

**Unmasking Media Narratives through Comparative Corpus
Linguistic Analysis: A Study of Russia-Ukraine Conflict**

Md. Obaidullah

obaidullah.ovi@nubtkhulna.ac.bd

Hasan Shaikh

hasanshaikhhrampal@gmail.com

Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna, Bangladesh

Article History:

Received:

10 May 2024

Accepted:

19 June 2024

Corresponding Author:

obaidullah.ovi@nubtkhulna.ac.bd

Keywords:

Media Narrative, Corpus

Linguistics, Critical Discourse

Analysis, Russia-Ukraine Conflict

In a world inundated with diverse media narratives, the Russia-Ukraine conflict emerges as a focal point of contention, revealing a complex interplay of linguistic strategies and discursive tactics. This study aims to unravel the intricacies of lexical choices, and discursive techniques employed by *Sputnik*, *BBC*, and *Fox News* in their coverage of the Russia-Ukraine conflict through corpus-assisted discourse studies techniques. Three corpora were created comprising 5,347 articles with 5,829,747 tokens, sampled from February 2022 to February 2023. Moreover, *Sputnik*'s diction strategically employs the phrase "military operation" while eschewing "war", portraying the conflict as a defensive, legitimate endeavour, thus reinforcing a Russian geopolitical narrative that recasts Ukraine not as a victim but as an active participant with extremist factions. *BBC*, in contrast, adopts a pro-Western stance, framing Ukraine as a victim and Russia as an aggressor. *Fox News* calls Russia's action as an invasion, and highlights the individual roles of political leaders in shaping the conflict. However, to address the limitations

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of this study, future studies can expand the scope, sources, languages, and genres for analysis. Furthermore, media consumers need to practice media literacy, cross-checking, and critical analysis in the era of overloaded information in order to form well-rounded opinions on complex geopolitical events.

INTRODUCTION

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has been a global issue, with media outlets providing varying accounts of the conflict. This study aims to understand, analyze, and compare the linguistic tools and discursive strategies used by Russian (*Sputnik*), European (*BBC*), and American (*Fox News*) media in their coverage of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The reasons for choosing these outlets are as follows. First of all, *Sputnik*, a Russian state-controlled news agency, presents the Russian government's international interests and perspectives (Voorhoof, 2022), countering Western media narratives. Secondly, the *BBC*, a globally recognized news organization, offers an international perspective (Henery, 2010) of the conflict, providing insights for cross-cultural and cross-linguistic analyses. Finally, *Fox News*, a prominent US news source, is perceived as conservative and right-leaning (Bartlett, 2015), offering a contrastive case for cross-cultural analysis.

The data happen to be op-ed articles and news reports directly aligned with Russia-Ukraine conflict published from 01 February 2022 to 28 February 2023 on the selected media websites.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict began after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Schoen & Smith, 2016), leading to tensions over Ukraine's desire to join NATO (Bowen, 2023; Cohen, 2019). In 2010, pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich was elected president, but his overthrow in 2014 led to Russia annexing the Crimean Peninsula and supporting separatists in eastern Ukraine (Greenberg, 2019; Schoen & Smith, 2016). Despite ceasefires and peace agreements (Cohen, 2019), the war continues (Lohsen & Morcos, 2022; Hurak, 2015), with Russia launching a special military operation in eastern Ukraine in February 2022

(Berger, 2022; Talley, 2022). The real goal is to prevent Ukraine from joining NATO and restore Russia's control over its former sphere of influence (Greenberg, 2019; Schoen & Smith, 2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media Narratives

In media, “narrative is a form of representation” (Fulton, 2005, p. 1). In this research context, media narratives refer to online coverage of events related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, published in the form of op-ed articles and news reports in the selected media. Media narrative shapes public opinion by presenting issues, selecting stories, and using persuasive language. The public influences the media by choosing media, providing feedback, and participating in civic activities (Bell, 1991; Lukin, 2019). According to Herman and Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model, media's role is to promote and protect ruling groups' interests. They choose topics, filter out information that contradicts dominant views, use language that influences audience emotions, and limit debate to acceptable boundaries. Thus, Kutter and Kantner (2012), and Nisco (2013) state that concordance analysis can provide insights into how media outlets present conflict actors and causes.

