

Case Study: Framing the Russo-Ukrainian War. A Comparative Review of Media Coverage and Analytical Discourse. Methodological Lessons and Advances

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“It is important that we don’t get Russia wrong, for doing so could lead to dire consequences.”

Shearman, 2001, 262

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**Experimental Design,
Methodology and Outputs for
Detecting Foreign Policy Discourses**



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Introduction

As specified in the project proposal, this project focuses on reviewing methodologies and approaches at the case-study level—for analysing emerging, subtle shifts in public and expert discourse on foreign policy in the media. However, following the controversial, if not entirely critical, findings reported under the original Critical Review of Methodologies (Monitoring) task, published under title *Analysing Media Analytics Tools for Foreign Policy Monitoring*, which was developed as the first output under the project, and Critical Review of Methodologies (Analyses) task, published under title *Identification of Methodological Challenges in International Relations Studies: A Case Study of the 2008 Russo-Georgian War*, a correspondingly modified research approach was applied. This modification was further warranted by two developments in AI over the past few years: on the one hand, rapid progress in the field has rendered several earlier findings outdated; on the other, the same progress has made the project's original research aims considerably more attainable. It was therefore assessed that the most productive approach was to examine real cases of highly topical media and academic coverage, or interpretation of that coverage, of an ongoing war and, in this way, to identify the most advanced methodological approaches used for media monitoring and analysis. This approach also served a highly relevant, practical foreign policy purpose. The paper concludes by bridging a methodological synthesis—centered on a comprehensive approach to evaluating completed framing analyses—toward prospective media content monitoring, at least conceptually. These blueprints, however, require further critical assessment and refinement in follow-up research involving experts from diverse academic backgrounds.

Accordingly, with the aim of identifying the key conceptual-methodological insights needed to inform the further development of qualitative monitoring of national and international foreign-policy discourses, one of two in-depth qualitative case studies follows. It aims to confirm or clarify whether the identified, selected, or newly proposed methodological approaches are appropriate for this purpose. Therefore, the case study critically examines and synthesises scholarship on media framing and explanations of the Russo-Ukrainian war since 2022, as offered by journalists, media outlets, and IR experts (as presented in the reviewed articles and studies). It then examines political and public framing and interpretation of the war's origins and development in relation to media framing and interpretation, incorporating global comparisons where possible.

The study thus pursues and prioritises an aim that is scientifically secondary, yet geopolitically contemporary and highly topical. Its objective is to offer a tentative synthesis and comparison of global perspectives on the Russo-Ukrainian war, as presented across local, national, and global media – including social media. The primary focus is on EU and US media, policymakers, and publics, given their support for Ukraine and their centrality to the conflict's geopolitics.

In addition, Russian academic analytical perspectives on media coverage (framing or narratives in general) of the Russo-Ukrainian war are presented separately.

To that end, substantial summaries of the identified studies are included where necessary. It should be highlighted that these are not just copy-and-paste abstracts. This approach obviously leads to a rather extensive scope of the study. However, this approach allows the reader's own assessment of the presented conclusions. For those who do not have the time or interest to read the full length, extensive summaries of sections and conclusions, as well as policy briefs, are available. Scientifically, literature reviews serve as critical background material by employing transparent,

replicable methodology to synthesize heterogeneous data streams. Their scientific value rests on explicit although less binding search protocols, inclusion/exclusion criteria, and cataloguing frameworks that mitigate selection bias—ensuring that findings are not anecdotal but thematically robust. In addition, robustness is secured through both the quantity and the diversity of sources. For that comparative end, breadth of resources was prioritised, although the scale and synthetic approach of the research allowed, in the end, also relative depth of findings.

Pragmatically, beyond academic utility, these reviews deliver an essential synthetic function for diplomats, policy makers, and international relations analysts. They distill overwhelming, often contradictory, daily media and intelligence fragments into coherent framing matrices—identifying dominant narratives, counter-narratives, and emergent discursive shifts over time. This synthesis enables decision-makers to move beyond reactive spin-doctoring, offering instead a temporal arc of narrative evolution—showing how frames are deployed by belligerents, amplified by social media, and reinterpreted by third-party states.

Methodologically, an alternative approach is presented in two chapters. The first is a sub-chapter in chapter 2, *Causes, Frames, and Narratives: Media Interpretations of the Origins and Framing of the Russia–Ukraine War*, and the second is a sub-chapter in chapter 5, *Russian Academic Research on the Media Representation of War*, both written by Konstantin Startsev. These innovative approaches offer novel methodological perspectives. They are partly based on the original versions but extend far beyond them in the size of reviewed outputs.

Discourse analysis explores how power is embedded in language and (re)produces dominant social structures. Framing analysis explores what elements of reality are strategically or tacitly foregrounded or backgrounded in conversations and text, and how this includes and excludes voices, ideas and interests in policy and decision-making (van Hulst et al, 2025). Media framing refers to the way media outlets present and structure information to shape the public’s interpretation of events, issues, or individuals (Zaklama, 2025). Media priming explains short-term impact to the media on subsequent judgments or behaviours (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Roskos-Ewoldsen & Dillman Carpentier, 2009). Framing and priming are the cognitive mechanisms that media outlets use to build, reinforce, and direct public understanding of a media narrative. Framing builds the structural blueprint of a story, while priming activates the mental pathways needed to retrieve and accept that story (Kostopoulos, 2020). Narrative analysis investigates how people make sense of events through the selection and connection of story elements: events, settings and characters. Beyond content selection, narrative structures also exhibit systematic variation for media reporting on war or military conflicts, as can be seen in the following Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative Overview of Narrative Structures Across Reporting Paradigms

Narrative Element	War Journalism / Traditional Elite Frame	Peace Journalism / Alternative Frame	Digital / AI-Driven Cognitive Warfare
Primary Focus	Military victory, strategy, and elite political actors	Humanitarian consequences, structural causes of conflict, and non-violent solutions	Fragmented micro-narratives, real-time updates, and affective (visual–emotional) engagement
Tone	Adversarial, binary ("us vs. them"), and sensationalist	Analytical, empathetic, and multi-perspective	High-velocity, emotionally charged, and verification often lagging behind circulation
Casualty Framing	Selectively reported or instrumentalised to legitimise military retaliation	Reported across all parties to render visible the human costs of violence	Visually explicit, virally circulated, and prone to synthetic manipulation (e.g., deepfakes, AI-generated imagery)

The report consists primarily of analyses of narrative structures typical of war journalism, but it also includes examples of peace versus war journalism (Rahman and Aoni, 2025; Fisher, 2023; and partially Nordenstreng et al., 2023); and a few examples of digital/AI-driven cognitive warfare (including as seen on social media). This division reflects the statistical nature of the available explored materials rather than an attempt to present a balanced sample.

Moreover, the media narratives rarely capture the true immediacy and gravity of war or armed conflict. This was confirmed by Shaver et al. (2021) who examined how U.S. news media reported on international affairs. Drawing on a corpus of approximately 25 million articles published by leading online news outlets over roughly a decade, the authors investigated whether aggregate reporting revealed disparities between the volume of attention devoted to major global issues and objective indicators of their human costs, such as the number of individuals killed. Their central finding was a general paucity of coverage of issues responsible for immense human suffering. Although the number of articles referencing a given topic tended to rise with the associated human toll, aggregate human costs appeared, overall, to exert little influence on the frequency with which such issues were reported in the mainstream media. In an extension of the project, Shaver et al. (2021) replicated their analysis using a restricted set of outlets — *The Economist*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, *Lawfare*, *The New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *War on the Rocks*, and *The Washington Post* — and found that the results did not diverge: the patterns observed in the restricted sample mirrored those reported for the full corpus.

The study by Shaver et al. (2021) further addressed the question of why some countries featured more prominently in news reporting than others. Several key findings emerged, although Shaver et al. (2021) cautioned against causal interpretation. Authoritarian governments were considerably more likely to receive media attention than other regime types. Unsurprisingly, political violence — or the threat thereof — also attracted coverage: countries in which the U.S. military was engaged in combat operations, countries undergoing forcible political transitions (operationalised as successful coups), and countries with higher recorded levels of wartime violence received substantially greater attention. Somewhat counterintuitively, variables plausibly related to restrictions on journalists' operational capacity were not consistently associated with reduced reporting. Factors that might have facilitated information flows or lowered operating costs — such as internet and mobile telephone penetration — did not correlate positively with coverage levels. Similarly, reporting on a given country actually increased with measures of direct threats to journalists, namely the numbers of journalists killed and, separately, jailed. (Countries with higher overall homicide rates — potentially a proxy for safety or ease of operation — did, however, receive less attention.) Nor were countries located farther from the USA, or those without English as an official language — both factors that presumably raised operational costs for U.S. media — less likely to be covered. The authors did note that countries with larger urban populations were markedly more likely to receive coverage, a pattern possibly linked to the ease of journalistic operations, but potentially also to some other country characteristic bearing on editorial interest. In other cases, no relationship was observed or the results remained ambiguous: participation in major international sporting events (e.g., reaching the World Cup final stages) showed no association with reporting levels, and neither did indicators of countries' global engagement, such as service as rotating members of the UN Security Council. Importantly, the findings by Shaver et al. (2021) counselled caution for academics, governments, and their contractors and grantees who construct and draw inferences from datasets composed largely or entirely of press reports. Shaver et al. (2021) argued that understanding how the probability of an event being reported varied by type, location, and time would be essential for determining whether report-based event data, in the aggregate, reflected

actual social phenomena or merely the tendencies of those who reported on them. These are important methodological observations for any large-scale monitoring based on media outputs.

Three Methodological Grounds for the Review

In general, the Russian invasion of Ukraine merits its extensive coverage in media and academic analyses: it is upending the post–World War II order, causing a humanitarian catastrophe, and risks escalating into a NATO–Russia confrontation (J. Zacharia, in De Witte (2022)). Additionally, Harb argues that it is for the first time when Western journalists are freely using precise terms (invasion, resistance, war crimes) and showing emotion, which Harb (2022) considers is appropriate for conveying the truth of the situation.

In addition to the geopolitical and media coverage specific reasons cited above, this comprehensive review is warranted on three methodological grounds.

First, the literature reveals that media and academic framing — including the identification of the war’s causes — and coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war more generally, are far from unified. This stems not only from the different perspectives offered by different media types, but more importantly from divergent national media discourses (and, in some cases, divergent national political, media and public discourses). Western media perspectives on the war usually differ from how it is portrayed in media outside the West; this divergence operates largely along a West/non-West axis. By “the West” is understood here the EU, the USA, Canada, Australia, and some other countries such as New Zealand or Japan.

In a partial review of previous scholarship focused on global and structured comparison, Ye and Aron (2025, 4) summarised three major conclusions from prior studies:

“(a) strategic media narratives appeared to be tightly coupled to alliance structures — Ukrainian, U.S., and European media emphasised sovereignty, rule of law, and victim protection, while Russian state media emphasised legitimization through memory politics, securitisation, and euphemistic normalisation (Khlevniuk et al., 2025; Locoman & Lau, 2025; Stawski & Szews, 2024);

(b) “non-aligned” media emphasised domestic costs and pragmatic diplomacy rather than wholesale adoption of either bloc’s storyline (Guazina, 2024; Wozniak et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2024);

(c) venue and audience mattered — connective, citizen-co-constructed narratives could outperform centralised messaging, and disinformation’s success hinged less on supply than on receptive belief ecologies, requiring tailored interventions that pair legal-moral claims with tangible, domestically salient benefits (Zakharchenko, 2025; Zilinsky et al., 2024).”

These findings are expanded below and confronted with a more detailed review of recent research — in particular, as noted, Russian academic perspectives. This is under-researched topic in general, and for the Russo-Ukrainian War coverage in particular. Trishchenko, Makeenko & Anisimov (2025) utilised a dataset of 2,011 publications by Russian media and communication scholars indexed in the Web of Science (2017–2021), for analysis of citation patterns to identify factors associated with international scholarly engagement. They found that fewer than 10% of publications received foreign citations, and those that did were typically published in high-ranking WoS indexes, involved international collaboration, or addressed universal themes. In contrast, the majority of

articles – published in Russian-language journals and indexed in Emerging Sources Citation Index – were cited almost exclusively by domestic scholars.

Second, and relatedly, the causes — and thus, indirectly, the possible solutions — of the war are interpreted in markedly different ways in the West and in the rest of the world (with some natural exceptions and fuzzy cases). These explicit or implicit attributions of primary responsibility often themselves shape the framing just described. In general, Zollmann (2024) identified two major competing explanatory frameworks.

The first interpretation, which dominated Western news media, attributed the war primarily to Russia's imperial ambitions and Putin's character. However, what prevails in certain geopolitical contexts does not necessarily correspond to the global perspective or to universal perceptions. In such real-world cases, it is worthwhile to explore alternative perspectives—or, at the very least, more nuanced ones. The need for such an approach was well documented in a previous study conducted within this project on the Russo-Georgian War. In that real-world geopolitical case, a fundamentally skewed perspective persists regarding the Russian Federation's role in the conflict—a view still held by the majority of EU member states even nearly two decades later.

The second interpretation, presented by some former high-level diplomats, Russia-focused scholars, and selected journalists, Russian politicians and diplomats, and supported by parts of the diplomatic and historical record, suggested that NATO's eastward expansion — in particular the planned expansion into Ukraine — provided the broader context that precipitated the invasion. In fact, foreign-policy analyst Carpenter (2022) reviewed the US policymakers who had predicted that NATO enlargement 'would lead to war' because Russia would perceive it as a hostile policy; warnings by figures such as George Kennan, Madeleine Albright, Strobe Talbott, and Robert M. Gates 'were ignored', and 'Washington's treatment of Russia ... was a policy blunder of epic proportions'. Bock (2014) called this "inattentional blindness". It should be noted that Nitoiu (2026) study explains the Russian President Putin high level narrative discursively constructed the context within which Russian leader made the decision to invade Ukraine in February 2022. Nitoiu (2026) noticed that during periods when Russia perceived willingness to cooperate from the West, Russia aimed to embrace, to a certain extent, a more liberal agenda. Conversely, when Russian leaders identified the narrative constructed by Western leaders as an existential threat, Russian leader tended to close off and become more assertive or aggressive. This contrasting pattern played out during Russia's imperial times, as well as during Soviet communist period. These findings emphasize that, during Putin's rule, the Russian narrative has consistently framed as a key priority the need to ensure that equality governs relations with the West. This effort was coupled with the goal of developing an equal and sustainable partnership with the West. Initially, during the 2000s, all narrative frames (including those focused on Ukraine or Europe) were constructed with a deep sense of hope, as the West was perceived to be committed and willing to develop cooperation with Russia. However, disagreements around the security architecture on the European continent, particularly NATO expansion in Georgia or Ukraine, gradually dispelled hopes for cooperation. As a result, following the Ukraine crisis, the Russian President narrative has emphasized the idea of Western betrayal following the end of the Cold War, and that closer military relations between the West and Ukraine would pose an existential threat to Russia. A key dynamic in the construction of the discourse of the Russian President was the move from a more technical and substantive framing of cooperation, which was prevalent during the first half of the timeframe, to a more identity, culture and history-informed framing by the Kremlin. The Russian President moved from a technocratic understanding of managing relations with the West based on discussing initiatives and solutions to a more ideological one that contrasted seemingly (gradually) irreconcilable differences

between Russia and the West. This ideological focus also translated in the way Russia/Putin framed Ukrainian nationalism and subsequent growing perceived Russophobia as a key result of the West's efforts to drive a wedge between Ukraine and Russia, but also the unwillingness of the EU or the US to acknowledge Russia's red lines. Furthermore, Nitoiu findings highlight that, by the end of 2021, one of the key unquestionable tenets of the Russian President narrative gradually became the idea that the West was never prepared to genuinely engage with Russia and was only ready to make merely symbolic moves, despite Russia's perceived track record of Russian concessions towards the US or the EU. When co-existence efforts on equal footing failed, Russia sought to turn away from liberal values and court other important international actors that shared anti-Western grievances, such as China or India. This led to a narrative shift towards promoting pluralism and multipolar world order as the only avenue for avoiding conflict with the West. The Russian President has been arguing for the last decade that the West needs to accept the development of a multipolar order and respect zones of vital geopolitical interest for Russia. Russian presidential discourse had consistently forewarned of the existential threats to the country's national security stemming from NATO's eastward enlargement toward Ukraine, compounded by what Russian leaders perceived as a fundamental asymmetry in Western engagement and an absence of genuine multilateral cooperation. This perception was further reinforced by an increasingly adversarial posture adopted by the USA — particularly in the aftermath of the 2016 presidential elections — which, from Russia's strategic calculus, signaled a deliberate reframing of Russia as a geopolitical adversary rather than a partner. By the close of 2021, Russia found itself in what its leadership characterized as an unavoidable and deeply entrenched confrontation with the West, with the Ukrainian question emerging as the principal — and ultimately irreconcilable — flashpoint of that broader geopolitical antagonism, concluded Nitoiu (2026).

These issues are not unrelated. As mentioned, the attribution of responsibility for the Russo-Ukrainian War—grounded in liberal or neoliberal theories of international relations—subtly frames how both IR analysts and journalists cover and analyse the conflict. If we ignore that it is legally aggression and set aside Russia's official justifications—such as 'demilitarising' and 'denazifying' Ukraine, and later ensuring its neutrality—the true reasons in Russian official discourse, as presented above, are perceived existential threats to Russia's national security from NATO's eastward expansion toward Ukraine. However, as noted above, this perspective is marginalised and at times ridiculed within Western media and diplomatic-political circles.

Third, even within the West, perspectives on the war are not uniform: media, politicians, and publics in Poland and the Baltic states (formally institutionalized as the Northern Group-Ukraine format, this coalition of 12 Northern European and Baltic nations was established in November 2024 to bolster Ukraine's defense industry and coordinate military aid) typically share unambiguous and rather categorical explanations of the war's causes (e.g., typically Russia's neo-imperialist ambitions - e.g. Klin, 2025), while the media, politicians, and/or publics of other EU member states display more varied interpretations. In addition, minor or even marginal dissenting media, public, or political perspectives still occasionally exist within otherwise predominantly unified Western national discourses, including, for example, in Poland (e.g., Taradejna, 2024).

In sum, such an overview may help policymakers and diplomats recognise alternative perspectives and avoid the insularity of ivory-tower thinking — which is critically relevant for a proper understanding of the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war. For journalists and the media, it may challenge deeply ingrained framings and preferred explanations of the war's causes.

Finally, from an academic perspective, with the benefit of an in-depth understanding of the background factors identified and the methodological deficiencies uncovered, the advances in AI mentioned above may facilitate new ways of monitoring and analysing media and public discourses on local and foreign policies, globally and in real time. Some of the studies reviewed below suggest promising, if tentative, results in that regard (e.g., Ye & Aron, 2025). Therefore, as noted, the methodological challenges inherent in global monitoring of news production—along with the caveats outlined above—constitute a new challenge that AI may help address, building on the tentative methodological-conceptual blueprints presented in the final section.

Structure of the Study

The study is structured as follows. Section I presents Mini Global Survey Among IR Analysts. This section provides initial methodologically limited but still potentially useful insight into real division between the West and the rest of the World in academia concerning causes of the Russo-Ukrainian War, with cognitive impact going deep into subsequent analyses. A note is warranted here. In academic writing, there exists an inherent bias toward perfection. Imperfect outputs, even when acknowledged as such, are typically treated as deficiencies. Yet it is rarely accepted that few research plans are executed with complete fidelity, or that few studies conclude exactly as originally envisioned.

Section II (Causes, Frames and Narratives: Media Interpretations) covers what is called media narratives - geopolitical, historical, and domestic-political explanations in media coverage, including indirect framing (based on headlines, author and source selection). As will be shown, media narratives and framings about the war were sharply contradictory globally (Nordenstreng et al., 2023; Holand & Ellingsen, 2025), although some country-specific trends could be identified: for example, U.S. outlets functioned as global agenda-setters when domestic political decisions carried international consequences, while European allies sustained day-to-day cohesion narratives and institutional oversight (Ye & Aron, 2025).

Section III (Contested Vocabularies: Political Rhetoric and News Language) analyses how political and diplomatic discourse shaped media coverage and vice versa (following Wozniak, Liu & Lind, 2024).

Section IV (Between Headlines and Minds: Media Narratives vs. Public Opinion) contrasts media narratives with survey data and public opinion (e.g., Chaban & Zhabotynska, 2024; Hameleers et al., 2024).

Section V provides Russian Academic Discourse on Media Framing (and Priming) of the Russo-Ukrainian War. As explained in detail later on, it represents Russian authors' perspectives of Russian and foreign media coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war. The uniqueness of this overview stems from the fact that it is based mostly on Russian-language sources.

Section VI, compares the methodologies and novel research approaches employed across the reviewed studies, assessing tentatively their innovative potential, reliability, strengths, and limitations.

Section VII offers a final synthesis organised around the key research topics of Sections I–V. Some thematic overlap across components is unavoidable, but each addresses a distinct dimension of media framing and explanation.

Appendix 1 presents results of a Pilot Experiment on Analyzing Foreign Policy Changes Through Media Reporting.

This synthetic review fills a gap left by partial studies lacking a unifying perspective for policy, academic and diplomatic audiences. It is acknowledged that this is an ambitious, and thus by definition, unfinished and imperfect project. However, these times are critical, and there is an urgent need to help end the Russo-Ukrainian war. It is hoped that this study will contribute to that effort while offering fresh insights and perspectives. Academically, this study suggests that with the assistance of AI, a comprehensive synthesis is both necessary and achievable. Finally, as noted, tentative methodological blueprints are provided for both media framing reviews and the monitoring of emerging foreign policies and trends.

Sources and Scope

Materials included country-specific, language-specific, case-specific, and comparative studies, plus a small global survey of analysts. Primary discovery sources were the CEEOL database, Google Scholar, and the Russian Scientific Electronic Library (eLibrary.ru). Methods, samples, and relevance to the research question varied — a limitation acknowledged throughout.

To capture scholarship structurally underrepresented in the major Anglophone citation indexes, the search strategy combined selected Scopus and Web of Science articles with the Central and Eastern European Online Library (CEEOL). CEEOL is a multilingual full-text repository of humanities and social-science journals, books, and grey literature from and about Central, Eastern, and South-Eastern Europe, indexing over 3,000 journals across more than thirty languages. Its inclusion was essential for surfacing peer-reviewed scholarship published in or on Central-Eastern Europe on the framing of the Russo-Ukrainian war — work that is largely invisible to Scopus and Web of Science due to their well-documented coverage bias toward English-language publications (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016). CEEOL was treated as a discovery layer rather than a quality filter: because the platform aggregates content without applying uniform peer-review criteria.

To access Russian-language scholarship, the search strategy incorporated the Scientific Electronic Library (eLibrary.ru) which aggregates 80 million of publications across more than 5,600 Russian journals. eLibrary.ru was used with explicit awareness of its well-documented quality and integrity problems: Chekhovich and Khazov (2022) identified more than 70,000 cases of publication duplication across 3.8 million articles on the platform, and a sustained body of scientometric and investigative work has shown that the broader Russian academic publishing infrastructure is structurally vulnerable to plagiarism, paper mills, hijacked journals, and translation-based duplication (Abalkina, 2023; Abalkina & Libman, 2020; Gerashchenko, 2023; Moskaleva et al., 2018). The Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI), a curated ~800-journal subset previously hosted on the Web of Science platform, was withdrawn by Clarivate in 2022–2023 following the company’s exit from Russia, removing the principal external quality filter for Russian-language scholarship.

Purely visual analyses (e.g., Nagy-Béni, 2025; AlQahtani & Alharbi, 2026) were excluded, as they usually avoid deeper structural causes. Such studies did occasionally reveal frame differences — Western and Ukrainian outlets depicted the war as happening to Ukraine (external cause), while Russian media implied geopolitical necessity or a larger threat (Young & Omosun, 2025) — but the portrayal of causes and perceptions, including framing, is more clearly captured through the variables chosen in non-visual studies. Some books and studies that received largely negative reviews, such as Anton Oleinik’s *A Comparative Analysis of Political and Media Discourses about Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine* (see Noordenbos, 2026), were excluded, as were some academically questionable outputs, such as those produced by NATO-affiliated individuals and institutions. In contrast, some low-quality studies were deliberately included, following the chosen search

strategy—they illustrate that scientific databases (not only in Russia) include rather questionable outputs. As the research advanced, the inclusion of diverse global perspectives—South African, for instance—was prioritized, even when this came at the cost of reduced quality. This is not to say that this report covers all relevant studies — this was impossible within the given research time and the scope of available materials. It is believed, however, that the report is illustrative, and possibly sufficiently representative, of European, US, Russian, and global media coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war.

I. Mini Global Survey Among IR Analysts

1. Survey Design and Respondent Sample

With the aim of gaining a global insight into the Russo-Ukrainian War, I attempted to obtain answers from researchers worldwide. This is by definition a tricky and challenging task. In total, over 200 experts and diplomats globally were contacted, yielding a response rate of approximately one third. Naturally, sampling of this type — based on a combination of personal contacts, secondary personal contacts, and direct contacting via publicly available email addresses, in some cases encouraged by the provision of a symbolic honorarium — does not provide fully reliable outputs. For example, although it was possible to secure a limited number (six) of answers from Russia, these were most likely experts who had managed to retain a critical perspective on Russia in general, and a more friendly or at least neutral position towards the West.

I managed to get about 80 answers among IR experts, but not much more than some 20 answers for diplomats and journalists each. I also attempted to contact IR analysts through editorial offices of IR journals, assuming these journals maintain extensive databases of email contacts from past and recent contributors and reviewers. This approach succeeded with a Polish journal but not with Czech, Hungarian, and Slovak IR journals, or with the International Communication Association.

One reviewer, Konstantin Startsev (2026), raised a rather critical opinion of this survey, which merits detailed discussion.

First, a heavy skew. Poland accounts for 26.5% of the entire sample (simply because one Polish journal's contact database worked out). The non-Western group is about 22 people. At such N, percentages ("59%") look solid, but they stand for 12–13 individuals. One cannot simultaneously write "the sample is not representative" and conclude that there is a "structurally significant interpretive divide." It is one or the other.

The next and most serious problem is that the study's key variable is assigned by the researcher himself. Respondents are sorted into "Collective West / Post-Soviet / Global South" by citizenship or affiliation, at the author's discretion. But the paper's hypothesis is that a person's views are shaped by their membership in a community. In that case, this membership should have been asked of the respondents themselves, not assigned by the author. The result is circular: the author constructs the very thing he sets out to measure.

Moreover, the categories themselves are not a neutral grid. "Collective West / Post-Soviet / Global South" is an imaginative geography, and a contested one: the boundary of "the West" shifts depending on who draws it. Bakić-Hayden (1995) described this as "nesting Orientalisms", as a gradation of "Orients" within Europe, in which each group perceives its eastern neighbour as the more "oriental" one; Kalmar (2022) shows the same logic as transitive: Germans view Czechs as Easterners, Czechs the Slovaks, Slovaks the Ukrainians, Ukrainians the Russians. Assigning respondents to these zones by the author's own mental map therefore builds the researcher's positional geography into the independent variable. The sample table itself shows the strain: Israel is filed under the "Collective West," while Albania (a country that was never part of the USSR or Warsaw pact) is grouped with Russia, Georgia and Ukraine in the "Post-Soviet / Eastern Europe" cohort. Most strikingly, the largest single group within the "Collective West" is Poland (26.5% of the whole sample), a country whose

own position on the West/East gradient is precisely what the nesting-Orientalisms literature is about (Kalmar, 2022). ”

The reviewer's concerns about sample composition and category construction are well taken, and merit clarification of the study's inferential logic rather than a defense of its numerical precision. First, the sample was not designed, and should not be read, as a probability sample supporting population-level percentage estimates; it follows a purposive, maximum-variation logic of case selection. The goal is conceptual coverage of blocs, not proportional representation of world population (Patton, 1990), and the appropriate standard of rigor is analytic generalization to the study's theoretical proposition rather than statistical generalization to a population (Yin, 2009). Accordingly, findings from small subgroups are reported and interpreted as indicative of a potential interpretive divide warranting confirmatory testing on a larger sample, consistent with the transferability criterion proposed for naturalistic, exploratory designs (Guba & Lincoln, 1985), rather than as confirmed structural effects; percentage figures for cells below conventional adequacy thresholds (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007) have been supplemented with raw counts to avoid overstating precision. Those are different, compatible epistemic registers.

Second, the independent variable has been reframed to reduce the circularity the reviewer correctly identifies. Bloc membership is operationalized as an institutional and documentable characteristic — citizenship, professional affiliation, and outlet nationality — rather than as self-perceived community belonging; this decouples the independent variable from the interpretive (dependent) variable it is hypothesized to predict. Where the theoretical claim does bear on self-perception, this is now treated as a separate, empirically testable question rather than assumed: a single-item self-placement measure would allow assigned and self-reported bloc membership to be cross-tabulated in future iterations, with any divergence itself constituting a substantive finding. A single-item self-placement question ("Which of these best describes how you'd characterize your own professional/political community?") might help here.

Third, because the Collective West / Post-Soviet / Global South classification is, as the reviewer notes, a contested and theory-laden geography rather than a neutral grid, the classification rule has been made explicit ex ante (alliance membership — NATO/EU/EEA — as of the survey date) rather than left to implicit researcher judgment. Case-specific anomalies (e.g., Israel, Albania) are edge cases (e.g., Israel coded via OECD/Western-alliance membership rather than geography). Other alliances also exist, ranging from the historically significant ANZUS treaty to more recent security pacts such as AUKUS and the Force Posture Agreement, the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty or the U.S.-South Korea Mutual Defense Treaty. Some other countries seem to be changing their geopolitical alignment radically (Ukraine), while others appear to oscillate between two blocs (Georgia). I agree that these classification choices remain a limitation of the design rather than a fully resolved issue, and I present the study's conclusions accordingly as hypothesis-generating, not confirmatory. The paper's classification is explicitly offered as one operationalization of a contested, theory-laden geography; testing whether survey respondents' framing tracks any externally-defined bloc structure is itself the contribution.

There is a certain level of imprecision and fluidity; however, overall, this does not necessarily undermine the meaning of the indicators.

Table 2. Country of citizenship — survey respondents

Country	n	% within cohort	% of total (N = 83)
Collective West — n = 59 (71.1% of total)			
Poland	22	37.3%	26.5%
USA	7	11.9%	8.4%
Estonia	5	8.5%	6.0%
UK	4	6.8%	4.8%
Spain	4	6.8%	4.8%
Sweden	3	5.1%	3.6%
Italy	3	5.1%	3.6%
Finland	2	3.4%	2.4%
Lithuania	2	3.4%	2.4%
Austria	1	1.7%	1.2%
Slovakia	1	1.7%	1.2%
Greece	1	1.7%	1.2%
Hungary	1	1.7%	1.2%
Netherlands	1	1.7%	1.2%
Israel	1	1.7%	1.2%
France / Russia	1	1.7%	1.2%
Subtotal	59	100.0%	71.1%
Post-Soviet / Eastern Europe — n = 10 (12.0% of total)			
Russia	6	60.0%	7.2%
Georgia	2	20.0%	2.4%
Ukraine	1	10.0%	1.2%
Albania	1	10.0%	1.2%
Subtotal	10	100.0%	12.0%
Global South — n = 13 (15.7% of total)			
India	7	53.8%	8.4%
Kenya	1	7.7%	1.2%
South Africa	1	7.7%	1.2%
Asian (unspecified)	1	7.7%	1.2%
Bangladesh	1	7.7%	1.2%
Malaysia	1	7.7%	1.2%
Brazil	1	7.7%	1.2%
Subtotal	13	100.0%	15.7%
Other / unspecified — n = 1 (1.2% of total)			
Prefer not to say	1	100.0%	1.2%
Subtotal	1	100.0%	1.2%
Grand total	83	—	100.0%

Notes: Collective West includes all EU member states represented in the sample, plus the United Kingdom and the United States of America. Post-Soviet / Eastern Europe covers Russia, Georgia, Ukraine, and Albania. Global South groups respondents from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. “France / Russia” reflects a dual or ambiguous citizenship response (placed in Other). “Asian (unspecified)” reflects a respondent who identified by regional rather than national category. Percentages may not sum to exactly 100.0 % due to rounding.

As can be seen, this is a more illustrative than representative sample, given its global focus but naturally limited number of responses (83). Nonetheless, it remains quite relevant given the heterogeneity of answers produced, and all the more so when comparing Non-Western with Western perspectives. Western perspectives (USA, EU, and Israel) were represented in more than 70 percent of responses. The first issue concerned the extent to which a respondent's work was focused on the Russo-Ukrainian War.

Chart 1. *The Russo-Ukrainian War as Focus of a Respondent*

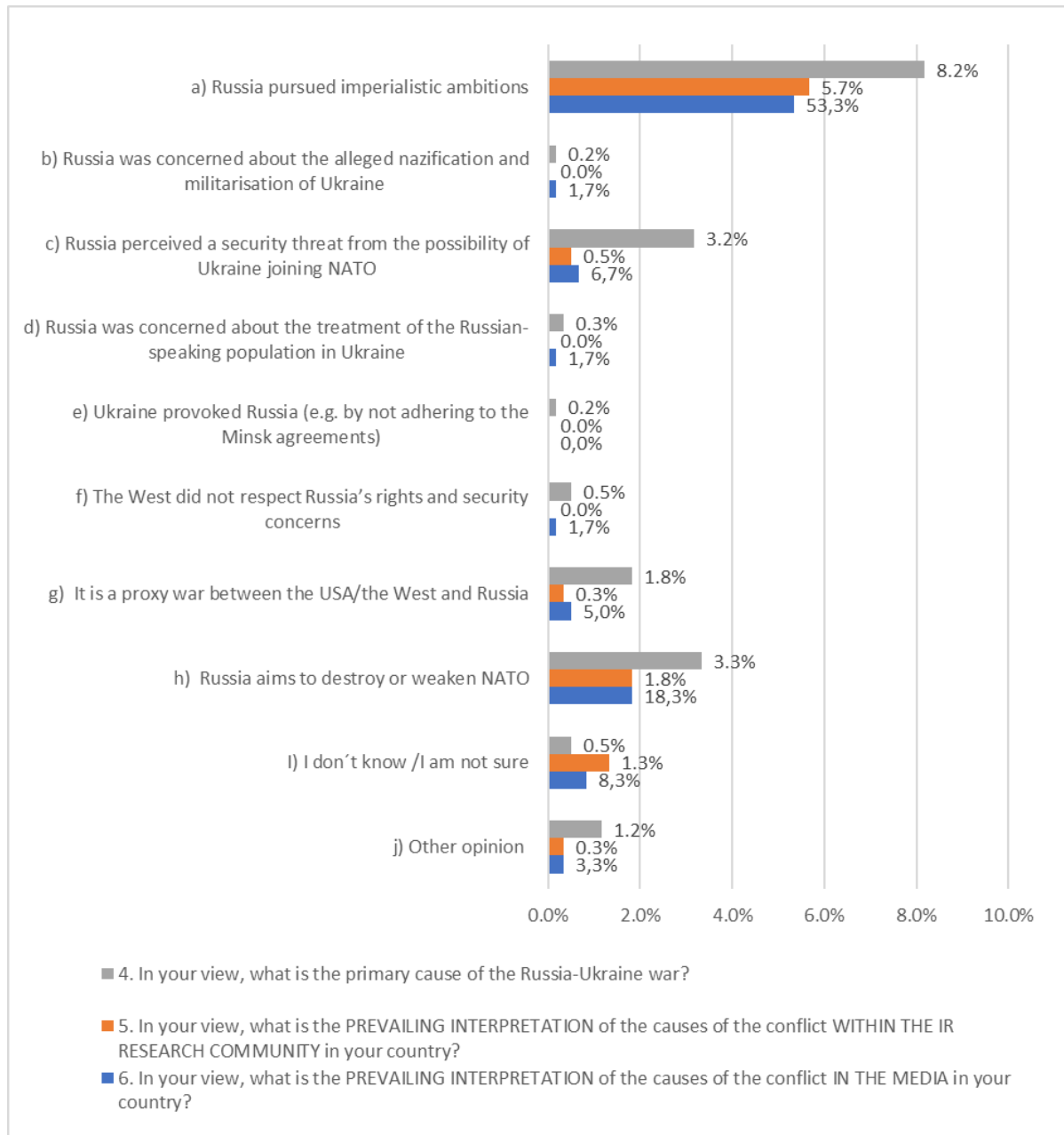


The fact that 40 percent of respondents systematically addressed the topic in question represents a notably positive outcome. A further 45 percent addressed it at least occasionally. This was mainly due to specific selection – mainly experts who showed interest in their previous publications to this type of issue (Russo-Ukrainian war, on in general, modern war conflicts) were contacted. The answers in questionnaire were predetermined, with open answer offered as alternative in questions that could provide unexpected perspective.

The survey data yield four principal findings. First, Western scholars overwhelmingly endorse Russian imperial ambitions as the primary cause of the war (81.7%), and they perceive this frame as dominant within their research communities and media, albeit at moderately lower levels (~53–57%). Second, alternative explanations—particularly those emphasising NATO expansion, proxy-war dynamics, and NATO-destruction motives—are privately entertained by substantial minorities (18–33%) but are perceived as having significantly less institutional traction (3–18%). Third, revisionist frames aligned with Russian official discourse register negligible endorsement at all levels. Fourth, respondents exhibit greater uncertainty about institutional consensus than about their own positions, confirming that the personal–perceived gap reflects genuine second-order judgments rather than projection.

Taken together, these findings suggest that Western scholarly discourse on the Russo-Ukrainian War is characterised by a dominant but not monolithic interpretive framework, with personal views displaying greater pluralism than respondents believe their institutional environments publicly sanction. The compression pattern—whereby alternative frames shrink at the institutional level—points to a perceived-consensus effect that merits further investigation in comparative discourse analysis.

Chart 2. Collective West Perspectives



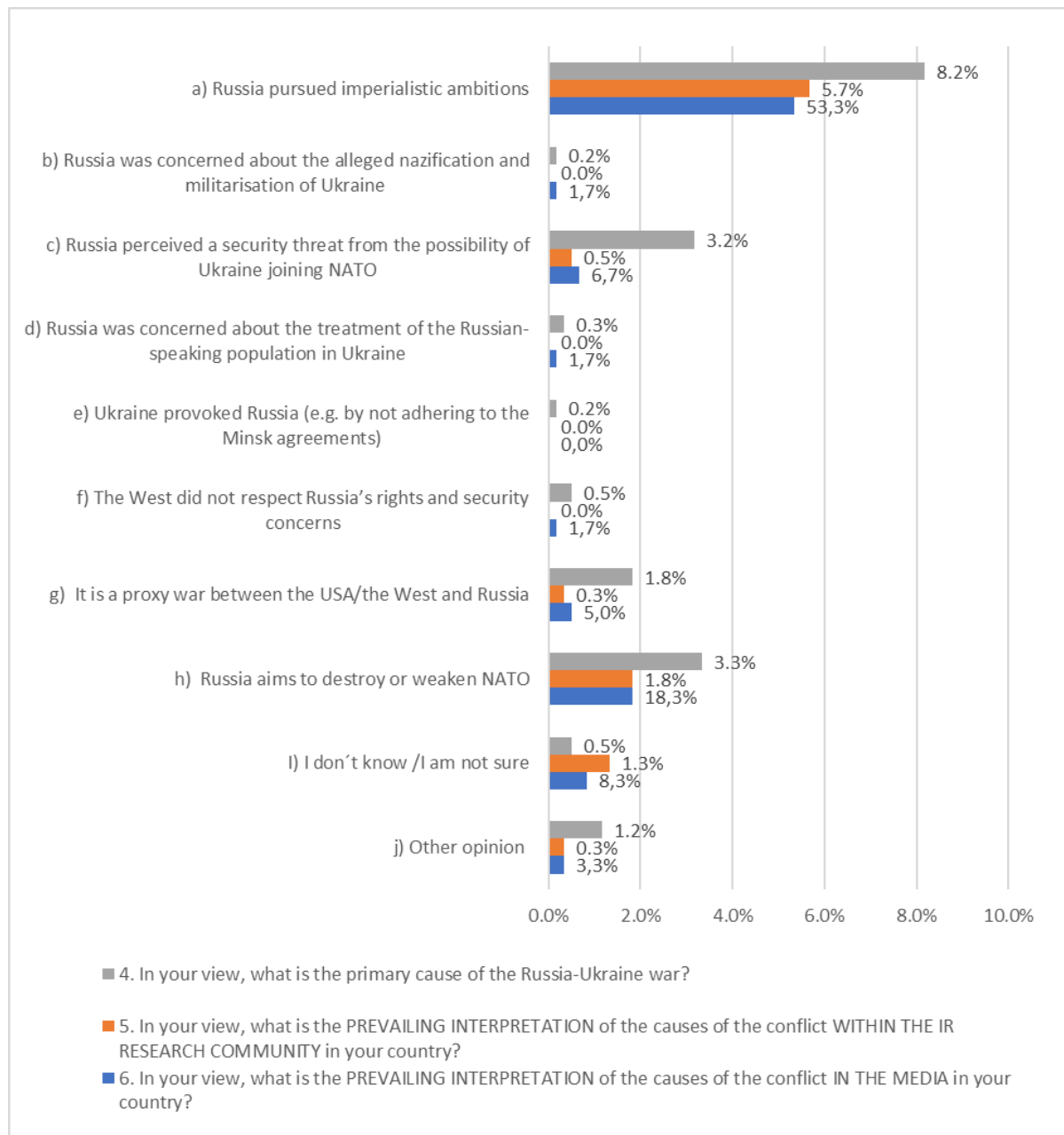
Notes: For Question 4, respondents could choose multiple options. For Questions 5 and 6, respondents were allowed to select only one option.

Taken together, the non-Western findings reveal a distinctive interpretive landscape shaped by three interlocking patterns.

First, the personal hierarchy of causal explanations is inverted relative to the West: NATO-security-threat and proxy-war frames outscore imperial-ambitions at the personal level, indicating that non-Western scholars lean considerably more toward structural-realist and great-power-conflict interpretations than their Western counterparts. Second, despite this personal orientation,

imperialism nevertheless remains the top perceived institutional frame—both within the research community and in national media. This persistence suggests that Western interpretive norms have diffused into non-Western academic and media discourse to a greater degree than they have shaped non-Western scholars' private views. Third, the most dramatic finding is the complete collapse of the NATO-destruction frame: although 27.3% of respondents personally endorse this explanation, it registers at 0.0% for both perceived research-community and perceived-media consensus—the steepest single decline observed in either cohort, and a complete disconnect between private belief and perceived public discourse on this specific claim.

Chart 3. *The Non-Western World Perspectives*



Notes: For Question 4, respondents could choose multiple options. For Questions 5 and 6, respondents were allowed to select only one option.

In addition, the non-Western cohort exhibits modestly greater openness to Russian-aligned justificatory narratives than the West—nazification concerns and Ukrainian-provocation frames register marginally higher personal endorsement—though these remain minority positions that find no institutional traction. Finally, personal uncertainty is entirely absent (0.0% "Don't know"), yet second-order uncertainty rises substantially to 9.1–13.6%, confirming that institutional judgments are not simple projections of personal views but reflect genuine, reflective assessments of collective consensus.

Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that non-Western IR scholars operate within an interpretive environment shaped by two competing forces: a personal predisposition toward structural-realist explanations, and a perceived institutional environment that remains anchored to the Western imperialism frame. The resulting tension—between private pluralism and perceived institutional homogeneity—mirrors the compression effect observed in the West, but with the axis of divergence inverted. Where Western scholars personally embrace the imperialism frame more strongly than they believe their institutions do, non-Western scholars personally favour structural-realist frames yet perceive their institutions as more imperial-aggression-oriented than they themselves are. This asymmetry carries implications not only for comparative discourse analysis but also for understanding how global scholarly communities internalise—and resist—dominant geopolitical narratives.

2. Comparative Analysis of Causal Attributions Across Cohorts

The two charts present survey data from two distinct respondent cohorts — scholars affiliated with the Collective West ($n \approx 60$) and those from the non-Western world ($n \approx 22$) — across three measurement dimensions: personal causal attributions (Q4, multiple-choice), perceived prevailing interpretation within national IR research communities (Q5, single-choice), and perceived dominant media framing (Q6, single-choice). A systematic comparison reveals both cross-cohort convergences and structurally significant divergences.

2.1 Convergences

A relatively shared primacy of Russian imperial agency was identified. Both cohorts identify *option a* ("Russia pursued imperialistic ambitions") as relatively the most frequently endorsed explanation in Q4 — 82% in the Collective West and 50.0% in the non-Western world for individual researchers. This cross-cohort consensus is the single most notable area of relative agreement and suggests a degree of shared recognition of revisionist intent in Russian foreign policy behaviour, even if the magnitude of endorsement differs substantially. The convergence is reproduced in institutional perceptions (Q5, Q6), where option *a* consistently attracts the plurality of responses in both groups of research community and media interpretation (~53–57% in the West; ~37–41% in the non-Western sample).

However, with ~ 59 %, Russian perception of a security threat of possibility that Ukraine joins NATO was the most dominant opinion among non-Western researchers. Interestingly, within research community and media in a particular country, this was estimated by a researcher at much smaller level – ~27 and ~18 % respectively.

It was found only marginal endorsement of explicitly pro-Russian rationalisations. Options *b* (alleged nazification/militarisation), *d* (Russian-speaking population concerns), and *e* (Ukrainian provocation) register less than 10% or near zero across Q5 and Q6 in both cohorts. This suggests

that neither respondent group perceives these narratives as institutionally dominant — whether in academic or media discourse — regardless of their geopolitical positioning.

There is relative epistemic confidence. Option *I* ("I don't know/I am not sure") is entirely absent from non-Western Q4 responses and minimal (5.0%) in the West, indicating that respondents in both cohorts approach causal attribution with considerable confidence in their personal assessments. A modest uptick in Q5/Q6 uncertainty (8.3–13.3% in the West) may reflect greater reflexivity about the internal consensus of national scholarly communities rather than personal ambiguity.

2.2 Divergences

Divergences involve structural-realist versus liberal-normative interpretive frameworks. The most analytically consequential divergence concerns the relative weight assigned to structural/geopolitical explanations versus those foregrounding Russian agency and imperial ideology. Option *c* ("Russia perceived a security threat from Ukraine joining NATO") was selected by 59% of non-Western respondents in Q4 — the single highest-endorsed item within their distribution — compared to only 32% in the Collective West. Analogously, option *g* ("proxy war between the USA/the West and Russia") was endorsed by 46% of non-Western respondents versus 18% among Western ones. This divergence maps onto a well-documented fault line in IR theory: non-Western scholarly discourse exhibits greater affinity with structural realist and post-colonial framings, whereby the conflict is interpreted through the optics of great-power competition and NATO expansionism rather than through a liberal-normative lens emphasising Russian revisionism and norm violation.

NATO-centric threat attribution was present. Option *h* ("Russia aims to destroy or weaken NATO") shows an asymmetric distribution: it is more salient among Western respondents in both Q4 (33.3% vs. 27%) and Q5/Q6 (~18% vs. near 0%). The near-complete absence of this framing in non-Western institutional perceptions is particularly notable and may indicate that this particular quasi-threat narrative possesses limited discursive currency outside Euro-Atlantic scholarly and media ecosystems.

Modest elevation of non-hegemonic security narratives in non-Western Q4 could be identified. Options *e* (Ukrainian provocation, 14%) and *f* (West's disregard of Russian security concerns, 14%) receive marginally higher Q4 endorsement among non-Western respondents relative to their Western counterparts (2% and 5.0%, respectively). While these figures remain well below the dominant explanations, their differential elevation may signal greater analytical openness — within non-Western academic communities — to revisionist security narratives typically marginalised in Western discourse.

Perceived pluralism in institutional framing can be detected. Within the Collective West, Q5 and Q6 distributions are tightly concentrated: option *a* commands over 53%, with option *h* as a distant secondary (~18%), and option *I* constitutes a non-trivial third response category (~8–13%). The non-Western Q5/Q6 distributions are comparatively dispersed, with meaningful shares assigned to options *a*, *c*, and *g* simultaneously. This suggests that non-Western respondents perceive their national IR communities and media as epistemically more heterogeneous, accommodating multiple competing explanatory frameworks rather than converging on a single dominant narrative.

2.3 Summary

The data are consistent with the hypothesis that causal attribution of the Russo-Ukrainian war is conditioned by epistemic community membership and geopolitical positioning. Western

respondents exhibit a strong interpretive consensus around Russian imperial agency, reproduced across personal, academic, and media framings. Non-Western respondents, while not dismissing the imperial thesis, exhibit substantially higher endorsement of structural and systemic explanations — particularly NATO expansion and proxy-war dynamics — and perceive greater pluralism in the institutional framing of the conflict within their own national contexts. These tentative findings have implications for comparative IR discourse analysis and for the study of how geopolitical positionality shapes scholarly epistemology, as will be shown later on.

3. Conclusion

This part of the study reports findings from a mini global survey of IR analysts ($n = 83$, response rate approximately one third of over 200 contacted) examining how researchers across different geopolitical contexts interpret the causes of the Russo-Ukrainian War, and how they perceive that their research community and media interpret the same issue. The sample is explicitly illustrative rather than representative, with Western respondents (Collective West: USA, EU member states, Israel) accounting for approximately 70% of the total, Post-Soviet and Eastern European respondents for 12%, and Global South respondents for roughly 16%. Approximately 87% of participants addressed the conflict either systematically (41%) or at least occasionally (46%) in their work, suggesting a high degree of topical engagement.

The central analytical tentative illustrative finding is a structurally significant interpretive divide between Western and non-Western scholarly communities. Both cohorts share a degree of consensus in recognising Russian imperial ambitions as a primary causal factor (82% in the West, 50.0% in the non-Western world), and neither perceives explicitly pro-Russian rationalisations — such as the nazification narrative, linguistic minority concerns, or Ukrainian provocation — as institutionally dominant in academic or media discourse.

However, the cohorts diverge sharply on structural-geopolitical explanations: non-Western respondents assign substantially greater weight to NATO expansion as a Russian security concern (59% vs. 32%) and to the proxy-war framing (46% vs. 18%), reflecting stronger affinity with structural realist and post-colonial IR frameworks. Western respondents, by contrast, converge tightly around liberal-normative interpretations foregrounding Russian revisionism, a consensus reproduced consistently across personal, scholarly community, and media perceptions.

A further notable asymmetry concerns perceived institutional pluralism: Western respondents report a highly concentrated national discourse, while non-Western respondents describe their academic and media environments as epistemically more heterogeneous, accommodating multiple competing explanatory frameworks simultaneously. Taken together, the findings suggest that geopolitical positionality and intellectual community membership are significant conditioning factors in how IR scholars frame the origins of the conflict — a conclusion with broader implications for the sociology of international relations knowledge production. It may also be that citizenship-based grouping captures legal status but imperfectly reflects epistemic community affiliation. Scholars trained in Western institutions but holding non-Western citizenship may share analytical frameworks despite geographic categorization. Rather than establishing causation, this data documents association between geopolitical position and explanatory preference. Funding sources, institutional employment, and publication pressures may independently influence scholar perspectives beyond nationality-based categories. Further research with controlled variables is needed to isolate mechanism. Nonetheless, these tentative findings help to explain and understand follow up results – approaches to analyses of media coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war. This

illustrative survey yielded results that were confirmed by a subsequent literature review, while also revealing the challenges of obtaining reliable, globally representative survey data without adequate global networking and financial backing.

II. Causes, Frames and Narratives: Media Interpretations of the Origins and Framings of the Russo-Ukrainian War

The comparison begins with broader, multi-country studies on media framing of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict before turning to country-specific, outlet-specific, and incident-specific analyses. Because the reviewed studies employed different methodologies, sources, sampling periods, and units of analysis, direct comparison is inherently challenging, and clustering seemingly similar findings can be misleading. The most reasonable approach — although far from perfect — was therefore to compare periods of the war, within which the most interesting observations and trends could be identified. The presentation accordingly proceeds chronologically, beginning with the outbreak of the full-scale invasion. For the same reasons of comparability, perspectives and findings on Russian domestic media are treated separately at the end of this section. In fact, there are two specific parts for Russian perspectives. There is subsection treating Russian media and domestic Russian discourse by Non-Russian Authors, and then another specific section V. dealing with analyses carried out by Russian authors.

1. The Outbreak Period (February–May 2022): Multi-Country Comparisons

Nordenstreng et al. (2023) compared the main TV news bulletins in nine countries — Russia, China, Finland, the UK, Italy, the US, Brazil, India, and South Africa — across 10 days sampled between late February and mid-April 2022. The findings suggested substantial variation in framing, angle, and political orientation, with significant differences between countries — especially between Russia and all others, but also between the Western and the BRICS countries. Russia was the clearest outlier, its TV news closely following a state-aligned propaganda model. Among Western nations, government-aligned framing was most prominent in Finland (77%) and Italy (75%) and least prominent in the US and UK (17–25%); within the BRICS group, such framing ranged from 29% (Brazil) to 54% (India). The home-country angle dominated in most countries, except in the UK, US, and Brazil, where non-governmental and Ukrainian angles received comparatively more airtime. Russia was portrayed negatively across nearly all nations, with China as the main exception (maintaining a neutral tone consistent with its official position) and South Africa showing some neutrality. Most notably, China was the only country to employ peace journalism from the first day of the conflict; Brazil, India, and South Africa occupied a middle ground between war and peace framing, while Western coverage leaned consistently toward war journalism.

It should be noted that the internal reviewer Starstev (2026) identified, among the weaknesses and shortcomings of the cited works, that "[t]he indicator 'government-aligned framing: Finland 77%, USA 17–25%, Russia an outlier' places fundamentally different things in a single column." This criticism, however, does not invalidate the findings, as the authors compared different media and political systems—a legitimate approach

Zollmann (2024) enriched this comparative focus by examining how the Western quality and tabloid press — nine outlets in the USA, the UK, and Germany (The New York Times, The Washington Post, New York Post, The Guardian/Observer, The Times/Sunday Times, The Sun,

Süddeutsche Zeitung, Die Welt/Welt am Sonntag, and Bild/Bild am Sonntag) — framed the causes of Russia's 2022 invasion during its first two weeks, situating the analysis within the broader diplomatic and historical record of NATO's eastward expansion. As mentioned, he identified two competing explanatory frameworks. The first, which dominated Western news media, attributed the war primarily to Russia's imperial ambitions and Putin's character. The second — minority framework — suggested that NATO's eastward expansion provided the broader context that precipitated the invasion. Zollmann found that the latter narrative was systematically marginalised: articles identifying Russia as the aggressor outnumbered those mentioning NATO expansion by a factor of 3.6 during the two-week period, a framing he argued ran contrary to available historical and documentary evidence and contributed to the sidelining of non-military approaches to resolving the conflict. Many items that did mention NATO expansion legitimised the policy or included critical statements only cursorily, although a small number of dissident politicians in the US, UK, and Germany who criticised NATO expansion were quoted. Overall, the press across countries and outlets emphasised frames depicting Russian actions as an aggressive war in pursuit of imperial interests and de-emphasised frames depicting Russia as a state with national interests struggling against NATO expansion — to the point, Zollmann argued, that the news media surrendered their obligation to cover different sides of the story impartially. When Russia invaded Ukraine, he concluded, the news media connected with already established habitual schemas.

Maurer, Haßler and Jost (2022) carried out a quantitative study of 4,300 items published in Germany's leading quality news media between 24 February and 31 May 2022. The sample included FAZ, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Bild, Spiegel, Zeit, ARD Tagesschau (8 p.m.), ZDF Heute (7 p.m.), and RTL Aktuell (6:45 p.m.). They found that in 93% of items, Putin or Russia were attributed sole responsibility for the war; the 'West' was designated as (co-)responsible in only 4% and Ukraine in 2% of all coverage. Motives for starting the war were thematised relatively rarely overall (253 contributions); where addressed, the motive of striving for great-power status (or imperialism, depending on translation) clearly dominated (71% of those contributions), while in a notable 28% defence against NATO was cited as the central motive. Economic motives were hardly ever attributed to Russia. Coverage was strongly dominated by political actors (80% of all actor mentions); scientists barely featured (approximately 2%). Der Spiegel was the only outlet that rated diplomatic measures more positively than deliveries of heavy weapons.

Stawski and Szews (2024) examined (using a modified version of Semetko and Valkenburg's 2000 method) how the war was framed in selected U.S., French, Polish, and Russian media during the first month of the conflict. An analysis of 400 articles showed that media in these countries used roughly the same generic frames; the most important differences concerned the war and human-interest frames, both of which were avoided by Russian media. The authors demonstrated that, despite using the same frames, media in different countries were able to produce markedly different images of events.

Kang, Park and Valdez (2024) applied topic modelling to 48,364 news story descriptions about the war published between 1 February and 31 July 2022, from which 538 stories were randomly selected as a verification sample for inferential analysis. Five news frames were identified: humanism, politics, peace, war, and the economy. In global coverage, the humanism and peace frames were associated with Ukraine, whereas the war frame was associated with Russia. National interest was reflected in coverage: European news publishers (France, Ireland, and the UK) used the humanism frame more (38.2%) than North American (Canada, the US, and Cuba; 27.1%) and Southeast/South Asian publishers (Malaysia, Singapore, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines; 25.7%); the latter group emphasised the politics and war frames more than other regions, with India

and the Philippines — given their links to Ukraine and Russia — most interested in international politics. The study also demonstrated that there was less peace news than war news overall, and that the economy topic (oil prices, stock markets, food, and the global crisis) appeared frequently, indicating that economic consequences became a global concern when wars have global impacts. However, Kang et al.'s (2024) approach can be criticised for mixing mutually incompatible countries and political as well as media systems (e.g., Cuba and the US) within "regional" perspectives.

