NLA University College

Propaganda frames in Russian media: A case study of the Russian-Ukrainian war coverage in RIA Novosti

Student kept anonymous due to sensitivity of the topic

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Dear reader,

I am pleased to present my master's thesis, the culmination of my academic journey. This dissertation represents an important milestone in my academic and personal growth, reflecting the knowledge and skills I acquired while studying at NLA University College.

As a citizen of Russia, the topic of propaganda frames in the Russian media is very close to me. Understanding how the media shapes public opinion is critical, especially during conflicts such as the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war. By examining the coverage of this conflict by *RIA Novosti*, a major Russian news agency, my dissertation aims to shed light on the role of propaganda in shaping the Russian public's perception of the war. As someone who values the freedom and independence of the media, I believe having access to objective and unbiased information is essential. I hope my research can contribute to developing a more transparent and responsible media space in Russia, where citizens are free to form opinions based on accurate and factual reporting.

I want to express my gratitude to all those who supported me while writing this dissertation, including my consultants, colleagues, friends and family. With their support, guidance and feedback, I could complete this work.

Thanks again for taking the time to read my master's thesis. This will give you a deeper understanding of the topic and inspire you to do more research and research.

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Abstract: The thesis examines the use of frames in modern media texts and their role in shaping public opinion in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict on the example of the Russian state news agency *RIA Novosti.* The conflict began in February 2022 when Russian troops invaded Ukraine. The study uses content and critical discourse analysis to analyse *RIA Novosti* articles. It concludes that they use four media frames such as "Changing Global Power Dynamics", "Saving the Russian World", "Nationalism", and "Historical", to create a favourable image of Russia and justify its military intervention in Ukraine. The study shows how state-affiliated media can manipulate public opinion and justify military intervention by creating specific frameworks and discourses, emphasising the importance of maintaining editorial independence and journalistic integrity, especially in conflict zones. The study concluded that there is a need for future research to examine how *RIA Novosti's* coverage influences public opinion and how other state-sponsored media cover conflicts.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, Russian-Ukrainian war, RIA Novosti, propaganda, coverage of military conflict, discourse, framing theory, content analysis.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The invasion of Ukraine by Russia (also known as Russian aggression against Ukraine, the Russian-Ukrainian war, or in Russia - "special military operation in Ukraine") commenced on Thursday, February 24, 2022. Russian forces entered Ukraine's territory from Russia and Belarus. They annexed Crimea, with the Russian-controlled Donetsk People's Republic (from now DPR) and Luhansk People's Republic (from now LPR) troops joining the conflict. Numerous warnings about the impending invasion have been reported in the media since October 2021. However, top Russian officials consistently denied any preparations for a war with Ukraine.

On February 21, 2022, Russia recognised the independence of the DNR and LNR. On February 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a statement announcing the beginning of the invasion. Putin justified the attack by stating the need to protect the DPR, LPR, and Russia while using the false characterisation of Ukraine as a neo-Nazi state. According to experts, it is believed that Russia created the separatist movement in the Donbas region of Ukraine, intending to justify their invasion (Rauta & Spatafora, 2022). The recognition of the DPR and LPR by Russia further solidified this claim.

In contrast to other military conflicts (Chechnya, Georgia, Syria and others) where Russia was involved, the West and the European Union have primarily prioritised the information aspect of the conflict since 2014, for this case is seen not only as a threat to a vital neighbour seeking closer relations but also as a manifestation of Russia's much broader strategy to challenge the liberal international movement (Meyer, De Franco, and Otto 2019, 238-239).

Simultaneously with the fighting in the fields, several "battles" occur in the information field for the reader's attention. Thanks to the achievements of technological progress in mass communications, radio, television, and the development of social networks, the primary weapon of modern warfare is no longer comprehensive information but meanings and values. If information warfare as a type of military action is widely known to people, then cognitive warfare is a new phenomenon for a person which they cannot yet resist.

Meanwhile, the imposed meanings seep deep into society, destroying and subjugating it. The analysis of *media frames* is of particular interest to sociological science, as it allows us to

understand the hidden mechanisms of the social influence of the media (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007, pp. 9-20). News is not an objective representation of reality but a reconstruction of a small part of reality from different angles. Media framing is a subtle yet powerful way to influence an audience. Studying media frames can help identify and explore essential points in public opinion research. This theory has sufficient popularity in foreign science, where its scientific productivity is practically not questioned: the study of framing mechanisms contributes to the development of objective new knowledge about the specifics of communication of society, mass media and power (Entman, 2007, pp. 163-173).

To achieve its goals, government media uses techniques to form specific frames in the perception of the country's population. For state-owned Russian media, this is not new. Let us consider this in the example of the representation of the conflict in Ukraine in 2014. The annexation of Crimea by Russia and events in the east of Ukraine was actively covered by the media representing the government's point of view. The most striking case of that year was a fake story about a "crucified boy" — a news video shown on July 12 and 13, 2014, on the First Channel of Russian television (Asmolov, 2016, pp. 9-39). The report contained false evidence of alleged bullying by Ukrainian military forces against residents of Slovyansk who supported the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), including the crucifixion of a three-year-old boy in front of his mother. The story received a tremendous public response, contributing to the polarisation of opinions about the news and inciting hatred. Although the "crucified boy" story is not new, it was invented by the British press during the First World War (Fussell, 2000, p. 44). True, instead of a boy, there was a soldier, but children cause more appeal to emotions, which is undoubtedly one of the propaganda tools.

The area of research

This thesis explores the theoretical and practical aspects of the formation and use of frames in the texts of modern media on the example of the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in the Russian news agency *RIA Novosti. RIA Novosti* is the largest Russian state news agency, founded in 1941. It started as the Soviet Information Bureau and was later renamed RIA Novosti in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The agency is headquartered in Moscow and has regional offices in various regions of Russia and some foreign countries (“History”, n.d.).

The importance of *RIA Novosti* lies in its status as a state news agency (Balmforth, 2015). As such, it is viewed as a reliable source of information, especially by the Russian government and its allies (Freedman, 2014, p. 9). It is often used to disseminate official government statements and shape public opinion on important issues. In addition, its international reach means it can provide a Russian perspective on global events, which is especially important for countries with limited access to other sources of information. *RIA Novosti* also plays a vital role in covering military events at home and abroad (Pavliuk, 2019, pp. 210-212). The agency has a dedicated team of reporters and correspondents specialised in military and defence topics, which provides comprehensive coverage of military events and events.

During the Russian-Ukrainian war that began in 2014, *RIA Novosti* played an essential role in shaping public opinion in Russia and abroad about the conflict. The agency covered the conflict extensively, presenting the Russian perspective on events unfolding in Ukraine. One way *RIA Novosti* influenced public opinion was to depict the conflict as a civil war rather than an invasion by Russian troops (Balmforth, 2015). This narrative was reinforced by the agency's coverage of events leading up to the conflict, which highlighted the role of Ukrainian nationalists in fueling tensions in the country. In addition, *RIA Novosti's* coverage of the conflict often relied on information provided by pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine rather than independent sources. This helped reinforce the narrative that Ukrainian nationalists instigated the conflict and that Russian intervention was necessary to protect the rights of Russian-speaking Ukrainians. *RIA Novosti* played a significant role in shaping public opinion about the Russo-Ukrainian war, presenting a Russian perspective on events that often contradict those of Western governments and the media (Freedman, 2014, pp. 155-156). Its coverage helped strengthen the Russian government's position on the conflict and created a sense of national pride and unity among the Russian public (Balmforth, 2015).

The topic's relevance is due to the growing interest in the study of frames formed in the media during the coverage of military conflicts. Studying these frames can show how the media shape public opinion and perceptions of war.

Main problem statement: The thesis aims to examine how the Russian media outlet *RIA Novosti* covers the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict and, which frames and why they are using, explore how Russian media manipulate and misrepresent facts.

The study will analyse the content of *RIA Novosti* in order to find out which frames appear most often and how they distort the facts.

The research will be based on the following *research questions:*

RQ1: What frames are *RIA Novosti* using during coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war?

RQ2: Why are they using existing frames?

RQ3: To what degree does *RIA Novosti* misrepresent facts during coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war?

The study's theoretical basis was the theory of framing, critical discourse analysis, content analysis, and the accompanying term "propaganda."

Research method in brief

The study applies a mixed research method, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods focusing on content analysis and critical discourse analysis.

The author uses content analysis and critical discourse analysis to answer RQ1 and RQ2, and RQ3, respectively. The researcher justified her choice by explaining how different approaches allow for exploring the processes of identifying and processing information in a message, how it is remembered and used in decision-making, and its influence on judgments and behaviour.

Additionally, the author uses the MAXQDA software to simplify text analysis and calculate the statistical frequency of the keywords in the text.

Structure of the thesis

The structure of the master's thesis comprises an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and a reference list.

The introduction chapter justifies the chosen topic, defines the object and subject of the research, and establishes the aims and objectives of the master's thesis.

The second chapter examines framing and agenda-setting theories in political communication studies to analyse the frames used by RIA Novosti to cover the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict. The concept of propaganda and its main provisions are also considered.

The third chapter is devoted to research methodology and discusses the main requirements regarding the selected methods.

The fourth chapter describes the results obtained by the author during the content and critical discourse analysis.

The fifth chapter is a comprehensive analysis of the findings of the study. It will contribute to the broader understanding of the formation and use of frames in the media during the coverage of military conflicts. The chapter will also provide insights into how the media can manipulate public opinion and perceptions of war.

In the concluding chapter (6), the author intends to provide a comprehensive overview of the primary discoveries about the media frames put forth by *RIA Novosti*. The author intends to comprehensively address the research questions raised by thoroughly analysing the current topic.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

To study the frames used by RIA Novosti when covering the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict, the author is interested in precisely what frames the Russian media use, their similarities and differences, and whether they exist. Also important is the question of why and for what they are using existing frames. First, it is necessary to turn to existing studies and approaches.

Among the approaches used in political communication studies, the theories of framing and agenda-setting occupy an essential place. They are popular and in demand: scientists not only study the cognitive capabilities of each of them but also actively discuss the substantive similarities and differences of these structures (Weaver, 2017, pp. 143-144). At the same time, both approaches are very productive. Their application can expand our understanding of the specifics of the communication interaction between government, society, and the mass media. That will directly contribute to the answer to the questions posed by the researcher. With the help of framing theory, the study's author will be able to identify the discourses and techniques used by the Russian media to cover the Russian-Ukrainian war. Agenda-setting theory will explain how the emphasis shifts during significant events to create the desired picture again. More on the significance of each of the theories is below.

2.1. Framing theory

One of the first works devoted to the phenomenon of framing was Goffman's book *"Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience"* (Goffman, 2006, pp. 7-57), which shows how knowledge about the context of social interaction organises everyday experience, helps the individual to conceptualise the various situations in which they become a participant. On the other hand, the term "frame" itself at the same time begins to be used in computer and cognitive sciences: The American scientist Marvin Minsky (Minsky, 1974, pp. 211-277) introduced the concept of "frame," denoting a knowledge structure that represents typical situations that can be used for categorisation various phenomena, forecasting one's actions.

In the field of media studies, there are various interpretations of the concept of "framing." It is often understood as a process of distortion of information in the media since journalists

need to broadcast the views of certain elites or the ruling class, thus consolidating established power hierarchies. An article by the American scholar Robert Entman (Entman, 1993, pp. 44-46) articulating this interpretation of framing is by far the most cited work on the subject. It defines the framing process as follows: "The selection of certain aspects of perceived reality to make them more prominent in the communicative text in such a way as to contribute to the definition of a specific problem, the interpretation of causes, moral assessment, and recommendations for the treatment of the described element" (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Thus, in the interpretation of Entman, framing always implies (at least implicitly) a particular manipulation that pursues a specific goal. In the same work, the researcher declares content analysis as the primary method of framing research, which can contribute to constructing frames and achieving greater "objectivity".

Since the time of Entman's article, the term "framing" has become the property of various research paradigms; sociological, psychological, and political approaches have been adapted to analyse this phenomenon (Bodrunova, 2019, pp. 17-38). Review articles have appeared systematising various research programs in this area (e.g., de Vreese, 2005).

The American researcher of media communication Paul D'Angelo (D'Angelo, 2002) gave a detailed description of the theories of framing, highlighting three main approaches to its conceptualisation, which persist. According to the author, framing study coincides with critical, cognitive, and constructivist paradigms.

Let us take a quick look at each of the paradigms: a researcher's goal is to provide the best possible information and research knowledge to improve the quality of his or her work. He or she follows a research philosophy that aims to guide the study. This philosophy can help the researcher make informed decisions regarding the various methods that will affect the academic study; according to the critical paradigm, which is based on the works of Alan Entman, framing is a form of media hegemony that limits the possibility of citizens participating in political communication. It also significantly impacts the behaviour of voters; the cognitive paradigm is a framework that focuses on the various steps involved in identifying and processing information. It also studies how this information is used in making decisions and influencing behaviour. In addition, it considers the role of the background knowledge of an individual in interpreting content.

