined up in the Western media landscape, which in its essence is a deviation from the principles of objectivity. Since media bias became particularly influential, it became a matter of concern and public discussion (Ebrahim, 2022; Bishara, 2022; Gregory, 2023) and reflected in public concerns in some Western countries as people feel that “the media have not performed quite as well for explaining the wider implications of the conflict or providing a different range of perspectives on it” (Newman et al., 2022, p. 36).

The central goal that this research seeks to address pertains to the substantial influence exerted by the intensely galvanized media environment that arises in times of armed conflict on journalism's objectivity. Since this phenomenon has been observed in past conflicts (Springer, Nygren, Ottosen) and has become particularly salient to media scholars during the Russian-Ukrainian war. In previous research on how Swedish media conducted the Russian-Ukrainian conflict Nina Springer (2022) concludes that “When society unites against a common enemy, the prerequisites for journalistic objectivity, i.e., ‘hearing both sides,’ change dramatically,” stressing that further investigation is required to determine how this phenomenon manifests itself in the current conflict.

When examining the role of the media in contributing to polarized discourses, it is noteworthy to highlight the distinctions between the media systems of Western and Russian contexts since press and speech freedoms, in general, are significantly influenced by the type of regime (Stier, 2015). The Russian media system is significantly influenced by an electoral autocratic system, which subjects it to extensive governmental regulations and censorship, as supported by evidence from scholarly research. The nature of Western media is more complex and has a variety of different intertwined and even conflicting perspectives.

The research analysis of Western mainstream media is essential due to its profound impact on public opinion, global influence, and role in shaping narratives and representations. Understanding the dynamics, biases, and effects of Western media discourse is crucial for comprehending the broader socio-political landscape. As Western media outlets dominate international news coverage and dissemination, many countries and regions rely on them as primary sources of information, which can significantly influence perceptions, attitudes, and policies worldwide. Critically evaluating the portrayal of various issues in the Western mainstream media is therefore essential for a comprehensive understanding of global information dissemination. Moreover, studying the Western mainstream media is crucial as it enables scholars to analyze the underlying structures, ideologies, and power dynamics within media systems.

When discussing the function of mainstream media in Western societies we indeed must take into consideration different types of media systems (Hallin and Mancini, 2004), but it is important to acknowledge that in common the importance of freedom of the press in all

democracies is comparable, if not greater, to freedom of speech as a primary responsibility of the media in democratic states is to keep citizens informed of the various social, political, and economic happenings taking place across the globe. There has long been a correlation between news consumption and models of “good citizenship” that are considered normative. (McCombs and Poindexter, 1983). Democratic self-governance is contingent upon a well-informed and knowledgeable electorate, capable of holding their elected representatives accountable. News is often regarded as the most essential channel for politically relevant and objective information in the public sphere (Habermas 1989) that allows forming of public discourse and public debates.

Due to their societal significance, journalists have been ideologically expected to be held to certain standards that demand journalistic objectivity which itself is seen by media scholars as a complex, developing concept that incorporates several distinct yet interconnected theoretical and practical ideas. Some scholars criticize the idea of objectivity itself (Schudson, 1978) and claim that “truth” can never be imported by the media and “truth” should always be distinguished from “news” (Lipman, 1920) pointing out that ideal objectivity is unreachable since the raw material of news “must pass through successive filters, leaving only the cleansed residue fit to print” (Herman and Chomsky, 2002, p. 62) and “thus distorted by the act of selective description” (Koch, 1990) which makes it nearly impossible to grant an ideally balanced coverage for various polarised sides, especially during the war.

One of the most extreme situations where journalistic objectivity can be probed is in wartime (Carruthers, 2005), where media bias becomes a significant part of reporting. The topic of journalistic objectivity became the most relevant and pressing issue (McLaughlin, 2016) not only because of the abstract and debatable professional obligations that journalists bear but because of the obvious and visible consequences of the violent actions that in wartime arise as a response to the information that circulates in the media and causes people’s suffering, destruction and death that puts journalism at the center of moral-ethical views. That’s why from the humanistic perspective even in times of war, the media was expected to maintain a commitment to objectivity and rigorous standards to achieve balance and advocate for peace and only peace.

However, various critical media scholars point out that media outlets do not adhere to objectivity principles and, may function as propaganda tools that serve specific interests and ideological views thus propagating a war journalism tone. Among all the strong criticism about media in autocratic countries, various researchers highlight that Western media have been involved in spreading misinformation to promote an agreement with government decisions and justify war actions. Media coverage of NATO operations in Iraq, Yugoslavia, Syria, and Libya raises multiple political and research questions about the role of the mainstream media, politicians and the logic that stands behind their editorial and journalistic choices (Ottosen, 2019; Kellner, 2004; Oddo, 2011; Brown, 2019; Kull, Ramsay and Lewis, 2003). One of the core motivations of this study is to research similar event phenomena during the Russian-Ukrainian war since the fact of their presence became evident and interesting for understanding.

Peace journalism, as an antipode to the dominant war journalism modality, sought to be a specific standard of journalistic practice that considers the causes and invisible war journalism aspects of the conflict and delivers news related to the war in a neutral and transparent manner. According to Johan Galtung, a peace journalist oriented toward truth would reveal the truth from all sides and expose any attempted cover-ups which contrasts with war journalists who only reveal their own truths, thereby assisting in covering up any other pertinent information (Galtung, 2003). Moreover, peace journalism can be seen as a framework for analysis that assess the quality of the media reports and thus can be valuable in the scope of this research. The media landscape played a major role in the escalating conflict of this historical period, as a bona fide battlefield where a range of discourses clashed and competed with one another.

Objectivity is a complex, contradictory, and ever-changing concept, without any clear-cut criteria for investigation making it problematic to use in scholarly research. However, the concept of objectivity has an intimate correlation to the idea of media bias as a form of deviation from objectivity and its examination provides a valuable framework for seeking to discern the truth concealed by ideological and vested interests. The examination of media bias in partial news reporting has been a customary practice in the realm of social sciences for a considerable period of time. By providing researchers with the ability to look at an issue from multiple perspectives, discourse analysis helps to uncover the hidden intentions within a text (Jones, Jaworska and Aslan, 2021). The application of these recognized analytical

methods allows for the assembly of a system for interpreting content. Moreover, to gain a better understanding of objectivity, scholars have incorporated other approaches, such as micro-level discourse analysis, to apprehend the power dynamics in evidence and to delve deeper into the rhetorical dimensions of objectivity.

Various forms of media bias have regularly been examined through critical discourse analysis. So for example, Van Dijk (2000) argues that critical discourse analysis can aid in identifying partisan or ideological bias by examining the language choices, discursive strategies, and sources utilized. Critical discourse analysis combined with narrative analysis looks at structural elements of the text such as headlines, subheadings, captions, and lead paragraphs, which often play a crucial role in framing the story (Bell, 1991) thus contributing to the analysis of the frames used in media.

Analysis of discourse in general can let us understand the aims and intentions of those who create and controls it no matter if it's individuals or specific groups in social power structures. The result of such research can explain which boundaries have been constructed by editorial choices, what the mainstream media want people to focus on and what they want to exclude from the collective consciousness. If we put aside the patriotic factor that attaches each individual to some kind of community (tribe), and conditionally define a person as an entity free from ideological boundaries, the question arises of what kind of account those who are directly involved in influencing discourse are preparing for the population that is under the impact of these discourses. It is important to understand whether the discourse pushes humanity toward a new global conflict, with potentially catastrophic consequences for both humanity and the environment.

The present research endeavors to critically examine the adherence of the discourse produced by mainstream Western media to principles of journalistic objectivity through qualitative and quantitative exploration of media various media bias practices which in its turn can deepen our understanding of the media's role in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. By conducting this investigation, a deeper insight can be gained concerning the events of this conflict and the ways in which they unfolded. In addition, this research could also offer valuable insight into the ways in which the media can both reflect and construct serious social and political events.

The implications of this research could be far-reaching for media professionals and consumers alike. By identifying common themes and patterns in media discourse during the Russian-Ukrainian war, the study could offer insight into how media bias operates in practice and how it may impact journalistic objectivity. Additionally, the investigation of the relationship between biased practices and the principles of peace journalism could provide valuable guidance for media professionals seeking to promote a more balanced approach to the coverage of the conflict in the interests of society. The critical discourse and semiotic analysis employed in the study may also offer a replicable framework for analyzing media bias in other contexts, potentially informing the development of new ethical and professional standards in journalism. Overall, the research has the potential to contribute to a more informed and responsible media landscape, ultimately benefiting the public's access to unbiased and accurate information.

2. Statement of Purpose

The present research endeavors to critically examine the adherence of the discourse produced by mainstream Western media to principles of journalistic objectivity through a qualitative and quantitative exploration of various media bias practices. By employing a comprehensive analytical methodology, integrating critical discourse analysis with semiotic and narrative techniques, the study seeks to unveil bias by examining how language is used to represent different groups, events, or aspects of war within texts and photography. Furthermore, this research employs quantitative content analysis to determine the prevalence of these practices within war reporting and to discern any differences between the analyzed outlets across two distinct periods. The findings of this research aim to shed light on the broader implications for media ethics, bias, and professional practice, with the aim of contributing to a deeper understanding of the role of media in shaping public perception of the war.

2.1 Research questions

- How are the conflicting sides of the Russian-Ukrainian war presented in discourse produced by the Western media and what potential biases can be identified in these representations? How are the “us” vs “them” narratives constructed?
- To what degree, and in what ways, does the discourse generated by the analyzed Western media outlets concerning the Russian-Ukrainian conflict adhere to the

principles of peace journalism? How does this alignment vary across these media platforms?

3. Theories

Journalistic objectivity seen is an important concept from an academic perspective as it upholds the principles of truth, accuracy, and impartiality in journalism, which are fundamental to the profession's role in informing the public. Undoubtedly, it is a fundamental value in journalism. Nevertheless, the concept of objectivity is complex, paradoxical, and constantly evolving. This section aims to scrutinize its historical development, tracing its emergence in the academic field and subsequent migration to journalism, as well as its present-day applications. Furthermore, this section will delve into the challenges that journalists face during times of war, and explore contemporary perspectives on the role of digital media in conflicts. Additionally, this section will examine new concepts, such as peace journalism, which seek to connect professional practices with the idea of "objectivity."

3.1 Journalistic objectivity

The debate regarding the feasibility or presence of journalistic objectivity and impartiality in journalism as a set of norms of journalistic professionalism has been ongoing for a considerable amount of time and found its significant development in the early 20 century. Michael Schudson (1978) draws a demarcation line in 1920 when the ideas of constructivism became obviously apparent and the influencing essay of Walter Lippmann, whom Schudson calls "the most wise and forceful spokesman for the ideal of objectivity" (Schudson, 1978, p. 151), has been published. Hudson emphasizes that the notion that individuals and society construct their own reality has been a fundamental concept in social thought since the 1920s. Prior to this, the subjectivity of perception was not a significant consideration for journalists.

In his writings, Lippman put his emphasis on science as a possible source of conceptual objectivity, which emerged in the mid-nineteenth century as a consequence of a paradigm shift in the technology of research that moved the scientific method from a "truth-to-nature" approach based on the ideas of standardization of observing subjects and observed objects to "mechanical objectivity" as a "the insistent drive to repress the willful intervention of the artist-author, and to put in its stead a set of procedures that would, as it were, move nature to the page through a strict protocol, if not automatically" (Daston and Galison, 2007, p.121).

The preceding debates within a philosophical discourse on the concept of "Objectivity" were also influential. Kantian contributions defined "objective" as a universal and a priori conditions, and the "subjective" with the psychological or "empirical", drawing a new line between two polar concepts "objectivity" and "subjectivity" that are inseparable and define each other. "The emergence of scientific objectivity in the mid-nineteenth century necessarily goes hand in glove with the emergence of scientific subjectivity" (Daston and Galison, 2007).

Since then "objectivity" was sweeping across a number of academic disciplines (Maras, 2013) and Lippmann's writings offer a highly advanced explanation for "objectivity" as a new and developing standard in journalism which, in accordance with Maras (2013) had passed a long way from the proto-objective era of 1800-1830 based on "factuality, independence, and impartiality" to objectivity as a reporter-focused occupational or organizational ethic of 1900 when the reporter's role in the newsgathering process became more apparent to the public and objectivity began to serve as an organizational tool, functioning as a means of discipline within the interactions between editors and reporters (Maras, 2013).

Discussing the problem of journalistic subjectivity Walter Lippmann (1920) was concerned about the issue of people distorting facts through the lens of cultural "stereotypes", emotions, standardization, routine judgment and disregard for subtlety thus leading to the construction of their own reality: "We can see that the news of it comes to us now fast, now slowly; but that whatever we believe to be a true picture, we treat as if it were the environment itself" (Lippmann, 1922, p. 4). Lippmann believed that social phenomena have two sides: an intrinsic or "true" and a constructed one. He asserted that "truth" can never be imported by the media and "truth" should always be distinguished from "news". The function of truth, in accordance with Lippmann, is to bring light to hidden facts, and the function of news is to signal an event.

In 1920 Lippmann contended that as the world becomes more complex, individuals and governments have a greater need for a reliable source of factual information. The lack of access to such information leaves people feeling lost and uncertain. Calling the most harmful forms of untruth "sophistry" and "propaganda", Lippmann highlights that "when those who

control them arrogate to themselves the right to determine by their own consciences what shall be reported and for what purpose, democracy is unworkable” (Lippmann, 1920, p.31) and warns that "the crisis of western democracy is a crisis in journalism". Lippmann questions if democracy could survive in the conditions “when the manufacture of consent is an unregulated private enterprise” (Lippmann, 1920).

Objectivity also refers to the idea that statements about the world can be deemed trustworthy if they conform to established rules recognized as legitimate by a professional community. Belief in objectivity entails faith in "facts," a lack of trust in "values," and a commitment to segregating the two concepts. Facts are viewed as assertions about the world that are subject to independent validation and remain unaffected by any individual's personal preferences. Conversely, values are considered an individual's conscious or unconscious preferences for how the world should be and are deemed ultimately subjective, without a legitimate claim to others (Schudson, 1978).

Andrew Calcutt (2011) describes journalistic objectivity as a multi-faceted concept that encompasses various interconnected ideas. Firstly, it involves a dedication to truthfulness that relates to “reporting factually accurate information”. Secondly, it often suggests neutrality as a commitment to presenting information unbiased, in the way “where there are conflicting interpretations of an event, presenting different viewpoints even-handedly” (Calcutt and Hammond, 2011, p. 98). Lastly, Calcutt describes objectivity as emotional neutrality, which entails separating facts from personal opinions and enabling audiences to form their own conclusions. He argues that journalists should ideally be dispassionate and neutral to report truthfully and that being a professional journalist requires particular knowledge and skills. This highlights that journalistic writing is a discipline rather than a personal expression of one's own “inevitable predilections and prejudices”.

Journalistic objectivity is closely linked to media ethics, media responsibility and accountability which can be defined as “the process by which media organizations may be expected or obliged to render an account of their activities to their constituents” (Pritchard, 2000, p. 2). Media scholars highlight that journalists who uphold objectivity are accountable to their audience, adhere to the highest ethical and professional standards of objective journalism, and ultimately to their employers (Ryan, 2001).

Schudson provides a critic the reliability of the concept of "objectivity", arguing that it was often just a rebranding of the previously accepted idea of "realism" that journalists of the 1890s adhered to. He suggests that the term "objectivity" was used to give the impression of a more rigorous and scientific approach to journalism, when in fact it was still subject to personal biases and societal norms.

There is a certain point in criticizing objectivity as a reliable concept. In terms of novelty, Schudson stresses that it is highly probable that their notion of "objectivity" was frequently just a new term for the "naive empiricism" that journalists in the 1890s referred to as "realism". In terms of consistency, McLaughlin (2016) admits that objectivity in journalism has been subjected to serious critique from an academic who suggested that media do not "reflect our social world" but play a significant role in constructing it and thus news "represent sectional interests rather than society as a whole". These debates about the "death of objectivity" gave birth to new speculations about the possible future of journalism as a 'post-"objective" profession' David Mindich (1998: 138).

3.2 Journalistic and media bias

As democratic societies value freedom of the press and the role of the media as a watchdog, it is important to assess whether media outlets are providing balanced and unbiased coverage. Understanding media bias which can be defined as a potentially measurable derivation from the ideal journalistic objectivity can have broader implications for media studies and contribute to the scholarly discourse on media representations, discourse analysis, and semiotics. The theoretical literature in this section has focused primarily on the different views on media bias and the ways to detect and categorize it.

Calcutt and Hammond (2011) point out the inevitable biases journalists embed by expressing their own viewpoint or interpretation of the story by selecting whom to interview and which quotes to incorporate, without resorting to overt editorializing. He explains these selections as criteria related to the psychology of perception that postulates that individuals are vulnerable to attentional bias: "We tend to notice certain things rather than others, depending on our background and interests"(Calcutt and Hammond, 2011, p. 100). He also names several external factors that could influence choices to be influenced such as conventions of news production, ethnocentric cultural prejudices, and preexisting ideas about the world.

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988) suggest a specific conceptual model in political economy - the propaganda model, which offers insight into how corporate mass media operates through the use of propaganda and systemic biases. The model mainly focuses on the specific structural constraints - "filters", that shape the raw news material and the whole media news industry making it possible for control by the narrow group of "owners", existing by the means of the limited information "sources" and shaping by specific market forces that affect through the "advertisement". Chomsky also connects propaganda with the "ideology" filter expressed through the projection of "fears" that shape journalistic choices (Herman and Chomsky, 2002).

"Bias is not in the eye of the beholder but is structured within the entire news process; the news filters and constructs reality according to a dominant or institutional ideology" (McLaughlin, 2016, p.34).

Citing Philip Knightley, McLaughlin stresses that sometimes correspondents neglected the significance of facts and transformed into mere propagandists for a particular side giving examples of *The Week* and the *Daily Worker* were known to blend propaganda with facts, and sometimes even fabricate stories to advance the Republican cause, which they supported fervently as Communist advocates before being reporters. Knightley objects that in these cases biased journalists deprive readers of their rights to the truth even if the truth "damages the cause of right against wrong".

Teun A. van Dijk (2008) states that the news is "imbued" with ideologies emphasizing the role of the news media in the "reproduction of ideologies in society". He defines ideologies as a collection of fundamental beliefs held by members of a social group, which shape their understanding of social occurrences and guide their discourse and actions as part of that group. He emphasizes that one of the primary techniques for manipulating discourse through ideology is the representation of in-groups and out-groups, as seen in the "Group Relations" aspect of the ideology schema. This is often achieved through the use of ideological pronouns such as "us" and "them" in text and speech (van Dijk, 2004).

Rodney H. Jones examines the topic of media bias, which refers to the way media messages convey certain perspectives and promote the agenda of those who produce them. He

highlights that “all media are biased towards different ways of communicating, different forms of social organization, and different perspectives on reality” (Jones, Jaworska and Aslan, 2021, p.48). He claims that most news messages claim to present ‘information’ which is purportedly ‘factual’ and ‘objective’ and journalists and other news producers take neutrality and objectivity as core values. However, it is acknowledged that there are various forms of bias that are present in the news.

“News bias can come from the decisions of reporters and editors about what is worth reporting and what is not, about whom to interview to find out ‘facts’ about events, and even about where cameras are placed to record events and how pictures get edited” (Jones, Jaworska and Aslan, 2021, p.48).

3.3 The role of media in war

According to Susan L. Carruthers (2011), the media plays different roles at different stages of a conflict. In general, she argues that the media tends to be objective during times of relative peace, but becomes more propaganda-oriented during wartime. Before a war begins, the media serves a preparatory and legitimizing function, constructing social approval for the resort to war through biased news gathering that favors ruling elites. During the mobilization phase of a war, the media assumes a propaganda role, disseminating state messages that justify the conflict. During the active phase of total war, the media plays a central propaganda role in disseminating state messages (Carruthers, 2011).