Hanley, Kumar, & Durumeric (2023) found that the coverage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine has varied widely between Western, Russian, and Chinese media ecosystems with, in their view, propaganda, disinformation, and narrative spins present in all three media ecosystems. The research period covered was from January 1, 2022, to April 15, 2022. They claim that they presented one of the first quantitative analyses of the key differences and similarities between the narratives touted by Chinese, Russian, and Western outlets about the Russo-Ukrainian War. Their approach aimed to determine and compare which topics media ecosystems report on, how each ecosystem reported on those topics, and whether there was influence between different media ecosystems (e.g., Russian to Chinese). Their dataset included 11,359 articles about Ukraine from Western (4,536 articles from eight online outlets: Cnn.com, nytimes.com, washingtonpost.com, theguardian.com, Yahoo.com, reuters.com, foxnews.com, abcnews.com), Russian (3,572 articles from 10 outlets: tass.com, sputniknews.com, news-front.info, geopolitica.ru, southfront.org, katehon.com, journal-neo.org, rt.com, strategic-culture.org, waronfakes.com), and Chinese (3,251 articles from seven outlets: chinadaily.com.cn, cgtn.com, globaltimes.cn, ecns.cn, xinhuanet.com, pdnews.cn, english.cctv.com) news ecosystems. Utilizing differential sentiment analysis and word2vec models, they detailed how each ecosystem has largely covered aspects of the Russo-Ukrainian War. Using a normalized scaled pointwise mutual information metric (NPMI) and partially labeled Dirichlet allocation (PLDA), they extracted the most characteristic words and topics from each ecosystem's articles. In total, the dataset comprised 11,359 articles and a total of 25 media outlets across three ecosystems. By utilizing the normalized pointwise mutual information metric, differential sentiment analysis, word2vec models, and partially labeled Dirichlet allocation, they produced a quantitative analysis of the differences in coverage amongst these three news ecosystems. They found that while the Western press outlets have focused on the military and humanitarian aspects of the war, Russian media have focused on the purported justifications for the "special military operation" such as the presence in Ukraine of "bio-weapons" and "neo-nazis", and Chinese news media have concentrated on the conflict's diplomatic and economic consequences. Detecting the presence of several Russian disinformation narratives in the articles of several Chinese media outlets, they finally measured the degree to which Russian media has influenced Chinese coverage across Chinese outlets' news articles, Weibo accounts, and Twitter accounts. Their analysis indicates that since the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Chinese state media outlets have increasingly cited Russian outlets as news sources and spread Russian disinformation narratives.

2. The 2022 Period

Ofori, Ha and Sharma (2026) examined news framing of the war across four countries (India, China, the USA, and the UK). Employing quantitative content analysis of 230 news stories, they found complex framing dynamics based on political allyship. The New York Times and The Guardian exhibited a strongly pro-Ukrainian stance; China Daily leaned toward a pro-Russian perspective; and The Times of India was mixed in its frames. US and UK outlets predominantly attributed responsibility for the war to Russia, casting Ukraine as the victim of Russian aggression;

by contrast, while China Daily and The Times of India sympathised with Ukraine as the victim, they were less likely to blame Russia. “Provocative” narratives were occasionally found, with the NYT, The Guardian, and The Times of India targeting Russia, and China Daily targeting NATO — demonstrating divergent approaches to framing the same war.

Sulzhytski et al. (2024) found, implementing a mixed-method semantic network approach (semantic network analysis to identify dominant concepts and hidden stable associations within media frames, and qualitative content analysis to contextualise revealed semantic structures at the level of disseminated messages or the collocation semantic network analysis) that already during the 2022 phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war, information flows were intensively framed by both sides, including via various Telegram channels. They analysed media framing exemplified through a case study of Mariupol and Azovstal siege. Their study addresses this gap by investigating and interpreting the inter-conceptual relationships surrounding the frames within the selected four Russian and Ukrainian Telegram channels: pro-government Russian (RIA), anti-government Russian (Meduza), pro-government Ukrainian (UNIAN), and anti-government Ukrainian (Legitimny). Their research revealed four issue-specific conflict frames, each depicting diverse representations of the main events, actors, and their roles. RIA used a ‘liberation from Nazis’ frame, portraying events in Mariupol as a liberation military operation against ‘Nazis,’ with the Russian army as the ‘liberator,’ Ukraine as a ‘puppet of the West’, and civilians as either neutral or supportive of Russia. Meduza offered a ‘civic critique’ framework that emphasised Russian aggression as the responsibility of the authorities and war crimes while presenting Ukraine as a victim but avoids fully aligning itself with Ukrainian nationalist claims. UNIAN emphasised the ‘unifying nationalism’ frame, portraying the battle as a heroic struggle of a united Ukrainian nation against a savage Russian invader, avoiding issues related to pro-Russian sentiments in the occupied territories. Legitimacy, using a ‘conspiracy’ frame, portrayed Ukraine as weak and manipulated by a corrupt government, suggests that the conflict is part of a larger power play between Russia and the West, and portrayed Ukrainian authorities as untrustworthy while treating the Azov Battalion with some respect. A methodological drawback was identified in sample selection and explained by the authors in follow-up correspondence, when they stated that the 2×2 framework was an analytical heuristic for structuring variation in framing positions—not a claim of institutional equivalence; that the comparison operates at the level of discourse and semantic-network structure rather than of ownership, organisational form, or legal status; and that the article's labels for the Ukrainian cells were imprecise, as its own findings on *Legitimny* indicate.

Akinboade et al (2023) focused on conflict from US (New York Post), Chinese (Global Times) and an African (The Citizen, South Africa) news media during the first two weeks of the war, from 24 February to 11 March 2022, following a descriptive content analysis of the war frames. They found that these media outlets used different news frames in their narratives dictated along differences in ideological orientation and considerations of their target audience. New York Post labelled the “invasion” as a “war” in which crimes were committed throughout Ukraine, South African Citizen news framing was less vicious, while Global Times simply characterized the invasion as a “crisis”. In general, the New York Post's coverage of the Russia-Ukraine conflict largely emphasized the Ukrainian victims of the war and depicted Russia as the aggressor. Global Times on the other hand promoted the China's potential role as a mediator, while The Citizen of South Africa sought to maintain the country's neutral stance.

3. The 2023 Period

Kamyanets (2025) analysed discourses (using critical discourse analysis) about the war as presented in US and British opinion articles featured in the Ukrainian press between March and October 2023 — a period marked by intense Western media debate concerning Ukraine's counter-offensive, which commenced in early June 2023. She identified three distinct topics transferred into Ukrainian discourse from US and British media discourses: the first portrayed the war as an attack on the international order, an imperialist war, and a genocidal war; the second framed it as an unwinnable territorial conflict; and the third defined it as Putin's war against the West.

Li, Lin, Nor and Tan (2025) investigated how three major international news agencies — Agence France-Presse (AFP), Reuters, and the Associated Press (AP) — constructed narrative frames in their coverage. Employing a mixed-methods approach integrating content analysis, critical discourse analysis, and visual examination, the study analysed 1,200 articles from each agency published between February 2022 and August 2023, focusing on four framing dimensions: war legitimacy, actor representation, economic discourse, and national image. The analysis revealed distinct framing strategies, particularly regarding the legitimacy and attribution of responsibility. AFP situated the war within broader geopolitical contexts by emphasising historical continuity and systemic factors; Reuters adopted a moralistic binary narrative characterised by emotionally charged language and personalised portrayals of actors; and AP employed a hybrid approach, combining neutral reporting structures with subtle evaluative elements. These textual differences extended into economic framing — Reuters emphasised global economic repercussions, AFP prioritised European security concerns, and AP integrated normative assessments into discussions of sanctions — while visual strategies (symbolic imagery, colour schemes, camera angles) reinforced the textual differences. The authors proposed a multidimensional framing model and argued for enhanced methodological rigour through multimodal analysis.

4. Longer Periods and Large-Scale Longitudinal Studies

Rahman and Aoni (2025) examined the application of peace journalism in international coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War. The study analysed 100 randomly selected articles (25 per outlet) published between January 2022 and January 2023 by CNN, BBC, Russia Today (RT), and Al Jazeera — outlets chosen for their global reach and contrasting geopolitical and editorial orientations. Content analysis was combined with logistic regression, with outlet, publication date, and article type (news report, editorial, opinion) as predictors of the presence of peace journalism indicators.

Overall, war journalism elements predominated (53% of articles) over peace journalism elements (47%), but the distribution diverged sharply along a Western/non-Western axis. Al Jazeera exhibited the highest share of peace journalism framing (60%), followed by RT (52%), whereas BBC (40%) and CNN (36%) leaned toward war journalism; aggregated, Western outlets displayed 38% peace journalism against 62% war journalism. Cross-tabulation and chi-square tests indicated that non-Western outlets were more than twice as likely to incorporate peace journalism elements. People-oriented framing was the most frequent peace journalism indicator overall (43%), led by Al Jazeera (56%) and RT (48%), against CNN (32%) and BBC (36%), whose coverage was more elite-oriented. A similar pattern held for conflict-resolution framing (46% overall; Al Jazeera 60%, RT 48%, BBC 40%, CNN 36%) and for the avoidance of demonising language, which was markedly rarer in CNN (20%) and BBC (28%).

The authors concluded that Western coverage tended toward adversarial, binary, and sensationalist framing consistent with national geopolitical alignments, whereas non-Western outlets foregrounded humanitarian and socio-economic dimensions and potential pathways to peace. However, it is questionable whether the peace/war journalism coding scheme does distinguish genuinely de-escalatory framing from state-aligned narrative positioning.

Ye and Aron (2025) analysed 190,864 English-language news posts published on the Facebook accounts of 112 media outlets across five continents during the first three and a half years of the conflict. They used an integrated pipeline combining network analysis, topic modelling, framing analysis, and audience-engagement modelling, organised around their novel model of Alliance-Linked Narrative Dynamics (ALND), in which domestic institutions, alliance ties, and platform logics condition both conflict narration and public interpretations of costs, responsibilities, and diplomacy. It must be stressed, however, that this output was an early or alternative research output and had not been peer-reviewed. Their results showed how global media aligned on exogenous shocks — battlefield developments, weapons deliveries, nuclear risk, accountability milestones — but diverged in framing sub-angles. Network analysis demonstrated that global coverage converged on a limited set of symbolic actors (Putin, Zelenskyy, Biden, Trump, Xi) who anchored discourse across blocs; topic and cluster analysis showed that military operations, nuclear risk, and accountability served as cross-bloc “alarm bells” generating synchronous coverage spikes. Intra-bloc alignment appeared in thematic areas: U.S. and allied outlets consistently emphasised weapons pipelines, often with dense sourcing and verification markers, while adversary outlets synchronised around economic blowback and contestation. These supply-side alignments extended to engagement patterns — allied audiences rewarded oversight and capability stories, adversary audiences responded most to operations and logistics framed through their own discursive lens — suggesting that alliances function not just as political coalitions but as narrative ecosystems in which media and audiences co-produce consistent interpretive logics. Divergences were systematic in framing sub-angles: within the economy cluster, U.S. outlets prioritised enforcement and sanctions design, allies emphasised infrastructure and energy security, adversaries focused on blowback, and “other” countries stressed logistics and food corridors. These divergences were consistent with earlier evidence of domestication and elite-discourse alignment in Brazil, India, and South Africa (e.g., Wozniak et al., 2024), but Ye and Aron’s results indicated that divergence was structured by blocs rather than by individual nations alone — although divergence also appeared within blocs (e.g., U.S. coverage tied weapons pipelines to domestic funding debates, while European allies highlighted oversight mechanisms; engagement data confirmed this split).

Bradshaw, Elswah, Haque and Quelle (2024) focused on how propagandist state-backed media outlets promoted a pro-Russian version of the war, particularly in non-English-language contexts. Grounded in strategic narrative theory, they analysed Russian state-backed media coverage across 12 languages for the period 1 February 2022 to 31 August 2024. Using topic modelling and narrative analysis, they found that Russian state-backed media focused primarily on promoting identity narratives, forming an image in which Russia was powerful, Ukraine was evil, and the West was hypocritical. Russian strategic narratives both converged and diverged across languages and outlets in ways that served Russia’s desired image and objectives in each region.

Mohanty, Sabadyn, Rodrigues, Wang, Kalugade and Banerjee (2026) presented dnipro, a corpus of 246,229 news articles collected over 31 months (1 February 2022 – 31 August 2024) from eleven outlets across five nation-states and three languages: English-language “Western” sources (The Financial Times, CNN), three Chinese outlets (Xinhua in Mandarin; Global Times and China Daily in parallel English editions), Ukrainian sources (Censor.net, The Kyiv Independent, European

Pravda), and Russian sources (TASS and Sputnik in English; Izvestia in Russian). The corpus featured comprehensive metadata and human-evaluated annotations for stance, sentiment, and topical framing. Using pre-defined stance annotations, the authors compared media attitudes toward Ukraine during the war's first two weeks against its final 15 days within the sampling period, revealing a striking shift along geopolitical lines: Chinese media began slightly pro-Ukrainian but shifted to mild opposition by August 2024; Russian coverage was consistently negative and grew markedly more so; US media became increasingly supportive; and UK coverage showed greater variability — together illustrating a deepening polarisation of geopolitical alignments. Thematic analysis found that Russian and Chinese outlets consistently emphasised institutional terminology (“special military operation”), security concerns (nuclear weapons), and counter-narratives (media manipulation, ceasefire), reflecting strategic adversarial framing; Ukrainian sources focused predominantly on humanitarian dimensions (civilian casualties) with frequent references to specific locations; and US and British media balanced humanitarian coverage with institutional responses (sanctions, the International Criminal Court) and policy discussions (no-fly zone). Analysis of divergent narratives showed that Russian sources tended to characterise airstrikes as precision strikes on military targets (framed as factual or attributed), while US, British, and Ukrainian outlets described the same events as attacks on civilian infrastructure, often citing eyewitnesses. Claim-pair analysis showed entailment occurring primarily within aligned media ecosystems, while contradictions emerged predominantly across geopolitical divides as competing interpretations rather than direct rebuttals: outlets rarely challenged one another explicitly, instead relying on differing topical framing, omission, or counter-attribution — constructing incompatible accounts of responsibility even when covering the same events.

Verbytska (2024) used topic modelling — a traditional generative probabilistic Latent Dirichlet Allocation model (LDA; Blei et al., 2003) complemented by the transformer-based BERTopic library (Grootendorst, 2022) building on BERT (Devlin et al., 2018) — to analyse framing in Euronews and Kyiv Post coverage from June 2022 to June 2023, interpreting extracted topics as generic frames capturing recurrent themes. In the Euronews corpus, both models unanimously ascribed remarkable importance to the frames ‘Security & Defence: military actions in the East, South and North of Ukraine’ and ‘Resources: financial and energy resources’ (mean distributions of 26.06% and 24.91%, respectively); the LDA model also prioritised topics conceptualised as frames on policy prescription and evaluation (22.60%), whereas BERTopic extracted topics summarised as frames on alliances and negotiations for support and global security (19.21%). In the Kyiv Post corpus, frame significance differed depending on the model: Security & Defence, Resources, and policy frames were distributed with mean values of 30.74%, 13.17%, and 18.71%, respectively, while BERTopic did not prioritise the resources frame but extracted a high distribution of the frame on external regulations, in particular alliances and negotiations for support and security (35.35%). BERTopic also extracted more keywords directed at named entities such as locations, people, organisations, and political groups.

5. Individual Media, Individual Countries, and Individual Incidents

Strukowska (2023) examined Reuters’ news coverage of the first day of Russia’s invasion in 2022 through an anthropolinguistic, generic-analytical case study. The analysis identified systematically recurring topical information organised into two schematic thematic patterns: (1) the delegitimisation of Russia and the victimisation of Ukraine, and (2) categorisation through binary social representations. The thematic areas highlighted by the outlet directly cast Russia in the role of the accused and pointed to its dehumanising strategies toward Ukraine, while lexical patterns

collocating with Ukraine thrived primarily on victimisation. Strukowska argued that Reuters' discourse production constituted a cultural construct based on what audiences were expected to read and how it was likely to be presented: the initial stage of the conflict predominantly hinged on the legitimisation of negative values attributed to Russia (inequality, terror, inhumanity). She further observed that the outlet's voice appealed to the emotions and values of the public, claiming common identity with readers — an interpersonal function creating affinity, solidarity, and co-membership between journalists and audiences — and suggested that journalists thereby moved beyond the conventional informational aim of news discourse toward a more interactional distribution of information driven by 'communicative pathos' instrumental in legitimising negative values.

Kumar & Thussu (2024) analysed the media narratives through the primetime monologues on India's most watched English-language news channel – Republic TV. A computer-assisted textual analysis and a thematic discourse analysis were conducted. Major themes emerging from the narratives revealed that the conflict was represented as an opportunity to serve the strategic interests of the USA and China, while the role of countries such as India in resolving the international crisis was highlighted in terms of a challenge to the US-led world order. Kumar & Thussu (2024) argue that during 'third party' conflicts, media narratives are influenced both by domestic political interests and established foreign policy traditions.

Cyrek (2022) explored how the CNN news portal portrayed Russian aggression against Ukraine through its "Russia-Ukraine News" headlines published in September 2022. Sixty-five per cent of all headlines were structured according to the pattern 'someone communicates/communicated something', and most concerned 'who says what' or 'what is said by whom'; the 'say(s)' structure occurred in 255 headlines (57% of the communication category and 37% of all researched material), while headlines with the structure 'someone is doing/does something' came second (91 occurrences). Headlines referring to statements mostly alluded to officials (260 of 450 headlines, 58%), especially Ukrainian ones (97), followed by US (53) and Russian officials (41), with pro-Russian officials and separatist leaders mentioned 12 times and treated separately due to the specificity of that group. This mode of reporting, Cyrek concluded, created an image of war based on quotes rather than actions — reading the headlines allowed users to know 'who communicated what' rather than what was actually happening.

Cyrek, Popiołek and Gorbachevsky (2022) analysed Facebook posts published by three US television stations chosen as representative of the ideological spectrum — CNN (skews left), PBS (middle), and Fox News (skews right). Content analysis showed three dominant topics: Ukraine, Russia, and the United States. Posts on Ukraine usually described the course of fighting or reports from the field, followed by President Zelensky (his history, actions, plans, and statements) and the overall situation in the country (destruction, challenges, needs); Ukraine's relations with other countries occurred least frequently. Posts on Russia usually described sanctions on the country or on particular citizens, with Vladimir Putin the second most popular framing device, followed by the topic of Russian media, fake news, and propaganda. Posts on the U.S. usually referred to Joe Biden's words and actions — Biden was the second most recalled president after Zelensky — with U.S. help for Ukraine and the war's impact on the U.S. the third most popular set. The stations placed their centres of gravity differently: CNN focused primarily on Ukraine over Russia; PBS gave most space to Ukraine over the United States; Fox News discussed Russia more than Ukraine. Only CNN took up global markets, logistics, and companies withdrawing from Russia, while PBS omitted the situation in Europe and nuclear danger.

Kwiatkowska and Solarz (2022) analysed how Polish media framed the war through their headlines during the first 150 days of the full-scale conflict (24 February – 24 July 2022), based on a broader monitoring report by the Institute of Discourse and Dialogue (INDID). The study examined 274 headlines from 292 randomly selected media items drawn from television (TVP ‘Wiadomości’, TVN ‘Fakty’, Polsat ‘Wydarzenia’), online portals (niezależna.pl, onet.pl, OKO.press), and the press (Rzeczpospolita, Polityka, Nasz Dziennik, Gazeta Polska), with a media split of 39% pro-government, 22% pro-opposition, and 39% neutral. Nearly 180 headlines used strongly negative language (death, enemy, hell, bleeding out) versus roughly 70 optimistic ones (help, heroism, victory) — negative framing appeared more than twice as often as positive. Differences across outlets were marked: TVP ‘Wiadomości’ used the most emotionally charged language, both demonising Russia (‘barbaric attack’, ‘Russian genocide’, ‘Putin’s bandits’) and glorifying Ukraine (‘heroic defence’) and Poland’s role; TVN ‘Fakty’ used neutral, minimal headlines (about 30% had none); Rzeczpospolita featured highly subjective but less emotional assertions (about half contained evaluative judgements); niezależna.pl was among the most charged and judgemental; and online portals used the longest, most informative headlines. Ukraine received a dual image — victim of aggression and heroic, indomitable defender deserving help — while Russia was reduced to a cruel, ‘bestial’ occupier, with collective terms (‘Russia’, ‘Russians’) replacing ‘Russian soldiers’ or ‘Russian military’; Putin was referred to by surname only (a form of verbal micro-aggression) and portrayed as a mad, sick, unstable dictator; Poland was framed as a benevolent helper, especially in pro-government media, but also as a potential target resisting Kremlin pressure. The authors’ central critique concerned journalistic responsibility: media violated standards of the Media Ethics Charter (separation of fact from commentary, fairness, audience welfare), notably through the careless, interchangeable use of legally distinct terms — genocide (intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, whose legal recognition triggers state obligations to intervene), war crimes (serious violations of the laws of war without that specific destructive intent), and crimes against humanity (systematic attacks on civilians). Treating these as synonyms, they argued, fuelled public panic and irrational behaviour (panic buying) while being legally and ethically irresponsible. They concluded that Polish media largely abandoned objectivity, pushing a one-sided anti-Russian narrative through sensational, clickbait-driven, emotionally loaded headlines — understandable given Poland’s proximity and involvement, but contrary to journalistic professionalism — and urged ‘cool-headed’, verified, emotion-tempering reporting.

Szulich-Kałuża and Wadowski (2024) carried out a content analysis of individual stories of ordinary Ukrainian and Russian citizens suffering the consequences of the war, as published on Poland’s most opinion-forming portal, Onet.pl, in the first half of 2024. They identified eight dominant frames: suffering (38 occurrences in the sample), the women’s frame (33), activity (27), escape (23), moral degradation (22), the clash of civilisations (19), change/another world (18), and the children’s frame (17). They concluded that the portal exhibited a general tendency to strengthen the positive image of Ukraine (the role of the victim; an accreditation function in retaliatory activities) and a second tendency to strengthen the negative image of Russia (the discrediting role of the brutal aggressor and cruel enemy).

Holand and Ellingsen (2025) examined how Norwegian news media framed the war on their own websites and Facebook pages, focusing on the overall narrative, the portrayal of the two presidents, and how awareness of media warfare was expressed in a hybrid public sphere comprising editorial media and distribution platforms. They found that coverage was largely characterised by value struggles in which good stood against evil and editorial media had chosen sides, while an ongoing battle for public opinion was particularly evident in Facebook comment fields. Coverage followed a dramaturgical curve: in December 2021 and January 2022 the ‘Ukraine crisis’ was one foreign-

affairs story among many, with a relatively unified narrative that invasion was unlikely but diplomacy urgent; through January and February 2022 it took the shape of a serial (would a peaceful solution succeed?); after 24 February, the invasion was described with disbelief and shock, and a ‘lost peace’ story dominated. The authors identified several sub-narratives: a historic turning point / new world order (52 articles used the exact phrase ‘ny verdensorden’, peaking in March 2022); the threat of a third world war or nuclear war (third-world-war references in 318 articles, nuclear-war risk in 453, Hitler comparisons in 304); ‘the duel that can and must be won’, which overshadowed coverage of civilian suffering, economic ripple effects, climate consequences, and food security; and heroic Ukrainians and foreign fighters versus Russian war resistance and low morale, with the enemy image targeting the Russian state leadership rather than Russians as a people. The personified main narrative pitted Zelensky against Putin: Putin was demonised (‘Hitler of our time’, a psychopath, ‘the Devil in Moscow’, grandiose, sick, isolated) and mentioned 13,256 times in the large dataset, while Zelensky (6,862 mentions) went from near-invisible to international media figure, cast as fearless and as defender of both Ukraine and free Europe — a structure the authors compared to the Norwegian folktale of Askeladden and his good helpers. Ukraine became ‘a country close to all of us’, Western unity was emphasised, and non-Western perspectives appeared only exceptionally. Mapped onto Galtung’s typology, this constituted classic war journalism: us-versus-them framing, elite sources, focus on the battlefield duel, dehumanisation of the opponent, and victory orientation. Notably, while editorial media maintained the pro-Ukrainian value-struggle frame even in their Facebook posts, the comment fields told a different story: heavy media criticism (including from pro-Ukrainian users), doubts about Zelensky’s hero status, concern about hatred toward ordinary Russians, distrust of leaders on all sides as well as of the US and NATO, and signs of bot activity and influence campaigns. The article also identified two competing characterisations circulating in the discourse — ‘Russia’s war of aggression’ (Hellestveit, 2022), the dominant Western framing grounded in the UN Charter, and a ‘proxy war’ between Russia and the USA attributed to more US-critical voices (Byman, 2023) — and noted that the pro-Ukrainian narrative became dominant in the West so quickly that a Norwegian Defence Research Establishment report (Diesen et al., 2024, p. 9) called it a source of error in understanding the conflict as it unfolded.

Ajibulu and Nwaoboli (2023) examined how Nigeria’s *The Guardian* framed the war, analysing 49 news reports published between 1 November and 31 December 2022 (census sampling made the population equivalent to the full sample). Using a codebook with eight frame categories — politicisation, human interest, attribution of responsibility, economic impact, violence of war, anti-protest, diagnostic, and conflict — they found that the outlet predominantly covered the war through the politicisation frame (31% of analysed reports), while the diagnostic frame appeared least frequently.

Qiu, Yu, Huang and Yang (2025) conducted a comparative content analysis of coverage by China Global Television Network (CGTN) and Voice of America (VOA), focusing on emotional framing across approximately 5,000 articles from each outlet. CGTN predominantly adopted a neutral, analytical tone prioritising geopolitical implications and foregrounding hope and diplomatic solutions, whereas VOA took a more emotionally charged approach, emphasising the humanitarian crisis and solidarity with Ukraine and amplifying anger and fear to justify international intervention. The authors argued that these contrasting strategies reflected the geopolitical interests of each outlet’s home country: CGTN positioned China as a peace-seeking mediator, while VOA framed Russia as the aggressor in defence of Western democratic values.

Breeze and Novoa-Jaso (2024) shed light on the Chinese official position by examining how CGTN presented the main actors and actions during the first three months of the conflict. Conducting a corpus-assisted discourse study (CADS) of all reports published about the conflict on CGTN from February to May 2022, compared with two similar corpora from Al Jazeera and Euronews, they traced how CGTN negotiated the discursive dilemma posed by China's neutral position. Russia and Russian actors/sources were the main protagonists in all three media, with Ukraine second, and a general rise in the prominence of EU leaders was noticeable in the second and third months; CGTN gave prominence to a wider range of actors and sources than the other channels, with particular focus on the USA, Asia, and some European leaders, and its terms for the conflict were at variance with those of Euronews and Al Jazeera. Over the period of study, CGTN's reporting moved from describing the situation as a relatively bloodless operation that would soon be over to admitting the presence of considerable destruction. By relying on Russian sources and giving prominence to Russia, its leaders, and their words, CGTN initially positioned itself more favourably toward Russia, at first uncritically repeating the official Russian line that the conflict was merely an 'operation'; faced with the need to report the continuation of the conflict and Ukrainian resistance, its reports began to shift blame for unpleasant events to 'the West's meddling', resorting to implicit and explicit projection of the USA as a foil for a positive Chinese self, while simultaneously expressing concern about the consequences of the conflict for China's own relations with Europe. By contrast, the underlying position taken for granted in Al Jazeera and Euronews was that the Russians were conducting a violent invasion of Ukraine constituting an outrage against the security of an independent nation and a threat to world peace, with Euronews itself taking discursive responsibility for statements denouncing atrocities and predicting negative consequences — possibly reflecting European public opinion or government stances, or simply proximity to the conflict zone.

Muwafi, Fareh and Jarad (2024) explored how Al Jazeera Arabic (AJA) and Al Jazeera English (AJE) discursively represented participants in the conflict through their headlines, applying a Hallidayan transitivity analysis. While AJE emphasised the Ukrainian government's vulnerability, AJA framed the conflict as a confrontation between two symmetrical forces. Shared representations were attributed to organisational and institutional pressures, whereas differences stemmed from distinct editorial policies and audience preferences — with AJA challenging the prevailing Western narrative and AJE reinforcing it.

Styszyński (2023) examined the Russian narrative of the war in the Arabic versions of Sputnik and Russia Today (RT Arabic), drawing on materials published on their official websites from the beginning of the war on 24 February 2022 to 31 March 2023 (RT Arabic materials dated back to February 2023, when the site became accessible again). He found that the coverage aimed at the creation of two opposite images — blaming the West and endorsing Russian policy — structured around negative approaches to the West and the reinforcement of alliances with the Middle East.

Teniou, Fadhloune, Bouanane and Madoui (2025) examined trends in coverage of the war on two Arabic websites, Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya. Using content analysis of 99 pieces published between 24 February and 24 June 2025, they found that both websites primarily focused on the political dimensions of the war — largely due to the numerous regional and international political initiatives, most notably from the United States under President Trump, encouraging negotiations and a ceasefire — followed by the military aspect (given the escalation and Ukraine's counteroffensive in that period), the humanitarian sphere (especially in articles covering Russian attacks and prisoners of war), and relatively low economic coverage (aid and loans, mining agreements, potential EU accession), with the social dimension least covered. Both outlets demonstrated a shared trend of

portraying Ukraine more favourably while framing Russia more negatively, though intensity and editorial framing differed: Al Arabiya exhibited a more fluctuating stance, alternating between neutrality and positivity toward Ukraine while maintaining a predominantly critical tone toward Russia, whereas Al Jazeera displayed stronger alignment with Ukraine through consistently sympathetic coverage and harsher criticism of Russia, presenting a more polarised narrative overall. The authors concluded that coverage was primarily informative and reportorial and generally objective to some extent, but that a thorough sentiment analysis indicated a slight bias toward the Ukrainian perspective, with Russia held responsible for the failure of negotiations, the hindrance of peace efforts, prisoner-of-war issues, and humanitarian suffering.

Ravikumar & Downey (2025) argued that the media coverage of the conflict exhibits three main frames: the invasion as an attack by Russia on Ukrainian sovereignty (Russian invasion), an anti-West pro-Russia frame (the West's encroachment on Russia), and a perspective aligning with Indian national interests (the conflict between Russia and the West). The Indian national interest frame that navigated between the pro and anti-West frames, however, was predominant. research, undertaken from February 24, 2022 to November 2022, included a comprehensive examination of the media portrayal of the Russia–Ukraine crisis on three prominent Indian television news channels: NDTV, India Today, and Republic TV. The TV media outlets considered for the study were consistently at the top-5 of the list of viewer. The comprehensive coverage consisted of a total of 98 news pieces pertaining to the war, distributed as follows: NDTV reported 30 stories, India Today covered 37 stories, and Republic TV included 31 stories. The duration of these news items exhibited considerable variation, spanning from a little interval of 0.48 s to a more extended period of 1 h and 55 s.

Tóth and Hámori (2023) examined the initial coverage of the Makiivka missile attack across six leading English-language outlets: BBC, CNN, The Guardian, The New York Times, Reuters, and The Washington Post. Outlets covered the event differently, varying in their use of language structures and naming conventions for Ukrainian and Russian sources. CNN relied most heavily on Ukrainian sources, while The New York Times and Reuters relied on them least, with the others in between; CNN also stood out for not including the views of pro-Russian bloggers, commentators, or propagandists, whereas the other five outlets did. Based on how concretely outlets named their Ukrainian sources, The Washington Post and The Guardian positioned themselves closest to the Ukrainian side, while Reuters and The New York Times showed the greatest distance. The findings suggested a positive correlation between the weight given to Ukrainian sources and the specificity with which those sources were named; headline analysis yielded similar results.

Fisher (2023) analysed 12 BBC and CNN articles from two time periods in news coverage between February 24th, 2022 and April 30th, 2023. Fisher found that selected Western media disproportionately favoured the Ukrainian perspective, while the Russian viewpoint was largely marginalised or stereotyped. The findings also suggested that Western media tended to normalise or downplay the role of neo-Nazi groups in the conflict and to minimise potential war crimes by Ukrainian forces. A quantitative content analysis of 99 articles, based on criteria adapted from Galtung's model, showed a clear dominance of war journalism over peace journalism, reinforcing divisive narratives; comparative results indicated that the BBC employed a more aggressive war-journalism style than CNN. The study called for critical reflection on media coverage, active challenging of bias, and a shift toward more balanced, peace-oriented conflict reporting.

Vuksanović (2026) found that the war reverberated across the Western Balkans in ways that reflected the region's own political dynamics more than the influence of any external actor,

including Russia. In Serbia, Montenegro, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, media coverage and public narratives surrounding the conflict were shaped primarily by domestic political realities, local media structures, and long-standing identity divides. Although narratives often resembled or paralleled themes associated with Russian state messaging, the evidence showed that their origins and functions were fundamentally homemade: rather than being targets of Russian influence or passive conduits for it, political and media elites across the region selectively drew on, adapted, and repurposed these narratives to serve their own pragmatic and opportunistic agendas. The study drew on media-monitoring data provided by Pikasa Analytics (Skopje, North Macedonia), based on quantitative tracking of media outputs across three countries during the period January–June 2025. The study also incorporated insights from 26 semi-structured interviews with journalists, editors, analysts, and observers—12 in Serbia, 6 in Montenegro, and 8 in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Interviewees consistently underscored that local political elites are neither Kremlin proxies nor ideologically committed to Moscow’s worldview. Instead, they employ pro-Russian narratives instrumentally: as tools for electoral mobilisation, as means of reinforcing identity boundaries, and as bargaining chips in relations with Western actors. Their accounts reveal a political class driven rather than ideological affinity by pragmatism, opportunism, and the logic of regime survival.

6. Russian Media and Domestic Russian Discourse by Non-Russian Authors

Brusylovska and Maksymenko (2023) conducted a discursive analysis of Russian media coverage of the 2022 invasion, examining articles from four major national outlets — the Moscow Times, Kommersant, Izvestiya, and Rossiyskaya Gazeta — over the initial period of the full-scale invasion beginning 24 February 2022 (1,562 items from Kommersant, 859 from Izvestiya, 87 from the Moscow Times, and 52 from Rossiyskaya Gazeta, with the English-language Moscow Times compared against the three Russian-language outlets). The study first examined the overall tone each outlet adopted when covering the ‘special operation’, then identified six official Kremlin narratives: (1) legitimisation of the ‘special operation’; (2) ‘useless Western sanctions’; (3) ‘the West versus Russia’; (4) ‘the Ukrainian army’s crimes’; (5) ‘provocative Western weapons’; and (6) ‘Ukraine loses the war’. The authors concluded that Russian officials’ rhetoric, widely amplified by state media, functioned as a deliberate Kremlin tool to reformat both Russian and Ukrainian regional identity, with a discernible narrative shift from ‘Ukraine loses the war’ toward ‘Russia is at war with the West’ — to save Ukrainians and to protect Russia, its identity, and even its civilisation — accompanied by the introduction of a special glossary usable for re-territorialisation and for changing the existing geopolitical space.

Petrovskaya (2024) examined how Russian state-controlled media framed the invasion through a content analysis of Evening with Vladimir Solovyov, Russia’s most popular political talk show. Drawing on eight three-hour episodes covering major events between February 2022 and February 2023, the study identified six dominant frames in the show’s official discourse: (1) Nazism; (2) genocide; (3) the West as enemy; (4) Slavic unity; (5) the liberation of Ukrainian lands; and (6) Russia as a victim of Western sanctions and Russophobia.

7. Summary

This summary focuses first on patterns in coverage framing, followed by methodological challenges.

Despite differences in period, method, and sample, the studies converge on several robust findings. First, attribution of responsibility to Russia was overwhelming in Western media: Maurer et al.’s

figure of 93% sole responsibility in German quality media is the starkest quantification, but the same pattern recurs in Zollmann's 3.6:1 ratio of aggressor-framing to NATO-expansion framing, Strukowska's delegitimisation/victimisation schema in Reuters, and the Polish, Norwegian, and Nigerian studies.

Second, war journalism dominated over peace journalism nearly everywhere it was measured (Nordenstreng et al.; Rahman & Aoni; Fisher; Holand & Ellingsen's mapping onto Galtung's typology), with peace-oriented framing concentrated in non-Western outlets.

Third, coverage was strongly personalised and elite-driven: a small cast of symbolic actors (Putin, Zelensky, Biden, Xi) anchored discourse globally (Ye & Aron), political actors crowded out experts (Maurer et al.: scientists c. 2%), and CNN's headline economy reduced the war to "who said what" (Cyrek).

Fourth, the same generic frames were available everywhere but were deployed to opposite effect — Stawski & Szew's finding that shared frames produced "markedly different images" is echoed in Mohanty et al.'s observation that contradictions across blocs took the form of omission and counter-attribution rather than direct rebuttal.

The clearest axis of divergence is geopolitical alignment rather than nation per se. Ye & Aron's Alliance-Linked Narrative Dynamics model and Mohanty et al.'s stance trajectories both suggest bloc-structured framing: US/UK outlets emphasised weapons pipelines, sanctions, and institutional responses; Russian and Chinese outlets converged on institutional euphemism ("special military operation"), counter-narratives, and economic blowback; Ukrainian sources foregrounded humanitarian dimensions.

A second axis is Western/non-Western: BRICS and Global South media occupied a middle ground between war and peace framing (Nordenstreng et al.), navigated via national-interest frames (Kumar & Thussu; Ravikumar & Downey on India's "third path"), or subordinated the conflict to domestic politics entirely (Vuksanović on the Western Balkans).

A third, less noticed axis is intra-Western variation: government-aligned framing ranged from 17–25% (US/UK) to 75–77% (Italy, Finland); Der Spiegel alone rated diplomacy above heavy weapons; TVN's minimalism contrasted with TVP's emotive maximalism within Poland; and BBC was more aggressively war-journalistic than CNN (Fisher).

Wire agencies, often presumed neutral, also diverged systematically (Li et al.: AFP contextual, Reuters moralistic-binary, AP hybrid).

China was the most consistent outlier on the "neutral" side — the only country employing peace journalism from day one (Nordenstreng et al.), though Breeze & Novoa-Jaso complicate this by showing CGTN's drift from repeating the Russian "operation" line toward blaming "Western meddling", possibly suggesting strategic positioning rather than genuine de-escalatory framing.

Russia is the outlier on the other end, with a documented narrative *shift* mid-war (Brusylovska & Maksymenko: from "Ukraine loses" to "Russia versus the West").

Al Jazeera is an intriguing case: highest peace-journalism share (Rahman & Aoni), yet internally split, with AJA challenging and AJE reinforcing the Western narrative (Muwafi et al.).

Two findings cut against the dominant-narrative grain: Maurer et al.'s 28% of motive-discussing items citing NATO defence (higher than Zollmann's marginalisation thesis would predict), and Holand & Ellingsen's Facebook comment fields, where audience discourse diverged sharply from

editorial framing — a rare glimpse of reception rather than production. Vuksanović's finding that pro-Russian narratives in the Balkans were "homemade" and instrumentally deployed, rather than Kremlin-injected, is a useful corrective to influence-operation assumptions elsewhere in the field (cf. Hanley et al. on Russian-to-Chinese narrative transfer, where influence *was* traceable).

The corpus divides roughly into three methodological families: Manual/quantitative content analysis, Computational approaches and Discourse-analytical and qualitative methods.

Manual/quantitative content analysis included Nordenstreng et al.; Maurer et al.; Zollmann; Stawski & Szews; Akinboade et al.; Ajibulu & Nwaoboli; Ofori et al.; Rahman & Aoni. This approach offers interpretive validity, theory-driven frame categories (often Semetko & Valkenburg or Galtung derivatives), and precise responsibility-attribution measures. Its costs are small and sometimes questionably representative samples (Ofori et al.: 230 stories across four countries; Rahman & Aoni: 25 articles per outlet; Fisher: 12 articles in the qualitative component; Akinboade et al.: two weeks), coder subjectivity, and limited generalisability across time. Rahman & Aoni's logistic regression is a welcome inferential step, but as the review itself notes, the peace/war coding scheme cannot distinguish genuinely de-escalatory framing from state-aligned positioning — RT's high "peace journalism" score is the *reductio* of the instrument.

Computational approaches included LDA and BERTopic (Verbytska; Kang et al.), word2vec, NPMI and PLDA (Hanley et al.), semantic network analysis (Sulzhytski et al.), and large-scale multi-method pipelines (Ye & Aron: 190,864 posts; Mohanty et al.: 246,229 articles; Bradshaw et al.: 12 languages) — deliver scale, longitudinal reach, cross-lingual coverage, and replicability, and can detect inter-ecosystem influence that manual coding cannot (Hanley et al.'s Russian-to-Chinese transfer). Their weaknesses are equally clear: topics are not frames, and the interpretive leap from word clusters to "generic frames" is under-theorised (Verbytska's model-dependent results — BERTopic and LDA prioritising different frames in the same corpus — is itself evidence of instrument sensitivity); aggregation choices can be incoherent, as the review's own critique of Kang et al.'s "regions" (Cuba grouped with the US) illustrates; English-language corpora skew samples (Ye & Aron); and some large-scale outputs lack peer review (Ye & Aron), trading rigour for timeliness.

Discourse-analytical and qualitative methods contained CDA (Kamyanets), CADS (Breeze & Novoa-Jaso), transitivity analysis (Muwafi et al.), anthropolinguistic genre analysis (Strukowska), thematic discourse analysis (Kumar & Thussu), and interview-based designs (Vuksanović) — capture *how* framing works linguistically (legitimation strategies, naming conventions, source attribution) and, in Vuksanović's case, the political economy behind narrative adoption, which content counting cannot reach. Their limitations are the familiar ones: tiny corpora or single outlets, researcher-dependent interpretation, weak generalisability, and vulnerability to confirmation of the analyst's priors — a live risk when the object of study is itself politically charged.

The strongest designs are mixed-method and comparative-with-controls: Breeze & Novoa-Jaso's use of Al Jazeera and Euronews as comparator corpora, Sulzhytski et al.'s pairing of network analysis with qualitative contextualisation, and Li et al.'s integration of textual, economic, and visual dimensions. Persistent field-wide weaknesses include: (a) overrepresentation of the first weeks/months of 2022 and of elite English-language outlets, with television, Telegram, and non-English regional media only patchily covered; (b) near-exclusive focus on content production, with audience reception addressed only incidentally (Holand & Ellingsen's comment fields; Ye & Aron's engagement modelling); (c) inconsistent operationalisation of "framing" — ranging from

Entmanian responsibility-attribution to topic distributions to transitivity structures — which limits cumulative comparability; and (d) sampling frames that conflate outlet type, ownership, and national system, making it difficult to separate media-system effects from geopolitical-alignment effects.

III. Contested Vocabularies: Political Rhetoric and News Language in the Coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War

This section examines how political rhetoric and news language interact in the coverage of highly polarized issues, where competing actors deliberately deploy contested vocabularies to shape public perception. Drawing on a corpus of studies of news framing from ideologically and geographically diverse outlets, the study summarises and synthesises findings of recent studies.

1. Indexing and Domestication: Government Wording versus News Language

Wozniak, Liu and Lind (2024) compared the terminology used by top politicians in Brazil, India, and South Africa to describe the conflict with the language found in local mainstream news reports, and analysed the salience of political leaders and geopolitical entities — including countries and intergovernmental organisations — in news coverage. They found no evidence that news reporting was indexed to government wording. Their analysis of references to geopolitical actors, however, revealed a strong tendency among news media to domesticate the war for their respective national audiences. The starkest contrasts appeared in the use of ‘war’, ‘invasion/aggression/assault’, and ‘occupation/takeover’ (the exceptions being ‘crisis’ and ‘humanitarian crisis’): the first was most prevalent in Brazilian coverage, the second in both Brazilian and South African coverage, and the third substantially more prominent in South African news discourse; Indian mainstream news stood out for its comparatively restrained language. Overall, the authors found no clear evidence that issue interpretations ‘cascaded down’ from the government level to news coverage: the restrained, carefully worded communications from heads of government and foreign ministries were not reflected in mainstream news discourse. If anything, news language conformed more closely — or was ‘indexed’ — to the interpretations of members of parliament, nearly two-thirds of whom came from opposition parties, a finding consistent with Bennett’s notion of contingent political elite dissent. Across all three countries, news media were considerably more likely than domestic government institutions to employ alarming terminology such as ‘war’, ‘invasion’, and ‘atrocities’.

A slightly different perspective emerged in Wozniak and Liu (2023), whose results confirmed news media’s tendency to largely concur with their home country’s geopolitical positioning and national interests when reporting international conflicts. They analysed how the Indian federal government and members of the lower house of Parliament framed the issue and compared this with the framing of the war in two widely circulated English-language newspapers with extensive foreign-affairs coverage, *The Times of India* and *The Telegraph*. Otherwise the findings were consistent with the later study, with strong evidence for a domesticated discourse during the first four weeks of the war.

Related findings on political-actor salience emerged from Maurer, Haßler and Jost (2022): in German coverage, government parties received roughly four times more media presence than the opposition — the SPD alone accounted for 48% of mentions of German parties — while the AfD and Die Linke were practically absent.

Ko et al (2025) found that within U.S. society, policy perspectives on Ukraine varied depending on political orientation. They collected news articles produced by U.S. media outlets and examined the distinctions between conservative and progressive sources. They used a word-frequency-based psycholinguistic analysis tool to construct seven word categories. Additionally, they employed topic modeling to measure the similarity between conservative and progressive media. Using Jensen-

Shannon Divergence (JSD), they found that government documents exhibited a greater similarity to conservative media sources.

2. Aggressor and Victim in Print-News Naming

Rudakova (2024) examined how American (The New York Times) and Russian (TASS) print news framed the war. Using ethnographic content analysis and NVivo software, the study qualitatively analysed 197 news articles published from 24 February to 31 December 2022, focusing — beyond framing techniques — on which side was portrayed as the aggressor and which as the victim. The findings revealed stark differences: the Russian outlet framed Ukraine and the United States as aggressors and provocateurs while casting Russia as the victim; the U.S. newspaper depicted Ukraine as the victim and Russia as the aggressor.

3. The Media Visibility of International Organisations

Parízek (2023) analysed, using natural language processing tools, the content of more than 2.9 million news articles published in January–September 2022 across virtually all states of the world and 60 languages, tracking the media visibility of NATO, the EU, and the UN in connection with the war. The empirical results showed that NATO’s initially high media visibility decreased significantly over time — suggesting that the Russian narrative portraying the war as one between Russia and NATO failed to secure a global reception; that the EU maintained a persistently strong and stable visibility throughout the period, forcefully associated globally with the prominent topics of ‘economy and sanctions’ and, later, especially ‘energy’ — areas in which the EU acted with an unexpected degree of cohesion and assertiveness, which the author read as good news for the perception of the EU’s otherwise often challenged actorness in foreign policy; and that the UN’s visibility was characterised by dynamic developments, declining over spring 2022 as the organisation appeared materially largely irrelevant given the de facto blockage of the Security Council, but rebounding strongly over the summer in connection with crises related to the war yet outside the Council’s direct control — food security, energy supplies, and nuclear hazards — suggesting that the breadth and robustness of the UN helped it tackle a major challenge to its authority by partly bypassing the Security Council. Globally, at least one of the three IOs appeared in 29.9% of news articles referring to the war, highlighting the relevance of international organisations for media coverage of the conflict.

4. The Vocabulary of Mediation

Escudero (2024) examined how mediation was presented in news media stories before and during the outbreak of the war, asking whether stories whose headlines introduced the words ‘mediation’ or ‘mediator’ responded to the concepts of mediation, peace, or war journalism. The documentary research analysed 100 news items in Spanish from global press outlets, obtained via Google’s search engine on the basis of headline keywords, complemented by interviews with three experts in the culture of peace (from Spain, Mexico, and Colombia). The findings revealed that 85% of the analysed media used a vocabulary whose style responded to war journalism and contradicted the idea of mediation in the content of the news stories; four categories of mediators emerged (self-proposed mediators, requested/expected mediators, mediating countries, and mediation experts). The author concluded that the sense of mediation in media provided confusion rather than clarity — even where the intention of mediation was covered, it was mostly accompanied by a binary

perspective of the conflict, the opposite of what mediation implies — and recommended creating spaces for training on the culture of peace-building in newsrooms.

5. Competing Causal Frames in National Debate

Papale and Solaroli (2025) addressed two major arenas of the Italian debate — journalism, focusing on four Italian newspapers, and politics, focusing on parliamentary records and the Twitter accounts of political leaders. The article showed that the debate was heterogeneous and polarised, identifying five major frames on the causes and consequences of the conflict that varied in prominence between and within the sources examined, reflecting not only different political orientations but also deeper socio-political fractures at the national level. Two major competing frames explained the war's causes. The ideological conflict frame identified Russia's imperialist project and expansionist strategy as the main cause, describing the attack as an ideological threat against the political and moral value of democratic freedom and the principles of national sovereignty and security; it drew on powerful framing devices, notably the historical exemplar of the fight against Nazism in the WWII, with keywords such as 'dictator' (for Putin) contrasted with 'resistance', 'liberty', 'free world', and 'our values'. The co-responsibility frame, while acknowledging Russia's military responsibilities, placed emphasis on the implications of Western policies for the outbreak of the war, interpreting it as part of a broader conflict between superpowers: NATO and the West (often understood as the US) were criticised for adopting aggressive policies toward Russia and seeking to extend influence over Eastern Europe regardless of Russia's security demands, a course of action — together with military support to Ukraine after the invasion began — deemed to deteriorate local security, provoke Russia's military reaction, and cause higher civilian casualties. The ideological conflict frame presented a slightly higher frequency than the co-responsibility frame (17% to 12%), observed both among party leaders and in the journalistic field; both frames, however, were absent from parliamentary records, where concerns about economic implications and the use of sanctions dominated. Importantly, the article did not adjudicate between the two causal narratives but mapped how they competed in Italian public discourse — with humanitarian and economic concerns overall prioritised over more ideological reflections on the nature of the invasion.

6. Claim-Making Language and Cross-Bloc Contradiction

At the level of claim-making language, Mohanty et al. (2026) likewise found that Russian media maintained internal consistency through attributed and analytical claims citing official statements, while contradictions across geopolitical divides took the form of competing interpretations — differing topical framing, omission, or counter-attribution — rather than direct rebuttals.

7. Summary

This summary focuses first on patterns in coverage framing (convergences, differences, outliers and disconnects), followed by methodological challenges.

The studies in this section converge on three findings that complicate simple top-down models of wartime framing. First, *domestication* is near-universal: media in Brazil, India, and South Africa (Wozniak, Liu & Lind; Wozniak & Liu), Italy (Papale & Solaroli), and India again (Ravikumar & Downey) filtered the war through national interests, domestic political fractures, and local audience concerns rather than simply relaying either Western or Russian narratives. Second, news language was consistently *more alarming than official government language*: across all three BRICS cases,

media were considerably more likely than governments to use "war", "invasion", and "atrocities", and the mediation vocabulary itself was overwhelmed by war-journalism style (Escudero: 85% of "mediation" stories contradicted the concept in their actual content). Third, mirror-image aggressor/victim framing between adversary ecosystems was total: Rudakova's NYT–TASS comparison shows perfectly inverted role assignments, consistent with Mohanty et al.'s finding that cross-bloc contradiction proceeded via omission and counter-attribution rather than direct rebuttal — competing accounts talk past, not against, each other.

The most theoretically consequential divergence concerns *indexing*. Wozniak, Liu and Lind found no evidence that news wording cascaded down from executive-branch language; where alignment existed, it was with parliamentary (largely opposition) voices — supporting Bennett's contingent-elite-dissent variant rather than classic indexing. Yet Wozniak and Liu (2023) found media largely concurring with home-country geopolitical positioning, and Ravikumar & Downey describe Indian media as "largely submissive to government policy" while still shaping consent. Maurer et al.'s German data cut the other way again: government parties received four times the opposition's visibility, with AfD and Die Linke practically absent. Ko et al. add a partisan-system twist: US government documents were linguistically closer to conservative media. The conclusion is that the state–media relationship is contingent on political system, party constellation, and the country's stake in the conflict — not a constant. A second axis of difference is *which actors anchor the story*: Ukraine and Russia dominated European and Global South coverage, whereas Chinese data pivoted around NATO/the US (Chaban & Zhabotynska) — the salience structure itself encodes political priorities. Parízek's IO-visibility data adds nuance: NATO's declining visibility suggests the Russian "war with NATO" frame failed globally, while the EU's stable salience clustered around sanctions and energy.

Several findings resist the dominant patterns. Indian mainstream media's restrained vocabulary stands out among the BRICS cases, matching public opinion that split blame evenly between the West (28%) and Russia (27%) — India is the clearest case where elite framing, media language, and public attitudes jointly diverge from both blocs. Serbia is the outlier in Hameleers et al.'s 19-country survey: highest false-information perceptions, and the only country attributing falsehoods to incapacity rather than intent. Ye & Aron's audience data reveal supply–demand *mismatches* that constrain the Herman–Chomsky propaganda model: US audiences ignored heavily covered economic-enforcement stories, and adversary audiences disengaged from sanctions coverage their own outlets supplied — heavy supply does not guarantee traction. Dastgeer & Thapaliya document temporal drift toward neutrality: pro-Ukraine tweets fell by 13% over 2022 while no-side positioning rose by 15%, suggesting audience fatigue that production-side studies miss. Troitskiy's finding that Russia's "fake news law" eliminated the discursive middle ground — forcing a heterogeneous intelligentsia into two camps — is a rare within-Russia counterpart to polarisation findings elsewhere, though with the crucial caveat that visible discourse under censorship cannot reveal actual opinion distribution.

Methodologies used can be categorised into comparative elite–media designs, Large-scale NLP, qualitative/ethnographic content analysis, survey research, social-media network and engagement analysis and discourse monitoring under censorship.

Comparative elite–media designs (Wozniak, Liu & Lind; Wozniak & Liu; Papale & Solaroli). Their key strength is triangulation across arenas — government statements, parliamentary records, leaders' social media, and news content — which allows indexing and cascading hypotheses to be *tested* rather than assumed, and which can detect where frames circulate in one arena but not

another (Papale & Solaroli's finding that both causal frames were absent from parliamentary records is only visible through such a design). Limitations include reliance on English-language or elite newspapers as proxies for "the media" (two Indian English-language papers cannot represent India's vast vernacular press), short observation windows (first four weeks), and difficulty establishing causal direction between elite and media discourse even when correlation is found.

Large-scale NLP (Parížek: 2.9 million articles, 60 languages; Ko et al.: JSD-based similarity; Mohanty et al.: claim-pair analysis). The scale and multilingual reach are unmatched — Parížek's design is arguably the only way to make credible *global* claims about visibility — and divergence metrics like JSD provide replicable, quantified measures of ideological distance. The trade-offs are familiar: visibility and word frequency are thin proxies for framing (an organisation can be highly visible while framed negatively); dictionary and psycholinguistic categories embed the researchers' assumptions; and interpretation of why patterns occur (e.g., why NATO visibility declined) remains inferential.

Qualitative/ethnographic content analysis (Rudakova; Escudero). These capture role assignment and conceptual coherence — whether "mediation" headlines actually deliver mediation content — which counting cannot. But Rudakova's two-outlet design conflates outlet, country, and media system (TASS is a state agency, the NYT a private newspaper — the comparison is asymmetric by construction); Escudero's Google-derived sample of 100 Spanish-language items introduces opaque algorithmic selection bias, and three expert interviews are illustrative rather than evidential.

Survey research (Hameleers et al.; the YouGov data in Ravikumar & Downey; Chaban & Zhabotynska). The 19-country, $N \approx 19,000$ design permits genuine cross-national inference about perception, trust, and attribution — the reception side almost entirely absent from the framing literature. Weaknesses: a single fielding wave (April–May 2022) freezes a fast-moving object; self-reported misinformation perception measures attitude, not exposure or accuracy; and country selection skews European. Chaban & Zhabotynska's synthesis is valuable for linking narratives to knowledge-producer elites, but — as the reviewed text itself notes — its causal explanation (elite opinion plus Russian propaganda) is only partially supported, and its a priori classification of all antagonistic causation narratives as propaganda builds a normative judgement into the analytical scheme.

Social-media network and engagement analysis (Dastgeer & Thapaliya; Taban & Gür; Ye & Aron's audience models). These uniquely access temporal dynamics, audience co-production, and bot activity, and Ye & Aron's supply–demand comparison is a genuine innovation for testing propaganda-model constraints. Limits: Twitter/Facebook users are unrepresentative of publics (half of Dastgeer & Thapaliya's users had no identifiable location); engagement metrics conflate approval, outrage, and curiosity; platform API changes threaten replicability; and the 1% share of tweets from pro-Russia countries reflects platform blocking and access as much as opinion.

Discourse monitoring under censorship (Troitskiy). Methodologically the most distinctive study: longitudinal, multi-platform observation of a constrained discursive field, with the "mental calendar" as an original analytical device. Its defining limitation is one Troitskiy himself concedes — under a censorship regime, the observable is systematically unrepresentative of the actual, so the study documents the *architecture of permissible speech* rather than opinion. This honesty is a strength, but it means findings about the intelligentsia's conservatism and disunity apply strictly to public performance.

Findings in this section partially remedy the production-side bias of the framing literature by adding reception, elite-discourse, and network perspectives, and its repeated falsification or qualification of

received models (indexing, cascading activation, Herman–Chomsky). From this perspective it is its greatest cumulative contribution. Persistent weaknesses include (a) the elite/vernacular gap — English-language and elite sources stand in for national media systems; (b) inconsistent conceptualisation of the government–media relationship ("indexing", "submissiveness", "concurrence", and "domestication" are used across studies without shared operationalisation, making the apparent contradictions between Wozniak et al.'s findings and Ravikumar & Downey's characterisation hard to adjudicate); (c) single-wave designs dominating a phenomenon that Dastgeer & Thapaliya show to be temporally unstable; and (d) normative commitments (baseline narratives, propaganda classifications) occasionally embedded in coding schemes, which complicates comparison with studies that bracket the causation question, in contrast to study done by Papale & Solaroli.