J. Hertog and D. MacLeod approach the study of frames as cultural rather than cognitive phenomena (Hertog & MacLeod, 2001, pp.139-162). Frames structure our understanding of social phenomena in several ways. First, frames define what content is relevant to the discussion. The task of framing is the exact classification of phenomena, concepts and ideas. Second, frames define the roles of individuals, groups, organisations, and institutions. Within one frame, a particular group may be considered essential in solving a social problem.

In contrast, within another frame, a given group may be defined as having little bearing on the problem's solution or may even be the source of the problem itself. Third, frames show how different beliefs, values, and actions can be connected. The framework allows certain connections to be seen as fitting and acceptable while others are deemed inappropriate, illegal, or unattainable. Fourthly, the symbolic representation of the topic depends on the choice of the frame, including the use of a specific language, sentence structure, and "code" words. Fifth, frames outline the values and goals of the frame's content. The emphasis on specific goals and values in each frame does not imply a complete disregard for others. Instead, the primary moral guides take precedence within the framework of the frame, while the others are considered secondary.

In the modern world, frames are used everywhere in various fields of activity. In addition, they become an instrument of wars waged not physically but in the information and virtual spaces. Frames are used in the construction of social confrontation. In connection with this, it is necessary to dwell on the description of the phenomenon of cognitive wars.

The phenomenon of meaning construction is considered the most important mechanism for maintaining cognitive wars. According to the book "*War and Anti-War*" by Alvin and Heidi Toffler, "modern social systems are highly variable in all their components, including interconnections, interaction speed, and individual countries' interests" (Toffler & Toffler, 1995, p. 139). The advent of mass media has made classical physical warfare increasingly ineffective, and the development of information and communication technologies has led to the emergence of a new paradigm - cognitive - in which the human consciousness and mind become the battlefield. Unlike information wars based on facts, the primary weapon of cognitive wars is specially selected, constructed or taken out-of-context information to create an "ordered" social scenario.

The cognitive paradigm aims to change interpretations without changing the facts, relying on ideology, religion, values, morality and other similar concepts. Physical wars are waged in physical space, information wars in information space, and cognitive wars in virtual space. The control of a nation's cultural capital is a critical objective in cognitive wars, as it enables the direction of society towards desired outcomes. The strategy of cognitive wars is a massive semantic attack on the "ownerless" semantic fields of the enemy with the aim of assimilation into the language and meanings of the aggressor, expanding them from the captured bridgeheads to the entire socio-semantic space (Toffler & Toffler, 1995, p. 139).

Andrey Devyatov, in his works, notes that the information-psychological war consists of two fields - the informational "war of meanings" and the uninformed "war of nerves" (Devyatov, 2014, pp. 7-20). Victory in the war of meanings and nerves is aimed at reformulating the behaviour of the vanquished by substituting fundamental values, motives and desires and losing the intellectual sovereignty of the enemy. The war of meanings is aimed at destroying the traditional worldview, ethical norms, dogmas of faith and the order of history, and the war of nerves is aimed at achieving a correct and precise reaction to the control signal from one's side and achieving lethargy, apathy, and apathy-destruction from strangers.

In cognitive wars, the target is the mind, including memory as a repository of meanings, thinking as the ability to create something new, and will. The goal is to dismantle the system of meanings, targeting the core that regulates its elements and relationships. Cognitive warfare is a strategy that involves damaging a system by distorting its settings or functions, breaking structural connections, exacerbating contradictions, and targeting critical points. The goal is to disrupt the system's elements and core, ultimately causing it to fail. The main cognitive warfare strategies that should lead to the self-destruction of systems include symbol substitution and image manipulation, reimagining the figurative literal, replacing the unambiguous with the polysemantic, and reducing the original universality. Cognitive wars rely on the media, information and social networks, search engines and software. The professionals involved include publicists, agitators, political technologists, writers, artists, propagandists, science popularisers, preachers, reporters, etc.

Media framing

In communication theory, media framing defines how news coverage can shape the opinions of the masses by using specific framing systems to help the reader understand the information. D. Kinder and L. Sanders propose terminologically and conceptually dividing the definition of a frame into a "scheme embedded in political discourse", the equivalent of media frames, and "internal structures of the brain", which corresponds to an individual frame. This distinction is based on who is the bearer of the frame. (Kinder and Sanders 1990, 74)

Media framing is a subtle yet powerful way to influence an audience. The study of media frames can help identify and explore essential points in the study of public opinion change, i.e., where frames have a powerful impact. Media framing allows us to intervene in the individual and collective consciousness imperceptibly.

Claes de Vreese believes that the potential of framing lies in the focus of the communication process. Communication is not static but a dynamic process that includes frame-building (how frames come into existence) and frame-setting (interaction between media frames and audiences) (Vreese, 2005, pp. 51-53).

Frames can also be considered as dependent variables and as independent variables. Media frames can be considered dependent variables, i.e., due to the production process, including organisational pressures, elite discourse and journalistic procedures. Media frames can also be studied as independent variables, such as factors in forming audience interpretations.

Media frames allow journalists to save time and intellectual resources by "packing" an event into a template. Thus, there is no need to invent new content. Individual frames are ideas and images in people's minds and through the prism through which they interpret information coming from the mass media.

B. Van Gorp, Wicks, S. Fiske and Du Graber offer their interpretation of individual frames. They suggest separating individual frames and cognitive schemas. Frames are a set of patterns and samples for the perception of reality and are part of a common culture or society (Wicks, 2017, p. 67). Cognitive schemas relate to a specific individual: they help to process information and form one or another attitude to an event, phenomenon or person based on life

experience and value attitudes (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Thus, it is important to understand that non-media frames can be both individual and mass in nature.

Van Gorp suggests that the framing literature gives the impression that frames can be found in multiple places in communication, in the minds of media constructors and audiences, in media content, and in culture (Gorp, 2007, p. 61). In a sense, frames seem to be everywhere, but no one knows exactly where they start and where they end. Therefore, Van Gorp proposes to follow the ideas of Hoffmann, who considers frames, with their own logic and meaning, as independent of the individual as possible and instead emphasises their connection with culture.

The idea of a cultural basis for frames leads to the idea that there are more frames than just those currently in use. Framing allows reporters and audiences to see that the same event evokes different feelings depending on which frame was used. Thus, when analysing frames, it can be helpful to recognise and apply frames that are predominantly applied in other social, political or historical contexts and periods.

Frames can also be considered as dependent variables and as independent variables. Media frames can be considered as dependent variables, i.e. as a result of the production process, including organisational pressures, elite discourse and journalistic procedures. Media frames can also be studied as independent variables, that is, as factors in the formation of audience interpretations.

J. Druckman, a public opinion researcher, identifies two types of frames — frames in communication and frames in thinking -- which work together to form a frame effect. Frames in communication - which are referred to as media frames - focus on what the speaker or news text is saying, while frames in thinking to focus on what the individual is thinking. Frames in communication often play an important role in the formation of frames in thinking.

For example, considerations that appear in thinking after exposure to media frames can affect how people form their opinions on this issue. This is what Druckman called the framing effect. He identified two different types of framing effects: equivalent (equivalency) and accent (emphasis) (Druckman, 2001, pp. 225-256). Equivalent framing effects force people to change their preferences by using phrases - turns, which, however, are not logically inconsistent and do not change the essence of the message being conveyed (i.e., change the wording, essentially leaving the meaning unchanged). For example, the expressions "glass

half empty" and "glass half full" carry the same meaning but are worded differently. Accent framing effects occur when, in the process of describing an issue or event, the speaker emphasises a subset of potentially significant aspects, causing people to focus on those aspects when formulating their own opinions (Druckman, 2001, p. 1042). Although both kinds of framing effects cause people to focus on specific aspects and ignore others, there are inconsistencies in accent framing effects between what has been mentioned and what has not been mentioned. For example, news texts may say that robbers took 50 hostages in a bank branch and not say that 30 of them were released after negotiations.

De Vreese created a generalised typology of news frames. Some frames are relevant only to specific topics or events (de Vreese, 2003). Such frames, according to de Vreese, can be called issue-specific frames. Other frames go beyond thematic limitations and can be applied to different topics, some even being used in different cultural and temporal contexts. De Vreese referred to these frames as generic frames.

R. Neumann, M. Just and A. Krigler identified five main types of frames used by the media:

- The human impact frame focuses on describing the individuals and groups affected by the problem;
- The powerlessness frame denotes the dominance of power over weak individuals or groups;
- The economic frame reflects the preoccupation with profit and loss;
- The frame of moral values refers to morality and social prescriptions;
- The conflict frame interacts with the media, in how they interpret the words of politicians (Just, Crigler, and Neuman 1992, 74).

D'Angelo proposed a model to explain the process of news framing, which comprises three sub-processes: building a frame, framing effects, and determining the frame. Building a frame includes both frame-building and frame-setting and involves understanding how journalists construct frames (D'Angelo, 2002, p. 880). This process shows that researchers actively construct frames, whereas journalists often need to conceptualise news as variables that shape reality. Researchers should identify the original journalistic intent, the meaning of the news, and the content format that integrates words and images into a frame. Framing effects refer to how frames affect individuals and society and are mediated by intermediate

processes ranging from official discourse to classroom frames. Before defining a frame, researchers should identify framing techniques, recognise the effects of frames on reality, and acknowledge that news sources deal with framed issues and events to some extent.

Van Gorp advocates for a mixed-methodology approach to frame analysis, suggesting using quantitative methods to study general trends in large data sets and qualitative methods to study subtle framing effects in small data sets (Gorp, 2007).

Regarding the specific technological methods used in framing, rhetorical and technical techniques are broadly categorised into two types. As identified by R. Entman, rhetorical techniques include word choice, metaphors, samples, the presence or absence of specific keywords, on-duty phrases, sources of information, and sentences that enhance the meaning of facts or judgments (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Specialised techniques include elements of news writing, such as headers, subtitles, captions for photographs, conclusions, layouts, and graphics. Hertog and MacLeod identify the choice of source and quote as additional framing techniques (Hertog & MacLeod, 2001, p. 101).

2.2. Agenda-setting theory

We should also pay attention to the most relevant topic today — the essential relationship between setting the agenda and framing.

First, a few words about the concept of salience are actively used in agenda-setting and framing theories. This term characterises the representation of a certain event in the media, the importance of this event by journalists, the degree of attention paid to it, and its "visibility" against the background of other informative topics. Spiro Kayosis distinguishes three components in its structure (McCombs & Kiousis, 2004, pp. 36-57):

1) attention paid to a particular event by the mass media information;

2) prominence — the place of the corresponding message in the structure of the media release - the first/last pages of the newspaper, primary/secondary TV or radio plot.;

3) valence — emotional colouring or tone of the message.

In order to understand why RIA uses current frames (RQ2), it is necessary to turn to one of the media representation theories - agenda-setting theory. The influence of the media on the decisions made by voters is called the agenda-setting effect (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, pp.

176–187). This concept is implemented through a hybrid method that combines the results of media content analysis and sociological surveys. Agenda-setting theory also outlines the bias associated with reporting events to the public. This bias in media reporting is used to promote media or government agendas.

Agenda-setting theory also suggests that the media can influence how people think about issues by phrasing them in a certain way. The media can use language, images, and other cues to shape public opinion about an issue, which is called media framing, which was mentioned earlier.

Several factors can affect the media's ability to set the agenda. One of the crucial factors is the credibility of the media. People are more likely to accept their program if the media is considered trustworthy. Another factor is the severity of the problem. Issues that are more visible and affect more people are more likely to be considered significant.

Agenda-setting theory has been applied in various fields, including politics, health communication, and social media. It has been used to explain how political campaigns use the media to influence public opinion and how the media can shape how people think about health issues.

In our work, conducting a sociological survey is difficult and dangerous, so that the researcher will take information from available sources. The collected information will help to understand certain motives that guide RIA Novosti when using specific frames to cover the military conflict.

Despite the wide variety of studies that have examined the relationship between media coverage and public prominence, the exact link between these two phenomena has yet to be determined. In 2018, the rise of social media and the internet made it harder to convince people that the media is the primary news source.

The theory only works for people who have the capacity to apply critical reasoning. For instance, if a person believes that their elected official was the best choice for office, despite the numerous contradicting reports presented by the media, they might have made a different decision.

In conclusion, agenda-setting theory is an integral communication theory that explains how the media influences people's thoughts and priorities. The theory suggests that the media

can shape the public agenda by choosing which issues to cover and how to frame them. Understanding that the media sets the agenda is essential for anyone who wants to understand how information spreads and how public opinion is formed.

2.3 Propaganda

In the Russian-speaking world, the perception of the term has undergone some changes due to the collapse of the USSR in 1991. After the collapse, propaganda began to be condemned and ridiculed, but only in its communist, political and ideological meaning, known as "Soviet propaganda". Other types of propaganda, such as "health promotion," are still considered acceptable and justified (OSCE 2015).

According to Article 19, an organisation that aims to protect the freedom of expression, there currently needs to be a clear definition of what exactly propaganda or hate speech means in international law. Some refer to the terms "war" and "propaganda" as examples of "hard terms." They note that "propaganda" is a rather broad concept, "covering several different types of expression, differing in the harmfulness of the content, the artfulness of their presentation, the strategy of dissemination and the severity of the consequences."

To understand what this research work is about, the author considers it necessary to define the term "propaganda." Propaganda is a word that has been used in various forms in the past few centuries. It stems from the work of a group of Roman Catholic cardinals who were established in 1622[1]. These cardinals were known as the Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, and this organisation was founded to carry out missionary work.