Corpus Linguistics

Corpus linguistics (CL) is a data-driven method of studying linguistics, using large digital corpora to analyze linguistic content (McEney & Hardie, 2012). Electronic corpora emerged with the emergence of computer science in the 1960s and gained popularity in the year 2000 (Lindquist, 2009). CL is a valuable technique for revealing hidden aspects of spoken language that perception alone cannot reveal (Reppen, 2010). The use of technology makes it easier to analyze large amounts of data, making manual analysis impractical (McEney & Hardie, 2012). CL is not a specific branch of linguistics but rather a set of approaches to linguistics (McEney & Hardie, 2012). It is seen as “use-based” and dynamic (Lindquist, 2009), with some linguists, such as Arts and Meijs, describing CL as corpus-based learning using digital text corpora and language analysis software as

a new field with a distinctive ability to express linguistic reality (Leech, 1992). As a corpus-based study, utilizing digital text corpora and language analysis software, CL requires a detailed explanation.

Using corpus linguistic methods, Solopova & Ilyushkina (2017) evaluated NOW corpus' political metaphors. 180 metaphorical entities were discovered focusing on 'Russia', 'Russian', 'Russians', and 'Putin'. Putin was symbolized for the entire nation of Russia. The symbolic frames depicted the government as vindictive and unreliable, posing a threat to other states and undertaking harmful foreign policies.

Kryzhanivska (2022) conducted a corpus-based analysis of media coverage on the Russian-Ukraine issue from August 2014 to March 2015 in *The Guardian*, *TSN*, and *RT*, Putin was the most frequently mentioned name in *TSN* and *The Guardian* corpora, suggesting his significant role in the matter. *RT* selected the USA as the most frequently used proper noun, indicating its role as a catalyst for conflict.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a research method that examines how language is used to communicate social and political issues, though “for CDA, language is not powerful on its own – it gains power by the use powerful people make of it” (Weiss & Wodak, 2003, p. 14). CDA aims to reveal the hidden meanings and power relations in discourse (Weiss & Wodak, 2003; Wodak, 2001), and to challenge them if they are unfair or oppressive. CDA is based on the idea that language is not neutral, rather reflects and shapes the worldviews of different groups of people (Waugh et al., 2016). Analyzing the language, it can uncover the ideologies and values that are embedded in discourse (Weiss & Wodak, 2003; Dijk, 1998), and also shows how discourse is influenced by the historical, cultural, political, and social context in which it occurs (Wodak, 2001).

Komsomolskaya Pravda's (KP) online news coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 conducted by Pomerantsev (2023) reveals that KP's narratives, before to the conflict, centered on vilifying Ukraine, emphasizing Western dangers to Russia, and endorsing the notion of the Russian world. However, the wartime corpus frequently recalls memories of the Great Patriotic War, compares Ukraine with Hitler's Germany, and emphasises on the Russian world.

An analysis of the publications of Strategic Studies Institutes of Russia, Ukraine, the US, the EU, and NATO from 1993 to 2014, carried out by Ilin & Nihatova (2023), reveals the importance of ethno-territorial nationalism in Russian politics and ideology, which is the basis for hybrid warfare.

Upon examining the literatures, it is evident that no research has been done on how the media has portrayed the Russia-Ukraine conflict, let alone a comparative corpus linguistic analysis of the narratives generated by *Sputnik*, *BBC*, and *Fox News*. Thus, this work intends to address this gap. Therefore, the study's point of departure is to assess and compare the narratives presented by Russian, European, and American media on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine crisis. Furthermore, this study seeks to improve our understanding of the media's power to affect and change public perception and opinion in the complex sociopolitical settings.

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) (Ancarno, 2020; Partington et al., 2013; Partington, 2010) to analyze media texts related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. CL is a methodology that focuses on data analysis techniques rather than the specific subject matter under investigation (Lindquist, 2009). It is motivated by its 'reliability and speed', facilitated by electronic texts and computational tools (Lindquist, 2009, p. 5). Eminently, corpora mirrors natural language usage without artificial constraints (McEnery & Wilson, 2001), ensuring

the authenticity of media portrayals of the events. Besides, corpora can “uncover patterns of usage and test intuitions about language usage by specific groups of users” (Jones, 2022, p. 126). Therefore, this approach yields comprehensive and insightful perspectives into the relevant media discourse within these corpora, providing valuable insights into the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

However, corpora provide information on language usage trends but do not uncover the underlying reasons and cognitive processes that impact language selection. The rationales behind particular forms, collocations, or use extend beyond statistical correlations (Jones, 2022). Thus, qualitative interpretation by researchers is essential in molding the outcome of CL studies, as the CADS technique incorporates CDA for interpreting the examined data.