IV. Between Headlines and Minds: Interrogating Media Narratives on the Russo-Ukrainian War Through Public Opinion Evidence

News media serve as the primary lens through which distant publics perceive the conflict, yet the relationship between journalistic reporting and public opinion is far from straightforward. While a substantial body of scholarship partly discussed above has examined the content, tone, and framing of war coverage, fewer studies have systematically tested whether and how these media narratives translate into measurable shifts in public attitudes. This section addresses that gap by interrogating the interplay between news discourse on the Russo-Ukrainian war and public opinion.

1. Contrasting Storylines and Audience Co-Production

Chaban and Zhabotynska (2024) found, on the basis of public opinion surveys, that the world — and the EU within it — held two major contrasting ‘stories’ or frames about Ukraine. They described how European and US respondents shared a systemic narrative viewing the war as unprovoked Russian aggression; Polish academic discourse, for instance, framed it plainly as unprovoked aggression by Russia that needed to be deterred, and this was positioned as the baseline against which other narratives were measured. Their research also demonstrated that some European media narratives paralleled the Global South and Chinese data segments by communicating the West (or the West and the US) as the invariably prominent political ‘actor’ of the war: the immediate participants — Ukraine and Russia — were the focus of the European and Global South data but only shadows in the Chinese data, for which (as for the Global South) the information pivot was NATO headed by the US, with the US and Europe as further highlights. The salience of political ‘actors’ pointed to the narrators’ political priorities, also evident in the ‘stories’ told about those actors. The chapter carefully documented pro-Russian/antagonistic narratives on causation as propaganda rather than as legitimate explanations. Drawing extensively on Koval et al. (2022), the authors also identified a structural bias in Western scholarship: a long tradition of focusing on Russian history, politics, and culture far more intensively than on Ukraine’s, which produced a tendency toward the ‘symmetrisation of responsibility’ — blurring the distinction between victim and aggressor — driven partly by norms of academic neutrality and partly by realist pressure to seek quick settlements. Their explanation that the existence of the two ‘storylines’ was caused by differences in the opinions of knowledge-producers (societal elites) and by the workings of Russian and pro-Russian propaganda targeting external opinion-formers and publics in different regions (Chaban & Zhabotynska, 2024, p. 223), however, seems only partially true in the light of the evidence reviewed here.

The audience models of Ye and Aron (2025) revealed that engagement was tightly linked to topic, and that audiences across blocs tended to respond to weapons cycles and nuclear risk even where tone or moral vocabulary differed — underscoring that shared agendas emerged most clearly when events were exogenous and symbolically charged. Allied audiences engaged most with governance and oversight, weapons and Western support, and counterstrike operations, suggesting a preference for capability and integrity stories rather than mediation or macroeconomic spillovers. By contrast, U.S. audiences engaged narrowly with capability pipelines, ignoring humanitarian and macroeconomic stories despite their prominence in coverage — an asymmetry illustrating that engagement is not simply a function of supply: while U.S. outlets heavily covered economic enforcement, audiences did not reward those stories, pointing to a disconnect between media

emphasis and public salience. Adversary audiences offered a striking contrast: despite adversary outlets devoting substantial coverage to sanctions and economic costs, audiences disengaged from sanctions design while rewarding operational and logistics coverage — a mismatch indicating that not all heavily supplied narratives gain traction with publics, suggesting constraints on the propaganda model (Herman & Chomsky, 1988), at least when narratives lack immediate salience for domestic audiences. ‘Other’-country audiences, by contrast, rewarded mediation and diplomacy, which aligned well with the bloc’s coverage, confirming a closer fit between supply and demand in non-aligned contexts.

2. Cross-National Survey Evidence on (Mis)information Perceptions

Hameleers et al. (2024), using an original 19-country comparative survey (N = 19,037) fielded in April–May 2022 in Austria, Belgium, Brazil, the Czech Republic, Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Serbia, France, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Sweden, and the United States, found that news users were likely to regard information on the war as false, and more likely to attribute false information to deliberate deception than to a lack of access to the war zone or inaccurate expert knowledge. Russian sources were substantially more likely to be blamed for falsehoods than Ukrainian or Western sources — but these attribution biases depended on a country’s position on the war: people mostly believed that falsehoods were intended to deceive them and selectively associated misinformation with the opposing camp. Comparing across countries, false-information perceptions were strongest in Serbia and least pronounced in Sweden; Serbia was also the only country where people believed false information was mostly due to lack of access or lacking expertise rather than intent. Although distrust was most clearly pronounced toward the pro-Russia side, people were also likely to associate domestic established media, citizens, and NATO with perceived falsehoods, and participants did not clearly distinguish between NATO and their own countries’ established media on the one hand and the Ukrainian government or media on the other. Overall support for Ukraine went hand in hand with relatively low levels of perceived falsehoods associated with the Ukrainian side versus the Russian aggressor. No major differences in misinformation beliefs appeared across demographic profiles, although people with the lowest education level on average rated Russian sources as spreading the lowest level of false information of any education group while being most likely to associate NATO with false-information dissemination. Citizens in countries with lower media trust (Serbia, Hungary, Poland, Greece) reported higher levels of perceived mis- and disinformation than democracies with higher trust in information (Sweden, Denmark, Germany) — implying that where trust in conventional information sources is low, mis- and disinformation beliefs are more likely to be salient.

3. Social-Media Networks, Bots, and Shifting Sentiment

Dastgeer and Thapaliya (2023) analysed information and disinformation in Twitter networks on the war in 2022. First, they explored four networks of 72,899 users with 124,540 connections from March, April, November, and December 2022; like all social media networks, the Twitter networks on the war were divided rather than centralised and had low levels of reciprocity. Second, 3,275 unique tweets and retweets from 104 countries were quantitatively examined, revealing a significant increase in the percentage of opinion in the last months of 2022 relative to the first months of the war (by more than 16.4%), while the percentages of fact and disinformation significantly decreased. While more than half of the tweets in the first months supported Ukraine, that support dropped by more than 13% in the last months, and the percentage of tweets siding with neither party increased

by more than 15% — the conversation shifted from support for Ukraine toward taking no side as the war continued. Politicians, organisations, and news media in pro-Ukraine countries were more outspoken than those in pro-Russia countries: the proportion of tweets from pro-Russia countries was considerably smaller (1%) than pro-Ukraine tweets (46%). The highest number of posts came from users with no shared location (49.8%), followed by the U.S. (24%), the U.K. (4.5%), Ukraine (3.1%), Canada (2.9%), India (1.4%), Germany (1.2%), Australia (1%), Japan (1%), and Belgium and the Netherlands (0.5% each); the largest group of users were citizens, followed by news media, organisations, and politicians.

Taban and Gür (2024), examining Twitter bots in the war as agents of influence, found that Twitter reacted to bots quite quickly and that Russia could not manage to exploit the Russian Twitter sphere as much as it had done before — which was why, they argued, Russia chose to block Twitter.

4. Discourse Under Censorship: Monitoring the Russian Intelligentsia

Troitskiy (2023) monitored social media reactions of the Russian creative and academic intelligentsia (those who remained in Russia) from September 2022 to March 2023, drawing on 7 professional union websites, 27 Telegram channels, and 16 Facebook pages, with the goal of identifying which events triggered public reactions and what ‘mental calendar’ — a post facto ordering of significant events — emerged. Several findings stood out. First, the myth of the intelligentsia’s unity collapsed: contrary to the stereotype of a unified ‘conscience of the nation’, the group proved deeply heterogeneous, and Russia’s March 2022 ‘fake news law’ forced this diverse spectrum into two opposing camps — pro-war/pro-Putin and anti-war — eliminating the middle ground. Second, creativity proved largely a myth in this context: the supposedly ‘creative’ intelligentsia showed striking conservatism, with innovation appearing only in form (humour, irony, Aesopian language used to evade censorship), never in content — narrative models and value frameworks remained rigid on both sides. Third, a ‘mental calendar’ emerged with three temporal layers: long-term continuous events (the war itself, mobilisation, sanctions, nuclear rhetoric, Transnistria); medium-term recurring dates (Soviet and post-Soviet holidays, increasingly reinterpreted and destabilised); and short-term flashpoints (Dugina’s death, the Kherson withdrawal, Navalny’s Oscar, Xi Jinping’s visit, the destroyed T-72 tank displayed in Berlin, Tallinn, and Tartu). Fourth, war fatigue and routinisation set in: by December 2022, even pro-war commentators showed exhaustion, and the war receded into an ambient background context appearing through allusion and association. Fifth, distinctive discourse patterns emerged: ‘Russia/Russians’ (rather than ‘the Russian army’ or ‘soldiers’) became the collective subject, risking long-term hostility toward ordinary Russians; Putin was demeaned (surname-only reference; speculation about his health and sanity) as a defensive strategy; conspiracy theories flourished; and history (the Cuban Missile Crisis, the USSR’s collapse) was used analogically to justify failures rather than to argue. Sixth, repressive escalation continued: during the seven months of the study, one professional organisation and two individual subjects of the research were declared ‘foreign agents’. Troitskiy acknowledged a key methodological limit: because only pro-government voices could speak openly, the data could not reveal the true distribution of opinion — the visible discourse largely echoed official narratives, while dissent went silent or coded. The bottom line was that the Russian intelligentsia was neither morally unified nor genuinely creative under wartime conditions: it was split, conservative in values, dependent on imported narratives, and increasingly silenced, its ‘mental calendar’ shaped less by genuine reflection than by reactions to state-generated events and media flashpoints.

5. India – media has a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of the conflict

Ravikumar & Downey (2025) wrote that October 2022 international YouGov public opinion poll findings indicated that equal number of Indians attributed responsibility for the Russian invasion of Ukraine to ‘the West’ and Russia (28% compared to 27%, while 45% indicated both were accountable or expressed uncertainty. They argued that, in addition to historical ties, the news media played a pivotal role in shaping public perceptions of the conflict. Although largely submissive to government policy, through deciding which frames to present and which political actors to support, the media played an important role in shaping public attitudes toward the conflict, securing domestic consent for foreign policy, and consequently in enabling the Indian government’s approach to the war.

6. A Critical Note on the Co-Responsibility Literature

Zollmann (2024) further argued that the news media had rarely framed NATO states as aggressors or imperial powers in previous historical interventions. It should be noted, however, that Zollmann perhaps did not differentiate sufficiently — or at all — among different types of military interventions, labelling all of them as aggressions, while some interventions arguably had humanitarian features (such as the 1999 Yugoslav–Kosovo conflict, which appeared to be turning into ethnic cleansing) or could be seen as a — perhaps excessive — reaction to global events (such as the 2001 US intervention in Afghanistan following the terrorist attacks on the USA). Nonetheless, Zollmann (2024) was right to note, citing McLaughlin (2020, p. 175), that the advance of a Russian ‘enemy image’ had functioned ‘as a stick to beat Putin and resurgent, post-Soviet Russia, often distracting from the West’s role [in] triggering tension’. This framing of Russia also omitted other dimensions of the country’s politics: Western news media by and large distorted Russian security interests, and a consistent pattern of reporting framed Russia’s concerns about NATO expansion as ‘unreasonable and inexplicable paranoia’ (McLaughlin, 2020, pp. 175–176, cited in Zollmann, 2024). On a macro level, commentaries departing from this pattern were scattered deviations from the dominant range of permissible opinion (similar reporting patterns were identified by other scholars; see Precht & Welzer, 2022, p. 21; Prinzing, 2022; Schiffer, 2022). The press mainly regarded Russia as the responsible party in the war and did not seriously factor in NATO co-responsibility. A study by Greene (2022) likewise showed how the notion of an ‘unprovoked’ war had been echoed repeatedly across the media ecosystem.

7. Summary

This summary focuses first on patterns in coverage framing (similarities, differences and outliers), followed by methodological challenges.

Three convergent findings structure this section. First, *bloc-conditioned perception mirrors bloc-conditioned production*: the two contrasting "storylines" Chaban and Zhabotynska identify at the level of public opinion (unprovoked aggression vs. West-centred causation) map directly onto the production-side divide documented in the framing literature, and Hameleers et al. show the same alignment at the level of misinformation attribution — publics selectively associated falsehood with the geopolitically opposing camp. Perception, in other words, is motivated: what people believe to be false tracks whose side they are on, not information quality. Second, *actor salience encodes political priorities* on both sides of the production–reception divide: Ukraine and Russia anchor European and Global South narratives, while NATO/the US anchors Chinese (and partly Global

South) narratives — the choice of protagonist is itself a causal claim. Third, several studies converge on the finding that *audiences are not passive receivers*: Ye and Aron's engagement models, Dastgeer and Thapaliya's sentiment drift, and Ravikumar and Downey's Indian polling all show publics diverging from, lagging behind, or reinterpreting the coverage supplied to them.

The central tension in this section concerns the *strength of the media–opinion link*. Ravikumar and Downey assign media a "pivotal role" in shaping Indian perceptions and manufacturing consent for government policy; Chaban and Zhabotynska attribute storyline divergence to knowledge-producing elites and propaganda; but Ye and Aron's supply–demand mismatches point the other way — US audiences ignored heavily supplied economic-enforcement coverage, and adversary audiences disengaged from their own outlets' sanctions coverage, suggesting audience autonomy that constrains the Herman–Chomsky propaganda model. The Indian polling data itself (28% blaming the West, 27% Russia, 45% both/unsure) can be read either as evidence of successful media framing of a "middle path" or as evidence that publics resist binary framing altogether — the studies do not resolve this. A further difference concerns *stability over time*: Hameleers et al.'s single-wave snapshot (April–May 2022) implicitly treats attitudes as fixed, whereas Dastgeer and Thapaliya document substantial drift within a single year (pro-Ukraine positioning down 13 points, neutrality up 15), and Troitskiy documents routinisation and fatigue even among pro-war Russian commentators by December 2022.

Serbia is the clearest cross-national outlier: highest perceived-falsehood levels in the 19-country survey, and uniquely attributing misinformation to incapacity rather than intent — plausibly reflecting its distinctive media-trust environment and geopolitical position. The lowest-education group in Hameleers et al. is a demographic outlier, rating Russian sources as *least* deceptive while most associating NATO with falsehoods — the only demographic cleavage in an otherwise flat profile. Troitskiy's Russian intelligentsia constitutes a structural outlier: the only within-Russia reception evidence in the section, and one where the "fake news law" eliminated precisely the middle ground that dominates Indian opinion (45% ambivalent) — a striking illustration of how legal coercion, not media framing, can restructure a discursive field. Finally, the "other"-country audiences in Ye and Aron are the only case of clean supply–demand fit (mediation coverage rewarded by mediation-interested publics), making non-aligned contexts the exception that highlights the misalignment elsewhere.

The specific sub-section performs its own adjudication in two places, and this deserves flagging as an analytical feature rather than a finding. Chaban and Zhabotynska's classification of all antagonistic causation narratives as propaganda builds a normative premise into the analysis — one the reviewed text itself pushes back on ("only partially true") — while their Koval-derived point about "symmetrisation of responsibility" in Western scholarship cuts in the opposite direction from Zollmann's marginalisation thesis. The critical note on Zollmann sharpens this: his claim of consistent NATO-friendly historical framing arguably homogenises interventions with distinct legal and humanitarian profiles (Kosovo 1999, Afghanistan 2001), yet his core observation — that NATO co-responsibility remained outside the dominant range of permissible opinion, with the "unprovoked" descriptor echoing across the ecosystem (Greene, 2022) — is corroborated by multiple independent sources (Precht & Welzer; Prinzing; Schiffer). The section thus stages a genuine unresolved scholarly dispute: whether Western coverage under-weighted co-responsibility (Zollmann, McLaughlin) or whether attending to co-responsibility itself risks symmetrising an asymmetric war (Koval, Chaban & Zhabotynska). Neither position is refuted by the empirical material presented.

Methodologies utilised included cross-national survey research, survey synthesis and narrative

interpretation, computational engagement modelling, social-network and content analysis of Twitter, longitudinal discourse monitoring under censorship and polling-anchored interpretive argument.

Cross-national survey research (Hameleers et al.). The strongest design in the section for population-level inference: 19 countries, N = 19,037, an original instrument, and enough national variation to link perception patterns to system-level variables (media trust). Its limitations are structural: a single wave frozen at April–May 2022 cannot capture the temporal drift other studies document; self-reported falsehood *perception* measures attitude and trust, not actual exposure or accuracy; the sample is heavily European (Brazil and the US aside), limiting Global South claims; and cross-country comparability of survey items across 19 languages and political cultures is assumed rather than demonstrated.

Survey synthesis and narrative interpretation (Chaban & Zhabotynska). Valuable for integrating opinion data with narrative theory and for the elite-knowledge-producer explanation, which few studies attempt. The costs: secondary reliance on heterogeneous surveys with differing instruments; a causal account (elites + propaganda) asserted more than tested; and the normative pre-classification of one causal family as propaganda, which forecloses the empirical question of how far such narratives reflect organic domestic reasoning — a question Vuksanović's Balkan evidence (from the earlier section) answers differently.

Computational engagement modelling (Ye & Aron). Methodologically the most innovative contribution: by pairing supply-side topic distributions with demand-side engagement, it converts the usually untestable "media effects" question into an observable fit/misfit analysis, generating the section's most theoretically consequential finding (constraints on the propaganda model). Weaknesses: engagement metrics conflate approval, outrage, irony, and curiosity; Facebook engagement measures platform-active publics, not populations; the bloc categories aggregate heterogeneous countries; and the work had not been peer-reviewed — its striking claims warrant cautious citation.

Social-network and content analysis of Twitter (Dastgeer & Thapaliya; Taban & Gür). Their unique contribution is *temporal* — four sampling windows across 2022 reveal sentiment drift invisible to single-wave designs — plus network-structural findings (division, low reciprocity). Cons: 3,275 tweets is a thin content sample against 72,899 network users; half the users had no identifiable location, undermining the country-level percentages; the 1% pro-Russia share reflects platform blocking and access asymmetries as much as opinion; and Taban and Gür's inference about Russia's *motive* for blocking Twitter is a plausible but unverifiable causal claim. Post-2022 API restrictions also make replication effectively impossible.

Longitudinal discourse monitoring under censorship (Troitskiy). A model of methodological honesty: seven months, 50 platforms/channels, an original analytical device (the three-layer "mental calendar"), and an explicit acknowledgement that under censorship the observable discourse cannot reveal opinion distribution. Its findings should therefore be read as mapping the *architecture of permissible public speech* — including its coded evasions — rather than attitudes. The sample (intelligentsia who remained in Russia) is also doubly selected: by profession and by the decision not to emigrate.

Polling-anchored interpretive argument (Ravikumar & Downey). Connecting YouGov data to media framing is a reasonable move, but the design cannot support the causal weight placed on it: the poll and the content analysis are contemporaneous cross-sections, so whether media shaped opinion, opinion shaped media, or both reflect elite foreign-policy tradition and historical ties

(which the authors themselves invoke) remains indeterminate. "Pivotal role" is asserted; the design demonstrates only congruence.

The section's collective strength is that it supplies what the framing literature lacks — reception evidence — and that its findings repeatedly *discipline* production-side claims: framing dominance does not equal persuasion (Ye & Aron), attribution of falsehood is motivated (Hameleers), and sentiment decays (Dastgeer & Thapaliya). The collective weakness is that no study in the section actually measures media *effects* in a causally identified way: all designs are observational, cross-sectional or descriptive-longitudinal, with no panel data, no exposure measurement linked to attitude change, and no experimental component. The section's framing promise — testing "whether and how media narratives translate into measurable shifts in public attitudes" — is thus only partially redeemed; what the evidence supports is congruence and mismatch mapping, not translation.

II.-IV (02). Alternative Methodological Approach (Konstantin Startsev)

1. Analytical Framework

Framing theory and the six analytic axes

Entman (1993) defines framing as the selection "some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation". These four functions are linked by what Entman (2004) describes as „a kind of cultural logic, each helping to sustain the others with the connections among them cemented more by custom and convention than by the principles of syllogistic logic” (p. 6).

These four functions represent the essence of the text’s statements, but they do not exhaust all the analytically significant properties of media framing. Therefore, two additional dimensions are identified from related theoretical works. Firstly, Entman’s cascade activation model (2004) places framing within a multi-level system extending from the administration through elites, media organisations and news texts to the public, in which the range and identity of the sources given a voice in the coverage of events significantly determine which frames become significant. This understanding, underpinned by Bennett’s theory of indexing (1990), forms the basis of the fifth axis, the management of sources and voices: important is not only what is said in the text, but also whose voice we hear and whose we do not.

Secondly, the distinction between episodic and thematic approaches made by Iyengar (1991) reflects a compositional property that is orthogonal to content: is the text organised around a single incident or around a stable structural condition? Iyengar experimentally demonstrates that this compositional choice has consequences for the attribution of causal relationships, independent of content, which makes it an independent framing variable rather than just a stylistic preference.

This review therefore utilises the following six axes. F1 (problem definition), F2 (interpretation of causal relationships), F3 (moral evaluation) and F4 (recommendations for solving the problem) are the four main framing functions defined in the works of Entman (1993). F5 (management of sources and voices) derives from the cascade activation model (Entman, 2004) and indexing theory (Bennett, 1990). F6 (episodic/thematic composition) follows Iyengar (1991). Taken together, axes F1–F4 identify what frames the text; F5 identifies through whom; and F6 identifies how the text is structured.

This six-axis framework F1-F6 will help us examine how the reviewed works address substantive framing, the management of sources and voices, and the composition of media narratives. The framework is not exhaustive, and a single study may relate to several axes. Within F2 specifically, causal interpretations are classified using a separate taxonomy of ten causal frames grouped into eight broader families.

F1. Problem definition

Research along this axis examines how the events in question are defined: as a “war” or a “special military operation”, as a “conflict” or a “crisis”. This axis includes three connected aspects: the

lexical designation of the event; legal and normative classification and the scale, i.e. whether the event is presented as bilateral, regional, European or global.

F1 is measurable; for example, Hanley et al. (2023) quantify the designation contest directly across three media ecosystems; Kwiatkowska and Solarz (2022) document the use of legally distinct categories as synonyms in Polish headlines; Sulzhytski et al. (2024) trace designation within a single incident across four channels.

F2. Causal interpretation

The central question in this axis is: “Why did the war break out?”

Zollmann (2024) posits two competing explanatory frames: Russia’s invasion is defined primarily as an aggressive, illegal war driven by Russian/Putin imperial ambitions; The second version places the blame for the war on the West, suggesting that NATO’s expansion provoked the invasion (Zollmann, 2024, pp. 374–375).

First, this binary is a necessary point of departure and insufficient as an instrument, for three reasons.

It is internally heterogeneous. The first concept is combining two incompatible assertions: that the cause lies in the nature of the Russian state, and that it lies in the qualities of one specific individual. Both assertions imply different counterfactual scenarios and different ways of resolving the problem. The second concept combines a realistic structural argument about anarchy and the security dilemma with the Kremlin’s own civilisational justification of war.

Second, this binary approach is not exhaustive. It leaves no room for interpretations based on class dynamics, the view of the conflict as ethno-national in nature, the utility of a foreign war for the regime’s domestic needs, or the mutual discursive construction of the threat, although each of these is examined in the academic literature. Zollmann’s own material contains an instance: in *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, Kornelius explains Russian moves toward Ukraine as motivated by Putin’s fear of democracy (Zollmann, 2024, p. 380). This is a frame concerning regime security which, within the two-component model, must be classified under the category of “imperial interests”.

Third, and most importantly, this model is circular to any positional variable. Since the first coordinate system is characterised as “Western” and the second as its opposite, any correlation between the geopolitical position of a given actor and its causal interpretation stems from the very structure of the model, rather than from the results of measurements.

Thus, in this review, the binary model is replaced by a taxonomy of ten causal frameworks nested within eight broader families, formulated on the basis of the locus of the cause and discriminated by a counterfactual test. The realist family divides into a structural-defensive and a proxy account (P3-a, P3-b), and the ethno-national family into co-ethnic protection and denial of nationhood (P5-a, P5-b), because in each case the two members imply different counterfactuals and cannot be coded as one. This conceptual model is based on Goetz and Ekman’s (2024) three-level framework, which includes deep, intermediate and immediate causes, and supplements it with explanations developed in the academic literature that cannot be reduced to these levels.

Table 3. *A taxonomy of ten causal frameworks nested within eight broader families*

	Frame	Locus of causality	The war would not have occurred if...
P1	Personalist	Leader psychology and personal traits	...a different individual had headed the state
P2	Imperial continuity	Nature of Russian statehood	...Russian statehood had not reproduced an imperial form
P3-a	Structural-defensive (realist)	International structure, security dilemma	...NATO had not expanded eastward
P3-b	Proxy / great-power competition	Instrumentalization of Ukraine by a great power	...the US had not used Ukraine as a lever against Russia
P4	Civilizational-identitarian	Clash of civilizations	Nothing? the opposition is posited as permanent
P5-a	Ethno-conflict: co-ethnic protection	Protection of a co-ethnic minority abroad	...the claimed attacks on Russian-speaking residents had not occurred
P5-b	Ethno-conflict: denial of nationhood	Refusal to recognise the Ukrainian nation as an independent entity	...Russia had recognized Ukrainians as a distinct nation
P6	Economical and structural	Configuration of economic interests and ownership structures	...the structure of economic interests had been different
P7	The regime's internal needs	The need to consolidate the regime through a foreign war	...the regime had not required mobilization and legitimation
P8	Spiral of securitization	Mutual threat construction	...at least one party had refrained from securitizing the other

When coding, the explanations given in the text are coded without assessing the accuracy of such explanations. Two pairs require explicit separation.

P3-a and P6 both locate causality at the systemic level. P3-a holds that the cause lies in the security structure and would operate regardless of the economic order; P6 holds that the cause is economic and that security dynamics are derivative. Without this distinction the two will be assigned to the same NATO-related text.

P6 and P7 both admit material interest as a cause, and they can be held simultaneously without contradiction, or in opposition to one another. P6 locates causality in the configuration of economic interests as a structure; P7 locates it in the requirements of a particular ruling group, whose material interests are one component among others. The discriminator is substitutability: if the account implies that a differently composed ruling group would have acted the same way under the same economic structure, the frame is P6; if it implies that this group's own requirements were decisive, the frame is P7. The two diverge sharply where a regime is presented as sacrificing economic interest to political survival, which is a P7 account and specifically not a P6 one.

Benefit is not cause. A text asserting that a party profits from the war is not thereby asserting that the party caused it. The inference from beneficiary to cause requires an additional premise, namely that the beneficiary possessed the capacity to bring the war about and exercised it. P6 is assigned only where three conditions hold: an economic interest or ownership structure is named; it is asserted to have caused the war rather than to have benefited from it; and the account implies that the war would not have occurred under a different economic configuration. Attribution of benefit is recorded in a separate field and does not populate the P columns.

The distinguishing factor is counterfactuality, not language. For example, when coding by language, an appeal to Russian-speaking residents of the Donbas is compatible with the P2, P4 and P5-a frameworks. However, counterfactuality distinguishes between them, with P4 positing antagonism as a permanent state and therefore characterised by the absence of an answer to the question “What could have prevented the war?”

F3. Moral evaluation

Who is the villain and who is the victim? The coding process assessed the attribution of responsibility, the use of demonising and victimising vocabulary, the emotional tone of the statements, and the grammatical agent.

This axis is the most comprehensively represented of the six. Moral evaluation must be distinguished from the causes of war, i.e. F2. Maurer, Hassler and Jost (2023) measure both variables separately on the same corpus, and these two variables behave differently. Nevertheless, these two variables can be combined.

F4. Treatment recommendation

What measures are proposed: military support, sanctions, negotiations, humanitarian aid, neutrality. These are assessed through an analysis of the measures mentioned, indicators of “peace journalism” and the significance of the topics under negotiation.

F5 Source and voice management

Who is permitted to speak: the distribution of access across countries, officials, oppositional actors, experts, wire services and civilians. Following Entman (2004), this axis is the precondition of the other four rather than a fifth function of the frame. Where a class of actors is structurally absent from coverage, the causal accounts that class would advance cannot appear, irrespective of any editorial decision about framing. The corpus measures this axis through source counts, party-presence distributions, wire-copy shares and headline architecture, and the resulting figures bear directly on the review’s central finding about F2.

F6. Episodic and thematic composition

Is the material organised on the basis of an analysis of individual cases or structures (Iyengar, 1991)? No study in the corpus uses this criterion as an explicitly coded variable; we have reconstructed this measure. Nevertheless, this dimension is significant, as it allows us to identify patterns, and also because the very absence of this dimension as a measured variable constitutes an important finding regarding this field of research.

Corpus construction and evidentiary hierarchy

Search strategy. The corpus was compiled through an unsystematic search, primarily using Google Scholar, employing combinations of the following terms: “framing”, “news framing”, “media coverage”, “content analysis”, “discourse analysis”, “narrative” in combination with the terms “Russian-Ukrainian war”, “Russian invasion of Ukraine”, “Russian-Ukrainian war”. The search was supplemented by citations from studies already identified. The search was conducted primarily in English, as well as in Russian, Ukrainian and Polish.

A terminological distinction is observed throughout. Media corpus denotes the body of news texts, posts or broadcasts analysed within a given study. Review literature denotes the set of studies

examined here. Where a figure is reported without qualification, it refers to the media corpus of the study under discussion.

One limitation of the search is specific to this review's principal question. The literature was assembled principally around framing and its methodological cognates, and that vocabulary preferentially retrieves studies of designation, moral evaluation and treatment recommendation, since these are what the framing literature conventionally measures. Studies that code attributed motive without describing themselves as framing research are correspondingly under-retrieved. The weakness of F2 documented below is therefore in part a property of the search, and the two cannot be separated on present evidence.

A limitation of this method is that the search methodology does not meet the standards of a systematic review. The protocol was not registered in advance; the inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed during the search rather than before it began; no formal selection log was kept; and no attempt was made to assess the completeness of the search. The body of literature should therefore be regarded as a substantial but non-exhaustive convenience sample of the available literature, and statements regarding the prevalence of phenomena in this field are consequently limited in scope. It is worth noting two implications from the outset: English-language publications are over-represented compared with the multilingual reality of the field under study, whilst works accessible only via paid subscription are under-represented compared with open-access works.

Systematisation. A direct comparison of corpus data is complicated by differences in methods, sources, historical periods and units of analysis. Therefore, this review is organised by analytical levels, applying the "bottleneck" principle: the evidential value of a study is limited by its most restrictive aspect. A study analysing the vocabulary of a single agency over the course of a single day constitutes a case study, regardless of the overall significance of its stated conclusions.

Four levels are identified: cross-national studies using a single instrument; national media systems ; individual media outlets and cross-media comparisons; and the analysis of individual events.

Platform coverage. The majority of studies in the body focus on traditional media: television, print media and online news, and, in lesser measure, Facebook and Telegram. None of the studies contains a systematic analysis of Twitter/X or TikTok, despite the key role these platforms play in real-time discourse on the war. This is a distinctive feature of the corpus that shapes all the conclusions drawn below.

Evidentiary hierarchy. The quality of the tool and the status of the publication are assessed according to separate criteria. The weight of the evidence is ranked as follows: manual coding with confirmed inter-coder reliability carries greater weight than machine annotation without such reliability; a coded scale consistently applied to a specific sample carries greater weight than an analysis of co-occurrences of keywords or a frame table compiled specifically for a single corpus; and a study in which the selection criteria are specified has greater weight than one in which they are not. Peer-reviewed sources are rated higher than preprints and theses. Non-standard status does not exclude a source: the report for the foundation by Maurer et al. and Petrovskaya's dissertation are used here, as their methods (a coded scale with specified consistency statistics and manual counting based on a specific sample) meet the criteria for evidential value. If a source has a non-standard status, this is indicated.

The extraction instrument, limitations

Design. Each study was analysed in accordance with a fixed data extraction scheme covering the following aspects: bibliographic details and publication status; level of analysis; countries and

sources of information; sample period; methodological approach; sample size (N) and unit of analysis; language of the corpus; coverage of each of the six axes of the framework F1–F6 (on a three-point scale: “measured”, “related but not measured” or “absent”, specifying the operationalisation by which each is measured); the presence of each causal framework (P1–P8); the study’s own terminology for these models, quoted verbatim; the position taken by the authors themselves; the presence of numerical data in tables or the qualitative nature of the presentation; and the problems identified in the study.

Verification. All quantitative claims retained in this review were checked against full texts. Qualitative extraction rested on full-text reading for a subset of the review literature and on structured second-pass extraction against the same schedule for the remainder; the latter is the weaker procedure, and entries resting on it are marked accordingly in the underlying coding sheet. No study was coded from an abstract alone. Where figures are reported in tables, they were recomputed: percentages against their stated denominators, ratios against their component counts, and significance tests against the reported cell frequencies. Four discrepancies located this way are documented in the relevant sections.

Limitations. Data extraction was assisted by a large language model (Qwen3.8-Max, accessed via API on 10/08/2026). To ensure construct validity, the model was prompted using a structured system instruction that embedded the six-axis framework (F1–F6) and the P1–P8 causal taxonomy, utilizing a few-shot prompting strategy with manually coded exemplars. Recognizing the risks of LLM hallucinations in numerical extraction and the cognitive bias inherent in single-reviewer verification, a mandatory cross-check protocol was applied: every quantitative claim, denominator, and statistical significance value extracted by the LLM was manually recomputed by the author against the original full-text PDFs. While this procedure does not replace independent double-coding (inter-coder reliability), it shifts the LLM’s role to a structured retrieval engine, ensuring that all retained data points are anchored in human-verified primary sources.

2. Analysis by level

Cross-national comparisons with a single instrument

This level provides the most robust basis for identifying general trends, as the operationalisation remains consistent across each study and the problem of incomparability does not arise during comparison. Seven studies are examined; the instruments used in them vary considerably, which allows for a comparison to be made both between measurement approaches and between the results obtained.

Manual duration coding. Nordenstreng et al. (2023) compared main evening news bulletins in nine countries (Russia, China, Finland, the United Kingdom, Italy, the United States, Brazil, India, and South Africa) across ten sampled days between 24 February and 14 April 2022, classifying items into thirteen topics and five national angles, measured in minutes of airtime.

Russia was a marked outlier at 99.7% of bulletin time devoted to the war; China’s share of 7% was the lowest in the sample. The domestic-perspective share was highest in Finland (77%) and Italy (75%) and lowest in the United States (17% broadcast, 21% cable) and the United Kingdom (25%), while Russia has 88%.

Two features of the instrument bear on interpretation. The variable is defined in the analytical section as the *own-country angle* and appears in the conclusions as the *national government perspective*; the propaganda-model inference rests on that relabelling. As for Russia, these five

categories of viewing angles are not mutually exclusive, since for Russia the “Russian perspective” and the “perspective of the country of origin” are the same.

On the six axes, the study measures F1 partially (through the topic inventory), F3 (tone toward Russia), F4 (the peace-journalism assessment), and F5 (the angle variable). It does not measure F2. The nearest variable is the topic *justification of war* as a share of airtime - Russia 13%, China 6%, South Africa 4%, UK 2%, Italy 1%, US broadcast 1.6%, and zero in Finland, US cable, Brazil and India -which records how much justification discourse is present, not which justification is offered. The study’s finding that China alone applied peace-journalism principles from the first day is an F4 result¹.

Keyword co-occurrence. Zollmann (2024) examined nine newspapers in the United States, United Kingdom, and Germany over the first two weeks. Of 3,410 items retrieved on "Russia," 952 (28%) contained aggression-related terms: 264 of 867 in the US (30%), 349 of 1,843 in the UK (19%), 339 of 700 in Germany (48%). Of 908 items mentioning NATO, 266 (29%) contained expansion-related terms: 85 of 257 (33%), 138 of 399 (35%), and 43 of 252 (17%) respectively.

The reported ratio of 3.6:1 divides counts drawn from two differently sized pools; within their own pools the shares are 28% and 29%, and on a common denominator the NATO-expansion share is 266 of 3,410, or 7.8%. The second measure is defined as co-occurrence of "NATO" with expansion lexemes, which registers the topic irrespective of stance: items explicitly denying the causal link fall within it, as the article’s own examples show. The author notes that keyword search cannot establish whether a term refers to the invasion, and records in a table note that the UK sample is inflated.

In terms of genre, the study is a media-framing analysis containing an embedded substantive argument about causes. Two of its three components concern coverage (an integrative review of Western reporting on Russia and the new Cold War, and the content study of the US, UK and German press); the third is a review of the historical and diplomatic record of NATO expansion, which argues the substantive case. The author’s own position combines a structural-defensive account with a proxy one, while explicitly accepting that the invasion constitutes a crime of aggression under international law: the claim advanced is about contributing factors, not about Russian responsibility.

Topic modelling with labelled ecosystems. Hanley, Kumar and Durumeric (2023) assembled 11,359 English-language articles published between 1 January and 15 April 2022 across three media ecosystems: 4,536 items from eight Western outlets, 3,572 from ten Russian, and 3,251 from seven Chinese. They applied NPMI, word2vec, differential sentiment analysis, and partially labelled Dirichlet allocation.

Case selection is not equivalent across the three. The Western sample comprises eight popular mainstream sites selected for reach across the political spectrum, whereas the Chinese sample consists of the seven English-language sites designated by the US State Department as Chinese foreign missions, and the Russian sample of nine sites from a US State Department list together with waronfakes.com, which the authors added separately. The Russian set is therefore weighted toward peripheral outlets with no Western counterpart in the comparison. The authors acknowledge the problem, noting that these lists do not incorporate all articles circulated in each ecosystem and are thus naturally biased, and proceed to treat the three groups as comparable ecosystems throughout.

¹ its theoretical attribution to Galtung and Ruge (1965), a paper on news values, is mistaken, and the war/peace distinction derives from Galtung’s later work.

All three samples are English-only, so the Russian and Chinese material represents externally directed communication while the Western material is domestic discourse²³.

Subject to these caveats, this is the only study in the corpus measuring a single causal frame across multiple ecosystems with one instrument. The shared latent topic combining "nato", "alliance", "europe", "expansion", "security", "soviet", "west", "treaty" and "eastward" appears in 47 Western articles (1.0%), 81 Russian (2.3%) and 58 Chinese (1.8%).

Distinctive topics, meaning those that most differentiate each ecosystem from the others, diverge sharply. The five leading Western topics are humanitarian and military without exception (Bucha and Mariupol, civilians and residents, damaged buildings, families, children), and none is causal. The Russian set includes Azov and Nazi vocabulary (52 articles, 1.5%), biological laboratories (54, 1.5%) and a Kyiv–Donbas–coup cluster (39, 1.1%). The Chinese set is led by negotiations and delegations (190, 5.8%), with biological laboratories third (103, 3.2%). In the word2vec models, "demilitarize" and "denazify" rank third and fifth among the twenty terms closest to "Ukraine" in the Russian ecosystem, echoing the stated aims of the Russian government.

Sentiment scores differ negligibly (5.42, 5.43 and 5.62 on a nine-point scale), and the authors themselves attribute the difference to Western use of "war" and "invasion", which carry negative valence in the labMT lexicon. What is measured here is thus a difference in designation registering as a difference in affect.

Computational framing lexicons at scale. Ye and Aron (2025), at not peer-reviewed preprint, analyzed 190,864 Facebook posts from 112 outlets between 24 February 2022 and 20 August 2025, combining network analysis, structural topic modelling, dictionary-based framing lexicons, and engagement modelling.

The central result is thematic convergence with divergence in sub-angles within shared topics. The grammatical-agency measure is the study's most relevant contribution here: Russia appears as grammatical subject more often than Ukraine in every grouping -63.9 against 31.1, 59.6 against 29.5, 57.7 against 30.7, and 47.3 against 27.2. On the measure closest to attribution of responsibility, the groupings converge rather than diverge.

² Furthermore, the Russian and Chinese samples are characterised by asymmetry . The Chinese sample contains duplicate entries. Global Times (globaltimes.cn) and pdnews.cn are separate properties of one publisher, People's Daily, the official organ of the Communist Party's Central Committee. CGTN (cgtn.com) and CCTV (english.cctv.com) are not separate outlets at all, it is two websites of China Central Television, owned by state China Media Group.

The Russian sample is concentrated. TASS (861 articles), Sputnik (743) and RT (689) supply 64.2% of the Russian corpus between them, while five peripheral sites contribute 16.2%. Sputnik, like Russia Today, is part of the state "Rossiya Segodnya" agency. Ten domains therefore do not constitute ten independent observations.

The three groups are therefore not comparable in the number of effective observations they contain, and this asymmetry operates in addition to the asymmetry of selection criteria; the Chinese figures are used below as provisional.

³ A discrepancy in Table 1 should also be noted. The Chinese column sums to 3,902 against a stated 3,251, a difference of 651 articles or 20% of that sub-corpus. The reported percentages are computed on 3,251, so if the per-domain counts are correct the Chinese shares are overstated by roughly a fifth: the NATO-expansion topic would fall from 1.8% to 1.5%, and negotiations from 5.8% to 4.9%. The discrepancy cannot be resolved from the published data, and the Chinese figures are cited here with that qualification.

Two constraints apply. The lexical analysis runs on 46,000 exemplar posts, the most topic-typical selection, rather than the full corpus; and the reported 96% accuracy validates the retrieval filter, not the framing lexicons, for which no human-coded reference standard is given.

Annotated corpus release. Mohanty et al. (2026) present *dnipro*: 246,229 articles from 1 February 2022 to 31 August 2024, eleven outlets, five countries, three languages, with stance, sentiment, and topical-frame annotations generated by Phi-4 and verified against human coders on samples.

Composition is heavily skewed and constrains any country-level statement: Russian sources are 66.5% of the corpus, Ukrainian 21.8%, Chinese 8.7%, and the United States and United Kingdom together 4.1% -one outlet each, CNN (5,760 items) and the *Financial Times* (4,218). Model-human agreement on stance is 0.58–0.62 against 0.77 human-human, a gap the authors state plainly; two of nine frames fall in the moderate-reliability band. The authors describe their stance comparison as illustrative rather than as an empirical finding.

One incidental result belongs to F3: discussions of morality are, in the authors' words, extremely rare despite the corpus's subject being an extended war.

Unsupervised topic modelling. Kang, Park and Valdez (2024) applied latent Dirichlet allocation to 48,364 news-item descriptions retrieved via a news API between 1 February and 31 July 2022, identifying five topics -humanism, politics, peace, war, economy -and drew a 538-item subsample across seven regions⁴.

The most informative element for this review is procedural. The initial nine-topic solution included *responsibility*, *causes*, *international relations*, and *government* as candidates; all four were merged into *politics* because they were not distinguishable. The causal dimension was present among the candidates and was collapsed for model interpretability -direct evidence that unsupervised topic modelling over short news-API text does not recover F2.

Peace-journalism indicators. Rahman and Aoni (2025) analyzed 100 articles, 25 per outlet, from CNN, BBC, Russia Today, and Al Jazeera between January 2022 and January 2023 against four peace-journalism indicators. War-journalism elements predominate overall (53% against 47%), with Al Jazeera at 60% peace elements, RT 52%, BBC 40%, CNN 36%; the Western aggregate is 38% against 56% non-Western⁵.

The reported West/non-West difference does not reach conventional significance on recomputation from the study's own tables.

The substantive point concerns the instrument. All four indicators -people-orientation (43%), empathy (39%), conflict-resolution focus (46%), avoidance of demonization (37%) -measure F4. RT's leading score on avoidance of demonizing language reflects a state euphemism policy backed by criminal liability for statements about the armed forces; a refusal to name the invasion as such

⁴ The published percentages are column shares: the proportion of frame-present items contributed by each region, rather than the rate at which a region uses the frame. Recomputed by row, Africa leads on politics (70.8%), the Middle East on war (86.7%), and Europe is lowest on peace (16.6%). Only the humanism ordering survives, and it does so because the three largest regional subsamples happen to be similar in size. Recomputation by row reverses the regional ordering on two of the three frames for which the study reports regional differences.

⁵ Recomputation from the reported percentages yields 19 of 50 and 28 of 50. Pearson's chi-squared is 3.252 with one degree of freedom, giving $p = 0.071$ (Yates-corrected 2.569, $p = 0.109$). The logistic regression reproduces the point estimate (odds ratio 2.077 against a reported 2.107) but gives a standard error of 0.214 where the two-by-two table yields 0.408; with the correct value, $p = 0.073$, consistent with the chi-squared. The reported difference does not reach conventional significance on these data.

registers on this scale as peace orientation. This is the clearest instrument confound in the corpus: an F1 constraint producing an F4 score that is then read as evidence about disposition.

What this level establishes, and what it implies for further search

Across seven studies applying six distinct instrument families, the distribution of measurement across the six axes is uneven in a consistent direction. F3 and F4 are measured by nearly all; F1 by several; F5 by two; F2 by one with a valid instrument and one with an invalid one; F6 by none. The substantive observation, that causal explanation is a low-frequency topic in the ecosystems where it has been measured, rests on a narrow base of parallel measurements by incommensurable instruments and requires replication.

For the extension of the corpus this suggests three priorities. First, studies coding attributed motive as a distinct variable, however small their samples, since these are the only ones that address F2 directly. Second, non-English cross-national work, since all seven studies at this level sample English-language output and thereby measure external communication for non-anglophone systems. Third, work covering the period after early 2025, which only one study at this level reaches.

National media systems

Cross-national comparison generalizes the position of whole countries. Examination of national systems shows within-system variation comparable to, and on some variables exceeding, between-country variation. Nine studies cover seven systems. Studies analysing political actors rather than media output are treated at F5 in the synthesis, since they describe the supply of positions available for media to index rather than any property of coverage.

Germany. Maurer, Hassler and Jost (2023) conducted a quantitative content analysis of 4,292 items from eight leading German outlets between 24 February and 31 May 2022, with Holsti inter-coder agreement between 0.71 and 0.98⁶. The report was commissioned by the Otto Brenner Stiftung and is not peer-reviewed. The sample spans editorial lines and includes a tabloid and a commercial bulletin.

This is the corpus's most valuable single instrument because it measures F2 and F3 separately on the same material, and the two behave differently.

On the F3 variable, 93% of items attribute sole responsibility to Russia or Putin, 4% name the West as co-responsible and 2% Ukraine. The aggregate conceals inter-outlet divergence: causes other than Russia were named with notable frequency only in *FAZ*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Spiegel* and *Die Zeit*, at approximately 10% each.

On the F2 variable, three motive categories were coded: active pursuit of power, defence against NATO expansion, and economic motives. Motives of any kind were discussed in 253 items of 4,292, or 5.9% of the corpus. Within that subset, great-power ambition dominated at 71%, defence against NATO was the central motive in 28%, and economic motives were almost never attributed.

⁶ The reliability metric requires a qualification that applies to this review's own use of the study: Holsti is a percentage-agreement measure and is not corrected for chance, so for skewed distributions such as the 93/4/2 split on the responsibility variable it overstates agreement, and a chance-corrected coefficient would return a lower figure. The range is also reported across the instrument as a whole rather than per variable, so it cannot be determined which variable scored 0.71.

Converted to the corpus denominator these become 4.2% and 1.65%: in a three-month corpus from eight leading outlets, the defensive account appears as the central attributed motive roughly seventy times.

The relation between the two variables is the finding. The ratio between the dominant motive categories on the corpus denominator is approximately 2.5:1; the ratio on the responsibility variable exceeds 20:1. Attribution of blame is near-universal while attribution of motive is confined to one item in seventeen: In the German media, the name of the perpetrator is usually given, but their motives are rarely explained.

The economic-motive category was present in the codebook and returned effectively zero, the only measured null on the political-economy frame in the corpus.

On F3 and F5 the report's headline conclusion is that coverage was not government-aligned: Chancellor Scholz received an aggregate evaluation of -31%, negative in all eight outlets (*Bild* -62%, *Spiegel* -54%, *FAZ* -19%, RTL -14%, Tagesschau -13%); the federal government -26%; Defence Minister Lambrecht -35%. On F4 the study supplies the corpus's fullest ranking of remedies: humanitarian measures judged sensible in 93% of evaluations, military support 74%, heavy weapons 66%, sanctions 64%, diplomatic negotiation 43%. On F5, governing parties accounted for approximately 80% of party mentions against 20% for the opposition, while Die Linke and the AfD had effectively no presence.

Russia. Brusylovska and Maksymenko (2023) analyzed *Kommersant* (1,562 items), *Izvestiya* (859), *Moscow Times* (87) and *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* (52) between 24 February and 23 April 2022 by discourse analysis.

The study is the corpus's fullest account of F2 in Russian state media, and it documents multiple frames operating simultaneously rather than one. Causality is located in the alleged genocide of Russian speakers in Donbas and the need for denazification (P5 combined with P4, presented as a historical mission); in NATO expansion and the use of Ukraine by the United States as a proxy against Russia (P3-a and P3-b); and in the premise that Ukraine is an artificial state to be reunited with a greater Russian ethnos (P2). The authors also document the state's elimination of independent domestic media as a variable in its own right, which is F5 evidence of a structural rather than an editorial kind.

Urman and Makhortykh (2025) analyzed 6,415,502 VK posts between 14 February and 24 June 2022, separating those using *war* (5,262,383) from those using *special military operation* (1,153,119), with BERTopic topic modelling and subscription-network analysis.

This is the corpus's clearest demonstration that F1 designation functions as a positional marker rather than a stylistic choice, and it does so at a scale no other study approaches. Its bearing on F2 is negative and informative: the denazification narrative maps onto P4 and P5, but the study finds that this causal framing lacked widespread organic engagement on the platform. Official causal accounts and popular uptake are separable, and this is the only study in the corpus that separates them. The authors acknowledge that inauthentic accounts cannot be excluded, which qualifies the engagement figures.

India. Ravikumar and Downey (2024) analyzed 98 news stories from three English-language television channels (NDTV 30, India Today 37, Republic TV 31) between 24 February and 30 November 2022, using Entman's framework as a declared coding scheme.

The study measures F2 directly, which places it in a small class. Three frames carry causal content: an anti-West frame locating cause in Western encroachment on Russia (P3-a); an Indian national-

interest frame defining the conflict as between Russia and the West, which implies Ukraine as proxy ground (P3-b); and a Ukrainian liberal-sovereignty frame attributing cause to Russia (P2). The authors note that the anti-West frame collapses P3-a and P3-b into a single category, so their relative weight cannot be recovered.

On F5 the study documents asymmetric access running counter to the pattern in Western systems: Ukrainian voices appear in 13 of 98 stories. This is the corpus's only quantified case of source imbalance in the opposite direction to that documented in Germany and the United States, and it is what structurally enables the anti-West and national-interest frames.

Poland. Kwiatkowska and Solarz (2022) analyzed 274 headlines over the first 150 days, classifying sources as pro-government, oppositional and neutral. TVP's *Wiadomości* used the most emotionally charged register; TVN's *Fakty* favoured minimal neutral phrasing; online portals were informative and extended. The authors criticize the use of legally distinct categories (genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity) as synonyms, an F1 finding bearing directly on how F3 is subsequently constructed.

Norway. Holand and Ellingsen (2025) analyzed 30,403 articles from six Norwegian outlets between 1 December 2021 and 31 May 2024, with a close reading of 409 articles and 1,041 Facebook posts, grounded in Galtung's war/peace model and narrative theory.

The study measures F1 through a scope-expansion finding: the framing of the war widens over its course from a bilateral event to a systemic one, tracked by keyword incidence over time. This is the only longitudinal measurement of problem definition in the corpus. On F3 it supplies actor-salience counts, and on F5 it is one of two studies examining the relation between professional and vernacular discourse, since the Facebook material captures audience response rather than editorial output alone.

Romania. Dragomir and Sporiş (2026) analyzed 851 texts (579,894 tokens) from three Romanian outlets between 24 February 2022 and 28 February 2024, combining automated concordance analysis with critical discourse analysis.

The corpus was filtered on a predefined catalogue of fear, threat and anxiety terms, so the study captures the security slice of coverage and no absence within it can be interpreted. Within that slice, causality is located in Russian historical expansionism and in Putin's nuclear threats (P2 combined with P1), while the structural-defensive account appears only as a Russian narrative that the outlets report in order to reject, not as an account they advance. This is a valuable case: it is the corpus's clearest instance of a causal frame present as a reported object rather than as an assertion, which is precisely the distinction that keyword co-occurrence designs cannot make.

Balkans. Vuksanović (2026), drawing on interviews with twenty-six figures from political, media and expert circles in Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, finds that the pro-Russian narratives dominant in the region are locally produced rather than imported: elites adapt them for electoral mobilization, identity-boundary reinforcement and bargaining with Western partners. This is a finding about the mechanism of narrative production rather than about frames within content, and it substantially qualifies the assumption that regional pro-Russian framing indexes passive uptake.

United States. Cyrek, Popiołek and Gorbachevsky (2022) compared 478 Facebook posts from CNN, PBS and Fox News and found divergence in subject focus rather than evaluation: CNN predominantly covered Ukraine, Fox News Russia, PBS Ukraine and the United States. Only CNN addressed global markets and corporate withdrawal.

What this level establishes, and what it implies for further search.

Within-country variation on individual variables reaches magnitudes comparable to between-country variation: the spread in evaluations of the German chancellor across eight outlets is 49 percentage points, and the spread in naming alternative causes is an order of magnitude. Country of origin is therefore insufficient as a specification.

Two findings emerge that were not visible at the previous level. Source imbalance runs in opposite directions in different systems, quantified in Germany (opposition parties near-absent) and in India (Ukrainian voices in 13 of 98 stories), which means that F5 asymmetry is not a property of coverage of this war but of particular systems covering it. And official causal accounts and popular uptake diverge, which the VK study establishes at a scale that permits the claim.

For corpus extension, the highest-value additions remain national systems where the alternative causal account is mainstream rather than marginal. Hungary, Austria, Czechia and Slovakia are uncovered at the level of media output, as is Turkey, which occupies an intermediate position no study addresses.

Individual outlets and paired comparisons: mechanisms of frame production

This level addresses how a frame is produced rather than which frame is present. Mechanisms group into four clusters, three of which belong to F5.

Source management. Tóth and Hámori (2023) examined the first forty-eight hours of coverage of the Makiivka strike across six leading English-language outlets and found that CNN relied most heavily on Ukrainian sources and alone excluded Russian pro-war bloggers, while the other five admitted such voices. They also identify a relation between the specificity with which Ukrainian sources are named and an outlet's proximity to the Ukrainian position, which suggests source attribution operates as a positioning device rather than only as verification. The piece is a research note; no inter-coder reliability is reported.

Headline architecture. Cyrek (2022) analyzed 695 CNN headlines and found 65% structured as reports of someone's statement, with the majority foregrounding speaker and utterance. A reader scanning headlines learns who said what to whom rather than what occurred: an F5 mechanism producing an F1 effect, since the event is defined through the statements made about it.

Lexical and grammatical choice. Strukowska (2023), on 54 Reuters items from the first day of the war, identifies delegitimization of Russia combined with victimization of Ukraine, and categorization through binary social representations. The evidence base is narrower than the conclusions: the published appendix contains six keywords and four collocates of "Russia," of which one is substantive (*launched*, frequency 12), and the reference corpus is named without composition, size or date. The study is positioned upstream, since Verbytska reports Reuters supplying 38.3% of her Euronews corpus.

Breeze and Novoa-Jaso (2024) show through corpus-assisted discourse analysis that CGTN's language shifted from reproducing the official Russian designation toward attributing difficulty to Western interference: an F1 shift with F3 consequences.

Muwafi et al. (2024) compare Al Jazeera English and Al Jazeera Arabic through transitivity analysis and find that a common parent organization sustains divergent discursive frames: the English

service reinforces the Western narrative while the Arabic service presents the conflict as a clash of symmetrical forces.

Audience adaptation and corpus composition. Verbytska (2024) compares 562 Euronews and 478 Kyiv Post items between 23 June 2022 and 24 June 2023, applying LDA and BERTopic in parallel and mapping topics onto the framing dimensions of Boydston et al. (2014) and Card et al. (2015). For Euronews, security and defence (26.06%) and resources (24.91%) carry the greatest weight.

Two features constrain interpretation. Both outlets publish in English for an international audience by the study's own account, so the stated Western/Eastern contrast compares a belligerent's English-language outlet with a pan-European broadcaster. And roughly a third of each corpus is agency copy: Reuters supplies 215 of 562 Euronews items (38.3%) against 29 in-house (5.2%); AFP supplies 135 of 478 Kyiv Post items (28.2%) against 111 in-house (23.2%). The corpus was assembled on the query "Russian invasion," sampling on a framing term whose distribution is then measured.

Simashova (2026) compares 1,614 articles from *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* with 342 from *The Kyiv Independent* between 24 February 2022 and 1 July 2025 by lexical co-occurrence analysis. The design complements Verbytska by pairing two Ukrainian outlets differing in intended audience rather than a Ukrainian outlet with a European one, which isolates audience adaptation from national position. Co-occurrence cannot establish stance, and the study is recorded with that limit.

Qiu et al. (2025), comparing CGTN and Voice of America, identify divergent emotional strategies: a neutral-analytical register oriented to geopolitical consequences and dialogue in the former, emotionally charged language in the latter. This is F3 material, and the pairing of two state-funded external broadcasters holds funding structure constant while varying alignment.

Third-party framing: India. Kumar and Thussu (2024) analyzed thirty-eight primetime monologues by Arnab Goswami on Republic TV between 15 February 2022 and 4 May 2023, combining LIWC textual analysis with thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke.

The study is the corpus's fullest case of a war framed through a third party's interests, and it registers on five of the six axes.

On F1, the problem is defined less as Russian aggression than as a crisis exposing Western decline, an opportunity for Chinese expansion, and a reordering moment with India at its centre. Scope is consistently global rather than bilateral, and Russia and Ukraine recede to context.