Even these individuals and others may find the term "Nazi" to be negative. It tends to refer to various things, such as the misleading nature of the war aims of the Nazis and the operations of the Propaganda Department of the Nazis.

This product is reminiscent of many instances of misleading and false advertising that have been carried out in various countries. For instance, in Latin languages, the term propaganda is commonly used in Latin languages for commercial purposes.

Propaganda is only sometimes seen as a negative phenomenon. In the English-speaking world, the term "propaganda" acquired a negative connotation due to the Second World War

[1] Sacred Congregation for Propagation of the Faith (the Propaganda) was established for this purpose in 1622. Missionaries received their mandate from Rome;

and the general rejection of the Goebbels Ministry of Propaganda and Education activities. In 1928, the now classic American propaganda writer Edward Bernays not only defined propaganda as "a consistent, unremitting effort to create or shape events to influence the attitude of society towards an initiative, idea or group" but also defined a detailed description of the benefits of advocacy for the public good, education, and emancipation of women (Bernays, 2018, pp. 1-3). He concluded: "Only with the judicious use of propaganda will our Government, regarded as the permanent administrative organ of the people, be able to maintain the close liaison with the public necessary in a democratic society."

Others (Kearney, 2007, pp. 337-359) argue convincingly that "direct and public incitement to aggression," or propaganda for war, should be included in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court as an independent international crime. They argue that the notion of war propaganda is "only as vague as states want it to be".

Another influential researcher of propaganda in the context of Russian realities is the historian and educator Tamara Eidelman, now recognised as a foreign agent[2], in her book “How Propaganda Works”, she examined how pro-government media work, how they influence public opinion, and what typical methods propagandists use around the world. Nevertheless, we need to pay attention to the typical manipulative frames, such as media use (Eidelman, 2018).

The concept of “we-they” is the opposite of the image of the enemy. So, according to a specialist in the history and literature of the XVIII-XIX centuries. A.L. Zorin, “the first mass propaganda campaign in the history of Russia " (Zorin & Plamper, 2010), is the text that the Synod sent out after the defeat of the Prussian army. The theses that were broadcast there are familiar to us today - “our sovereign is mighty and strong”, and theirs is the “antichrist”, “Russia had so many victories that we are confident of future ones' ' and so on.

The concept of "they are different." Here, the authors of such manipulative materials resort to the weaknesses of the human psyche. Psychologists have long noted that under stressful conditions (such for example military operations), people are more inclined to look for enemies, while others who are unlike them arouse more suspicion. This gives those in power an excellent opportunity to explain that it is not “they” who are to blame for the problems of

[2] a status given in Russia to individuals who receive foreign support or are under "foreign influence".

the country but these “others” who want to harm us (Masons / Templars / Americans and others).

Moreover, this situation is typical not only for Russian and post-Soviet realities but also for the Balkans. Thus, during the war in Kosovo, local affiliated journalists resorted to the image of the enemy in the face of the “evil West” (Kurspahić, 2003, pp. 151-165). To support such thoughts, state media journalists replace concepts with others with negative connotations. So, for example, Ukrainians became “Banderites”, Europe became “Gayropa” (Foxall, 2017, pp. 174-193), and America became “Pindostan”[3]. Alternatively, on the contrary, endowing neutral words without emotional colouring with a negative meaning. For example, many people associate the words “Jesuit” and “Masonic” with something conspiratorial and harmful. The thought that everything is undoubtedly intertwined and connected helps to strengthen the image of the enemy in mind, which is always somewhere nearby. Conspiracy theories indulge in controlling opinions, so people can be convinced that even the best intentions are malicious intent (Pomerantsev, 2020, p. 81). Another important tool for maintaining the “alien” image is for journalists to manipulate statistics and numbers to create the picture they want. It is also worth noting that the media's primary goal in creating propaganda materials is most often an appeal to emotions. Therefore, topics such as religion, family, and traditional values often appear in such materials. Another sign of manipulative material is repetitiveness; the more often you repeat the same thing, the more likely it is to believe in it. Goebbels used this technique (Doob, n.d., pp. 419–442).

If we talk about the stylistic features of propaganda materials, then they are characterised by the reduction technique. This is when the text is written fluently and competently, but at some point, we may notice jargon or take it easy to reduce the distance between the media and the reader. This technique allows you to create an image of "your media", which speaks the same language as the everyman.

[3] One of the slurs that russian media uses to name USA

Chapter 3: Methodology

In order to determine the essence of the methodology of this study, it is necessary to refer to the research questions posed by the author — RQ1: What frames are RIA Novosti using during coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war?; RQ2: Why are they using existing frames?; RQ3: To what degree does RIA Novosti misrepresent facts during coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war?

For some reason, the media's interest in the coverage of military conflicts is increasing. Such as, for example, the rise of political propaganda during hostilities (Lasswell, 2013). In the modern context, this is somewhat different since it was only towards the end of the 20th century that textual, audio, and visual messages about the war became the dominant aspects of the war. Jean Baudrillard expressed this point in his famous essay *There Was No War in the Persian Gulf,* noting that stories about events from the Persian Gulf are coming to the fore while actual events are becoming less attractive (Baudrillard, 2004).

In addition, the trend toward mediatisation of hostilities impacts society in general and the journalistic community in particular. In order to create a favourable image of a military operation, politicians create many publicity opportunities with blanket statements over occasions where more critical media coverage may occur. Due to the impact of media content that appeals primarily to emotions, there is a polarisation of opinions and increased aggression. In this situation, journalists, on the one hand, must react in a certain way to the news created by politicians. On the other hand, the task of the media is to cover events in such a way as to create conditions in society for peaceful discussion and the formation of public opinion on the issue of hostilities. The Russian writer and historian Tamara Eidelman believe that the news presented at that time may have contributed to the outbreak of war or raised the struggle for peace (Eidelman, 2018, p. 7).

3.1 Arriving at a methodology

To achieve the goals and fulfil the tasks of the master's work, the researcher applied the following method in practice — a mixed method research design. Mixed research methods are quantitative and qualitative research methods. The author chose this method because it

allows two types of data analysis. The main research object is the media frames used by the Russian media *RIA Novosti*. The researcher picked this media outlet for several reasons.

Firstly, based on information available on the official website of *RIA Novosti,* the outlet claims to have a large monthly readership of 20 million unique users. Secondly, during the recent hostilities, *RIA Novosti* published noteworthy articles. One such article, *"The Arrival/attack of Russia and the new world,"* was mistakenly published on February 26, 2022. The article was prepared and anticipated a Russian victory in the Russian-Ukrainian War, claiming that "Ukraine has returned to Russia." Although RIA Novosti promptly removed the article, it was republished by the state news agency Sputnik and translated into English by the Pakistani newspaper The Frontier Post under the title *"New World Order."*

Furthermore, on April 3, 2022, RIA Novosti published an article titled *"What should Russia do with Ukraine,"* which was accused of having genocidal intent. The author will analyse these publications in greater detail through critical discourse analysis.

Often approaches to identifying media frames are divided into deductive and inductive (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; Matthes, 2009). Some researchers introduce a more complex typology of approaches. For example, J. Matthes and M. Koring (Matthes & Kohring, 2008) identify five basic approaches, which they call as follows: hermeneutic, linguistic, holistic, computer-based, and deductive. These approaches may overlap and are not mutually exclusive. R. Entman, J. Matthes, and L. Pelicano identify four approaches (Matthes, 2009). However, we are interested in the Scheufele approach, which he divides into qualitative and quantitative approaches (Scheufele, 2010). A mixed approach can also be singled out, in which researchers use both qualitative and quantitative analysis of media frames.

To answer RQ1, the author uses qualitative research methods — content analysis and framing within the cognitive and constructivist paradigms framework. The author justifies his choice by the fact that considering frames in different paradigms allows us to explore the processes of identifying and processing certain pieces of information in a message and studying how this information is remembered, used in decision making and influences judgments and behaviour (Price, Tewkesbury, Powers, 1997). In addition, critical discourse analysis will allow us to look at the texts under study from a different angle, to consider the “motivation” of the text, taking into account its social and historical contexts. It will also help

to understand the function of the language used and how discourse can stimulate positive or not-so-social change.

In order to conduct not only textual but also statistical analysis, the author has applied the MAXQDA software. This software will simplify the analysis of text fragments, as it can calculate the statistical frequency in the text. This will help to answer RQ1. In addition, MAXQDA Plus has an additional MAXDictio module with quantitative text analysis. With it, analysis of the text's vocabulary and context is made possible. More details about this tool are described in part about quantitative research.

The author will again turn to mixed methods research to answer RQ2. The author has chosen critical discourse analysis (CDA) as the primary tool since critical studies of discourse can be aimed at exposing both the symbolic system and individual elements. This statement is not a refutation of the forms of "false consciousness" (prejudices, ideologies, or simulacra) (Zenkin, 2011, pp. 7-32) in order to compare their positivistic allies with some kind of "correct" understanding. It is not about the content but the forms of expression. The subject of criticism does not locate himself outside the field under investigation but, on the contrary, proceeds from being included in it and claims to influence it by the very act of research, which thereby turns into a form of political participation. More about CDA is in the subsection dedicated to it.

Furthermore, I examine how the agenda is formed to understand why the media uses specific frames. As for the study period, the author plans to choose the first week of the war, from 24/02/2022 to 03/03/2022. This period was not chosen by chance, as the author is sure that the first week of publications set the tone for subsequent publications. Furthermore, the author will be able to identify recurring or existing frames in the state media of the Russian Federation.

Next, I will discuss in more detail the methods used in the study.

3.2. Quantitative Methods

When choosing a quantitative approach to identify media frames, the researcher should focus on sampling, encoding, and frame detection methods. As stated earlier, the sample of this study is publications by *RIA Novosti* from February 24, 2022, to March 03, 2022. The author plans to narrow the data set with keywords to focus on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

The researcher will use one of the services that can collect statistical data and allow users to select certain media publications by keywords and topics. The keywords will be referred to as units for convenience in what follows.

The *units for coding* are

- “Special military Operation (from now on SMO)”,
- “Russia”;
- “NATO”;
- “Ukraine”;
- “Kyiv”;
- “Donetsk People’s Republic” (from now on DPR);
- “Lugansk People’s Republic (from now on LPR).

The author combined the units according to the semantic load - “Russia” and “Ukraine” for convenience. Each unit will include the following subunits, which will help better understand the context of pro-Russian media frames. Table 1.1 contains the unit-wise categorisation of the keywords.

	Unit “Russia”	**Unit “Ukraine”**
Keyword	DPR, LPR, Putin V., SMO, Medinsky V., Kadyrov R., Shoigu S., Medvedev D.	Ukraine, NATO, Kyiv, Zelensky V., Ukrainian military forces (from now on – UMF).

Table 1.1. Coding keywords

The study's author uses the MAXQDA software to collect data. MAXQDA is a software package for qualitative and mixed-methods research. MAXQDA is suitable for any type of qualitative research, including but not limited to grounded theory, literature reviews, market research studies, qualitative text analysis, and mixed methods approaches. For this research, the function of qualitative text analysis is critical - it allows us to identify the frequency of using the keywords (starting now referred to as the code), which I indicated above. In addition to the frequency, this function allows us to examine the context and tone of using codes. Data is collected using the additional Web Collector application. It collects web pages in their original format or as simplified web pages, automatically storing the source and date of collection. This extension has simplified the collection of publications for the study.

3.3. Qualitative Methods

Examples of qualitative textual analysis are discourse analysis (Coupland, 2000; Pan and Kosicki 1993) and qualitative content analysis (Xenos and Foot, 2005); (Neiger & Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2016; Avraham & First, 2010), but as a rule, differences in the procedure for extracting media do currently have existing frames. The units of analysis are individual news items (Speer, 2017), articles, article headlines (Xenos & Foot, 2005), or announcements (Coupland, 2000). A distinctive feature of frame analysis when using a qualitative approach is the small number of analysed texts. The advantage of using a qualitative approach is the possibilities of deeper analysis and a more detailed description of media frames. However, researchers note some difficulties. First, the analysis is characterised by the subjectivity of the results obtained as researchers build the necessary semantic connections and proceed from their ideas about the topic under study (Matthes & Kohring, 2008; (Van Gorp, 2010). Second, researchers rarely describe the procedural issues of frame selection, making it difficult for other researchers to replicate the analysis or use the schema (Matthes & Kohring 2008). This leads to the fact that the results of studies that use a qualitative approach to analysing media frames may need higher reliability.

3.4. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is specific in that it considers both written and oral discourse as a form of social practice (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997, pp. 258-284) and focuses on the analysis of communication in the media, politics and other institutional areas. The concept of CDA refers to the interaction between various social structures and acts and the multiple institutional and situational contexts that influence them. It influences discourse and political reality. The CDA seeks to identify the numerous power and political control structures commonly used for discrimination and exclusion (Wodak & Reisigl, 1999, pp. 149-173). It also aims to analyse the ways in which these structures are used for political and social oppression.