Carruthers emphasizes that it can be challenging to pinpoint exactly when a war starts, but it is evident that the media can have a significant impact in the lead-up to a violent conflict, whether or not it ultimately results in a formal declaration of war. In many cases, media approval for the use of military force stems from a bias in news-gathering for powerful, influential sources that support the decision to go to war (Carruthers, 2011).

In examining the factors that contribute to news bias, Carruthers identifies various aspects, including subjective viewpoints that are inevitably non-value-free and structural characteristics of the political economy that impact the editorial and journalistic decision-making process, influenced by the "interests and needs" of commercial sponsors. She notes that it is conceivable that both news and entertainment media may serve the interests of the existing order in a more intricate and less direct way, mirroring the "dominant

ideology" without conscious acknowledgment of the specific requirements of particular corporate sponsors, owners, or advertisers. She also assumes that editorial and journalistic choices about how to cover war events as well as overall journalistic self-censorship can outcome not only in the interest of the specific governments but in the interest of the public opinion that defines the tone and perspective they are keen to obtain from news content.

Analyzing the connection between the rising complexity of the media landscape and its impact on modern warfare, Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2013) introduce the concept of 'diffused war', defining it as a new paradigm of war in which the "mediatization of war makes possible more diffuse causal relations between action and effect, creating greater uncertainty for policymakers in the conduct of war" (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2013, p. 3). The phenomenon of "diffused war," in which media and communication technologies play a central role, has occurred within the context of a shift from the first to the second phase of the process known as mediatization. In a diffused war, the dynamic interaction between governments, militaries, and the public is intensified and made more unpredictable by the use of media and communication technologies, leading all parties to find new ways to manage and control the flow of information related to the conflict (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2013).

Hoskins and O'Loughlin argue that the use of media and communication technologies by news media, citizen media, and militaries has become integral to the conduct of war, and it is necessary to consider the role of media in order to fully understand the nature of modern warfare. The development and widespread adoption of mass media technologies, including both analog and digital platforms, has led to an increase in the number and visibility of conflict-related stories, which can have a significant impact on individuals and groups. "How we perceive war is not just a matter of the content of news, of the images and stories presented to us, but also a matter of how we relate to the media" (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2013, p. 6).

Several media scholars emphasize that the most apparent rejection of objectivity in journalism takes place in the field of war reporting. Greg McLaughlin (2016) states that with the reporting of war, the topic of journalistic objectivity became the most relevant and pressing issue. He highlights that throughout history, there have been numerous examples of war correspondents who have blurred the lines between journalism and combat, either by

participating in the fighting they were covering or by positioning themselves as military or political advisors.

3.4 Peace Journalism

“Peace journalism is when editors and reporters make choices – of what to report and how to report it – that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value nonviolent responses to conflict” (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005, p. 5).

According to Lynch and McGoldrick, conventional journalism often unintentionally fuels conflict by focusing on violent events, emphasizing binary divisions, and neglecting the root causes and potential solutions to conflicts. They propose an alternative approach, peace journalism, which focuses on understanding and explaining the background and context of conflict, giving voice to all parties involved, and highlighting peace initiatives and nonviolent solutions (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005).

The concept of peace journalism, introduced by Johan Galtung (2003), provides journalists with a framework for avoiding a value bias towards violence when reporting on war and conflict. He juxtaposes peace journalism which focuses on the conflict peacefully transformation and war journalism which focuses on “meta-conflict that comes after the root conflict, created by violence and war, and the question of who wins” (Galtung, 2003, p. 177). According to Galtung, war journalism dominates the media, portraying conflicts as battles or sporting events in which two parties struggle to impose their goals while reducing the complexity of the conflict and its underlying causes.

Galtung distinguishes between war journalism and peace journalism, outlining specific characteristics that differentiate the two (See Appendix A: Peace/Conflict Journalism; War/Violence Journalism). Peace journalism is centered around the principles of truth, people, and solutions to conflict, with an orientation toward promoting peace. It seeks to humanize all sides of a conflict and make the underlying causes of violence visible. In contrast, war journalism is focused on violence, propaganda, and elites, with an orientation toward highlighting the victory of a specific side. It makes conflict opaque and tends to polarize groups into "us" versus "them", often resorting to dehumanizing one side through the use of persuasive techniques.

In peace journalism, objectivity includes giving a fair representation to all sides of a conflict, not just the loudest or most powerful voices. It also involves objectively reporting on peace initiatives and nonviolent solutions, not just violent events. This approach considers the root causes of a conflict, giving voice to all parties involved, and providing context and analysis to promote informed understanding (Hanitzsch, 2007). However, this approach posits that objectivity should not just focus on presenting 'both sides' of a conflict, but should also strive to explain the underlying issues, the implications of the conflict, and potential solutions.

Peace journalism in accordance with Galtung aims to provide serious, professional reporting that makes the conflict more transparent. It seeks to depolarize by portraying the complexity of all sides and to deescalate by emphasizing peace and conflict resolution as much as violence. Truth, in accordance with Galtung, is at the heart of peace journalism, as it opposes propaganda and lies. This means seeking truth from all sides, exploring the formation of the conflict, and giving voice to all parties involved: “Truth-oriented journalists would expose truths from all sides and uncover all cover-ups. The war journalist is only exposing their own truths and they help in covering up” (Galtung, 2000, p. 163).

Peace journalism has been criticized by some as being too idealistic or as advocating for bias in favor of peace. However, its proponents argue that conventional journalism is already biased toward violence and conflict, and that peace journalism simply provides a more balanced and constructive perspective (Hanitzsch, 2007).

4. Research review

The concept of journalistic objectivity has been a subject of extensive academic inquiry for decades. Scholars have explored various methodologies to examine the structure and content of media reports, aiming to understand how objectivity and bias manifest in journalistic discourse. Narrative and discourse analysis, in particular, have emerged as popular techniques in this area of research.

In the present section, the focus is on previous scholarship that has investigated the topic of journalistic objectivity in the context of war. The examination of media coverage during wartime poses unique challenges for journalists and media organizations as they navigate

complex ethical and practical considerations. The issue of bias and objectivity in such scenarios has been the subject of rigorous academic scrutiny.

Additionally, this section also delves into previous research on the media's role during the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The conflict not only posed challenges for media organizations but also highlighted the need to understand the relationship between media and political power. Previous scholarship has explored various dimensions of this complex relationship, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities that arise for the media in conflict situations.

The conflict in Ukraine has its research history. Roman Horbyk (Horbyk, 2017) looks at how Europe was depicted in the media during *Euromaidan* and the subsequent Ukraine-Russia crisis. Horbyk's data consists of articles from nine newspapers with varying political and journalistic viewpoints, as well as interviews with journalists, foreign policymakers, and experts. The study also makes use of online and historical sources, as well as relevant policy documents.

Several scholars have shown an interest in studying the phenomenon of media bias in representing the Russian-Ukrainian relationship. The research conducted in this field aims to shed light on how news media can present a distorted or incomplete picture of certain events or issues. By analyzing the biases in media coverage of the *Euromaidan* protests in Russia and the UK, Zixiu Liu found that both countries' news outlets engaged in one-dimensional reporting that stereotyped the protests and followed a similar logic of "othering" their counterparts. This was evident through the frames used by the Russian and British media, which revealed illiberal trends in both countries - a hybrid regime (Russia) and a liberal democracy (UK). The British media portrayed the protests as pro-democracy revolutionaries, while the Russian media portrayed them as a Western-backed political coup. Both media outlets were criticized for failing to go beyond their governments' political lines and engage in an in-depth investigation of the events (Liu, 2019).

Numerous researchers have already delved into the media representation of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict which became the subject of extensive academic research, with scholars investigating various aspects of its media coverage, such as the framing of the conflict, the use of propaganda and disinformation, and the impact of media on public

opinion. Olga Brusylovska and Iryna Maksymenko, talking about the political discourse produced by Russian outlets argue that Russia's objectives in the conflict involving regional identity and media influence include disrupting the current statehood and geopolitical situation of post-Soviet nations, as well as altering the existing status quo. In this context, the military campaign in Ukraine can be seen as a tactic to establish a new level of regional policy, which could be implemented in other regions if successful (Brusylovska and Maksymenko, 2022).

Several media research studies have examined the issue of journalistic objectivity in the media's coverage of the war in eastern Ukraine in 2014. Gunnar Nygren (2016) conducted a study that focused on the various aspects of media coverage in four countries: Ukraine, Russia, Sweden, and Poland. To investigate this issue, the study utilized both quantitative content analysis and semi-structured interviews.

According to the research, the Ukrainian mainstream media exhibited a patriotic bias by focusing more on the country's military than its political landscape or international relations. The study noted that the media largely overlooked the "enemy," with only a handful of articles mentioning the rebels in eastern Ukraine, meanwhile, the media coverage in Russia presented a more multifaceted picture compared to Ukrainian media, with significant attention paid to both the fighting and civilians. The Russian media's coverage of the conflict largely aligned with the Russian government's stance. While Russian support for eastern Ukraine was noteworthy, the focus was mainly on the provision of humanitarian aid to the local population.

The conflict received media coverage in Poland and Sweden as well but with a greater emphasis on how it affected these two countries specifically. An examination of the coverage themes revealed that proximity to the conflict influenced the differences in coverage. In Poland, the media focused on the conflict's international dimension, with Russian military involvement being a significant area of concern. The study's key finding is that the framing of the conflict is closely intertwined with the political situation in each country. Additionally, professional culture, patriotism, self-censorship, and political context are essential variables in understanding media coverage. The selection of themes is predominantly influenced by the degree of proximity to the conflict and its potential impact on the home country and audience. In both Russia and Ukraine, the framing of the conflict is shaped by a combination of

activism, self-censorship rooted in professional cultures, and mechanisms within the media system. This has resulted in coverage that is influenced by political divisions, deviating from the professional ideals of objectivity and impartiality.

Nygren (2016) highlights the challenges faced by journalists who aim to uphold their professional autonomy while simultaneously dealing with pressure from political or military leadership. These journalists must navigate the delicate balance between adhering to professional values such as objectivity and impartiality and fulfilling the expectations of sources and audiences who may want them to convey emotions or exhibit patriotism and loyalty towards their country and its political and military leadership.

Media researchers have directed their attention toward analyzing the discourse surrounding Western military interventions. This has been a subject of particular interest due to the significant impact these interventions have on both the national and international levels. In his article "War legitimization discourse: Representing 'Us' and 'Them' in four US presidential addresses", John Oddo (2011) analyzes the biases that have been used in the speeches given by Franklin D. Roosevelt and George W. Bush, referred to as "call-to-arms" speeches. It uses Thibault's method of critical intertextual analysis to identify key legitimization strategies and underlying themes in the rhetoric of both speakers. The article also looks at the speeches in the context of their historical and social setting to show how the presidents manipulated the public. The analysis looks at the use of polarizing language to create an "Us" and "Them" divide, the use of past and future representations to justify violence, and the demarcation of group membership to discredit opponents of war and legitimize violence against non-aggressors.

Through their studies, researchers aim to uncover the power dynamics and political interests that shape military discourse, as well as the ways in which the media portray and frame these interventions. Rune Ottosen (2019) analyzes how the Norwegian news media framed the Norwegian military presence in Syria and Libya, taking into consideration the legal aspects of recent NATO operations that violated international law and were ignored by mainstream media. The study focuses on self-censorship among Norwegian journalists who ignored the fact that Norwegian special forces participated in military operations inside Syria from May 2017 to March 2018.

Ottosen argues that previous research has provided empirical evidence of how propaganda and psychological operations (PSYOPS) by parties involved in a conflict can influence the framing of news stories. He states that avoiding enemy images is a “challenge for journalists covering international conflicts” (Ottosen, 1995, p. 101). He points out that the construction of an image of an enemy, such as portraying Assad as an enemy and linking Islam with the Islamic State (IS), was a part of Norwegian news coverage (Ottosen, 2019).

Ottosen concludes that the majority of the articles about the Norwegian military presence in Syria were neutral news pieces without taking a clear stance. Furthermore, the sources used in these articles were largely composed of military officials, experts, and politicians, indicating an over-representation of elite sources. Ottosen notes that the Norwegian media coverage did not provide enough detailed information about the actual activities of the Norwegian forces in Syria. While some articles were critical of the presence of Norwegian forces, the coverage of legal issues was insufficient to stimulate public discourse.

According to Ottosen, war journalism typically falls short of conveying accurate and pertinent information about military interventions, disastrous war outcomes, and the legal and human rights implications of such actions. The media's coverage of Norway's military engagement in Syria could have benefited from peace journalism, which involves moving “beyond government propaganda” and examining the Norwegian military's involvement in these conflicts. This would require deliberating on whether such actions are counterproductive and contribute to conflict escalation (Ottosen, 2019).

Another example of the implementation of Galtung's model is Shinar's (2009) investigation of the 2006 Lebanon War coverage. In his research, the peace journalism model served as the foundation for content analysis, which compared the reporting in a Canadian and an Israeli newspaper. The empirical results from this comparative study revealed "dimensions as viable professional practices to advance peace journalism" (Shinar, 2009, p.469). He analyzed the coverage of the conflict in both newspapers and determined that war journalism predominated; however, peace journalism was not entirely absent. Furthermore, a considerable portion of the coverage granted ordinary people a voice and adopted "less victimizing language."

During the course of the war, the issues of infrastructural limitations, media bias, and censorship in Russia have emerged as crucial areas of inquiry for researchers of media. These challenges have become a valuable source of data for academics, who have sought to better understand the impact of these factors on the flow of information to the public, the shaping of public opinion, and the ability of the media to perform its democratic role in a conflict situation. For example, John V. Pavlik's essay (2022) highlights the difficulties and constraints that Russian journalists have encountered since the beginning of the war. The passage of the Russian law mandating compliance with the official government position on the Ukraine war resulted in the closure of the last independent TV news operation in Russia. According to Pavlik, reporters are required to obtain authorization from military authorities for their news coverage gathering. Additionally, the use of the term "war" is prohibited in Russian media, and violating this law can lead to a prison sentence of up to 15 years or more (Pavlik, 2022).

In light of the Russian-Ukraine conflict, Pavlik stresses the significance of independent news media, emphasizing that it is a "disinformation war" or "propaganda war." To effectively combat this war, he suggests that only independent journalists and news media are capable of doing so. He also recommends that individuals question all information, regardless of the source, whether it be from Russia, China, the USA, or even Ukraine if it is crucial. He believes that objective reporting, without bias, is crucial in providing credible news coverage of the war that is acceptable to the public.

This research also encompasses the previous studies conducted on how the media constructs an image of the enemy. This topic is particularly relevant in the context of current research as it provides insights into how media representation can influence public perceptions of a conflict. Springer et al. conducted a study on the portrayal of the Ukrainian conflict in Swedish media, focusing on the construction of "Their War" versus "Our War". In their research, the authors examine the concept of "Patriotic Journalism", which refers to coverage that is loyal, supportive, sympathetic, and empathetic towards one's own nation or ethnic community, but may deviate from objectivity. They point out that Patriotic Journalism is most prevalent when reporting on "our war" or "our news", while reporting on "their war" or "their news" is typically approached with greater personal and professional distance, allowing for detached observation and balancing.

The utilization of qualitative content analysis in researching news cases has proven to be effective in examining patriotic journalism, according to the researchers. Their findings show that the Swedish media's coverage was characterized by a strong, authoritative stance, with clear opinions and a preference for the Ukrainian side in instances where the Russian side was perceived as being aggressive or morally wrong. The researchers also note that a protagonist's viewpoint was more frequently adopted in cases that focused on a victimized individual or group.

5. Material and methodology

The present study employs qualitative content analysis and quantitative content analysis as an integral method to identify and examine how and to which extent media reports align with the principles of journalistic objectivity, as outlined in Johan Galtung's model of peace journalism (See Appendix A: Peace/Conflict Journalism; War/Violence Journalism). The primary focus of the analysis is on the ideological aspects of the discourse, as well as the techniques used to construct an image of the enemy in news coverage between February 24th, 2022 and April 30th, 2023.

Since qualitative analysis focuses on the implicit meanings, quantitative analysis analyzes visible aspects of reporting such as open usage of the victimizing language, military language, or open good/bad tagging. Quantitative content analysis can help provide a quantitative baseline for understanding the context and scope of the qualitative discourse and semiotic content analysis. It can be used to identify patterns and trends in the frequency and distribution of specific themes related to the war. This can help to identify the dominant narratives and discourses used by journalists and media outlets in reporting on the war, and how they change over time as well as how they differ from one source to another which can help to reveal biases or silences in the reporting.

5.1 Material retrieving and preparation

The focus of the study is on high-circulation high-quality digital news resources, which are predominantly Western and adhere to liberal democratic values. The selection criteria for the chosen media sources included content publishing websites that use English as the primary language of reporting, leading positions in the world of internet traffic. There were several options that passed these criteria: BBC, CNN, and the New York Times. Another important

aspect is the accessibility of the data for open access, and open possibilities to obtain the whole array of the produced materials without subscription or other limitations. Two main media sources were matching these criteria and were selected: BBC, and CNN.

5.1.1 BBC

The BBC, or British Broadcasting Corporation, is a public service broadcaster based in the United Kingdom. It is the world's oldest national broadcaster and one of the largest media organizations in the world. The BBC operates multiple TV and radio stations, provides news services locally, nationally, and internationally, and hosts a range of digital content on its website and app platforms. BBC offers services in more than 40 languages through its World Service division.

The SimilarWeb report indicates that the BBC's online platform garnered a significant audience, with an estimated 524 million visitors in March 2023. The geographical distribution of traffic to the BBC website reveals a considerable international reach, with approximately 23% originating from the United States, 14% from the United Kingdom, 6% from India, and a further 6% from Canada.

Steven Maras (2013) highlights that the BBC has traditionally considered objectivity and impartiality as fundamental aspects of its ethos. "The BBC is a unique institution in terms of objectivity in that it pursues it as an organizational norm" (Maras, 2013, p. 220). However, he stresses that in the 2006 Royal Charter, objectivity is no longer explicitly mentioned. Similarly, the current version of the 'BBC Mission and Values' statement on their website does not include any reference to objectivity. Nonetheless, executive staff frequently emphasize the importance of practicing objectivity and how it contributes to upholding trust in the BBC during their speeches (Maras, 2013).

According to the BBC's own guidelines, they "must do all we can to ensure that controversial subjects are treated with due impartiality in all our output." The BBC strives to provide a balance of viewpoints over time so that no significant strand of thought is underrepresented or omitted (*BBC: Section 4: Impartiality - Guidelines*, no date).

5.1.2 CNN

CNN, or Cable News Network, is an American news-based pay television channel. It was founded in 1980 by American media proprietors Ted Turner and Reese Schonfeld as a 24-hour cable news channel. CNN was the first television channel to provide 24-hour news coverage and was the first all-news television channel in the United States. CNN's programming primarily consists of news shows but also features feature programs covering business, politics, sports, entertainment, health, and other topics.

As per the data aggregated in a SimilarWeb report, CNN's online digital platform experienced substantial traffic, accruing an estimated 598 million visitors in March 2023. An analysis of the geographical segmentation of this web traffic reveals that a significant majority, approximately 74%, originated from the United States. The remaining notable contributions to the website's traffic stemmed from Canada, accounting for 5%, and Mexico, contributing 2%. This data underscores the predominance of CNN's digital reach within North America.

While many other major media companies make their "CNN News Standards & Practices Policy Guides" publicly available. CNN does not publish its "CNN News Standards & Practices Policy Guide" due to its classification as containing "privileged, confidential, and proprietary information about CNN's business practices" (Wemple, 2021). This lack of transparency regarding their specific standards and practices poses challenges when attempting to analyze and assess CNN's adherence to these guidelines.