On F2 the study advances a proxy account (P3-b) in which the United States and China pursue strategic advantage and Ukraine is a pawn, stated causally in the claim that the Ukraine fallout is in many ways a result of Western interference. Alongside it the monologues carry the corpus's most extensive material on attribution of benefit: the war is presented as a bonanza for America, with money financed by bloodshed in Ukraine, billions for defence contractors and Wall Street, and jobs created in the United States.

The distinction matters and is easily lost. Identifying a beneficiary is not identifying a cause, and the monologues do not assert that the structure of American capital produced the war; they assert that American actors profit from a war that occurred and prefer its continuation. The material is therefore recorded under attribution of benefit rather than as an instance of P6, and the claim about preferring a prolonged war concerns the war's continuation rather than its onset, which is a distinct explanandum.

The study does not code causal frames systematically, so relative prevalence cannot be quantified, and Russia's own motives are barely discussed. And the authors also document a frame that does not map onto the taxonomy: the emergence of a polycentric order in which, in the monologues' terms, just and unjust are no longer decided in Washington, Brussels or London. This is a systemic transformation narrative about consequences rather than causes, and it is recorded as outside the scheme rather than forced into it.

On F3 the LIWC tone score is 5.37 on a hundred-point scale, indicating strongly negative affect. The moral structure is unusual: the United States and China occupy the aggressor position (hypocritical profiteer; expansionist villain), Ukrainians and a named Indian student killed in Kharkiv occupy the victim position, and India occupies the position of principled actor. Russia receives comparatively little explicit condemnation.

On F4 no policy options are enumerated; India's own foreign-policy stance is presented as the appropriate course, with Russian oil purchases and QUAD membership maintained simultaneously.

On F6 the LIWC analytic score is 61.48, and the themes are structural rather than event-bound, embedding the war in the history of non-alignment, BRICS and SCO membership and Sino-Indian border tension. This is the clearest qualitative candidate for thematic composition in the review literature, although the classification rests on qualitative reading and LIWC scores rather than a coded variable.

On F5 the design constrains what can be said: the unit is the anchor's monologue, so the primary voice is the presenter, and source distribution is not coded. The authors note that Indian television journalists frequently conflate the ruling party with the nation.

Sampling is purposive across thirty-eight debates, so the material is not a random sample of the channel's coverage, and monologues capture editorial voice rather than the full range of sourcing within the debates.

Chinese state discourse. Sautedé, Mo and Tang (2025) analyzed 301 front-page articles from the Chinese-language edition of *Global Times* between February 2022 and April 2024, coding actor-specific narratives across issue, identity and systemic levels within the strategic-narratives framework.

The study measures F2 with unusual precision for a single-outlet design, and its results are largely negative in a way that is informative. The proxy account is dominant: the United States and the West are coded as manipulator of Ukraine (18 mentions) and cause of disorder (61 mentions), and the war is explicitly labelled a NATO proxy conflict. The structural-defensive account is secondary, with Russian actions rationalized through pressure from the United States and NATO. Imperial continuity is absent: the outlet does not locate causality in Russian expansionism, coding Russia instead as part of European peace and a supporter of international norms. Personalist attribution is likewise absent.

This is the corpus's only study demonstrating the absence of specific causal frames in a named outlet rather than their presence, and the Chinese-language edition is examined rather than the English one, which distinguishes it from every other study of Chinese state media in the corpus.

Russian state discourse. Petrovskaya (2024), on eight three-hour episodes of *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* talk show between February 2022 and February 2023, identifies six dominant frames: Nazism, genocide, the West as enemy, Slavic unity, liberation of Ukrainian lands, and Russia as victim of sanctions and Russophobia. Slavic unity and Russophobia are the clearest

civilizational markers located in the corpus. The work is a thesis analyzing a single programme without reported inter-coder reliability.

Nigeria and the BBC. Ajibulu and Nwaoboli (2023) analyzed 49 items from the Nigerian *Guardian* between 1 November and 31 December 2022 by quantitative content analysis, finding politicization dominant. The article contains an internal discrepancy: the text reports the anti-war protest frame at 2% while the table shows 8% (four items of 49), the 2% figure belonging to a different frame.

Hermilania (2024) analyzes five BBC articles from March 2022 using Pan and Kosicki's model; the sample is too small to support the general claim in the title, and detailed tables are provided for two items. Both are recorded at this level with their limits stated.

Teniou et al. (2025) compare Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya across 99 items, measuring topic distribution and stance: F3 material that complements Muwafi's transitivity analysis on the same outlet family.

What this level establishes, and what it implies for further search.

Frame production is traceable to identifiable editorial operations rather than inferred from aggregate patterns, and the majority of documented mechanisms concern access to voice rather than the content of assertions.

Two results at this level bear on the review's central question. Sautédé et al. demonstrate that specific causal frames can be shown absent from a named outlet, which is a stronger claim than low prevalence and requires a design that codes for absence. And Kumar and Thussu supply the corpus's most extensive material on attribution of benefit, which is distinct from causal attribution and is recorded separately: where a third party with material interests in the conflict's outcome does the framing, identification of beneficiaries becomes prominent without a corresponding causal claim being advanced.

For corpus extension the principal gap here is generic rather than geographic: nearly every study examines mainstream or elite outlets. Alternative, oppositional and podcast ecosystems remain absent, and these are the venues in which accounts marginal in mainstream coverage would be expected to concentrate. No study in the review literature analyses TikTok on a sample adequate for coding, and none systematically analyses Twitter/X.

Single events and temporal moments

The narrowest level examines studies bounded not by outlet or country but by a single occurrence or point in time. Studies here cannot support statements about media systems, and their value lies elsewhere: an event held constant across outlets isolates framing variation from event variation, which no other level achieves. Where higher levels observe that outlets differ, this level shows what they do with identical material.

The siege of Azovstal

Sulzhytski, Matveieva, Navumau and Khutkyy (2024) applied collocation-based semantic network analysis followed by qualitative reconstruction to four Telegram channels between 24 February and 30 June 2022, filtering on Azov-related terms. The filtered subsample comprises 1,279 messages: RIA 393, Meduza 353, UNIAN 439, Legitimnyy 94.

Designation differs by channel before anything else does. RIA foregrounds *special military operation* and state-centric bureaucratic register; Meduza uses *war*, *military campaign* and *Russia's invasion of Ukraine*; UNIAN centres *Russia–Ukraine war*; Legitimnyy prefers *situation* and *crisis* over *war* or *invasion*. The four channels then produce four meaning spaces around the same siege.

RIA advances a liberation frame: the events in Mariupol are an emancipatory operation, the Russian army a liberator, Ukraine a Western puppet, civilians neutral or Russia-supporting, with NATO named as the real enemy. Meduza offers civic critique, assigning responsibility to the Russian authorities and presenting Ukraine as victim while declining Ukrainian nationalist claims. UNIAN advances unifying nationalism, presenting a heroic struggle of a unified people against dehumanized occupiers and passing over pro-Russian sentiment in occupied territories. Legitimnyy advances a conspiratorial frame in which Ukraine is weak and governed by a corrupt administration, and the conflict forms part of a larger contest between Russia and the West, with ordinary Ukrainians victims of both foreign aggression and domestic corruption.

Mapped onto the axes, all four channels converge in evaluating the siege as grave, and all four diverge in assigning responsibility. The principal divergence lies in problem definition and causal attribution, while moral evaluation varies chiefly through the attribution of responsibility rather than through the assessment of severity. The F3 evaluations follow from the F1 designations rather than varying independently, which is consistent with the dependency ordering set out at Analytical Framework section and is the only material in the review literature on which that ordering can be examined.

Two features constrain use. The comparative design pairs channels on a government/anti-government axis, but the authors record, on the authority of the Security Service of Ukraine, that Legitimnyy was established under the direction of Russian militants; in correspondence they clarified that the two-by-two functioned as an analytic heuristic and that the labels applied to the Ukrainian cells were imprecise. And volumes are not comparable: 2,279 messages from Legitimnyy against 22,303 from UNIAN in the unfiltered dataset, with the qualitative stage resting on 94.

The study supplies the corpus's fullest evidence on the regime-diversionary frame, in two directions at once. Legitimnyy presents the war as an instrument through which politicians and oligarchs pursue power and wealth. The account is coded P7 rather than P6 under the discriminator set out at F2. Causal interpretation: causality is located in the requirements of a particular ruling group rather than in an economic structure that would operate irrespective of who occupied it. The case is a useful boundary instance, since the material interest named is unambiguously economic while the causal locus is not.

The Makiivka strike

Tóth and Hámori (2023) examined the first forty-eight hours of coverage of the strike on Makiivka on the night of 31 December 2022 across six English-language outlets. The study measures F5 exclusively, and its finding qualifies a common assumption: admitting both sides is not automatically neutral, since which voices are admitted and how precisely they are identified are themselves framing decisions. It is a research note with a small item count; its value is demonstrative rather than evidential.

The first day of the invasion

Strukowska (2023) analyzed 54 Reuters items published on 24 February 2022. As a temporal-moment study the design is well chosen: the first day is the point at which framing conventions are

set with the least accumulated precedent, and Reuters is upstream of a substantial share of European coverage. The evidence base is narrow, as set out above, and the study measures F3 through lexical association and touches F1 through designation without measuring F2.

The deportation of Ukrainian children

In the non peer-reviewed course paper of Olishevych (2026) holds a single issue constant across Ukrainian and Russian public communication from February 2022 to December 2025, applying Entman's four functions as declared categories. Two features distinguish it. The issue is one on which the two communication systems make incompatible factual claims rather than incompatible evaluations of agreed facts, which is rare in this corpus. And the four-year window makes it the only sustained longitudinal treatment of a single issue available. The work is a university course paper with no quantified sample, and it is recorded for its design and for the gap it identifies rather than as a source of measurements.

What this level establishes, and what it implies for further search

Three observations survive the small number of studies.

Holding the event constant does not produce convergence. The Azovstal case shows four internally coherent and mutually incompatible accounts of one siege. All four converge in evaluating the event as grave, and all four diverge in assigning responsibility; the principal divergence lies in problem definition and causal attribution, while moral evaluation varies chiefly through the attribution of responsibility rather than through the assessment of severity.

Framing decisions at this level are traceable to identifiable operations made within hours: which sources are admitted, how precisely they are named, which collocates attach to which actor.

The level remains underpopulated relative to its analytic value. Four studies, of which one is a research note and one an undergraduate paper, cover a war that has produced numerous events with cross-bloc coverage.

For corpus extension this is the clearest gap in the review. Events with documented divergent coverage and no dedicated study include Bucha in April 2022, the Nord Stream explosions in September 2022, the Kakhovka dam breach in June 2023, the Prigozhin mutiny in June 2023, and the Oval Office exchange of 28 February 2025. Two of these (Nord Stream, the dam breach) are cases in which attribution of the act itself was contested, which makes them the most promising available material for observing causal attribution under genuine uncertainty, as distinct from coverage of the invasion, where the act is not in dispute.

3. Synthesis by axis

This section re-aggregates the material of Analysis by level and Single events and temporal moments sections, by analytic axis rather than by level, recording for each axis which studies measure it, how, at what level, and with what evidentiary standing. The re-aggregation is an application of the scheme set out at 2.1 rather than a meta-analytic estimate: the studies do not share operationalizations, and no pooled frequency is claimed anywhere below.

One finding emerges from the distribution itself and is independent of any position on the war. The literature measures who is blamed considerably better than it measures why participants say the war occurred. Attribution of responsibility, designation and sentiment are instrumented on corpora ranging from tens of items to millions of posts, with dedicated scales, reported reliability and replication across independent designs. Attributed motive is instrumented once, on one national corpus, with a three-category variable.

This asymmetry is not a neutral property of the field. Research on framing is itself framed: the instruments developed to study how media assign blame have been elaborated over three decades, while instruments for studying how media explain causation have not, and a literature equipped to detect one and not the other will report the first as the substance of coverage. The observation that causal accounts are rare in coverage cannot at present be separated from the observation that the field is poorly equipped to detect them.

F1. Problem definition

Twelve studies measure designation, legal classification or scope, and the axis is the second best instrumented in the corpus.

The largest single measurement is Urman and Makhortykh (2025), who separate 5,262,383 posts using *war* from 1,153,119 using *special operation* across 6.4 million VK posts between February and June 2022. At that scale the designation contest is observable as a distribution rather than as an illustration, and the authors' subscription-network analysis establishes that the two vocabularies index different audiences rather than different registers. Hanley et al. (2023) measure the same contest across three media ecosystems, finding that Western outlets persistently label the events an invasion and a war while Russian and Chinese outlets prefer crisis and conflict. Sulzhytski et al. (2024) show the same distinction operating within a single incident: *special military operation* at RIA, *war* and *invasion* at Meduza, *Russia–Ukraine war* at UNIAN, *situation* and *crisis* at Legitimnyy.

Two studies extend the axis beyond lexical choice. Kwiatkowska and Solarz (2022) document the use of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity as synonyms in Polish headlines, which is a classification failure rather than a designation choice and bears directly on what F3 can subsequently assert. Holand and Ellingsen(2025) track scope expansion over time, showing the Norwegian framing widening from a bilateral event toward a systemic one; this is the only longitudinal measurement of problem definition in the corpus.

Two further findings belong here by consequence rather than by design. Cyrek (2022) shows that 65% of CNN headlines are structured as reports of statements, so the event is defined through the utterances made about it: an F5 mechanism producing an F1 effect. And Breeze and Novoa-Jaso (2024) trace CGTN's shift from reproducing the Russian designation toward attributing difficulty to Western interference, which is a designation change with causal consequences.

Assessment. Well instrumented, measured at scales from 54 texts to 6.4 million posts, and consistent across independent designs: designation varies systematically across communicative positions and is not reducible to outlet genre in the studies reviewed. A stronger claim is not available, since several of the comparisons set domestic Western communication against externally directed Russian and Chinese output, a confound documented in Methodological synthesis: field limitations and instrument artifacts section. The axis is the best instrumented of the six in the review literature, and it is also the one on which the field has converged without having named it as a distinct object.

F2. Causal interpretation

Twelve studies register on this axis, but the standing of the evidence differs so sharply between them that a single count is misleading. Four categories are distinguished.

Coded as a dedicated variable. Maurer, Haßler and Jost (2023) alone code attributed motive as a separate scale on a large national corpus with reported reliability. Motives are discussed in 253 items of 4,292 (5.9%); within that subset great-power ambition is 71%, defence against NATO 28%, economic motives effectively zero. Converted to the corpus denominator these are 4.2% and 1.65%. Ravikumar and Downey (2024) also code causal frames as declared categories using Entman’s framework on 98 Indian broadcast stories, though their anti-West frame collapses the structural-defensive and proxy accounts into one, so their relative weight cannot be recovered.

Measured through topic structure. Hanley et al. (2023) locate the NATO-expansion topic at 1.0% of Western items, 2.3% of Russian and 1.8% of Chinese, the only cross-ecosystem measurement of a single causal frame with one instrument. Sauté, Mo and Tang (2025) code actor-specific narratives across 301 *Global Times* front pages and produce the corpus’s only demonstration of causal frames being **absent** from a named outlet: imperial continuity and personalist attribution do not appear, while the proxy account dominates, with the United States coded as manipulator of Ukraine (18 mentions) and cause of disorder (61 mentions)⁷.

The Zollmann share of 7.8% is used in this review with the qualification established at Cross-national comparisons with a single instrument section: the instrument registers the topic irrespective of stance, so 266 is an upper bound of indeterminate tightness, and the common-denominator share is correspondingly an upper bound. The direction of the bias is known; its magnitude is not recoverable from the published data.

Reconstructed qualitatively. Brusylovska and Maksymenko (2023) document several causal frames operating simultaneously in Russian state press: alleged genocide of Russian speakers and denazification; NATO expansion and American use of Ukraine as proxy; and the premise that Ukraine is an artificial state. Petrovskaya (2024) identifies six frames in a single television programme, of which Slavic unity and Russophobia are the clearest civilizational markers in the corpus. Sulzhytski et al. (2024) reconstruct four incompatible accounts of one siege. Kumar and Thussu (2024) advance a proxy account in which the United States and China pursue advantage and Ukraine is a pawn; their extensive material on American profit from the war is recorded as attribution of benefit rather than as causal attribution, for the reasons set out at 2.1.3.

Present as reported object rather than assertion. Dragomir and Sporiş (2026) find the structural-defensive account in Romanian coverage exclusively as a Russian narrative that outlets report in order to reject. This case matters beyond Romania: it is the distinction that keyword co-occurrence designs cannot make, and Zollmann’s (2024) instrument is precisely such a design. Of 266 items registering NATO expansion in his corpus, an unknown share are of this kind, and the article’s own examples confirm the category is occupied.

Two negative results complete the picture. Urman and Makhortykh (2025) find that the denazification narrative lacked organic engagement on VK, separating official causal accounts from

⁷ These percentages are computed on a stated Chinese sub-corpus of 3,251, whereas the per-domain counts in the source table sum to 3,902, a discrepancy of 20% that cannot be resolved from the published data. If the per-domain counts are correct, the Chinese share falls from 1.8% to 1.5%. The Western and Russian columns sum exactly, so those two figures are unaffected. All three are treated here as provisional.

popular uptake, which no other study does. Kang, Park and Valdez (2024) document the exclusion of *responsibility* and *causes* from a topic model for interpretability, which is direct evidence that unsupervised modelling over short text does not recover the axis.

The economic frame is measured once and returns zero. Maurer, Haßler and Jost (2023) coded economic motives as one of three categories on the attributed-motive variable and found them almost never attributed, on a corpus of 4,292 items with reported reliability. No other study in the corpus measures the category, and no study documents its presence.

The null is more informative than a simple absence, for two reasons. First, the corpus contains a substantial quantity of adjacent material that is not causal: economic consequences (sanctions, grain and energy prices, inflation) appear in most studies at this level, and attribution of benefit appears prominently in at least two. Neither constitutes an economic causal account, and the volume of the adjacent material makes the absence of the causal one easy to overlook.

Second, the economic reading is available and is not taken. The clearest case is Oliskevych (2026) on the deportation of Ukrainian children, where Ukrainian communication attributes the removals to a deliberate state policy and specifies its content as genocide, Russification and the destruction of Ukrainian identity. An interpretation in terms of demographic or labour resources is neither advanced nor contested by either communication system in that study. Comparable readings of agricultural land, mineral deposits and Donbas industry as attributed motives do not appear anywhere in the corpus.

This is a stronger observation than low prevalence. It is not that the economic account is rare; it is that it is not selected where it is readily available, in coverage that discusses the economic dimensions of the war at length. Whether this is a property of the coverage or of the studies that have examined it cannot be settled on present evidence, and the targeted test is specified at Directions for development part.

Assessment. Weakest instrumented of the six despite being the review's principal question. Numerical values are extractable from four studies (Maurer, Hanley, Sautede, Ravikumar and Downey), and only the first codes motive as a dedicated variable. Four studies with incommensurable instruments independently observe a low frequency of causal accounts. This is a pattern of parallel independent observations rather than convergent evidence: a coded motive variable on a national corpus, a topic distribution over three ecosystems, an actor-narrative count on one outlet's front pages, and a declared frame scheme on ninety-eight broadcast items measure different constructs, and their agreement in direction cannot be aggregated into a single estimate. Two further cautions attach. Two of the four figures carry qualifications identified in this review and stated at the studies concerned: the Zollmann share is produced by an instrument that cannot distinguish assertion from rejection, and the Hanley percentages rest on a denominator that the source's own table does not reproduce. And low prevalence is not the same finding as active marginalization: measuring how often an account appears is not measuring the process that determines how often it appears.

Two structural observations hold across the axis. Causal frames appear in combination rather than singly, so any design forcing a single assignment per text will misrepresent the material: Brusylovskaya documents four frames co-present in one press system, Sulzhytski two or three per channel. And the taxonomy does not exhaust what studies find: Kumar and Thussu document a polycentric-order narrative that concerns consequences rather than causes and is recorded outside the scheme rather than forced into it.

F3. Moral evaluation

The best instrumented axis, and the one most often confused with F2.

Maurer, Haßler and Jost (2023) supply the fullest coded evaluation data: on a national corpus of 4,292 items, Putin and Russia are evaluated at the negative extreme, Ukraine and its president at the positive. Ye and Aron (2025) supply the largest measurement of a grammatical proxy, with Russia appearing as grammatical subject more often than Ukraine in every grouping at roughly two to one, converging rather than diverging across positions. Strukowska (2023) documents delegitimization and victimization as collocation patterns on the first day of the war. Muwafi et al. (2024) reach the same object through transitivity analysis, and Qiu et al. (2025) through emotional categories.

Two findings complicate the axis rather than confirming it. Kumar and Thussu (2024) document a moral structure in which the aggressor position is occupied by the United States and China rather than by Russia, victims include a named Indian student killed in Kharkiv, and the position of principled actor is occupied by India; the LIWC tone score of 5.37 on a hundred-point scale confirms strongly negative affect without identifying its target. Mohanty et al. (2026) report that explicit moral framing is extremely rare across a 246,229-article corpus, which they read as operational and material considerations outweighing ethical rhetoric.

The distinction from F2 requires restating. Attributing blame is F3; attributing motive is F2.

Maurer measures both separately on the same corpus and they behave differently by an order of magnitude: the ratio between the two dominant motive categories is approximately 2.5:1, while the ratio on the responsibility variable exceeds 20:1. Coverage overwhelmingly names a perpetrator and rarely explains what he was seeking. Figures from the two variables are nonetheless cited interchangeably in the secondary literature, which accounts for part of the apparent disagreement between studies that this review resolves.

Assessment. Strongly instrumented and internally consistent where positions are aligned. The Indian case shows that near-universal negative evaluation of Russia is a property of aligned systems rather than of coverage in general.

F4. Treatment recommendation

Eight studies register, and one supplies the only ranking.

Maurer, Haßler and Jost (2023) evaluate five remedies on a coded scale: humanitarian measures judged sensible in 93% of evaluations, military support 74%, heavy weapons 66%, sanctions 64%, diplomatic negotiation 43%. *Spiegel* alone rated diplomacy above heavy weapons; ARD Tagesschau rated diplomatic measures slightly negative.

The remaining instruments measure the axis less directly. Nordenstreng et al. (2023) and Kang, Park and Valdez (2024) treat peace as a topic and record its salience; Hanley et al. (2023) find negotiations the largest distinctive Chinese topic at 5.8%; Kumar and Thussu (2024) find no policy options enumerated at all, with India's own stance presented as the appropriate course.

Rahman and Aoni (2025) apply four peace-journalism indicators, and the study is where the axis produces its clearest methodological lesson rather than its clearest finding. RT's leading score on avoidance of demonizing language reflects a state euphemism policy backed by criminal liability for statements about the armed forces. A refusal to name the invasion as such is an F1 constraint; it registers on this scale as an F4 score; and it is then read as evidence about disposition. The claimed significance of the study's West/non-West contrast also fails on recomputation, at $p = 0.071$ rather than the reported value.

Assessment. Adequately instrumented where remedies are coded as named measures, poorly instrumented where peace-journalism scales are used as proxies. The axis is logically independent of F2, and its convergence should not be read as convergence on causes.

F5. Source and voice management

Eleven studies register, and the axis carries more weight in this review's argument than its usual treatment in the literature would suggest.

Three studies quantify access asymmetry, and they do not point the same way. Maurer, Haßler and Jost (2023) find governing parties at approximately 80% of German party mentions against 20% for the opposition, with Die Linke and the AfD effectively absent. Ravikumar and Downey (2024) find Ukrainian voices in 13 of 98 Indian broadcast stories, an imbalance running in the opposite direction. Tóth and Hámori (2023) find that five of six English-language outlets admitted Russian pro-war voices in the first forty-eight hours after Makiivka while one did not, and that the specificity with which Ukrainian sources are named tracks an outlet's proximity to the Ukrainian position.

Two studies measure a structural rather than editorial constraint. Verbytska (2024) reports Reuters supplying 38.3% of a Euronews corpus against 5.2% written in-house, and AFP supplying 28.2% of a Kyiv Post corpus against 23.2% in-house; roughly a third of each corpus is agency copy, which places Strukowska's (2023) analysis of first-day Reuters lexis upstream of a substantial share of European coverage. Brusylovska and Maksymenko (2023) treat the state's elimination of independent domestic media as an explicit variable, which is a precondition of framing rather than an instance of it.

Three studies describe the supply of positions rather than their admission, and are treated here rather than among the national media systems, since none analyses media output. Mihalik and Orosz (2024) document what Slovak party leaders say, and Troyan and Kyrydon (2026) what Polish officials and intellectuals say. Kumar and Thussu (2024) describe the limiting case, in which the anchor's own voice is the primary source and external actors appear mainly as objects of commentary.

Assessment. Well instrumented and, on the evidence assembled here, the axis with the strongest bearing on F2. Where a class of political actors is structurally absent from coverage, the causal accounts that class would advance cannot appear, irrespective of any editorial decision about framing. The German case makes this concrete: the parties most likely to advance a structural-defensive account had effectively no media presence during the period in which that account appears in 1.65% of coverage. The relation is not demonstrated as causal by any study in the corpus, and stating it as a hypothesis is the appropriate standing.

F6. Episodic and thematic composition

No study in the review literature operationalizes this as a coded variable. What follows is a reconstruction from heterogeneous proxies, none of which measures the construct directly, and the reconstruction is reported as such.

Nordenstreng et al.'s war/peace dichotomy is the closest available proxy and inherits the misattribution to Galtung and Ruge noted above. Cyrek's headline-structure coding measures grammatical form rather than depth of context. Vuksanović's coverage-volume time series measures volatility. Kumar and Thussu's LIWC analytic score of 61.48, combined with themes embedding

the war in the history of non-alignment and in Sino-Indian relations, is the corpus's clearest case of thematic composition, but the classification rests on qualitative reading rather than a coded variable.

One pattern recurs across genuinely independent sources and is compositional rather than classificatory: individual testimony deployed in the service of a stable, non-episodic theme. It is documented in Polish coverage built around civilian and diaspora sourcing, in Russian state television's use of Great Patriotic War imagery to recast discrete events, and in Kumar and Thussu's use of a single named casualty to anchor a structural argument about American profiteering. The distinction appears more useful as a description of a compositional device available to outlets on every side than as a binary classification of outlets.

Assessment. Not measured. The axis is retained because the reconstruction yields a pattern and because its absence as a measured variable is itself a finding about the field.

Table 4. Cross-axis summary

Axis	Studies registering	Numerical values extractable	Assessment
F1 Problem definition	12	Urman and Makhortykh, Hanley, Sulzhytski	Strong, large scales, convergent
F2 Causal interpretation	12	Maurer, Hanley, Sautédé, Ravikumar and Downey	Weak: one dedicated instrument
F3 Moral evaluation	10	Maurer, Ye and Aron, Kumar and Thussu, Mohanty	Strongest
F4 Treatment recommendation	8	Maurer, Rahman and Aoni, Hanley	Adequate where remedies are named
F5 Source and voice	11	Maurer, Ravikumar and Downey, Verbytska	Strong, and central to the argument
F6 Episodic/thematic	0 direct	none	Not measured

The distribution is the review's principal finding about the field. Of six framing functions, the literature measures four well, one not at all, and the one this review set out to examine with a single dedicated instrument on a single national corpus.

Note. Within F2 the frames are unevenly attested. The economic-structural frame (P6) is measured by one study and returns a null; the securitization-spiral frame (P8) is not measured by any. Counts of studies registering an axis should not be read as counts of studies measuring every frame within it.

The retention of the securitization-spiral frame in the taxonomy requires justification, since it is not attested anywhere in the review literature. Two considerations support it. The account it names is not marginal in the scholarly literature on the war: mutual securitization is a developed explanation with its own body of work in security studies, and its absence from the framing literature is therefore a fact about the boundary between two fields rather than about the plausibility of the account. And the absence is only visible as an absence if the category exists: a taxonomy

constructed from what the literature happens to measure could not register that an established explanation goes unmeasured. Removing the cell would make the finding disappear along with it.

Methodological synthesis: field limitations and instrument artifacts

Six patterns recur across the corpus and condition the interpretation of any aggregate claim.

Instrument confounds across axes

The most consequential errors in the corpus are not errors of execution but of attribution: a measurement on one axis read as evidence about another. Three instances are documented. Rahman and Aoni's peace-journalism indicators measure F4, and RT's leading score on avoidance of demonizing language is an F1 constraint imposed by state policy, read as an F4 result and interpreted as disposition. Hanley et al.'s sentiment scores differ across ecosystems by 0.20 on a nine-point scale, and the authors themselves attribute the difference to Western use of *war* and *invasion*, which are negatively valenced in the lexicon: an F1 difference registering as an F3 measurement. Nordenstreng et al. classify CCTV as peace journalism on the basis of topic salience and neutral tone, which is an F4 and F3 inference from which no F2 conclusion follows.

Conflation of economic consequence, economic benefit and economic motive

Three distinct objects share a vocabulary and are routinely treated as one. Economic consequence (sanctions, commodity prices, energy supply) concerns the war's effects and belongs to problem definition and treatment recommendation. Attribution of benefit identifies who profits, which is a claim about distribution rather than about causation. Economic motive attributes the war to an economic interest, which is a causal claim and the only one of the three that registers on F2.

The distribution across the corpus is markedly uneven: economic consequence appears in most studies, attribution of benefit in at least two prominently, and economic motive in one, where it is measured and returns zero. A review that did not separate the three would report the political-economy frame as well attested on the strength of material that is not causal at all.

Conditional percentages reported without their denominators

A percentage computed on a subsample is not comparable with one computed on a corpus, and the distinction is routinely lost in secondary citation. Maurer's 28% is a share of the 5.9% of items discussing motive at all, which is 1.65% of the corpus; the figure is cited in the literature as though it were the latter. Kang, Park and Valdez report column shares that are read as usage rates, and recomputation by row reverses the regional ordering on two of three frames. Zollmann's 3.6:1 divides counts from two differently sized pools; the common-denominator value is 7.8%. In each case the underlying data are sound and the reported figure is correct within its own frame of reference; what fails is the transfer.

Designs that cannot distinguish assertion from report

Keyword co-occurrence registers a topic irrespective of the stance taken toward it. Zollmann's second measure captures items that explicitly deny the causal link, as his own examples show, and Dragomir and Sporiş demonstrate that an entire national coverage can carry a causal frame exclusively as a reported foreign narrative to be rejected. Any prevalence figure produced by co-

occurrence is therefore an upper bound of indeterminate tightness, and the direction of the resulting bias cannot be recovered from the published data.

Asymmetric case selection in cross-ecosystem comparison

Hanley et al. compare eight popular Western mainstream outlets with Russian and Chinese sets defined by US State Department designations, which weights the non-Western sets toward peripheral outlets with no Western counterpart. All three samples are English-only, so the comparison sets externally directed communication for Russia and China against domestic discourse for the West. The same restriction applies at the cross-national level generally: seven of eight studies at Cross-national comparisons with a single instrument sample English-language output.

Errors in published works

Beyond the denominator problems above, verification located several discrete errors. Nordenstreng et al. attribute the peace-journalism concept to a paper on news values, and relabel the own-country angle as the national government perspective between the analytical section and the conclusions, with the propaganda-model inference resting on the relabelling. Ajibulu and Nwaoboli report the anti-war protest frame at 2% in the text where the table shows 8%, the 2% figure belonging to a different frame. Ravikumar and Downey's Table 1 gives a solution cell for the anti-West frame that contradicts the moral evaluation in the adjacent cell of the same row, which is most plausibly a transcription error but cannot be resolved without the authors. Two studies were excluded on quality grounds contain more serious problems.

Platform and language coverage

The corpus is dominated by traditional outlets and, to a lesser extent, Facebook, Telegram and VK. No study systematically analyzes Twitter/X. The only material touching TikTok rests on ten posts. This is a property of the available literature rather than an exclusion criterion, and it bounds every finding reported here: whether the patterns identified hold on platforms with different production logics remains an open question.

4. Limitations of this review

Corpus and search

The corpus was assembled through non-systematic search, principally via Google Scholar, supplemented by citation tracing and by targeted searches for under-represented systems. No protocol was pre-registered; inclusion criteria were developed during rather than before the search; no screening log was maintained; and no measure of saturation was attempted. The corpus is a substantial but non-exhaustive convenience sample, and prevalence statements about the field are bounded accordingly. Anglophone venues are over-represented, and paywalled work is under-represented relative to open-access work.

Extraction and verification

Extraction was assisted by a large language model working from full texts, with human verification. This is not equivalent to independent double coding, and no inter-coder reliability coefficient is reported. Verification was performed by a single reader. Full texts were obtained and read directly for a subset of the corpus; the remainder were coded from a structured second-pass extraction

against the same schedule, which is a weaker procedure and is marked as such in the underlying coding sheet.

Application of the discriminator

The counterfactual test is applied to what studies report rather than to the media texts they analyze, which this review does not access. Where a study does not report causal attribution, the instrument records absence of measurement, not absence of the frame in the coverage. This distinction is preserved throughout and is essential to the interpretation: the finding that causal explanation is rarely measured is well supported, while the finding that it is rare in coverage rests on four studies.

Coverage in time

Sampling in the reviewed studies is concentrated in 2022 and 2023. Two studies extend into 2025. The period following early 2025, during which the positional configuration of several states changed, is effectively uncovered.

5. Directions for development

Four lines of work would materially strengthen this review, in descending order of value relative to effort.

Independent second coding

This is the highest-value addition and the cheapest relative to what has already been done. The extraction schedule, the counterfactual discriminator and the coding rules are documented at 2.1.9 and are transferable; a second coder working independently on a subsample of fifteen to twenty studies would yield a reliability coefficient and, more importantly, would locate the systematic errors that single-coder work cannot detect. The first coding pass in this project produced three such errors, each inflating a particular category, and each was found only because the pass was repeated with revised rules. A second coder is the appropriate instrument for finding the errors the revised rules have introduced in turn.

Two design points follow from experience. The subsample should be stratified to include studies at every level and studies with and without dedicated causal variables, since the failure modes differ. And the second coder should work from the same full texts, not from summaries: the single most consequential coding error in this project arose from accepting a summary figure without checking the source, and was corrected only when the study was read.

Targeted corpus extension

The gaps are specific rather than general.

By national system. Slovakia, Hungary, Austria and Czechia are uncovered; These are the European systems in which the structural-defensive account is mainstream rather than marginal, which makes them the strongest available test of whether low prevalence is a property of the account or of the systems so far studied. Turkey occupies an intermediate position that no study addresses. Searches should be conducted in the national languages, since work of this kind appears in national communication journals.

By event. The single-event level holds four studies. Bucha, the Nord Stream explosions, the Kakhovka dam breach, the Prigozhin mutiny and the Trump's presidency all received simultaneous

cross-position coverage and none has a dedicated study in the corpus. Two of these are cases in which attribution of the act itself was contested, which makes them the most promising material for observing causal attribution under genuine uncertainty.

By outlet type. Nearly every study examines mainstream or elite outlets. Alternative, oppositional and podcast ecosystems are absent, and these are the venues in which accounts marginal in mainstream coverage would be expected to concentrate.

By period. Work covering 2025 and after is nearly absent.

A targeted test for the economic frame. The null on P6 rests on a single measurement, and a directed search is required before it can be reported as a property of the field rather than of the corpus. Two strategies are available. The first targets attributed Russian economic motives directly, combining the conflict terms with resources, agricultural land, grain, rare earths, mineral deposits, Donbas industry, economic motives and resource grab. The second targets coverage of events with an unambiguous economic content, notably the grain corridor, the occupation of the Zaporizhzhia plant, and the deportations, asking whether an economic reading is advanced anywhere in that coverage.

If a directed search returns nothing, the null should be reported as a finding with the search strings stated, since the claim that an available and elementary explanation is systematically not advanced is substantive and is falsifiable only if the search behind it is documented.

Secondary analysis of an existing corpus

The *dnipro* corpus is released under CC-BY-NC with annotations and URLs for 246,229 articles across five countries and three languages, and its identity frame reaches acceptable reliability. A secondary coding pass on that material would permit the taxonomy to be tested at scale without new data collection, and would convert several of the qualitative reconstructions above into measurements. This is the only route currently available to a quantitative test of the causal axis, and it does not depend on the field producing new studies.

Author correspondence

Two questions in this review can be resolved only by the authors of the studies concerned: the apparent transcription error in Ravikumar and Downey's Table 1, and the discrepancy between text and table in Ajibulu and Nwaoboli. Correspondence has already resolved one such question, concerning the comparative design in Sulzhytski et al., where the authors clarified that the arrangement functioned as an analytic heuristic and that certain labels were imprecise. The procedure is inexpensive and, on the evidence of that case, productive.

V. Russian Academic Discourse on Media Framing and Priming of the Russo-Ukrainian War

The following outline maps the conceptual architecture of the review. SubSection 1 reconstructs the structural and discursive paradigm of the contemporary Russian media landscape. It is essential to understand the Russian media environment, which serves as a key input for the academic analyses reviewed here. In fact, the present analysis, although far from representative, yields interesting insights that debunk the reductive labelling of the Russian media system as mere propaganda. More specifically, there is propaganda, but it has unique and little-known nuances. SubSection 2 sets out the methodological caveats applied to the Russian-language sources surveyed. Similarly to understanding the Russian media landscape, the political and methodological challenges in Russian academia – shared in part with the media sector – are fundamental for a critical review of Russian academic outputs. Sections 3–5 present the substantive findings, organised by analytical axis (framing of causes and narratives, contested vocabularies, and the relation between media narratives and public opinion); Section 6 synthesises the comparative observations. One can wonder what the purpose of such a study can be if, simply put, both Russian media coverage and Russian analysts' interpretations of media coverage in Russia and abroad are by definition biased or potentially censored. There are, however, a few relevant counter-arguments. Firstly, it is scientifically relevant what methodologies and tools Russian authors used in their analyses. Secondly, it is interesting in itself for analysts and diplomats how Russian media and Russian academics approach the Russo-Ukrainian war. For these reasons, extensive citations from Russian academic studies, when relevant, are retained. Thirdly, it can serve as necessary material for comparative studies with Western media coverage and Western scholarship. Lastly, this output may provide critical feedback to Russian and other non-Western journalists and academics.

1. The Russian Media Landscape: A New Paradigm

Perhaps the most synthetic characterisation of the contemporary Russian media system has been offered by Lyubushkin (2025), who argues that “a new paradigm of the Russian media landscape has emerged, in which language, platform, and ideology operate as a unified system of meaning-production, grounded in rhetorics of unity, mutual aid, and collective responsibility, and anchored by the digital integration of traditional media into online space.”

Vasily Gatov (USC Annenberg; World Association of Newspapers board member; in Vasiliev, 2023) characterised the Russian information environment in similar but more direct terms, as one of “substitution of information by opinion expressed either by an official or by an expert, followed by the introduction of specific rhetorical constructions exerting priming or framing effects on post-Soviet consciousness.” His diagnostic claim is that, metaphorically, “propaganda stamps appear even in the weather forecast,” and that “the statement of a quite mediocre studio expert can become a news occasion in itself.”

The sections below trace supporting evidence or counter-evidence and in this way assess each of the components of Russian media discourse identified or rather suggested by Lyubushkin (2025) in turn. Empirical support for Gatov description of the Russian information environment, although illuminating, may be impossible to find directly in to be analysed texts produced by (mostly) Russian analysts.

1.1 Language: National Unity, Military Terminology, Neologisms and Temporal Dynamics

As discussed by Krivokhina (2024), there are nation-wide narratives of national unity (“rallying of the people,” “all-national support,” “we are together”). Importantly, Krivokhina identified temporal dynamics at play. In 2022, the crisis-response phase, emotionally oriented strategies dominated: the historico-memorial strategy provided moral justification, and the social consolidation strategy mobilised resources and absorbed initial shock. In 2023, the stabilisation phase, the more rational geopolitical-sovereignty strategy gained ground, populated by concrete regional economic successes; the humanitarian-reconstructive strategy also expanded. In 2024, the prospective-positioning phase, a balanced integration of all four strategies emerged, with regional coverage becoming more complex — moving fluidly between hero-fellow-countryman narratives, defence-industrial narratives, and family-volunteer narratives within single editorial cycles (Krivokhina, 2025).

The temporal periodisation itself encodes, however, a political narrative. The labels “crisis response” (2022), “stabilisation” (2023), and “prospective positioning” (2024) may constitute a teleological reading of the war as a successfully managed transition rather than as an ongoing high-casualty conflict with uncertain trajectory. The periodisation thus reproduces the official Russian framing of the war’s temporal arc. Nonetheless, it is worth to mention key factors that increased the effectiveness of media strategies, as identified by Krivokhina (2025). These included using multimodal materials (text, image, sound) which improved memorability by 37%. Maintaining an optimal frequency of concept mentions (12–15 mentions per 1000 words) was also helpful. Focusing on personalization of content increased audience reach by 23%.

Moreover, different media outlets showed a specialization in these strategies. For instance, Russian Channel One (Pervyy Kanal) predominantly used the Historical-Memorial strategy (63% of its content), while RIA Novosti focused on the Humanitarian-Reconstructive strategy (58%)(Krivokhina, 2025).

On the linguistic dimension of the new paradigm, Fesenko and Kholostov (2023) argued that contemporary Russian internet-media language has become heavily saturated with military terminology, jargon, and metaphor, and that neologisms perform not merely a referential but an evaluative function, encoding attitudinal stances toward events. Semantic neologisms form the largest group, in which existing Russian words acquire new combat-related meanings: *lentočka* (“ribbon” → line of contact), *zhdu* (“waiter” → person awaiting the return of Ukrainian authority on territories Russia controls), *muzykanty* (“musicians” → Wagner PMC fighters, via the composer Wagner), *ptichka* (“little bird” → drone or UAV), *ukrop* (“dill” → pro-Western Ukrainian, strongly pejorative), *banderlog* (Ukrainian who venerates Bandera, with added contempt borrowed from Kipling’s *Jungle Book*), and *otpuschnik* (“vacationer” → Russian serviceman volunteering on occupied territory during official leave, with positive connotation). A further subset of three semantic neologisms (fifty-seven attestations) reworks ordinal numerals: *dvukhsotyy* (KIA), *trekhsotyy* (wounded), and *pyatisotyy* (deserter or refuser).

For comparison, Kuznetsova (2025) focused on neologisms in – what she called - Anti-Russian media discourse. The analysis of 30 articles from English, German, and Ukrainian media (February 2022 – August 2024) identified three primary methods of neologism formation: First, Compounding (Word Composition, e.g. *Putin-friendly* (English), *Angriffskrieg* (German – “war of aggression”), *apmucmu-nyminicmu* (Ukrainian – “artist-Putinists”). Second, Contamination (Blending, e.g. *Putler* (Putin + Hitler), *pauucmu* (Russia + fascists), *Xanymin* (grab + Putin). Third, Morphological Transformation, e.g. *scholzen* (from Scholz – “to promise and break a promise”), *джавелиниту*

(from Javelin – "to destroy with Javelin missiles"). She concluded that word-formation neologisms are a highly effective means of speech impact in anti-Russian information warfare. Kuznetsova (2025) found that compounding is the leading model in German media due to the language's inherent propensity for composita formation, including hyphenated compounds that incorporate foreign or culturally specific words (e.g., *Kreml-Despot*, *Kreml-Boß*). In Ukrainian media, contamination-based neologisms built on negative connotations (e.g., *паууззм*, *Ханьмih*) are particularly widespread and carry strong derogatory force. English-language examples rely more on adjective-noun compounding with evaluative adjectives such as *friendly* to imply alignment or threat.

1.2 Platforms and Ideology: Z-Channels, Turbopatriotism, and Loyalist Opposition

On platforms—and partly on ideology—Chirkin, Kolmakov, and Skupov (2023) conducted a content analysis of seven Telegram channels they classified as “Z-channels” (Rybar, WarGonzo, Povyornutye na voine Z, Yuriy Podolyaka, Starshe Eddy, Vladislav Ugolny, and Mardan), covering posts from 1 December 2022 to 28 February 2023. The channels were selected to span four author types: serving military personnel, military bloggers, professional Telegram journalists, and Donetsk People’s Republic residents. The authors carved out Z-channels as a category distinct both from traditional military correspondents (voenkory, institutionally affiliated with VGTRK—the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company, Russia’s main state-owned broadcasting holding—Komsomolskaya Pravda, and similar outlets) and from official government Telegram channels that merely append “Z” to their names (for example, Yugra Z).

A Z-channel is defined by three converging features: roughly seventy per cent of content focused on the Russo-Ukrainian frontline coverage; two-way interactive communication (open comments, granular emoji reactions, and voluntary donation drives for Russian forces and Donetsk People’s Republic/Luhansk People’s Republic militias); and editorial independence from both state media and budgetary control. Within this taxonomy, only Pegov’s WarGonzo qualified as a “canonical voenkory of a new generation”; most other administrators were classified as military bloggers. Posts were coded against nine thematic categories, five directions of criticism, and twelve named political or military figures.

Chirkin et al. (2023) invoked the Duma deputy Matveychev’s term turbopatriotism to describe the radicalising tendency in Z-channels: a worldview in which every domestic political, economic, or cultural arrangement is evaluated solely by whether it advances the Russo-Ukrainian War objectives, with “soft rhetoric,” foreign holidays, or perceived negotiating compromises treated as treasonous. Of the five identified criticism vectors, tactical decisions (274) and army-supply problems (227) dominated, followed by personnel decisions (216); criticism of officials’ personalities (83) and diplomatic decisions (58) were much rarer. The authors argued that Z-channels may constitute the embryonic form of a new type of political opposition—not from liberal-democratic positions but from a patriotic, pro-war direction critical of the current leadership for insufficient mobilisational rigour. This is what Chirkin et al. (2023) call loyalist opposition—a phenomenon that classical Western-origin disinformation typologies, oriented toward foreign interference, tend to miss. At the same time, the analysis indicates that the “Z-channel” label conceals significant internal differentiation along an embeddedness-versus-autonomy axis.

1.3 The Russian Media System: Classifications and Categories

For the Russian media system as a whole, Kiriya (as cited in Vasiliev, 2023) classifies Russian media into three categories: pro-government outlets (directly state-owned or indirectly controlled);

conditionally independent outlets generating entertainment content and avoiding political engagement; and blocked outlets accessible only via VPN. Kiriya (in Vasiliev, 2023) identified the absence of private media from socio-political life as a defining feature of the Russian media system. Similarly, Kazakov, Vilkov & Shestov (2023, 320) argue that there are practically no oppositional print media left in Russia. Bykova & Mart'yanova (2023) identified the specific channels through which the Russian state reaches citizens as federal television (Pervyy Kanal, Rossiya 1, NTV, Rossiya 24), Telegram channels, YouTube channels, and social-media groups. Kolobova (2025) study emphasized that platforms like Telegram, VKontakte, Rutube, and Zen have become essential arenas for what she calls information warfare. War correspondents (*voenkor*), as "new media" actors, play a pivotal role in shaping public opinion by leveraging these formats to reach millions of users, according to Kolobova (2025).

1.4 Ideology: Structural Homogenisation, Localisation, “Destructive Media” and “Mental War”

Sonina (2024) highlights the legitimization function performed by Russian media: constitutional principles are invoked not to constrain state action but to retrospectively normalise territorial annexations contested under international law. Moreover, Sonina (2024) inadvertently provides evidence of structural homogenisation in the Russian media sphere: the convergence on military correspondents as primary sources (identical claim to Kolobova, 2025), the recurring cast of authorised commentators, and the integration of Telegram channels into the mainstream news cycle indicate a tightly coupled informational ecosystem rather than a pluralistic one (identical finding to Lyubushkin, 2025). Sonina presents this as a “completely new format” of media practice; the same evidence would support a reading of media–state alignment. However, Krivokhina (2024) argues that regional Russian media do not simply transmit federal narratives but adapt and localise them, generating what she calls a hybrid “conceptual sphere” in which abstract national narratives are translated into the idiom of local identity, place, and personal relationship. Federal media, in this account, set the ideological and event-level frame; regional media “humanise” it by populating it with personal stories, local symbols, and the values of the “small motherland” (*malaya rodina*).

On the ideological and at the same time negative dimension, Grabelnikov (2024) proposed *destrukivnye media* (destructive media) as the operative term for media and mass-communication channels whose function is not the “objective reflection of reality” but “manipulation of audiences, implantation of disinformation, disorientation, anxiety, panic, and fear.” The category is deliberately broad and prescriptive: it bundles foreign reporting, Ukrainian state media, oligarch-controlled Ukrainian outlets, social-media disinformation, the Russian-language Wikipedia, and Western digital platforms into a single analytical class defined by its alleged divergence from a presumed standard of objectivity.

Grabelnikov’s conceptual move is consequential because it elides the standard (though contested) distinctions maintained in Western media-studies vocabulary: between propaganda (state-aligned persuasion) and the content-specific categories of disinformation (deliberately false content), misinformation (inadvertently false content), and malinformation (targeted harmful content); and across media types, including mainstream, partisan (ideologically aligned), and alternative media (usually thematically opposed to the mainstream or addressing niche audiences). All of these are collapsed into a single category of “media-as-weapon.” Grabelnikov (2024) further introduces *mental'naya voyna* (mental war) as a recent addition to the vocabulary of *informatsionnaya voyna*, *ideologicheskaya voyna*, and *gibridnaya voyna* (information war, ideological war and hybrid war).

He defines mental war as “the imposition of new meanings to occupy the consciousness of the opponent, the substitution of established concepts, basic attitudes, and values.”

1.5 Rhetorics of Unity, the Non-Aggregability of Russian Information Actors and Four Media Communication Strategies

On the rhetorics of unity, commentary by Grozovsky (in Vasiliev, 2023) underscored the non-aggregability and uneven sophistication of Russian information actors—a point developed in more detail in Section 3.3 below. In contrast, Sonina (2024) identified four professional-editorial practices that have crystallised in Russian media since February 2022. First, the prioritisation of military correspondents as the primary source of information on events at the front. Second, the cultivation of high-profile political figures — particularly State Duma deputies who have volunteered for service — as authoritative voices. Third, the emergence of “desirable” foreign commentators sympathetic to the Russian position, exemplified by the American military analyst Scott Ritter, described as a persona grata across official Russian media. Fourth, the proliferation of Telegram channels devoted to military affairs and the routine citation of these channels in mainstream Russian media coverage.

Krivokhina (2024) developed a more specific typology of four media communication strategies. The historico-memorial strategy constructs an “axis of historical continuity” between the Special Military Operation and the Great Patriotic War. The humanitarian-reconstructive strategy shifts the visual and narrative focus from combat to civilian aid and infrastructural reconstruction. The geopolitical-sovereignty strategy with a local economic dimension centres on Russian independence and technological breakthrough under sanctions. The social consolidation strategy is identified as the most powerful at the regional level. Federal narratives of national unity (“rallying of the people,” “all-national support,” “we are together”) are personified at the level of street, courtyard, and school. Regional media cover local humanitarian collections, schoolchildren’s “letters to a soldier,” and meetings between families of mobilised soldiers and regional governors.

Bykova, & Martianova (2025) drew parallels between the role of media/propaganda during World War II and the current conflict.

1.6 Toward a Propaganda Model: Between Herman–Chomsky and the Chinese “Transmission Belt”

Lyubushkin’s (2025) abstract model appears to capture the contemporary Russian media landscape and its domestic propaganda function reasonably well. The reconfiguration of the Russian media landscape and the wider communication environment can be understood as a propaganda model—though not in the sense developed by Herman and Chomsky (1988/2002), but rather as occupying an intermediate position between their Propaganda Model and the Chinese “transmission belt” model. The latter operates under strict state oversight (through a dual apparatus of communist party ideology departments and state administrative agencies), robust digital censorship (Platforms use a combination of automated keyword filters and human moderators to manually remove or block posts that are deemed sensitive), and pervasive self-censorship, with the Central Propaganda Department coordinating the overarching narrative across both traditional and digital platforms and consistently portraying the Chinese political and economic system as effective in generating growth and responding to citizens’ needs - under a “telling China’s story well” initiative (Mattingly et al., 2025). However, in Chinese model, there is leeway for independent coverage that is not perceived

as a threat to social stability or the Party and country.⁸ In contrast, in the Russian media environment, it appears impossible to detect independent media outlets, however minor or local, that would not face immediate persecution.

Several features of Herman and Chomsky's framework nonetheless remain pertinent to the Russian case: the state is well positioned to pressure outlets through the threat of withdrawn advertising or broadcasting licences, libel suits, and other direct and indirect modes of attack, and the media remain constrained by a dominant ideology. In contrast to Herman and Chomsky's framework, however, there is no role for private media independent of government.

It follows that what is reported in Russian media and the Russian academic discussion below may not represent media or societal discourses accurately, since the underlying discourses are already biased, distorted, or suppressed at the level of Russian media input/output and high-level political communication. Neither academicians enjoy full freedom of expression in their writings, though their underlying positions can often be detected indirectly. The academic literature surveyed here should therefore be read with this filter in mind: it offers insight not only about the discourse but is itself an artefact of the discourse it purports to describe. Significantly, as documented by Vasiliev (2023), when analysing the Russo-Ukrainian War, Russian and foreign experts often do not agree on fundamental issues.

To see in a more transparent way how this new model of Russian propaganda works in its complexity, and from a communication content point of view – based on Russian authors themselves, specifically Krivokhina (2024, 2025) – a transparent matrix table that includes communication strategy as well as evolving temporal phases of the Russo-Ukrainian War, is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Russian Media Communication Strategies Across Temporal Phases of the Special Military Operation (2022–2024)

Media Communication Strategy	2022: Crisis-Response Phase (Emotionally Oriented)	2023: Stabilisation Phase (Rationally Oriented)	2024: Prospective-Positioning Phase (Integrated)
1. Historico-Memorial <i>Axis of continuity: SMO ↔ Great Patriotic War</i>	32% Moral justification; historical legitimacy. Key conceptual pair: <i>"Defence of Donbass + Genocide"</i> (68% frequency). Archive montage in 95% of materials. Example: <i>"Lessons of History"</i> (Russia 24, September, 2022).	41% (+9 pp) Peak presence. Sustained as background legitimising narrative. Parallel interviews with veterans and SMO participants. Example: <i>"Immortal Regiment"</i> (Perviy Kanal, May 2023).	38% (-3 pp from peak) Integrated fluidly with hero narratives. Visual montage: WWII veterans and SMO participants with St. George ribbons. Audience reach: +42% (Mediascope).

⁸ China media guide (22 August 2023), <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13017881>

Media Communication Strategy	2022: Crisis-Response Phase (Emotionally Oriented)	2023: Stabilisation Phase (Rationally Oriented)	2024: Prospective-Positioning Phase (Integrated)
2. Humanitarian-Reconstructive <i>Civilian aid, infrastructure repair</i>	28% Strong emergent presence. Concept: <i>"New Life of Mariupol"</i> (f=18/text). Visuals: aid convoys, civilian evacuation. Example: RIA Novosti humanitarian coverage.	37% (+9 pp) Expands significantly. Comparative "before/after" photos in 93% of materials. Example: <i>"Mariupol: Day by Day"</i> (RIA Novosti, August 2023). 2.4M social media views (monthly record).	45% (+8 pp) Highest presence (+17 pp total growth). Focus on positive narratives. Example: <i>"Children of Donbass"</i> (TASS, January 2024). Infographic: <i>"287 new schools in 2 years"</i> .
3. Geopolitical-Sovereignty <i>Sanctions, import substitution, technological breakthrough</i>	15% Latent. Abstract sanctions discourse; minimal concrete evidence. Concept: <i>"Sanctions as a stimulus"</i> (f=15/text).	34% (+19 pp) Rapid growth. Key conceptual pair: <i>"Sovereignty + Import Substitution"</i> (54%). Example: <i>"Oil and Gas Shield"</i> (Izvestia, November 2023). Animated maps: new export routes.	42% (+8 pp) Strong presence (+27 pp total growth — largest increase). Key conceptual pair: <i>"Technological Breakthrough + Victory"</i> (47%). Example: <i>"TechnoRussia"</i> (Zvezda, March 2024). Audience engagement: 58% (+23% above average).
4. Social Consolidation <i>"Rallying of the people," regional personification</i>	25% Grassroots mobilisation; absorption of initial shock. Concept: <i>"Together we are strong"</i> (f=12/text). Visuals: rallies, humanitarian collections.	29% (+4 pp) Regional governors meet families of mobilised soldiers. Example: <i>"Heroes Among Us"</i> (Komsomolskaya Pravda, 2023–2024). Interactive <i>"Heroes Map"</i> .	31% (+2 pp) Most powerful at regional level (+6 pp total growth). Example: <i>"Letter to a Soldier"</i> (NTV, February 2024). 38M viewers; 247 tons of aid collected.

Note. Based on empirical data from Krivokhina (2025, 54, Table 1). Frequencies represent the proportion of each strategy in total media content per year. Percentage point (pp) changes indicate year-on-year growth. SVO/SMO = Special Military Operation.

These Russian media and/or political communication strategies across temporal phases of the Russo-Ukrainian War, as the Russian authors call the Special Military Operation, are in themselves little known in Western academic and political discourse. Moreover, as suggested, and as follows from internal political limitations on free expression, they primarily reflect high-level internal political discourse. In that sense, they are important not only from academic but also from political and diplomatic perspectives.

The studies reviewed in this section converge on a picture of the contemporary Russian media system as a tightly integrated propaganda apparatus in which language, platform, and ideology function as mutually reinforcing components rather than as analytically separable domains. Lyubushkin's (2025) synthetic characterisation — language, platform, and ideology as a unified meaning-production system — is empirically supported across multiple dimensions: by Krivokhina's (2024, 2025) documentation of temporally evolving narrative strategies; by Fesenko and Kholostov's (2023) analysis of militarised neologisms performing evaluative rather than merely referential functions; by Chirkin et al.'s (2023) mapping of Z-channels as a loyalist-opposition ecosystem; and by Sonina's (2024) and Kolobova's (2025) convergent findings on structural homogenisation around military correspondents and Telegram integration.