With the generality of the methodological approach and interpretation of social phenomena (including media discourse), discourse analysis methods vary widely. This may be the study of metaphors and collective symbols, a multi-stage intent-analysis method (Ushakova, 2000), and the combinatorial method of the Vienna School of the CDA (Wodak & Reisigl, 1999).

In the works of T. van Dijk devoted to the history and theory of discourse analysis, this discipline is understood very broadly. In his opinion, modern discourse analysis originates in ancient rhetoric and, in addition to it, includes five main sources and at the same time its subdisciplines:

1) structuralism, semiotics, narrative analysis, and ethnography;

2) analysis of verbal communication;

3) the theory of speech acts and pragmatics;

4) sociolinguistics;

5) text processing from the point of view of psychology and the theory of artificial intelligence (van Dijk, 2000).

In practical terms, T. van Dijk has proposed a scheme for a systematic description of news as a type of discourse.

More universal would be a linguistic analysis of empirical discourses, including media discourse, where at least three dimensions or levels of analysis would be taken into account: 1) content (thematic repertoire), 2) cognitive (intentions and strategies), 3) linguistic and paralinguistic (language means and forms of realisation of intentions and strategies, layout[4], supragraphemics[5], topographics[6], etc.).

The listed measurements are hierarchical in nature and have specifics that require an adequate research method. Content and linguistic levels are expressed explicitly and can be the object of analysis. One can reach the cognitive level only through the other two since intentions and strategies, as products of a mental nature, are objectified only in language. Each of the levels can be an independent object of study. However, each of them contains elements of other levels (for example, such a semantic move typical for media discourse as a generalisation is at the same time a cognitive strategy) (Khilkhanova, n.d., 136-140.).

The thematic content of any media publication, whether radio, print, or electronic media, is the main characteristic that reflects and determines its place in the media system at any

[4] Layout, text and graphic components arrangement on the page / printed interface /virtual edition.

[5] Selection of typefaces and font selection tools - italics, underlining, spacing, use of capital letters, varying the saturation and font size.

[6] Methods for placing printed text on a plane.

level. In previous linguistic analyses of media discourse, the importance of content was often underestimated, and the attention of researchers was focused on the purely linguistic aspects of discourse. Meanwhile, the content, or thematic repertoire, is an institutional macro-category, organised following institutional settings and constraints, a construction, a model of reality. As such, the content category should be separated into separate levels requiring an adequate analysis method. The reliability of the analysis of the category of content is possible only if two conditions are met: the analysis must be 1) carried out on the example of a large corpus of empirical discourse texts; 2) statistically verified. Both can be achieved using the well-known sociology (but not linguistics) content analysis method. The use of content analysis makes it possible to obtain a statistically accurate picture of the thematic repertoire of empirical media discourse. The reliability of this method has been repeatedly confirmed (Noelle-Neumann, 1977). The main limitations of this methodology are large data sets, which can take a long time to process.

Based on the above provisions about CDA, the author decided to apply this method in the framework of his study. Indeed, to determine why RIA Novosti used existing frames and how they misrepresented facts during coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war (RQ2 and RQ3), it is crucial to analyse the text component and take into account the social context of publications. The social context will give the necessary emotional colouring to informational occasions. Furthermore, discourse often cannot exist without ideology, which is certainly relevant to this study. After all, the researcher considers the publications of the pro-Russian media, known for their loyal attitude towards the authorities, from which we can conclude that the use of CDA will allow us to look at what ideological postulates frames are formed on. An excellent example of such analysis is that in his book *Language and Power* (Fairclough, 1984, pp. 140-163), Norman Fairclough critically analysed the speeches of Margaret Thatcher[7] to see how Thatcherism became the new "common sense." (i.e., accepted knowledge and ideology) in the UK.

This study is based on the discursive construction of social reality, namely that it is possible to reveal the nature and specifics of the coverage of military conflicts by analysing discursive practices about a particular event. Michel Foucault gives the following interpretation of the concept of “discourse,” and we will take it as the basis for our analysis:

[7] former British Prime Minister 1979-1990

“It is a collection of anonymous historical rules, always defined in time and space, which have established in a given epoch and for a given social, economic, geographical or linguistic space the conditions for performing the function of utterance. (Foucault 2013, 108)”

In this study, the author suggests that military conflicts are constructed within the framework of “discursive conventions, norms, and rules, in areas of institutional interaction where individuals adopt a specific discursive practice” (Kozhemyakin & Dubrovskaya, 2017, pp. 90-107). For the discursive construction of conflicts, nominations play the most crucial role since the nomination gives an idea of who is a "friend" and "foe." The author also puts forward the thesis that the ideological correlation of the nominated group plays a vital role in the choice of nominations, including in cases where the group is "foe."

To implement the CDA, the author will follow the following steps:

1. Selection of publications. The main selection criteria are the text’s discursive content and the number of views.

2. Textual analysis. This research aspect involves the analysis of linguistic characteristics and internal links of the source text. At this stage of the analysis, the author will study the choice and models of the dictionary (lexicographic means); rhetorical means (epithets, metonyms, metaphors); semantic-syntactic figures (antitheses, gradations, repetitions); clichés (primarily political clichés). Particular attention will be paid to studying metaphors and metonymy to manipulate consciousness and maintain the dominant group’s social ideas.

3. Comparison of the obtained results with socio-historical conditions to understand what frames are formed and why.

3.5. Content analysis

The most popular method for identifying media frames is the content analysis method. P. Borah analysed 379 articles by media frames and found that 62% use the content analysis method (Borah, 2011). In the case of content analysis, coding is done manually. The essence of content analysis is translating verbal information into a more objective non-verbal form, the ascent from text to non-textual reality, which refers to social (or intellectual) reality in all its diversity. Content analysis is a reasonably rigorous scientific method that involves the

systematic and reliable fixation of some aspects of the content of a particular set of documents, followed by quantification (quantitative processing) of the data obtained.

With the help of content analysis, not only the characteristics of documentary sources are established, but also the features of the entire communication process: social orientations and attitudes of the communicator (creator of the text); values and norms replicated in documents, the effectiveness of their perception in different audiences. Content analysis is always a comparison of two streams. It aims to develop a quantitative description of the semantic and symbolic content of the document, fixing its objective features and counting the latter.

In practice, there are two types of content analysis (depending on the nature of the presentation of the content of the text): non-quantitative and quantitative.

Non-quantitative content analysis is based on a non-frequency model of text content (in this case, only the presence of a text content element - an indicator corresponding to the content category is recorded, and quantitative measures are not used). This approach allows us to identify types of qualitative content models (regardless of the frequency of occurrence of each type). Quantitative content analysis is based on the use of quantitative measures. Its task is to obtain a quantitative structure of the content of the text (within the framework of the system of analysis categories used). Both types of content analysis have in common that they are based on explicitly formulated rules of research procedure.

Content analysis allows the creation of a picture of the vision created in society through the media. Therefore, all definitions of content analysis emphasise its objective nature. At the same time, objectivity is interpreted as follows: "Each step can be taken only based on formulated rules and procedures." Therefore, a vital test mechanism is the repeatability of results when using the same material by different researchers. The content analysis brings the most significant benefit when processing large text arrays. In this case, it provides an opportunity: firstly, to identify trends in changing views and positions by comparing the texts of one author (or several authors - representatives of the same direction) belonging to different periods; secondly, to identify differences that characterise the content of texts belonging to different authors (or authors who follow different schools) by comparing these texts.

Here are the steps for conducting content analysis based on a study that aimed to identify current frames in the Russian media:

1. Research question formulation: This content analysis aims to identify the prevailing frames in *RIA Novosti*.

2. Sampling: 1417 materials collected by *RIA Novosti* were initially reviewed, and 77 articles were selected for content analysis based on their relevance to the military conflict. Non-relevant materials were excluded, such as news about removing Russian athletes from competitions.

3. Coding category development: To facilitate content analysis, categories or coding themes that were mutually exclusive and exhaustive was established. Established quantitative research methods support this conclusion.

4. Content encoding: The coding categories previously developed were applied to the selected articles. This involved systematically reviewing the texts and assigning codes to various pieces of content.

5. Data analysis: The researcher analysed the data quantitatively after coding.

6. Interpretation of results: The analysis aimed to identify frequently repeated verbal constructions or units that formed frames. The primary areas of evaluation for this study were Russia and Ukraine, with units of analysis representing each category. A unit of analysis can be a semantic or qualitative unit, such as an idea, topic, word, statement, title, paragraph, or character.

These steps outline a systematic approach to content analysis that can be applied to a wide range of research questions to identify meaningful patterns in the data.

Encoding categories:

1. Frame constructions: identification of frequently repeated verbal constructions or units that form frames associated with the units “Russia” and “Ukraine”. This category includes defining language patterns such as metaphors, keywords, and slogans often used in the analysed materials.

2. Russia: Analysis of how Russia is represented in the analysed materials, including its role in the conflict, foreign policy, and relations with Ukraine.

3. Ukraine: Analysis of how Ukraine is presented in the analysed materials, including its political and military situation and relations with Russia.

Encoding procedures:

1. Frame constructions: each text will be carefully read, and any frequently repeated word constructions or units forming frames will be identified and encoded.

2. Russia and Ukraine: Each text will be carefully read and coded according to the categories of Russia and Ukraine. The texts will be reviewed regarding how these two countries are represented and their role in the analysed materials.

To do this, the author of the study uses the MAXQDA software.

Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter presents the results of our research, the purpose of which was to study the frames used by RIA Novosti when covering the Russian-Ukrainian war. The study used two types of analysis: content and critical discourse. I analysed 77 articles published by RIA Novosti from 02/24/2022 to 03/03/2022, focusing on the frames used in their coverage. I conducted a content analysis to determine the primary themes presented in the articles. In contrast, critical discourse analysis examined the underlying ideologies and power relations reflected in the language used. The analysis of the articles gave an idea of the frames used by RIA Novosti when covering the war and the reasons for their use.

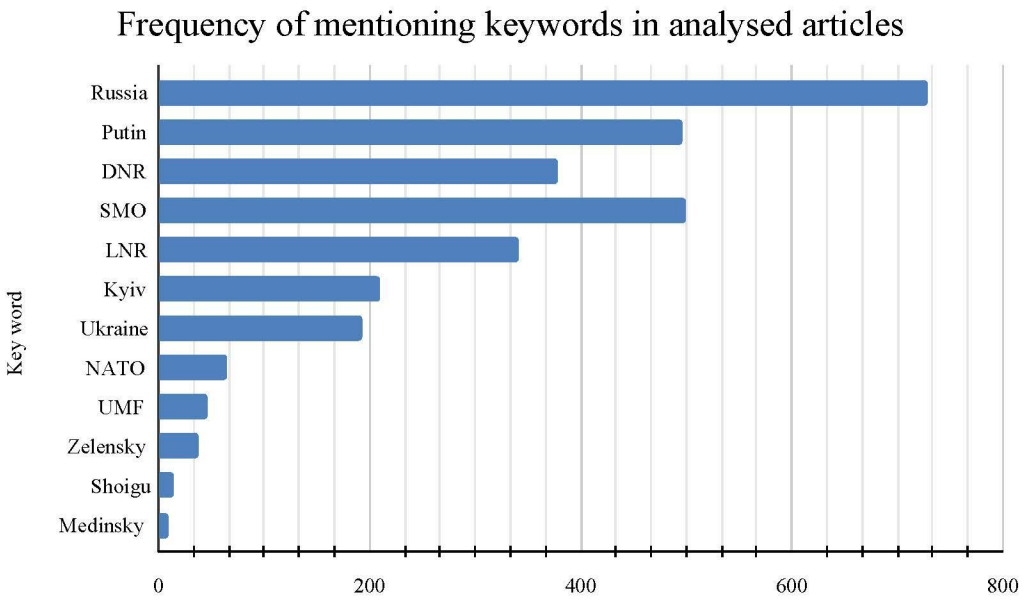
In general, this chapter provides a detailed analysis of the frames used by RIA Novosti in its coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Below is the data that the author of the study found.

4.1. Content-analysis results

Research question: What current frames in the Russian media are associated with the coverage of Russia's invasion of Ukraine?

The graph below shows the search results for keywords in 77 articles that the author selected from 1,417. To learn more about selecting articles for content analysis, consult chapter three, specifically paragraph 3.5.



Img. 4.1 Frequency of mentioning keywords in analysed 77 articles

Sampling: a targeted sample of 77 items was selected from 1,417 items collected by *RIA Novosti* on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict.

After analysing *RIA Novosti's* publications (77 items), it was discovered that the terms "Russia" and "SMO (Special military operation)" hold the highest frequency of occurrence. With a frequency of *728* and *499*, respectively, it is clear that these words are the most commonly used keywords, highlighting their significance in news articles.

Other frequently occurring keywords include *"DNR (Donetsk People's Republic)"* with a frequency of *378*, *"Putin"* with a frequency of 496, and *"LNR (Luhansk People's Republic)"* with a frequency of *341*.

These acronyms refer to the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic, the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic, and the *"special military operation"* in Ukraine. Here, I have summed up the number of mentions of abbreviations and the complete spelling of keywords since they carry the same semantic load. The keywords *"Kyiv"* and *"Ukraine"* also appear in the data set with a frequency of *209* and *193*, respectively. In addition, the keywords *"NATO", "AFU", "Zelensky", "Shoigu"*, and *"Medinsky"* appear in the data set with much less frequency. Although these terms are less significant in the data set, they provide additional context for the current conflict and the parties involved. The frequency analysis

shows that *RIA Novosti* articles can focus heavily on the conflict in eastern Ukraine and the role of pro-Russian separatists and the Russian government. The Ukrainian government and NATO may be mentioned less often but still attract considerable interest.