5.1.3 Content preparation

The construction of the content selection process entailed a multi-stage approach. At the outset of the inquiry, a deliberate choice was made to avoid the employment of the search mechanisms offered by the online platforms bbc.com and cnn.com. This determination was predicated upon the desire to preclude algorithmic bias and interface modes that draw upon various cultural forms. This decision was grounded upon the concern that such mechanisms could cast the researcher as a subject within discourse, potentially jeopardizing the selection process.

As a substitute, the present research employed customized crawling and parsing mechanisms. The crawling procedure involves procuring the contents of the webpage in the form of

HTML, preserving the content within the database, extracting all links situated within the page's body, and subsequently utilizing these links as targets for subsequent crawling, thereby recursively assembling a precise map of the entire site. The crawler is further configured to exclude specific categories of sites that fall outside the scope of the research, such as those dedicated to "sport" and "entertainment", language categories divergent from English, or forms of media not related to the research inquiry, such as video and audio.

The parsing mechanism functions by processing the stored content and extracting and organizing pertinent information, including the title, description, publication date, editing date, category, author, and textual content from the HTML metatext. The parsed and structured data is then saved within a designated database, replete with well-organized indexes for enhanced searchability based on specific parameters, including category, topic, time of publication, and keywords.

During the time frame spanning from March 1st, 2023 until May 3rd, 2023, crawling mechanisms procured in excess of 4 million links from the BBC website. Among these links, 3 million were linked to the BBC domains (bbc.com, www.bbc.com), while over 870 thousand were associated with the news category. Following the exclusion of technical pages, approximately 198 thousand pages were parsed and subsequently stored within the database in a structured format for subsequent analysis. A similar scheme was applied to CNN where 647 thousand links were crawled and 250 thousand pages were obtained and 50 thousand were parsed and stored in the database.

5.2 Qualitative analysis

Qualitative content analysis is an extensively employed research method. It can be defined as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005, p. 1278) or as “an approach of empirical, methodological controlled analysis of texts within their context of communication, following content analytic rules and step by step models, without rash quantification” (Mayring, 2000).

Galtung's seminal work identified a set of critical inquiries that peace correspondents must address in their reportage during times of conflict to mitigate the incidence of factual

inaccuracies. The present study builds upon this framework by incorporating these pivotal inquiries as the primary analytical tool employing the main questions of peace journalism as the dimensions for qualitative analysis. The objective of the study is to evaluate the veracity of media reports concerning the armed conflict by investigating the extent to which peace correspondents have adhered to Galtung's guidelines:

- What is the conflict about? How the parties in this conflict are represented?
- How are the “deeper roots of the conflict” being represented, in structure and culture, including the history of both?
- What kind of ideas did journalists represent about possible outcomes rather than one party imposing itself on the other?
- How about such invisible effects of war such as trauma, hatred, wish for revenge and glory are presented?
- Are there actors in the representation that are working to reduce, prevent or stop violence? In which way (supportive or not) their visions and methods are represented?

The research at hand is centered on the investigation of themes that play a crucial role in delineating the construction of "us" versus "them" in the context of peace journalism. These themes are of paramount importance as they occupy a central position in the peace journalism model, which aims to foster understanding, harmony, and conflict resolution through responsible reporting of news events.

In this study, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is the primary method used to analyze the language and discourse of the data. CDA is a rigorous and systematic approach to examining the ways in which language is used to construct meaning and power relationships in social contexts. In addition to CDA, the study also employs semiotic and narrative analysis as secondary methods that can provide complementary insights into the discourse. The semiotic analysis focuses on the study of signs and symbols and how they contribute to the construction of meaning, while narrative analysis examines the ways in which stories are constructed and the underlying themes and messages conveyed through them.

5.2.1 Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a research method that involves studying how language is used to construct, maintain, and legitimize social inequalities. It is based on the idea that

the way language is used is intentional, whether or not the speaker is aware of it. This research provides a general CDA analysis framework and demonstrates how to apply it to a systematic media outlet review. It is important to note that CDA research, like any other form of academic research, can reproduce ideological biases, and it is important to ensure qualitative rigor and trustworthiness in the research process (DuBroff, 2018; Sackett, 1979).

According to Mary Talbot (2007), discourse pertains to the activity of cultural interaction rather than a tangible outcome. She underscores that discourse is not a product but rather a continuous process, and that texts are an observable product and an integral aspect of this process. Consequently, studying texts such as war reports in isolation is devoid of significance. In general, discourse analysis encompasses the examination of language in its practical application, and investigates language as a medium of social interaction (Talbot, 2007).

Norman Fairclough's work focuses on the language used in news, documentaries, and political speeches as a way to understand how these media shape our understanding of public affairs. Fairclough claims language has the power to influence our knowledge, beliefs, values, and social identities and producers have the ability to control what is included or excluded in a representation, and what is emphasized or downplayed. This gives journalists the authority to present facts to the public. Production processes involve biases that shape how the world is presented. These biases can create implicit meanings that appeal to readers' emotions and subjectivity, such as feelings of danger or justice (Fairclough, 1995).

John Richardson and Fairclough's approach to CDA involves examining language at three different levels: the micro-level (e.g. words, sentences, and grammar), the meso-level (e.g. texts and genres), and the macro-level (e.g. institutions, power relations, and ideology). This multidimensional approach allows CDA to analyze the ways in which language is used to both reflect and shape social and political power dynamics (Richardson, 2007).

According to Richardson, not all the meaning in a text is explicitly stated. There are also presupposed meanings that are implied or taken for granted in the text and can be interpreted in different ways. Richardson cites Reah's work and discusses three linguistic structures that often convey these underlying meanings. Analysis of prepositions includes the detection of certain words that suggest previous actions or states, the use of articles to connect existing

meanings to the current text, and the use of "wh- questions" that assume the reader is already aware of certain phenomena (Richardson, 2007).

Another essential framework that is irreplaceable for critical discourse analysis, especially from the perspective of the peace journalism model that puts a strong emphasis on analyzing "us" vs "them" biases is the "Ideological Square" of Van Dijk (2004). According to this model, information is ideologically biased by emphasizing the good things of the inner group, de-emphasizing the good things of out-group, emphasizing the bad things of out-group and de-emphasizing the bad things of the inner group. In other words, this ideological bias arises as a positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation and can be materialized in specific semantic structures such as negative topics, granularity, presuppositions, denominations, and others.

5.2.2 Semiotic analysis

In genres such as news, persuasive discourse typically employs multiple modes, including visual and auditory elements. Among these modes, images have been recognized by scholars as highly effective means of persuasion due to their ability to immediately appeal to viewers' emotions and unconscious associations, rather than rely solely on reason (Jones, Jaworska and Aslan, 2021).

In the context of current research, semiotic analysis can serve as an integral layer to both critical discourse analysis and as a distinct method for analyzing visual content such as photographs and graphical images that often accompany written or spoken language. By applying semiotic analysis to visual elements, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the persuasive strategies employed in multimodal discourse and the ways in which images contribute to shaping meaning and message.

Ferdinand de Saussure, a prominent Swiss linguist, introduced a theoretical framework (Saussure, 1917) that is widely acknowledged as the pioneering academic effort to unravel the complex nature of the sign. This model postulates that a sign comprises two essential elements that are inseparably linked: the signifier, which represents the perceptible, material manifestation of the sign, and the signified, which pertains to the conceptual notion to which the signifier refers. The signified is a mental construct that exists within an individual's

consciousness, devoid of physicality and best characterized as a "notion of a thing" rather than an actual entity.

Ferdinand de Saussure's semiological framework has been closely associated with the field of psychology. Saussure posited that linguistic signs were completely immaterial entities that did not possess a definitive, one-to-one correlation with external reality. Instead, he contended that signs did not represent reality in and of themselves. In later iterations of his theory, it became evident that reality was a mental construct that could be defined as a meaning construct that was inextricably linked to the language system, which itself was socially grounded and served as an intersubjective mediator between individuals in society. According to Saussure, rather than reflecting reality, language plays a crucial role in its construction.

Charles Sanders Peirce (1980) advanced an alternative model of sign analysis that diverged from Saussure's approach by emphasizing the logical function of signs. Peirce identified the sign as a triadic entity that brings together three fundamental components: a representamen (i.e., the element that performs the representation), an object (i.e., that which is represented), and an interpretant (i.e., how the representation is interpreted).

Peirce's triadic model of sign analysis yields several typologies of signs, which are classified into three categories: symbolic, iconic, and indexical. The symbolic type is based on arbitrary conventions and is not motivated by objective factors. The iconic type is based on similarities between a sign and a phenomenon (e.g., visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory), with the goal of representing reality with the greatest possible precision. The indexical type is based on the implicit relationship between one phenomenon and another (e.g., smoke to fire). It is worth noting that no sign is purely symbolic, iconic, or indexical; a single sign may fulfill multiple roles, thus creating different dimensions for interpretation and more complex connotations.

In his analysis of language and representations, Stuart Hall (1997) argues that representation serves as a bridge between language, meaning, and culture. To effectively interpret the world, individuals within a given culture must share a common set of concepts, images, and ideas, collectively referred to as "cultural codes." These codes are used to assign meaning to objects, people, and events, shaping our understanding and interpretation of the world around us (Hall and Open University, 1997).

Chandler argues that the concept of meaning is multifaceted and encompasses both denotative and connotative dimensions. Within communication and representation, denotative meaning is associated with the conveyance of information, while connotative meaning serves an aesthetic function. Denotative meaning is often regarded as the literal or common-sense interpretation of a sign, as defined in a dictionary. Conversely, connotative meaning refers to the personal associations and interpretations of individuals, which may be widely recognized within a particular culture or subculture. These connotative meanings are heavily influenced by social context and require interpretation, which challenges a simplistic structuralist approach to decoding meaning (Chandler, 2022).

According to Roland Barthes, the connotative and denotative dimensions of meaning in photography can be analytically differentiated. While denotation refers to the object or subject being photographed, connotation pertains to the way in which it is photographed. Chandler emphasizes that Barthes argued that connotation creates the illusion of denotation, presenting the medium as transparent. Thus, denotation is not a natural meaning but rather a product of the process of naturalization, just like connotation. This naturalization process creates “the powerful illusion that denotation is a purely literal and universal meaning, which is not at all ideological, and that those connotations that seem most obvious to individual interpreters are just as natural” (Chandler, 2022, p. 163).

Semiotic analyses also review the relationships between signs, which can be categorized into two types, as highlighted by Saussure: syntagmatic and paradigmatic. Syntagmatic relations represent structural combinations between linguistic units that follow a specific flow of content in time, creating a context or chain. On the other hand, paradigmatic relationships are based on the associative connections between signifiers, creating a paradigm that is a "set of associated signifiers or signifieds that are all members of some defining category, but in which each is significantly different" (Chandler, 2022, p. 99).

5.2.3 Narrative analysis

The narrative analysis encompasses various analytical methods that are utilized to interpret written or oral communication that takes a storied form (Figgou and Pavlopoulos, 2015). This type of analysis is primarily focused on examining the structure, content, and purpose of narratives in communication. The roots of narrative analysis can be traced back to the

narrative turn in psychology and the pioneering research of Jerome Bruner over two decades ago. The study of autobiographical life stories provides a means to explore temporal aspects and individuals' reconstructions of developmental processes and is closely associated with the analysis of narrative identity (Demuth and Mey, 2015).

In the field of narrative analysis, it is commonly assumed that people use storytelling as a means to give structure and meaning to their lives and that their narratives serve a functional and intentional purpose (Figgou and Pavlopoulos, 2015). This can be applied to the analysis of various media reports where such storytelling techniques are being applied by journalists. In their role as gatekeepers of information, journalists hold significant influence over the narratives presented to the public, and their actions can have both beneficial and detrimental effects. Thus, regarding media analysis, a key area of focus involves examining how journalists create narratives to highlight certain aspects of the reality they aim to convey while downplaying others.

Different approaches to narrative analysis can be distinguished based on whether they focus on the content or structure of the narrative (Figgou and Pavlopoulos, 2015). Thematic approaches interrogate what a story is about, while structural approaches examine how a story is constructed to achieve specific communicative goals. The structural approach identifies six elements that comprise a narrative, including an abstract, introduction, complication, evaluation, resolution, and coda, as proposed by Riessman (2008).

Labov's coding structures offer a more sophisticated approach to narrative analysis, consisting of abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, and coda (Labov, 1973). The abstract provides the reason for telling the story, orientation establishes the setting and time frame, complicating action marks a pivotal event that changes the course of action, evaluation expresses the narrator's attitude toward the event, the resolution indicates the final outcome, and coda brings the audience back to the present (Mihas, 2023). Johnny Saldana (2021) has proposed additional analytical practices, including dramaturgical coding, motif coding, and metaphor coding. Dramaturgical coding regards life as a performance, and individuals as characters in a story with a discernible beginning, middle, and end, with associated codes such as objectives, conflicts, tactics, attitudes, emotions, and subtexts (Mihas, 2023).

5.2.4 Material selection

The present study utilized a qualitative research design that focused on a targeted analysis of media representations of the conflict in question. The selection of data for analysis was determined by a systematic process that was guided by key themes and topics that are central to the discourse surrounding the conflict. Specifically, the analysis was structured around three overarching themes: (i) representations of combatants from the Russian and separatist sides, (ii) representations of combatants from the Ukrainian side, and (iii) representations of non-combatants. Through this analysis, the study seeks to provide a nuanced and comprehensive understanding of how conflict is represented in the media.

The analysis also takes publication time as one of the criteria of the material selection. There are two groups: the first in spring 2022, which corresponded to the early stages of the war, and the second in winter-spring 2023, one year after the onset of hostilities. By comparing the media's portrayal of soldiers and civilians across these two time periods, the study sought to identify any shifts or changes in the prevailing discourse surrounding the conflict.

In the process of selecting articles for qualitative analysis, all articles published within a pre-defined time frame and pertaining to the designated categories and topics of the Russia-Ukraine conflict were first obtained. Thereafter, a subset of articles was specifically chosen to represent both combatants and non-combatants. The final selection of articles (See Appendix B: The Analyzed Articles of a Qualitative Case Study) for qualitative analysis was based on various qualitative factors intrinsic to the reports, including the size of the text, use of imagery, and presentation of topics within the text.

5.2.5 Process

The objective of this research is to examine a total of 12 chosen articles, sourced from two distinct media outlets and spanning two different time periods. Due to technical constraints, the study was unable to initially secure all required articles. Thus, the analysis began with a focus on six articles from BBC, followed by a detailed examination of six articles from CNN. The selection of these articles was not determined by a specific topic or publication date, rather they were randomly chosen, allowing for a broad and impartial analysis across diverse themes and temporal contexts.

This analysis included several crucial stages: obtaining background details, drafting an in-depth summary of the article, initiating a structure analysis, conducting a detailed textual examination, performing an intertextual and contextual analysis, undertaking a sociocultural practice assessment, discursive Practices, and finally, formulating a conclusion by defining the key elements for RQ1.

Initially, the researcher embarks on a comprehensive overview of the article, charting out the salient background and specifics pertaining to the item. This includes elements such as the date of publication, the author's identity, and the broader socio-political environment encapsulating the circumstances under which the text was produced.

The analytical approach also prioritizes an inspection of the article's headline, recognizing it as the most conspicuous segment of any textual content. This practice is grounded in the understanding that headlines typically encapsulate the essence of the narrative, employing suggestive language to draw readers in and, in turn, significantly shaping their perception and interpretation of the subsequent content.

Then the research identified the primary narrative structures, which serve as crucial components of the overall narrative architecture. After that, the researcher initiates textual analysis, delving into the surface-level elements of the text. This involves an intricate exploration of its structure, vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and stylistic nuances, with an aim to identify and catalog any significant features or patterns that might emerge. For example, the employment of "strong" words such as "freedom", "democracy", "liberty", etc; metaphorical language; the semiotic and paradigmatic relationship of the specific textual elements.

A special emphasis is made on understanding how discursive strategies contribute to the formulation and representation of in-group ("us") and out-group ("them") identities. In this study, discourse analysis focuses on identifying elements like loaded language, presuppositions, or framing tactics that are used to differentiate between "us" and "them". It explores how certain actions or characteristics are emphasized or downplayed to depict one group positively and the other negatively, thereby contributing to a divisive narrative. The research seeks to identify the primary words that carry positive and negative connotations in

relation to the "us" vs "them" representation. These words are then placed onto an ideological quadrant to better understand the inherent biases and viewpoints presented in the article.

Analyzing socio-cultural practice the research focused on highlighting societal structures, power relations, and ideologies that influence the text and are influenced by it. The main question that the researcher seeking an answer to is: how does this text contribute to broader social narratives or power structures?

Finally, bringing together all observations from each article analysis endeavors to address the core questions as per Galtung's model, detailed in Section 5.2.

5.3 Quantitative analysis

Kevin Coe and Joshua M. Scacco (2017) define quantitative content analysis as a “research method in which features of a text are systematically categorized and recorded so that they can be analyzed” (Coe and Scacco, 2017, p.1278). Coe highlights that quantitative content analysis is set apart from other research methods that aim to depict, elucidate, and ultimately construe text content by its methodical observation and quantification of patterns in texts. This approach, commonly known as coding, entails the systematic observation and quantification of textual patterns, and it is largely a mechanical procedure that entails minimal interpretation(Coe and Scacco, 2017). Content analysts produce a codebook to establish uniformity in the coding process. Moreover, a comprehensive codebook typically includes multiple instances of accurate codes.

It is important to note that while this research section centers on quantitative characteristics, the core of the methodology involves a qualitative subjective analysis of content in accordance with the codes of peace journalism. This approach can be regarded as abstract and complex, making it challenging to translate into strict objective codes. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge that the outcome of the analysis is subject to variation and subjectivity.

5.3.1 Framing

Framing refers to the manner in which information and stories are presented or "framed" within a particular context, perspective, or viewpoint in communication, media, and content analysis. The concept of framing suggests that the way information is presented can significantly influence how it is perceived and understood by an audience.

Framing theory was first introduced by sociologist Erving Goffman in his book "Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience" (1974). He describes frames as "schemata of interpretation" that allow individuals to identify, classify, and understand events and occurrences.

Later, Robert Entman in his influential article "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm" (1993), offers a more detailed approach to framing in communication studies. Entman explains that to frame is to "select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation." (Entman, 1993, p.52).

In content analysis, framing is employed as a methodological tool to study how media and communication platforms highlight certain aspects of information over others, thereby shaping the audience's perceptions. For example, a newspaper article on war events could be framed in several ways: it could emphasize the war crimes and atrocities of one side or another. Each frame would offer a different perspective on the same event, thus influencing how readers understand and interpret the event.

5.3.2 Material selection

In this study, a quantitative analysis was conducted using 99 selected items from two sources, namely BBC and CNN. The selection process was conducted for two time spans: the first was from 1 April 2022 to 30 April 2022, during which 53 items were selected, and the second was from 1 April 2023 to 30 April 2023, during which 46 items were selected. The primary criterion for selecting the items was their relevance to the topic of the war between Russia and Ukraine. To ensure the validity of the selection, articles that indirectly discussed the topic of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, such as economic reports or reports on domestic policy, were excluded from the selection.

5.3.3 Coding categories

Galtung's parameters, which outline the characteristics of both war journalism and peace journalism (Galtung, 2003), continue to serve as a reference point for conflict coverage analysis. Dov Shinar (2009) provide an example of utilizing the idea of Ting Lee and Maslog

(2005) to refine Galtung's classification by creating 13 war journalism and 13 peace journalism indicators. Following Shinar's practice the current investigation, adopted ten of these coding criteria (See Appendix C: Coding Categories for Frames.)