Analytically, the Russian media model occupies an intermediate position between the Herman–Chomsky Propaganda Model — applicable where private media nominally exist but are structurally constrained — and the Chinese transmission-belt model of direct party-state coordination. Its most distinctive feature is the near-total absence of tolerated independent media, distinguishing it from both comparators.

Two findings deserve particular attention for their broader scholarly significance. First, Krivokhina's temporal periodisation — crisis-response, stabilisation, prospective-positioning — reveals a sophisticated adaptive communication strategy, though one whose very labels reproduce the official Russian framing of the war as a successfully managed progression. Second, Chirkin et al.'s concept of loyalist opposition — pro-war criticism directed at leadership for insufficient mobilisational rigour — identifies a phenomenon that standard Western disinformation typologies, oriented toward foreign interference, are structurally ill-equipped to capture.

A consequential limitation of the entire section is reflexive: the academic literature surveyed is itself produced within the constrained discursive environment it purports to describe, and must be read accordingly.

2. Methodological Notes

2.1 Terminological Convention: SVO versus Russo-Ukrainian War

It is well-known that the Russian invasion in Ukraine is officially labeled in Russia as the special military operation in Ukraine (SMO). Since Russia is not a free country⁹, and anyway, under a war-like conditions, even academicians are limited in their free expression in most countries, it is useful first to summarise official position of Russian authorities on how to interpret this war. As naturally follows from the new paradigm of the Russian media landscape described above, Russian academic authors consistently use the terminology “Special Military Operation” (SVO/SMO) rather than “Russo-Ukrainian War.” In this review the term has generally been adjusted to the more widely accepted designation—Russo-Ukrainian War—though in cases where “Special Military Operation” carries analytical importance in its own right, it has been retained. It should be acknowledged that the SVO terminology is not simply an empty propaganda label: as discussed elsewhere in this study, the term denotes specific features of the war that, from the Russian perspective, may justify its use within Russian academic and media discourses. In Russian military-doctrinal interpretation, the Special Military Operation is not a standard full-scale war but a campaign with limited political objectives and limited or (ideally) precise military specifications. Of course, it is highly problematic that the use of alternative terminology — including that dominant in the West (the Russo-Ukrainian War) — is not allowed and is, in fact, punishable. Nonetheless, “Regardless of its internal qualification, Russia’s attack on Ukraine constitutes an act of aggression and an ongoing violation of international law.”(FIDH, 2022).

It is of fundamental importance to understand all nuances of how this war (its causes and objectives) is being interpreted in Russia. This knowledge can help to facilitate peace. Sometimes causes of military conflicts may get blurred or entirely wrong among diplomats, journalists and academicians for decades in many countries or within entire global-cultural regions.

⁹ Having occupied the 152th place in 2023 according to the Cato Institute the HUMAN FREEDOM INDEX 2025, <https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/2025-12/2025-human-freedom-index.pdf>

The objective of SMO of the Russian Armed Forces of the Russian Federation is, according to experts from the Military University of the Ministry of Defense, to defeat only the enemy's military facilities, and for civilians to create exit corridors from the combat zone and to provide humanitarian aid (Shvetsov & Fedorova, 2023, 127, Bakkunov, 2024).

It is relevant to mention here that in his address on February 24, 2022, the President of the Russian Federation stated that the plan of military actions included not the occupation of Ukraine, but the **protection of civilians of LPR and DPR**, who have been subjected to (alleged) genocide from Ukraine for eight years; **elimination of (alleged) neofascism**; **prevention the deployment of NATO military bases in Ukraine** as a direct threat to the security of the Russian Federation; **prevention the deployment of nuclear weapons on the territory of Ukraine** (Shvetsov & Fedorova, 2023, 127-128).

Russian President Putin seemed to be consistent in his justification of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, or, as he called it, SMO. For example, in an interview with T. Carlson on June 2, 2024 (Lonskaia, 2024), he interpreted denazification as "*uprooting the ideology*" (*vykorchevat' ideologiyu*) in a metaphor quoted from the interview, linked to eliminating neo-Nazi influence. Then there was as an objective mentioned protection of Russian-speaking populations. This was one of the core political concepts Lonskaia identified as "*защита носителей русской лингвокультуры*" — protection of carriers of Russian linguistic culture — listed explicitly as a conceptual pillar of Putin's 2024 interview. Lonskaia summarized Putin's communicative goals as including "*preservation of territorial integrity of Russia*" and rallying society around the idea of a "*united, strong, multinational state*." Finally, there was countering Western anti-Russian policy. Lonskaia identified "*collective West*" and "*NATO war crimes*" as key concepts, with Putin's objective framed as exposing and resisting what he characterizes as **Western aggression and manipulation**.

Naturally, these objective of the SMO are to be found in to be research papers written by Russian academics. However, although these objectives are sometimes mentioned selectively, and interpreted with emphasis put on different issues in to be cited Russian academic articles. Yet the general feeling of long term unfair approach of the West and in particular of the USA towards Russia, and feeling of threat prevention coming from NATO expansion, can be commonly identified in Russian (and among other Russian Federation ethnics) academic discourse a long time before the invasion or the SMO began.

Nonetheless, it is an open question to what extent these position and opinions, or analytical claims, instead of being results of independent academic analysis, just more or less reflect the official position of Russian authorities. In the final analysis this is perhaps not relevant question – Russian academia seems to reflect opinions of the Russian authorities or, less so, of the Russian society. It is commonly understood that changes in Russian geopolitics can be traced in speeches by Russian presidents.

One can argue that to get correct perception of Russians academia on external threat perception and in particular, the reasons for waging war against Ukraine, it would be advisable to explore political and academic documents and studies published a long time before this invasion happened, and when Russia (including academia) was somehow more free country.

2.2 Methodological Limitations of Russian-Language Scholarship

More importantly, the articles by Russian authors are frequently methodologically underdeveloped. They often need to be treated as expert-described observations rather than as quantitatively

documented results or qualitatively well-developed thoughts. In that sense, only cumulative or highly selective collection and critical interpretation of these texts may yield a more accurate picture of the role of the media and media discourses in Russia.

For example, the “content analysis” by Plotnitskaia (2023) is essentially a frequency count with valence coding (neutral / pro-Russia / pro-Ukraine), and the coding criteria are not specified, which limits the weight that can be placed on the reported percentages. Obviously, “pro-Ukraine” is not something value neutral, but something determined by political rhetoric and censorship or self-censorship. For Nurbagomedova (2024), the sampling logic is unclear: “random selection” is claimed, but the procedure—searching site-internal Google for three Russian-language keywords—would not return a representative sample from foreign-language outlets but would likely bias retrieval toward articles indexed for Russian readers or referenced in Russophone discourse. This can nonetheless be a legitimate approach, provided it is framed and interpreted accordingly. Grayvoronskiy’s (2022) data are explicitly described as drawn from “acquaintance with” selected Mongolian media publications and accompanying blog-sphere comments, with no sampling frame, coding scheme, or systematic content analysis. For Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022), the corpora are modest, and the South Korean and North Korean materials are not balanced for outlet, length, or genre, which constrains how strongly the cross-system comparison can be pressed; the lead author’s association with the Military University of the Ministry of Defence and the authors’ explicit framing of media analysis as serving national “information security” also warrant disclosure.

In addition, for Samambetova and Torbik (2023), several methodological points are worth surfacing critically. First, the binary informational-agitational versus critical-analytical typology is asserted rather than operationalised, and the decision to bracket the latter narrows the evidentiary base in a way that loads the conclusion. Second, the framework treats lexical choices such as invasion, occupied, and separatists as *prima facie* manipulative without engaging the descriptive defence of those terms (UN General Assembly Resolution ES-11/1; ES-11/4 on the legal status of the territories under international law). Third, the Germany-1939 analogy is presented as a representative media-image device on the strength of a single quoted passage—a slim evidentiary base for a strong claim about systematic mythologeme construction.

This second issue in Samambetova and Torbik’s analysis points to a fundamental challenge within Russian academic discourse and, in particular, its interpretations. For example, Kurbanov (2024) uses the term “anti-Russian position,” which on closer inspection may conflate critical coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War with genuinely biased reporting. Moreover, genuinely biased reporting and commentary may be specifically anti-Russian or merely reflect typical features of journalism reporting and commentary in general, as discussed later in the case of *The Economist*—yet these distinctions are rarely drawn in Russian academic writing.

The limited analytical approach of many Russian authors is also reflected in the brevity of the articles themselves: several ostensibly “academic” content analyses span only three pages (Lyubushkin, 2025; Sonina, 2024; Wei & Zhou, 2023; Bykova & Mart’yanova, 2023), while others extend to fewer than two pages (Orekhova, 2024, Kalinin & Fedulov, 2023), appearing to offer little more than an abstract or summary, or just commentary with no or limited sources cited.

However, there are some notable positive exception such as Kazakov, Vilkov & Shestov (2023) or Krivokhina (2024, 2025) who used both extensive the empirical base for the analysis as well as a three-stage analytical procedure. She drew on federal media materials from February 2022 to June 2024, including 1,287 text publications, 420 visual items, and over 120 hours of television broadcasts, alongside official government and military documents. To process this corpus,

Krivokhina (2025) employed a three-stage analytical procedure. First, machine-assisted quantitative analysis using AntConc, Tropes, and KH Coder identified dominant concepts and their frequency. Second, qualitative examination of linguistic and visual features was applied to decode imagery, symbols, and color schemes. Finally, the findings were synthesized into a comprehensive analytical matrix mapping strategies, core concepts, linguistic markers, visual patterns, and implementation techniques.

One may conclude that Russian academic outputs, especially those appearing in edited volumes or written by military staff, frequently exhibit limited academic rigor. This observation, however, is not substantially different from the pattern observed in many other countries, including East European or in general post-Soviet countries.

2.3 Source Accessibility and Search Strategy

Accessibility of sources varied: most were freely available, a smaller number were entirely inaccessible, and only a few were behind a paywall. The analysis therefore drew primarily on openly available sources, supplemented in some cases by well-developed abstracts where the full text could not be obtained. The search focused on the keywords media (СМИ, *sredstva massovoy informatsii* — средства массовой информации) and Special Military Operation (SVO, специальная военная операция), which returned between 75 and 39,967 records (depending on whether the Boolean connector “and” was included) out of almost 80 million publications in the database. In total, 30 Russian language publications have been included.

Although most to be cited analysts are ethnic Russians and living in Russia, Russian academic corpus also includes non-Russian authors. Considering that these form a part of the official Russian academic repository, it seems proper to keep them included here.

Notwithstanding the methodological and ideological-structural limitations outlined above, it has been possible to identify a number of useful insights into how Russian academics perceive Russian media coverage and, in particular, foreign and Western—as well as non-Western—media coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War. The final analytical summaries below necessarily vary in size. These analytical summaries are categorised into three basic groups as it is in critical review of Western analysts outputs on the same topic. Individual entries are not summarised on available English abstracts, but included AI-assisted overview of (mostly) Russian language academic sources.

3. Causes, Frames and Narratives: Media Interpretations

This section covers domestic political framing and primings, as well as by and large geopolitical and historical explanations of the Russo-Ukrainian War in media coverage. As might be expected, Russian academic and media explanations of the Russo-Ukrainian War proved largely unified. However, in some cases, when Russian authors reviewed monitoring by foreign media, they sometimes mentioned alternative explanations of the Russo-Ukrainian War, or, at least, they pointed at the uproar (negative attitude towards the war) among foreign media, politicians or audiences at the start of the Russo-Ukrainian War. Uneven methodological approaches, sampling strategies, and divergent research foci among the Russian authors have nonetheless constrained the present review’s ability to offer a fully balanced account of causes, frames, and narratives. In addition, priority was given to new information, with the aim of making this review more globally representative.

In some cases, some commentaries rather than scientific articles provide clear answer to the causes of the Russo-Ukrainian War. This was the case of Kalinin & Fedulov (2023) who framed the Russo-Ukrainian War as a direct response to the expansion of NATO, the potential for Ukraine to acquire nuclear weapons, and the broader geopolitical goal of preventing a larger conflict. They argued that Russia is not fighting against Ukraine but against the geopolitical ambitions of the United States. In their view, the "theory of managed chaos," "color revolutions," and information warfare, are tools employed by the United States and the West to challenge Russia's national security and state integrity. However, the article is a theoretical and policy-oriented discussion rather than an empirical media analysis (four decades old sources, three pages length). This missing evidentiary base raises in itself a methodological question – how many materials stored in Russian academic repositories are in fact merely current or long-settled personal opinions? Relatedly, one can assume that such opinions reflect the prevailing, if perhaps more forcefully expressed, opinions among Russian elites. As such, these opinions have analytical value in themselves.

3.1 Russian Analysts on Non-Western Media Coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War

3.1.1 Japan — “An Anti-Russian Position” With Alternative Viewpoints

Kurbanov (2024) examined coverage in the Japanese media conglomerates NHK, Yomiuri, Mainichi, and Nikkei, as well as The Japan Times, over the period January 2022 to April 2023. His study found that the Japanese media took what he characterised as “an anti-Russian position,” while at the same time admitting alternative viewpoints about the need to understand the reasons for Russia’s actions.

3.1.2 Iran — Condemnation of the War and Blame on NATO Policy

Polishchuk and Koklikov (2022) conducted a lexico-statistical analysis of 6,238 articles from the official Iranian agency IRNA containing the word “Ukraine,” together with transcripts of fourteen analytical television programmes. The conflict was perceived by the majority of Iranian journalists and experts as a full-scale war rather than a limited military operation, in contrast to the official Russian label. The dominant lexeme in IRNA coverage was *jang* (“war”), with 9,781 occurrences, vastly outpacing *‘amaliyāt* (“operation,” 2,762) and the full phrase *‘amaliyāt-e neẓāmi-ye vīzhe* (“special military operation,” 461). The collocation “war in Ukraine” (*jang-e Ukrāyn / jang dar Ukrāyn*) appeared more than 3,400 times combined.

Nevertheless, the materials of the official Iranian media were broadly close to the official Russian position, and the principal blame for the outbreak of the armed conflict was placed on NATO policy and the Ukrainian leadership. A distinctive high-frequency phrase was *bī-tavajjohi-ye Qarb be negeranīhā-ye amniyati*—“Western neglect of [Russia’s] security concerns” (1,336 occurrences)—which was presented as the explanation for Russia’s action. Terms such as *tahājom-e Rusiye be Ukrāyn* (“Russian invasion of Ukraine,” 218 uses) appeared but without the negative connotation they carry in Western media: the same word *hamle* (“attack”) was used for Ukrainian shelling of Russian territory, including Belgorod. Moreover, Iranian experts interviewed in analytical television programmes consistently blamed NATO expansion and Western provocation, argued that the West deliberately prolongs the war in order to weaken Russia, dismissed accusations against Russia (for example, regarding Bucha) as Western or Ukrainian psychological operations, and predicted that sanctions would damage the EU more than Russia. The authors attributed the dominance of “war” terminology partly to Iran’s collective memory of the Iran–Iraq War—heavy casualties, no territorial gain—which gives *jang* a strongly negative connotation and underpins an Iranian

preference for diplomatic over military conflict resolution. Iranian media content condemned war itself as a means of resolving territorial disputes.

3.1.3 China — “Friendly Neutrality”

Plotnitskaia (2023) analysed Chinese-language coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War via the Baidu search engine, examining more than 120 articles from Chinese media and social networks between January and April 2023, with a particular content-analytic focus on coverage of Belgorod Oblast as a border region. Plotnitskaia found that Chinese media refused to label the war an “invasion” and did not condemn it. Plotnitskaia characterised the stance of the monitored articles as one of “friendly neutrality” toward Russia. Official discourse emphasised the Russia–China “strategic partnership” and the Putin–Xi personal rapport, although Plotnitskaia notes that Beijing has not yet committed to a definite level of economic support for Russia and that its political position remains ambiguous.

Similarly, Kalinin (2022) analyzed the means of representing the Special Military Operation in Chinese media. He examined 90 news reports from leading Chinese outlets (Xinhua, China.com, Renmin Ribao, Phoenix, and others), published between February 24 and May 24, 2022, with a total corpus volume of 195,084 Chinese characters. The corpus was balanced by month, with 30 articles from February, March, and April respectively. Using qualitative and quantitative content analysis from a cognitive approach, Kalinin examined the evaluative and content components of media representation. The analysis showed that Chinese media viewed the military operation from the content side, with detailed attention to economic, political, and historical context, while the evaluation was positively neutral. Chinese media coverage was characterized by a “positively neutral” evaluative stance, with an absence of overtly negative or positive value judgments. Chinese media prioritized explaining the situation rather than forming an evaluative component. The analysis revealed extensive mention of numerous international actors (EU, USA, Poland, Lithuania, Japan), with NATO mentioned 282 times, indicating that Chinese media viewed the conflict within a broad foreign policy context. Kalinin concluded that Chinese media paid little attention to the “dark side” of the conflict.

The historical thematic block accounted for 12.06% of all lexical items, with high-frequency references to Cossacks, Tsar, USSR, and NATO eastward expansion, demonstrating that Chinese media presented the conflict as a consequence of historical contradictions and foreign policy factors.

Kalinin noted that the concept of WAR in Chinese linguoculture differed from the Russian understanding, correlating more with confrontation than with cruelty and death. When negative characterizations appeared (e.g., “war crimes,” “atrocities”), they were consistently attributed to external Western sources (BBC, Guardian) and often presented in scare quotes or as “potentially possible” claims, indicating deliberate distancing from such framing.

3.1.4 China, North Korea, and South Korea — Sharply Divergent Representational Strategies

Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022) identified sharply divergent representational strategies across these three media and political systems: Chinese media adopted a positively neutral, context-heavy framing; South Korean media constructed a negative image of Russia in alignment with the United States; and North Korean media produced a positive framing of Russia’s actions while assigning blame to the United States and its allies. The corpus comprises 90 Chinese news items, 90 South Korean articles, and 42 North Korean articles, drawn from 24 February to 24 May 2022.

The Chinese case is distinctive across the three corpora in the breadth of its thematic coverage. A second distinctive feature is the near-absence of victim-centric vocabulary. A third finding concerns how the small number of negatively-valenced references that do appear are constructed: in the collocation analysis, references to “war crimes” or “atrocities” attributed to Russia are reported only in indirect speech, and are attributed to Western outlets (BBC, The Guardian). Moreover, they are framed as “possible” cases, and contain the most charged terms in scare quotes—a presentational pattern the authors read as deliberate distancing from the Western framing.

For North Korea, the clearest signal in the parties-to-conflict cluster is the inversion of the principal antagonists: the most-cited country pairing is not Russia and Ukraine but Russia (155) and the United States (194), with Ukraine itself appearing only seventy times. The United States is referred to using polemical, agitprop-style constructions translated by the authors as “the so-called USA” and “the doomed/imperialist US regime,” and article headlines such as “Who is the provocateur?” and “Who is the culprit of escalation?” explicitly position Washington as the originating actor. NATO (31 occurrences) is treated as a co-participant, unlike in the South Korean corpus.

3.1.5 Analytical Summary: Russian Analysts on Non-Western Media Coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War

The studies reviewed in this section collectively map what might be termed the *non-Western information landscape* of the Russo-Ukrainian War, covering Japanese, Iranian, Chinese, North Korean, and South Korean media. While the geographic scope is commendably broad, the studies vary considerably in methodological rigour and analytical depth, and read together they reveal both the diversity of non-Western framing strategies and the structural limitations of the Russian scholarly gaze directed at them.

The Spectrum from Alignment to Divergence

The most striking finding across the corpus is that non-Western media do not constitute a coherent bloc but span a wide spectrum from partial alignment with Russian framing to studied neutrality to outright divergence. At one pole, North Korean media, as documented by Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022), produced the most unambiguous pro-Russian framing of any outlet examined across the entire section: inverting the principal antagonists so that the United States — not Ukraine — becomes Russia's primary adversary, deploying agitprop-style polemical constructions, and framing the conflict explicitly as a US-instigated provocation. This positions North Korean media as closer to Russian state media logic than any other non-Western actor in the corpus.

Iranian media, documented by Polishchuk and Koklikov (2022), occupies an analytically complex intermediate position. On the one hand, Iranian outlets overwhelmingly used “war” rather than “special military operation” — a terminological choice that diverges from official Russian framing and reflects, as the authors note, Iran's distinct cultural memory of the Iran–Iraq War. On the other hand, the substantive interpretive frame closely tracks the Russian official – or perhaps fact-based – official position: NATO expansion is treated as the root cause, Western allegations such as Bucha are dismissed as psychological operations, and sanctions are predicted to harm the EU more than Russia. Iran thus presents the unusual combination of terminological divergence and substantive alignment — a distinction the authors credit but do not fully theorise.

Chinese media, examined by both Plotnitskaia (2023) and Kalinin (2022) independently, and by Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022) comparatively, clusters around what these authors variously describe as “friendly neutrality” or a “positively neutral” evaluative stance. The consistency of this

characterisation across three separate studies, using different corpora and methods, lends it reasonable credibility. The mechanism of this neutrality is analytically interesting: Chinese media does not avoid negativity altogether but systematically attributes negatively-valenced claims — "war crimes," "atrocities" — to Western sources, presenting them in indirect speech, scare quotes, or as "possible" rather than established facts. This is a sophisticated distancing technique that allows Chinese media to report on Western allegations without endorsing them, functioning as a form of *attributed framing* rather than simple omission.

South Korean media, by contrast, constructed a negative image of Russia in alignment with the United States — the only non-Western (geographically) actor in the corpus whose framing converges substantially with the Western pattern documented in Sections 3.2 and 3.3. Japanese media, though examined only briefly by Kurbanov (2024), follows a broadly similar trajectory, taking what he characterises as "an anti-Russian position" while admitting some alternative viewpoints. Both cases suggest that alliance structure and security dependence on the United States are stronger predictors of media framing than geographic region or non-Western identity per se.

Methodological Observations

The studies differ substantially in methodological quality. Polishchuk and Koklikov (2022) is the most methodologically rigorous in the group: its lexico-statistical analysis of over 6,000 articles with precise frequency counts for key lexemes and collocations produces empirical claims that are independently assessable and comparatively grounded. Kalinin (2022) and Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022) are similarly systematic in their corpus construction and content-analytic approach, with clearly defined time windows, balanced sampling by month, and cognitive-linguistic framing of the evaluative analysis. Plotnitskaia (2023) is the weakest methodologically: a sample of "more than 120 articles" retrieved via Baidu, with a particular focus on Belgorod Oblast coverage, is an unusual and arguably idiosyncratic entry point into Chinese media as a whole, and the characterisation of an entire national media system on this basis warrants caution. Kurbanov (2024) is too briefly summarised in the available text to assess methodologically, but the absence of any quantitative or systematic qualitative detail is notable.

Missing Angles and Structural Gaps

Several significant omissions are apparent across the corpus. First, the Global South beyond East and Central Asia is entirely absent. African, Latin American, and Middle Eastern media — with the partial exception of Iran — receive no attention, despite the fact that these regions collectively represent a substantial share of the non-aligned information environment and have demonstrated varied and often nuanced responses to both Russian and Western framing of the conflict. This absence likely reflects the language competencies and regional orientations of the Russian academic community rather than any principled sampling decision.

Second, the studies treat each national media system as internally homogeneous. Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022) acknowledge, at least implicitly, the difference between Chinese state and social media, but none of the studies systematically distinguishes between state-controlled outlets, independent media, and social media ecosystems within any given country. Given that platform-mediated content often diverges substantially from official media framing — a dynamic particularly relevant in China, Iran, and South Korea — this conflation represents a meaningful analytical limitation.

Third, and relatedly, only exceptionally the studies address *audience reception* or the degree to which official and mainstream framing actually shapes public opinion in these countries. The gap

between media output and public understanding is particularly consequential in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian media environments, where audiences are known to develop sophisticated strategies of reading against the grain.

Finally, the comparative framework implicit in several studies — particularly Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022) — is not fully exploited. The juxtaposition of Chinese, South Korean, and North Korean media within a single study creates the conditions for a genuinely illuminating three-way comparison, but the analysis remains largely descriptive rather than explanatory. The structural factors that produce such sharply divergent framing strategies among geographically proximate states — alliance configuration, regime type, historical memory, trade dependencies — are noted but not systematically theorised.

3.2 Russian Analysts on Western Media Coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War

3.2.1 European and US Media — Half Negative, Half Neutral Toward Russia

Nurbagomedova (2024) presents a content analysis of five leading European and US outlets: The Guardian, Le Figaro, Il Foglio, The New York Times, and Berliner Zeitung. Working from a sample of 150 articles retrieved between February 2023 and March 2024, the author coded 79 of the 150 publications as negative toward Russia, 66 as neutral, and only 5 as positive, with Il Foglio, Berliner Zeitung, and Le Figaro identified as the most hostile in tone (Nurbagomedova, 2024, 134–135). The interpretive frame the study imposes on this distribution, however, departs sharply from Western framing analyses of the same outlets: where for example Chaban and Zhabotynska (2024) and Wozniak et al. (2026) read negative valence as accurate reporting on an aggressor state, Nurbagomedova (2024) construes it as orchestrated “demonisation” driven by mythologisation, emotionalisation, and marker-words such as aggressor, tyrant, and dictator (p. 131).

The analytical value of the article for the present review therefore lies less in its empirical claims than in its status as an artefact of state-adjacent Russian academic discourse: it reproduces the official lexicon of “Special Military Operation,” treats Western use of invasion and Putin’s war as *prima facie* evidence of bias, and concludes with an explicit policy prescription that media image-building be embedded in Russian state information strategy (Nurbagomedova, 2024, 135). The piece illustrates how the same empirical pattern—a strongly negative tonality distribution across major Western outlets—can sustain diametrically opposed scholarly interpretations depending on the analyst’s framing premises, and it underscores the methodological importance of distinguishing manifest content from interpretive overlay in comparative media studies.

3.2.2 German Media — Aggressor, Victim, and Champion of Justice

Orekhova (2024) presents an abstract—or, perhaps more accurately, a summary without cited sources—in which she claimed that a uniform communicative-pragmatic strategy has become firmly entrenched in the German media space, oriented exclusively toward the formation of public opinion favourable to political elites. One of the central elements of this strategy, in her view, is the discrediting of the aims and objectives of the Special Military Operation. This is performed at the cognitive-ideological level (the implanting of deliberately false attitudes, the imposition on recipients of a distorted picture of events, and the suppression of alternative points of view) and at the linguistic level (in the selection of vocabulary). Examining the concept “SVO” as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon or frame, Orekhova suggests, allows one to identify not only its inner core, which expresses denotative and connotative meaning, but also its periphery, where the evaluative characteristics and additional associations promoted by the German mainstream and, in

her account, expected of native speakers by the proponents of “anti-Russian propaganda” are situated.

The SVO is thus presented in German media through three contextual prisms, each carrying its own evaluative-associative interpretation: the actions of Russia (a war of conquest); the actions of Ukraine (a defensive war); and the actions of Germany (unconditional support for Kyiv). Correspondingly, each of these actors is to appear in the target audience’s consciousness in a specific role: aggressor, victim, and champion of justice.

3.2.3 UK–USA–Canada — Asymmetric Connotational Lexis and a Media Mythologeme

Samambetova and Torbik (2023) examined the features of English-language news texts covering the Special Military Operation in Ukraine. They used headlines and articles from thirteen Anglophone outlets—The New York Times, New York Post, Washington Post, USA Today, HuffPost, The Globe and Mail, The New Yorker, The Wall Street Journal, Los Angeles Times, Foreign Policy, Time, Daily Express, and The Independent—covering the period February 2022 to May 2023. The authors stipulated two coverage modes (informational-agitational and critical-analytical) and then restricted their analysis to the first, on the stated grounds that the critical mode is not the dominant format.

They found that positive-connotation lexis was attached to the Ukrainian side and to Western support (determined, survive, assistance), while negative-connotation lexis was attached to the Russian side (revenge, threat, disaster). The authors read this asymmetry as ideological modality. The headline lexicon—invasion for the SVO, occupied for DPR/LPR territory described by Russian sources as “liberated,” and separatists for pro-Russian residents—is treated as the central mechanism of “information war.” Samambetova and Torbik (2023) argue that English-language outlets constructed a media-mythologeme of contemporary Russia by analogy to Germany in 1939, framing this as “latent negative transfer” that smuggles Nazi associations into the reader’s cognition without overt argument. Anglophone coverage of the SVO is thus characterised by tight structural organisation, headline-weighted semantic load, and a consistent toolkit of lexical, stylistic, and syntactic devices that the authors classify en bloc as manipulative: “substituting concepts, distorting facts, acting on the emotions and feelings of the audience.”

3.2.4 UK — The Economist: Continuation and Intensification of a Long-Standing Anti-Russian Editorial Line

Lipitskaya (2024) argues that The Economist’s coverage of Russia did not undergo a sudden hostile turn in February 2022 but represents the continuation and intensification of a long-standing anti-Russian editorial line. The Russo-Ukrainian War, in her account, served as a “formal pretext for the legalisation and further channelling” of pre-existing anti-Russian public sentiment rather than as the cause of new editorial hostility. To substantiate this continuity claim, she examined articles published between 2018 and 2019 alongside articles from 2023–2024, arguing that the rhetorical infrastructure is structurally identical across both periods. Lipitskaya’s (2024) core contribution is the identification of three rhetorical techniques allegedly characteristic of The Economist’s coverage.

The first is hasty extrapolation from anecdote. Lipitskaya argues that The Economist presents individual cases — she cites the journal’s treatment of the Daniil Markin and Yegor Zhukov prosecutions — as evidence of structural pathologies in the Russian state. Single incidents, in her reading, are illegitimately scaled into “alarming trends” through the rhetorical device of treating the

particular as a synecdoche for the general. She notes parenthetically that both cited cases involved actual legal proceedings (Markin's charges were eventually dropped; Zhukov received a three-year suspended sentence for incitement to extremism), but argues that the journal's framing inflated these local episodes into world-historical significance.

The second is semantic presupposition. Drawing on the opening sentence of The Economist's February 2024 article on Kharkiv ("‘That is my blood,’ says Natalya Popova..."), Lipitskaya argues that the proposition "this is my blood" carries the presupposition "blood is being shed," which in turn carries the further presupposition of identifiable agents responsible for the bloodshed. The reader, she contends, is thereby manoeuvred into a position of automatic solidarity with the victim and automatic hostility toward the perpetrator, with critical faculties bypassed by visceral imagery. She observes — with what reads as professional admiration for the technique — that the device works through "cinematic" imagery that mobilises the reader's existing media literacy against analytical scrutiny.

The third is exploitation of sympathy, illustrated through The Economist's account of the Nemyshlyansky district memorial of teddy bears and toys outside the ruins of a Kharkiv home where three children were reportedly killed in a Russian drone strike. Lipitskaya dismisses the report by noting that "the reliability of the information provided is not confirmed by anything," and treats the sentimental framing as a manipulative pressure technique rather than as reporting on a documented incident.

The problem with Lipitskaya's approach and argumentation is that every technique she identifies in The Economist's coverage can be identified as structurally homologous to techniques routinely deployed in Russian state media coverage of the war, or to the work of journalists in general. For example, Allan and Zelizer (2004), Tumber and Palmer (2004), and Seethaler et al. (2013) documented how "embedded journalism" forced reporters to rely heavily on the immediate anecdotes of the specific military units they were attached to. This led to a "hasty extrapolation" where a successful skirmish or a single local interaction was generalised to imply the entire invasion was going smoothly and welcome, masking broader systemic failures. Scholars analysing the 1999 NATO intervention (e.g. Nohrstedt, Kaitatzi-Whitlock, Ottosen, & Riegert, 2000) noted that media outlets frequently used single, highly specific refugee anecdotes to extrapolate a generalised narrative of localised ethnic dynamics, driving Western military intervention before complex regional histories were verified or contextually mapped. Similarly, Lynch and McGoldrick (2005) provided a systemic critique of anecdotal/episodic war reporting. Comparable analyses appear in Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's Propaganda Model (in Manufacturing Consent) and in foundational work on ideology and discourse in critical discourse analysis. These frameworks examine how "lexical choices" function as semantic presuppositions—loading a sentence with a predetermined moral judgment. Chouliaraki (2006) deconstructed the media's exploitation of sympathy. In the journal *Discourse & Society*, numerous studies analyse the phrase "the War on Terror" itself as a semantic presupposition, in addition to books such as Hodges and Nilep (2007). In that sense, when a journalist asks, "How can we best win the war on terror?" the sentence presupposes that a "war" is the correct, legally sound paradigm for counter-terrorism. The audience is linguistically barred from debating whether police action or diplomacy would be more effective; the premise of "war" is already baked into the syntax. In other words, The Economist's coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War, as described by Lipitskaya (2024), may be accurately characterised in its rhetorical features—but those features do not necessarily indicate inherent anti-Russian bias.

3.2.5 Italy — *Corriere della Sera*: Negative Linguistic Representation of Russia

Asmyatullin (2022) analyzed the linguistic framing of Western economic sanctions against Russia in *Corriere della Sera*, one of Italy's largest daily newspapers. Using a combined quantitative and qualitative approach, the study examined the newspaper's discourse during the initial months of the conflict. The corpus analysis revealed a tendency toward the discursive othering of Russia. The acute stage of confrontation between the West and Russia was described through a black-and-white dichotomy between the collective West (Self) and Russia (Other). This framing was reinforced linguistically through strong epithets such as *stato-canaglia* ("rogue state") and a generally hostile narrative. The analysis demonstrated that *Corriere della Sera*'s discourse on anti-Russian economic sanctions contained a certain bias. The negative linguistic representation of Russia and the justification of severe economic sanctions contributed to the construction of a strong enemy-image.

3.2.6 Analytical Summary: Russian Analysts on Western Media Coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War

The five studies reviewed in this section share a common object of analysis — Western media coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War — but vary considerably in methodological rigour, geographic and outlet scope, and the degree to which their conclusions can be accepted as independent scholarly findings rather than as reproductions of official Russian discourse. They constitute a revealing corpus: not primarily because of what they demonstrate about Western media, but because of what they disclose about the epistemological premises and rhetorical conventions of state-adjacent Russian academic media studies.

Normative and Epistemological Positioning

The most consequential shared feature across nearly all five studies is their adoption — explicit or implicit — of the Russian state interpretive framework as an analytical premise rather than as an object of inquiry. Nurbagomedova (2024), Orekhova (2024), Samambetova and Torbik (2023), and Lipitskaya (2024) all treat the conflict's official Russian designation ("Special Military Operation") as the unmarked, neutral term, and Western use of "war," "invasion," or "aggressor" as self-evidently biased. This move forecloses the possibility of distinguishing between journalistic framing and accurate description — a distinction central to any credible comparative media analysis. Asmyatullin (2022) is the most restrained in this respect, confining its claims to the discursive construction of a negative Russian image without explicitly endorsing or contesting the underlying reality of the events described.

Only Nurbagomedova (2024) is explicit enough in its policy prescription — calling for Russian state investment in counter-image-building — to make its normative alignment fully transparent. The others perform a veneer of analytical neutrality while reproducing the same underlying framework, which arguably makes them more, not less, methodologically problematic.

Methodological Range and Quality

The studies differ substantially in methodological ambition. Nurbagomedova (2024) at least provides a quantitative content analysis with a defined sample, coding categories, and numerical results — making her empirical claims, if not her interpretive overlay, independently assessable. Samambetova and Torbik (2023) work from a reasonably large corpus of thirteen outlets across an extended time frame, though their restriction of analysis to the "informational-agitational" mode — justified on the grounds that the critical-analytical mode is not dominant — conveniently narrows the corpus to material most amenable to their framing-as-manipulation argument. Lipitskaya (2024)

grounds her argument in close rhetorical reading of specific texts, which yields genuine analytical granularity but at the cost of generalisability. Orekhova (2024) presents what is essentially an unsourced summary without cited empirical data, making it the least defensible as a research article in the conventional sense. Asmyatullin (2022) deploys a combined quantitative-qualitative corpus approach, though the study covers only the initial months of the conflict and is limited to a single outlet in a single country.

Geographic and Outlet Coverage

The studies collectively span a reasonable range of national and outlet contexts: UK, USA, Canada, Germany, Italy, and France are all represented to varying degrees. The Anglophone press receives the heaviest attention, with The New York Times, Washington Post, and The Guardian appearing across multiple studies. Notably absent is any sustained analysis of Scandinavian, Eastern European, or Baltic media — outlets whose coverage of Russia carries distinct historical and geopolitical inflections that might complicate the monolithic "Western media" construct these studies collectively reproduce. Southern European outlets appear only marginally, with Asmyatullin's (2022) single-outlet Italian study and Nurbagomedova's brief inclusion of Il Foglio and Le Figaro representing the extent of non-Anglophone Western coverage.

The Rhetoric-as-Manipulation Argument

A recurring analytical move across the studies — most developed in Samambetova and Torbik (2023) and Lipitskaya (2024) — is the identification of standard journalistic and rhetorical techniques (lexical connotation, semantic presupposition, sympathetic framing, anecdotal extrapolation) as evidence of deliberate manipulation and information warfare. As noted in the discussion of Lipitskaya (2024), this argument is structurally circular: the same techniques are pervasive in all war journalism, including Russian state media, and their identification in Western outlets does not distinguish bias from ordinary professional practice. None of the five studies compares Western rhetorical techniques with equivalent features in Russian media coverage of the same events — a comparison that would be methodologically necessary to sustain any claim of *asymmetric* bias rather than universal journalistic practice.

Missing Angles and Structural Limitations

Several significant gaps are apparent across the corpus as a whole. First, none of the studies examines *intra-Western heterogeneity* in any sustained way. Despite covering outlets from multiple countries, all five studies treat "Western media" as an essentially unified actor, eliding substantial differences between, for instance, Italian and American journalistic cultures, or between liberal and conservative Anglophone outlets. Nurbagomedova's finding that Il Foglio, Berliner Zeitung, and Le Figaro were the most hostile in tone — more so than The Guardian or The New York Times — is noted without further analysis, though it potentially disrupts the unified-West thesis the study otherwise advances.

Second, *temporal dynamics* are almost entirely ignored. Only Lipitskaya (2024) makes a longitudinal argument — that The Economist's hostility to Russia predates 2022 — but even she does not track how framing evolved *within* the war period. The question of whether Western coverage modulated, intensified, or fragmented as the conflict extended is left unaddressed.

Third, the studies universally treat media framing as a *top-down, producer-driven* phenomenon. Audience reception, selective exposure, and the role of platform algorithms in shaping how Western publics actually encountered coverage of the conflict are entirely absent.

Fourth, and perhaps most importantly for the present review, none of the five studies situates its findings within the broader international academic literature on war journalism, media framing, or information disorder. This isolation from the broader scholarly conversation is a defining characteristic of the Russian academic corpus under review and constitutes a structural limitation of the field as a whole.

3.3 Russian Analysts Comparing Russian, Non-Western and Western Media Coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War

3.3.1 USA, Russia and India: Three Distinct Trajectories

Vasiliev (2023) compared the information agendas of three pairs of Russian and foreign media: the television channels Pervyy Kanal, CNN, and NDTV (New Delhi Television Limited, one of India's major English-language broadcast news networks), and the radio stations Sputnik, NPR (National Public Radio, a US public media outlet), and All India Radio. The analysis covered three month-long observation windows: 15 February–15 March 2022 (the onset of the Russo-Ukrainian War), 15 August–15 September 2022 (the six-month mark), and 15 February–15 March 2023 (the one-year anniversary). The method combined keyword-intersection analysis and n-gram co-occurrence analysis across the six outlets, supplemented by a series of expert interviews. The expert component drew on an ideologically heterogeneous group: Alexander Sharikov (Higher School of Economics [HSE], media director); Oliver Boyd-Barrett (Bowling Green State University, emeritus); Boris Grozovsky (independent economic commentator); Vasily Gatov (USC Annenberg; World Association of Newspapers board member); Oleg Dmitriev (Rossiya Segodnya; HSE); Ilya Kiriya (HSE Critical Media Studies); and Alexei Nikolov (RT director general; HSE). The mix of HSE-affiliated, state-media-affiliated, and Western-affiliated experts is unusual and gives the qualitative component genuine analytical range.

First Observation Window: Operation Onset

At the operation's onset, all six outlets shared substantial keyword overlap. Pervyy Kanal and CNN intersected on "Russia," "Ukraine," "Russian," "Ukrainian," and "Kyiv." Pervyy Kanal paired "Russia" most often with "Ministry of Defence," "President," "armed forces," and "against"; CNN paired the same word with "says" and "against." "Ukraine" appeared in Pervyy Kanal alongside "situation," "territory," "armed forces," and "special operation," but in CNN alongside "invasion of Ukraine"—a lexical divergence that captures the framing gap at the level of single-word collocations. Distinctive n-grams further sharpened the divergence: Pervyy Kanal emphasised "peaceful civilian," "operation protection," "high-precision weapons," "military target," "volley fire," and "take control," while CNN highlighted "nuclear power plant" and NDTV "Russia–Ukraine crisis."

Sputnik and NPR shared "Russian," "Ukrainian," "Russia," "Ukraine," "sanction," and "Putin," but the collocational profiles diverged sharply: Sputnik paired "Russia" with "sanction against," "armed forces," and "declares," whereas NPR paired the same word with "against," "invaded," "Europe," and "says." All India Radio overlapped with both but focused primarily on "Indian embassy in Ukraine"—already signalling India's inward-focused, diaspora-oriented coverage frame.

Second Observation Window: August–September 2022

Cross-outlet keyword overlap collapsed significantly. Pervyy Kanal and CNN now intersected only on "Russia." Pervyy Kanal and NDTV intersected on "Russia" and "today." CNN and NDTV intersected on "Queen" and "says"—meaning that the dominant shared topic between the US and Indian channels at the six-month mark was Queen Elizabeth II's death, not Ukraine. NDTV's

distinctive n-gram was “new covid cases.” This is the article’s most striking finding: six months into the war, Ukraine had already lost cross-national agenda primacy outside the directly involved media.

Third Observation Window: February–March 2023

Pervyy Kanal and CNN intersected on “Russia,” “Ukraine,” and “Russian”; Pervyy Kanal and NDTV showed no keyword intersection at all; CNN and NDTV intersected only on “says.” Pervyy Kanal’s “Russia” now paired most frequently with “exercises,” “China,” and “Azerbaijan”—a clear pivot away from the conflict frame toward alliance-building. CNN paired “Russia” with “negotiations.” Pervyy Kanal’s distinctive n-grams included “Sergei Lavrov,” “Joe Biden,” “weapons deliveries,” “UN Security Council,” “Nord Stream,” “pension reform,” “military aid,” “Ukrainian militant,” and “Zelensky regime”; CNN’s were “Putin upstaging,” “Moscow leaves,” and “Biden’s trip.” Sputnik’s distinctive n-grams shifted to “Nord Stream,” “White House,” “championship match,” “air alarm,” and “grain deal”; NPR’s to “Xi Jinping,” “President Biden,” “largest democracy,” and “Saudi Arabia.”

Three Trajectories

Vasiliev (2023) identifies three distinct trajectories. Indian media rapidly disengaged, reverting to internal news priorities; NDTV by year’s end essentially ceased mentioning the operation. US and Russian outlets sustained coverage, but in increasingly sparse form. Russian outlets initially emphasised “successes of the Russian army,” but by year-end their distinctive n-grams become decreasingly battlefield-anchored, with “volleys” and “shelling” the principal exceptions. Foreign outlets sustained the “war” and “invasion” frames throughout; Russian outlets sustained “liberation” and “defence.” The lexical gap is total at the framing level even where surface-level keyword overlap appears.

Expert Findings

The experts split on whether the agenda fundamentally shifted in 2022–2023. Sharikov characterised early 2022 as the strongest mediastorm of recent memory, peaking late February through April and decaying by summer; by year’s end, publication parameters had returned to pre-war baselines except in the Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Polish, Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian press. Nikolov and Dmitriev argued, more provocatively, that the substantive shift in Russian and Western agendas occurred not in 2022 but in 2014–2016, with February 2022 representing predictable continuation rather than rupture.

Grozovsky and Kiriya both pushed back forcefully against the construct of a unified national agenda. Grozovsky stressed that no single Russian agenda exists: federal, regional, voenkor, and opposition agendas constitute distinct ecosystems that cannot be aggregated. He notes that the distance between US Republican-leaning and Democrat-leaning media was large but smaller than the distance between Russian federal media and the voenkor-channel agenda. Kiriya similarly argues that there is no statistically average US agenda, since different states host newspapers serving distinct audiences.

Gatov documented excessive coverage of officialdom—from the president through municipal mayors—at the expense of natural disasters, technogenic problems, and any forms of protest. On India, Gatov distinguished between Indian national-level English-language media (New Delhi Media, Times of India), whose coverage broadly aligns with Anglo-American framing while inviting commentators less critical of Russia, and regional English-language outlets in Mumbai, Bangalore, and Chennai, where critical positions toward Russia carry strong anti-colonial connotations—Putin’s actions in Ukraine being “perceived and interpreted as a colonial war.”

Sharikov complicates this further by noting the language-skew distortion: India's mass-language publics in Bengali and Hindi remain under-analysed, and the English-language press is structurally Britain-facing because of colonial history. This introduces unaccounted indeterminacy into any India-based agenda inference.

Kiriya identifies "the striving to demonise and dehumanise opponents" as a shared agenda feature across the conflict's narrative spaces. Nikolov adds the procedural observation that "any armed conflict eventually ends" and that the warring sides simply want it to end differently. Boyd-Barrett identifies the contact points as the US characterisation of the conflict as critically important at present and the framing of US action as hybrid warfare against Russia. Dmitriev locates the common ground at the structural level of the news flow itself rather than its content.

Sharikov reports research showing that in 2021 the tonal balance of Russia-related coverage in the English-language press (USA, UK, Canada, India, and South Africa) trended positive rather than negative. The negative-to-positive ratio in publications turned negative only in March 2022, was neutral or positive in other months, and moved into positive territory from May 2022. Sharikov flags this as directly contradicting the widespread view in the Russian political sphere that all foreign countries are against Russia.

Sharikov's most pointed claim is that "for us, the United States proves a much more significant country than Russia is for the United States in their press." US regional press concentrates on internal problems and selects international events with direct regional relevance. Russia, for US media, is "a distant abstract country"—yet the Russo-Ukrainian War temporarily disrupted this pattern, retaining the conflict in upper agenda positions due to multiple converging factors. Kiriya formulated the underlying shift starkly: the SVO "is the first serious military conflict within the Western world since World War II," establishing a new normality of war coverage for Western audiences.

Finally, Kiriya identified the absence of private media from socio-political life as a defining feature of the Russian agenda. Gatov elaborates: state influence over the media agenda produced news filtering that excludes any critical or even negative information about the authorities. The Russian agenda is undergoing "radicalisation of the state agenda," while simultaneously Western—especially European—coverage frames the conflict not as existential but as that of a country defending against invasion, that is, "simply support for those who resist." Russian voenkor channels and television offer "alternative points of view" within the cross-platform Telegram system, complicating the otherwise dominant state-media frame.

3.3.2 USA and Russia: Sensationalist Headlines and "Investigative" Reporting versus Official Government Statements and Factual Rebuttals

Kuyantseva and Klipakova (2024) conducted an in-depth case study of the Bucha incident, analyzing Western headlines from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Times*, alongside Russian headlines from RIA Novosti, TASS, and Kommersant. The authors argued that the Russia-Ukraine conflict represented a civilizational confrontation between Russia (as a Eurasian civilization) and the West (led by the United States), drawing on the geopolitical philosophy of Aleksandr Dugin. This civilizational lens, they contended, was essential for understanding media structures and information warfare strategies. The authors identified four levels of special operations in the information confrontation: (1) strategic information operations (e.g., the Bucha incident); (2) special propaganda (decomposition of the enemy, discrediting leaders); (3) fake news (creating panic and diverting resources); and (4) operational games of special services.

Ukrainian propaganda was described as having placed fake news production on an assembly line, exemplified by the "Yedyni Novyny" (United News) telethon. The authors noted that Ukrainian media deliberately mixed high-quality information with fake content to exhaust Russian resources in debunking them.

The authors presented the Bucha massacre allegations as a Western-orchestrated information provocation designed to justify arms supplies to Ukraine and create a symbol of Ukrainian suffering. They noted the linguistic coincidence that "Bucha" sounds like "butcher" in English, suggesting it was deliberately chosen for Western audiences. The authors contrasted Western journalism—characterized by sensationalist headlines and "investigative" reporting with strong authorial positions—with Russian journalism, which relied heavily on official government statements and factual rebuttals. Western media was portrayed as treating news as a commercial product. Russia's strategy of systematically disproving fakes with facts was described as having limited effectiveness when the global media environment was overwhelmingly pro-Ukrainian at the start of the conflict.

3.3.3 UK, Germany and Kazakhstan: Two Contrasting Framings and One With Neutrality

Izilyaeva and Mirokiyants (2025) analyzed the media discourses of The Guardian (UK), Berliner Zeitung (Germany), and Kazakhstan Pravda (Kazakhstan) in comparison with Russian media outlets. Key Russian media actors analyzed included Channel One, Russia 1, and TASS.

The Russian media framing emphasized "denazification," protection of sovereignty, and defense of Russian-speaking populations. The narrative strategy relied on historical determinism, geopolitical confrontation, and protection of traditional values. Russian military personnel were depicted as heroic, courageous, and fulfilling their duty, while Russia was positioned as a victim of aggressive Western actions.

The Western media framing presented the conflict as unprovoked Russian aggression against sovereign Ukraine. The narrative strategy built on universal values of human rights, international law, and democracy versus authoritarianism. The coverage was victim-centered, humanizing the conflict through civilian casualty stories, refugee flows, and urban destruction, while portraying Russian leadership negatively, particularly Vladimir Putin.

The Russian narrative rationalized the operation through technocracy and military heroism, whereas the Western narrative employed emotional framing through personal stories and humanitarian catastrophe. For example, Putin's medal award to General Gerasimov was reported positively in Russian media but framed as rewarding alleged war crimes in Western media.

Kazakhstan media, represented by Kazakhstan Pravda, maintained "political ethics" and neutrality, with only seven Ukraine-related articles since 2022, focusing on friendly relations with both sides.

3.3.4 Analytical Summary: Cross-National Comparative Studies of Russian Western and Non-Western Media Coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War

The three studies reviewed in this section share a common empirical preoccupation — the lexical and ideological distance between Russian and Western media framings of the Russo-Ukrainian War — but differ substantially in methodology, analytical scope, normative positioning, and the conclusions they permit. There is a distinct group of media outlets in states such as India or Kazakhstan that typically become, as time passes, progressively less interested in the topic and/or tend to present it in a rather neutral way.

Points of Convergence

All three studies confirm what might be called the *total framing gap*: Russian and Western outlets not only use different terminology but operate within incommensurable narrative logics. The "special military operation" versus "war/invasion" dichotomy, documented quantitatively by Vasiliev (2023) and discursively by Izilyaeva and Mirokiyants (2025), is not merely a matter of word choice but reflects divergent constructions of legitimacy, causality, and victimhood. Kuyantseva and Klipakova (2024) arrive at the same conclusion through a single-incident case study, arguing that even the selection and naming of an event (Bucha) is embedded within opposing information warfare strategies.

All three studies also reproduce — though to varying degrees of explicitness — the contrast between a *state-policy-anchored Russian media logic* and a *commercially and normatively driven Western media logic*. Vasiliev's experts characterise Russian agenda-setting as "radicalisation of the state agenda," while Izilyaeva and Mirokiyants note that Russian media relied on official government statements and technocratic-military heroism, in contrast to the victim-centred emotional framing of Western outlets. Kuyantseva and Klipakova echo this but invert the evaluative direction, portraying Western sensationalism as a commercial and strategic defect rather than a journalistic mode.

Points of Divergence

The studies diverge sharply in methodology. Vasiliev (2023) employs a longitudinal mixed-methods design — keyword-intersection and n-gram co-occurrence analysis across three time windows, supplemented by expert interviews from an ideologically heterogeneous panel — making it the most methodologically sophisticated of the three and the only one capable of capturing temporal dynamics in agenda-setting. Kuyantseva and Klipakova (2024) conduct a qualitative case study of a single incident, which offers analytical depth but no generalisability. Izilyaeva and Mirokiyants (2025) adopt a discourse-analytical approach across three national contexts, positioned between the other two in scope.

Most consequentially, the studies diverge in their normative and epistemological positioning. Izilyaeva and Mirokiyants, as well as Vasiliev — despite their different methods — maintain a broadly descriptive stance, presenting competing frames as objects of analysis rather than as truth claims to be adjudicated. Kuyantseva and Klipakova (2024), by contrast, explicitly adopt the geopolitical philosophy of Aleksandr Dugin as their interpretive framework, treating the conflict as a civilisational confrontation and characterising the Bucha reporting as a Western-orchestrated "information provocation." This is an epistemologically unusual move in academic discourse and warrants critical attention: the authors effectively reproduce the Russian state framing as an analytical premise rather than as a dictum to be explained. Their study is therefore more valuably read as a specimen of Russian official-adjacent academic discourse than as an independent comparative analysis.

The Non-Western Dimension

A notable analytical contribution shared by Vasiliev (2023) and Izilyaeva and Mirokiyants (2025) — absent from Kuyantseva and Klipakova — is the inclusion of non-Western media actors. Vasiliev's finding that Indian media had effectively disengaged from Ukraine coverage by the six-month mark, reverting to domestic priorities, challenges any binary West-versus-Russia framing and introduces a third trajectory of *agenda indifference*. Izilyaeva and Mirokiyants' documentation of Kazakhstan Pravda's studied neutrality — only seven Ukraine-related articles since 2022 —

similarly complicates the assumption of a globally bifurcated information environment. These findings are significant for the broader question of media coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War, as they suggest that non-alignment in media coverage is not simply passive but reflects deliberate editorial and geopolitical positioning (including indifference or low coverage).

Missing Angles and Limitations

Several analytical gaps are notable across all three studies. First, *Ukrainian media* appears only as an object of Russian criticism — as a propaganda apparatus or fake-news producer — and never as an independent analytical actor with its own framing dynamics, internal diversity, or evolution over time. This absence reflects a structural limitation of the Russian academic corpus under review but also represents a significant blind spot for comparative analysis.

Second, *intra-Russian media heterogeneity* is raised by Vasiliev's expert panel — most pointedly by Grozovsky, who stresses the irreducibility of federal, regional, voenkor, and opposition agendas — but is not systematically operationalised in any of the three studies. The voenkor-Telegram ecosystem, acknowledged by Vasiliev as a site of "alternative points of view," remains analytically underdeveloped across the corpus.

Third, none of the three studies addresses *audience reception* or *media effects*: framing is analysed at the level of content production, with no consideration of how these competing frames are processed, negotiated, or resisted by actual audiences in Russia, the West, or non-aligned countries.

Fourth, *platform and format diversity* is largely ignored. All three studies focus on television, radio, and print/online news outlets, leaving social media, messaging platforms, and video ecosystems — which play a central role in contemporary information disorder — unexamined.

Finally, the studies do not engage with one another, and no cross-citation or cumulative synthesis is attempted within the Russian academic literature itself. Each study constructs its comparative framework independently, which limits the development of a coherent research programme on this topic within Russian scholarship.

4. Contested Vocabularies: Political Rhetoric and News Language

This section analyses how political and diplomatic discourse shapes media coverage, and vice versa.

4.1 Russia — “Journalism of Co-Participation”

Lyubushkin (2025), already cited, summarises the structural and functional transformation of Russian state media discourse since February 2022: a shift from an informational model to an interpretive-consolidating one, which the author terms “journalism of co-participation” (*zhurnalistika soprichastnosti*). The communicative role of Russian media has moved from describing events to interpreting them through a value-laden frame. Media has become an instrument of social regulation, collective meaning-making, and “institutional empathy” rather than a mirror of reality. Content analysis shows a marked increase in “internal” topics: support for SVO participants and their families, reconstruction of “liberated” territories, volunteerism, and social projects. Explanatory journalism and the “rhetoric of legitimisation” have intensified, and Russian media have taken on the role of interpreters of events.

4.2 Germany — Collusion Between Media and Elites

Orekhova (2024) is cited here again, in an abstract or summary without cited sources, claims that prior to the start of the Special Military Operation the content of Germany's socio-political discourse was only partly unfriendly in character, but that, literally from the first days of the Russo-Ukrainian War, the German mainstream took a steady course toward overt "Russophobic propaganda." In her account of coverage of Russia's actions, a uniform communicative-pragmatic strategy has become firmly entrenched in the German media space, oriented exclusively toward the formation of public opinion favourable to elites.

4.3 South Korea — Editorial Line versus Public Opinion

Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022) note a tension between the editorial line and public opinion in South Korea: the country officially supports Ukraine and has joined parts of the sanctions regime, but the authors cite poll data indicating that more than seventy per cent of South Koreans believe Seoul should not become entangled in the conflict and should restrict its assistance to humanitarian aid. They additionally observe that NATO (21 occurrences) is not treated as a significant party to the conflict in the South Korean corpus—a contrast both with Chinese coverage (282 mentions) and with North Korean coverage.

4.4 Analytical Summary: Contested Vocabularies — Political Rhetoric and News Language

The three cases examined in this section illustrate how the relationship between political discourse and media language operates differently across national contexts. In Russia, Lyubushkin (2025) documents a systemic shift from informational to interpretive-consolidating journalism, in which media actively constructs collective meaning rather than reporting events — a finding consistent with the broader propaganda-paradigm thesis developed in Section 1. In Germany, Orekhova (2024) asserts a sudden and total alignment between media and political elites from February 2022 onward, though her argument, unsupported by cited empirical sources, must be treated with considerable caution as a specimen of Russian state-adjacent discourse rather than independent analysis.

The most analytically interesting case is South Korea, where Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022) identify a measurable tension between official editorial alignment with Western positions and majority public opinion favouring non-entanglement — a gap that points to the limits of top-down framing and merits further empirical investigation.