Below we will consider specific examples of using keywords in the context of the analysed articles. Out of 246 occurrences of keywords, the author of the study selected 25 examples of citations that most clearly illustrate the context of use.

“Justification through self-defence”

The quotes focus on the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The language used in the quotes reveals a range of perspectives, from the Russian government's justification of its military operation as self-defence against Ukraine's alleged development of nuclear weapons to condemnation of neo-Nazi and Bandera supporters in Ukraine.

"The special military operation of the Russian Federation in Ukraine is, among other things, the realisation of Russia's right to self-defence after the statements of the Ukrainian authorities about the desire to gain access to nuclear weapons" - RIA Novosti, 28.02.2022 ("Nebenzya called the operation in Ukraine Russia's right to self-defence" 2022)

The justification of SMO is often found in the texts of *RIA Novosti* journalists use metaphors that have a bright emotional colouring, for example:

"Russia's special military operation against Ukraine is the only way to stop the fratricidal war unleashed by Kyiv." — RIA Novosti, 02/24/2022 (Alksnis 2022); "The army acts exclusively against military facilities, while the attitude towards civilians is as careful as possible - and respectful of the military personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine as people who have sworn allegiance to Ukraine and its people." — RIA Novosti 24.02.2022 (Alksnis 2022).

Moreover, to reinforce the idea that the SMO is "good", an epithet is used to describe the military operation as "cautious" and "careful" about the civilian population and "respectful" to the Ukrainian army. All of the above creates a positive image of the Russian military and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in readers.

Demonising the West and doubting NATO

"And if the Eastern European states believe that this does not concern them, since they, unlike Kyiv, are full-fledged members of NATO, in the coming years they will have a big and very unpleasant surprise" — RIA Novosti 24.02.2022 (Alksnis, 2022)

This antithesis is used to contrast the perception of Eastern European states as members of NATO against the potential consequences of conflict. *RIA Novosti* thereby emphasises that the "West" is the real enemy that plots against everyone — *"The West will always betray you, son." — RIA Novosti 24.02.2022 (Alksnis, 2022)*

Also, to demonise the image of the West, *RIA Novosti* uses the metaphor of "creamy victories" to describe Western countries that benefit from Russia's past victories.

"Today, on the first day of the special military operation, Russia not only sent a clear message to NATO "As you approach our borders, you will crawl away from them," but also informed the West that it would never again fight on its territory." — RIA Novosti 24.02.2022 (Alksnis, 2022); "It sounds as modern as possible, especially since the draft of the new NATO strategic concept, which is scheduled to be adopted in June this year, Russia appears as the main threat to the alliance's security." — RIA Novosti 03.03.2022 ("Nebenzya called the operation in Ukraine Russia's right to self-defence" 2022); "If you are still convinced that falling – in any status – under the NATO umbrella guarantees you complete freedom to do any indecency towards Russia and its people, then take a close look at today's numerous" — RIA Novosti 24.02.2022 (Alksnis, 2022)

The keyword *"NATO"* is used in the context of an enemy and reinforces the reader's feeling that "the whole world is against Russia." *RIA Novosti* also doubts the competence of NATO as an organisation that can guarantee protection.

Emotional Language

"The denazifying state — Russia — cannot proceed from a liberal approach concerning denazification." — RIA Novosti 24.02.2022 (Alksnis, 2022)

The irony in the quote above is used to criticise the Ukrainian government's statement about Russia's intentions of denazification with the support of the armed forces. Because this suggests that Russia is not actually denazifying, despite its claims to do so.

"Russia has once again confirmed that in the end, it always comes for its own — and for its own." — RIA Novosti, 25.02.2022 ("Matvienko called the special operation the only way to stop the war" 2022); "We support our guys, we do not abandon our own, and we believe that Russia could no longer remain indifferent to what has been happening on the territory of Donbas for so long" — RIA Novosti, 03.03.2022 ("Krymskaya Gazeta" printed the letter Z on the front page in support of the military" 2022).

Repetition is used in the chosen quotation to emphasise the idea of loyalty and support towards "one's own side", i.e. Armed forces of the Russian Federation.

Negative image of Ukraine

Keywords *"Ukraine", "Kyiv", "V. Zelensky", and "UMF" RIA Novosti* betray a negative connotation through associations with neo-Nazis and Nazis.

"liquidation of armed Nazi formations (which means any armed formations of Ukraine, including the Armed Forces of Ukraine), as well as the military, informational, educational infrastructure that ensures their activity." — RIA Novosti, 26.02.2022 (Mikhailov, 2022); "possible to save the lives of civilians, called on Macron to join the efforts for the safe evacuation of foreigners from Ukraine, and also gave "reasoned explanations about the significant role of neo-Nazis in the state policy of Kyiv." — RIA Novosti, 03.03.2022 ("Macron fears the worsening situation in Ukraine" 2022); "Nevertheless, there are dead and wounded among the Russian troops, but the losses of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and nationalists are many times higher." — RIA Novosti 24.02.2022 ("Units of the Armed Forces of Ukraine massively leave their positions, the Ministry of Defense said" 2022); "The swastika, known in the world under the name "wolf hook" and banned in several European countries as a neo-Nazi symbol, also officially flaunts the standards of this structure, with which Zelensky has repeatedly participated in joint events." — RIA Novosti, 03.03.2022 (Kornilov 2022).

In addition, the above keywords can be found in the context of Ukrainian propaganda, in the voice of V. Zelensky himself.

"Residents of Kyiv, from where I am writing this column, for the most part, as a result of the quality work of the TV for the last eight years, have been confident that Ukraine is protecting Europe from the "Muscovite horde." — RIA Novosti, 26.02.2022 (Mikhailov,

2022); "How can Russian troops control the airfield in Gostomel near Kyiv if the TV set destroyed the troops landed there yesterday and recaptured the airfield itself?" — RIA Novosti, 03.03.2022 (Kornilov, 2022);

Conclusion

In summarising the content analysis, we can conclude that three of the most frequently mentioned keywords are *"DPR", "LPR",* and *"Russia"*, which indicates that the articles may be mainly devoted to Russia's involvement in the conflict in Ukraine. However, the Ukrainian government and NATO may also be of considerable interest, although they are mentioned less frequently.

RIA Novosti's articles focus more on the views and actions of pro-Russian separatists and the Russian government than on the Ukrainian government. The language used in the quotes reveals a range of points of view, from the Russian government's justification of its military operation as self-defence to the condemnation of neo-Nazi and Bandera supporters in Ukraine. *RIA Novosti* also uses metaphors and antitheses to create a positive image of the Russian military and the Russian invasion of Ukraine while demonising the West and NATO.

Content analysis of quotes reveals several contexts: political context; propaganda in the media; historical context (several quotes refer to historical events, including World War II and Russia's relations with Eastern Europe); civilians; nationalism.

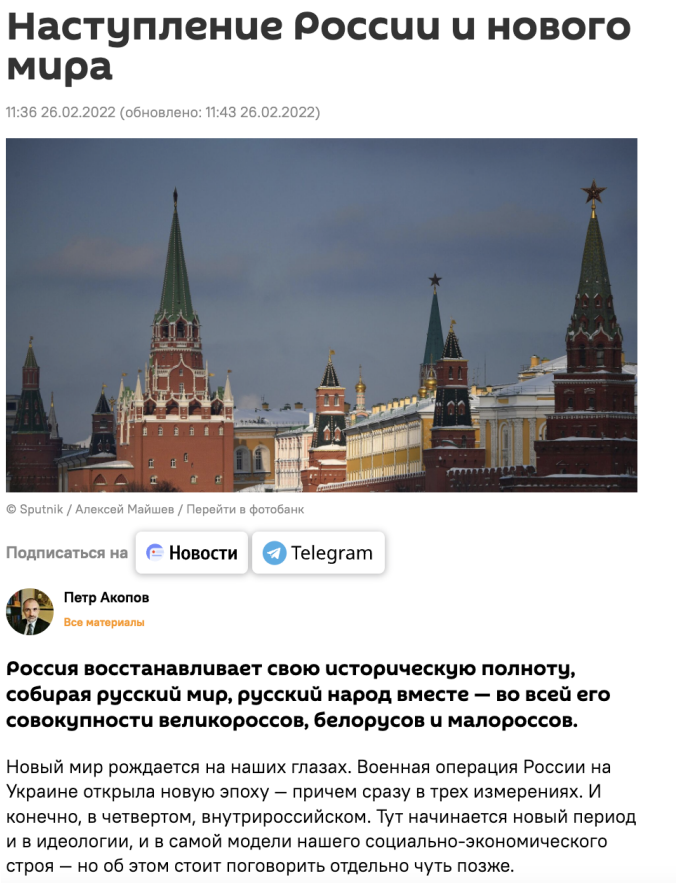
Content analysis is a research method that allows researchers to systematically study and analyse media content to identify patterns and themes in the material (Krippendorff, 2013, p. 9). In this case, content analysis was critical in understanding the frames *RIA Novosti* uses to cover the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. After conducting a content analysis of 77 articles by *RIA Novosti* on the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, I could identify the most frequently used keywords and the specific contexts usage of the keywords. It also gave a rough understanding of the frames in which *RIA Novosti* portrayed the conflict. This information is crucial because it can help us better understand the media landscape surrounding the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and the messages being conveyed to readers. In addition, it could shed light on how state-run media, such as *RIA Novosti*, are covering the military conflicts and the potential impact that coverage could have on public opinion.

4.2. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) results

The results of critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be presented in this subparagraph of the fourth chapter. For the CDA, I selected publications based on discursive content and the number of views. More about this in the third chapter, paragraph 3.4. I will also examine how the findings relate to socio-historical conditions to understand the emerging frames and their causes.

Article №1.

The first article analysed by the author is called *"The Arrival of Russia and the new world,"* which was published on February 26, 2022. Before *RIA Novosti* deleted the article, it had 230,751 views. The text of the publication has been saved in the Internet web archive.



Наступление России и нового мира

11:36 26.02.2022 (обновлено: 11:43 26.02.2022)

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Петр Акопов

Все материалы

Россия восстанавливает свою историческую полноту, собирая русский мир, русский народ вместе — во всей его совокупности великороссов, белорусов и малороссов.

Новый мир рождается на наших глазах. Военная операция России на Украине открыла новую эпоху — причем сразу в трех измерениях. И конечно, в четвертом, внутрироссийском. Тут начинается новый период и в идеологии, и в самой модели нашего социально-экономического строя — но об этом стоит поговорить отдельно чуть позже.

Img. 1.2 Screenshot of the publication "The Arrival of Russia and the New World", saved in the web archive

The article's author is Petr Akopov, a columnist for *RIA Novosti*. The volume of the article is 1078 words. The article discusses the Russian military operation in Ukraine and how it opened a new era, including changes in ideology and socio-economic models. *RIA Novosti* says Russia is restoring its historical completeness and unity, bringing together "the Russian world". The article states that the need to resolve the Ukrainian issue has always been Russia's main problem, including a complex of divided people and national humiliation. The article argues that the West sees Russia returning to its European historical borders. Russia's cooperation helped achieve the unification of Germany, which in turn made the unification of Europe possible. The West is trying to punish Russia for not allowing the expansion of the Western space to the East, but Russia is morally and geopolitically ready for confrontation.

During the CDA, the author singled out lexicographic, rhetorical and semantic-syntactic means of text analysis. Table 1.2 shows identified language elements, including common phrases, that reinforce political ideologies or stereotypes and create a sense of momentum and a persuasive argument.

Lexicographic means (Words and phrases that have a specific connotation and reinforce political ideologies or stereotypes)	Rhetorical means(linguistic means such as epithets, metonyms and metaphors to create a compelling and engaging argument)	Semantic-syntactic figures (antitheses, gradations and repetitions)	Language clichés (frequently used phrases or expressions that have lost their original meaning and have become used too often)
New World	three dimensions	brothers shoot at each other	anti-Russia
threaten[8]	split of the Russian people	according to Russian good (albeit not quite smart) will[9]	derussification

[8] In this case, meaning bite off more than one can chew
[9]in this case, the role of Russia in the restoration of the unity of Germany is described

Lexicographic means (Words and phrases that have a specific connotation and reinforce political ideologies or stereotypes)	Rhetorical means(linguistic means such as epithets, metonyms and metaphors to create a compelling and engaging argument)	Semantic-syntactic figures (antitheses, gradations and repetitions)	Language clichés (frequently used phrases or expressions that have lost their original meaning and have become used too often)
exasperated by	sound off[10]	even the deaf could hear	Anglo-Saxons
state collapse	collapse of the Russian land	an age of global leadership	European orientation
world order	Russian threat	aggregates of Great Russians[11], Belarusians and Little Russians[12]	Old World[13]
historical borders	Complex	The West is trying to punish Russia.	geopolitical stupidity
West	historical responsibility		geopolitical fools
Atlantic block	national humiliation		

[10]The author on the reaction of the West / Europe regarding the return of Russia to its historical borders

[11]an ethnonym used in relation to Russians as their self-determination or external representation and underwent a series of transformations during the 18th - early 20th centuries.