- For war journalism: (1) marked visibility of war effects; (2) emphasis on elite and official sources; (3) conflict outcomes focused on war options; (4) emphasis on 'here and now' events; (5) frequent good/bad tagging; (6) framing preferences for one or two parties; (7) partisanship; (8) zero-sum victory/defeat orientation (sports-coverage approach); (9) victimizing language; (10) military vocabulary.

- And for peace journalism: (1) less marked visibility of war effects; (2) emphasis on 'people sources'; (3) conflict outcomes focused on negotiation and agreement; (4) emphasis on longer term processes and wider aspects; (5) absence of good/bad tagging; (6) multi-party framing preference; (7) no partisanship; (8) win-win orientation (health-coverage approach); (9) absence of victimizing language; (10) absence of military vocabulary.

These criteria have served to typify each media report analyzed according to its war or peace journalism predominant frame. The study analyzes each news report through the suggested indicators with a -5/0/+5 grade scale where +5 corresponds to the peace pace of journalism and -5 indicates the war pace and 0 indicates an inability to identify the pace for example in case of absence of data applicable for an index.

5.3.4 Process

For quantitative analysis, the analytical process primarily focuses on the coding of articles, guided by a predefined list of frames or themes (See Appendix C: Coding Categories for Frames.) This coding procedure is typically executed by a researcher who also doubles as the individual responsible for coding and verification.

In order to streamline the process and maximize efficiency, specialized web applications have been developed. These applications are tailored to expedite the coding procedure and are designed to filter out visual elements such as images or other third-side components. These elements, if not managed, could introduce noise into the coding process and subsequently influence the analysis's outcomes.

The outcome of the coding process is a comprehensive assessment of each item, rated on a scale ranging from -5 to 5 in the context of two opposing frames - peace journalism and war journalism. A score of -5 signifies maximum alignment with the evaluation frame of war journalism, implying an article heavily skewed towards a war narrative. Conversely, a score of 5 indicates an article's strong affiliation with peace journalism, denoting a narrative that advocates for peace and diplomacy.

A score of 0, symbolizes either the inability of an article to align with either peace or war journalism frames or indicates a balanced representation of both frames. For instance, if an article evenly incorporates both official government sources and civilian voices, the resultant score for that particular pair of frames would equate to 0. This scoring methodology provides a nuanced approach to understanding the tone and direction of journalism, shedding light on the perspectives that drive media narratives.

The outcomes of the coding analysis produced a variety of scores between -5 and 5. This data was then transformed through a normalization process to create a peace journalism score for each assessed criterion. This standardized score was configured to categorize each item as indicative of peace journalism, war journalism, or neutrality. These classifications were given corresponding values of 1, -1, or 0, respectively.

More specifically, items that scored between 0 and 5 were allocated a standard score of 1. This indicated a significant alignment with peace journalism, reflecting narratives that endorse peaceful resolutions, diplomacy, and a comprehensive understanding of conflict contexts.

Conversely, items that garnered scores within the range of 0 to -5 were assigned a standardized score of -1. This suggested a significant bias towards war journalism, a frame that often emphasizes conflict, violence, and usually portrays events from a polarized perspective, potentially fostering division.

Finally, items that yielded a score of 0 in the original evaluation received a standard score of 0 in the normalized system. These items were classified as neutral, meaning that they did not demonstrate a clear alignment with either the peace journalism or war journalism frames.

Instead, these articles often present a balanced perspective, incorporating viewpoints representative of both the peace and war journalism frames.

5.4 Validity

Despite the methodological reliability of this study, certain inherent limitations need to be acknowledged.

While the research encompasses an analysis of 12 articles from BBC and CNN concerning the Russian-Ukrainian war, the conclusions derived may not fully extend to the entirety of these news outlets' coverage of the conflict. The selection of these articles, while conducted through a strategic process intended to reduce potential bias, ultimately falls under the choice of the researcher. This introduces an element of subjectivity, which might bias the findings toward the researcher's preconceptions.

Further inherent limitations are underpinned by the qualitative nature of the research. The interpretive frameworks of critical discourse analysis, narrative analysis, and semiotic analysis can be significantly influenced by the subjective perceptions and interpretive perspective of the researcher. These analytical methods necessitate a deep understanding of language and cultural nuances, heightening the potential for interpretive variances.

Moreover, the semiotic analysis extends beyond the verbal discourse, encompassing non-verbal signs such as images. Despite the comprehensive nature of this approach, it can present additional challenges, as the interpretation of these visual elements might be subject to individual bias or misunderstanding. Hence, while the research design provides valuable insights into the narratives and semiotics within the selected articles, the potential for subjectivity and interpretative bias must be acknowledged as limitations inherent in this type of qualitative analysis.

In the quantitative analysis, since almost all the coding is performed by one researcher with selective checks by another person, there is a potential concern about inter-rater reliability. Ideally, to ensure that the coding is consistent and reliable, a second coder would code a larger subset (or even all) of the data. Discrepancies in the coding would then be resolved through discussion or consensus. Considering that only one person has done most of the

coding, there may be unconscious bias in how the coding is conducted. This could affect the results in ways that may not accurately represent the content of the articles.

There could be framing and codebook limitations. While Galtung's peace journalism framework is an established model, it might not capture all the nuances of the narratives or discourses within the news articles. The coding scheme may inadvertently overlook certain subtleties or nuances present in the text.

Focusing only on two media outlets may not provide a comprehensive view of how the war is framed across various media platforms. It might be more insightful to include other international and local news sources for a broader perspective. The choice of two time spans could affect the results, especially if there were significant events related to the war outside of these time spans that dramatically altered the narrative.

Personally, as a researcher, I approached the topic with an already existing context of experiencing analyzing and comparing media discourses of Russian and British digital media outlets. In previous research, I found out that both sides use similar techniques to create narratives that can look very similar but are targeted at different audiences. At that moment I personally wondered if the media on both sides compromise objectivity in specific interests and I found it disquieting since people build their opinions and probably prepare themselves for war based on these distorted narratives. The motivation that was driven me through the research is an attempt to understand how the media manufacture bias and to what extent this practice is embedded into the product that we call 'news'.

6. Analysis

6.1 Qualitative Findings

Article 1: BBC: Ukraine war: On the front line of the battle for Kharkiv

BBC journalists Quentin Sommerville and Darren Conway spend a week with Ukrainian forces in Kharkiv, eastern Ukraine, as they fight off nightly Russian airstrikes and shelling. In this report, they recount their experiences of being embedded with the Ukrainian army, speaking to soldiers about the conflict, the tactics used by both sides and the difficulties of fighting a war against a larger, better-equipped enemy. The article emphasizes the toll the

conflict has taken on civilians, with dozens killed and hundreds injured. It highlights the Ukrainian military's improvised tactics and reliance on anti-tank missiles provided by foreign manufacturers.

The article presents five distinct narratives, all of which take place within a closed space in the Kharkiv frontline and closed time frame in the “early days of the” “invasion,” corresponding to when the interviews were conducted. The author maintains a seemingly neutral position throughout the piece, allowing the voices of the interviewed individuals to take the central stage. However, the journalist's choices in presenting each speaker's perspective and the ways in which the raw stories were filtered are apparent. By evidencing the various filters at play, the author provides a nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics at work within the closed space and time of the article.

At the denotative level, "invasion" refers to the act of entering or intruding upon a place or territory with force or aggression. It typically implies an encroachment upon the rights, boundaries, or sovereignty of the invaded entity. The connotative level of "invasion" brings in the associated emotions, ideas, and values. It often carries negative connotations, evoking notions of hostility, threat, fear, and violation. The word can imply an unwanted presence, an attack, or an imposition of one's will upon others. Words used alongside "invasion" in discourse, such as "force," "aggression," or "occupation," further shape the interpretation of the term. Additionally, the language used by different parties involved in an invasion, such as the invading force and the invaded entity, can affect public perception and shape the narrative surrounding the event.

The discourse clearly illustrates the power relations at play in the conflict. The Russians are portrayed as the oppressors, often carrying out nighttime airstrikes and shelling, while the Ukrainians are depicted as the victims fighting back.

The article features 5 distinct narratives, with 4 of them being presented by Ukrainian combatants who have been actively involved in the Russian-Ukrainian war. Their accounts and perspectives primarily revolve around their military engagements, including tactics, weaponry, and their views on the "enemy." While the journalist maintains a neutral position throughout, the speakers' opinions and filters are evident in the narration. The remaining narrative is presented by a doctor who represents a more civil and humanitarian aspect of the

conflict. There are no narrators who represent the Russian side neither from the combatant or civilian perspectives.

The narration that the article starts from is an interview of a young Ukrainian lieutenant, Yevgen Gromadsky, standing in a snowy, war-torn landscape while explaining the incoming and outgoing fire from his position. Lt. Gromadsky comes from a family with a long military history and recently lost his father defending the city. He describes the current fight against Russian forces, including tank battles and mortar shells.

The article's abstract opens with a vivid setting of a "frozen landscape" under the "nightly shelling" that referred to the cruel conditions in which the Ukrainian soldiers have to fight. The journalist creates a narration orientation by introducing the first narrator - a young man, a soldier named Lt. Gromadsky whose father was killed. The journalist depicts this young man standing with the weapon, ready to kill other men. The connection between the narrator and his killed father creates an indexical connection and justification for his position as "ready to kill" as revenge for his loss.

The journalist explains that the narrator is going to be an "eighth" generation of combatants in the "free Ukraine". Here the word "free" can be seen as a strong word that is paradigmatically connected to words such as "liberal", "democratic", "and independent" which expose the main set of Western ideological values and thus creates a cultural connection between the narrator and reader. The journalist creates boundaries for the BBC readers to think and see the events from the specific syntagmatic "value"-oriented perspective presented in the article.



Figure 1.1: (*Ukraine war: On the front line of the battle for Kharkiv - BBC News*) - Lieutenant Yevgen Gromadsky

The imagery that accompanies the narrative consists of the background that depicts the white surface that can be read as a “frozen landscape” that is separated from the grey sky by a thin line of trees. “Frozen landscape” has a negative connotation and has indexical connections to the “cold”, “emptiness” and “hostility”. There are no buildings or objects depicted in the image but very rare bushes. The editorial choice of the photo puts the reader in an “empty” environment where the main character is depicted alone with the “enemy” on the horizon.

The main character can be visually read as a very young man which can rise feelings of parental attachment from older readers. The authors of the photo appeal to the emotions creating the contrast between a young man and war, which in this picture is presented as a cold-hostile environment and the uniform. The choice of the journalist creates the contrast between the “frozen” environment in which the young man, that could be paradigmatically read as a “boy” or a “kid”.

He doesn't look at the camera which makes him in the position of not the narrator but more as a subject of the narration. He wears clothes that can be read as typically military uniform and a helmet on his head. His face, his eyes, and the shape of his mouth express tiredness and sadness. There is a visible walkie-talkie on his chest which is an iconic American brand that signifies the support and adherence to the Western world and subsequently to Western values. Together with the written text that emphasizes the will of the young soldier to fight

for a “free Ukraine”, the editors want to show that this young man and his civil position are part of the overall fight for the West and Western values. The implicit meaning that this part of the article delivers is that “they” (Ukrainians) are fighting for “us”, they are “us” that corresponds to the prevailing Western discourse during the conflict.

In the second part of the narrative, Lt. Gromadsky explains that “they” (Russians) use the tactic of “white flag”, which implicitly refers to dishonesty and cheating of “their” side. He also describes how “we” (Ukrainian combatants) are using anti-tank guided missiles and small arms to defend their positions, and are being supplied with weapons from countries such as the United States and Britain thus highlighting the importance of Western support. The journalist takes focus on his “Puma” trainers and highlights the Ukrainian army is improvising and merging civilian defense forces with the regular army putting into the context existing criticism of the Ukrainian government for being poorly prepared which implicitly signifies the Ukrainian army needs more support from Western countries.

In the second narration, the soldier explains that they are fighting to protect their “families” and “homes”, and are determined to defend their land against Russian forces, which they describe as fighting like “stupid animals”. The phrase “Stupid animals” has two dimensions. Firstly it dehumanizes the human subjects for this signifies being applied and thus justifies inhuman attitudes such as murder, torture, etc. The second, word “stupid” create a contrast between the subjects and the narrator implying that the narrator is “smart”. Then, the narrator stresses that “They fight like it's 1941 - they have no maneuverability”, which confirms the statement of “stupid” and adds more dichotomies to the context such as outdated/modern, dynamic/cumbersome. The narrator increases the contrast by stating “We fight like lions”, where the metaphor “lion” has a positive connotation connected to “strength”, and “braveness”. Thus the journalist highlights the combatant as the “brave” and “strong” “lions” that protect their “families” and “homes” against the “stupid animals”.

Narrator Sergey starts with: “We see the enemy, we kill the enemy, there's no conversation, that's it” which has an intertextual connection to the phrase “Veni, vidi, vici” by Julius Caesar and first, dehumanizes the subject of “killing” by naming it “enemy” and second connects to the meaning of victory. “What aircraft have you given us?” is a rhetorical question that is trying to persuade the readers of the moral duty of Western societies to support Ukraine by supplying weapons, which corresponds to the main discourse during the war.



Figure 1.2: (*Ukraine war: On the front line of the battle for Kharkiv - BBC News*) - Battalion commander Sergey

The photo that follows right after this rhetorical question depicts a young, unshaven man standing inside a building. The photo can be seen as percussive since the character looks directly at the camera, with perspective and a look that can be read as “kindness” and a smile on his face. This kind of imagery raises compassion and parasocial attachment to the character depicted. The position of the imagery in the text connects the implicit generosity of Ukrainian soldiers in a Borscht scene with the rhetorical question “What aircraft have you given us?” thus creating a meaning that outcomes from the syntagmatic relations between these elements. Thus, creating the implicit message in this question “What aircraft have you given us?”, could sound like “Give us an aircraft”.

The next paragraph increases this meaning by describing the ongoing advance of Russian forces across the east and south of Ukraine, despite the resistance of the Ukrainian army. While the Ukrainian soldiers are “brave”, they recognize that their ground forces alone will not be enough to stop the Russian advance. Many soldiers emphasize the need for air defense and a “no-fly zone” to aid in the defense against Russian forces.

The following paragraph introduces Eugene calling him a “great Viking of a man”, who is introduced to the readers as a heavily tattooed man with an orange beard who is part of a

reconnaissance team working near apartment blocks. The naming choice puts the character into the European and even Scandinavian context and exposes the choice of the journalist to create a connection between “Ukrainians” and European countries.

The final narrator is a doctor from a local hospital that is depicted in the background of a destroyed building, fire, and smoke. The journalists emphasize that he is wearing a “Miami Beach” T-shirt with the American flag which again creates a connection between the narrator and the Western world through the symbolic system and cultural forms.

This passage exposes the visible outcomes of the war as destruction, killed and injured people. Dr. Dukhovskiy shows the injured children that became the victims of the “Russian attack”. Among the variety of variants, the narrator and the journalist choose to expose a child as the victim, which could raise a stronger emotional response as the killing or injuring children violates predominant social norms. Moreover, the editors expose the children suffering visually by providing a photo of an injured child, who is visually unconscious and connected to the tubes of the life-supporting system.



Figure 1.2: (*Ukraine war: On the front line of the battle for Kharkiv - BBC News*) - Dmitry in intensive care

The narrator also describes the overall destruction in the city arguing that despite Vladimir Putin's desire to demilitarize Ukraine, the ongoing Russian advance is creating a “no-man's land” and turning entire cities, like Kharkiv, into the front line.

The coda of the overall story starts at the starting point on the front line on the edge of the city where the journalist describes the “dozen or so frozen Russian corpses” who lay in the snow. There is a detailed description of the “guts of one are spilled across the forecourt”. “We will leave them for the dogs”- says one of the soldiers. This passage dehumanizes the Russian soldiers that are killed during the shelling by exposing them as trash and or killed animals that don’t deserve to be buried as humans. Since this passage follows the part that related to the killed and injured children as well as the overall destruction caused by the war, the author aimed to justify such dehumanization by making it socially acceptable.

The text uses emotive and descriptive language to provide a vivid portrayal of the ground realities of war, conveying a sense of urgency and tension. For instance, expressions such as "it's as if time is standing still" and "time is elastic" work to highlight the tense, chaotic, and unpredictable atmosphere of war. The BBC reporter's narrative of the conflict from the perspective of the Ukrainian forces serves to humanize the conflict, by providing personal stories of the Ukrainian soldiers and civilians.

Table 1.1: Us vs Them representations. Ideological Quadrant

	They (Russians)	Us (Ukrainians)
Positive	-	Brave, Steady, Strong, Smart, Modern, Dynamic, Generous, Careful, Kind
Negative	Stupid, Outdated, Animals, Cumbersome, Brutal, Inhumane, Senseless, Dishonest	-

The article “Ukraine war: On the front line of the battle for Kharkiv” doesn’t expose what the conflict is about focusing only on the visible aspects of the war. There are only indirect clues referring to the claims of President Putin about “denazification”. In general, only one party to the conflict is broadly represented. There is no information about the deep roots of the conflict and the previous civil war in Ukraine, and no discussion about the cultural features of the conflicting sides. The article also lacks a discussion of the potential outcomes of the war and only presents a victory-oriented perspective. The rhetoric used in the article reinforces a

divisive "us-them" narrative, where there are obvious elements of the dehumanization of "them", exposure of "their" untruth and uncovering "their" lies, and focusing on "our" suffering.

Article 2: BBC: Ukraine war: Refugee from Popasna spots looted possessions on Russian tank.

The article "Ukraine war: Refugee from Popasna spots looted possessions on Russian tank" is a story of a Ukrainian refugee in the UK who claims to have recognized items looted from her home in a photo of a Russian tank passing by bombed buildings in Popasna, Luhansk region. The items include a new boiler, tablecloth, Disney bedsheets, and a red blanket. The woman and her children fled Ukraine in April and are staying in Nottinghamshire under the UK government's Homes for Ukraine scheme. Media reports suggest that Russian troops have looted goods from areas close to the Ukrainian borders with Russia and Belarus since the start of the invasion.

The title here immediately sets up a narrative of victimisation (the Ukrainian refugee) and aggression (items looted from her house on a Russian tank). The power dynamics are clear from the outset: the Russian forces are portrayed as dominant and destructive, while the Ukrainians are depicted as victims.



Figure 2.1: (*Ukraine war: Refugee from Popasna spots looted possessions on Russian tank - BBC News, 2022*) - Ms Koreniuk said the boxed boiler, bed linen and tablecloth were hers

The report prominently features a photograph that serves as the central focal point. The primary layer of meaning conveyed by the image is derived from its iconic qualities, allowing for easy recognition of the captured reality. Additionally, the image incorporates multiple layers of symbolic representation, with discernible depictions of a tank, buildings, and various items present on the tank, as well as two human figures positioned atop the tank. One of the individuals depicted in the image appears to be directly engaged with the camera.

The background of the image depicts standard Soviet-style housing structures, characterized by their distinct window shapes and proportions that are emblematic of late 1980s-era 9-story architectural design. The form of the house can be interpreted as embodying a collection of cultural codes that not only reflect the predominant architectural styles of the time but also symbolize the entire Soviet era of which Ukraine was a part.

Notably, the buildings exhibit clear signs of damage, including noticeable scorch marks that serve as indices of a previous fire, as well as evident destruction throughout the structure. The cumulative effect of these damages in conjunction with the presence of the tank creates a signifying index that points to an ongoing conflict. Furthermore, the specific nature of the destruction suggests that the house may have been intentionally targeted by a missile attack. We see part of the former Soviet Union that now is in ruins and at war.

The concept of a house evokes a positive set of connotations that center around themes of warmth, familial connection, protection, and life itself. However, the presence of a destroyed house introduces a contrasting meaning that conveys a strongly negative connotation, which can be interpreted as symbolizing broken lives, death, unsafety, and suffering, disaster.