News is a form of public discourse (Dijk, 1988) that significantly influences information dissemination across various fields, including media studies and linguistics (Drid, 2018). News production is not merely a factual presentation but a complex narrative shaped by societal norms and professional judgment, often resulting in distorted reflection of reality (Dijk, 1988). The selection of language to depict events greatly influences the understanding of news articles (Bednarek & Caple, 2012; Develotte & Rechniewski, 2001). People get news from different sources, frequently looking to external sources to broaden their knowledge outside existing ideological structures (Hosseini, 2016). News output is frequently swayed by the agenda of media owners, resulting in partial reporting of conflicts (Hamborg et al., 2018; Hamborg, 2023). Therefore, CDA is the appropriate method to reveal these narratives.

As the CADS is the combination of corpus-based approach and CDA (Ancarno, 2020), incorporating both quantitative and qualitative research. Furthermore, the main data outputs in CADS are concordance lists, multi-word expression lists, keyword lists, and collocation lists (Ancarno, 2020), this study utilizes all these data outputs except keyword lists with their qualitative interpretations.

Keywords, “a statistical abstraction from frequency lists” (McEnery & Hardie, 2012, p. 41). Here, AntConc’s “word” tool is used to discover ten most frequent tokens (excluding function words) from each corpus and then compared accordingly putting on excel spreadsheet.

Collocation, the frequent co-occurrence of words or phrases within a specific range of a node word, is a concept that goes beyond random chance, highlighting patterns in language use (McEnery & Hardie, 2012; Ancarno, 2020). In corpus linguistics, it’s common to focus on the most significant collocates, often the top twenty, for analysis (Ancarno, 2020). This study narrows down to five collocates related to conflict/ war discourse, using AntConc’s “collocate” tool for qualitative interpretation.

Multiword Expressions manifest recurrently, signifying a pattern of linguistic utilization, and “are also sometimes termed n-gram, word cluster, and so on” (Ancarno, 2020, p. 171). In the case of n-gram, this study analysed four grams through “n-gram” tool.

Concordances are comprehensive lists of every instance of a word or phrase in a corpus (Ancarno, 2020), aiding in the comprehension of its significance and the speaker’s perspective (Partington et al., 2013). They are beneficial for locating instances of word groups (Partington et al., 2013) and can be arranged in alphabetical order for convenient recognition (Ancarno, 2020). However, the researcher has chosen the lemma “invasion” for concordance analysis.

Sampling and Procedure

Three corpora were compiled from three news outlets in total 5,347 articles with 5,829,747 tokens (Sputnik: 2,581 articles with 3,201,762 tokens; BBC: 1,409 articles with 1,188,814 tokens, and Fox News: 1,357 articles with 1,439,171 tokens) published from 01 February 2022 to 28 February 2023.

Wayback Machine was used tool to access websites: (<http://www.sputniknews.com>), (bbc.co.uk/news), and (<http://www.foxnews.com>) at specific time and data. Then, the articles were collected and saved in separate

text documents with UTF-8 coding cleaning through jusText demo, and were analyzed by AntConc's respective tools.

We communicated with all three organizations via email, seeking permission to utilize their data. Unfortunately, only the BBC responded and gave permission. Thus, we are positive in the appropriateness of utilizing the other two organization's data for educational purposes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Frequency

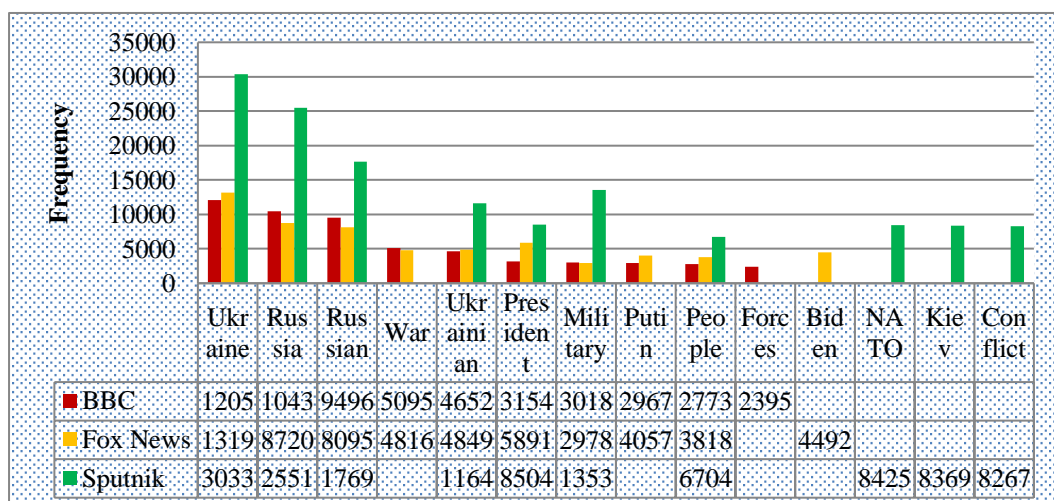


Figure 1. The comparison of the top ten most frequently used tokens

The frequency analyses demonstrate distinct linguistic patterns and discursive tactics that may reflect the outlets' editorial perspectives, focus areas, and possibly their underlying biases or agendas.