[12] meaning Ukrainian

[13]In this case, it is used in the sense of the common name of three known to Europeans before the discovery of America in 1492, parts of the world - Europe, Asia and Africa; usually contrasted with the New World.

Table 1.2. The results of the text analysis of the article "The Arrival/attack of Russia and the new world"

The main idea of the analysed article is that the era of global domination of the West is over, and the new world order will be built by all countries, including Russia, and not just by the West. Akopov P. also draws attention in his article to the growing tension between Russia and the West, which is seen as a response to the "geopolitical expansion of the Atlanticists (Akopov, 2022)".

This article appears to be a political statement praising Russia's military intervention in Ukraine and advocating Ukraine's reunification with Russia. The text uses several rhetorical and semantic-syntactic devices to convey this idea. Such as: *"three dimensions," "brothers shoot at each other," "split of the Russian people,"* and others.

The article begins with the assertion that a new world is being born before our very eyes and that Russia's military operation in Ukraine has ushered in a new era in three dimensions. The phrase *"new world"* implies that the current world order is changing, and Russia plays a crucial role in shaping it. This is further underlined by the author's statement that the Russian military operation opened a new era.

This is followed by discussions about the idea of restoring the unity of Russia, stating the overcoming of the tragedy of 1991 and its unnatural fragmentation. This statement is crucial because it suggests that the collapse of the Soviet Union was a tragedy and that the restoration of Russian unity is necessary for the country's progress.

In addition, the author argues that the return of Ukraine to Russia is necessary to overcome the complex of national humiliation and the reunification of the Russian people. The phrase "national humiliation" implies that Russia's loss of Ukraine was a source of shame for the country. Then comes the emphasis that every year, the return of Ukraine to Russia will become more and more complex, implying that time is running out and that immediate action must be taken.

The author also uses several rhetorical devices, including epithets and metaphors, to convey his message. For example, the author calls the division of the Russian people a "complex" and the return of Ukraine to Russia a "historical responsibility." These phrases

give the argumentation of the analysed article an emotional colouring, making it more convincing for the reader.

In addition, the author also uses semantic-syntactic figures to strengthen his argument. For example, the author refers to the Russian people in terms of their "aggregate of Great Russians, Belarusians, and Little Russians," emphasising the idea of a single people. The author also uses repetition when talking about the West's attempts to punish Russia, stating that "The West is trying to punish Russia."

Finally, the author uses political clichés such as "anti-Russian" to describe Ukraine's current stance towards Russia and "geopolitical stupidity" to describe Western attempts to take over Ukraine. These clichés further emphasise the author's argument that Ukraine should be reunited with Russia.

Conclusions

After analysing the text, here are the intermediate results that can be summarised:

Based on the findings of the analysed article, a shift is occurring in global power dynamics, with the West no longer holding a dominant position. Instead, a new world order is emerging in which Russia plays a pivotal role. The author advocates the reunification of Ukraine with Russia, portraying it as a necessary step towards restoring Russia's unity and overcoming "national humiliation." The *RIA Novosti* journalist uses rhetorical and semantic-syntactic devices to make his argument more convincing, including repetitions and political clichés. However, it is essential to note that this article is a political statement in favour of Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, and its views do not reflect the objective reality of the situation (Pomerantsev & Weiss, 2014).

Article №2.

The second article is *"What Russia should do with Ukraine"* by Sergeytsev Timohey, columnist for *RIA Novosti*. The material was published on 03.03.2022 and received 1615800 views. The volume of the article is 1889 words.

In his article, Timofey Sergeytsev equated Ukrainian politics and Europeanization with Nazism. According to the author, "denazification of Ukraine" means a policy of genocide. The liquidation of Ukraine as a state and as an ethnic group, its division into separate

"people's republics" with the dominance of Russia and the eradication of the very name "Ukraine". The political class of Ukraine and all armed groups defending Ukraine must be destroyed, and mass repression and ethnic cleansing must be carried out in Russian-occupied Ukraine. As a precondition for this, the author says that Ukraine must "de-radicalize". This is because "a significant part of the population - probably the majority - was assimilated and drawn into the politics of the Nazi regime," and "the hypothesis that "the people are good and the government is evil" does not stand up to scrutiny."

РИА НОВОСТИ

Что Россия должна сделать с Украиной

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Флаги Украины и "Правого сектора"*, найденные в бывшем расположении ВСУ под Мариуполем. Архивное фото

Читать ria.ru в Новости Дзен

Тимофей Сергейцев

Все материалы

Еще в апреле прошлого года мы писали о неизбежности денацификации Украины. Нацистская, бандеровская Украина, враг России и инструмент Запада по уничтожению России нам не нужна. Сегодня вопрос денацификации перешел в практическую плоскость.

Img.1.3 Screenshot of the publication "What Russia should do with Ukraine"

Below, in Table 1.2. the results of the textual analysis of the article are presented.

Lexicographic means	**Rhetorical means**	**Semantic-syntactic figures**	**Language clichés**
Nazi	Bandera Ukraine[14]	Poroshenko's world[15]	de-nazification
lustration	instrument of the West	Zelensky's world	anti-fascists
to exterminate	war criminals	Nazi system	liberal approach
harsh beyond all reason	ideological repressions[16]	eight years war/eight years of resistance[17]	ukronazism[18]
"independence"[19]	Ukrainianism[20]	genocide of the Russian people	Little Russia
"European (pro-Western, pro-American)" path of "development"	social swamp	artificial inflation of the ethnic component	Novorossiya
“neutralism”	alienation line		de-ukrainization

[14] The concept of "Banderites/ Bandera Ukraine” is often used to refer to all Ukrainian nationalism.

[15] Poroshenko former President of Ukraine

[16] in the context of "re-education of Ukraine"

[17] **r**eference to the events of 2014 (annexation of Crimea and escalation of the conflict on the territory of Donetsk and Lugansk)

[18] derogatory term for Ukrainian nationalism

[19] hereinafter, words in quotation marks have a negative connotation

[20] The article's author defines the term as "an artificial anti-Russian construction that does not have its civilizational content, a subordinate element of an alien and an alien civilization."

Lexicographic means	Rhetorical means	Semantic-syntactic figures	Language clichés
terror	Western totalitarianism		Old World
Kyiv regime	Russian civilization		

Table 1.2. The results of the text analysis of the article "What Russia Should Do with Ukraine"

Briefly summarise the main idea of this text, it becomes clear that Sergeytsev is promoting the idea of "brutal censorship" of Ukrainian culture and the "de-Ukrainization" of Ukrainians in the territories occupied by Russia during the invasion. The column's author believes that the ethnocentrism of Ukraine is an unnatural distortion and that the existence of Ukraine as a nation-state is impossible. The author expresses his view that Ukraine should be divided into several states that will be under the direct control of Russia. He believes that the "ethnic component of self-identification" of Ukraine will also be rejected after its occupation by the Russian Federation. The entire text aims to create a negative image of Ukrainians and Ukraine.

Sergeytsev calls for the "lustration of power" and the "denazification of a significant part of the masses, which are passive Nazis" through repression. This idea is reflected with the help of lexicographic and rhetorical means. Example: "Further denazification of this mass of the population consists in re-education, which is achieved by ideological repression (suppression) of Nazi attitudes and strict censorship: not only in the political sphere but also necessarily in the sphere of culture and education." (Sergeytsev, 2022)

Sergeytsev believes Russia should deal with "denazification" and Ukraine should lose its sovereignty. He sets the timeframe at "at least one generation." For example, a columnist uses the following antithesis — "Ukraine disguises Nazism as a desire for independence and a European path of development" (Sergeytsev, 2022) or "Ukronazism carries no less, but a

greater threat to the world and Russia than German Nazism of Hitler's recension" (Sergeytsev, 2022) — to create a more convincing argument in defence of the idea of "denazification."

A special place in the article is given to the plan for "denazification." Sergeitsev, in his text, proposes to divide Ukraine into two parts - Western and Eastern - and draw a "line of alienation" between them. With the help of this rhetorical means of expression, the article's author gives a rich emotional colouring to the following judgement: "A hostile Russia, but forcibly neutral and demilitarised Ukraine will remain behind it; haters of Russia will leave there. (Sergeytsev 2022)" Such a combination of epithets and antitheses creates a negative perception of people who disagree with the pro-Russian position. Sergeytsev characterised most of the Ukrainian people as "accomplices of the Nazi regime," He proposes to involve "in forced labour to restore the destroyed infrastructure" and the rest to be executed or imprisoned.

The above language tools are reminiscent of those used to shape Nazi rhetoric. Also, such statements call for the commission or approval of specific actions, namely the genocide of Ukrainians. A similar thing happened during coverage of the civil war that began in 1990 between the Hutu government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front.

The image of Russia as a caring and wise brother is formed through speech turns, as, for example, "they will be convinced of Russia's long-term intentions, including that they will not be abandoned"; "to realise oneself as the last instance of protection and preservation of those values of historical Europe (Old World)."

However, at the same time, Sergeitsev admits that "Russia will not have allies in the denazification of Ukraine," therefore, "we will have to part with pro-European and pro-Western illusions finally." In this case, with the help of semantic means, he emphasises the idea of the impossibility of the existence and development of Russia together with Europe and the West. Further, the author again uses metaphorical phrases: Russia ``tried to save the West " in the 20th century, but the West “rejected these victims”. Moreover, to reinforce his earlier theses, he again turns to the antithesis, which emphasises the cardinal differences between Russia and the West - "Further on, Russia will go its own way, not worrying about the fate of the West, relying on another part of its heritage - leadership in the global process of decolonization" (Sergeytsev 2022).

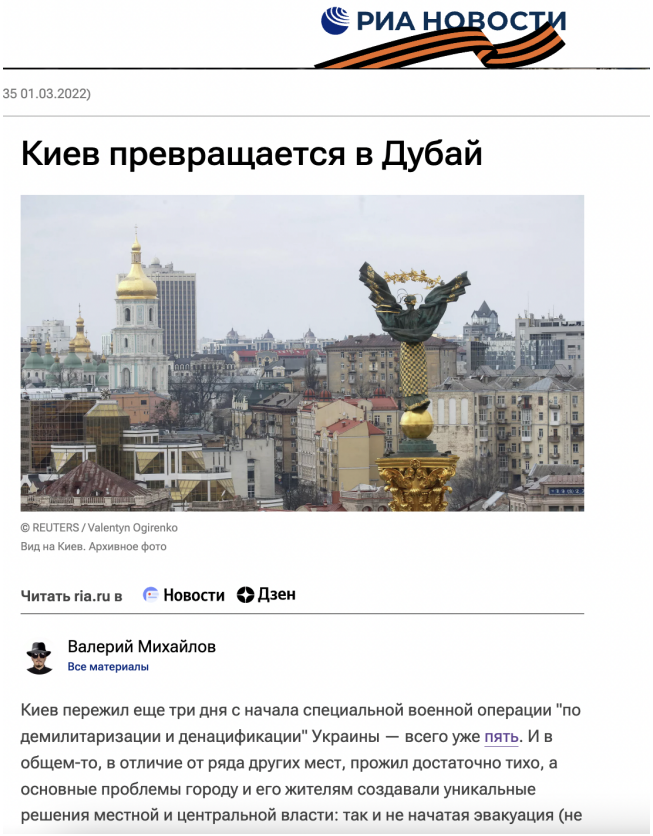
Conclusions

After analysing the text, here are the intermediate results that can be summarised:

This text is dominated by the idea of "brutal censorship" of Ukrainian culture and the "de-Ukrainization" of Ukrainians in the territories occupied by Russia during the invasion. *RIA Novosti* is spreading the opinion that Ukraine's ethnocentrism is an unnatural distortion and that Ukraine's existence as a nation-state is impossible. The article describes plans to divide Ukraine into several states that will be under the direct control of Russia, as well as to abandon the "ethnic component of self-identification" of Ukraine after its occupation by the Russian Federation. The entire text aims to create a negative image of Ukrainians and Ukraine, and the language used is reminiscent of Nazi rhetoric. The *RIA Novosti* journalist portrays Russia as a caring and wise brother but simultaneously admits that "Russia will not have allies in the denazification of Ukraine", pointing out the impossibility of Russia's existence and development together with Europe and the West. Once again emphasising the isolation of the Russian Federation from the whole world.

Article №3

The third article for analysis, *"Kyiv is turning into Dubai"*, was published on 01/03/2022. The publication's author is Valery Mikhailov, also a columnist for *RIA Novosti*. This analytical essay received 297741 views, and the volume of the text is 916 words. The article *"Kyiv is turning into Dubai"* is a first-hand account of the situation in Kyiv during the special military operation "demilitarisation and denazification" of Ukraine. Despite the absence of hostilities in the city, local and central authorities created problems for its residents, such as the evacuation that did not begin, the mass distribution of machine guns, strange decisions regarding the duration of the curfew, and much more. State propaganda and the lack of critical thinking among the population contributed to the return of confidence in the imminent "overpowering" of the aggressor, i.e. Russia. I would also like to note that the article is replete with rude and jargon expressions, which are part of the so-called "reduction" technique. It lies in the fact that the style of the text, for the most part, can resemble classic journalistic, but slang and colloquial words will still flash there to create the feeling of “one’s own” person, close to “the people” (Krongauz, 2014).