The photograph's central focus is an object that can be identified as a tank. The symbol of the tank is widely recognized in Soviet culture as a monument symbolizing victory in World War II and the liberation of Europe from Nazi occupation. However, after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the tank acquired an additional negative set of denotations associated with oppression and invasion.

Here the tank is a symbol of hard power and destruction. Syntagmatically, the tank's placement in the image creates a sense of opposition against the reader, as its right-to-left direction runs counter to the way in which the viewer reads. This oppositional placement imbues the image with a sense of oppression, as the tank's symbolic weight appears to crush the reader. However, despite this sense of confrontation, the image's perspective does not

position the tank directly facing the viewer but rather depicts it passing by, rendering the viewer a mere observer. When viewed in conjunction with the background, the image creates a sense of causality in which the tank represents the catalyst for the destruction that is visible in the scene. The symbol “Z” signifies as called in Russian official sources “Special Military Operation”.

Positioned atop the tank are several objects: a box and a blanket featuring a character from a Disney cartoon, in addition to two individuals situated inside the tank. Although the person on the left side of the tank remains hidden from view, the individual on the right side of the tank is visible and wears a distinctive helmet that protects the ears from the tank's internal engine noise, thereby serving as an indexical signifier of their connection to the tank's crew. The viewer perceives this person as a soldier who operates the tank, with a dirty face and an open mouth that, when combined with the positioning of their eyes, may convey a sense of stupidity, simplicity, carelessness, or impudence. Furthermore, the individual is depicted holding a package in his left hand (right side of the image).

The photograph is syntagmatically well-organized, with its narrative flowing cohesively from left to right and from top to bottom. This narrative begins with a setting that paradigmatically evokes themes of ruin, broken lives, death, unsafety, suffering, and disaster, which subsequently leads to a symbol that paradigmatically represents oppression, hard power, and the source of destruction. The narrative culminates with an individual who is associated with themes of stupidity, simplicity, carelessness, or impudence. Connecting these narrative elements is the symbol "Z," which indexes the actor responsible for these events as being Russia.

The accompanying natural language text, "Our reaction was that whatever they hadn't destroyed they would steal," serves to implicitly depict the actors in the photograph as "barbarians". Towards the end of the article, the author contends that "Russian troops had sent home 58 tonnes of looted goods," with many of the stolen items being everyday goods such as “sneakers, canned food, TVs, car tires, and tents”. Firstly the choice of the type of “looted” good is symbolic of “sneakers”, and “canned food” related to cheap junk food, which makes Russian soldiers look poor and hungry which indexically projects these characteristics of Russia as such country. Moreover, such statements serve to reinforce the notion that the depicted in the article scene has a mass character and corresponds to objective reality and, as a result, contributes to the construction of a social reality that is based on these assertions.

The discourse in this article frames the Ukrainian people as innocent victims suffering at the hands of aggressive, destructive Russian forces, encouraging empathy for the Ukrainians and condemnation of the Russian military actions.

Table 1.2: Us vs Them representations. Ideological Quadrant

	They (Russians)	Us (Ukrainians)
Positive	-	-
Negative	Looters, Ruiners, Stupid, Brutal, Rude, Impudent, Barbarians, Raiders	-

The article doesn't describe the deeper roots of the conflict and presents only one side. Culture and history are not presented directly but can be read from the implicit layers of meaning. No possible ideas about the possible outcomes of war have been represented. The article predominantly focuses on the visible effects of war. No actors that reduce the violence have been represented. The journalist focuses on the arena there are only two parties and one goal. Closed space and time, indirect references to the broader context. "Us-them" journalism where "them" is marked vividly as "bad" and "us" as "victims" with emphasis on "our" suffering. Dehumanization of "them". The article framed visible aspects of war.

Article 3: BBC: Russian army officer admits: 'Our troops tortured Ukrainians'

The article delivers the story of a former Russian military officer, Konstantin Yefremov, who has accused Russian soldiers of brutal interrogations, torture, and mistreatment of Ukrainian prisoners in the Zaporizhzhia region of southern Ukraine. He claimed that one site saw interrogations and torture continuing for about a week, every night and sometimes "twice a day". Yefremov attempted to resign from the army, but he ended up being dismissed for refusing to return to Ukraine. He fled Russia after his revelations and now lives outside the country. Yefremov was in Ukraine early in the war, and his accounts of torture and other brutalities have been verified through photographs and military documents. Yefremov also spoke of his group's looting of occupied areas, including bicycles, lawnmowers, and axes. They even ate food found in a mansion they came across while searching for food.

The story starts when Yefremov arrived in Crimea in February 2022 as the head of a de-mining unit of the 42nd Motorised Rifle Division, which was sent to take part in "military exercises." He claims that he and his colleagues initially believed it was just a "drill" and that no one believed there would be war.

The journalist starts by introducing Yefremov as "the most senior officer" which can be seen as an opening hook or an orientation. Then the BBC journalist explains that he is a "man with a story to tell". The narrator says that he was deployed to Ukraine last year and has agreed to share information about the crimes he witnessed there. He claims to have witnessed torture and mistreatment of Ukrainian prisoners, looting by his comrades in occupied areas, and brutal interrogation sessions led by a Russian colonel, where men were shot and threatened with rape. BBC reports that there are documents that confirm that his story is true.

In the resolution of the story he describes he fled from the Russian army, hiding and finally leaving the country: "I hid from the neighbours, too, because I'd heard of cases when neighbours told police about young men who'd been draed and were hiding. I found this situation humiliating and unacceptable."

The main part that the journalist focuses on is the narration of Yefremov on the war crimes of the soldiers he served with. So there is a part of the article that describes looting: "Soldiers and officers grabbed everything they could", there is a specific choice of the narrator to emphasize the cases of looting "bicycles" and "lawnmowers", which expose the looters (and Russian soldiers in the projection) as pitty and on the background of the unfolding war which indexes suffering and destruction that describes Russians (collectively) as barbarians. In the phrase "I'll take this home and cut the grass next to our barracks", the home is presupposed as barracks that in the collective projection creates a connection between collective Russians and "barracks".

The journalist creates a context of the Yefremov story, stating that "In 2014, Russia was not only accused of orchestrating a separatist uprising there but of sending in its own troops." which has elements that mix factual data with Western assumptions on some aspects of the civil war in Ukraine. However, the paragraph follows in affirmative form as a presupposition that doesn't open a discussion since the main focus is kept on the Yefremov narrative.

Yefremov describes the poor supplies as “we were so hungry” so soldiers have to “hunt for rabbits and pheasants” That contrasts with the part which describes the better supplies of his comrades “There was so much food. The fridges were packed”, which raises the question of justice.

Then Yefremov describes the “interrogations and mistreatment of Ukrainian prisoners”. So he provides detailed examples of how the Russian soldiers were threatening Ukrainian soldiers with rape. Right in the middle of the paragraph Yefremov says: “The Kremlin wants Russians to believe that, in Ukraine, Russia is fighting fascists, neo-Nazis and ultra-nationalists. This false narrative serves to dehumanize Ukrainians in the eyes of the Russian public and the military.”

That passage follows the main Western discourse that denies the presence of neo-Nazis and ultra-nationalists in the course of the war. The journalist doesn't open the discussion and thus creates a strict border for its discourse that all the allegations about neo-Nazi groups at the war are that “the Kremlin wants Russians to believe that”, which implicitly presupposes that these allegations are not true. The place where this passage is placed decreases readers' critical approach as this passage is designed to follow the time span when the reader should experience a shock after the description of the Russian war crimes, especially after the scene with the attempts to rape with a bottle, which indeed violates social and cultural norms and should raise an emotional response and attacks ethos rhetorically.

Then the journalist decides to confirm the narrative of Yefremov with the official statement (rhetorically as pathos) from the UNHCR which “has been documenting cases of mistreatment of prisoners in the war in Ukraine”, and, the UN report states that “there is torture and ill-treatment of prisoners of war happening on both sides”, which could be an objective point of the journalist, however, the reporter decides to reduce the agent: “Russian prisoners of war, too, have reported beatings and suffering electrocution” (who did it?) and turn the discussion into the impersonal form with no clear indications of possible culprits on the other side: "It is unacceptable for either side to do this." and wrap it up with further elaboration.

“I don't know what's going on in their heads ... How could they allow themselves to be fooled?”, in that part, the narration takes as the assumption that “they” are “fooled”, which creates an implicit dichotomy that “we” are “informed” or “enlightened”.

The article delivers one-sided view of the conflict. Only one side (Russian) of the conflict is presented directly. Ukrainian is represented as a part of the narrator’s story. The roots of the conflict are depicted poorly. The issue of the preceding civil war in Ukraine touched fleetingly without any elaboration or discussion but with the obvious presupposed position about the eastern Ukrainian separatists were “orchestrated” by the Kremlin. That statement is expressed by the invisible commenter that represents the “right” or “dominant” point of view.

There are no discussions or ideas about the possible outcomes of the war. One side is exposed as ultimately “wrong”, and another side is exposed as the ultimate “victim”. The presupposed position is that the “right” side must win over the “wrong” side. The article mainly presents visible aspects of war - war crimes, torture, murder, and looting. The storyteller is represented as a person who decides to stop the violence which could be a good example for both sides.

The language used in the article is largely emotive and graphic, designed to evoke strong reactions from the reader. Terms like 'brutal', 'torture', 'threatened with rape', 'defector', 'traitor', 'looting', 'mistreatment', 'coward', and others, are not neutral terms. They construct a reality where the Russian military is seen as brutally oppressive, and the Ukraine as suffering victims.

The article is written in a way that emphasizes the power dynamics between the Russian military, the Ukrainian victims, and Mr. Yefremov himself. Yefremov, despite his seniority, is portrayed as helpless in the face of systemic violence and oppression. His attempts to leave the army are met with threats of imprisonment, indicating a power hierarchy that resists dissent. This power dynamic extends to the treatment of Ukrainian prisoners as well, with the Russian colonel wielding unquestionable authority.

Overall, the article employs a strategy of framing “us” vs “them”, in which “they” are portrayed as problematic and the source of untruth. While the article does incorporate certain aspects of peace journalism, such as providing ample space and time for discussion, it ultimately falls short of this standard by resorting to propagandistic statements that align with

prevailing discourse. Although the author had the opportunity to delve into the topic of war crimes committed by Ukrainian forces, this subject is intentionally ignored at the outset, resulting in an unbalanced treatment of the issue.

Table 1.3: Us vs Them representations. Ideological Quadrant

	They (Russians)	Us
Positive	-	Informed, Enlightened
Negative	Barbarians, Rude, Criminal, Rapists, Looters, Fooled	-

Article 4: BBC: 'Mariupol is a graveyard': Evacuees recount terror of Russian assault
 The article reports on the desperate situation in Mariupol, a besieged city in Ukraine. Civilians fleeing the city have described starvation, looting by Chechen fighters, and dead bodies being buried in shallow graves on the streets. Elderly and disabled people who are unable to leave their homes are especially vulnerable. Russian forces have blocked aid to the city, and the UK Ministry of Defence warned that the humanitarian crisis is deepening as fierce fighting continues for control of the city. "Chechen militants loyal to Moscow" are reportedly heavily involved in the siege of Mariupol. Evacuees describe the terror they faced as they made their way out of the city. The International Committee of the Red Cross is helping to evacuate people from the city, which has been under siege since the beginning of the Russian invasion.

The article is structured as a news report, with a clear introduction that sets the context for the story, followed by detailed accounts from civilians who have managed to escape the besieged city of Mariupol. The article also includes information about the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the region, as well as warnings from the UK Ministry of Defence. The article ends with an account of the arrival of evacuees at a refugee staging center in Zaporizhzhia, with descriptions of their exhausted and shell-shocked condition. Throughout the article, there are quotes and firsthand accounts from refugees and aid workers, as well as information about the involvement of Chechen militants and Russian forces in the conflict.

The author's main focus is on the accounts of civilians who have fled Mariupol due to the desperate situation inside the besieged city caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The main characters in this report are civilians who managed to flee Mariupol in recent days, including Yuliia, her two daughters, and her mother Tatiana, as well as Liubov and her son Valerii. Selected characters are mainly women and children which is connected to the traditional principle "Women and children first". The refugees describe their journey through Russian and Ukrainian lines as an evacuation "from hell". The author focuses on Yuliia, her daughters, and her mother, Tatiana, who survived underground for a month with no water, gas, or electricity.

The author uses metaphoric language naming the battle scene as "hell", and saying that "Mariupol is a graveyard" which increases the readers' emotional connection to the described scene. The article provides stories that support the Western point highlighting that the destruction of the city was caused by the Russian military. However, it's worth mentioning that there are media and social media and human rights organizations reporting evidence that the fire on the living constructions was held by Ukrainian combatants as well and Ukrainian combatants used living facilities as a fire point, thus using civilian people as a live shield.

The report is built on the principle of closed space and time. There are several references to the preceding "reasons" and "contexts", however, they are lacking depth and elaboration. There is only one side is represented in detail, the other side of the conflict is represented in the narratives of the representative of the Ukrainian side. There is no representation of the "deep" roots of the conflict and no detailed reference to its structure and culture. Even though Mariupol is the city with the most contrasting and polarized opinions on the conflict, the whole population of the city was represented by a homogeneous group from one side. The focus of the reporting is presumably on the visible aspects - destruction, death, and grief. No actors that trying to stop or reduce the violence being presented.

This text uses emotive language and first-hand accounts to vividly portray the traumatic experiences of the refugees. These include words and phrases like "desperate", "starving", "hell", "looting", "frightened", "tears of joy", "bombed", "destroyed", "terrifying", and "graveyard". The use of direct speech from the refugees makes the narratives more personal, authentic and compelling, evoking sympathy from the readers.

The text production involves sourcing stories from refugees who have fled Mariupol, using their accounts to shape the narrative. The text was produced in a way that puts the victims' voices at the forefront. There are no direct quotes from the invading forces, demonstrating the focus on the civilian perspective. The consumption of this text would likely elicit empathy towards the victims and condemnation towards the invading forces.

The text represents a clear binary opposition between the victimized residents of Mariupol and the invading forces. This dichotomy embodies the power imbalance where the invading forces are portrayed as causing harm and destruction. The narrative suggests that the invaders are taking advantage of their position to exploit and harm the citizens of Mariupol, while the citizens themselves are powerless. The ideology implicit here aligns with humanitarian principles, emphasizing the injustices and violation of human rights happening in Mariupol.

Table 1.4: Us vs Them representations. Ideological Quadrant

	They (Russians)	Us (Ukrainians)
Positive		
Negative	Looters, Devastators	

Article 5: BBC: Ukraine war: The friends who fought Russia's invasion

The article is built around the story of two Ukrainian university students, Maxsym Lutsyk and Dmytro Kisilenko, who joined the army to fight when Russia loomed over Ukraine in 2022. The article reflects on the fear and bravery that they experienced during the conflict and how it changed their outlook on life. Additionally, it discusses the international response to the conflict and how NATO has steadily increased its support for Ukraine. The article concludes with a reflection on the impact of the conflict on the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, and the contrast between it and the war zones in the east and south of the country.

The title of the article has built on creating a contrast between “friends” and “Russia’s invasion”. The word “friend” can evoke a range of paradigmatical associations depending on the context and individual experiences. Some possible paradigmatical associations of the word "friend" include: “positive relationships”, “social networks”, “loyalty”, “intimacy”, and “childhood”. The title of the article is “friends” who are involved in the action “fight” which

presupposes the “enemy” which implicitly should represent the opposition. Here the author puts the word “Russia’s invasion”. So the author creates a contrast between something that represents the “good” side and something that represents the “bad” side.

The author introduces two main characters: Ukrainian university students, Maxsym Lutsyk and Dmytro Kisilenko. Initially, they were depicted as nervous and fearful, but they also had bravery and courage. The article portrays them as young men who took a big step into the unknown “dressed to go to a festival, not to war”, but who showed great “resilience” and “bravery” in the face of “danger”. The main characters repeat the main Ukrainian discourse statements: “Every piece of Ukraine needs to be recaptured”, “Every inch of Ukrainian land which was recognized as Ukrainian in 1991 should be Ukrainian”, “war is horrible, but it's like the price for our unity and our country”.

The opposition to their image the author draws “Russians” who “destroyed all the bridges”, “made their biggest mistake”, and “would kill us[the narrators] or put us in prison because of our[the narrators'] political views”, “swallowing Kremlin propaganda”, “They understand, he said, that they don't have friends waiting for them. "They know that they will enter Bakhmut city only when they will destroy it when they will kill every Ukrainian soldier who is defending it... They understand that they are fighting for territories and for some political reasons of their government”.



Figure 5.1: (*Ukraine war: The friends who fought Russia's invasion - BBC News, 2023*) -

Ukraine war: The friends who fought Russia's invasion

One of the key photographs portrays the primary protagonists positioned on the thoroughfare of Kyiv. Through the manipulation of contrasting meanings inherent in the constituent components of the photograph, the author generates cognitive dissonance. This image features young Ukrainian men, who also serve as the principal characters in the narrative.

There are several associations related to the paradigmatic connections of this image. The image in general implies that the person is relatively young, which can vary depending on the context and the age of the speaker. Masculinity or maleness can reinforce gender stereotypes. Youthful energy - enthusiasm, and a zest for life, can be seen as positive attributes. Inexperience: inexperience, naivety, and a lack of knowledge or wisdom. Physical appearance such as youthfulness, attractiveness, and vitality. The image is also connected to negative stereotypes, such as immaturity, recklessness, or a lack of responsibility. The clothes of the characters highlight their relation to the new young generation.

Another layer of the signification is connected to the environment and situations these characters are in. We can see the Kalashnikov AK-47 that every character carries. the Paradigmatical associations of the word "AK-47" are complex and varied, reflecting the multiple meanings and contexts: The AK-47 is often associated with military forces, as it is a popular weapon among armies and insurgent groups around the world, the AK-47 was invented in the Soviet Union in the 1940s, and the Soviet military. The AK-47 is sometimes associated with criminal or terrorist activity, as it has been used in numerous conflicts and attacks around the world. AK-47 is known for its reliability and durability, technology, and can be seen as a symbol of resistance and revolution in some contexts, and its use can be associated with political movements and ideologies.

Additionally discernible in the visual field is the presence of barricades in the backdrop. The paradigmatical line can include: Safety and security as barricades and sandbags are also used to protect buildings and people from threats such as floods or gunfire. Sandbags are often used in military operations to fortify positions or protect against explosive blasts, so these words can be associated with warfare and conflict. During natural disasters or other emergencies, sandbags may be used to prevent flooding or control the flow of water, so these words can be associated with emergency response and disaster relief. Barricades and sandbags are physical barriers

These constituent components are integrated into the syntagmatic chain to construct a narrative that aligns with the written work of Maxsym Lutsyk and Dmytro Kisilenko, and is also linked to the photograph showcasing Maxsym Lutsyk, fully outfitted in military gear, situated in front of a demolished building. This particular image features Maxsym Lutsyk brandishing a NATO standard rifle, thereby imbuing an additional layer of narration that alludes to Ukraine's transition from its Soviet past to a more Western-oriented future.

The is only one side of the conflict is represented in the article as two brave young “friends” who are protecting their country from the enemy. Focus on both visible and invisible aspects of the war. The conflict is represented in the context from the start of the active phase. The deeper roots of the conflict are not represented, as are its structure and cultural characteristics. The journalist represents only one party imposing itself on the other. Victory-oriented reporting. No actors are working on the prevention or reducing or stopping of violence. Violence is presented as the only mean of war.