5. Media Narratives vs. Public Opinion

The interpretations summarised below should be read as primary-source artefacts of Russian-language academic discourse on third-state reactions to the war, rather than as independent empirical assessments of local public opinions.

5.1 Indonesia — Negative Depictions and the Question of Fake News

Muzykant and Syurkani (2024) examined Indonesian media coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War, as well as the Indonesian government's retaliatory measures against media that published fake news, between 23 February and 10 April 2022. They distributed questionnaires to two different groups of respondents in two waves (329 and 339 respondents). In the first group, 69.6 per cent stated that the Indonesian media depicted Russia in a negative light at the very beginning of the war; in the second group, 59.1 per cent reported noticing several items of news in Indonesian media that depicted Russia negatively. Interestingly, and somewhat contradictorily, the authors state in

their abstract that about seventy per cent of Indonesian netizens reported that news in the Indonesian media regarding modern Russia was more positive, although sources of fake news or hoaxes were also identified.

5.2 China — Friendly Neutrality Among Netizens, Mirroring the Official Line

Plotnitskaia (2023) found that the majority of politically engaged Chinese netizens sympathised with Russia, mirroring the official line. As illustrative evidence, the Chinese translation of Putin's address of 24 February 2022 accumulated 1.1 billion views in twenty-four hours, with predominantly enthusiastic reception. Chinese internet users largely reproduced the official line and adopted a neutral, descriptive posture—relaying facts from Russian or Ukrainian sources without evaluative commentary. Independent factual analysis or explicit side-taking is rare, as are alternative perspectives supporting either side. The Russo-Ukrainian War is nonetheless a heavily discussed topic, and the aggregate stance of Chinese netizens is best described as “friendly neutrality” toward Russia.

In contrast, Erofeeva and Muravyov (2022) argued that the semiotic opposition “We–They” served as a fundamental cognitive tool for understanding reality in Chinese media discourse about the Special Military Operation. Their analysis drew on Chinese media materials from sources including Huanqiu Shibao, Sina, Xinhua, Sohu, Guancha, CCTV, and Global Times. Chinese media constructed Russia within the “We” space through several positive framings. Russia was portrayed as possessing a centuries-old history of victories, with fearless and skilled warriors (the “fighting nation” trope). Russian military strength was emphasized through descriptions of new hypersonic weapons (*Kinzhal*, *Avangard*, *Zircon*). Russia was depicted as defending national security against the entire Western world, while the ruble's recovery from sanctions was presented as a financial success story. Russians were characterized as having a “special Russian soul”—courageous, indomitable, and brave. Conversely, the “They” space encompassed negative connotations. Western countries were portrayed as seeing financial opportunities in human suffering and hunger. The West was accused of projecting its own guilt onto Russia, and its actions were described as an “absurd farce” aimed at strangling Russia at any cost. The West was characterized as war-loving, cowardly, and hypocritical, while Western civilization was presented as creating external enemies to survive, ultimately leading to its own decline. “Anglo-Saxons” were depicted as viewing Russians as “aliens” and “barbarians” (Orthodox Tatars with white appearance).

5.3 Russia — Telegram as the Central Communication Channel, Youth More Critical

Lyubushkin (2025) bases his analysis on VTsIOM data showing that seventy-eight per cent of Russians had engaged in voluntary aid during the past year (an increase of five percentage points), with thirty-six per cent specifically helping “SVO” participants. Recurrent semantic fields include together, help, support, restoration, responsibility, hero/heroism, co-participation, and unity. The collective pronoun “we” (my) is used heavily—including in depersonalised constructions—to symbolise collective identity and legitimise action. The growth of analytical and explanatory genres is consistent with crisis-communication logic: audiences under uncertainty seek explanation and validation of decisions.

External pressure has served as a driver of digitalisation. Specifically, Ofcom's revocation of RT's UK licence in March 2022, the twenty-nine UK investigations into Russian broadcasting, and the EU sanctions package suspending RT and Sputnik accelerated the digitalisation of Russian media discourse. With limited access to Western platforms, Telegram has become the central channel. Russia had 90.9 million monthly Telegram users in July 2025, and MTS AdTech reported that the

platform passed 100 million unique users in Q2 2025. Official channels such as RIA Novosti and RT na russkom (RT in Russian) hold million-strong audiences and produce multi-genre, multimedia discourse.

While the majority of Russian society supported the Russian President's decision to launch the special military operation (SMO), this support varied across social groups. Young people, in particular, proved more skeptical and critical of the outbreak of hostilities compared to society at large. Kazakov, Vilkov, and Shestov (2023) identified several reasons for this distinctive youth attitude.

First, age-related features of this social stratum played a role. Second, the political socialization of today's youth had largely occurred within an ideological vacuum. Third, media practices prevalent among young people exerted a significant influence. With 93% of young people preferring to obtain news from the Internet, opportunities for informational autonomy had objectively expanded. Furthermore, serious questions—not only among young people—arose regarding the quality, reliability, and efficiency of state-broadcast information on the SMO's progress.

5.4 Mongolia — Government-Aligned Neutrality

Grayvoronskiy (2022) identified three main groups within the Mongolian population: (i) supporters of the official, neutral position of the Government of Mongolia; (ii) opponents of the war, including Russia's Special Military Operation in Ukraine; and (iii) supporters of Russia and its foreign policy aimed at protecting national security, including the Special Military Operation in Ukraine. The majority of the Mongolian population backs the government's official line of close monitoring, strict neutrality, non-intervention in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, calls for a peaceful diplomatic resolution, and humanitarian assistance for the Ukrainian population.

5.5 Specific Case — Circulation of Russian Narratives Into Chinese-Language Discourse

Wei and Zhou (2023), writing as university students, presented a Chinese-language relay of the Russian official narrative, explicitly addressed to a Sinophone audience and reproducing the official line as transmitted on Russian state television. The text in Chinese is useful evidence in its own right of the circulation of Russian narratives into Chinese-language discourse via Russian universities.

The text quotes the core framing devices of Putin's public address of 24 February 2022 verbatim: Article 51 of the UN Charter; the Federation Council's ratification of the friendship and mutual-assistance treaties with the DPR and LPR; "demilitarisation and denazification" of Ukraine; protection of people subjected to "eight years of bullying and genocide by the Kyiv regime"; and the disclaimer that occupation of Ukrainian territory is "not part of the plan." The authors construct the United States as the post-Cold War "hegemon," characterise Russian elite consensus as treating this condition as transient and contrary to interests, and then extend the frame to Beijing: "perhaps China has the same considerations." This is reinforced later with the claim that "what is happening to Russia today may also happen to China." The non-interference principle is pivoted in the same direction—Soviet-era non-interference is equated with what "China today demands of the international community." The authors invoke Article 3 of the Russian Constitution (the people as sole source of power; direct secret ballot for the head of state) to argue that Putin's decision to launch the Russo-Ukrainian War carried a direct popular mandate. A substantial section argues that the USSR, qua subject of international law, was never properly dissolved. The unstated

implication—left for the audience to draw—is that contemporary Ukrainian statehood rests on a legally contestable foundation.

5.6 Analytical Summary: Media Narratives vs. Public Opinion

The cases examined in this section reveal a broadly consistent pattern: official media framing and public opinion tend to align in states sympathetic to or dependent on Russia, while tensions between the two emerge in more independent contexts. Chinese netizens, as documented by Plotnitskaia (2023), largely reproduce the official "friendly neutrality" line, and Erofeeva and Muravyov (2022) identify a structured We–They semiotic opposition in Chinese media that actively constructs Russia within a positive collective identity frame. Mongolian public opinion similarly clusters around government-sanctioned neutrality. Indonesian findings are internally contradictory and methodologically underdeveloped, limiting their analytical utility.

The most consequential domestic finding concerns Russia itself: while aggregate public support for the Special Military Operation is documented, Kazakov, Vilkov, and Shestov (2023) identify a meaningful youth exception, attributable to internet-driven informational autonomy — a fracture in the otherwise homogeneous consolidation narrative.

The Wei and Zhou (2023) case is analytically distinctive: as a Chinese-language relay of Russian official narratives produced within a Russian university, it constitutes direct evidence of cross-linguistic narrative transmission, illustrating how Russian framing devices circulate into Sinophone discourse through institutional academic channels rather than purely through media.

6. Comparison and Analyses

Taken together, the sources surveyed above demonstrate that the Russian-language scholarly literature on Russo-Ukrainian War media framing has bifurcated along an empirical–doctrinal axis since 2022. The empirical pole remains methodologically engaged with international media studies (e.g. Krivokhina, 2024, 2025; Vasiliev, 2023; Chirkin et al., 2023; Polishchuk & Koklikov, 2022; Kalinin & Mavleeva, 2022), while the doctrinal pole has developed its own conceptual vocabulary—Grabelnikov’s (2024) destructive media, cognitive war, and mental war; Fesenko and Kholostov’s (2023) inventory of the lexical infrastructure (*ukrop*, *banderlog*, *dvukhsotyy*); and Chirkin et al.’s (2023) term “loyalist opposition”—that operates parallel to, but not in conversation with, international scholarship.

At the same time, two distinct sets of analytical criteria are applied: the first, deployed in the study of Russian and non-Western media systems, is largely descriptive and contextualising; the second, reserved for Western media, is mostly forensic and accusatory. The same journalistic operation—most notably the lexical designation of the conflict as a “war” or “invasion” rather than as a “special military operation”—is rendered legitimate or manipulative according to the political valence of the surrounding interpretive frame.

The seven subsections that follow develop the main comparative observations that emerge from reading the literature as a corpus rather than as a sequence of individual studies.

6.1 The Empirical–Doctrinal Bifurcation

Three observations follow from the bifurcation thesis and warrant fuller development. The first is that the methodological gap between the two poles is wider than the institutional gap. Krivokhina (2024, 2025, Vasiliev (2023), Chirkin et al. (2023), Polishchuk and Koklikov (2022), Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022) operate with corpora running to hundreds or thousands of items, explicit (if imperfect) coding schemes, and named software-assisted methods of analysis. By contrast, Grabelnikov (2024), Orekhova (2024), and to a lesser extent Lyubushkin (2025) operate predominantly at the level of conceptual stipulation: terms are introduced, applied to instances, and treated as adequate without verification of their discriminating power. Both poles, however, are housed in roughly the same institutional ecosystem—Russian universities, Russian-language journals, and eLIBRARY.ru-indexed conference proceedings—which means that the bifurcation cannot be reduced to an institutional distinction along the lines of “mainstream universities versus security-affiliated outlets.”

The second observation is that the empirical pole occasionally produces findings inconsistent with the doctrinal pole’s assumptions. Sharikov’s (2022) tonal-balance data, reported in Vasiliev (2023), show that English-language coverage of Russia turned negative only in March 2022 and returned to neutral or positive territory from May 2022—a finding that directly contradicts the “everyone is against Russia” premise on which much of the doctrinal literature implicitly rests. Kiriya’s observation, echoed by other cited experts, that demonisation is a feature common to all sides of the narrative space, rather than asymmetrically directed at Russia, cuts against the same premise. The empirical literature thus contains the materials for an internal critique of the doctrinal literature, but the two poles do not appear to engage each other directly within Russian academic discourse.

The third observation is that the doctrinal pole imports an evaluative vocabulary—destructive media, mental war, cognitive war, Russophobic propaganda, anti-Russian position—without the analytical distinctions that would make those terms portable into comparative media studies. In the absence of operationalisation, these terms function less as analytical categories than as evaluative markers signalling the analyst’s positionality, which limits their utility for cumulative scholarship and effectively quarantines them from international literatures.

6.2 Asymmetric Evaluative Standards

Russian academic analyses of foreign media coverage exhibit a consistent evaluative asymmetry: non-Western media aligned with or sympathetic to Russia’s position receive neutral-to-positive characterisations, while Western media critical of Russia are framed as manipulative, propagandistic, and engaged in “demonisation.” However, it is acknowledged here that this sharp dichotomy becomes less radical—or more justified—if the second explanatory framework, as identified by Zollmann (2024), is considered.

A pattern recurs across the literature surveyed in Sections 3 and 4. When non-Western media (Chinese, Iranian, North Korean, Mongolian) frame the conflict in ways aligned with the official Russian position, Russian analysts characterise the framing in neutral or approving terms—“friendly neutrality” (Plotnitskaia), “alternative viewpoints” (Kurbanov on Japan’s secondary frame), “perception of war’s destructiveness as grounded in collective memory” (Polishchuk & Koklikov on Iran). When Western media (US, UK, Canadian, German, French, Italian) frame the conflict in ways opposed to the official Russian position, the same analysts characterise the framing as “manipulation,” “demonisation,” “Russophobic propaganda,” and “mythologisation” (Samambetova & Torbik; Nurbagomedova; Orekhova).

The asymmetry is not a finding about media but a feature of the analytical apparatus. The same lexical choice—using the word “war” rather than “operation”—is treated as evidence of accuracy in the Iranian case (where it confirms the Russian framing of NATO blame) and evidence of manipulation in the Anglophone case (where it does not). The Iranian use of *jang* and the Anglophone use of *invasion* are formally identical moves—naming the event in deviation from the Russian official lexicon—but they are evaluated according to whether the surrounding interpretive frame is congenial or hostile to the Russian position. This is what Samambetova & Torbik (2023) call “ideological modality” when found in the English-language press; it is left unnamed when found in the Russian academic analysis of that press.

This is not a failure unique to Russian analysts. Comparable evaluative asymmetries can be documented in Western framing scholarship, where descriptive choices about Russian or Russian-aligned sources are rarely treated as artefacts requiring methodological accounting. The Russian academic literature is distinctive, however, in treating analytical bias primarily as evidence of bias on the opposing side, rather than as a shared methodological problem. The Vasiliev (2023) expert panel—with its inclusion of Boyd-Barrett, Gatov, and Kiriya—comes closest to surfacing this issue, but it remains an outlier within the literature surveyed.

6.3 The Lexical Battleground

The SVO-versus-war terminology question is the most heavily worked seam in the literature. Almost every study reviewed engages with it, either directly or indirectly. Polishchuk and Koklikov measure the relative frequencies in Iranian media; Plotnitskaia notes Chinese refusal of naming “invasion”; Kalinin and Mavleeva document divergent labelling across three East Asian systems; Samambetova and Torbik treat *invasion* and *occupied* as the central manipulative devices of the Anglophone press; Vasiliev’s n-gram analysis tracks the persistence of “liberation” and “defence” in Russian outlets against “war” and “invasion” in foreign ones; Fesenko and Kholostov inventory the lexical infrastructure (*ukrop*, *banderlog*, *dvukhsotyy*) through which the Russian internet-media language has internalised the conflict frame.

Two implications follow. First, the literature converges, perhaps unintentionally, on the claim that lexical choice carries the analytical weight that framing analysis traditionally assigns to selection, salience, and narrative structure. This is a comparatively narrow operationalisation of framing, but it has the advantage of yielding measurable cross-corpus comparisons.

Second, the convergence implies a research programme that the Russian scientific literature has not pursued: systematic cross-system comparison of lexical choices on a common coding scheme, ideally conducted in parallel by researchers embedded in each system, with reconciliation of divergent codings as a substantive output rather than as a problem to be smoothed over. As noted above, the expert panel assembled in Vasiliev (2023) made an embryonic contribution to such a debate.

6.4 Loyalist Opposition and the Limits of Standard Media-System Typologies

Chirkin et al.’s (2023) finding on Z-channels merits separate consideration because it identifies a phenomenon that classical information disorder typologies—oriented toward foreign interference, state-backed influence operations, and the malinformation–disinformation–misinformation triad—do not capture well. Z-channels are domestically produced; editorially independent of state media and state budget; critical of Russian leadership, particularly on tactical, supply, and personnel decisions; ideologically more aligned with the Russo-Ukrainian War than the state media

themselves; and substantively pro-war. The category Chirkin et al. label loyalist opposition thus combines features that the standard taxonomies treat as mutually exclusive: independence from the state, critique of the state, and ideological alignment with the state's core foreign-policy commitments. If loyalist opposition is to be made tractable as an analytical category, it requires its own conceptual apparatus—one that distinguishes ideological alignment from institutional alignment, and that captures within-regime pluralism without conflating it with liberal-democratic opposition.

This is one of the most consequential comparative implications of the Russian literature for the international media-studies field: a substantial empirical case has been documented that does not fit existing typologies of state-aligned or oppositional media, and the documentation has been conducted by Russian-language scholarship that international scholarship is unlikely to read at scale. Comparative work on the Russo-Ukrainian War media environment will need to develop categories capable of accommodating within-regime pluralism of the kind Z-channels exemplify.

6.5 The State–Society Gap: Recurring but Untheorised

Several studies surface, almost in passing, evidence of divergence between official editorial lines and public opinion in third states. Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022) report poll data indicating that more than seventy per cent of South Koreans believe Seoul should not be drawn into the conflict, despite the official editorial alignment with US framing. Grayvoronskiy (2022) identifies three population groups in Mongolia, with the largest backing the government's neutrality but with substantial minorities on both pro- and anti-Russian sides. Muzykant and Syurkani (2024) report contradictory survey results for Indonesia, with respondents reporting both predominantly negative media depictions of Russia and predominantly positive perceptions of “modern Russia.”

The studies record these gaps but do not theorise them. From a comparative media-studies perspective this is a significant omission. The state–society gap is the locus at which framing effects are tested: if a population is exposed to dominant editorial framing X but holds opinion not-X, then either the framing is ineffective, or it is effective in ways the survey instrument fails to capture, or alternative information channels—transnational, diasporic, platform-mediated—are carrying counter-frames. Each possibility has distinct implications for how foreign-policy framing reaches publics in third states. The Russian literature documents the gaps but does not pursue them, which is itself a comparative observation: scholarship oriented toward state-media analysis tends to underweight the non-state, platform-mediated, and informal information channels that may be doing the heavier framing work.

6.6 Internal Research Contradictions and Methodological Convergences

A further pattern worth surfacing concerns internal contradictions within individual studies. Muzykant & Syurkani (2024) present survey data showing both negative depictions and positive perceptions, but do not reconcile them. Nurbagomedova (2024) reports a distribution of 79 negative, 66 neutral, and 5 positive items across five Western outlets, then characterises this as “demonisation”—a characterisation that requires either disregarding the 71 non-negative items or treating “neutral” coverage as covertly negative, neither of which is justified in the text.

These are not just weaknesses of individual studies as much as evidence that the methodological approaches are at an early stage of consolidation in majority of cases. Alongside the contradictions, however, there are methodological convergences that warrant emphasis. The studies converge on lexical-choice analysis as the operational core of framing work; they converge on Telegram as the

central infrastructural object for understanding the post-2022 Russian information environment; they converge on the cross-system comparability of frequency-weighted collocation analysis; and, where they include expert components, they converge on the need for ideologically heterogeneous expert panels. Comparative media studies of the Russo-Ukrainian War will require future work that takes the contradictions seriously—reconciling them through better measurement or treating them as evidence of within-system heterogeneity that the current frame imperfectly captures—and that builds on the convergences as a methodological core.

Two cases nevertheless disrupt the binary tendency identified in 6.2. Kurbanov (2024) acknowledges that Japanese coverage takes an anti-Russian position while noting the admission of “alternative viewpoints,” thus registering internal pluralism within a hostile system. Vasiliev’s (2023) expert panel constructs a more stratified picture of the Indian media landscape, distinguishing national English-language outlets aligned with Anglo-American framing, regional English outlets articulating anti-colonial critiques of Russian action, and an under-analysed vernacular press (Bengali, Hindi) that introduces what Sharikov (2022) terms “unaccounted indeterminacy” into inferences drawn from English-language data alone.

6.7 Implications for the Comparative Study of Media Coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian War

Five implications for international comparative media studies can be extracted from the literature surveyed.

First, the empirical pole of Russian Russo-Ukrainian War / SVO media scholarship is methodologically engaged with international scholarship in ways that the political distance between the academic systems would not predict. Vasiliev’s expert panel, Chirkin et al.’s coding scheme, Polishchuk and Koklikov’s lexico-statistical apparatus, and Kalinin and Mavleeva’s contrastive corpus design are all recognisable as variants of methods used in international media studies. Even where the interpretive framing of these studies departs sharply from international conventions, their data and methods retain comparative value. The doctrinal pole, by contrast, has limited utility outside its own discursive context.

Second, the loyalist-opposition phenomenon identified by Chirkin et al. (2023) requires conceptual work that has not yet been done at the international level. This is a candidate for collaborative cross-system research and is precisely the kind of empirical case that any cumulative comparative scholarship on Russo-Ukrainian War coverage needs to accommodate if its typologies are to remain analytically adequate to the post-2022 environment.

Third, the lexical-choice approach to framing, and in some cases to priming—comparatively narrow but cross-corpus comparable—offers a methodological convergence point on which Russian and international scholarship could in principle work in parallel, were the political conditions to permit it. Independent coding from researchers embedded in different media systems, with divergence treated as substantive evidence rather than as measurement error, would yield a more robust comparative apparatus than the unilateral analyses currently often present on both sides.

Fourth, the state–society gap recurring across third-state cases is under-theorised in both the Russian and international literatures, and is precisely the level at which population-level effects of foreign-policy framing become visible or fail to. Future comparative research on Russo-Ukrainian War media coverage will depend on better instruments for capturing this gap—instruments that combine media-content analysis with audience research designed to detect counter-framing through non-state and platform-mediated channels.

Fifth, Russian authors believe, as summarised by Izilyaeva & Mirokiyants (2025) that Russian and Western media have created parallel informational realities, each with its own internal logic and evidence system. Putting aside ideological-political adversary factors caused by the war situation, this is reflected in the selection of primarily two major competing explanatory frameworks, as identified by Zollmann (2024). These frameworks, in turn, are not chosen on purely empirical grounds; rather, they are predicated upon a deeper ontological commitment—namely, whether one views the world through a realist (neo-realist) or liberal (neo-liberal) lens of International Relations theory. Such perspectives may be conscious or unconscious, but in either case, they fundamentally shape how geopolitical events are understood and interpreted.

In sum, the Russian-language literature on Russo-Ukrainian War / SVO media framing is best read neither as a transparent window onto Russian media nor as a closed propaganda artefact, but as a complex hybrid: in part a methodologically engaged contribution to comparative media studies of the Russo-Ukrainian War, in part a primary-source artefact of the discourse it describes. Treating it as either pole alone risks losing what is most analytically useful in it.

V. (02) Alternative Methodological Approach (Konstantin Startsev)

1. Dataset “Russian Academic Papers (Media+War)”

The purpose of this stage was to construct a reproducible collection of Russian-language academic publications in which the Russian-Ukrainian war is examined through media, mass communication, journalism, propaganda, or discourse. The resulting dataset is titled Russian Academic Papers (Media+War).

The corpus consists of academic texts about media texts. It examines the field at a second level: rather than analysing media representations directly, it analyses how academic publications describe, operationalise and evaluate those representations.

1.1. Data Sources

Searches were conducted in eLIBRARY.RU and CyberLeninka. The platforms were used as complementary rather than interchangeable sources: eLIBRARY.RU supplied broad bibliographic coverage, whereas CyberLeninka supplied openly accessible full text. This combination linked bibliographic reach to the practical requirements of full-text analysis.

eLIBRARY.RU is the largest Russian electronic library of scholarly publications and is integrated with the Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI). The platform was established in 1999 at the initiative of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research and began systematic coverage of Russian-language publications in 2005. According to its official description, it provides abstracts and full texts for more than 80 million scholarly publications and patents, including electronic versions of more than 5,600 Russian scientific and technical journals; more than 4,500 journals are available through free open access. The system reports 5.6 million individual registered users in 125 countries (eLIBRARY.RU, n.d.).

CyberLeninka is an open-access scholarly library organised around the principles of Open Access and Open Science. It provides free full-text access and identifies CC BY as its default licensing model. On the access date, the project page reported 3,733,114 scholarly articles and approximately six million unique visitors per month. In this study, CyberLeninka served primarily as the source of open, machine-readable full text (CyberLeninka, n.d.).

1.2. Relation to Existing Mappings

Ostapenko et al. (2023) mapped scholarship on the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine in Scopus for 2014–2023, using data available on 31 July 2023. Their workflow combined Scopus's built-in tools with Bibliometrix, Biblioshiny, and InfraNodus. The global dataset comprised 4,661 documents, and the subset with Ukrainian affiliation comprised 748. Relative to 2021, publication output in 2022 increased by 579.6 per cent globally and by 413.7 per cent for Ukrainian-affiliated publications.

Ostapenko et al. report that they formulated their search vocabulary after analysing international documents, including UN General Assembly resolutions A/RES/68/262 and ES-11/1 through ES-11/6. The resulting Scopus query combined Ukraine AND Russia* with eleven alternative designations of

the event (Ostapenko et al., 2023, p. 14). An equivalent nested expression cannot be executed in eLIBRARY.RU because disjunction is available only at the top level and parentheses are not supported.

The authors' cluster and narrative analyses indicate that, after 24 February 2022, the scholarly literature increasingly interpreted the events as a full-scale war. In the authors' cluster analysis, the corresponding cluster reached an influence score of 52 per cent in the worldwide publication set and 60 per cent in the Ukrainian-affiliated set (ibid 26–27). The dominant terminology also shifted from *aggression*, *armed conflict*, and *hybrid war* terms used before the full-scale invasion to *war*, *war crimes*, *martial law*, *disinformation*, and *national identity* (ibid, 24–25).

Chernyshov (2024) provided a journalistic review of the eLIBRARY.RU record set returned by the phrase “special military operation”. As of 15 August 2024, the query produced approximately 2,200 articles (for comparison, the article reported approximately 5,500 records on “historical policy” and 650 on “Conversations about Important Things”). Legal disputes formed the largest category at 27 per cent, followed by military research and then sociology, psychology, the humanities, and theology. The review also observed that work of doubtful scientific value was distributed across outlets rather than confined to peripheral journals.

The review does not report a formal coding scheme, reliability assessment or reproducible measures, but it provides an initial description of the Russian-language array.

1.3. Descriptor Grid

The search strategy was constructed as the Cartesian product of two descriptor axes. The first axis contained the names used for the conflict in Russian-language academic writing. The second contained concepts from media and communication research, including media, journalism, propaganda, discourse, narrative, framing and related categories. Their pairwise combinations produced 270 queries, each of which was executed separately. The grid was an instrument for retrieval; it did not substitute for substantive screening.

1.4. Manual Screening and Inclusion

Every retrieved record, whether ultimately included or excluded, was inspected manually. Decisions were based on the title, abstract, keywords, and bibliographic metadata and, when a file was available, on the full text. Results returned by different queries were consolidated through stable identifiers and bibliographic matching, so the final counts refer to unique publications.

A publication was included only when both inclusion criteria were met: it substantively concerned the Russian-Ukrainian war and treated media, communication, journalism, propaganda or discourse as an object or a material analytical dimension. Texts in which either the conflict or communication appeared only incidentally were excluded. Manual screening yielded 631 relevant publications.

1.5. Current Composition and Availability

As of 28 August 2026, the corpus contained 631 unique relevant publications: 321 records from eLIBRARY.RU and 310 from CyberLeninka. For source attribution after cross-database deduplication, a publication retrieved from both databases was assigned to CyberLeninka; the eLIBRARY.RU count therefore contains only the remaining publications assigned to that source. Full texts had been obtained for 311 publications; 320 records remained at the bibliographic-metadata stage while file retrieval continued. The available full-text collection contained 11,079,829 characters, equivalent to

approximately 6,155 standard pages. These figures describe the collection at the stated cutoff date rather than separate analytical corpora.

The corpus is published on Kaggle as *Russian Academic Papers (Media+War)*. The dataset contains a structured publication index recording source, year, title, authors, publication outlet, DOI or URL, full-text status, file length and a stable identifier. Retrieved full texts are linked to the corresponding records. The present chapter reports the dataset as it stood at the 28 August 2026 cutoff (Russian Academic Papers (Media+War), 2026).

1.6. Analytical Programme

Once full-text retrieval is complete, the corpus can support analysis of event naming, thematic and discursive repertoires, declared methods, publication dynamics across years and outlet types, and author, journal and citation networks. Because its units are academic studies rather than media items, it can also be used to examine methodological practices, patterns of cumulative knowledge and recurrent omissions in the field.

Except where a finding is explicitly reported and validated in a later section, distributions observed in titles, terminology, and metadata are treated here as directions for analysis rather than as substantive conclusions. Converting them into findings requires the completed corpus and a separate coding scheme.

1.7. Limitations

Single coder. Manual relevance screening was performed by one coder, and screening reliability has not yet been measured. This limitation concerns corpus inclusion and is separate from validation of the later substantive annotation scheme. A reproducibility check should independently recode a stratified sample of included and excluded records; until such a check is completed, the 631-item corpus should be treated as a single-coder screening result.

Scope. The corpus is a search-bounded collection at the intersection of war studies and communication research, not a census of Russian scholarship. Coverage depends on database indexing, the descriptor grid and the completeness of bibliographic records. Within those boundaries, the corpus supports descriptive statistics, bibliometric analysis, content analysis and discourse analysis of Russian-language scholarship on media and war.

2. Meta-study of Foreign-Media Research in the Russian Academic Publication Space

Post-2022 studies of foreign media representations of Russia and of the Russian-Ukrainian war form a useful subset of the Russian academic publication space. They show how authors publishing in that space approach media systems that differ politically, institutionally, linguistically and culturally.

Throughout this chapter, the category is defined by publication context: articles in Russian academic journals and contributions to scholarly conference or proceedings volumes issued by Russian academic institutions. It does not classify authors by citizenship, ethnicity, institutional affiliation or language. This definition includes both journal articles and academic proceedings, including Samambetova and Torbik (2023) and Kuyantseva and Klipakov (2024).

The substantive scope is also broader than studies in which the Russian-Ukrainian war is the sole object. The selection includes studies of foreign media representations of Russia and of the war in the post-2022 context: in some publications the war is the direct object of analysis, while in others it is a major component of a broader investigation of Russia's post-2022 media image. Studies with longer collection windows are retained where the period after February 2022 materially structures the analysis.

Countries are unevenly represented in the literature. The cases below were selected for maximum variation across media systems and, where possible, research designs. When several similar publications were available for one country, preference was given to the study with the more transparent empirical basis or to one adding an independent analytical dimension. The selection maps variation in objects, methods, inferential practices and conclusions; it is not a basis for estimating their prevalence across Russian academic publishing.

Several of these publications contain original corpora, frequency counts, source comparisons or audience data. They are useful both for what they report about foreign media and for how they construct those reports: which categories are applied, which differences are treated as significant, and where description gives way to inference or political evaluation.

2.1 Iran

One of the largest early corpora is presented by Polishchuk and Koklikov (2022), both affiliated with Moscow State Linguistic University, in their study of official Iranian media. The authors analyse the vocabulary of 6,238 IRNA publications containing the word “Ukraine”, together with transcripts of fourteen analytical television programmes.

A significant finding is the divergence between two analytical dimensions. Iranian state media routinely use the term “war” (*jang*), in contrast to the official Russian designation of the conflict as a “special military operation”. At the same time, the causal interpretation of the conflict is close to the official Russian position: NATO expansion, disregard for Russian security interests and the responsibility of the Ukrainian leadership all occupy a significant place in the material.

The Iranian case shows why event naming should not be treated as a proxy for an entire frame. Event naming and causal attribution can diverge: a media system may call the event a war while accepting substantial parts of the Russian causal account. Terminology alone can misrepresent the broader framing structure. Polishchuk and Koklikov (2022) support this conclusion with a large original dataset rather than a secondary description of Iranian positions.

2.2 East Asia

The impossibility of a simple “West versus non-Western world” dichotomy is demonstrated even more clearly by Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022). Their comparative dataset consists of 90 news reports from leading Chinese news agencies (195,084 Chinese characters), 90 South Korean articles (45,069 characters) and 42 North Korean media texts (36,285 characters), all covering the period from 24 February to 24 May 2022. The analysis follows a broadly parallel two-stage framework: frequency lists and collocations are generated in AntConc, after which lexemes are grouped into corpus-specific thematic blocks and individual statements are interpreted qualitatively (Kalinin & Mavleeva, 2022, p. 137).

The three corpora differ not only in evaluation but also in the lexical organisation of the event. The authors characterise the Chinese corpus as substantive and positively neutral. In the Chinese results,

Table 1 lists NATO 202 times, although the prose immediately following the table reports 282 mentions, an internal numerical inconsistency (Kalinin & Mavleeva, 2022, pp. 138–139, Table 1). The broader foreign-policy and historical contextualisation is nevertheless clear. In the South Korean corpus, “invasion” (160) is more frequent than “war” (122), “occupation/seizure” appears 40 times, and NATO only 21 times; in the North Korean corpus the United States (194) appears more often than Russia (155) or Ukraine (70), while the recurrent formula is “the situation surrounding Ukraine” (Kalinin & Mavleeva, 2022, pp. 140–143, Tables 2–3).

The comparative design nevertheless has important limits. The corpora differ substantially in size, and the reported units for different writing systems are not directly commensurable. Thresholds for selecting “significant” vocabulary are also set in absolute rather than normalised terms: more than 28–30 occurrences for the PRC and the Republic of Korea and more than 15 for the DPRK (Kalinin & Mavleeva, 2022, p. 137). The reported percentage shares of thematic blocks are therefore not directly comparable as if they were generated by a single common measurement scale. The thematic grids also differ (four blocks for China, three for South Korea and two for North Korea) and are derived separately from each corpus. The article then infers from the existence of only two DPRK blocks that the North Korean leadership treats the event exclusively as an international political conflict initiated by the United States and its allies (Kalinin & Mavleeva, 2022, 140). A feature of the analytical categorisation is thereby partly converted into a substantive property of the object.

The next inferential extension concerns intent. Kalinin and Mavleeva do not merely describe the South Korean corpus as negative in tone; they infer an “intention of the South Korean media to create a negative image of Russia’s actions” (Kalinin & Mavleeva, 2022, pp. 135, 143). Frequency distributions and collocations can establish recurrent lexical framing, but they do not by themselves identify communicative intention.

Overall, the conclusion is more narrow: the three media systems differ sharply in terms of how they name events and contextualize them. China combines “conflict” and “war” with relatively weak evaluative collocations; South Korean coverage foregrounds “invasion” and “occupation”; North Korean coverage uses a more neutral event label while shifting causal responsibility towards the United States. This result rests directly on lexical evidence and does not depend on treating the thematic percentages as strictly equivalent measures.

2.3 The United Kingdom

Sharikov (2024) analyses the representation of Russia in the UK online media using Factiva. The corpus contains approximately 4.5 million texts from 416 sources published between 1 January and 31 December 2022, including 59 national and 357 regional outlets. Russia rose from tenth place among countries mentioned in British sources in 2010 to fourth in 2022, while mentions increased sharply after 24 February. At the same time, within Factiva’s topic classification, “military action” accounted for only 1.4% of all British publications in 2022 and was not the leading category even among materials mentioning Russia on 24 February.

The study combines large-scale automated measurement with substantial internal variation. Factiva classifies 99.2% of the overall corpus as neutral, so Sharikov introduces a “tonal balance” measure based on the difference between positive and negative shares. Materials mentioning Russia show a negative balance, strongest in national outlets and weaker in Scotland and Northern Ireland. However the qualitative conclusion about a “consolidated anti-Russian position” is derived from an interpretive summary rather than a specified coding procedure.

The case illustrates that corpus size and automated measurement do not by themselves guarantee inferential validity. It also complicates any treatment of the UK media as a homogeneous bloc: national and regional sources differ substantially, and the ordering of individual outlets does not follow a simple left–right pattern.

2.4 Cross-national comparison: Russia, the United States and India

Vasiliev (2023) compared Russian, American and Indian media agendas across three one-month periods: February–March 2022, August–September 2022 and February–March 2023. The study examines two parallel groups — Pervyi Kanal, CNN and NDTV on television, and Sputnik, NPR and All India Radio on radio — using keyword intersections and n-gram co-occurrence, supplemented by expert interviews. The longitudinal comparison shows a progressive divergence of agendas: Russian and American coverage remains focused on the conflict but increasingly differs in framing, while Indian media gradually return to domestic priorities.

The quantitative procedure is reported only partially: corpus sizes, selection thresholds and several technical details required for reproduction are absent. The expert component is more distinctive. The panel includes researchers, independent commentators and representatives of RT and Rossiya Segodnya, and produces markedly heterogeneous interpretations. Several experts reject the assumption that either the Russian or American media constitute a single agenda; others describe demonisation and dehumanisation as processes occurring across opposing media environments. Sharikov’s contribution also reports that the tonal balance of Russia coverage in English-language media was not uniformly negative over time. Vasiliev’s study within the same Russian academic publication space preserves empirical and expert evidence that challenges simplified models of homogeneous national media systems and permanently polarised information environments.

2.5 Japan

Maximov’s study (2025), conducted at the Institute of Scientific Information for Social Sciences of the Russian Academy of Sciences (INION RAN), provides the most extensive and reproducible design in the Japanese case considered here. The corpus consists of 374 editorials from *Yomiuri Shimbun*, *Asahi Shimbun*, *Mainichi Shimbun* and *Nikkei Shimbun* in which Russia is mentioned at least once; these constitute approximately 13% of the 2,888 editorials published by the four newspapers in 2024.

Unlike predominantly qualitative reviews, the study uses a transparent digital pipeline. Processing is performed in R and includes linguistic annotation, latent semantic analysis and LDA topic modelling with twenty topics. The thematic profile is broader than Russia or the Russian-Ukrainian war: the corpus also contains editorials on elections in the United States and Venezuela, EU issues, Japanese domestic politics, energy, the Middle East and other topics. Maximov also provides the JapEdit repository containing the dataset, code, fixed random seeds, model information and figures, making a substantial part of the procedure reproducible.

The study is particularly useful for separating procedural transparency from inferential validity. The conclusion that Russia’s image is “rather negative” is not itself an output of a specified sentiment classifier or a pre-registered valence coding scheme. It is an interpretive synthesis based on the topical structure of the corpus and the recurrence of negatively valenced terms such as “aggression”, “occupation”, “war”, “authoritarianism” and “ambition”. That interpretation may be reasonable, but it is analytically distinct from the computational procedures that produced the topic structure.

The same distinction matters for the proposed explanation of this negativity. Maximov (2025) relates it in large part to the official position of the Japanese government on the war. The article documents both media content and the government's publicly stated position, but it does not independently test the causal path *government position* → *editorial framing*. The media analysis establishes the pattern to be explained; by itself, it cannot identify the mechanism producing that pattern.

The methodological lesson is narrower than a judgement that this digital analysis “fails”. Reproducibility and inferential validity are separate dimensions of research quality. Maximov (2025) performs unusually well on the first, while the article's principal evaluative and causal conclusions are produced at a later interpretive stage rather than by a specified valence estimator or causal design.

2.6 India

Golubtsova examined the Hindi-language media environment in two studies (2024, 2025), each with a different comparative object. The first (2024), compares two Hindi-language publications belonging to different institutional environments: the privately owned, pro-government *Dainik Jagran* and *BBC Hindi*, a service of the British broadcaster. A frame analysis of materials published between January 2023 and May 2024 leads the author to describe *Dainik Jagran* as producing a predominantly neutral image of Russia, positive in the context of bilateral relations and more ambiguous in relation to Russian political leadership, whereas *BBC Hindi* is described as constructing a consistently negative image. The second study (2025), focuses on *BBC Hindi* and *Deutsche Welle Hindi* during 2024 and interprets their linguistic practices as participation in a Western information and psychological campaign against Russia.

The comparison is analytically useful because the language of communication and a substantial part of the target audience are held relatively constant, while organisational origin and political-informational environment vary. It shows why “Indian media” should not be treated as a unitary national category: a Hindi-language media space can contain outlets embedded in very different institutional systems.

At the same time, the empirical reporting in both studies is limited. Neither article reports the corpus size, the number of analysed items or frequencies for the identified frames, despite making claims about recurrent or dominant patterns. In Golubtsova's 2025 study, the material is explicitly restricted to texts with a negative evaluative vector, so the conclusion about negative representation is partly prestructured by the sampling rule itself.

A second issue concerns the relation between coding and comparison. In the 2024 study, the frame sets are derived separately from the two outlets and overlap only partially: *Dainik Jagran* is organised around bilateral relations, confrontation and Russian leadership, while *BBC Hindi* foregrounds the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, Russian leadership, foreign policy and domestic problems. This may reflect genuine differences between the outlets, but because the analytical grids are not fully common, the design does not cleanly separate differences in the object from differences introduced by corpus-specific categorisation.

The evaluative standard is also asymmetric. Golubtsova (2024) notes that *Dainik Jagran* rarely uses the official Russian expression “special military operation”, instead referring to the war with Ukraine and reporting that Russia attacked Ukraine, while nevertheless classifying the outlet's overall representation as neutral. Comparable conflict nominations in *BBC Hindi* are treated as part of the construction of Russia as an aggressor. The problem is not that these terms cannot be analysed as framing devices; it is

that the criterion for moving from nomination to “manipulation” is not applied symmetrically across the two sources.

Finally, both studies theoretically connect framing and linguistic choice to manipulation and audience influence, while the empirical material remains textual. Claims about the formation, consolidation or manipulation of audience representations are therefore not directly measured. This transition from text-level evidence to audience-level inference is not unique to Golubtsova’s work; it recurs in several of the selected cases and should be treated as a separate inferential step rather than as an automatic consequence of identifying a frame.

2.7 The Middle East and the Arab world

Zinin’s review “The Crisis in Ukraine: A View from the Middle Eastern Media Field” (2024), published in the scientific-informational journal *Russia and the Muslim World*, belongs to a different genre from the corpus-based studies discussed above. The article provides no fixed sampling frame, no predefined or exhaustive source frame, no monitoring period specified as part of a research design and no coding procedure. Instead, Zinin constructs an analytical narrative from quotations and summaries drawn from Algerian, Egyptian, Emirati, Saudi, Bahraini, Libyan and Jordanian sources, together with pan-Arab outlets.

Several themes recur across the narrative: distrust of Western interpretations of the war, assessments of the 2023 Ukrainian counter-offensive and the fighting for Avdiivka, the resilience of the Russian economy to sanctions, Western double standards in comparison with Gaza, NATO’s role and the desire of states in the region to retain foreign-policy autonomy. Rather than being the output of a formal thematic-analysis procedure, these themes are assembled by the author into a broader line emphasising the failure of attempts to isolate Russia and the strengthening of a multipolar international order.

The article occupies an unstable boundary between academic review and political commentary. The distinction between cited positions and the author’s own analytical voice is not consistently maintained. Assertions that Western media are biased, that Middle Eastern media are “increasingly relying on independent assessments”, and that perceptions of the war should be viewed “through the prism of Washington’s efforts” are formulated directly by Zinin rather than attributed to an external source. The terminology likewise follows official Russian usage: “special military operation”, “the Kyiv regime”, “Nezalezhna”, the “liberation” and “return” of Avdiivka, and “territories that have become Russian”.

The transition from media material to claims about regional public opinion is particularly weak. Generalisations about the “Arab street” are supported by an online poll on Dubai-based website, a comment by a single anonymous user presented as an illustration of Arab public sentiment, and a columnist’s retelling of a friend’s impressions after returning from Kyiv. These observations may be useful as examples of discourse, but they cannot carry the weight of a regional audience estimate.

The source selection is also asymmetrical. The abstract explicitly acknowledges the ambiguity of Arab states’ positions towards the war, but positions diverging from the article’s dominant interpretive line do not receive comparable representation in the body of the text. Consequently, Zinin (2024) has limited evidentiary value as a systematic description of the Middle Eastern media field. It is, however, highly informative as an example of an academic regional-studies text in which the selection and interpretation of foreign media voices are closely embedded in a frame largely consonant with official Russian discourse about the war.

2.8 South Africa

Solopova and Koshkarova (2025) employed the most elaborate corpus-computational apparatus among the cases considered here. Using the NOW (*News on the Web*) platform, they constructed a virtual subcorpus of 1,000 English-language articles from South African publications covering 2011–2024 and totalling more than half a million words. Frequency lists, N-grams, collocations and thematic clusters are generated using NOW and the Russian “Conceptoscop” software suite; frame analysis, metaphor modelling and cognitive-discursive analysis are then applied to the material.

The authors conclude that Russia’s image in South African media is constructed primarily through interstate relations and BRICS rather than through events inside Russia itself. They identify “partnership” as the dominant diagnostic frame and “progress” and “degradation” as major prognostic subframes. The article also explicitly notes a practical limitation: some NOW functionality was unavailable to users in Russia, which led the authors to rely on domestic software for parts of the processing.

Closer inspection, however, reveals a substantial gap between the analytical apparatus described and the evidence reported in the results. The 1,000-document subcorpus is not a probabilistic or substantively screened sample; it consists of the first 1,000 results from 11,750 documents ordered by a relevance criterion that is not explained. The excerpt of that ranked list reproduced in the article includes a number of texts in which Russia is mentioned only incidentally, while no screening procedure is described. The 2011–2024 interval functions as a collection window rather than as a longitudinal design: changes over time are not analysed.

More importantly, the quantitative outputs that motivate the corpus construction are largely absent from the reported findings. The article does not provide the frequencies needed to reconstruct the asserted dominance of the “partnership” frame; the substantive interpretation is illustrated through a small number of quotations. Several diagnostic frames are mentioned but receive little subsequent analysis. In at least one case, the interpretive summary appears to move away from the pragmatic orientation of the cited source: a passage that contrasts a South African governing party’s commitment to human rights with its political friendships with Russia and China is incorporated into a partnership-oriented interpretation rather than treated as potentially disconfirming evidence. Negative descriptions are similarly contextualised as part of the structural logic of prognostic alternatives rather than used to reconsider the overall description.

This pattern can be described as descriptive bias. The term is used here for an observable asymmetry in how evidence is treated at the descriptive stage, not for an author’s presumed motives or ideology: observations that fit the emerging account are treated as direct evidence, while discordant observations are more readily contextualised, reclassified or explained away. The mechanism is distinct from sampling bias because it operates after evidence has entered the analysis.

The central issue in the South African case is the weak connection between the computational apparatus and the claims ultimately reported. The published results do not provide enough quantitative information to reconstruct the asserted dominance of the identified frames. Solopova and Koshkarova (2025) illustrate the difference between using computational tools and showing how their outputs support an argument.

2.9 Latin America

The study by Epifanova and Danilova (2024) differs in one important respect: it does not reduce Nicaraguan media discourse to a single pro-government source. Alongside the pro-government El 19

Digital, it examines the opposition publications *La Prensa* and *Confidencial*, as well as *Barricada* and *La Jornada*. The resulting picture is mixed. Pro-government sources and those identified by the authors as neutral present Russia positively or neutrally and readily draw on official Russian sources; opposition sources use the vocabulary of war and invasion, criticise the Russian authorities and draw on Western news agencies. The authors also note that in some cases it is impossible to distinguish the stance of a Nicaraguan publication from translated Western material. The identification of internal heterogeneity within the media system is the strongest part of the study.

Later in the article, however, this heterogeneity is neutralised rather than analysed. The discrepancy is explained by the copying of Western sources—that is, by the opposition press’s lack of an independent stance—after which the final conclusion describes the image of Russia as predominantly positive-neutral. The evaluative criterion is explicit: coverage is considered moderate if it does not undermine Russia’s reputation, while avoidance of the word “war” in favour of “conflict” is counted as restrained tone. The media analysis does not measure audience or economic outcomes, yet the conclusion predicts effects on consumer preferences and trade. The journal’s editors themselves note the circular structure of the argument (*“the nature of bilateral relations”* → *“the country’s image in media discourse”* → *“the nature of bilateral relations”*) in a footnote on p. 196.

2.10 The Balkans

Dombrovskaya and Shundich (2024) provided one of the few selected cases in which media analysis is supplemented by audience data. Their design combines discourse analysis of 1,000 publications from thirty media outlets targeting audiences in Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia with an online cross-national survey of 1,067 respondents—644 in Serbia, 363 in Croatia and 60 in Montenegro—conducted from April to June 2023 (Dombrovskaya & Shundich, 2024, p. 126). The media material is analysed diachronically, with the authors distinguishing a period dominated by what they describe as rational argumentation from a post-2022 period in which emotional stereotyping and “distortion of facts” become more prominent (pp. 127–129).

The audience component produces a substantively interesting mismatch. Negative meanings are described as dominant in major media segments, while a substantial share of respondents—especially in Serbia—report positive attitudes towards Russia; the country-level cluster distribution is shown in the figure on p. 130. In principle, this two-level design is stronger than simply inferring public attitudes from media texts. Combining content analysis with cross-sectional survey data can test media-effect hypotheses when respondents are linked to coded media diets or content-specific exposure and the inferential model supports the relevant claim. In this study, the weakness lies in how the media and audience components are linked.

The media sample and the survey are compared largely at aggregate levels. The article does not report an individual-level mapping between respondents and exposure to the particular outlets, frames or media items analysed in the content component. The observed mismatch between media discourse and attitudes is therefore a valid descriptive finding, but it does not by itself establish that particular media caused the negative or positive attitudes observed.

The interpretation is further complicated by the construction of the respondent clusters. The clusters are explicitly evaluative: a positive orientation towards Russia appears within a category labelled “constructive and adequate perception”, whereas negative orientations are grouped under “destructive and stereotypical perception”. The unnumbered cluster table spans (ibid pp. 130–133) and includes politically substantive indicators such as Russia’s role in challenging American hegemony, combating neo-Nazism and possessing “objective and justified” reasons for the military operation (ibid pp. 130–

133). Agreement with elements of the official Russian explanatory narrative consequently contributes to the definition of “adequacy”. This reduces the capacity of the clustering solution to function as an independent validation of the prior normative frame, although it does not make the survey data unusable.

A similar issue appears in the media analysis. On p. 126, “distortion of facts” and “simplification” are introduced as negative-image technologies, with simplification defined partly as shifting attention away from the “real causes” of the military operation. These are therefore not purely formal descriptors; they depend on a prior substantive judgement about the correct causal account. The article then associates narrow reliance on official media with the “destructive and stereotypical” cluster and broader information-seeking with the more positive cluster (*ibid*, 129). That causal interpretation requires evidence beyond the aggregate correspondence reported.

There are also reporting problems. The article reports a 3% sampling error for an online survey but describes no probability-sampling mechanism sufficient to justify the conventional margin-of-error interpretation (*ibid*, 126). More concretely, the declared N=1,067 sample consists only of respondents from Serbia, Croatia and Montenegro, yet on p. 136 reports percentages for “residents of Kosovo” and “citizens of Albania” without explaining how those respondents enter the sample (pp. 126, 136). This is an internal reporting inconsistency, not merely a question of interpretation.

The study is therefore methodologically valuable precisely because it collects data at both the media and audience levels. The survey remains evidence about the respondents, and the comparison demonstrates that media discourse and reported attitudes do not align mechanically. What the design, as implemented and reported, does not establish is the stronger causal claim that particular media exposure produced those attitudes. The limitation lies in the linkage and operationalisation, not in the general possibility of combining content analysis with cross-sectional survey research.

2.11 France

Mirimanov (2025) analysed Russian-related coverage by TF1, France 2 and BFM TV on the basis of 150 materials from their online platforms between February 2022 and December 2023 (Mirimanov, 2025, p. 105). The theoretical frame is established before the empirical analysis: the abstract motivates the study by “ever-increasing information aggression against Russia’s interests” and explicitly makes compliance with principles of objectivity and impartiality part of the research task (Mirimanov, 2025, p. 102).

Nevertheless, the article does not reduce French television to a single propaganda system. Mirimanov differentiates the channels by style: TF1 is treated as strongly emotional, France 2 as mixed and BFM TV as comparatively neutral; the concluding comparison states that the channels differ substantially despite a shared critical orientation towards the military operation (*ibid* p. 108). The abstract likewise reports a high degree of political pluralism while characterising the overall image of Russia as negative and linking this to framing the operation as a humanitarian crisis (Mirimanov, 2025, p. 102).

The evaluative benchmark, however, remains normatively loaded. BFM TV’s greater neutrality and objectivity are supported with examples that include an advocate of peace negotiations rather than additional arms supplies and a claim of shared responsibility involving the United States (Mirimanov, 2025, p. 106). The article later treats the channel’s invitation of Russian experts and speakers as contributing to objectivity and a more comprehensive view (Mirimanov, 2025, p. 108). At the same time, the abstract criticises French television for insufficiently representing Russian arguments about security threats, nationalism and Nazism in Ukraine and the role of the United States (Mirimanov,

2025, p. 102). In practice, judgements of greater objectivity therefore tend to coincide with the presence of arguments compatible with the Russian explanatory frame. Acknowledging heterogeneity within a foreign media system does not, by itself, guarantee a symmetric standard of evaluation.

2.12 Western media

At the opposite end of the spectrum is the conference paper by Samambetova and Torbik (2023), published in the scholarly collection *Creative Linguistics*. The authors examined materials from thirteen English-language outlets covering the period from February 2022 to May 2023. Coverage is divided into “informational-propagandistic” and “critical-analytical” formats, after which the latter is excluded from the main analysis on the grounds that it is less common. That prevalence claim is not independently demonstrated, and the exclusion removes precisely the category in which a journalist’s position might diverge from the presumed dominant line.

The terms “invasion”, “occupied” and “separatists” are classified as tactics of information warfare. The choice of terminology is legitimately a subject of framing research; the methodological issue is the symmetry of the criterion. In the same analytical context in which Western nominations are treated as manipulative, the authors introduce competing Russian nominations: the territories of the DPR and LPR are described as “liberated by Russian troops”, and the war is designated as a “special military operation”. Negative tone towards Russia is then related to the foreign-policy position of Western states rather than demonstrated through an independently specified comparative criterion.

For the meta-analysis, the value of this work lies in the explicitness of this asymmetry. One side’s nomination is treated as an object requiring explanation, while the competing nomination functions as the unmarked descriptive baseline. The same operation may be harder to detect in studies where political assumptions are embedded in more elaborate procedural language.

2.13 Ukraine

A particularly explicit case of a normative framework preceding empirical examination is the conference paper by Kuyantseva and Klipakov (2024). The stated object is manifestations of information confrontation in Russian and Ukrainian media, interpreted through a broader claim about information warfare conducted by the United States and the United Kingdom. Ukrainian media are positioned within this account as an instrument or platform of the larger confrontation rather than analysed as an autonomous media system.

The interpretive framework is stated at the outset. Drawing on Aleksandr Dugin, the paper presents the conflict as a civilisational confrontation between Russia/Eurasia and the Atlanticist West; the conflicts of 2014 and 2022 are described as formally Russian-Ukrainian but substantively as a confrontation between NATO and Russia. The political characterisation therefore precedes the analysis of media material rather than emerging from it.

The empirical comparison is very small and unsystematic: the discussion relies on five headlines from Western publications (*The Times*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*) and three examples from Russian outlets (RIA Novosti, *Kommersant*, TASS), with non-overlapping time points and no defined corpus, sampling frame or coding procedure.

The paper treats reports of killings in Bucha as a staged Western information operation designed to justify arms supplies and create a symbol of Ukrainian suffering. One line of argument rests on the resemblance between the place name “Bucha” and the English word “butcher”; another rests on the claim that international organisations did not respond to Russian demands for evidence. Bucha is then

placed alongside Aleppo and MH17 as examples of fabricated information operations. Competing hypotheses are not evaluated against evidence; the claim functions as a premise within the paper's explanatory frame.

Western journalism is characterised through attention-grabbing headlines, strongly expressed authorial positions and references to “investigative journalists” placed in scare quotes. Russian materials—primarily official commentaries—are presented as a comparatively restrained alternative. Authors provide an unusually explicit case of outcome prestructuring: the political interpretation is fixed before a small set of media examples is used illustratively. For the present meta-analysis, the case shows how a normative premise can become the organising principle of the analysis.

2.14 Conclusions

Taken together, the cases do not support a simple division between a homogeneous “Russian” and “Western” account of the war. Iranian media combine the term “war” with causal explanations close to the official Russian account (Polishchuk & Koklikov, 2022); Chinese, North Korean and South Korean media differ sharply in naming and contextualisation (Kalinin & Mavleeva, 2022); British sources vary across national, regional and outlet levels (Sharikov, 2024); Hindi-language coverage differs by institutional origin (Golubtsova, 2024, 2025); and Nicaraguan pro-government and opposition outlets construct incompatible representations of Russia (Epifanova & Danilova, 2024). Vasiliev's (2023) longitudinal comparison likewise shows different trajectories across Russian, American and Indian agendas. The relevant variation is both between and within national media systems.

Across these cases, four dimensions should be kept analytically separate: event naming, causal attribution, moral evaluation and claims about audience effects. A particular nomination or causal explanation does not establish the remaining dimensions. The Iranian case is the clearest example: the term “war” coexists with causal attribution close to the official Russian account. This distinction provides the bridge to Section (02) 5.3, which examines how such claims are constructed and supported.

3. Contrasting Cases in the Production of Academic Knowledge

Section (02) 5.2 compared studies primarily by the geographical and institutional contexts of the media systems they examined. The present section changes the unit of comparison. Instead of grouping publications by region, it follows different stages in the production of an empirical claim: conceptualisation, operationalisation, measurement, interpretation and the transition from evidence to substantive conclusion.

The six cases were selected purposively from the broader body of publications examined for this chapter. Selection required a full text that permitted substantial reconstruction of the research procedure, a methodological issue that could be compared across publications, and sufficient contrast to avoid duplicating closely similar designs. The set therefore includes discourse analysis, digital-trace research, content analysis and methodological operationalisation. Potanina and Morosanova (2023) are retained as a historical methodological comparison although their empirical material predates 2022; Dombrovskaya (2026) is included because constraints can enter knowledge production at the stage of measurement design, before a main empirical analysis is conducted. These six cases are analytical contrasts, not a prevalence sample.