Img.1.4. Screenshot of the publication "Kyiv is turning into Dubai"

The results of the text analysis are provided below in Table 1.3.

Lexicographic means	**Rhetorical means**	**Semantic-syntactic figures**	**Language clichés**
“victory”[21]	saboteur mania	buried alive people/buried alive[22]	demilitarization
“whip into shape”	"Western partners"	about the gigantic losses of the aggressor and his atrocities	denazification

[21] in the original article, Mikhailov used the Ukrainian word peremoga
[22] about the capture of Zmeiny Island by the Russian Navy

Lexicographic means	Rhetorical means	Semantic-syntactic figures	Language clichés
crank out	spirit-uplifting	Do you think that when the "dead " border guards…. someone asked why Zelensky had buried people alive? No!	fake news
fuckup	Kyiv authorities		government propaganda
extravagance	brainwashed perfectly		decommunization
diversionist	harmless pampering		eight years
having fun[23]	put the squeeze on the aggressor		
flooded with investments	willing or unwilling		

Table 1.3. The results of the text analysis of the article "Kyiv is turning into Dubai"

The main idea of the analysed text is a reflection on the falsification of facts about the SMO and the results of the "demilitarisation and denazification" of Ukraine. It is worth noting that from the beginning, namely the title, the author uses the trope of irony, *"Kyiv turns into Dubai"*, to create emotional and evaluative judgments. The author means that Kyiv is far from Dubai — "discourse about imminent happiness could be heard in giant queues at grocery stores and a few working pharmacies." Mikhailov paints a picture that the city is in

[23] in the text of the article is used in a figurative sense

ruins and does not function properly but still strives for Dubai luxury. Furthermore, the author illustrates the desire for a rich and carefree life through hyperbole - "Ukraine will not only be accepted into the EU and NATO but simply flooded with investments."

Mikhailov generally likes to turn to hyperbole, for example, "an endless number of fakes about the gigantic losses of the aggressor and his atrocities." In this case, the author exaggerates and distorts the facts about the creation of news about the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. This technique makes one feel that the whole world is against Russia and that the juggling of facts occurs only on the part of Ukraine / Europe / the West, while the Russian Federation is more honest and fair than its opponents.

It also follows from the text that it is not so important who exactly is the antagonist, how important is the idea that "everyone is against us". This is expressed through the following phraseological unit - "In Kyiv, Russian troops, to put it mildly, are not waiting." These expressions form the opinion that dissenters are present, but the author almost immediately gives us an explanation why: "brainwashed perfectly"; "even the beginnings of critical thinking." This sharpens the feeling of superiority and difference from "others", "dissenters". This idea runs like a "red thread" through the entire text.

Further, the author abounds in the text with stylistically reduced nouns and adverbs, often metaphorically, to fill the image of Ukraine with such features that make its image frivolous and its political decisions unimportant.

The text often features the notorious Russian political propaganda cliché "eight years", which has been used since the end of February 2022 in connection with Russia's invasion of Ukraine as a reminder that the war in Donbas has been ongoing since 2014. This cliche justifies Russia's invasion of Ukraine and relieves society of responsibility, and demonises the enemy. In addition, the author does not hesitate to manipulate facts. For further information, please refer to Chapter 1.5. For this, he uses oxymorons and rhetorical questions. See, for example, "buried alive" / "buried alive" / "why did Zelensky bury people alive?"

The oxymoron "buried alive " is used metaphorically in this text to suggest that President Zelenskiy figuratively buried the border guards alive, posthumously awarding them the title of Hero of Ukraine when they were not dead. The author uses this phrase to convey a sense of criticism and irony towards Zelensky's actions, as it is seen as an exaggerated reaction to the situation.

Moreover, the author suggests that the public did not perceive the continued presence of Russian troops as a threat, and the episode with the border guards was perceived as "ridiculous and somewhat mocking." Using an oxymoron highlights the contrast between the seriousness of the situation and the perceived lack of concern or action on the part of the government and the public.

The author then wonders if anyone criticised Zelensky for his actions, suggesting that using an oxymoron points out the situation's absurdity and irresponsibility of those in power. Using the oxymoron helps underscore the author's criticism of the government's response to the situation. It draws attention to the contrast between the seriousness of the situation and perceived inaction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysed text of *RIA Novosti* reflects the falsification of facts around the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by Ukraine/Europe/West and the "demilitarisation and denazification" of Ukraine. The *RIA Novosti* columnist uses various literary devices, such as hyperbole, oxymorons and rhetorical questions, to manipulate facts, create emotional and evaluative judgments, and convey a sense of criticism and irony about the actions of the Ukrainian authorities. The text emphasises a sense of superiority and difference towards dissidents, justifies Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and absolves society of responsibility. Ultimately, the text is a preconceived point of view that distorts the reality of the situation.

Chapter 5: Discussions

In this chapter, we will address research questions: RQ1: What frames are RIA Novosti using during coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war?; RQ2: Why are they using existing frames?; RQ3: To what degree does RIA Novosti misrepresent facts during coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war? We will also delve into the main conclusions of our study, especially concerning the frames used by RIA Novosti when covering the Russian-Ukrainian war. We will look at the meaning of these frames and their relationship to the existing literature, as well as why RIA Novosti uses these existing frames. In addition, we will assess how much RIA Novosti distorts the facts when covering the war. By carefully examining these results, we aim to provide a more complete understanding of our study and its broader context.

5.1. Existing frames

Frame №1 "Changing Global Power Dynamics"

RIA Novosti's articles emphasise the idea that the West is no longer dominant and a new world order is emerging in which Russia plays a key role. This frame combines several techniques - firstly, it is conspiracy theories. The idea that the West has ever dominated the world and influenced other states is reminiscent of the conspiracy theory of the "shadow government". Furthermore, in the case of RIA Novosti, they need to support the idea that a person lives in a world full of conspiracies and transform it into a worldview. In the context of Russian realities, conspiracy theory does not support ideology but replaces it. More importantly, conspiracy theories help control. According to P. Pomerantsev (2020):

> In a world where even the most authoritarian regimes are afraid to introduce censorship, the audience has to present the most cynical picture of the motives of their opponents; it is necessary to convince readers that behind every seemingly noble motivation lies an insidious (albeit unprovable) plan. (pp. 80-81)

As a result, the audience loses faith in the possibility of an alternative and willingly believes in the facts presented.

The second “trick” RIA Novosti resorts to is contrasting Russia to the rest of the world and believing in its "special" purpose.

The first mention of a "special" purpose is listed behind the answer to the philosophical letter of P. Chaadaev[24]. A.S. Pushkin. In his response, Pushkin counters Chaadaev's view of Russia as something similar to the civilisation of the countries of Western Europe (in the context of development) and states that “we had our special destiny” (Pushkin, 2012, p. 381). This idea formed the basis of Russia's superiority over the rest of the world and its role in the global world order. According to RIA Novosti journalists, Russia honours "traditional values" and is a stronghold of adequacy. Therefore, they love to oppose "we-them." This opposition refers to a psychological phenomenon based on the human tendency to divide the world into different groups. This categorisation often leads to forming an "in-group" to which the individual belongs and a "foreign group" to which he does not belong. The in-group is often associated with positive qualities such as trust, loyalty, and cooperation, while the outgroup is seen as a potential threat, enemy, or competitor (Eidelman, 2018, pp. 33-75).

In the context of propaganda, the concept of "we-them" is often used to create a sense of unity and solidarity between members of a particular group or nation. It can also be used to demonise or vilify a particular group, often called the "enemy". This technique will be used in subsequent frames. However, using propaganda based on the concept of "us-them" can also lead to negative consequences. This can create feelings of prejudice, intolerance and hostility towards the outgroup, leading to conflict and violence. Therefore, it is vital to be aware of the potential dangers of this concept and use it responsibly and ethically.

Overall, Frame №1 seeks to create a narrative that portrays Russia as a critical player in the new world order. It promotes a sense of greatness and solidarity among its citizens through conspiracy theories and "us-them" opposition.

Frame №2. Saving the “Russian world”.

RIA Novosti is actively broadcasting the idea of Ukraine's reunification with Russia, portraying it as a necessary step towards restoring Russia's unity and overcoming "national humiliation." The significance of this narrative is especially apparent in the past two decades of the history of the Russian Federation. Nevertheless, sovereignty and imperialism are not new; they appeared during the rule of Nicholas I. The feeling of sovereignty, in this case, is

[24] During the period spanning from 1826 to 1831. Chaadayev composed a series of eight "Philosophical Letters" in the French language, which addressed Russia's cultural state. These letters were disseminated among scholars as manuscripts and were subject to circulation for a considerable duration. Within these letters, Chaadayev espoused his critique of the Russian cultural landscape, specifically highlighting its perceived inferiority compared to the leading Western civilizations of the time.

necessity to support the idea that the state has some global goals that are much more important than the goals of its citizens. The entire population can live happily if the government's ambitious plans come to fruition.

Let us look at the origins of such rhetoric and turn to an interview[25] with V. Surkov, former assistant to the president of Russia, the main ideologist of the current regime, about the "Russian world". He claims that the Russian world "is everywhere where people speak and think in Russian. This is where, perhaps, they do not speak and do not think in Russian but where they respect Russian culture very much. They see the Russian national development model as an alternative to what they have at home. There are more and more people like that now (Uspenskiy, 2021)." But much more interesting is what he said before, namely, that the ideology of the Russian world exists in order to tell "about the empire, about our intention to expand, but at the same time not to offend the hearing of the world community."

From this follows another technique actively used by *RIA Novosti* - this is the cult of traditions. They use it because the state has the right to do as it wants, not because it is good but because it inherited this right.

Also, to reinforce frame No. 2, *RIA Novosti* practises the manipulation of facts. From the idea that "NATO troops are getting closer to the borders of Russia" to "Attack by the Russian Federation is a defence by the UN Charter (“Message from the President of the Russian Federation”, 2022)." It is essential to mention that a statement by V.V. Putin, where he references Article 51 of Part 7 of the UN Charter (“Chapter VII: Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression (Articles 39-51) | United Nations”, n.d.) and cites his decision to conduct a military operation with the sanction of the Federation Council of Russia and in adherence to treaties of friendship and mutual assistance ratified by the Federal Assembly, has been frequently cited in *RIA Novosti* materials.

The above statements are misleading and false; Russia bordered five NATO member states before the Ukraine conflict. In addition, the alliance complies with the Russia-NATO Founding Act, which prohibits the permanent deployment of significant combat forces in countries joining NATO.

[25] At the moment, the interview is not available, it was removed from YouTube for violating the rules of the site

Second, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), which has been monitoring the situation in Ukraine on a special mission for years, also unambiguously refutes Putin's claim that the Russian invasion falls under Article 51 of the UN Charter. OSCE Chairman and Polish Foreign Minister Zbigniew Rau condemned the Russian invasion as a "fundamental violation of the UN Charter. To justify the attack with Article 51 were "regrettable and shameful (*"OSCE Chairman-in-Office calls on Russian Federation to immediately stop the war against Ukraine, stresses civilian population must be protected"* 2022)."

Also, to justify the "special military operation", *RIA Novosti* uses the narrative about the "denazification" of Ukraine. The idea that "SMO" is being carried out in order to prevent alleged bullying and alleged "genocide" taking place, Russia needs to make efforts to "demilitarize and denazify Ukraine" is mentioned in most of the analysed articles. However, this narrative is also false and propagandistic since it can be said that there are small right-wing extremist groups in Ukraine, as in many other countries. However, experts say they play an utterly insignificant role in society (Rossoliński-Liebe & Willems, 2022, pp. 1-10). Accordingly, there are no real reasons to talk about "denazification".

To sum up, Russia's military intervention in Ukraine is supported by historical narratives, a cult of tradition, and manipulated facts from *RIA Novosti*. They present Ukraine's reunification with Russia as a necessary step to restore unity and reclaim what belongs to them. *RIA Novosti's* active use of the cult of traditions and fake news misleads readers and is false.

Frame №3 Nationalism

In this context, *RIA Novosti* is promoting a pro-Russian and anti-Ukrainian agenda to destroy Ukrainian identity and sovereignty. The language used in the text is highly nationalist, but it promotes Russian nationalism, not Ukrainian nationalism.

RIA Novosti portrays Ukraine as a distorted and unnatural entity that should be divided and brought under Russian control. The idea of "denazification" is used to justify the suppression of Ukrainian culture and dissent, and the author uses rhetorical devices to create a negative image of Ukrainians and Ukraine. The text uses the words "Nazi", "Bandera Ukraine", and "Nazification" to describe Ukrainians. It also mentions a "Ukrainian layman" satisfied with using terror and blitzkrieg tactics against "anti-fascists" in Odesa, Kharkiv,

Dnepropetrovsk, Mariupol and other Ukrainian cities. All these verbal and speech constructions are aimed at humiliating Ukrainians. The articles also emphasise the role of Russia as a protector and leader in the world, but at the same time, reject the idea of cooperation with Europe and the West. Thus, nationalism in this context promotes a specific political program to advance Russian interests at the expense of Ukrainian sovereignty and identity.