The report is built upon very strong “us-them” polarization. The narrators speak out the main Western discourse positions. The focus of the article is on the two parties where there is an obvious humanization and heroization of one of the sides which is contrasting with the strong criticism and silencing of the other side. Propaganda-oriented journalism. The report is aimed to expose “their” untruth and “other” suffering. No criticism of the other side. Victory-oriented report.

Table 1.5: Comparison of Them vs Us Framing by Ideological Quadrant

	They (Russians)	Us (Ukrainians)
Positive		Brave, Young, Modern, Open-minded
Negative	Fooled by propaganda, Fooled by the government, Fighting for the territories	

Article 6: BBC: Ukraine war: Why so many Russians turn a blind eye to the conflict

The article is a first-person account of the author's experiences and observations of life in Russia in the context of the ongoing war between Russia and Ukraine. It explores the

complex emotions and attitudes of ordinary Russians towards the conflict and the impact it has had on daily life in different parts of the country. The author describes how, despite the war being in the news every day, many Russians continue to go about their daily lives as normal, while others are deeply affected by the conflict, whether through personal connections or the strain it has placed on society. The article also raises questions about the role of the Russian government in shaping public opinion and the extent to which ordinary Russians feel they have agency in shaping the direction of their country.

The author does not present a single unified view of Russian people but rather describes a range of experiences and opinions that exist within Russian society. The author notes that while some Russians have left the country and many hipster journalists and IT specialists have departed, others have replaced them. In some parts of the country, life appears outwardly unchanged, with shops, cafes, businesses, and banks still open, and car-sharing services still functioning. However, the author also describes signs of a slow-burning crisis in Russia, with doctors leaving their jobs due to the numbers of war-wounded being brought for treatment in local hospitals, and residents feeling abandoned and angry in little frontier towns near the Ukrainian border. The author also notes that it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about Russian attitudes towards the war in Ukraine, with sociologists and pollsters unable to gauge public opinion due to the lack of freedom of speech or information in Russia. However, the author suggests that most ordinary Russians are in the middle, trying to make sense of a situation they did not choose, do not fully understand, and feel powerless to change.

The title of the article “Why so many Russians turn a blind eye to the conflict” delivers a presupposition that the Russian people have a “blind eye” which corresponds to the main discourse produced by the BBC in relation to the Russian-Ukrainian war. So the journalist is not asking “Are many Russians blind [...]?” and even not making a statement that “Many Russians turn a blind eye [...]”, but taking it for granted and applying the “wh-” question to avoid the reader to analytically and critically come to the individual conclusion about trustworthiness and the determination of “Russian” people as “blind”. There are several paradigmatic associations with the word “blind” such as: oblivious, ignorant, and uninformed. Moreover, the presupposition that many Russians are “blind” presupposes that the source of the statement is not “blind” (but conscious, mindful, aware, seeing, and clear-sighted) that could produce the feeling of the feeling of superiority over Russian people.

So, the whole title of the article can be seen as a propagandistic (percussive, aimed at turning the masses (big audiences) on the ideological side) message that can be decoded as “We are right. They are not”.

“In speeches and essays, he has made clear his belief that Russia occupies a unique place in the world as part of both the East and West. Russia has its own traditions, religion, and its own ways of doing things. Russians need order and control, and demand respect.”



Figure 6.1: (*Ukraine war: Why so many Russians turn a blind eye to the conflict - BBC News, 2023*) - Vladimir Putin always blames the West for the war and state TV repeats his world view

That paragraph accompanies the photo that depicts three persons sitting in front of the working TV with President Putin giving a speech. That image symbolizes the relationship between the “people” who are represented as two women of different ages and a child which in its turn symbolizes three generations and the hegemonic center of the “power” that communicates with “people” by the mean of “medium” which the TV-set is. The image itself is associated with the “TV-zombie” image depicting the people controlled by the “propaganda”. The image of President Putin on the screen has intertextual connections to the character of “big brother” from “1984” by Orwell and the whole scene can be seen as an allusion to the anti-utopian world.

This image in its turn syntagmatically connected to the previous text that claims that “more people had stood up for their freedom and challenged state TV propaganda” and “Russians [...] let the Kremlin decide for them”. At the same time, there is a syntagmatic connection between the “propaganda” statement and “threats from the West and Ukraine” which presupposes that these allegations are not trustworthy.

Moreover, the word “propaganda” in that context has a strong negative connotation and is associated with manipulative and deceptive messaging that has paradigmatic connections to manipulation, persuasion, ideology, and control. The usage of this argument as a counter implies that the narrator in contradiction is not propaganda but objective, true, transparent, and free.

The author makes use of strong, emotive language and metaphorical expressions to portray the gravity of the situation. Phrases such as "a chokehold", "troubling moral compromises", and "paid with their freedom" dramatize the situation, drawing readers' attention to the severity of the issues and provoking emotional responses.

The text is pervaded with the concept of power and dominance, specifically the power of the Russian government and its impact on the lives of ordinary citizens. This can be seen in how the author describes the Kremlin's influence over media and the consequences of dissent, such as imprisonment. It also emphasizes the idea of a small group (the government) making decisions that impact the larger population, who seem to be largely powerless.

The author uses several discursive practices to communicate their message. For instance, the usage of direct quotations and anecdotes offer a human perspective on the situation, making it more relatable and believable to readers. The author also refers to their personal experiences, which serve to build ethos, making their arguments more credible.

The author cites history and uses external sources, like referencing a Belfast-based Russian academic and historical events such as the Gorbachev era or defeat against Japan. This gives the discourse depth and broadens the scope of the narrative. This intertextuality not only serves to contextualize the current situation but also to legitimize the author's argument.

Table 1.6: Us vs Them representations. Ideological Quadrant

	They (Russians)	Us (Ukrainians)
Positive		Not blind (conscious, mindful, and aware), Objective, True
Negative	Blind (oblivious, ignorant, and uninformed), Helpless, Obedient, Indifferent, Misled with propaganda	

Article 7: CNN: A far-right battalion has a key role in Ukraine's resistance. Its neo-Nazi history has been exploited by Putin

The article discusses the far-right Azov movement, which has been part of Ukraine's military and political landscape for nearly a decade. So the author emphasizes that the movement's military and political wings were formally separated in 2016, and the Azov battalion was integrated into the Ukrainian National Guard. The regiment has a history of neo-Nazi leanings; in the past, it has been associated with White supremacists and neo-Nazi ideology and insignia. The article explores how the movement is used in Russian media campaigns, which, in accordance with the author, seek to elide fact and disinformation. Despite international notoriety, the article notes that Ukraine "is not a cesspit for Nazi sympathizers," and the Azov political wing only won 2.15% of the vote in the last elections in Ukraine in 2019. The article concludes by highlighting a far-right extremist problem on both sides of the conflict, and there seems to be a bias in only reporting on Ukraine's far-right problem.

The article seems to have been carefully written to present a balanced view, citing multiple sources, reporting from different perspectives, and providing historical context. It scrutinizes both Ukrainian and Russian narratives, pointing out inconsistencies and propaganda tactics.

However, the framing of the Azov movement can be seen as part of a broader discourse that often associates far-right movements with violence, extremism, and terrorism. The focus on the Azov movement serves to highlight the issue of right-wing extremism in the conflict, which could potentially detract from the larger geopolitical dynamics at play.

The article starts with the statement that “Putin” has “exploited” the topic of neo-nazi organizations. If other previously analyzed materials (such as BBC), such statements form presuppositions, CNN journalists still keep it in the form of debates, which this article draws a conclusion under.

The article is interesting material in terms of the Western discourse which in general denies the importance of the role of the far-right military regiment such as Azov in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict whereas, on the opposite side, Russian discourse takes strong attention to such neo-nazi organizations and movements and uses it as the discourse that morally justifies the warfare on Ukrainian territory.

The article depicts Putin and the Russian government as the initiators of the conflict, framing their invasion of Ukraine as a “special mission”. The term "special mission" can be seen as a euphemism, attempting to paint the invasion in a positive light or as a necessary measure. Putin's speech minutes before the invasion began is a clear sign of his intent and control over the unfolding situation.

The Ukrainian leadership is represented both as a victim (in the face of the Russian invasion) and as a complex entity grappling with far-right elements within its own borders. The explicit mention of President Zelensky's Jewish heritage serves to contradict Putin's narrative of 'denazifying' Ukraine, suggesting a disconnection between the Russian narrative and the reality on the ground.

The Azov Movement's use of symbols such as the black sun and Wolfsangel, associated with Nazi ideology, signifies their far-right leanings. Their continued use of these symbols, despite denials of Nazi associations, adds to the complexity of their public image. The Azov Movement is depicted as a controversial entity with neo-Nazi leanings, albeit an effective fighting force against the Russian invasion. The article's focus on Azov's links to extremist groups in the West and recruitment of foreign fighters signifies the international reach and impact of the conflict.

"Neo-Nazis"- This term is recurrent throughout the text, functioning as a key symbol in the narratives spun by both the Russian government and Azov's own denials. Its use reflects the

potent historical and emotional weight it carries, especially in the context of a European conflict.

The author also calls Azov “Death Star” which has intertextual connections to the “Star Wars” movie and is paradigmatically connected to such meanings as symbols of advanced technology or destructive power, like a nuclear bomb or a black hole, the Galactic Empire's oppression and evil, fear as a weapon of mass destruction, the military-industrial complex.

The whole content of the article builds in the form of different perspectives on the topic with direct quotes provided by various experts. However, the article itself has percussive power that delivers the main point that is formed in the headline. So, for example, there are several photos that depict civilians who engaged in Azov activities. Journalistic choices in that case represent women, children, and the elderly who are training with wooden rifles can explain that the intention of the journalist(editor), was to reduce the dramatism of the fact that far-right and neo-nazi armed groups are playing the major role in the conflict escalation.

The author also balances the narrative about the Ukrainian far-right regiment with the fact that there are nationalist organizations participating in the war on the Russian side. Despite the strong criticism that the author provides towards neo-nazi organizations and their probable problems for the future of Europe, the narrative slightly goes down to the argument that Azov is not “so” neo-nazi. The author also avoids the topic of the role that neo-nazi and far-right movements played in the decisive moments of *Euromaidan* 2014. In general, the article aimed not to open a discussion about the far-right organization in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, but discursively close it.

The article focuses on the deeper roots of the conflict. Ideological and cultural aspects were represented including references to history. Parties to the conflict are represented as relatively balanced. There is a critique for both conflicting sides as well as a third side being highlighted (the neo-nazi movement). The article however doesn't represent the possible outcomes of the conflict. There are no actors introduced who aimed to avoid or reduce violence. The article is not built around the “us-them” paradigm. The article represents both sides in a relatively balanced manner.

Article 8: CNN: In Ukraine's Russian-speaking east, Putin's war is tearing families apart

The article is a news report about the situation in eastern Ukraine. The article highlights the experiences of Ludmilla, whose brother was killed in a Grad rocket attack, and the trauma that many people in the region are facing due to the ongoing conflict. The article also discusses how the war has affected the relationship between Ukraine and Russia, and how the propaganda spread by Russian President Vladimir Putin is causing people in Russia to believe that the conflict is not as serious as it really is. The article also discusses the military strategy being used by Russian forces and the devastation it is causing in the region.

The author uses the word "family" in the headline to create a pole. Here are some paradigmatic associations for the word "family": members: parents, children, relationships: love, care, support, emotions: happiness, joy, love, pride, values: unity, respect, responsibility, and honesty. In general the word "family" has a positive connotation and is related to the core values general for the Christian and subsequently western world.

Another pole in this narrative is represented by something that is "tearing" families apart, thus creating a reality where these core values that are associated with the word "family" are attacked by something that subsequently represents "evil". This evil is "war". But it's not just war, but "Putin's war". The headline of the article is constructed with the presupposition that it relates the war to one person - President Putin.

Ludmilla is described as a 69-year-old woman who survived a bombardment in the eastern Ukrainian city of Lysychansk. The article provides some details about her conversation with her brother Victor, who died in the attack, and her injuries sustained during the bombing. She is also quoted discussing the impact of the war on her relationships with family members in Russia. The whole narrative is built around her tragedy of losing her brother.

This narrative represents a specific group of the people - "Ukraine's Russian-speaking east". Ludmilla explains that he has relatives in Russia and highlights that "it's hard to relate to someone if they believe Russian President Vladimir Putin's propaganda". She called Russian politics "Putin's" "Zombification". In general, the author uses victimization tactics, focusing on the pain and grief of Ludmila to broadcast the messages that the main Western discourse repeatedly reproduces. Surrounded by a strong emotional disturbance that the reader should

expose through empathy for the main character of the article. Using the adjective “Russian-speaking” appeal to the Russian audience as the voice that represents a common socio-cultural basis that should be encoded by Russian readers as "our".

Right after that, the author turns to focus on the Ukrainian combatant Serhiy Hayday and the official - the head of the Luhansk region military administration who argues that Russian forces are destroying every settlement on the front lines of the region. He believes that the only place they can advance is in the areas they have “completely destroyed”. He also says that they won't directly attack the low-lying sister cities of Lysychansk, and Severodonetsk, but will try to encircle them. This tactic is playing out in other areas too, and if successful, it would trap a devastating portion of the Ukrainian military.

The article ends with a quote from Ludmila: “As long as greed and avarice in humanity are not overcome, these wars will never end”. In general, this statement is very neutral and can be made about multiple agents, for example, Ukrainian oligarchs that founded organized far-right groups, Russian oligarchs who benefit from the price changes, and Western military corporations that benefit from sending weapons to Ukraine, politicians that gain power on all sides of the conflict. Ludmila also adds that “No matter how much a person has, it is always not enough.”, which is also a very indirect and impersonal statement. However, the syntagmatic relations are obviously put in line with the previous statements that centralize the problem around President Putin thus hijacking it rhetorically to benefit and strengthen the dominant theme in the discourse.

This article represents the conflict from a one-sided perspective. In accordance with the article, there is only one truth (related to the main discourse that produce this article) and other opinions are not represented and signified with “zombie” and “propaganda” signifiers. The roots of the conflict are not presented. However, there are some indirect short references to the theme of language minorities with no elaboration. No ideas about possible outcomes of the war rather than victory-oriented rhetorics are not presented. The report focuses on some invisible aspects of the war as trauma, grief, and sorrow. No actors that could reduce or prevent violence are not presented.

Table 1.7: Us vs Them representations. Ideological Quadrant

	They (Russians)	Us (Ukrainians)
Positive		
Negative	Zombies, Tearing families apart	

Article 9: CNN: 'Just to survive': Wagner fighters recount the horrors of battle in eastern Ukraine

The article is about the experiences of two former fighters of the Russian private military company Wagner, who were captured by Ukrainian forces late last year. They spoke to CNN about the experiences they faced on the battlefield in eastern Ukraine, where “anyone who faltered was immediately shot by their own commanders”. The article describes the wave of attacks and hideous losses the fighters encountered, with one recalling that 60 out of 90 men died in their first assault. The fighters also talked about the self-preservation instinct that kicked in, with some freezing while others dropped their weapons and were killed by sniper fire. The article also covers how the fighters were recruited by Wagner, with the group’s chief, Yevgeny Prigozhin, offering them six-month contracts in return for being pardoned. The recruitment campaign was in full swing in Russia’s prisons, with an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 men recruited.

From a discourse analysis perspective, the text is notable for its use of direct quotations from the fighters, which are presented in a straightforward, matter-of-fact manner. The report does not seek to interpret or analyze the fighters' experiences but rather allows their own words to contribute the discourse. This lexicalisation approach gives the text a sense of authenticity and immediacy, as though the reader is hearing the fighters' stories directly from them.

The report also makes use of descriptive language to convey the brutality of the conflict. The phrase "hideous losses" is used to describe the casualties suffered by the fighters in their assaults, while the reference to "World War I charges" suggests a sense of futility and waste. The text also describes the fighters' experiences in vivid detail, using phrases such as "praying to God, begging for water" and "digging his own grave and then was shot" to convey the harshness of their situation.

Another sign is the description of the battlefield as reminiscent of World War I, which conveys a sense of antiquity and barbarism. The term "first wave" invokes the idea of a massive, coordinated attack, while the repetition of "send another group" implies an endless cycle of violence and death. The use of the term "self-preservation instinct" highlights the fear and desperation felt by the fighters, while the phrase "no matter what the cost" emphasizes the extreme lengths they were willing to go to survive.

The mention of the recruitment of prisoners and the offer of pardons and fresh starts in life suggests that the fighters were motivated by a desire for freedom and a new beginning. However, the use of the term "deadly and disposable" in the title implies that their lives were seen as expendable by those who recruited them. The description of the recruitment campaign as being in "full swing" suggests a sense of urgency and a large-scale operation.

In terms of structure, the text follows a linear narrative, beginning with the fighters' experiences on the battlefield and then moving on to their recruitment by Wagner. This structure serves to contextualize the fighters' experiences within the broader political and social context of the conflict in eastern Ukraine. The report also includes background information about Wagner and its chief, Yevgeny Prigozhin, which helps to establish the organization's reputation for brutality and its use of prisoners as recruits.

The headline is well-structured and descriptive. There are two worlds that create the overall tone of the report: "survive" and "horrors". "Survival" can be linked to war or conflict, where individuals or communities must navigate dangerous situations and threats to their safety as well surviving implies enduring and persisting despite challenges, hardships, or obstacles. Where the environment of "horrors" is pragmatically linked to such concepts as "rear", "terror", "anxiety", "nightmares" or gruesome and terrifying scenes of violence, memories of traumatic events they have experienced or witnessed.

The article and the narratives are the main "them" representation. "They" are prisoners, recruited by the private Russian military battalion, "They" did not know about the frontline, "they" were unprepared for the battle, "they" were lied to, "they" have been defeated, "they" loose. The narrative repeats the main pattern of such stories where the narrators are imprisoned soldiers, who reveal the "untruth" of their commanders.

Reliability of such narratives is always questioned the source of the information are people who are in the position to produce only one side information. So the editors create the illusion of honesty by introducing the context: “CNN told the fighters that they could end the interview at any time they wished. But they spoke in detail for more than an hour.”

There is only one side of the conflict is directly presented, representatives of which are in the dependent power position and reproduce the narratives that correspond to the main discourse thus increasing its bias. The article doesn't delve into the deep roots of the conflict. The culture of the side is presented through the captured combatant a former prisoner or a criminal. There are no possible means for outcomes of war presented but military victory. Strong “Us-them” journalism, where “them” are vividly negatively marked. Reviling “their” untruths, naming “their” evil-doers. Focus on both visible and invisible aspects of war.

Article 10: CNN: Fighting Wagner is like a ‘zombie movie’ says Ukrainian soldier

The article is about the ongoing conflict between Ukrainian soldiers and fighters belonging to the Russian private military contractor, Wagner, near the city of Bakhmut in Ukraine. The article describes the tactics used by Wagner, which involve sending waves of attackers, mainly comprising raw recruits straight out of Russian prisons, who know little about military tactics and are poorly equipped. When the first wave is exhausted or cut down, Wagner sends in more experienced combatants, often from the flanks, in an effort to overrun Ukrainian positions. The article also describes the experiences of Ukrainian soldiers who have faced Wagner's assaults and the tragic stories of some of the fighters recruited by Wagner. Finally, the article contrasts the leadership of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky with that of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

In this article, these messages are delivered through the narratives of Ukrainian soldiers and Russian POWs, who are named “zombies” and “meat”, whose tactics are “primitive” and “brutal” and who have no choice but “to fight” or back to “cell”. Ukrainian soldiers in the opposition were depicted as brave and devoted to “freedom” and “democracy”: “Most of my guys, they are volunteers. They had (a) good business, they had (a) good jobs, they had a good salary, but they came to fight for their homeland. And it makes a great difference”.