Each case is examined through the same questions: Are comparable objects treated by comparable standards? Are alternative explanations retained? Does the conclusion remain at the level supported by

the evidence? Do political or normative assumptions enter the measurement model? Can discordant or non-binary observations remain visible? Can the path from the reported procedure to the substantive result be reconstructed? The questions are dimension-specific; no publication is reduced to a single overall quality judgement.

3.1 Potanina and Morosanova: Symmetrical Analysis with Methodological Limits

The study by Potanina and Morosanova (2023) falls within the period of publications under consideration here, although their empirical data—Russian and Ukrainian online news from 2014–2018—relates to the period prior to 2022. Therefore, this article is used as a historical methodological comparison rather than as evidence of media coverage of the current phase of the war.

The authors analysed forty-two texts, twenty-one from Russian and twenty-one from Ukrainian outlets, drawn from major online media and analysed until further material no longer produced substantively new interpretative repertoires. The method is an extended discourse analysis in the tradition of Potter and Wetherell, following a procedure validated in Khoroshilov’s doctoral work and modified so that repertoires are examined for the elements of the socio-psychological infrastructure of conflict around which they are organised. The article labels this “critical discourse analysis”, although its stated Potter and Wetherell lineage belongs to the discourse-analytic tradition of social psychology rather than to the Fairclough-style CDA tradition. The terminological issue is secondary here: the important point is that one analytical framework, derived from work on the ethos of intractable conflict, is applied to both corpora.

The principal comparative result is structurally symmetrical. Both media discourses construct different accounts of the conflict but employ similar repertoires: legitimisation of ingroup goals, delegitimation of the opponent, victimisation of the ingroup and maintenance of a positive ingroup image. In both corpora the remaining ethos themes—unity, patriotism, security and peace—are absent. Neither national corpus is used as a politically neutral baseline against which the other is defined as a deviation.

The design also allows evidence that complicates its own principal result to remain visible. The authors report that Russian sources from 2014–2015 contain alternative repertoires—implicit support for the Ukrainian authorities and the attribution of responsibility to both sides—which disappear from later material, and they note that explicit historical-memory repertoires occur on the Russian side while the Ukrainian theme of occupation is treated as only a possible, not a demonstrated, activation of collective memory. Neither observation is smoothed away in favour of the symmetry thesis.

This strength should not be confused with methodological completeness. The forty-two texts constitute a purposive saturation sample rather than a fixed sampling frame, and the published article provides neither a distribution of the final sample across the nine outlets nor an estimate of intercoder agreement. The authors refer to triangulation as a validity strategy without describing its implementation. There is also a reporting tension concerning collective memory: the abstract states that references to it occur in both media discourses, whereas the detailed results and the conclusion identify them principally in the Russian material.

Inferential restraint is substantial but incomplete. The authors explicitly distinguish media discourse from audience representations and identify direct audience research as a separate future task. At the same time they attribute a consolidating function to the identified repertoires and draw on external survey and interview evidence when discussing the relationship between media discourse and public perceptions. Potanina and Morosanova are most informative on two dimensions: the application of

broadly equivalent categories to opposing media systems and the explicit recognition that textual evidence is not itself a measure of audience attitudes.

3.2 Radina and Khomenko: Acknowledged Confounding and an Interpretive Leap

Radina and Khomenko (2025) compared Russian-language TikTok content before and after February 2022. Their dataset contains 3,371 videos: 2,520 from July 2018 to 24 February 2022 and 851 from March 2022 to March 2024. Data collection was automated in Python, while hashtags were selected manually and grouped into thematic categories. The sample is oriented towards highly viewed and highly engaged material rather than towards representing all Russian-language TikTok content.

The study explicitly recognises a major comparability problem. After February 2022, both the political environment and access to TikTok in Russia changed. The observed differences may therefore reflect not only changes in what users posted but also changes in who remained able and willing to use the platform. The authors preserve both explanations: increased politicisation may reflect the growing importance of political events in everyday life, but it may also reflect a change in the composition of the accessible user population.

A similar caution appears in the quantitative analysis. The authors decline to apply significance testing to some comparisons because broad categories cannot be classified confidently as political or non-political. Here uncertainty in measurement directly limits the statistical conclusion.

A separate interpretive claim is less well supported. Radina and Khomenko associate an approximately nineteenfold increase in the thematic group labelled “slogans” with a distinctive state of public consciousness. Yet the category combines politically opposite hashtags, including both anti-war and pro-war slogans, without coding the direction of the position expressed. The increase demonstrates the greater presence of slogan-based political expression, but it cannot by itself identify a particular state or political direction of public consciousness.

A terminological feature of the article deserves separate notice, since it recurs in the following case. The authors write throughout of the “special military operation”. The word *war* enters their text only inside user hashtags—among them #война, #войнаукраине and #россияагрессор—where it names one of the largest thematic groups in the post-2022 collection. The divergence between the vocabulary of the authors and the vocabulary of the material they analyse is not commented upon.

The case thus combines two different inferential practices. A serious external confound remains explicitly present in the explanation of overall change, while a separate audience-level interpretation goes beyond what the classification directly measures. Methodological restraint and inferential extension can coexist within the same publication.

3.3 Muzykant and Hu: From Digital Indicators to Audience and Institutional Claims

Muzykant and Hu (2024) analyse Chinese media coverage and online attention using Baidu Search Index and Information Index data, Weibo trending topics and engagement indicators for three institutional accounts: the Russian Embassy in China, the Ukrainian Embassy in China and Russia Today. The methodology and the principal digital indicators are set out on pp. 55–60; the article also introduces external survey evidence on perceived responsibility for the war on p. 62.

One of the clearest empirical findings is a divergence between media terminology and user search behaviour. Chinese media predominantly use the expression “Russian-Ukrainian conflict”, whereas after a brief initial period Baidu users search considerably more often for the equivalent of “Russian-

Ukrainian war”. The authors also note that “special military operation” is not included in the Baidu index (ibid p. 59, Fig. 5). On the following page, the media-side comparison again shows preference for “conflict” over “war” (ibid p. 60, Fig. 6).

This result should be interpreted with caution. Search terminology does not by itself show approval or rejection of a political position. As the Iranian case in Section 5.2.1 demonstrated, event naming, causal attribution and political evaluation can move independently: Iranian outlets overwhelmingly used the word war while reproducing the Russian account of the conflict’s causes. The prevalence of “war” in Chinese searches does not establish the overall attitude of Chinese users towards Russia.

The article's broader conclusions contain two claims that need to be separated because they stand in different relations to the evidence. The first concerns naming: immediately after the search comparison, the authors state that Russia’s designation was received by the Chinese audience as a special military operation, in contrast to Western vocabulary such as war, invasion and aggression (p. 60). That statement sits uneasily with the preceding user-search result in Fig. 5, where “war” predominates after the short initial period (p. 59). The second concerns attitudes: the conclusion describes Chinese audience attitudes towards Russia and the operation as unequivocally positive (p. 64). That claim is not refuted by the terminological finding—evaluation and naming are distinct—but neither is it established by search terminology alone.

From these indicators the argument extends considerably further. In the conclusion, the higher engagement of the Russian accounts is treated as evidence of Russian control over the Chinese information field; the text then states that the Western media war has no chance of succeeding in China, attributes positive audience orientation partly to the Chinese government’s position and argues that Russian state actors successfully took control of the relevant discourse. It finally draws an institutional lesson about the importance of state ownership and control of new-media platforms (ibid 64–65).

Each step requires additional evidence. Search frequency is not a measure of approval. Engagement with three institutional accounts is not a representative measure of the Chinese population. Greater visibility does not by itself establish control over a discursive field. External survey evidence may describe attitudes, but it does not show that the measured online behaviour produced those attitudes, or that state ownership of platforms produced the observed configuration.

3.4 Dombrovskaya: Normative Asymmetry within the Measurement Model

Dombrovskaya (2026) represents a different stage of knowledge production. It is primarily a methodological article proposing an operational framework for the future analysis of media frames of the civilisational confrontation between Russia and the West, informed by preliminary qualitative analysis. It does not fit a model in which an existing empirical dataset is transformed into a conclusion. Its relevance lies earlier in the process, at the stage where the object is made measurable.

The theoretical premise is explicit. The article states that in wartime society should consolidate against the enemy, should not permit criticism directed at its own side and should not allow narratives that justify the opponent; monitoring deconsolidating information flows is then presented as a practical task (ibid p. 38). These assumptions subsequently enter the operational variables.

The proposed instrument contains “mirror” pro-Russian and pro-Western contexts, but the two sides are not represented by equivalent kinds of categories. Table 1 presents paired geopolitical contexts (ibid p. 39), after which the operational list for pro-Western resources includes erosion of sovereignty, interethnic and intergenerational division, delegitimation of authority and secessionist orientations, whereas the list for pro-Russian resources contains positively valued commitments such as patriotism,

interethnic cohesion, sovereignty, value consensus, consolidation around public authority and territorial integrity (p. 40). The two lists are not merely different in content; they are of different kinds. One records what a text is held to do to society, the other what it is held to affirm.

A similar asymmetry appears in the description of communication techniques. Pro-Western influence is operationalised through categories such as value subordination, contagion, bandwagon effects, dehumanisation, primitivisation and guilt induction (ibid p. 41). Parallel pro-Russian practices are described on the preceding page through mobilisation of positive historical memory, patriotic feeling and value consolidation (p. 40). Functionally comparable communicative processes are described through systematically different evaluative vocabularies according to the political orientation of the source.

In conclusion author claims that application of the proposed analysis will reveal representations of interethnic, interreligious and intergenerational division and contexts of regional secession, although the article itself reports the operationalisation rather than results produced by applying the full instrument (ibid p. 41). Dombrovskaya provides a clear example of the preliminary structuring of results through operationalization. Political normativity is incorporated into the measurement model, which will subsequently yield results.

3.5 Chirkin, Kolmakov and Skupov: A Political Configuration beyond a Simple Binary

Chirkin, Kolmakov and Skupov (2023) analysed posts published between December 2022 and February 2023 by seven Telegram channels associated with the Russian Z-Telegram environment. The channels represent several actor types, including serving military personnel, military bloggers, Telegram journalists and authors associated with Donbas. Content is coded by nine thematic categories, five directions of criticism and twelve named political and military figures.

The critical content identified in the study is recurrent but limited in volume: the authors themselves report that critical posts rarely exceed a tenth of the total and are frequently phrased obliquely. Within that share, criticism concentrates on the conduct of the war: tactical decisions receive 274 critical references, supply problems 227 and personnel policy 216, compared with 83 references concerning officials' personal qualities and 58 concerning diplomacy. The substantive configuration is support for the war combined with criticism of how it is conducted, frequently from a position more radical and mobilisation-oriented than that of official media.

The authors interpret such channels as a possible prototype of a new political force. Importantly, this possibility is already stated in the introduction and the abstract, and it governed the selection of channels. The analytical category therefore does not emerge from open inductive coding, and the case should not be presented as an unexpected discovery produced by a theoretically neutral design.

Autonomy from the state is also not a characteristic of this class. This is a factor mentioned in the authors' own material: in October 2022, the Ministry of Defense requested that Roskomnadzor review several of these channels, and the article explains that the two channels with the fewest critical posts were integrated into official media structures.

The preliminary theoretical framework does not eliminate the empirical complexity of the material. The study considers the political configuration, which a simple classification along the lines of "loyal/opposition" or "pro-war/anti-war" would fail to adequately reflect, and identifies differences between the channels rather than treating them as a homogeneous bloc. This lends the study a limited but real methodological value: its structure preserves politically heterogeneous configurations.

3.6 Krivokhina: Formal Specification without Full Inferential Traceability

Krivokhina (2025) presents the most extensive formal methodological apparatus among the six studies. The stated empirical base includes 1,287 textual publications, 420 visual materials and more than 120 hours of television broadcasting from February 2022 to June 2024, together with official state and military materials. The procedure combines AntConc, Tropes and KH Coder with qualitative analysis and integration of the results into an analytical matrix (Krivokhina, 2025, p. 50).

A formal description of procedure does not by itself make the results reconstructible. “Frequency” is used for several non-equivalent quantities: the concept definition uses more than 15 mentions per month (ibid p. 50); the notes to Table 1 define *f* as mean mentions per text and also describe the annual “frequency” column as a strategy’s share of the overall media flow (ibid pp. 51–52, Table 1); a later case uses counts per 1,000 words (p. 53); and the conclusion gives an “optimal” frequency of 12–15 mentions per 1,000 words (p. 57). The four annual strategy percentages in Table 1 sum to 100% in 2022, 141% in 2023 and 156% in 2024. Totals above 100% are compatible with non-exclusive coding, but the article does not specify whether categories are exclusive, how these annual shares are calculated or what denominator is used. The figures therefore cannot be reconstructed from the published method.

There is also a direct discrepancy between the main table and the conclusion. Table 1 reports 32% and 28% for the historico-memorial and humanitarian-reconstructive strategies in 2022 (ibid pp. 51–52, Table 1), whereas the conclusion reports 42% and 38% for those same strategies and year (p. 57). The published text does not explain the change, so it is impossible to determine which values constitute the intended result.

A further problem concerns claims requiring evidence outside the reported content analysis. On p. 55, a +37% figure refers to social-media mentions for the “Immortal Regiment” example, while a +23% figure refers to engagement for the “TechnoRussia” example; the same page separately reports 67% memorability for key theses. In the conclusion, however, +37% reappears as an increase in memorability attributed to multimodal synchronisation and +23% as an increase in average reach attributed to personalisation (ibid 57). The transformation between these constructs is not explained. The same concluding page reports a correlation between military successes and technological discourse ($r = 0.72$) and states that the military-political situation determines 78% of conceptual emphasis ($p < .01$), without specifying the statistical model, sample underlying these tests or an operational definition of “military success”.

In this case, including formal operations in the report does not guarantee that it will be possible to reconstruct how specific values were obtained and how they support the conclusions.

3.7 Comparative Interpretation

The cross-case comparison does not produce a ranking. Symmetry, transparency, reproducibility, treatment of alternatives and inferential restraint vary independently, and a study may perform well on one dimension while remaining weak on another.

Two recurrent patterns deserve emphasis. First, several studies make at least one claim at a level not directly supported by the reported evidence, especially when moving from texts or digital traces to intentions, audience states, effects or institutional mechanisms. Second, the two digital-trace studies record vocabulary (war vs SVO) that differs from the official Russian designation: Radina and Khomenko (2025) leave this mismatch unexamined, whereas Muzykant and Hu (2024) report a conclusion about naming that conflicts with their own search indicator. These are case-level observations, not prevalence estimates.

Taken together, the cases locate inferential problems at different stages of research: selection and classification, operationalisation, the transition from evidence to claim, and the treatment of uncertainty or discordant observations. They also show that symmetry, reproducibility and technical sophistication are separate properties rather than interchangeable indicators of methodological strength.

In this context, political bias refers exclusively to the observable asymmetry in research activity, rather than to conclusions about the authors' motives. It takes on methodological significance in cases where comparable actions are assigned different analytical labels depending on the subject, where political orientation is embedded in the definitions of positive and negative variables, or where contradictory data are interpreted differently from data that support the preferred interpretation.

Limits of Inference from the Selected Cases

The selected cases identify possible research practices; they do not estimate how common those practices are in Russian academic publishing. The country cases in Section (02) 5.2 were chosen for variation across media systems, and the six cases in Section (02) 5.3 for methodological contrast. No field-level percentage or prevalence claim follows from either selection.

Several analytical categories used in Section (02) 5.3 were developed or refined while reading the same publications that illustrate them. They should be treated as provisional categories rather than validated measures. Their operational boundaries, overlap and applicability to publications not selected for methodological interest remain to be tested through explicit coding rules and intercoder validation.

The cases differ in discipline, genre, research object and method, which limits direct comparison. The audit is also restricted to what the published texts report. Missing sampling rules, denominators, reliability estimates or model specifications justify a conclusion that an inference cannot be reconstructed from the publication; they do not prove that the underlying procedure was never performed. This creates an auditability asymmetry: highly specified studies expose more of their analytical process to verification and therefore also to criticism.

The analysis does not identify author motives. The same published pattern could arise from theoretical commitments, disciplinary conventions, institutional incentives, editorial constraints, self-censorship or sincere empirical judgement. Yatluk and Khukalenko (2025) also show that visible academic wording can be adapted under constraint without mapping directly onto substantive content. Terminology aligned with official discourse is therefore not, by itself, evidence that the analytical framework shares the same political position. The present audit is strongest where it concerns observable research operations rather than inferred intentions.

Finally, claims about audiences and media effects require evidence at the receiver level. Textual, search or engagement data can support conclusions about media content and observable digital behaviour, but they do not by themselves establish effects on public attitudes. Survey data can describe attitudes; attributing those attitudes to particular media exposure requires an explicit exposure-response link and an appropriate inferential design. This restriction applies only when a publication makes audience or effect claims.

Accordingly, Sections (02) 5.2 and (02) 5.3 should be read as qualitative and diagnostic. They identify research operations and generate categories for later testing.

Directions for Future Research

Operationalising the analytical categories. The categories developed through close reading (such as

asymmetric standards, outcome prestructuring, inferential extension, preservation of alternatives and inferential traceability) should be converted into explicit coding rules and tested for intercoder agreement before their prevalence is estimated.

Corpus-wide analysis. The broader search-retrieved corpus should be completed and frozen before analysis, with predefined inclusion criteria and human-validated coding in which language models assist structured extraction rather than serve as the sole judges of interpretive variables.

Measuring auditability. A corpus-wide study should measure how often publications provide the sampling frames, coding rules, denominators, reliability information and statistical specifications required for their empirical claims to be independently checked.

Comparative designs within Russian academic publishing. Within-author, within-journal and matched cross-institutional comparisons before and after 2022 could test whether research questions, methods and inferential practices change with political sensitivity while holding important disciplinary and individual differences more constant.

Linguistic orientation as a testable hypothesis. Comparison with less politically sensitive media research should establish whether the prominence of lexical, metaphorical and conceptual analysis reflects the general disciplinary structure of Russian media research or becomes stronger specifically in studies of war.

Movement towards “safer” research objects. Matched comparisons across authors, journals and periods could test whether greater political sensitivity is associated with movement towards foreign, historical or narrowly linguistic objects and away from direct examination of causality, responsibility, verification and audience effects.

Distance between evidence and claims. Claim-level coding could test whether political sensitivity is associated with a larger distance between the level of available evidence—text, digital trace, survey or experiment—and the level of the conclusion, and whether this distance varies with the political direction of the claim.

International comparison. A parallel international corpus coded according to the same rules is necessary to determine whether any differences concern methodological quality, disciplinary composition, inferential practices or political directionality, or disappear after controlling for discipline, genre and method.

VI. Methodologies and New Research Approaches: A Comparative Assessment

Because the primary aim of this case study was to identify the most advanced methodological approaches usable for qualitative monitoring of national foreign-policy discourses, this section compares the research designs employed across the reviewed studies, assessing their innovative potential and reliability, their strengths, and their drawbacks and limitations. Seven methodological families could be distinguished.

1. Manual Quantitative Content and Framing Analysis

The largest group of studies relied on classic human-coded content analysis, typically applying deductive frame categories to modest samples (Nordenstreng et al., 2023; Zollmann, 2024; Maurer et al., 2022; Stawski & Szews, 2024; Ofori et al., 2026; Ajibulu & Nwaoboli, 2023; Kwiatkowska & Solarz, 2022; Cyrek, 2022; Cyrek et al., 2022; Tóth & Hámori, 2023; Fisher, 2023; Teniou et al., 2025; Szulich-Kałuża & Wadowski, 2024). The strengths of this family lay in conceptual validity: human coders could capture responsibility attribution, source selection, and legally significant terminological distinctions (as in Kwiatkowska & Solarz's differentiation of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity) with a nuance that automated methods still struggled to reproduce. Its reliability, when intercoder procedures were properly reported, was well established. The drawbacks were equally well known: small samples (from 12 articles in Fisher, 2023, to a few hundred in most studies) and short observation windows limited generalisability; deductively imposed frame categories risked confirming what they set out to find; several studies did not report intercoder reliability at all; and manual coding could not scale to the volume or velocity required for real-time discourse monitoring. Its innovative potential for the present project was therefore low as a stand-alone method, but high as a validation layer for computational pipelines.

2. Qualitative Discourse-Analytic Approaches (CDA, CADS, Transitivity, Genre Analysis)

A second family employed qualitative or corpus-assisted discourse analysis: Brusylovska and Maksymenko (2023) on Russian outlets; Strukowska (2023) on Reuters through anthropolinguistic genre analysis; Muwafi et al. (2024) through Hallidayan transitivity analysis; Breeze and Novoa-Jaso (2024) through corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS); Kamyranets (2025) on transferred discourses; and Styszyński (2023) on Arabic-language Russian state media. The chief strength was depth: these studies revealed the linguistic mechanisms — lexical collocation, transitivity choices, euphemism, glossary construction — through which framing operates, mechanisms invisible to frequency counts. CADS, in particular, offered a promising hybrid, combining corpus-level quantification with close reading and thereby improving replicability relative to purely interpretive CDA. The limitations were the mirror image: findings depended heavily on analyst interpretation, replicability was weak, and corpora were usually restricted to one or a few outlets, so results could not be generalised to national media systems. Reliability was thus moderate at best; innovative potential lay mainly in supplying the interpretive categories that automated systems require.

3. Computational Topic Modelling and Large-Scale NLP

A third family scaled the analysis by orders of magnitude: Kang et al. (2024) applied topic modelling to over 48,000 story descriptions; Parízek (2023) processed 2.9 million articles in 60 languages; Bradshaw et al. (2024) combined topic modelling with narrative analysis across 12 languages; and Verbytska (2024) explicitly benchmarked a generative probabilistic model (LDA) against a transformer-based model (BERTopic). The strengths were scale, multilingual reach, longitudinal coverage, and — crucially for this project — the demonstrated feasibility of near-real-time global monitoring. Verbytska’s comparative design was methodologically the most instructive: the two models converged on dominant frames but diverged on secondary ones, and BERTopic proved more sensitive to named entities — showing that model choice materially affects substantive conclusions. This points to the central reliability problem of the family: topics are not frames, and the interpretive leap from word clusters to ‘generic frames’ remained under-theorised; validation samples (as in Kang et al., 2024) mitigated but did not eliminate the problem. Additional limitations included dependence on data availability (Parízek’s visibility measures captured salience, not valence), English-language and platform biases, and sensitivity to preprocessing decisions rarely reported in full. Innovative potential: high, provided outputs are validated by human coding.

4. Integrated Computational Pipelines and Purpose-Built Corpora

The most innovative designs were the integrated pipelines. Ye and Aron (2025) combined network analysis, topic modelling, framing analysis, and audience-engagement modelling across 190,864 posts, and — unusually for this literature — derived from the empirical patterns a new middle-range theory (Alliance-Linked Narrative Dynamics) that generates testable predictions about when narratives converge and diverge. Mohanty et al. (2026) contributed dnipro, a 246,229-article multilingual corpus with human-evaluated stance, sentiment, and framing annotations, plus entailment/contradiction analysis of claim pairs — an infrastructure contribution that enables replication and secondary analysis, both chronically absent from this field. The strengths were the combination of supply-side (coverage) and demand-side (engagement) data, longitudinal breadth, and cross-lingual design. The reliability caveats were nonetheless serious: Ye and Aron’s study had not been peer-reviewed at the time of writing, analysed only English-language posts (limiting the very cross-bloc claims it advances), and relied on Facebook engagement metrics that conflate approval, outrage, and bot activity; annotation quality in dnipro depended on the validity of pre-defined stance categories; and both pipelines inherited the topics-are-not-frames problem noted above. Innovative potential: the highest of all reviewed families — these designs came closest to the project’s goal of AI-facilitated real-time discourse monitoring — but their reliability must currently be rated as provisional.

5. Social Network Analysis and Platform-Native Studies

Dastgeer and Thapaliya (2023) combined network analysis of 72,899 Twitter users with quantitative content analysis of tweets across 104 countries; Taban and Gür (2024) studied bot dynamics; and Holand and Ellingsen (2025) innovatively paired editorial content with the counter-currents visible in Facebook comment fields, operationalising the ‘hybrid public sphere’. The strength of this family was its unique access to the audience side of framing — revealing, for instance, that comment-field discourse diverged sharply from editorial framing, and that support for Ukraine on Twitter eroded over 2022 while neutrality grew. The limitations were structural: platform samples are unrepresentative of national publics (nearly half of Dastgeer and Thapaliya’s users shared no location); bots and

coordinated inauthentic behaviour contaminate the signal; and post-2023 API restrictions have made several of these designs difficult or impossible to replicate. Reliability was therefore time- and platform-contingent; innovative potential remained high for triangulation but low for stand-alone inference.

6. Comparative Survey Research

Hameleers et al. (2024) provided the methodological gold standard on the perception side: an original 19-country survey (N = 19,037) with harmonised instruments, permitting genuinely comparative claims about misinformation perceptions and their dependence on national media trust. The strengths were representativeness, cross-national comparability, and direct measurement of audience beliefs rather than their behavioural proxies. The limitations were the single measurement wave (April–May 2022, capturing only the war’s rally phase), reliance on self-report, and the absence of panel data that would permit causal claims about media effects. Chaban and Zhabotynska (2024) used existing surveys interpretively rather than generating new data, which made their synthesis valuable but their causal explanation — attributing narrative divergence primarily to elites and propaganda — empirically under-determined, as noted above. Innovative potential can be seen as moderate methodologically, but indispensable as the demand-side benchmark against which media-side findings must be read.

7. Digital Ethnography and Longitudinal Qualitative Monitoring

Troitskiy (2023) offered the most original qualitative design: seven months of systematic monitoring of a defined social milieu (the Russian intelligentsia remaining in Russia) across 50 digital venues, yielding the ‘mental calendar’ as a novel analytic construct for periodising public attention. The strengths were ecological validity and access to discourse under censorship — precisely the environment in which surveys and content analysis of official media fail. The limitations were acknowledged by the author: because only pro-government voices could speak openly, the visible discourse could not reveal the true distribution of opinion; the milieu was narrow; and the design was labour-intensive and analyst-dependent. Innovative potential can be seen as high as a template for monitoring constrained information environments, with reliability necessarily limited by those same constraints.

The Table 6 presents overview of main categories and features of identified methodologies.

Table 6. *Comparative Overview of Methodological Characteristics*

Methodological family	Innovative potential	Reliability / strengths	Main limitations
Manual content / framing analysis	Low (stand-alone); high as validation layer	High conceptual validity; established intercoder procedures	Small samples; short windows; deductive bias; cannot scale to real time
Discourse analysis (CDA, CADS, transitivity)	Moderate; supplies interpretive categories	Depth; reveals linguistic mechanisms; CADS improves replicability	Analyst-dependent; weak generalisability; single-outlet corpora
Topic modelling / large-scale NLP	High, if human-validated	Scale; multilingual; longitudinal; near-real-time feasibility	Topics ≠ frames; model-dependence (LDA vs BERTopic); salience without valence

Methodological family	Innovative potential	Reliability / strengths	Main limitations
Integrated pipelines / purpose-built corpora	Highest of all families	Supply- and demand-side data combined; enables replication (dnipro); theory-generating (ALND)	Partly non-peer-reviewed; English-language bias; engagement metrics conflate approval, outrage, bots
Social network / platform studies	High for triangulation	Unique audience-side access; captures counter-currents	Unrepresentative samples; bots; API closure blocks replication
Comparative surveys	Moderate; demand-side benchmark	Representative; cross-nationally harmonised (19 countries)	Single wave; self-report; no causal leverage
Digital ethnography (mental calendar)	High for censored environments	Ecological validity under censorship	Narrow milieu; visible discourse ≠ opinion distribution; labour-intensive

Three cross-cutting conclusions followed. First, no single family was sufficient: the most credible findings in the reviewed literature emerged where computational scale was validated by human coding (Kang et al., 2024; Mohanty et al., 2026) or where media-side data were confronted with audience-side data (Ye & Aron, 2025; Holand & Ellingsen, 2025; Hameleers et al., 2024). Second, methodological choice was not neutral with respect to substantive conclusions — Verbytska (2024) demonstrated that two topic models applied to the same corpus prioritised different frames, a sobering result for any monitoring system built on a single model. Third, for the project’s purpose of anticipatory monitoring of subtle discourse shifts, the integrated-pipeline family offered the most promising template, but only if its current weaknesses — peer-review deficits, monolingual bias, and unvalidated engagement metrics — are corrected by design: multilingual corpora, human validation samples, and triangulation with survey data.

8. Evaluating the Quality of Media Framing Analyses: Criteria for Scholarly Assessment

Assessing the quality of media framing research requires a systematic evaluative framework that spans quantitative and qualitative methodologies. The credibility of a framing study rests not on the volume of data processed or the number of texts quoted, but on the reliability and validity of its measurement procedures, the conceptual clarity of its frame definitions, and the depth of its contextual interpretation. This guide consolidates the principal criteria for such an assessment into six dimensions: theoretical grounding, research design and transparency, measurement quality in manual coding, computational approaches, interpretive depth, and reflexivity. Particular attention is given to the additional demands imposed by wartime media environments, in which strategic communication, censorship, and disinformation systematically shape the data available for analysis.

Theoretical Grounding and Conceptual Definition

A high-quality framing analysis must first be distinguishable from adjacent forms of content analysis. Framing concerns selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration — not merely what a story is about, but how it is constituted as a particular kind of problem (Entman, 1993). An analysis that conflates frames with topics, themes, or evaluative stances forfeits its analytical purchase, because it substitutes description of subject matter for analysis of interpretive structure (Matthes & Kohring, 2008).

Evaluators should therefore ask which conception of the frame a study employs and whether it is applied consistently. Entman's (1993) definition — a frame defines a problem, diagnoses its causes, renders moral judgements, and recommends remedies — remains the most widely operationalized model, but it is not interchangeable with alternatives. Gamson and Modigliani (1989) conceptualize frames as interpretive packages composed of framing and reasoning devices; Scheufele (1999) distinguishes frame-building from frame-setting within a process model of media effects; Van Gorp (2007) situates frames in shared cultural repertoires that precede any individual text; and de Vreese (2005) separates generic from issue-specific frames, a distinction with direct consequences for comparability across studies. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) provide the standard operationalization of generic news frames (conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, responsibility). A study that invokes “framing” without committing to one of these traditions — or that silently combines incompatible definitions — should be assessed as conceptually underdetermined.

Research Design, Sampling, and Transparency

Replicability is a precondition of scientific credibility, and a credible framing analysis must therefore make its design fully inspectable.

Frame identification strategy. The study must state whether frames were derived inductively from the material, deductively from prior literature, or through a hybrid procedure, and must document the derivation path. Matthes and Kohring (2008) argue that holistic frame assignment invites unreliability and recommend decomposing frames into observable elements (problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, treatment recommendation) that are coded separately and clustered subsequently; whether a study adopts this or an alternative procedure, the choice must be justified.

Unit of analysis. The coding unit — article, paragraph, proposition, headline, or image — must be explicitly defined, together with rules for handling multiple frames within one unit. Unspecified or shifting units of analysis are among the most common sources of irreproducibility in framing research (Lacy et al., 2015).

Sampling. The population of texts, the period of coverage, the outlets selected, and the retrieval keywords must be specified precisely enough to permit reconstruction of the corpus. The sampling design itself requires justification: for media content distributed over time, constructed-week sampling is demonstrably more efficient than random or consecutive-day sampling and is the accepted standard (Riffe et al., 1993). Outlet selection should be defended on theoretical grounds (e.g., reach, ownership diversity, ideological range) rather than convenience. In multilingual corpora, the treatment of translation must be disclosed, since translation decisions are themselves framing operations that can introduce or suppress framing devices.

Measurement Quality in Manual Coding: Reliability and Validity

Codebook. A detailed codebook is an absolute requirement. It must define each frame category with explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria and worked examples — for instance, in coverage of armed

conflict, categories such as humanitarian crisis, military strategy, geopolitical contest, and economic consequences. Without a public or available-on-request codebook, the research is not reproducible (Lacy et al., 2015).

Intercoder reliability. Where human coders are employed, chance-corrected agreement coefficients must be reported. Krippendorff's alpha is preferable to Cohen's kappa because it accommodates multiple coders, ordinal and interval data, and missing values, and because kappa is vulnerable to distortion under skewed category distributions (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007) — a realistic condition in wartime coverage, where a single frame frequently dominates. Krippendorff (2004) recommends $\alpha \geq .800$ as the conventional threshold, with $\alpha \geq .667$ acceptable only for tentative conclusions; the widely cited .70 benchmark derives from Landis and Koch's (1977) interpretive scale for kappa and should not be applied uncritically. Reliability should be established on an independently double-coded subsample of adequate size — in practice at least 10–20% of the corpus — and reported per variable or per frame rather than as an aggregate average, since aggregation can conceal unreliable categories.

Validity. Reliability must not be conflated with validity or with objectivity: coefficients measure agreement between coders, not the meaningfulness of what is coded. A coding scheme can be perfectly reliable while capturing nothing of theoretical interest. Evaluators should therefore ask whether the operationalization is validly derived from the study's framing theory — for instance, whether an Entman-based analysis in fact codes all four frame functions (Who is assigned blame? What moral judgements are passed? What remedies are proposed — negotiation or armament?) rather than a subset relabelled as the whole (Entman, 1993; Matthes & Kohring, 2008).

Computational Approaches: Scaling With Validation

Contemporary framing analysis increasingly combines manual interpretation with automated classification. The division of labour must be explicit and methodologically justified: typically, manual analysis supplies deep contextual and moral interpretation on a limited sample, while computational methods extend validated categories across large corpora. Grimmer and Stewart's (2013) injunction — that all automated text-analysis output must be validated against human judgement — remains the governing principle.

Preprocessing. The study must document text-cleaning decisions (lemmatization, stop-word treatment, deduplication), because these decisions carry framing weight. In coverage of the Russo–Ukrainian war, for example, the lexical variants “aggression,” “invasion,” and “special military operation” are not interchangeable tokens but framing devices; preprocessing that collapses or discards them destroys the object of study.

Topic models. Where unsupervised methods such as latent Dirichlet allocation are employed, topics must not be mechanically equated with frames. Topics are lexical co-occurrence structures; frames are interpretive structures. Topics (e.g., “energy crisis”) are at most building blocks of frames (e.g., “Western economic sacrifice”), and the mapping between them requires interpretive validation (DiMaggio et al., 2013; Walter & Ophir, 2019).

Large language models. Where LLM classification is used, prompts must be grounded in the study's codebook definitions (zero-shot or few-shot), and performance must be validated against a manually coded gold standard, with precision, recall, and F1 reported per frame rather than as aggregate accuracy (Gilardi et al., 2023). Because proprietary models change over time, the model name, version, and access dates must be reported, and response stability should be verified through repeated classification runs. For extensively covered conflicts, the possibility of training-data contamination should be

acknowledged. Validation against human coding is the minimum requirement; fine-tuning on manually coded data is optional and applies only to supervised designs.

Sentiment and emotion. Tracking emotional trajectories — fear, anger, heroization — over the course of a conflict is a legitimate and often revealing complement to frame analysis, particularly where emotional currents reinforce political narratives. It must nonetheless be kept conceptually distinct: sentiment is not a frame but, at most, a framing device, and a study that reports sentiment scores as “frames” commits the conflation identified in Section 1 (Baden et al., 2022).

Interpretive Depth and Contextualization

A frequency count of frames, however reliable, does not by itself constitute a framing analysis. Analytical depth requires a multi-layered reading that attends to metaphor, visual elements, stereotypes, rhetorical questions, and — critically — source structure: which actors are given voice, which are paraphrased, and which are absent. Strong studies interpret their findings within the social, economic, and political conditions of production, explaining why a particular frame emerged at a particular moment rather than merely recording that it appeared. For conflict coverage, this entails engaging with the documented dependence of war reporting on official sources: Bennett’s (1990) indexing hypothesis predicts that the range of frames in mainstream coverage will track the range of elite debate, a prediction directly testable in framing data. Analyses that stop at description — without addressing the consequences of framing, the interests it advances, and the systematic silences it produces — remain content summaries rather than framing scholarship.

Reflexivity, Ethics, and the Wartime Context

Every analysis is conducted from a position, and a high-quality study makes that position inspectable rather than invisible.

Acknowledged limitations. Scope restrictions — mainstream media only, exclusion of social media, algorithmic biases in retrieval and classification, the analyst’s linguistic competence — must be stated and their consequences assessed rather than minimized.

Analytical neutrality. The study’s own language must remain academically detached; a recurrent failure mode is the unreflective adoption, in the researcher’s own prose, of the very frames under analysis. In cross-linguistic work this extends to transliteration and translation choices.

Propaganda and censorship. Wartime data are shaped by strategic military communication, censorship regimes, and coordinated disinformation, all of which distort both the corpus and the behaviour of automated classifiers trained or prompted on it. A credible study addresses these distortions explicitly in its discussion of limitations rather than treating the corpus as a neutral record.

Ethical distance. Finally, evaluators should assess whether the interpretation maintains scholarly neutrality throughout or drifts, however inadvertently, toward apologetics for one party to the conflict. Where sources originating in a belligerent state’s academic or media system are analysed, best practice is a dual-reading protocol that treats such texts simultaneously as secondary literature and as primary artefacts of the discursive formation they describe.

A framing analysis attains scholarly value when methodological rigour is combined with reflexivity — that is, when its inferential procedures are sound, its constructs theoretically derived, its interpretations historically and politically situated, and its limitations acknowledged rather than minimised. Beyond

describing manifest content, such work explains the consequences of framing, the interests it advances, and the silences it produces.

9. From Retrospective Evaluation to Prospective Monitoring: An Epistemic and Methodological Reorientation

Shifting the analytical framework from retrospective evaluation to prospective monitoring entails more than the repeated application of an existing instrument. It redefines the epistemic objective—from explanation to signal detection—and, in doing so, fundamentally alters several evaluative and procedural criteria.

The Governing Shift: Base Rates and False Alarms

A completed content-analytic study asks what frames were present and why they emerged. A monitoring system asks whether a change has occurred and whether that change is genuine. Genuine foreign-policy repositioning constitutes a rare event, whereas ambient discursive variation is continuous. Under these conditions, any monitor with moderate sensitivity and a rare target will produce a preponderance of false positives—a straightforward implication of base-rate dynamics. The binding design constraint therefore becomes specificity rather than sensitivity, and the primary quality metric becomes the system's hit rate and false-alarm rate against an external criterion, rather than intercoder reliability coefficients such as Krippendorff's α .

This reorientation also renders the multiple-comparisons problem structural rather than incidental. A dashboard tracking, for instance, twenty indicators across twelve outlets on a weekly basis performs approximately 12,000 implicit tests annually. In the absence of false-discovery-rate control, such a system will continuously register spurious shifts. Most operational media-monitoring systems fail at this level rather than at the coding stage.

Sampling Logic Inverts

Constructed-week sampling, a recommended practice in retrospective content analysis, is actively unsuitable for monitoring. Its deliberate omission of certain days is designed to estimate a period parameter efficiently. A monitor, by contrast, cannot discard days, because the signal of interest may manifest as a transient two-day anomaly. The appropriate alternative is a census-based capture of a deliberately narrowed set of outlets, with the narrowing justified theoretically rather than pragmatically.

The Unit of Measurement Must Descend Below the Frame Level

Frames are lagging indicators; by the time a frame shift becomes observable, the underlying repositioning is already public. Subtle change surfaces first in sub-frame discursive elements, including:

Designation lexicon – the operative term used to refer to a third state (e.g., “partner” → “competitor” → “rival” → “adversary”), and the ordering of countries in enumerative structures.

Modality and deontics – the weakening of editorial obligation language (e.g., “must” → “should” → “could”), and the increasing prevalence of conditional constructions.

Source repertoire – shifts in the set of actors quoted, or the disappearance of previously cited sources. Following Bennett’s (1990) indexing logic, a narrowing or widening of the quoted elite range constitutes the earliest observable trace of change in elite consensus.

Agency attribution – alternations between active and passive voice, and the use of nominalization (e.g., “the strikes occurred” versus “X struck”).

Density of anonymous sourcing – trial balloons often precede official positions; an increase in formulations such as “officials familiar with” around a given dossier may serve as a genuinely useful leading indicator.

Presence or absence of qualifying clauses – the disappearance of a standing caveat can itself constitute the entire signal.

The final category presents the greatest difficulty: detecting silence requires a specified counterfactual baseline of what the outlet previously stated with regularity. This is tractable only where discourse is highly formulaic—a consideration that points to the following principle.

Ritualised Discourse Provides the High-Signal Environment

The classic insight of totalitarian system analysis is methodologically defensible: the more formulaic the baseline, the more detectable the deviation. State-affiliated and elite-consensus outlets exhibit low-variance discourse, such that small departures carry high informational value. Pluralistic media systems possess the opposite property—there, the signal lies not in any single outlet’s wording but in the distributional pattern: the emergence of a previously marginal position in a centrist outlet, or a contraction in the spread of positions across the media spectrum. These phenomena require distinct statistical approaches: anomaly detection against a tight baseline in the first case, and a dispersion-based measure across outlets in the second.

Change-Point Detection Replaces Hypothesis Testing

Monitoring requires rolling-window comparison against a burn-in baseline, employing structural-break or Bayesian change-point methods. A further explicit decomposition is necessary to distinguish among:

Event-driven spikes (exogenous, reverting) – the dominant confound, requiring control via an event register.

Drift (slow, monotonic) – the actual target of interest.

Compositional change – outlet closures, paywall introductions, editorial turnover, or shifts in platform distribution. Observed change must be decomposed into within-outlet variation versus corpus-composition change; failure to do so risks reporting editorial staffing changes as foreign-policy movement.

Reliability Acquires a Temporal Dimension

In a completed study, reliability is established once and assumed stable. In a monitoring system, three forms of drift accumulate:

Coder drift – human coders’ interpretive standards shift over months, necessitating periodic recoding of a frozen calibration set, not merely the coding of fresh material.

Concept drift – the codebook category ceases to fit the discourse it was designed to capture.

Model drift – the most dangerous. Silent version changes in proprietary large language models can break a time series without producing any error signal. To mitigate this, model versions must be pinned, access dates recorded, and a frozen calibration set re-run at every version change. Any resulting discontinuity should be treated as an artefact to be documented, not as a substantive finding. If a time series must span a version change, both versions should be run in parallel over an overlap window and the offset reported.

Validation Against an External Criterion Is Non-Optional

A monitoring system is unfalsifiable unless discursive indicators are validated against an independent policy series: UN General Assembly voting records, sanctions decisions, treaty and memorandum-of-understanding signatures, arms-transfer authorisations, official statement corpora, or diplomatic personnel movements. Two procedures are indicated:

Backtesting – running the completed monitor over historical periods containing known repositionings to assess whether it would have triggered, when, and with what frequency of spurious alarms. This constitutes the direct analogue of validation in the retrospective framework and is the point at which most such systems quietly fail.

Lead-lag estimation – establishing whether the discourse indicator actually precedes the policy indicator, rather than merely reporting it. Granger-type tests are applicable with the usual caveats; the substantive risk is that one has constructed an expensive detector of already-published news.

Entman's (2003) cascading activation model provides a directional expectation worth exploiting: an authentic shift should exhibit a cascade signature—originating at the official or elite level, propagating downward, with contestation entering at predictable points. Movement that appears simultaneously across levels, or in a bottom-up direction only, is more likely noise or an unrelated dynamic.

Multilingual Monitoring: Do Not Translate, Then Code

Translation flattens precisely the lexical and modal distinctions that carry the signal. The solution is to build parallel language-specific indicator sets anchored to a common construct, and to test construct equivalence explicitly rather than assuming it. A designation shift in Hungarian, German, and Ukrainian coverage will manifest through three different lexical realisations of the same underlying move; treating them as a single dictionary destroys the measurement.

Output Genre and Analytic Tradecraft

The deliverable of a monitoring system is not an article but a periodic bulletin with graded confidence. This requires borrowing the discipline of analytic tradecraft standards: separate evidence from assessment; use calibrated probability language consistently; state explicitly what would disconfirm the assessment; and grade findings into categories such as *signal*, *watch*, and *noise*, rather than reporting point claims. Every bulletin should carry the running false-alarm record—a monitor that never publishes its misses is not a credible instrument.

Reflexivity Acquires Two New Problems

Goodhart/adaptation effects – monitored actors who learn the indicators may adjust surface features while maintaining their underlying position, degrading the instrument over time. Indicator sets therefore require periodic rotation and should not be fully publicised.

Operational consumption – monitoring outputs on foreign-policy discourse are read by policy and security audiences, placing the analyst inside the process rather than outside it. This entails a materially different ethical position from retrospective scholarship.

The following principles remain intact from the retrospective framework: the theory–topic distinction; codebook explicitness; the reliability–validity separation; preprocessing transparency; and the refusal to conflate sentiment or topics with frames. What Inverts: Sampling logic, the primacy of specificity over sensitivity, and the temporalisation of reliability are all inverted. What Is New: Baseline construction, change-point machinery, external-criterion validation, backtesting, and purpose limitation are novel additions that must be systematically integrated into the monitoring design. The new methodology, still subject to ongoing refinement, is set out in the following section.

VII. Final Synthesis

1. On the Premises of the Review (Introduction)

The three methodological grounds set out in the Introduction were confirmed by the body of evidence. Media and academic framing of the Russo-Ukrainian war was demonstrably not unified, and the divergence ran primarily — though not exclusively — along a West/non-West axis that recent large-scale research reconceptualised as alliance-bloc structure (Ye & Aron, 2025; Mohanty et al., 2026). Attributions of the war's causes varied systematically with geopolitical position, and even within the West a gradient existed, from the categorical framings of Poland and the Baltic states (Kwiatkowska & Solarz, 2022) to the more heterogeneous Italian debate (Papale & Solaroli, 2025) and the marginal dissenting currents visible even in strongly pro-Ukrainian media systems (Taradejna, 2024; Holand & Ellingsen, 2025).

2. On Causes, Frames, and Narratives (Section II)

2.1 Framing patterns and narrative dynamics

Regarding the framing of the war's origins, the reviewed studies converged on several robust findings. Western mainstream media overwhelmingly attributed responsibility to Russia and Putin personally — 93% sole attribution in the German quality media (Maurer et al., 2022), a 3.6:1 ratio of aggression framing over NATO-expansion framing in the US, UK, and German press (Zollmann, 2024) — while the co-responsibility narrative associated with NATO enlargement was systematically marginalised, notwithstanding its presence in the diplomatic record (Carpenter, 2022) and its persistence as a minority frame (12% in Italy; Papale & Solaroli, 2025; 28% of motive-thematising German items; Maurer et al., 2022). At the same time, the critical literature advancing the co-responsibility thesis exhibited its own weaknesses — notably Zollmann's insufficient differentiation among historically distinct types of Western interventions. Outside the West, framing followed national interest and alliance ties rather than a single counter-narrative: Chinese outlets moved from cautious neutrality toward blaming 'Western meddling' (Breeze & Novoa-Jaso, 2024; Mohanty et al., 2026; see also Erofeeva & Muravyov, 2022; Kalinin, 2022; Plotnitskaya, 2023; Wei & Zhou, 2023); non-aligned media domesticated the war and emphasised pragmatic costs (Wozniak et al., 2024; Kang et al., 2024; Wozniak & Liu, 2023; Ravikumar & Downey, 2025); Arabic-language coverage displayed a mild pro-Ukrainian tilt with significant intra-regional variation (Muwafi et al., 2024; Teniou et al., 2025; Styszynski, 2023); and Western Balkan narratives, though resembling Russian messaging, proved fundamentally homemade (Vuksanović, 2026). Russian state media constituted the clearest outlier throughout, shifting from 'Ukraine loses the war' to the civilisational frame 'Russia is at war with the West' (Brusylovska & Maksymenko, 2023; Petrovskaya, 2024; Bradshaw et al., 2024; see also Izilyaeva & Mirokiyants, 2025; Krivokhina, 2024; Lyubushkin, 2025). Perhaps the most consequential synthetic finding was that global media aligned on what to cover — exogenous, symbolically charged events acted as cross-bloc 'alarm bells' — while diverging systematically on how to frame it (Ye & Aron, 2025; see also Sharikov, 2022), producing incompatible accounts of responsibility through selection, omission, and counter-attribution rather than through direct rebuttal (Mohanty et al., 2026).

Beyond the attribution of responsibility, the corpus converges on three further patterns. First, war journalism dominated over peace journalism nearly everywhere it was measured (Nordenstreng et al., 2023; Rahman & Aoni, 2025; Fisher; Holland & Ellingsen, 2025) (Holland & Ellingsen, 2025) with peace-oriented framing concentrated in non-Western outlets. Second, coverage was strongly personalised and elite-driven: a small cast of symbolic actors — Putin, Zelensky, Biden, and Xi — anchored discourse globally (Ye & Aron, 2025); political actors crowded out experts (scientists accounted for roughly 2% of sources; Maurer et al., 2022); and CNN's headline economy reduced the war to 'who said what' (Cyrek, 2022; see also Cyrek et al., 2022). Third, the same generic frames were available across media systems yet deployed to opposite effect, with shared frames producing markedly different images of the war (Stawski & Szews, 2024; see also Ko et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2025) — a finding consistent with the selection-and-omission mechanism noted above.

These divergences run along three distinguishable axes. The clearest is geopolitical alignment rather than nation per se: US and UK outlets emphasised weapons pipelines, sanctions, and institutional responses (see also Chaban & Zhabotynska, 2024; Kamyanets, 2025; Toth & Hamori, 2023). A second axis is the Western/non-Western divide, with BRICS and Global South media occupying a middle ground between war and peace framing (Nordenstreng et al., 2023; Wozniak et al., 2026) or navigating the conflict through national-interest frames, as in India's 'third path' (Kumar & Thussu, 2024; Ravikumar & Downey, 2025). A third, less noticed axis is intra-Western variation: government-aligned framing ranged from 17-25% in the US and UK to 75-77% in Italy and Finland (see also Klin, 2025); *Der Spiegel* alone rated diplomacy above heavy weapons; TVN's minimalism contrasted with TVP's emotive maximalism within Poland; and the BBC proved more aggressively war-journalistic than CNN (Fisher). Even wire agencies, often presumed neutral, diverged systematically — AFP contextual, Reuters moralistic-binary, AP hybrid (Li et al., 2025).

Several further findings qualify the outlier cases. China was the most consistent outlier on the 'neutral' side — the only country employing peace journalism from the first day of the invasion (Nordenstreng et al., 2023) — although its documented drift towards blaming 'Western meddling' may indicate strategic positioning rather than genuinely de-escalatory framing (see also Qiu et al., 2025; Mattingly et al., 2025). Al Jazeera constitutes an intriguing internal split: it recorded the highest share of peace journalism (Rahman & Aoni, 2025) yet AJA challenged while AJE reinforced the Western narrative (Muwafi et al., 2024). Audience reception, where observed at all, diverged sharply from editorial framing (Holland & Ellingsen's, 2025, Facebook comment fields) — a rare glimpse of reception rather than production (see also Kazakov et al., 2023). Finally, whereas Western Balkan pro-Russian narratives proved homemade and instrumentally deployed, Russian-to-Chinese narrative transfer was empirically traceable (Hanley et al.; see also Kalinin & Mavleeva, 2022). This finding cautions against both uncritical influence-operation assumptions and their wholesale dismissal.

Ye and Aron (2025, 36-37) proposed an updated model of global media influence, which they termed Alliance-Linked Narrative Dynamics (ALND). The model suggests that narratives are conditioned by three interacting forces: (1) domestic media institutions that set the baseline style and constraints; (2) alliance ties that synchronise narrative production across borders; and (3) platform-level dynamics that diffuse bloc-consistent frames rapidly across systems, with structural asymmetries (resources, wire services, language hubs) further amplifying some narratives while muting others. What was new in this model was not that agendas converge — agenda-setting, indexing, and cascading activation had already shown that — but that convergence and divergence mapped systematically onto alliance blocs. Alignment appeared when events created shared salience, while divergence appeared in sub-angles shaped by bloc-specific political economies and institutional routines. Engagement added a crucial

layer: publics responded most strongly when coverage matched their bloc's narrative culture, highlighting the co-production of alignment between media and audiences. The framework thereby extended prior accounts of media imperialism and news flow (see also Herman, 2018; Seethaler et al., 2013; Nohrstedt et al., 2000) and complemented network agenda-setting models by clarifying that networks are not flat but bloc-structured.

2.2 Methodological approaches and their limitations

The reviewed corpus divides into three methodological families. The first, manual and quantitative content analysis (Nordenstreng et al., 2023; Maurer et al., 2022; Zollmann, 2024; Stawski & Szews, 2024; Akinboade et al., 2023; Ajibulu & Nwaoboli, 2023; Ofori et al., 2026; Rahman & Aoni, 2025; see also Moses et al., 2023; Rudakova, 2024) offers interpretive validity, theory-driven frame categories — typically Semetko and Valkenburg or Galtung derivatives — and precise responsibility-attribution measures. Its costs are small and sometimes questionably representative samples (230 stories across four countries in Ofori et al.; 25 articles per outlet in Rahman & Aoni, 2025; a two-week window in Akinboade et al.), coder subjectivity, and limited generalisability across time. Rahman and Aoni's (2025) logistic regression represents a welcome inferential step, yet the peace/war coding scheme cannot distinguish genuinely de-escalatory framing from state-aligned positioning — RT's high 'peace journalism' score is the *reductio* of the instrument.

The second family comprises computational approaches: LDA and BERTopic (Verbytska, 2024; Kang et al., 2024), word-embedding and topic-model pipelines (Hanley et al.), semantic network analysis (Sulzhytski et al., 2024; see also Qiu et al., 2025; Ibrahim et al., 2025), and large-scale multi-method designs (190,864 posts in Ye & Aron, 2025; 246,229 articles in Mohanty et al., 2026; twelve languages in Bradshaw et al., 2024). These deliver scale, longitudinal reach, cross-lingual coverage, and replicability, and can detect inter-ecosystem influence that manual coding cannot, as in Hanley et al.'s Russian-to-Chinese transfer. Their weaknesses are equally clear: topics are not frames, and the interpretive leap from word clusters to 'generic frames' remains under-theorised — Verbytska's model-dependent results, with BERTopic and LDA prioritising different frames in the same corpus, are themselves evidence of instrument sensitivity. Aggregation choices can be incoherent (Kang et al.'s grouping of Cuba with the United States), English-language corpora skew samples (Ye & Aron, 2025), and some large-scale outputs lack peer review, trading rigour for timeliness (see also Taban & Gur, 2024; Dastgeer & Thapaliya, 2023).

The third family encompasses discourse-analytical and qualitative methods: critical discourse analysis (Kamyans, 2025), corpus-assisted discourse studies (Breeze & Novoa-Jaso, 2024), transitivity analysis (Muwafi et al., 2024), anthropolinguistic genre analysis (Strukowska, 2023), thematic discourse analysis (Kumar & Thussu, 2024), and interview-based designs (Vuksanović, 2026). These capture how framing works linguistically — legitimisation strategies, naming conventions, source attribution — and, in Vuksanović's case, the political economy behind narrative adoption, which content counting cannot reach. Their limitations are the familiar ones: tiny corpora or single outlets, researcher-dependent interpretation, weak generalisability, and vulnerability to confirmation of the analyst's priors — a live risk when the object of study is itself politically charged (see also Orekhova, 2024; Lipitskaya, 2024; Asmyatullin, 2022; Kuznetsova, 2025).

The strongest designs are mixed-method and comparative with controls: the use of Al Jazeera and Euronews as comparator corpora (Breeze & Novoa-Jaso, 2024), the pairing of network analysis with qualitative contextualisation (Sulzhytski et al., 2024), and the integration of textual, economic, and visual dimensions (Li et al., 2025; see also AlQahtani & Alharbi, 2026; Nagy-Beni, 2025; Young &

Omosun, 2025). Four field-wide weaknesses nonetheless persist: (a) overrepresentation of the first weeks and months of 2022 and of elite English-language outlets, with television, Telegram, and non-English regional media only patchily covered (see also Chirkin et al., 2023; Kolobova, 2025); (b) a near-exclusive focus on content production, with audience reception addressed only incidentally (see also Holland & Ellingsen, 2025; Taradejna, 2024); (c) inconsistent operationalisation of 'framing' — ranging from Entmanian responsibility attribution to topic distributions to transitivity structures — which limits cumulative comparability (see also van Hulst et al., 2025; Zaklama, 2025); and (d) sampling frames that conflate outlet type, ownership, and national system, making it difficult to separate media-system effects from geopolitical-alignment effects.

3. On Contested Vocabularies (Section III)

3.1 Vocabulary as a site of contestation

The vocabulary of the war proved to be an independent site of contestation, not a mere reflection of official rhetoric. Contrary to classic indexing expectations, news language in Brazil, India, and South Africa did not cascade down from restrained government wording; if anything, it was indexed to parliamentary and opposition voices and was consistently more alarming than official discourse (Wozniak et al., 2026; Wozniak & Liu, 2023). Terminological choices — 'war' versus 'invasion' versus 'special military operation', 'genocide' versus 'war crimes' — carried legal and political weight that media often handled carelessly, with demonstrable effects on public reactions (Kwiatkowska & Solarz, 2022; see also Cyrek, 2022; Kuznetsova, 2025), while even ostensibly peace-oriented vocabulary such as 'mediation' was embedded in war-journalism styles that contradicted its meaning (Escudero, 2024).