Sputnik shows a markedly higher frequency of all the listed terms compared to the *BBC* and *Fox News*, with particularly high counts for "Ukraine", "Russia", "Russian", and "Military". This suggests a more intensive coverage of the conflict, with a possible emphasis on military aspects and a focus on both countries involved. The high frequency of "NATO" and "Kiev" in *Sputnik*'s coverage, absent from the others, hints at specific discursive strategies that might emphasize NATO's involvement in the conflict and center the narrative around the Ukrainian capital, potentially framing the conflict in terms that align with Russian

geopolitical narratives; this echoes with the findings of Xu and Tao (2023). This might serve to position the conflict not just as a regional or bilateral issue, but as a symptom or flashpoint of larger international tensions.

BBC and *Fox News*, while similar in their lower frequency counts compared to *Sputnik*, exhibit their own unique patterns. The *BBC*'s coverage appears to be more balanced in terms of mentioning both "Ukraine" and "Russia", though still with a significant focus on the conflict ("War") and military aspects. As Baker (2006) suggests that a term, phrase, or grammatical construction might imply the presence of a discourse, *Fox News*' higher frequency of "President" and "Biden", indicates a possible emphasis on the US administration's role or stance regarding the conflict, possibly the emphasis on political leadership. The presence of "Putin" in both *BBC* and *Fox News* coverage, with a notably higher count in *Fox News*, could point to a discursive strategy that personalizes the conflict, possibly attributing the actions or decisions directly to the Russian leader.

The use of "war" is telling, as it is mentioned less frequently than geographical or personal identifiers, suggesting a possible editorial choice across outlets to frame the conflict in specific terms that may influence public perception. Notably, the absence of certain terms in some outlets' coverage, such as "Forces" in *Fox News* and both "Putin" and "War" in *Sputnik*'s dataset, further highlights the selective focus of each media outlet. This selection can be seen as a discursive tactic, either to foreground specific aspects of the conflict or to omit elements that may not align with the narrative the outlet seeks to construct.

In short, these aforementioned strategies might take the form of varying focus (e.g., military vs. diplomatic angles), personalization of the events (mention of leaders' names), and the involvement of other nations or organizations (e.g., NATO). These not only reflect the outlets' editorial choices but also shape the narratives, influencing public perception.

Collocation

The data provides a variegated canvas of linguistic preferences of three mainstream media, *Sputnik*, *BBC*, and *Fox News*, as regards the media discourse of the Russia-Ukraine dispute. On the one hand, it is clear that each of the three prefers certain terms and phrases over the others; on the other, that data are by no means sheer coincidences but are redolent of certain discursive tactics and devices, perhaps even the attitude of the publishers to the topic. The resulting collocations of the ten most frequent running words of three corpora are combined in the following table.

Table 1. Collocations of the most frequent words

<i>Sputnik</i>	<i>BBC</i>	<i>Fox News</i>
Collocations of Ukraine		
Operation, Conflict, Military, Nazify, Demilitarize	War, Invasion, Conflict, Eastern, Support	Eastern, Invasion, War, Kyiv, Aid
Collocations of Russia		
Operation, Sanctions, Military, Proxy, Conflict	Invasion, Sanctions, Accused, Annexed, Crimea	Launched, Invasion, War, Sanctions, Military
Collocations of Russian		
Forces, Defense, Military, Operation, Troops	Forces, Officials, Occupied, Separatists, Media	Forces, Destroy, Invasion, Aggression, Missile
Collocations of War		
	Crimes, Prisoners, anti, Effort, Began	Torn, Crimes, End, World, Cold
Collocations of Ukrainian		
Forces, Shelling, Attacks, Training, Territory	Forces, Territory, Officials, Refugees, Counter	Forces, Soldiers, Servicemen, Resistance, Refugees
Collocations of President		
Putin, Biden, Zelensky, Macron, Erdogan	Putin, Zelensky, Biden, Macron, Ursula	Biden, Zelensky, Putin, Trump, Xi
Collocations of Military		
Operation, Launched, Aid, Equipment, Targeting	Operation, exercises, Aid, Equipment, Alliance	Operation, Aid, Equipment, Exercise, Personal
Collocations of Putin		
	Ally, Regime, Speech,	Invasion, War, ally,