There are several propagandistic messages that meet in this article and that are repeatedly detected in the previous analysis: “People in Russia afraid of Putin”, “The war in Ukraine is the war for freedom”, and “The war in Ukraine is the war for democracy”. The editor chose the Russian POW to deliver this message: “This guy [President Volodymyr Zelensky] is really the leader of the free world, at the moment, on our planet.”

The video that supplies this article starts with a report that says that Russia is violating a key nuclear arms control agreement and Russia is not allowing the US to inspect its nuclear weapons. Then the CNN body announcer states that “Putin and military leaders have threatened nuclear war” and then CNN provides the cut from President Putin's interview: “With regard to the threat of nuclear war, Svetlana Genadijevna, that’s right, the threat is growing, so why hide the truth?”, The cut from the next speaker is the commander of the pro-Russian “Vostok Battalion” Alexander Khodakovsky: “We don’t have means to defeat NATO, but we have nuclear weapons for that”.

All these narratives compound a syntagmatic chain: “Russia is violating a key nuclear arms control agreement”, “Putin is threatening nuclear war”, Russian confirm: “With regard to the threat of nuclear war, Svetlana Genadijevna, that’s right, the threat is growing, so why hide the truth?”, “We don’t have the means to defeat NATO, but we have nuclear weapons for that”.

However, the translation of Putin's quote is not correct in terms of the context that is presented in the full version of his interview where he answers the question about the possible threats of nuclear war: “With regard to the threat of nuclear war, Svetlana Genadijevna, that’s right, the threat is growing, so why to hide the truth? Under no circumstances will Russia be the first to use [nuclear weapons]. But if [Russia] does not use the first under any circumstances, then the second will not apply either. Therefore, the possibility of using them in the event of a nuclear strike on our territory is very limited”. The quote from Khodakovsky in the background states that “The next round of escalation is nuclear. If NATO countries cross the red line.”

In both cases, the speaker emphasizes that Russia will be able to apply nuclear weapons only in case if the other side [NATO] will do it first which creates a different meaning. However, the editorial choice is to remove these parts and expose these quotes as a direct threat that comes from Russia that creates a specific social reality for the readers that is deliberately

distorted by the editorial choices. Moreover, the editor don't balance the report with similar statements from the Western countries about determination to use nuclear weapons (Liz Truss says she's 'ready' to hit nuclear button if necessary, 2022).

The narrative about the Wagner group presented right next after that report follows the background of the possible emotional response from the readers regarding the possibility of nuclear war. That emotional response could contain anger, resentment, and fear together with the image of the possible enemy creating a reality with Russia and President Putin exposed as the collective enemy and threat to the Western World.

The article exposes the one-sided perspective on the conflict as a war for "freedom". The Russian party represents captured Russian Wagner POWs who criticize their commanders and Putin's regime. The deep roots of the conflict are not represented in either the structure, culture, or history. No possible outcomes rather than the victory of the Ukrainian side are not presented. The report discusses the trauma of the soldiers and the very intense psychological pressure on the frontline.

The article represents war's two-sided conflicting arena with only one possible goal and one guilty. Close space and time. "Us-them" journalism, propagandistic messages, a voice for "us". Dehumanization of "them" (zombies, meat, primitives). Focusing both on visible and invisible aspects of war. The article exposes "their" untruth and "our" suffering. Focus on elite peacemakers.

Table 1.8: Us vs Them representations. Ideological Quadrant

	They (Russians)	Us (Ukrainians)
Positive		Brave, Free
Negative	Zombies, Meat, Primitive	

Article 11: CNN: Elderly Ukrainians and their pets stay put in the abandoned east
 This article is about the lives of elderly residents who have remained in Konstantinivka, a town in eastern Ukraine, despite the ongoing conflict with Russia. The article describes their

struggles to survive in a war-torn town with intermittent water and electricity, and how they cope with the constant threat of violence and death. Many of the residents are impoverished, with only a small pension to live on, and rely on soldiers passing through town for food. The article also mentions the government's efforts to encourage residents to evacuate, but many elderly, infirm, and impoverished residents are reluctant to leave their homes.

The article is structured around interviews with several elderly women who have chosen to stay in their homes despite the dangers of living in a warzone. The discourse is primarily focused on the experiences and perspectives of these women, as they try to cope with the daily challenges of living in a conflict zone.

The language used is descriptive and vivid, portraying the devastating impact of the war on the lives of these women. The article highlights their struggles with poverty, lack of access to basic necessities such as running water and electricity, and their reliance on soldiers passing through town for food. The article also highlights the physical destruction caused by the conflict, such as blown-out windows, destroyed buildings, and rubble-filled streets.

The discourse is framed around the resilience and stoicism of the women interviewed, who are depicted as determined to survive despite their circumstances. The author also portrays them as people of faith, relying on God to protect them in times of danger. Overall, the discourse in this text portrays the devastating impact of the conflict on the lives of civilians in the town of Konstantinivka, while also highlighting the resilience and determination of those who have chosen to stay and endure the hardships of war.

The article is not framed as an “us-them” narrative. The main narrator Tamara is not taking any side of the conflict but shares her everyday life and limitations during the war. The article focuses on the trauma of the people who live on the front line in the destroyed regions of the eastern Ukraine. Despite the fact that the article uses victimization tactics, it doesn't openly blame any side of the conflict but exposes the conflict itself as something “horrible”. The tone of the article - is “tiredness”, and “emptiness”.

Article 12: CNN: In Russia's military, a culture of brutality runs deep

The article is about alleged war crimes committed by Russian forces in Ukraine. It provides details of atrocities such as summary executions of civilians, torture, and the inhumane

treatment of prisoners of war. The article also highlights the history of Russia's military interventions and the culture of brutality and scorn for the laws of armed conflict that have been extensively documented in the past. It draws parallels between the current situation in Ukraine and Russia's past military campaigns in Chechnya and Syria, where similar atrocities were committed. It also discusses the international community's reaction to the conflict and the Ukrainian government's efforts to expose and prosecute these crimes. The article concludes with President Biden's call for a war crimes trial after the Bucha images surface.

The article argues that the issue of brutality is not just a matter of individual actions but rather is deeply ingrained in the military culture of Russia. The authors provide historical links to the wars in Chechnya and Syria to contextualize the pervasive nature of violence within the Russian military. In addition, the article uses the recent war crimes committed by Russian troops in Bucha to illustrate the continuation of this culture of violence. The article exposes the various forms of violence being inflicted on people, providing detailed descriptions of the ways in which they are being killed.

By presenting the issue in this manner, the article exposes the underlying power dynamics and structural inequalities that allow for such violence to occur. It highlights the role of the state and its institutions in perpetuating and normalizing brutality within the military. Furthermore, the article challenges the dominant narrative that portrays the Russian military as a powerful and heroic force and instead provides a more nuanced understanding of the complex realities on the ground.

The critical discourse approach employed in the article encourages readers to question the dominant discourse surrounding the Russian military and to consider alternative perspectives. By highlighting the historical, social, and political contexts that contribute to the perpetuation of brutality within the military, the article calls for a more comprehensive and critical examination of the issue. It also encourages readers to consider the broader implications of such violence, not only for victims and their families but also for society as a whole.

The pictures emerging from the Kyiv suburb of Bucha are mentioned to show strong evidence of apparent war crimes by Russian forces in Ukraine, where dead civilians on the streets with hands bound and shot execution-style, and others were apparently mowed down

at random. The article uses strong and emotive adjectives such as "grotesque," "brutality," "horror," and "ruthless" to emphasize the atrocities of the Russian military in Ukraine.

The author also uses imagery and metaphor to convey the message. For example, the article depicts the scenes unfolding in places like Bucha as reminiscent of Russia's war in Chechnya, where allegations surfaced of widespread human-rights abuse by Russian troops. The author also mentions that the scenes unfolding in Bucha suggest an intimate kind of violence, which could be interpreted as the Russian military's brutality.

Moreover, the article quotes Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's Secretary General, to support the message that the Russian military has a culture of brutality and scorn for the laws of armed conflict. The author also mentions the allegations of summary executions in Chechnya and claims that similar evidence of summary executions abounds in towns such as Bucha.

The article also quotes the Ukrainian parliament's human rights ombudsman, Liudmyla Denisova, who said that Russia's treatment of prisoners of war violates the Geneva Conventions, laying out a theoretical case for potential war crimes prosecutions. The author uses quotes and accounts from Ukrainian officials, advisers, and eyewitnesses to emphasize the inhumane treatment of prisoners of war and local Ukrainian mayors.

The conflicting sides in the article are the Russian forces and the Ukrainian government. The article accuses the Russian forces of committing apparent war crimes, including summary executions of civilians and prisoners of war. The Russian military is depicted as having a culture of brutality and scorn for the laws of armed conflict. On the other side, the Ukrainian government is presented as the victim of the invasion and the one fighting against Russian forces to protect their territory and people. Ukrainian officials are also quoted in the article describing the mistreatment of Ukrainian prisoners of war and the detention of local mayors by Russian forces.

6.2 Quantitative findings

6.2.1 General findings: The Dominance of War Journalism

The summation of the index scores for each article provides a comprehensive assessment of the “temperature” to which peace journalism is represented in the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. This approach allows for a quantitative analysis of the extent to which the news sources prioritize peace-oriented reporting, which can provide insights into the framing and biases of their coverage. Table 2.1 provides examples of the indexed articles.

Table 2.1: Examples of Temperature for Peace Journalism in News Coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict

Mauled Russian units, shrinking Ukrainian stocks: Leaks suggest both sides hold mixed hands for next phase of war	-0.5
Two men claiming to be ex-Wagner fighters said they killed civilians in Ukraine. One recanted. Wagner is looking for the other	-0.5
Elderly Ukrainians and their pets stay put in the abandoned east	0.8
European leaders head to Beijing with hope of driving peace in Ukraine, while balancing business ties	0
Mariupol: Satellite images suggest mass graves dug near besieged city	-0.7

The study's findings indicate that peace journalism was underrepresented in the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, with only 15% of the analyzed items classified as peace journalism. In contrast, the majority of the analyzed reports, 83%, were classified as war journalism.

6.2.2 Comparative finding: BBC Adopts an Aggressive Tone of War Journalism

This study offers a comparative analysis of the selected news sources and the two distinct time spans covered by the analyzed samples (Table 2.2). By exploring these variables, our study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the tone of media coverage surrounding the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The comparative nature of our analysis allows for a nuanced examination of the differences and similarities in the coverage provided by the selected news sources over time, providing valuable insights into the overall trends and biases in media framing of the conflict.

The analysis examined a total of 99 items from two news sources, BBC and CNN, with 50 and 49 items respectively. The findings indicate that both news sources demonstrate a significant prevalence of war journalism framing. However, there are also identified noteworthy differences between the two sources in their use of peace journalism framing and the emphasis placed on different aspects of the conflict. These differences enabled us to provide more definitive and nuanced answers to the research questions we posed earlier.

Table 2.2: Peace and War Coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict by News Source and Time Period

Time Period	Source	Peace journalism (%)	War journalism (%)
April 2022	CNN	8	92
April 2022	BBC	3	96
April 2023	CNN	40	56
April 2023	BBC	9	90

The analysis reveals a prevalent use of war journalism framing across all news outlets analyzed. However, the comparative findings demonstrate noteworthy differences in the overall tone of the reports produced by the selected outlets. Specifically, the results in the Table 2.3 indicate that the BBC tends to adopt a more aggressive approach in their coverage, with a greater emphasis on war journalism framing. In contrast, CNN demonstrates a comparatively lower use of war journalism framing, resulting in a more balanced coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Table 2.3: Table of Peace and War Coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict by News Source

Source	Peace journalism (%)	War journalism (%)
BBC	6	94
CNN	24	73

Table 2.4 reveals a notable difference in the prevalence of peace journalism over time. Specifically, the data evidence a strong prevalence of war journalism framing in April 2022, which may be attributed to the beginning of the conflict and the heightened interest in visible aspects such as war crimes in Bucha and missile strikes on civilian objects. The overall

number of articles produced on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict during this period may have also contributed to the prevalence of war journalism framing. In contrast, our findings for April 2023 indicate a more balanced use of journalism framing, with a greater focus on the less visible aspects of the conflict. This shift in focus may be due to a saturation of the news market with war reports and a general "tiredness" with the topic of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Table 2.4: Table of Peace and War Coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict by News Source

Source	Articles analysed	Peace journalism (%)	War journalism (%)
April 2022	53	5	94
April 2023	46	26	71

Data in Table 2.5, evidence that the news reports on the war between Russia and Ukraine seem to be heavily skewed towards war journalism rather than peace journalism.

Table 2.5: Comparison of Peace and War Indicators in News Reports

Peace Journalism Indicators	(%)	War Journalism Indicators	(%)
less marked visibility of war effects	28	marked visibility of war effects	67
emphasis on 'people sources'	28	emphasis on elite and official sources	62
conflict outcomes focused on negotiation and agreement	20	conflict outcomes focused on war options	65
emphasis on longer term processes and wider aspects	24	emphasis on 'here and now' events	59
absence of good/bad tagging	27	frequent good/bad tagging	60
multi-party framing preference	20	framing preferences for one or two parties	65
no partisanship	25	partisanship	68
win-win orientation	17	zero-sum victory/defeat orientation	63
absence of victimizing language	20	victimizing language	72
absence of military vocabulary	12	military vocabulary	83

The reports show an equal split between marked and less marked visibility of war effects, indicating a balanced approach in depicting the impact of the conflict. The reports heavily rely on elite and official sources (62%) rather than ordinary people or 'people sources' (28%), suggesting a top-down perspective on the conflict. The reports predominantly focus on war

options (65%) over negotiation and agreement (20%), indicating a preference for discussing military responses and strategies over diplomatic solutions. News stories are more concentrated on 'here and now' events (59%) rather than longer-term processes and wider aspects (24%). This might limit the audience's understanding of the broader context and implications of the conflict. The data indicates a high level of good/bad tagging (60%) as opposed to neutral reporting (27%), suggesting that the conflict is often framed in terms of 'right' and 'wrong' sides. The reports show a strong preference for one or two parties (65%) over a multi-party perspective (20%). This could potentially lead to a biased representation of the conflict. There is a high level of partisanship (68%) in the news stories, with only a quarter of the reports being non-partisan (25%). The reports overwhelmingly depict the conflict as a zero-sum game (63%) rather than a situation where a win-win outcome is possible (17%). The use of victimizing language is prevalent in the reports (72%), which might induce emotional responses in the audience and influence their perceptions of the conflict. The reports heavily rely on military vocabulary (83%), which could contribute to a war-oriented framing of the conflict, with only a small proportion of reports avoiding such language (12%).

In summary, these findings suggest that the media's coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war tends to emphasize conflict and competition, heavily relies on elite sources, uses significant good/bad tagging, and employs military vocabulary. These aspects, combined with the high degree of partisanship, might contribute to a more divisive and polarized understanding of the conflict among audiences.

Based on the obtained data in Table 2.6, it can be assumed that the BBC tends to have a more war-focused approach, with higher percentages of marked visibility of war effects, partisanship, good/bad tagging, zero-sum orientation, and use of military vocabulary. In contrast, CNN seems to have a more balanced approach with more emphasis on negotiation and agreement, longer-term processes, and an absence of good/bad tagging. However, both outlets could benefit from more multi-party framing, less victimizing language, and a focus on win-win outcomes to provide a more nuanced understanding of the conflict.

Table 2.6: Comparison of Peace and War Indicators in News Reports by Media Source

	BBC	CNN		BBC	CNN
Peace Journalism Indicators	(%)		War Journalism Indicators	(%)	
less marked visibility of war effects	22	35	marked visibility of war effects	74	59
emphasis on 'people sources'	32	25	emphasis on elite and official sources	56	67
conflict outcomes focused on negotiation and agreement	12	29	conflict outcomes focused on war options	66	63
emphasis on longer term processes and wider aspects	20	29	emphasis on 'here and now' events	72	45
absence of good/bad tagging	16	39	frequent good/bad tagging	66	53
multi-party framing preference	16	25	framing preferences for one or two parties	70	59
no partisanship	16	35	partisanship	80	55
win-win orientation	10	25	zero-sum victory/defeat orientation	70	55
absence of victimizing language	16	25	victimizing language	76	67
absence of military vocabulary	10	14	military vocabulary	84	82

CNN has a higher percentage of less marked visibility of war effects (35%) than the BBC (22%). However, both outlets lean towards a marked visibility of war effects, with the BBC at 74% and CNN at 59%. Both outlets focus more on war options than negotiation and agreement, with the BBC having a slightly higher percentage (66%) than CNN (63%). However, CNN has a higher focus on negotiation and agreement (29%) than the BBC (12%). Both outlets have a higher percentage of frequent good/bad tagging, with the BBC at 66% and CNN at 53%. However, CNN has a higher percentage of absence of good/bad tagging (39%) than the BBC (16%). CNN has a higher percentage of multi-party framing preference (25%) than the BBC (16%). The BBC shows a higher level of partisanship (80%) compared to CNN (55%). Both outlets heavily rely on military vocabulary, with the BBC at 84% and CNN at 82%.

Based on the obtained data (Table 2.7), it can be assumed there has been a significant increase in less marked visibility of war effects, from 17% in April 2022 to 41% in April 2023. This could indicate a change in the reporting focus, with fewer explicit impacts of warfare.

Table 2.7: Comparison of Peace and War Indicators in News Reports over Time

	H22	H23		H22	H23
Peace Journalism Indicators	(%)		War Journalism Indicators	(%)	
less marked visibility of war effects	17	41	marked visibility of war effects	77	54
emphasis on 'people sources'	39	22	emphasis on elite and official sources	55	70
conflict outcomes focused on negotiation and agreement	11	30	conflict outcomes focused on war options	79	47.83
emphasis on longer term processes and wider aspects	21	28	emphasis on 'here and now' events	66	50
absence of good/bad tagging	11	46	frequent good/bad tagging	81	35
multi-party framing preference	19	22	framing preferences for one or two parties	70	59
no partisanship	17	35	partisanship	77	57
win-win orientation	8	28	zero-sum victory/defeat orientation	68	57
absence of victimizing language	4	39	victimizing language	91	50
absence of military vocabulary	11	13	military vocabulary	83	83

Conflict Outcomes Focused on War Options aspect has seen a significant decrease from 79% in April 2022 to 48% in April 2023. This shift may suggest a growing focus on peace efforts, negotiations, or alternative solutions to the conflict in the latter period. There's a substantial decrease in 'bad/good' tagging category from 81% in April 2022 to 35% in April 2023. This indicates a move away from framing the conflict in moral or dichotomous terms. Journalistic partisanship has decreased from 77% in April 2022 to 57% in April 2023. This indicates a significant decrease in bias or favoritism towards one side in the reporting. Victimization language indicator has significant decrease from 91% in April 2022 to 50% in April 2023. This indicates a shift away from language that portrays one side as victims and the other as aggressors.

6.3 Analyzing and discussing findings

6.3.1 RQ1: How are the conflicting sides of the Russian-Ukrainian war presented in discourse produced by the Western media and what potential biases can be identified in these representations? How are the "us" vs "them" narratives constructed?

These qualitative findings are further validated by quantitative content analysis, revealing an overarching tone of war journalism in the chosen media outlets. The study uncovers the

utilization of various discursive strategies by these outlets to propagate an imbalanced representation of the conflicting sides. These strategies comprise dehumanization, demonization, heroization, and the spread of propagandistic assertions.

The examined articles share numerous examples of violations pertaining to the principles of impartial event reporting, including a disproportionate representation of the Ukrainian perspective and an insufficient depiction of the Russian standpoint. The Russian viewpoint is chiefly represented via prisoners of war (Article 9) or defectors (Article 3), thereby typically articulating "our" voice. The narrative excludes ongoing Russian or separatist combatants and civilians, symbolically annihilating the separatists (former Ukrainian citizens now supporting Russian forces) and making them invisible to readers. Moreover, the representation excludes individuals and officials who openly critique the current course of the Ukrainian regime.