3.2 Framing patterns, convergences, and divergences

The studies in this section converge on three findings that complicate simple top-down models of wartime framing. First, domestication is near-universal: media in Brazil, India, and South Africa (Wozniak et al., 2026; Wozniak & Liu, 2023; on India, see also Ravikumar & Downey, 2025) and Italy (Papale & Solaroli, 2025) filtered the war through national interests, domestic political fractures, and local audience concerns rather than simply relaying either Western or Russian narratives. Second, the alarmist tilt of news language documented in 3.1 extended from single terms to entire coverage styles: across all three BRICS cases media outpaced their governments in using 'war', 'invasion', and 'atrocities', and even the mediation vocabulary was overwhelmed by war-journalism style — 85% of 'mediation' stories contradicted the concept in their actual content (Escudero, 2024). Third, mirror-image aggressor/victim framing between adversary ecosystems was complete within the elite pair examined: Rudakova's (2024) NYT–TASS comparison shows perfectly inverted role assignments — albeit on a deliberately narrow base — consistent with the omission-and-counter-attribution mechanism identified in Section II (Mohanty et al., 2026): competing accounts talk past, not against, each other (see also Sulzhytski et al., 2024).

The most theoretically consequential divergence concerns indexing. Wozniak et al. (2026) found no evidence that news wording cascaded down from executive-branch language; where alignment existed, it was with parliamentary (largely opposition) voices — supporting Bennett's contingent-elite-dissent variant rather than classic indexing. Yet Wozniak and Liu (2023) found media largely concurring with home-country geopolitical positioning, and Ravikumar and Downey (2025) describe Indian media as 'largely submissive to government policy' while still shaping consent. Maurer et al.'s (2022) German data cut the other way again: government parties received four times the opposition's visibility, with

AfD and Die Linke practically absent. Ko et al. (2025) add a partisan-system twist: US government documents were linguistically closer to conservative media — a counterintuitive alignment, given the administration in office during the study period, that invites further explanation. The conclusion is that the state-media relationship is contingent on political system, party constellation, and the country's stake in the conflict — not a constant. A second axis of difference is which actors anchor the story: Ukraine and Russia dominated European and Global South coverage, whereas Chinese data pivoted around NATO/the US (Chaban & Zhabotynska, 2024) — the salience structure itself encodes political priorities. Parizek's (2023) IO-visibility data add institutional nuance: NATO's declining global visibility suggests that the Russian framing of the conflict as a 'war with NATO' failed to secure worldwide reception, while the EU's persistently strong salience clustered around sanctions and energy (see also Chaban & Zhabotynska, 2024; Ofori et al., 2026; Klin, 2025).

3.3 Outliers and disconnects

Not all results fit these patterns. Indian mainstream media's restrained vocabulary stands out among the BRICS cases, matching public opinion that split blame evenly between the West (28%) and Russia (27%) — India is the clearest case where elite framing, media language, and public attitudes jointly diverge from both blocs (Wozniak et al., 2026; Ravikumar & Downey, 2025). Serbia is the exception in Hameleers et al.'s (2024) 19-country survey, registering the highest perceptions of false information and standing alone in attributing falsehoods to incapacity rather than intent (see also Vuksanović, 2026). Ye & Aron's (2025) audience data reveal supply-demand mismatches that challenge the scope of the Herman–Chomsky propaganda model: US audiences ignored heavily covered economic-enforcement stories, and adversary audiences disengaged from sanctions coverage their own outlets supplied — heavy supply does not guarantee traction. Dastgeer and Thapaliya (2023) document temporal drift toward neutrality: pro-Ukraine tweets fell by 13% over 2022 while no-side positioning rose by 15%, suggesting audience fatigue that production-side studies miss. Troitskiy's (2023) finding that Russia's 'fake news law' eliminated the discursive middle ground — forcing a heterogeneous intelligentsia into two camps — is a rare within-Russia counterpart to polarisation findings elsewhere, though with the crucial caveat that visible discourse under censorship cannot reveal actual opinion distribution (see also Kazakov et al., 2023; Bykova & Mart'yanova, 2023).

3.4 Methodological approaches and their limitations

Methodologically, the studies reviewed here fall into six distinct design types: comparative elite-media designs, large-scale NLP, qualitative/ethnographic content analysis, survey research, social-media network and engagement analysis, and discourse monitoring under censorship.

Comparative elite-media designs (Wozniak et al., 2026; Wozniak & Liu, 2023; Papale & Solaroli, 2025) offer a key strength: triangulation across arenas — government statements, parliamentary records, leaders' social media, and news content — which allows indexing and cascading hypotheses to be tested rather than assumed, and which can detect where frames circulate in one arena but not another (Papale & Solaroli's finding that both causal frames were absent from parliamentary records is only visible through such a design). Limitations include reliance on English-language or elite newspapers as proxies for 'the media' (two Indian English-language papers cannot represent India's vast vernacular press), short observation windows (first four weeks), and difficulty establishing causal direction between elite and media discourse even when correlation is found.

Large-scale NLP — exemplified by Parizek's (2023) 2.9 million articles across 60 languages, Ko et al.'s (2025) JSD-based similarity measures, and Mohanty et al.'s (2026) claim-pair analysis (see also Ye

& Aron, 2025; Bradshaw et al., 2024) — offers unmatched scale and multilingual reach — Parizek's design is arguably the only way to make credible global claims about visibility — and divergence metrics like JSD provide replicable, quantified measures of ideological distance. The costs are well known: visibility and word frequency are thin proxies for framing (an organisation can be highly visible while framed negatively); dictionary and psycholinguistic categories embed the researchers' assumptions; and interpretation of why patterns occur (e.g., why NATO visibility declined) remains inferential.

Qualitative/ethnographic content analysis (Rudakova, 2024; Escudero, 2024) captures role assignment and conceptual coherence — whether 'mediation' headlines actually deliver mediation content — which lies beyond the reach of frequency-based measures. But Rudakova's two-outlet design confounds outlet-, country-, and system-level differences (TASS is a state agency, the NYT a private newspaper — the comparison is asymmetric by construction); Escudero's Google-derived sample of 100 Spanish-language items introduces opaque algorithmic selection bias, and three expert interviews are illustrative rather than evidential.

Survey research (Hameleers et al., 2024; the YouGov data in Ravikumar & Downey, 2025; Chaban & Zhabotynska, 2024; see also Mattingly et al., 2025) offers genuine cross-national inference about perception, trust, and attribution — the reception side largely missing from the production-focused studies discussed in Section II. The 19-country, $N \approx 19,000$ design permits robust comparative analysis. Weaknesses: a single fielding wave (April–May 2022) freezes a fast-moving object; self-reported misinformation perception measures attitude, not exposure or accuracy; and country selection skews European. Chaban & Zhabotynska's (2024) synthesis is valuable for linking narratives to knowledge-producer elites, but — as the fuller discussion of this study above notes — its causal explanation (elite opinion plus Russian propaganda) is only partially supported, and its a priori classification of all antagonistic causation narratives as propaganda builds a normative judgement into the analytical scheme (see also Noordenbos, 2026).

Social-media network and engagement analysis (Dastgeer & Thapaliya, 2023; Taban & Gur, 2024; Ye & Aron's audience models, 2025; see also Chirkin et al., 2023; Kolobova, 2025) uniquely accesses temporal dynamics, audience co-production, and bot activity, and Ye & Aron's supply-demand comparison is a genuine innovation for testing propaganda-model constraints. Limits: Twitter/Facebook users are unrepresentative of publics (half of Dastgeer & Thapaliya's users had no identifiable location); engagement metrics conflate approval, outrage, and curiosity; platform API changes threaten replicability; and the 1% share of tweets from pro-Russia countries reflects platform blocking and access as much as opinion (see also Muzykant & Syurkani, 2024).

Discourse monitoring under censorship (Troitskiy, 2023) is methodologically the most distinctive study: longitudinal, multi-platform observation of a constrained discursive field, with the 'mental calendar' as an original analytical device. Its defining limitation is one Troitskiy himself concedes — under a censorship regime, the observable is systematically unrepresentative of the actual, so the study documents the architecture of permissible speech rather than opinion. This honesty is a strength, but it means findings about the intelligentsia's conservatism and disunity apply strictly to public performance (see also Krivokhina, 2025; Lyubushkin, 2025; Sonina, 2024).

As in Section II, the strongest designs combine complementary forms of evidence: Parizek's (2023) scale and the cross-arena triangulation of the comparative elite-media studies stand out as the most credible templates for inference.

3.5 Cumulative contributions and persistent weaknesses

This section partially remedies the production-side bias identified in Section II by adding reception, elite-discourse, and network perspectives; its repeated falsification or qualification of received models (indexing, cascading activation, the Herman–Chomsky propaganda model) constitutes its greatest cumulative contribution. Several studies examined here (Ye & Aron, 2025; Mohanty et al., 2026; Bradshaw et al., 2024; Sulzhytski et al., 2024; Maurer et al., 2022) also appeared in Section II; they are revisited from the reception and elite-discourse side rather than introduced as fresh evidence. Persistent weaknesses include (a) the elite/vernacular gap — English-language and elite sources stand in for national media systems (see also Akinboade et al., 2023; Ajibulu & Nwaoboli, 2023); (b) inconsistent conceptualisation of the government-media relationship (‘indexing’, ‘submissiveness’, ‘concurrence’, and ‘domestication’ are used across studies without shared operationalisation, making the apparent contradictions between Wozniak et al.’s findings and Ravikumar & Downey’s characterisation hard to adjudicate); (c) single-wave designs dominating a phenomenon that Dastgeer & Thapaliya (2023) show to be temporally unstable; and (d) normative commitments (baseline narratives, propaganda classifications) occasionally embedded in coding schemes, which complicates comparison with designs that bracket the causation question, such as that of Papale and Solaroli (2025) (see also van Hulst et al., 2025; Zaklama, 2025).

4. On Media Narratives versus Public Opinion (Section IV)

4.1 The contested media–opinion link

The relationship between media supply and public demand emerged as the least settled and most policy-relevant theme within the reviewed corpus. Audiences did not simply absorb the narratives most heavily supplied to them. U.S. audiences ignored extensively covered stories on economic enforcement and sanctions, while audiences in adversary states similarly disengaged from sanctions coverage promoted by their own media. By contrast, audiences in non-aligned contexts rewarded the mediation-focused coverage provided by their media (Ye & Aron, 2025). These findings limit the explanatory reach of strong interpretations of the propaganda model (Herman & Chomsky, 1988).

Evidence drawn from comment fields and social media further revealed countervailing dynamics that remained largely invisible in editorial content. These included declining pro-Ukrainian engagement over the course of 2022 and growing distrust directed at all sides of the conflict (Dastgeer & Thapaliya, 2023; Holland & Ellingsen, 2025). Survey evidence likewise showed that citizens selectively attributed misinformation to the geopolitically opposing camp and that perceptions of disinformation were strongest where trust in domestic media was weakest (Hameleers et al., 2024). Taken together, these findings suggest that the divergent “storylines” documented by Chaban and Zhabotynska (2024) were co-produced by audiences and media rather than simply imposed by political elites or propaganda. Under conditions of censorship, moreover, observable public discourse ceased to constitute a reliable proxy for public opinion (Troitskiy, 2023).

4.2 Convergent findings across the production–reception divide

Three convergent findings structure this section.

First, bloc-conditioned perception mirrors bloc-conditioned production. The two contrasting “storylines” identified by Chaban and Zhabotynska (2024)—unprovoked aggression versus West-centred causation—map closely onto the production-side divide documented throughout the framing

literature. Similarly, Hameleers et al. (2024) demonstrate that publics systematically attributed misinformation to the geopolitically opposing camp. Taken together, these findings suggest that perception is politically motivated: what individuals perceive as false corresponds more closely to geopolitical alignment than to the objective quality of information, at least on the available evidence (see also Ravikumar & Downey, 2025).

Second, actor salience encodes political priorities across both media production and audience reception. Ukraine and Russia serve as the principal protagonists in European and much of the Global South's narratives, whereas NATO and the United States occupy this role in Chinese narratives and, to a lesser extent, in parts of the Global South. The selection of protagonists therefore does more than organise narratives; it itself constitutes a causal claim about responsibility for the conflict (Parizek, 2023; Chaban & Zhabotynska, 2024).

Third, multiple studies converge on the conclusion that audiences are not passive recipients of media narratives. The supply–demand mismatches identified by Ye and Aron (2025), the documented sentiment drift over time (Dastgeer & Thapaliya, 2023), and Indian polling evidence presented by Ravikumar and Downey (2025) all demonstrate that publics may diverge from, lag behind, or actively reinterpret the coverage supplied to them. Rather than confirming a straightforward transmission model of media influence, these studies collectively suggest a more dynamic relationship in which audiences selectively engage with, negotiate, and sometimes resist dominant media narratives.

4.3 The strength of the media–opinion link

The central tension running through this section concerns the strength of the relationship between media narratives and public opinion. Ravikumar and Downey (2025) assign the media a "pivotal role" in shaping Indian perceptions and manufacturing consent for government policy, while Chaban and Zhabotynska (2024) attribute the divergence of competing storylines largely to knowledge-producing elites and propaganda. By contrast, the supply–demand mismatches discussed above point in the opposite direction. U.S. audiences showed little engagement with extensively supplied sanctions coverage, while audiences in adversary states similarly disengaged from sanctions narratives promoted by their own media. These patterns suggest a degree of audience autonomy that challenges strong interpretations of the Herman–Chomsky propaganda model.

The Indian polling evidence itself illustrates this ambiguity. The finding that 28% of respondents blamed the West, 27% blamed Russia, and 45% attributed responsibility to both sides or remained uncertain may be interpreted either as evidence that media successfully framed a broadly accepted "middle path" or as evidence that publics resisted binary framing altogether. The available studies do not permit a definitive conclusion.

A further point of divergence concerns the temporal stability of public opinion. Hameleers et al.'s (2024) cross-national survey provides a single-wave snapshot collected during April–May 2022, implicitly treating attitudes as relatively stable. By contrast, Dastgeer and Thapaliya (2023) document substantial shifts within a single year, with pro-Ukraine positioning declining by 13 percentage points and neutrality increasing by 15 percentage points. Troitskiy (2023) likewise identifies processes of routinisation and fatigue among pro-war Russian commentators by December 2022. Collectively, these findings suggest that public attitudes are better understood as dynamic and context-dependent than as fixed outcomes of media exposure.

4.4 Outliers and deviant cases in audience reception

Several studies identify cases that depart from the dominant cross-national patterns and thereby illuminate the conditions under which media–audience relationships vary.

Serbia represents the clearest national outlier. Within Hameleers et al.'s (2024) 19-country survey, Serbian respondents reported the highest levels of perceived falsehood and were uniquely inclined to attribute misinformation primarily to incompetence rather than deliberate intent. This distinctive pattern plausibly reflects Serbia's particular media-trust environment and geopolitical position (see also Vuksanović, 2026).

A demographic outlier likewise emerges within Hameleers et al.'s analysis. Respondents with the lowest levels of formal education were the only group to rate Russian media sources as comparatively less deceptive while simultaneously associating NATO with the greatest prevalence of falsehoods. This constitutes the sole substantial demographic cleavage within an otherwise remarkably consistent cross-national profile.

Troitskiy's (2023) study of the Russian intelligentsia constitutes a structural outlier. It is the only contribution in this section to examine audience reception from within Russia itself, where the "fake news law" effectively eliminated the moderate or ambivalent positions that characterised Indian public opinion, in which 45% of respondents blamed both sides or remained uncertain. This contrast provides a striking illustration of how legal coercion, rather than media framing alone, can restructure the boundaries of permissible public discourse.

Finally, the "other-country" audiences examined by Ye and Aron (2025) constitute the only case in which media supply and audience demand closely aligned. Public engagement corresponded closely with mediation-focused coverage, making non-aligned contexts the exception that highlights the broader pattern of supply–demand misalignment observed elsewhere. Collectively, these deviant cases reinforce the conclusion that audience reception cannot be explained solely by the volume or direction of media coverage but is instead conditioned by broader political, institutional, and sociocultural contexts.

4.5 Scholarly disputes and unresolved questions

Unlike the preceding sections, the literature reviewed here required explicit adjudication between competing scholarly interpretations. This is itself analytically significant, reflecting genuine theoretical disagreement rather than inconsistency in the underlying empirical evidence.

The first dispute concerns the conceptualisation of propaganda. Chaban and Zhabotynska (2024) classify all narratives attributing causation to Western actions as forms of propaganda, thereby incorporating a normative premise into their analytical framework. Yet the reviewed source itself qualifies this position by noting that such claims are "only partially true," indicating that the categorisation rests partly on normative judgement rather than empirical demonstration.

A related disagreement concerns the interpretation of Western media framing. Chaban and Zhabotynska's (2024) discussion of Koval's concept of the "symmetrisation of responsibility" suggests that emphasising NATO's role risks creating a false equivalence between the aggressor and the victim. This position stands in tension with Zollmann's (2024) argument that Western media systematically marginalised interpretations assigning any meaningful degree of co-responsibility to NATO. The critical discussion of Zollmann further sharpens this debate. His claim that Western reporting

consistently privileged NATO-friendly historical framing may understate the prominence of earlier Western military interventions, including Kosovo (1999) and Afghanistan (2001), within broader public discourse. Nevertheless, his central observation—that NATO co-responsibility remained largely outside the dominant boundaries of acceptable public debate and that the descriptor "unprovoked" echoed consistently across the media ecosystem (Greene, 2022)—is corroborated by multiple independent sources (Precht & Welzer, 2022; Prinzing, 2022; Schiffer, 2022).

The literature therefore presents a genuine unresolved scholarly dispute rather than a contradiction in the empirical record. The central question is whether Western media systematically underweighted questions of NATO co-responsibility (Zollmann, 2024; McLaughlin, 2020) or whether emphasising co-responsibility itself risks symmetrising an inherently asymmetric war (Koval, 2020; Chaban & Zhabotynska, 2024). The evidence reviewed here does not decisively resolve this debate, leaving it as an important avenue for future research.

4.6 Methodological approaches and their limitations

Methodologically, this section draws on six principal research designs: cross-national survey research, survey synthesis and narrative interpretation, computational engagement modelling, social-network and Twitter content analysis, longitudinal discourse monitoring under censorship, and polling-anchored interpretive argument.

Cross-national survey research (Hameleers et al., 2024) provides the strongest basis for population-level inference within the section. Covering 19 countries and 19,037 respondents, the study employs an original survey instrument and sufficient national variation to relate perceptions of misinformation to broader system-level characteristics, particularly trust in domestic media. Its limitations are nevertheless substantial. As a single-wave survey conducted during April–May 2022, it cannot capture the temporal changes documented elsewhere in the literature. Measures of perceived falsehood primarily reflect attitudes and trust rather than actual exposure to misinformation or factual accuracy. The sample remains heavily European, with Brazil and the U.S. providing the principal non-European cases, thereby limiting broader claims regarding the Global South. Finally, cross-national equivalence across 19 languages and political cultures is assumed rather than empirically demonstrated.

Survey synthesis and narrative interpretation (Chaban & Zhabotynska, 2024) make an important contribution by integrating diverse opinion studies within a coherent narrative framework and advancing an explanation centred on elite knowledge production. Few studies attempt such theoretical integration. At the same time, the approach depends on heterogeneous secondary surveys employing different instruments and sampling strategies. Its causal explanation—combining elite influence and propaganda—is asserted more strongly than it is empirically tested, while its prior classification of one family of causal narratives as propaganda partially forecloses the empirical question of whether such interpretations may also emerge organically within domestic political cultures. Evidence from Vuksanović's (2026) analysis of the Balkans suggests that this possibility cannot be dismissed.

Computational engagement modelling (Ye & Aron, 2025) represents the section's most methodologically innovative contribution. By directly pairing media supply with audience demand, the study renders the traditionally difficult-to-test question of media effects empirically observable through a supply–demand fit analysis. In doing so, it produces one of the review's most theoretically significant findings by demonstrating the limits of strong propaganda-model predictions. However, engagement metrics cannot distinguish approval from criticism, irony, outrage, or curiosity. Facebook engagement reflects the behaviour of platform-active users rather than the broader population, while the broad

geopolitical blocs used in the analysis aggregate countries with considerable internal diversity. Moreover, the study had yet to undergo peer review at the time of writing, warranting appropriate caution in interpreting its conclusions.

Social-network and Twitter content analysis (Dastgeer & Thapaliya, 2023; Taban & Gur, 2024) contributes a valuable temporal dimension that is absent from most survey-based studies. Four sampling periods across 2022 reveal substantial shifts in online sentiment alongside network characteristics such as fragmentation and limited reciprocity. Nevertheless, important limitations remain. The content analysis includes only 3,275 tweets despite a network comprising 72,899 users, approximately half of whom could not be geographically identified, reducing confidence in country-level estimates. The very small proportion of pro-Russian content likely reflects platform restrictions and differential access as much as underlying public opinion. Furthermore, Taban and Gur's explanation for Russia's decision to block Twitter remains a plausible but unverified causal inference. Replication has also become considerably more difficult following Twitter's post-2022 API restrictions.

Longitudinal discourse monitoring under censorship (Troitskiy, 2023) exemplifies transparent methodological practice. The study follows discourse over seven months across 50 platforms and channels, introduces the original analytical concept of a three-layer "mental calendar," and explicitly recognises that observable discourse under conditions of censorship cannot be treated as a reliable measure of public opinion. Consequently, its findings are best understood as mapping the structure of permissible public speech—including coded forms of communication—rather than attitudes within the broader population. The sample is also doubly selective, comprising members of the Russian intelligentsia who both remained in Russia and continued participating in public discourse.

Polling-anchored interpretive argument (Ravikumar & Downey, 2025) links YouGov polling evidence to patterns of media framing, providing a plausible interpretive account of Indian public opinion. However, the design cannot sustain the strong causal claims advanced by the authors. Because both the polling data and the content analysis are contemporaneous cross-sectional observations, it remains impossible to determine whether media shaped public opinion, public opinion shaped media coverage, or whether both reflected deeper influences such as elite foreign-policy traditions and historical geopolitical relationships, factors acknowledged by the authors themselves. Accordingly, while the evidence demonstrates congruence between media narratives and public attitudes, it does not establish causal direction.

4.7 Collective contributions and persistent weaknesses

Collectively, the studies reviewed in this section significantly strengthen the literature by systematically incorporating audience reception into debates that have traditionally focused on media production. Building on the reception-oriented turn introduced in Section 3, they repeatedly qualify production-side assumptions. Framing dominance does not necessarily translate into persuasion (Ye & Aron, 2025); perceptions of misinformation are politically motivated rather than purely informational (Hameleers et al., 2024); and public sentiment evolves over time rather than remaining fixed (Dastgeer & Thapaliya, 2023). Together, these findings demonstrate that audience reception is an active and dynamic process rather than the passive acceptance of elite narratives.

At the same time, an important methodological limitation unites the literature. None of the reviewed studies identifies media effects through a robust causal design. All rely on observational, cross-sectional, or descriptive longitudinal evidence. None combines direct measures of media exposure with subsequent changes in attitudes through panel designs, experimental interventions, or comparable

causal strategies. Consequently, the section only partially fulfils its stated objective of assessing "whether and how media narratives translate into measurable shifts in public attitudes." The available evidence convincingly maps patterns of congruence and divergence between media production and audience reception, but it cannot conclusively demonstrate the causal processes through which media narratives shape public opinion. This remains one of the most significant unresolved gaps in the contemporary literature.

5. On Russian Academic Discourse on Media Framing and Priming of the Russo-Ukrainian War (Section V)

Russian-language scholarship on media framing of the Russo-Ukrainian War has developed along two largely separate trajectories. The first is an empirical tradition that employs methodologies comparable to those used in international media studies, including corpus linguistics, comparative agenda-setting, discourse analysis, and computational approaches. The second is a doctrinal tradition that relies primarily on conceptual assertions and normative interpretations, drawing on concepts such as *cognitive warfare*, *destructive media*, and *Russophobic propaganda* without systematically defining or operationalising them. Although both traditions emerge from the same institutional and academic environment, they rarely engage with one another.

This division is particularly evident in studies of media framing. Empirical research identifies frames through observable linguistic patterns, thematic structures, or agenda-setting indicators, whereas doctrinal studies frequently assume that Western media are inherently propagandistic. Consequently, evaluative concepts often function less as analytical categories than as expressions of geopolitical positioning. The distinction is important because it shapes both methodological practice and the explanatory scope of the literature.

5.1 The empirical tradition: Methodological sophistication

The empirical strand demonstrates substantial methodological engagement with approaches recognised in international communication research. Krivokhina (2024, 2025) analyses regional media across Russian federal subjects to examine the conceptual framework through which the "special military operation" is domestically legitimised. Vasiliev (2023) compares agenda-setting patterns in Russian and foreign media, identifying systematic differences in topic selection and source usage. Chirkin et al. (2023) map the structure of the Z-Telegram ecosystem, revealing a differentiated network that includes what they describe as a "loyalist opposition" (discussed further in Section 5.4).

Kalinin and Mavleeva (2022) and Polishchuk and Koklikov (2022) employ corpus-linguistic methods to compare Russian official terminology with its representation in Chinese, North Korean, South Korean, and Iranian media. Their findings indicate that lexical choices—particularly the use of "special military operation," "war," or "invasion"—serve as indicators of geopolitical alignment. While media in states politically aligned with Russia more frequently adopted official Russian terminology, even relatively neutral outlets increasingly shifted toward the term "war" over time (Kalinin & Mavleeva, 2022). This observation has broader comparative relevance, suggesting that terminology functions as a visible marker of political alignment that has received comparatively limited theoretical attention within framing research.

Overall, this body of research displays a level of methodological sophistication that is often overlooked outside Russia. Corpus analysis, explicit coding procedures, comparative agenda-setting, and social-media mapping generate findings that can readily be incorporated into international comparative

research. Its principal limitation lies not in methodological execution but in theoretical integration. Individual studies produce valuable empirical evidence yet rarely relate their findings to broader debates on framing, agenda-setting, media effects, or comparative political communication. As a result, the literature remains empirically informative but theoretically fragmented.

5.2 The doctrinal tradition: Positionality as analytical substitute

The doctrinal strand proceeds primarily through conceptual assertion rather than empirical investigation. Orekhova (2024), for example, examines representations of the "special military operation" in German media but frames the analysis around the prior assumption that German coverage constitutes "Russophobic propaganda" instead of systematically coding textual characteristics. Likewise, Fesenko and Kholostov (2023) invoke the concept of "cognitive war" as a presumed Western strategy without defining measurable indicators or specifying how the concept might be empirically tested. Grabelnikov (2022) similarly employs the category of "destructive media," which in practice refers to reporting critical of Russian policy.

A defining feature of this literature is therefore its reliance on evaluative concepts that are assumed rather than demonstrated. Terms such as *destructive media*, *cognitive warfare*, and *Russophobic propaganda* function primarily as interpretive labels rather than analytically operationalised variables. Rather than testing hypotheses, these studies generally begin from the premise of Western information warfare and interpret media content through that conceptual framework.

This approach also produces an internal inconsistency. Empirical studies occasionally report findings that complicate doctrinal assumptions—for example, Vasiliev's (2023) observation that Western reporting became more balanced over time—yet such findings rarely influence subsequent doctrinal discussions. Although both strands exist within the same academic environment, meaningful dialogue between them remains limited.

5.3 Evaluative asymmetry and analytical contraction

A recurring feature of the literature is evaluative asymmetry, whereby similar journalistic practices receive different interpretations depending on the geopolitical orientation of the media outlet. The use of terms such as "war" or "invasion" instead of "special military operation," for instance, is treated as a neutral descriptive choice in politically sympathetic media—Polishchuk and Koklikov (2022) describe Iranian outlets' use of "war" in this manner—but as evidence of "Russophobic propaganda" in Western reporting (Orekhova, 2024; Grabelnikov, 2022).

This asymmetry effectively assigns analytical significance to lexical choice that framing research more commonly attributes to broader processes of selection and salience (Entman, 1993). Whereas international framing studies typically examine issue selection, source diversity, causal attribution, and narrative emphasis, much of the Russian-language literature reduces framing to terminology.

This narrower focus has both strengths and limitations. Concentrating on lexical choice cannot capture the full range of framing processes identified in the broader literature, including emphasis, omission, contextualisation, and causal interpretation. At the same time, terminology provides a comparatively robust basis for cross-linguistic comparison. Word choice can be quantified with relatively high reliability across corpora, whereas coding broader framing categories often requires interpretive judgments that are more difficult to standardise across languages and political contexts.

5.4 Findings with cross-national relevance

Despite its limitations, the Russian-language literature offers findings with wider comparative significance. One notable contribution is Chirkin et al.'s (2023) identification of a "loyalist opposition" within the Z-Telegram ecosystem. These channels are neither conventionally state-controlled nor politically oppositional. They frequently criticise military tactics and operational decisions while remaining firmly supportive of the broader objectives of the war. This hybrid configuration complicates existing media typologies, including both indexing models based on elite consensus and propaganda models emphasising direct state control. Instead, it suggests that media alignment operates along a continuum rather than through a simple state-versus-independent dichotomy.

A second recurring observation concerns the gap between official narratives and public opinion. Kazakov et al. (2023) find that media influence Russian youth attitudes toward the war but does not fully determine them, while Troitskiy (2023) describes a discursive environment in which public expressions diverge from privately held views under conditions of censorship. Similar patterns appear in third-country contexts, where official editorial positions shaped by geopolitical considerations differ from more sceptical or ambivalent public attitudes (Muzykant & Syurkani, 2024). This divergence between official framing and audience reception parallels the supply-demand distinctions identified in Section IV and reinforces the broader conclusion that media production cannot be taken as a direct indicator of audience interpretation.

5.5 A hybrid literature: Empirical research and primary-source evidence

The coexistence of empirical and doctrinal traditions constitutes one of the most significant characteristics of Russian-language scholarship on the war. Rather than forming a coherent research programme, the literature combines methodologically grounded empirical analysis with a parallel body of politically normative interpretation. Consequently, it is most productively understood as a hybrid body of scholarship that serves both as a contribution to comparative media research and as a primary source reflecting the informational environment in which it was produced.

The empirical literature contributes replicable evidence regarding terminology, agenda-setting, and online media structures that can be incorporated into comparative research. The doctrinal literature, in contrast, derives its analytical value less from its empirical claims than from what it reveals about the construction of political narratives within academic discourse. Its recurring use of concepts such as *cognitive warfare*, *destructive media*, and *Russophobic propaganda* illustrates how empirical analysis and normative positioning become intertwined within particular scholarly communities.

This dual character presents both challenges and opportunities for comparative synthesis. Empirical findings should not be integrated into international scholarship without considering the institutional and political contexts that shape research design. At the same time, doctrinal studies should not be dismissed solely as propaganda. They constitute valuable primary evidence of how segments of the Russian academic community conceptualise information conflict and media influence. Viewed in this way, Russian-language scholarship complements rather than simply contrasts with Western research. The fragmentation of media narratives documented throughout this review is mirrored by a corresponding fragmentation of scholarly interpretation, reinforcing the broader patterns identified in the preceding sections.

6. Discussion

This qualitative case study pursued two goals: first, to test and refine methodological tools for monitoring foreign-policy discourse via critical engagement with media-framing scholarship on the Russo-Ukrainian war (2022–present); second, to offer a geopolitically timely synthesis of global media perspectives—prioritising EU/US angles while separately treating Russian narratives. Its robustness rested on source breadth and volume. The pragmatic payoff was a distilled framing analysis for policymakers, mapping narrative arcs, counter-frames, and temporal shifts beyond reactive spin.

Its innovative potential rests, technologically, on using AI and, methodologically, on moving from evaluating the quality of media framing outputs and related academic outputs to real-time monitoring—or, in other words, from retrospective evaluation to prospective monitoring.

Original Contributions of the Study

The study’s originality lies less in proposing a new theory of media framing than in constructing a novel comparative methodological framework and testing it on a live, unfolding conflict. Its principal contribution is the use of the Russo-Ukrainian War as a methodological test case for evaluating whether emerging approaches — including AI-assisted methods — can support anticipatory monitoring of foreign-policy discourse. Within the broader EXPERIMENTAL DETECTOR project, this marks a deliberate pivot from evaluating existing monitoring tools and a historical case’s IR methodology (the 2008 Russo-Georgian War) towards real-time methodological piloting, effectively turning the war itself into a natural experiment for methodology development. The specific contributions operate on six distinct levels: Theoretical grounding, Design and sampling, Measurement quality, computational procedures, Interpretation and context and Reflexivity, ethics, and output.

From Retrospective Evaluation to Prospective Monitoring

The quality criteria developed for evaluating completed framing analyses do not transfer intact to a monitoring instrument designed to detect emerging shifts in foreign-policy discourse. Some criteria carry over unchanged; several invert; and a number of requirements that are absent from retrospective scholarship become decisive. The mapping below sets each retrospective criterion against its monitoring analogue and marks the relation between them, so that a monitoring design is not read as a methodologically weaker version of a study. The relation column uses three values: *carries* (the criterion transfers, sometimes extended), *inverts* (the monitoring requirement contradicts the retrospective one), and *new* (no retrospective counterpart exists)

Table 7. Retrospective criteria and their monitoring analogues

Retrospective criterion	Monitoring analogue	Relation
1. Theoretical grounding		
The study declares which conception of the frame it employs and applies it consistently.	The instrument declares the same conception, and additionally specifies the sub-frame observables through which movement in that frame is expected to become visible first.	Carries (extended)
Frames must not be conflated with topics, themes, or sentiment.	The same prohibition holds, and a further one is added: an indicator is not a frame. A shift in designation lexicon is evidence of frame movement, not the movement itself.	Carries (extended)

Retrospective criterion	Monitoring analogue	Relation
Generic and issue-specific frames are distinguished, with consequences for comparability.	Both layers are required simultaneously: generic indicators supply stable baselines and cross-case comparability; issue-specific indicators supply sensitivity to the case at hand.	Carries
Frame-building and frame-setting are theorized as process (Scheufele, 1999).	Cascading activation (Entman, 2003) supplies a discriminant rather than a background theory: an authentic repositioning should display origination at elite level and downward propagation. Simultaneous or bottom-up appearance is treated as probable noise.	Carries (operationalized)
2. Design and sampling		
Constructed-week sampling is the efficient standard for estimating period parameters (Riffe et al., 1993).	Census capture of a deliberately narrow outlet set. Constructed-week sampling discards days by design; the signal may be a two-day anomaly.	Inverts
Population, period, outlets, and retrieval terms are defined for a single closed corpus.	A frozen burn-in baseline period is defined, followed by an open-ended rolling window, together with a stated policy governing when and how the baseline may be revised. (<i>a pre-specified, immutable opening period whose data establish the reference values for all subsequent measurement, and which is deliberately excluded from hypothesis testing</i>). Two practical implications worth checking in whatever document this comes from: (1) it should state <i>how long</i> the burn-in runs and on what basis that length was chosen (convergence criterion, inter-coder reliability threshold, fixed calendar span); (2) it should state what happens if the system materially changes mid-study — normally that requires declaring a new baseline and reporting both, not silently amending the old one.	Carries (temporalized)
Outlets are selected for reach, ownership diversity, and ideological range.	Outlets are selected for baseline stability and cascade position. Ritualized or state-affiliated discourse supports anomaly detection against a tight baseline; plural systems support dispersion measures across outlets.	Inverts
The unit of analysis is declared (article, paragraph, proposition, image).	Two units are declared: a measurement unit below the frame (clause, designation, source mention) and a decision unit at which alerts are raised (typically outlet-week).	Carries (extended)
The corpus must be reconstructable by a third party.	Corpus composition is itself tracked as a variable — outlet closures and launches, paywall changes, editorial turnover, platform distribution — and observed change is decomposed into within-outlet change and compositional change.	New
Translation decisions are disclosed as framing operations.	Translation is not performed prior to coding. Parallel language-specific indicator sets are anchored to a common construct, and measurement equivalence across languages is tested rather than assumed.	Inverts
3. Measurement quality		
Krippendorff's $\alpha \geq .80$ is established once on a double-coded subsample (Krippendorff, 2004).	Reliability is re-established periodically on a frozen calibration set, and coder drift is reported as a time series rather than certified at a single point.	Carries (temporalized)

Retrospective criterion	Monitoring analogue	Relation
Reliability is reported per frame rather than as an aggregate.	Reliability is reported per indicator <i>and</i> per period, since a stable overall coefficient can conceal a category that degraded mid-series.	Carries (extended)
Validity is established by deriving the operationalization from framing theory (Matthes & Kohring, 2008).	Construct validity remains necessary but is no longer sufficient. Criterion validity against an independent policy series — assembly voting, sanctions decisions, treaty and memorandum signature, arms-transfer authorizations, diplomatic personnel movements — becomes the governing test.	Carries (raised)
—	Backtesting over historical periods containing known repositionings, reporting hit rate, false-alarm rate, and detection lead time.	New
—	False-discovery-rate control across the indicator × outlet × period grid (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995). A dashboard performing thousands of implicit tests annually will otherwise detect shifts continuously.	New
—	Specificity is prioritized over sensitivity, with the alert threshold justified against the assumed base rate of genuine repositioning.	New
4. Computational procedures		
Preprocessing is documented, and framing-bearing lexical variants are preserved.	Preprocessing is additionally frozen for the life of the series; any alteration forces a documented discontinuity and a parallel run across an overlap window.	Carries (extended)
Topics are not to be equated with frames (DiMaggio et al., 2013; Walter & Ophir, 2019).	The same holds, with a stronger consequence: unsupervised topic solutions are unstable across re-estimation and are therefore unsuitable as the primary detector. They remain useful for exploration and codebook revision.	Carries (strengthened)
Model name, version, and access date are reported for reproducibility.	Version pinning becomes a continuity requirement rather than a citation courtesy. Silent vendor updates break a time series without producing any error signal; a frozen calibration set is re-run at every version change, and any resulting offset is reported as an artefact.	Inverts in status
Classifier performance is validated against a manually coded gold standard, with precision, recall, and F1 reported per frame (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013).	Two gold standards are maintained: a frozen set used to detect model and coder drift, and a periodically refreshed set used to measure current performance under concept drift.	Carries (extended)
Sentiment is a framing device, not a frame.	Emotional-trajectory data are admitted as a covariate and as context, but never as an alert trigger.	Carries
5. Interpretation and context		
The study explains why a given frame emerged when it did.	The instrument distinguishes exogenous event-driven spikes, genuine drift, and compositional change, maintaining an event register as a control series.	Carries (recast)
Indexing theory predicts that the frame range tracks the range of elite debate (Bennett, 1990).	The prediction becomes a live indicator: contraction or expansion of the quoted elite range is among the earliest observable traces of consensus movement.	Carries (operationalized)

Retrospective criterion	Monitoring analogue	Relation
Source structure is analysed — who speaks, who is paraphrased, who is absent.	Anonymous-sourcing density is tracked as a leading indicator, on the reasoning that trial balloons precede declared positions.	Carries (extended)
Silences are analysed against a counterfactual standard of what could have been reported.	Silence detection requires an explicit model of the expected utterance, and is tractable only where the baseline is formulaic. The disappearance of a standing qualifying clause is treated as a first-class signal.	Carries (formalized)
—	Lead–lag estimation against the policy series. If the discourse indicator does not precede the policy indicator, the instrument is detecting published news rather than anticipating movement.	New
6. Reflexivity, ethics, and output		
Limitations are acknowledged rather than minimized.	A running record of false alarms and missed events is published with each release. An instrument that does not publish its misses is not an instrument.	Carries (formalized)
The analysis maintains neutral language and does not adopt the frames under study.	The same, with the addition of analytic tradecraft conventions: evidence is separated from assessment, probability language is calibrated and used consistently, and each assessment states what would disconfirm it.	Carries (extended)
Wartime corpora are shaped by strategic communication, censorship, and disinformation.	The same, plus adaptation: actors who learn the indicator set can adjust surface features while holding the underlying position. Indicator sets are rotated periodically and are not published in full.	Carries (extended)
A dual-reading protocol treats belligerent-state sources as both secondary literature and primary artefact.	Retained, and extended by explicit cascade-position coding of each source.	Carries
Ethical distance from the object of study is maintained.	Purpose limitation is stated in the design phase. Monitoring outputs on foreign-policy discourse are read by policy and security audiences, which places the analyst inside the process; anticipatory media literacy must be distinguished explicitly from intelligence production.	New
Findings are published as an article, with claims stated as demonstrated results.	Findings are released as a periodic bulletin, graded as signal, watch, or noise, with confidence expressed in calibrated terms.	Inverts

Note on the three consequential inversions

Sampling. Constructed-week sampling is so well established in content analysis that its rejection reads at first as methodological carelessness. The justification is that the two designs estimate different quantities. Constructed-week sampling is an efficient estimator of a *period parameter* and achieves that efficiency precisely by discarding days. A monitor does not estimate a period parameter; it tests for departure from a baseline at the earliest feasible moment, and a discarded day is a discarded opportunity for detection. The efficiency gain is purchased with exactly the property the monitor needs.

Outlet selection. Selecting outlets for baseline stability rather than representativeness appears to sacrifice external validity. It does so deliberately. The monitor’s target is not a description of the media system but the detection of movement, and detectability is a function of the signal-to-baseline-variance ratio. Low-variance, ritualized discourse yields high information from small departures; the classic

craft of inferring what was happening inside a closed political system from indirect, often trivial surface signals — because direct evidence was unavailable - result rests on this property rather than on any special insight into the texts. Where the media system is plural and no outlet has a tight baseline, the measurable object shifts from wording to distribution — the appearance of a previously marginal position in a centre outlet, or a contraction in the spread of positions across the field — and requires dispersion statistics rather than anomaly detection.

Translation. Translating before coding is standard practice in comparative work and is nonetheless disqualifying here. The signal in emerging repositioning resides substantially in designation lexicon, modality, and agency attribution, all of which translation normalizes. A weakening from obligation to recommendation, or a substitution of one designation for a near-synonym, will typically survive translation only by accident. Parallel indicator sets are more laborious to construct and require explicit equivalence testing, but they preserve the measurement.

An integrative, cross-linguistic synthesis of structurally separated literatures

The study brings together three normally separate bodies of scholarship — Western, non-Western, and Russian-language academic discourse — into a single comparative framework, filling a gap left by partial studies lacking a unifying perspective for policy, academic, and diplomatic audiences. The search strategy is itself a methodological contribution: by deliberately combining Google scholar with CEEOL and eLibrary.ru, the study systematically recovers Central and Eastern European and Russian-language work that is largely invisible to mainstream Anglophone citation indexes owing to their well-documented English-language bias. The resulting treatment of the Russian corpus is the most extensive English-language synthesis of Russian scholarship on media framing of the war to date, and its analytical handling is distinctive: Russian academic outputs are read as a hybrid literature — part methodologically engaged empirical research, part primary-source artefact of the discourse it describes — a reading that avoids both uncritical acceptance and wholesale dismissal. The identification of an empirical–doctrinal bifurcation within that corpus, and the documentation of loyalist opposition in the Z-Telegram ecosystem, are contributions that international scholarship would otherwise miss.

Original primary evidence linking interpretation to geopolitical position

The Mini Global Survey of IR analysts, diplomats, and journalists constitutes new empirical data generated by the author, not derived from existing literature. Despite its acknowledged sampling limitations, it provides an original cross-national dataset on how causal attribution of the war diverges by geopolitical position — demonstrating systematic differences between Western and non-Western expert communities alongside points of convergence. Crucially, the survey does more than describe: it corroborates, with independent primary evidence, the alliance-bloc framing model that Ye and Aron (2025) had proposed on other grounds, thereby linking scholarly interpretation to geopolitical context through a second, methodologically distinct data source.

A comparative methodological audit converted into an actionable architecture

Rather than simply listing methods, the study assesses the principal methodological families — manual content and framing analysis, critical discourse analysis and CADS, computational topic modelling and NLP, integrated computational pipelines, social network analysis, comparative survey research, and digital ethnography — against their innovative potential, reliability, and limitations. The synthesis demonstrates that the major traditions yield different but complementary insights: manual coding captures responsibility attribution with conceptual validity; computational methods deliver scale and

cross-lingual coverage; discourse analysis reveals linguistic mechanisms invisible to frequency counts. By reviewing studies processing corpora of hundreds of thousands of posts and articles, the study also provides empirical grounding for its core premise — that recent advances in AI make globally comparative, real-time discourse monitoring technically feasible, provided outputs are validated by human coding and triangulated with survey and event data. The audit culminates in a concrete hybrid-architecture blueprint combining multilingual computational pipelines, human-coded validation, and triangulation against official-statement data — a methodological roadmap directly usable for designing future monitoring systems rather than an end in itself.

Conceptual refinements with applicability beyond the case

Three conceptual contributions stand out. First, the study establishes lexical choice as a leading indicator of framing shifts: the documented migration from “crisis” to “war” to “invasion” in non-Western media, and from “special military operation” to “civilisational war” in Russian discourse, shows that vocabulary carries analytical weight comparable to traditional framing variables while yielding measurable cross-corpus comparisons — arguably the study’s most practically exportable finding, offered as a tractable design principle for anticipatory monitoring systems. Second, by foregrounding the Z-channel phenomenon, the study introduces a category — loyalist opposition — that classical information-disorder typologies cannot accommodate: outlets that are domestically produced, editorially independent of state media, critical of the leadership on tactical decisions, yet ideologically more aligned with the war than state media themselves. This combination of features that standard taxonomies treat as mutually exclusive demonstrates the need for categories capable of accommodating within-regime pluralism. Third, the study refines comparative media-system typologies by situating the Russian landscape in an intermediate position between the Herman–Chomsky propaganda model and the Chinese transmission-belt model, distinguished from both by the near-total absence of tolerated independent media.

Critical interrogation of received theoretical frameworks

The study does not merely apply existing theory; it tests and qualifies it. Contrary to classic indexing expectations, news language in Brazil, India, and South Africa did not cascade down from restrained government wording but was, if anything, indexed to parliamentary opposition voices, while in other contexts government parties dominated visibility — demonstrating that the state–media relationship is contingent on political system, party constellation, and a country’s stake in the conflict, and thereby advancing indexing theory beyond its original U.S.-centric formulation. The systematic documentation of a production–reception mismatch — heavy narrative supply failing to guarantee audience traction, with pro-Ukraine sentiment on social media declining while neutrality rose — challenges strong interpretations of the Herman–Chomsky propaganda model and marks an empirical contribution to understanding the limits of media influence. The study also handles the genuinely unresolved dispute over NATO co-responsibility — whether Western coverage underweighted it, or whether emphasising it risks symmetrising an asymmetric war — without prematurely adjudicating, and acknowledges that selection between these frameworks reflects deeper ontological commitments in IR theory. Finally, the identification of evaluative asymmetry in Russian academic analysis — where identical lexical choices are read as accuracy in friendly media and manipulation in Western media — offers methodological caution to comparative scholars about how analytical apparatus can embed normative premises that foreclose empirical questions.

Policy relevance and a forward research agenda

Beyond academic utility, the study performs a synthetic function for diplomats, policymakers, and strategic analysts: it distils overwhelming and often contradictory daily media fragments into coherent framing matrices, identifying dominant narratives, counter-narratives, and emergent discursive shifts over time, and thereby enables decision-makers to move beyond reactive responses towards a temporal understanding of how frames are deployed, amplified, and reinterpreted by third-party states. Equally, by mapping under-researched pathways — the elite–vernacular gap, the scarcity of audience-reception evidence, the undertheorised state–society gap in third-state cases, limited platform and format diversity, and the absence of causal identification in media-effects research — the study provides a structured research agenda rather than merely a summary. Its recommendation that future comparative work pursue independent coding by researchers embedded in different media systems, with divergence treated as substantive evidence rather than measurement error, offers a practical pathway for building robust comparative apparatus despite geopolitical constraints.

Overall assessment

Taken together, these contributions position the work as an original methodological synthesis with applied relevance: an integrative, cross-linguistic, and methodologically self-aware review, augmented by new primary survey data and an applied pilot of AI-assisted monitoring. The study largely borrows and confirms rather than invents theory — corroborating, for example, the alliance-bloc framing model — but its unusual transparency about its own limitations is itself a contribution, offering a model for how comparative media studies might handle the epistemological challenges of researching a politically charged conflict in which the object of study is embedded in competing information ecosystems. It is best understood as a methodological proof-of-concept for the wider anticipatory media literacy agenda.

Taken together, the review supported four overall conclusions. First, the framing of the Russo-Ukrainian war was structured less by individual national idiosyncrasies than by alliance-bloc membership, with domestication as the dominant mechanism in non-aligned systems — a finding that any monitoring methodology must build in as a stratification variable. Second, the dominant Western causal frame (Russian imperial aggression) and the marginalised co-responsibility frame (NATO expansion) coexisted in nearly all Western media systems, but at ratios so unequal that the diversity requirement of impartial coverage was arguably not met; conversely, the co-responsibility literature itself required critical handling. Third, vocabulary functioned as a leading indicator of framing shifts — the migration from ‘crisis’ to ‘war’ to ‘invasion’, or from ‘special military operation’ to civilisational war — which makes lexical monitoring one of the most tractable early-warning signals for the anticipatory purposes of this project. Fourth, media narratives and public opinion were only loosely coupled, so any monitoring system restricted to the supply side would systematically misestimate discourse shifts; engagement and survey data must be integrated by design. Fifth, setting aside war-induced ideological-political divisions, the selection between the two main explanatory frameworks identified by Zollmann (2024) is not purely empirical. It is ontologically grounded—whether through a realist or liberal IR lens. Conscious or not, this worldview ultimately shapes geopolitical interpretation.

Methodologically (Section VI), the way forward indicated by the strongest reviewed studies was a hybrid architecture: multilingual computational pipelines for scale and speed, validated by human-coded framing analysis for conceptual accuracy, and triangulated with events data and official-statement corpora — precisely the kind of AI-facilitated, real-time, globally comparative monitoring that the project’s original aims anticipated and that recent advances have now brought within reach. A

pilot study indicated that AI-supported tools enable the precise and rapid analysis of nuanced discourses at the local media level. As previously discussed, media in authoritarian regimes, in particular, strongly reflect official government stances. Insights or cross-checking from local experts—or initially from the European diaspora—could strengthen media monitoring validity and reliability in countries like Iran. No new core staff are needed; experts across the EU (some cited here) can be pooled and work remotely.

Although most of this pilot output was based on US-based Anthropic AI tools (Claude, the best seemed to be Fable 5) and Chinese-based DeepSeek, using a Europe-based AI like Mistral (Le Chat) or Lumo means one can avoid many concerns associated with foreign-hosted proprietary models—such as data residency, cloud compliance, or vendor lock-in. Yet Mistral is not currently the best AI tool - or even among the top - when it comes to performance on demanding tasks.¹⁰

These findings also caution academics, governments, and their contractors against relying on press-report datasets, as reporting probabilities vary by event type, location, and time—potentially reflecting media biases rather than actual phenomena. Nonetheless, the findings further suggest that, in light of both geopolitical challenges and AI progress, the timing is right to introduce a novel method for monitoring foreign policy discourses.

Limitations of the Study

This study is best understood as a comparative methodological synthesis and pilot rather than a source of definitive empirical conclusions. Its principal strengths — multilingual scope, deliberate incorporation of structurally underrepresented Russian-language and Central European scholarship, and methodological experimentation with AI-assisted analysis — are inseparable from a set of limitations that condition how its findings should be read. These fall into seven clusters.

Review design: illustrative rather than systematic

Although broad, the literature review is not a systematic review or meta-analysis. Evidence was combined from Scopus, Web of Science, CEEOL, Google Scholar, and eLibrary.ru without a formal PRISMA protocol, quantitative quality assessment, or risk-of-bias scoring. Inclusion and exclusion decisions involved unavoidable judgment calls: purely visual analyses were excluded, some demonstrably weak studies were deliberately retained to illustrate database quality problems, and certain outputs were omitted on editorial grounds. Complete coverage of relevant studies was, as acknowledged throughout, impossible within the available time and resources; the evidence base is therefore representative and illustrative rather than exhaustive. The reviewed studies are also highly heterogeneous — in methodology, sampling, media types, countries, languages, periods, and units of analysis — which limits cumulative comparability and means that clustering similar findings can itself be misleading.

Survey component: small, skewed, and non-representative

The only original empirical dataset is the mini global survey of IR experts and diplomats (n = 83, approximately one-third response rate from over 200 contacted). Recruitment relied on convenience sampling through personal contacts, secondary referrals, cold outreach, and — in some cases — a

¹⁰ Institute of the Estonian Language (2026). Estonian LLM Leaderboard 2026, https://moodupuu.eki.ee/benchmark/propaganda_resistance

symbolic honorarium, and the author explicitly notes that this method does not provide fully reliable outputs. The respondent pool is geographically skewed: roughly 71% come from the Collective West, with Poland alone accounting for over a third of that cohort (an artefact of recruitment via a Polish IR journal succeeding where parallel attempts through Czech, Hungarian, Slovak, and international bodies failed), while Post-Soviet and Global South respondents together constitute under 30%. The non-Western subsamples are too small for robust statistical inference, which limits the generalisability of comparative claims about “Western versus non-Western” interpretive patterns. The six Russian respondents were likely self-selected for willingness to participate internationally and may hold views more critical of the Kremlin than mainstream Russian academic opinion. More fundamentally, the survey groups respondents largely by citizenship, yet nationality is an imperfect proxy for epistemic community: scholars trained or employed abroad may share analytical frameworks that diverge from those implied by their passports. Finally, the design identifies associations between geopolitical location and interpretive preference but cannot establish causality; alternative explanatory variables — institutional incentives, funding structures, publication pressures, disciplinary traditions, professional networks — were not systematically examined.

Corpus biases: language, media type, and temporal skew

The reviewed literature disproportionately relies on English-language sources and elite legacy outlets (The New York Times, The Guardian, BBC, CNN), while vernacular press, regional media, and non-English digital ecosystems receive only patchy coverage; television, Telegram channels, and social media platforms — central to the contemporary information environment — remain systematically understudied relative to print and online news. Regional coverage is likewise uneven: Western and Russian scholarship receives substantial attention, whereas Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia are comparatively thin, a function of the available literature rather than deliberate design. A temporal skew compounds these gaps: a significant share of production-side studies freezes analysis in the first weeks and months of the 2022 invasion, even though sentiment demonstrably drifted over time, which undermines claims about longitudinal framing dynamics. The deliberate exclusion of most visual analyses (photographs, television imagery, memes, AI-generated images) further leaves an increasingly important dimension of contemporary information warfare largely unexamined. A general caution also applies to any study in the corpus relying on press-derived event datasets: as Shaver et al. (2021) demonstrate, the probability of event coverage varies systematically by event type, location, and time, so media-derived corpora may reflect reporting tendencies rather than underlying reality.

Operationalisation problems in the reviewed literature

The reviewed studies employ markedly different conceptualisations of “framing” — from Entmanian responsibility attribution to LDA/BERTopic topic distributions to transitivity structures in critical discourse analysis — making systematic meta-analysis effectively impossible. Computational approaches face the specific problem that topics are not frames: the interpretive leap from co-occurring word clusters to generic frames remains undertheorised and analyst-dependent, and different topic models applied to the same corpus can prioritise different frames, indicating that methodological choice materially affects substantive conclusions. Several discourse-analytical studies rest on tiny corpora or single-outlet designs that conflate outlet-level, country-level, and system-level differences, and numerous manual content analyses fail to report intercoder reliability — a particular concern for politically charged coding categories such as “pro-Russian” versus “pro-Ukrainian” framing.

The Russian-language corpus: quality, asymmetry, and reflexivity

Russian-language scholarship accessed via eLibrary.ru exhibits well-documented integrity problems, including over 70,000 identified cases of publication duplication, plagiarism, paper mills, and hijacked journals; the 2022–2023 withdrawal of the Russian Science Citation Index from Web of Science removed the principal external quality filter, and CEEOL was used only as a discovery layer rather than a quality filter. Beyond quality, the corpus bifurcates between empirically grounded work and doctrinal output that deploys terms such as “destructive media,” “cognitive warfare,” and “Russophobic propaganda” without operationalisation — texts that function more as primary-source artefacts of state-adjacent discourse than as independent scholarship, yet appear alongside methodologically rigorous studies. An evaluative asymmetry runs through much of this literature: identical lexical choices are read as “friendly neutrality” in non-Western media but as “manipulation” or “demonisation” in Western media. Most fundamentally, the Russian academic literature surveyed is itself produced within the constrained discursive environment it purports to describe — under the “fake news” law and broader repressive measures — and must be read accordingly: visible discourse under censorship cannot reveal the true distribution of scholarly opinion, particularly given emigration and self-silencing among scholars working on sensitive topics.

Media effects: association without causation

No reviewed study establishes causal relationships between media narratives and public attitudes through panel, experimental, or quasi-experimental designs; all evidence is observational, documenting congruence and mismatch rather than persuasion or translation. Reception data are sparse relative to production-side analysis, and the few audience-focused studies rely on self-report surveys, unrepresentative social media samples, or discourse under censorship. Related theoretical gaps remain: the repeatedly observed divergence between official editorial lines and public opinion (in South Korea, Mongolia, India, Indonesia) is documented but not systematically theorised, and standard media-system typologies fail to accommodate phenomena such as Z-channels — editorially independent, tactically critical, yet ideologically aligned outlets.

Execution, positionality, and shelf life

The entire review — source selection, coding, translation, and synthesis — was executed by a single researcher (two alternative parts were produced independently by another researcher) without independent double-coding or inter-rater reliability checks. The use of AI tools for summarising and analysing Russian-language sources introduces potential biases from model training data and may obscure nuances in the original texts, and in some cases substituted for direct engagement with full texts. Several pivotal sources had not undergone peer review at the time of writing. Finally, the study’s conclusions are time-bound in two respects: the war and its media coverage continue to evolve, and findings on the comparative performance of AI tools are explicitly tied to a rapidly changing technological landscape, meaning they will date quickly and require periodic revisiting.

Overall assessment

None of these limitations undermines the study’s value, but together they define its academic status. The findings should be read as informed synthesis and hypothesis-generating evidence — a rich, illustrative pilot demonstrating what multilingual, AI-assisted comparative review can achieve and where its boundaries lie — rather than as statistically representative results, definitive claims about media effects, or a fully replicable systematic review. It is hoped that the consistent and explicit

acknowledgement of these constraints can itself be seen as methodological strength: the study models the reflexive transparency it recommends to the field.

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