Even if *RIA Novosti's* texts often use the word "aggressor" to describe Russia, they replace the concept. When we hear "invasion," our minds immediately think of a hostile attack on Ukrainian soil from external forces. However, it is essential to note that the media has used this term more sarcastically, often expressing scepticism or doubt about Ukraine's policies. This can confuse many people, as "invasion" carries a heavy connotation and can be alarming. The permanent credentials will be the same disinformation and manipulation of facts we discussed earlier.

Overall, *RIA Novosti's* text offers a more complex and troubled picture of Ukraine, with a sense of insecurity and fear among the population, than it is.

Frame №4. "The Role of Russia in History" or historical frame

The historical frame in the context of *RIA Novosti's* coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war refers to the use of historical events to shape the narrative of the conflict. This frame emphasises the importance of Russia's history and its relations with Europe/America for understanding the current conflict.

Several quotes from *RIA Novosti's* articles refer to historical events, particularly the Second World War, which is an integral part of Russia's national identity. For example, *RIA Novosti* may use references to the role of the Soviet Union in defeating Nazi Germany during World War II to draw parallels to Russia's current involvement in the conflict. The idea is to portray Russia as a defender of its people and an ally of other countries in the face of external threats, in this case, fictitious "neo-Nazis" on the territory of Ukraine.

RIA Novosti also uses frame №4 to refer to nostalgia for when Russia was the dominant world power. For example, references to Russia's historical ties to Eastern Europe are most likely used to portray the current conflict as a struggle to restore Russia's influence and prestige in the region.

In general, the historical frame serves to highlight the conflict in a way that resonates with the Russian public. By recalling historical events and emphasising Russia's role, *RIA Novosti* can influence public opinion and shape the perception of the conflict.

5.2. Conclusions

Answering the research questions —RQ1: What frames are RIA Novosti using during coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war?; RQ2: Why are they using existing frames?; RQ3: To what degree does RIA Novosti misrepresent facts during coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war?, the author concludes that *RIA Novosti* uses four main frames when covering the Russian-Ukrainian war. The first frame, "Changing Global Power Dynamics," highlights that the West is no longer dominant but that Russia is in the lead. Frame №2, "Saving the Russian World," portrays the special military operation as "a necessary step towards restoring Russian unity" and overcoming "national humiliation." Frame №3, "Nationalism", aims to form a negative opinion about Ukraine and its people. Furthermore, the last frame, frame №4, is "historical, " reflecting nostalgic moods. Table 1.4 shows examples of various language constructs for forming the above frames.

Lexicographic means	Special military operation (SMO), Russia, NATO, Ukraine, Kyiv, Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), Luhansk People's Republic (LPR), V. Putin, V. Zelensky, UMF, neo-Nazis, Bandera, Azov, Donbas, volunteers, insurgent.
Rhetorical means	Epithets: "cautious", "significant", "liberal", "internal", "famous". Metonyms: "UMF", "TV", "swastika", "Western patrons". Metaphors: "Moscow horde", "cream of victories", "fratricidal war",

Semantic-syntactic figures	Semantic-syntactic figures: Antithesis: "full members of NATO" vs "big and very unpleasant surprise". Irony: "quality TV work", "liberal approach to denazification". Repetition: "Russia is finishing them," "we do not abandon our own." Exclamation: "as you approached our borders so that you will crawl away from them!"

Table 1.4. Development of frames from language constructionsRIA Novosti

The following motivations can explain the use of these frames. First, to create a narrative depicting Russia as a key player on the world stage. The global community currently views Russia as a nation that engages in aggressive behaviour, actively interfering in the internal affairs of other countries. Moreover, for the current ideology, creating a positive image of Russia is beneficial. The second motivation follows from this - the promotion of a sense of greatness and solidarity among the inhabitants of the Russian Federation. This thought's spread helps justify Russia's military intervention in Ukraine and presents it as a necessary step to protect the Russian-speaking population. Using historical references and portraying Ukraine as part of Russia's traditional sphere of influence, *RIA Novosti* is trying to legitimise Russia's actions and garner public support for the intervention.

Moreover, by portraying the conflict in Ukraine as a struggle for Russia's historical identity, RIA Novosti is also trying to create a sense of historical continuity and connection between Russia's past and present. Encouraging national pride and identity among Russians can be an effective strategy for gaining support for the current government and its policies.

The third motivation is to form a negative image of Ukraine and its people, which also justifies Russia's actions further and potentially win the support of the Russian population.

Based on the analysis conducted by the author, it is evident that the Russian government's agenda significantly influenced *RIA Novosti's* coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict to present a favourable image of Russia, legitimise its actions in Ukraine, and incite nationalist feelings among the Russian populace. The frames used allow *RIA Novosti* to appeal to the emotions and values of its audience, as well as to legitimise Russia's military intervention in

Ukraine, which in turn can strengthen the government's narrative and create a coherent message that supports its position.

In response to RQ3 about the distortion of facts in the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war, the following ways can be distinguished:

RIA Novosti downplays Russia's involvement in the conflict. For example, they called Russian soldiers and military equipment "volunteers" and "rebels" and downplayed the scale of Russian military operations in Ukraine.

They often portray Ukraine as the aggressor in the conflict and suggest that the Ukrainian government is responsible for starting the war. *RIA Novosti* also accuses Ukraine of committing war crimes and atrocities against Russian speakers in the country's east. *RIA Novosti* often promotes the narrative that Russians in Ukraine are being subjected to genocide by the Ukrainian government. However, there is little evidence to support this claim. While cases of violence against ethnic Russians in Ukraine certainly took place, especially in the early days of the conflict, there is no evidence of a systematic campaign of extermination. Many ethnic Russians in Ukraine live there peacefully and without fear of persecution.

Another common theme in *RIA Novosti's* coverage of the conflict was the idea that NATO was aggressively expanding its borders and encircling Russia. This is a long-standing Kremlin narrative designed to justify Russian aggression and portray Russia as a victim of Western aggression. However, the reality is much more subtle. While NATO expanded eastward after the end of the Cold War, most of that expansion took place in countries formerly part of the Soviet bloc and sought closer ties to the West.

Moreover, NATO has repeatedly stated that it is a defensive alliance that poses no threat to Russia or any other country.

RIA Novosti has also played a role in the Kremlin's attempts to vilify Ukraine and its government. For example, even during the Euromaidan protests that led to the overthrow of Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych in 2014, *RIA Novosti* claimed that the West supported these events (Vinogradov, 2017). In fact, the protests were a grassroots movement led by Ukrainians unsatisfied with Yanukovych's corrupt and authoritarian regime. In addition, *RIA Novosti* has often portrayed the Ukrainian government as being dominated by fascists and neo-Nazis, which is not supported by the facts. While Ukrainian society

undoubtedly has far-right elements, the government has taken steps to distance itself from these groups and help build a more inclusive and democratic society.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

The art of framing has long been a subject of interest in media research. This has become even more relevant today when the media has enormous power to shape public opinion and perception of events. One such event, which received comprehensive coverage in the media, is the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The Russian news agency *RIA Novosti* played a significant role in this coverage, and as a result, it came under scrutiny due to its use of frames.

To summarise this study, it is necessary to start by summarising its problem and objectives. The problem of the research is to study the formation and use of frames in the texts of modern media, in particular, in the coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict by the Russian news agency *RIA Novosti*. The topic's relevance lies in understanding how the media shape public opinion and ideas about the war. The study aims to study the frames used by *RIA Novosti* and how they manipulate and distort facts. The study's author asked herself the following research questions: What frames are used, why are they used, and how are the facts distorted? The examples we found and analysed allow us to answer the questions posed in the following way. *RIA Novosti* uses four main frames: "Changing the dynamics of global power", "Saving the Russian world", "Nationalism", and "Historical". The motives for using these frames are to create a positive image of Russia, to reinforce a sense of grandeur and solidarity among the Russian population, to justify Russia's military intervention in Ukraine, and to stir up nationalist feelings among the Russian population. *RIA Novosti* downplays Russia's involvement in the conflict by portraying Ukraine as the aggressor, promoting the narrative that Russians in Ukraine are victims of genocide by the Ukrainian government (which has little evidence to support it), and belittling the Ukrainian government by claiming it is dominated by "fascists" and "neo-Nazis" (which is not supported by the facts)."

Goffman's famous essay *Frame Analysis* presents the sociological interpretation of the concept of "frame," which is the solid theoretical foundation for the study (Goffman, 2006, pp. 7-57). In order to understand the concept, we have looked at the different approaches scientists took to define framing. In addition, the first chapter described such aspects of the work on cognitive warfare, media framing and agenda theory.

The research methodology was determined by the following practices — content analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA). The units of analysis were articles posted mentioning the critical units "Russia" and "Ukraine" from February 24, 2022, to March 03, 2022. A total of 77 articles were analysed, of which 26 citations were selected as the most representative of the identified indicators. Moreover, the three most viewed articles were selected for conducting CDA.

After analysing the study's material, it became clear that the articles primarily focus on Russia's involvement in the conflict in Ukraine, as the most frequently used keywords were "DPR", "LPR", “SMO”, and "Russia".However, the Ukrainian government and NATO are also of considerable interest, although they are mentioned less frequently.

RIA Novosti's articles focus more on the views and actions of the pro-Russian separatists and the Russian government than on the Ukrainian government. The language used in the quotes reveals a range of points of view, from the Russian government's justification of its military operation in self-defence to the condemnation of neo-Nazi and Bandera supporters in Ukraine.

Based on the results of the CDA, it becomes clear that the *RIA Novosti* articles promote certain discourses, such as, for example, a shift in global power dynamics with the emergence of a "new world order" in which Russia occupies a leading position. Also, *RIA Novosti* broadcasts the idea of reunification of Ukraine with Russia and portrays Ukraine and Ukrainians negatively. However, it is worth noting that the publications represent a biased point of view that distorts the reality of the situation. The language used in the articles includes various literary devices such as hyperbole, oxymorons and rhetorical questions to manipulate facts, create emotional judgments, and convey a sense of criticism and irony about the actions of the Ukrainian authorities.

An analysis of *RIA Novosti's* coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war leads to the conclusion that the news agency uses four mainframes to create a favourable image of Russia and legitimise its military intervention in Ukraine. These frames include "Changing Global Power Dynamics", "Saving the Russian World", "Nationalism", and "Historical". *RIA Novosti* uses various language constructs to build these frames, such as epithets, metonyms, and metaphors.

The author suggests that the agenda of the Russian government significantly influences *RIA Novosti's* coverage of the conflict by appealing to the emotions and values of its audience, fueling nationalist feelings among the Russian population, and reinforcing the government's narrative. Moreover, the news agency distorts the facts to downplay Russia's involvement in the conflict, portray Ukraine as the aggressor, and suggest that the Ukrainian government is responsible for starting the war. *RIA Novosti* also accuses Ukraine of committing war crimes and atrocities against Russian speakers in the country's east. However, there is little evidence to support these claims.

Thus, the author's findings show that *RIA Novosti's* coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian war is heavily biased in favour of Russia and the Russian government. The news agency's use of language constructs and framing techniques serves to justify Russian actions in Ukraine, fueling nationalist sentiments among the Russian population and distorting facts related to the conflict. Therefore, the author has provided answers to the research questions.

The results of this study are essential for the media and conflict studies field, as they show how state-affiliated media can manipulate public opinion and justify military intervention by creating specific frames and discourses. This study highlights the critical importance of carefully examining media coverage of military conflicts, especially when one of the tools is "propaganda".

For professionals, this study highlights the urgent need for the media to maintain their editorial independence and journalistic integrity, especially in conflict zones. The findings also highlight the need for fact-checking and debunking false narratives and propaganda.

Future research on the topic discussed may be examining how *RIA Novosti's* coverage of the conflict affects public opinion in Russia and abroad. In addition, future research could examine how other state-sponsored media cover conflicts and how they frame their reporting. Finally, this study highlights the need for comparative research to assess how media coverage of conflict varies across language and media systems.

During the study, the author encountered several difficulties. For example, some materials, including *RIA Novosti* publications, were removed, and the amount of data was significant. The MAXQDA software helped to handle the processing of a large amount of data.

In addition, the author needed some help in translating from Russian into English. Some language clichés or constructions are used exclusively in Russian. It is essential to mention that this did not affect the study's conclusions.

I want to finish my work with the words of a welcoming speech at Williams College in 1984 by the exiled USSR poet, Nobel Prize winner Joseph Brodsky: "The surest defence against Evil is extreme individualism, originality of thinking, whimsicality, even - if you will - eccentricity. That is, something that can't be feigned, faked, imitated (Brodsky, 1984)." Propaganda has been used throughout history to shape public opinion and promote certain ideologies. While it can be a powerful tool in the hands of those who wield it, it can also be dangerous when used to manipulate or deceive the public Brodsky's quote emphasises the importance of independent thinking and a willingness to question the messages presented by the propaganda media By developing our unique perspectives and refusing to be influenced by external factors, we can protect ourselves from the dangers of propaganda and accept sound decisions about the world around us Ultimately, it is only by accepting our individuality and maintaining a critical eye that we can truly protect ourselves from the insidious effects of the propaganda media.

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