Qualitative content analysis identified instances of dehumanizing language directed at both Russian combatants and civilians. Russian combatants are explicitly dehumanized through labels such as "stupid animals", "meat", and "enemies", and through degrading comparisons, portraying them as unintelligent, barbaric, rude, and impudent. Russian civilians are dehumanized through labels such as "zombies". This discourse perpetuates the portrayal of the Russian population as helpless, ignorant, and indifferent, having been "fooled" by propaganda from the "Kremlin" or "Putin." Simplification tactics are often utilized to define President Putin as the root cause of ongoing conflicts, particularly in the case of "Putin's war," which serves as a constant signifier of the violent conflict between Russia and Ukraine through the analyzed reports. In general, representation aligns with war journalism paise, which encourages an "us-them" mentality and dehumanizes "them" as a problem.

Analyzed discourse often seeks to conceal or diminish the significance of neo-Nazi organizations in the ongoing conflict and the broader context of destabilization in Ukraine. In Article 7, the author examines the history of the far-right movement in Ukraine, referring to it as "The Death Star" and exploring its possible ties to terrorism. Despite these connections, the author attempts to justify the existence of neo-Nazi movements by arguing that movements do not play a significant role in the democratic process. However, the author's arguments are undermined by the fact that regiments with neo-Nazi ideology and symbolism have been integrated into the Ukrainian National Guard, raising questions about the connections between official state institutions and openly neo-Nazi organizations. The author

doesn't discuss the possible outcomes of the far-right organizations' activity and their effect on the loss of social consensus in Ukraine which has a multicultural and multinational society. Upon analysis, it is evident that the author employs persuasive techniques aimed at helping "our" cover-ups and de-stigmatizing the neo-Nazi movement. The author achieves this by using visual content that depicts children, elderly women, and civilians holding wooden rifles, creating an image that portrays these organizations as being close to "the people," and providing arguments that discuss neo-Nazi organizations are not "so" neo-Nazis.

The attempt to downplay and normalize the neo-Nazi movement is concerning and raises questions about the author's intentions. Through constant repetition and analysis of evidence, it becomes apparent that both the BBC and CNN have claimed that Russian allegations about neo-Nazism in Ukraine are "false," "lies," and "groundless." This suggests that Western discourse sets a boundary that restricts readers from fully comprehending the situation in the Russian-Ukrainian war. It is deeply worrying to attempt to downplay the presence of neo-Nazi organizations. If militarized right-wing extremist groups exist within Europe, it is crucial to address and debate these issues.

The present analysis examines the portrayal of Ukrainian combatants in media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war, demonstrating a trend toward heroization. The research also presents evidence that downplays the acts of warfare committed by Ukrainian soldiers. Generally, the texts positively denote these combatants as modern, western, brave, strong, steady, honest, young, pleasant, smart, and generous. Analyzed articles do not focus on revealing war crimes committed by Ukrainian combatants such as their inhumane treatment of prisoners, and killing of civilians. Instead, the emphasis is on highlighting Russian war crimes against combatants and civilians. The articles neither depict Ukrainian soldiers as the cause of visible infrastructure destruction (Mariupol example). When such instances are mentioned, the agent is repeatedly removed, thus excluding Ukrainian participation in actions that readers can see as unpleasant and not correct.

This one-sided portrayal serves to reinforce the heroization of Ukrainian combatants while downplaying their potential culpability in violent actions which corresponds to war journalism as a contrast between the "us-them" relationship shifting it into a positive representation of "us"(Ukrainians) and negative representations of "them"(Russians).

In Article 10, it is evident that CNN is using explicit untruth by taking quotes from President Putin's speech out of context and incorporating them into statements that convey a meaning that is vastly different from the original one. This manipulation is particularly concerning as it pertains to the topic of nuclear war and threats, and given the wide audience of such messages, this kind of discourse poses a significant threat not only to peace between Western countries and Russia but to all of humanity, which is dependent on the outcome of a possible nuclear war that could arise as a result of such statements.

Due to all the findings that this research highlights, the question arises: can there be situations when journalistic objectivity could be justifiably violated due to some reasons? For example, the issues surrounding objectivity in journalism become particularly pertinent in situations such as coverage of global warming where journalists may find themselves gravitating towards a perspective that they deem as 'more right'. Nonetheless, the essence of what it means to be 'right' differs fundamentally in different instances.

In the case of global warming, scientific facts play an essential role as the basis for discussions. That could be different perspectives on the problem for example geological which provide specific material proofs such as the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere or objective chemical markers in fossils that explain the phenomena of climate change in the different geological periods. In other words, there is solid ground that always can be used for identifying objectively the 'more right' position.

Covering war is more problematic due to the fact that any conflict is based on a complex spectrum of sociocultural and political processes, each of these processes is ambiguous and complex and the interpretation of which depends on the cultural and ideological firmware of the interpreter. This kind of discussion also relies on philosophical views such as the just war theory whose reliability is debatable and it relies on vague concepts that could be interpreted differently in different socio-cultural environments (Ilesanmi, 2000). In other words, it is important to emphasize that the concept of "being right" in this case is not a logical one, as in the case of the example of global warming, but is a purely ideological construct that has its roots in the nature of the news media system itself.

Looking deeper and seeing the media from the perspective of system theory which exposes the autopoietic nature existing on the means of itself (Luhmann, 2000), we can consider that

the main propaganda message “we are right”, firstly arises a dichotomy “we are right - they are wrong” and all following "us-them" dichotomies, and then reproduces its “rightness” by means of its “rightness” reproduced in the previous iterations. In that sense, the discourse is always "right".

Thus, war journalism constantly reproduces its own biases and deviations from objectivity on the systematic level. The system evolves more disconnected from objective reality and facts, constantly generating mass delusion that reflects in social practice. That partly explains the difficulty of journalists to challenge the main discourse with alternative ideological vectors. In the context of war, this is dangerous as the system initiates a feedback loop (Lynch and McGoldrick, 2005; Meadows, 2008) that makes rhetoric more aggressive, biases stronger and war more violent. That’s why the current model of journalism is incapable to identify “more right” in the war context and can not be a platform for a non-violent resolution of the conflict, as from the perspective above it is an indirect catalyst of violence.

Certainly one can take as a possible justification for the deviations of objectivity the emotional response defined by the fear of Russia and the spread of its influence. The Russian military machine is indeed threatening, the propaganda is strong (Brusylowska and Maksymenko, 2022), the values promoted by Russia in no way correspond to the values of the Western world, strong autocratic tendencies, the desire for revanchism and the imperial ambitions of some representatives of the Russian political elites increase significant fears that Russia may hypothetically present its interests in other countries. But could it be that the mainstream Western media contributed to some of these processes in an indirect way? "If the traditional media themselves are unable to transmit alternative perspectives and voices, the danger is that those segments of the global village that feel marginalised will turn to terror in order to make a difference in the media agenda" (Ottosen and Nohrstedt, 2008) which can probably be observed in the ongoing conflict and what is of interest for future research. If so, an imbalance in journalism can only aggravate relations with Russia, increase its extreme and create a number of precedents that may become a reason for further escalation which inevitably will cause human loss.

For future research, it is important to reconsider the whole situation beyond the frames that media create and analyze the ongoing conflict from various perspectives that mainstream media is failed to address.

Are there cases when journalism can refrain from objectivity due to some circumstances? The theory of peace journalism answers this question by arguing that journalism should strive for objectivity and balanced coverage, especially in wartime when the pressure on objectivity is most intense. “Truth-oriented journalists would expose truths from all sides and uncover all cover-ups” (Galtung, 2000, p. 163). From this perspective, it was crucial for the research to understand exactly how the balance is off and how journalistic objectivity is systematically sabotaged by the various actors involved in the news production process to help the media system be more objective even in critical situations.

This research highlights a sensitive aspect concerning the impact of changes in the quality of news reports on journalistic objectivity as a professional norm. If analyzed media outlets present themselves as adhering to these norms, and due to the observed pressure on these norms, it becomes evident that either these outlets should reconsider their reporting style or either reconfigure the definition and reconstruction of these norms to ensure their coherence with the news products they produce. Further investigation is warranted, particularly from an ethnographic perspective, to explore how journalists currently perceive and navigate these norms and identify the transformations taking place within them.

6.3.2 RQ2: To what degree, and in what ways, does the discourse generated by various Western media outlets concerning the Russian-Ukrainian conflict adhere to the principles of peace journalism? How does this alignment vary across these different media platforms?

The study's findings indicate that war journalism is dominating the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict both on BBC and CNN. Only 15% of the analyzed items were classified as peace journalism and 83% were classified as war journalism.

The findings evidence that the BBC tends to adopt a more aggressive approach in their coverage, with a greater emphasis on war journalism framing. In contrast, CNN demonstrates a comparatively lower use of war journalism framing, resulting in a more balanced coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

Qualitative analysis also evidence that the rhetorical approaches adopted by CNN and BBC demonstrate stark contrasts, which influence their representation of global events and narratives. CNN typically maintains a more neutral stance. The BBC, on the other hand, exhibits a more aggressive posture in its representation of events, often employing dehumanization and victimization tactics to shape narratives. The polarization dichotomy of 'us' versus 'them' is more noticeable within the BBC's coverage compared to that of CNN.

That corresponds general trend as the UK (In Democratic Corporatist Model) media has traditionally been more partisan in its print press than the US (Liberal Model) and regardless the fact that both countries have a high degree of journalistic professionalism, but the 'objectivity norm' is stronger in the US as culturally in the UK, it's more accepted that newspapers have a political bias the cultural expectation in the US for news to be neutral and objective (Hallin and Mancini, 2004).

An interesting discovery emerged organically during the process of curating materials for qualitative analysis. It was observed that CNN appeared to abstain from including images or videos of Russian and Ukrainian soldiers in their reports in April 2022. While sourcing such visual content from BBC was relatively straightforward, the task proved to be more challenging with CNN. However, by April 2023, this pattern of restrictive representation no longer seemed to be in effect.

Results highlight a strong prevalence of war journalism framing in April 2022, which may be attributed to the beginning of the conflict and the heightened interest in visible aspects such as war crimes in Bucha and missile strikes on civilian objects. In contrast, our findings for April 2023 indicate a more balanced use of journalism framing, with a greater focus on the less visible aspects of the conflict. This shift in focus may be due to a saturation of the news market with war reports and a general "tiredness" with the topic of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

The qualitative analysis provided also indicates that the media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in the examined articles aligns more closely with Johan Galtung's concept of war journalism than peace journalism. However, some analyzed articles showcase elements of peace journalism, focusing on personal accounts of ordinary individuals affected by the war, hence highlighting its devastating consequences. For example, Article 11 stands

out for its avoidance of "us-them" framing or "good-bad" labeling and for its refusal to propagate allegations or disseminate blatant propagandistic messages.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, this study has illuminated the dynamics of Western media discourse surrounding the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. It has revealed a discernible dominance of war journalism (RQ2), particularly exhibited in the BBC's and CNN's coverage, which outweighs peace journalism in its portrayal of the conflict. This finding is consistent across both qualitative and quantitative analyses and exposes a shift towards sensationalism and binary narratives, which may inadvertently contribute to the escalation of tensions.

The prevailing discursive framework promotes a divisive "us" versus "them" narrative that corresponds to a "patriotic" stance and correlates with the findings of Springer (2022). Western media coverage has been observed to disproportionately represent the Ukrainian perspective, while the Russian standpoint is largely marginalized or stereotypically characterized which aligns with the findings of Zixiu Liu (2020) about *Euromaidan* coverage by the UK and evidence of the consistent trend in British media. The dehumanization and demonization of Russian combatants and civilians, alongside the heroization of Ukrainian combatants, starkly exemplify this trend. Moreover, the findings also shed light on the worrying aspect of misinformation, particularly in the use of misleading quotes and propagandistic messages (RQ1).

The discourse also exhibits a concerning effort to normalize or trivialize the role of neo-Nazi organizations in the conflict. Despite clear indicators of their active participation, Western media outlets generally downplay their influence and involvement. Possible war crimes and atrocities committed by Ukrainian combatants are also deemphasized in the discourse. This biased representation underscores the manipulation and selective framing inherent in the coverage, potentially obstructing a comprehensive understanding of the complex and multifaceted conflict.

The research thus concludes that Western media coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war exhibits significant alignment with the principles of war journalism rather than peace journalism. This coverage tends to entrench polarizing narratives and discourses that may

inadvertently exacerbate tensions rather than promote peaceful resolution. Therefore, the media, with its immense influence on public perception and discourse, needs to critically reflect on its coverage, challenge its own biases, and strive for a more balanced, peace-oriented portrayal of the conflict.

Continuing the discourse initiated by Nina Springer (2022), the present study concludes that media-biased practices are systematically embedded into the fabric of the discourse and the principles of journalistic objectivity - balance (or the concept of 'hearing both sides'), impartiality, and nonpartisanship - face considerable pressure. Yet, research also suggests that this is not a static or constant phenomenon. Trends fluctuate over time, encompassing periods where journalism appears to shift towards a more balanced approach to its coverage.

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9. Appendix

A. Peace/Conflict Journalism; War/Violence Journalism (Galtung 2003)

Peace/Conflict Journalism	War/Violence Journalism
I—Peace/Conflict-Oriented	I—War/Violence-Oriented
Explore conflict formation; x parties, y goals, z issues; general ‘win-win’ orientation.	Focus on conflict arena; 2 parties, 1 goal (‘win’), 1 issue (‘war’); general ‘zero-sum’ orientation.
Open space, open time; causes and outcomes anywhere, including in history/culture.	Closed space, closed time; causes and exits in arena, ‘who threw the first stone?’
Making conflicts transparent.	Making wars opaque/secret.
Giving voice to all parties; empathy and understanding.	‘Us–Them’ journalism; propaganda, voice for ‘Us’, only.
See conflict/war as a problem; focus on conflict creativity.	See ‘Them’ as the problem; focus on who ‘prevails’ in war.
Humanization of all sides (regardless).	Dehumanization of ‘Them’ (more so the worse the weapon).
Proactive: Prevention before any violence/war occurs.	Reactive: Waiting for violence before reporting.
Focus on invisible effects of violence (trauma and glory, damage to structure/culture).	Focus only on visible effects of violence (killed, wounded and material damage).
II—Truth-Oriented	II—Propaganda-Oriented
Expose untruths on all sides.	Expose ‘their’ untruths.
Uncover all cover-ups.	Help ‘our’ cover-ups and lies.
III—People-Oriented	III—Elite-Oriented
Focus on suffering all over: on women, the aged, children, giving voice to the voiceless.	Focus on ‘our’ suffering; on able-bodied elite males, being their own mouthpiece.
Naming all evil-doers.	Naming ‘their’ evil-doers.
Focus on peacemakers among the people.	Focus on ‘elite peacemakers’.
IV—Solution-Oriented	IV—Victory-Oriented
Peace = non-violence + creativity.	Peace = victory + ceasefire.
Highlight peace initiatives to prevent more war.	Conceal peace initiatives before victory is at hand.
Focus on structure, culture, the peaceful society.	Focus on treaty, institution, the controlled society.
Aftermath: Sincere interest; resolution, reconstruction, reconciliation.	Aftermath: Leave for another war; return if the old war flares up again.

B. The Analyzed Articles of a Qualitative Case Study

	Spring 2022		
	Russian combats	Ukrainian combats	Noncombats
BBC	Ukraine war: Refugee from Popasna spots looted possessions on Russian tank https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61643533	Ukraine war: On the front line of the battle for Kharkiv https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60693166	Mariupol is a graveyard': Evacuees recount terror of Russian assault https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61035565
CNN	In Russia's military, a culture of brutality runs deep https://edition.cnn.com/2022/04/04/europe/russia-military-culture-brutality-intl/index.html	A far-right battalion has a key role in Ukraine's resistance. Its neo-Nazi history has been exploited by Putin https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/29/europe/ukraine-azov-movement-far-right-intl-cmd/index.html	In Ukraine's Russian-speaking east, Putin's war is tearing families apart https://edition.cnn.com/2022/05/03/europe/eastern-ukraine-conflict-stakes-intl-cmd/index.html

	Spring 2023		
	Russian combats	Ukrainian combats	Noncombats
BBC	Russian army officer admits: 'Our troops tortured Ukrainians' https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64470092	Ukraine war: The friends who fought Russia's invasion Published 24 February https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64733014	Ukraine war: Why so many Russians turn a blind eye to the conflict https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64703768
CNN	'Just to survive': Wagner fighters recount the horrors of battle in eastern Ukraine https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/12/europe/wagner-convicts-eastern-ukraine-pleitgen-intl	Fighting Wagner is like a 'zombie movie' says Ukrainian soldier https://edition.cnn.com/2023/02/01/europe/ukraine-soldiers-fighting-wagner-intl-cmd/index.html	Elderly Ukrainians and their pets stay put in the abandoned east https://edition.cnn.com/2023/04/09/europe/ukraine-konstantinivka-fighting-elderly-intl/index.html

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C. Coding Categories for Frames

War Journalism	Peace Journalism
<p>Reports mainly on visible effects of war (casualties, dead and wounded, damage to property).</p> <p>Examples of using visible aspects of war: <i>“During the short video, the victim with the yellow armband is beheaded by a man with a large knife who is wearing a white band around his leg”</i></p>	<p>Reports also on invisible effects of war (emotional trauma, damage to society and culture).</p> <p>Example of an invisible aspect of war: <i>“On the ground next to Tamara is a shopping bag containing her purse and a few groceries. She says she can’t survive on her monthly pension, amounting to about fifty dollars. She supplements it with food shared by soldiers passing through town. When all else fails, she says, she begs.”</i></p>
<p>Emphasis on elite and official sources (focuses on leaders & elites as actors and sources of information).</p> <p>Example of the emphasis on the official sources: <i>“Germany’s foreign intelligence service told a parliamentary committee Wednesday that it has intercepted radio communications where Russian soldiers talked about shooting soldiers and civilians in Ukraine, a source with knowledge of the meeting said.”</i></p>	<p>Emphasis on ‘people sources’ (focuses on common people as actors and sources of information).</p> <p>An example of the emphasis on the people sources: <i>“Mykola 46, took us straight to the far end of the room. “This was my half a metre of space. I was sleeping standing up” he said.”</i></p>
<p>Conflict outcomes focused on war options.</p> <p>Example of the outcomes focused on war options: <i>“Weather the storm, exhaust the enemy</i></p>	<p>Conflict outcomes focused on negotiation and agreement. Reports the areas of agreement that might lead to a solution to the conflict</p>

<i>and then strike back."</i>	Example of conflict outcomes focused on negotiation and agreement: <i>"I believe that peace is always made by opening channels; peace can never be made by the closure."</i>
Emphasis on 'here and now' events. Example of emphasis on 'here and now' events: <i>"Russia is trying to regroup, resupply and reinforce its offensive in the Donbas region"</i>	Emphasis on longer term processes and wider aspects
Frequent good/bad tagging	Absence of good/bad tagging
Framing preferences for one or two parties	Multi-party framing preference
Partisanship. Explicit or implicit preference on the conflicting sides. This bias can manifest in a variety of ways, including the selection of certain stories to cover and the way in which those stories are presented.	No partisanship
Zero-sum victory/defeat orientation. Involves framing the conflict as a zero-sum game, in which one side's victory necessarily means the other side's defeat.	Win-win orientation
Victimizing language Example of victimizing language: <i>"An oil storage depot was set on fire in a Russian city just north of Ukraine after what Russia described as an attack by two Ukrainian helicopters"</i> .	Absence of victimizing language
Military vocabulary (" <i>Russian troops,</i> " " <i>tanks,</i> " " <i>POW,</i> " " <i>shelling</i> ")	Absence of military vocabulary