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	Ordered, Mobilisation	Ordered, Criminal
Collocations of People		
Protect, Militia, Proclaimed, Killed, Evacuated	Killed, Million, Donetsk, Displaced, Injured	Killed, Donetsk, American, Million, Fled
Collocations of Forces		
Occupying, Advancing, Armed, Control, Proxy		
Collocations of Biden		
		Administration, Approval, Announced, Sanctions, Policies
Collocations of NATO		
Expansion, Allies, Member, Join, Condemning		
Collocations of Kiev		
Regime, Coup, Assistance, Weapons, Military		
Collocations of Conflict		
Proxy, Resolve, Prolong, Involvement, Armed		

Sputnik's lexicon, for instance, is peppered with terms like “Operation”, “Nazify”, and “Demilitarize”, suggesting a narrative that frames Russia's actions as premeditated and defensive, possibly aimed at a certain ‘cleansing’ of what it perceives as militant elements within Ukraine. The use of “Nazify” is particularly telling, as it evokes historical injustices and attempts to position Ukraine not as a victim, but as an aggressor with radical elements. As Goddard (2020) states that every state legitimizes their goals and actions to garner domestic and international support for their foreign policies, this language strategy serves to justify military actions and recast the aggressor's role in a more favorable light.

However, *BBC* uses words like “Invasion” and “Support” suggesting a representation of the conflict as Russia's aggressive incursion into Ukrainian territoriality. The word “Support” contrasted with “Invasion” also suggests an underlying discourse of support for Ukraine, a representation of the country as the underdog that needs help, pitted against a stronger opponent. It shows that the

usage of some vocabulary words is based on an idea of unwilling invasion and how it has left a loud international echo.

Fox News and *BBC* share the same linguistic territory with the inclusion of terms like “Aid” and “Invasion” but concentrate more on “Kyiv”, the heart of Ukrainian resistance. This focus on the capital served to reinforce an idea of the geographical center of the conflict but also an ideological stand against aggression. For this reason, the use of “Aid” with “Invasion” reflects a discourse of support and resilience, where persons turn active on reference to the crisis; this aligns with the findings of Sun (2023).

The analysis extends beyond geographical entities to concepts and individuals, revealing how the portrayal of leadership and military actions can influence public perception. Terms associated with “President”—naming leaders like Putin, Biden, Zelensky—highlight the personalization of the conflict, suggesting its resolution rests not just on armies but on diplomatic leadership. The varied portrayal of military actions, from “Operation” to “Launched” and “Aid”, underscores the multifaceted nature of military engagement, from direct conflict to support logistics.

The singular term “War” unveils another layer of linguistic strategy. *Sputnik*’s absence in this category contrasts with *BBC* and *Fox News*, where “Crimes”, “Prisoners”, and “Cold” suggest a negative portrayal of conflict, from the immediate to the protracted, the physical to the ideological, with implications of legality and historical context that may invoke reader sympathy towards Ukraine. Similarly, the discourse surrounding “Forces” and “Military” reveals an emphasis on active engagement, control, and the strategic dimensions of the conflict. *Sputnik*’s addition of “Targeting” might subtly imply a more aggressive stance by opposing forces, because conflict intensifies group solidarity, fostering a deeper sense of unity and increasing skepticism towards the opposing faction (Nabers, 2009), portraying foreign countries as adversaries to unite and strengthen internal national unity (Baker & Oneal, 2001).

As Richardson (2007) states, “the way that people are named in news discourse can have significant impact on the way in which they are viewed” (p. 49), the portrayal of “Putin” diverges significantly, with *Sputnik*’s absence of direct criticism contrasting with *BBC* and *Fox News*’ use of “Invasion”, “War”, and “Criminal”, suggesting a clear stance against the Russian president’s actions.

The collocations related to “People” and “Forces” further accentuate the human cost and the role of military actors, with terms like “Protect”, “Killed”, “Evacuated”, “Occupying”, and “Advancing” painting vivid pictures of the conflict’s impact on civilian lives and the movements of military entities.

Finally, terms such as “NATO”, “Kiev”, “Conflict”, and “Biden” have clear geopolitical connotations. Furthermore, words such as “Expansion”, “Regime”, “Proxy”, and “Sanctions” have broader stakes and the involvement of global powers.

In summation, *Sputnik*’s narrative seems aligned with projecting a defensive and strategic posture for Russia, *BBC* highlights aggression and victimhood, while *Fox News* highlights the humanitarian crisis and the international response. Through their specific linguistic choices, these media outlets frame the conflict in ways that reflect their perspectives, potentially influencing the global narrative and public opinion on this critical issue. The comparative analysis of these discourses reveals not just the diversity of media narratives but also their power in constructing reality in the minds of their audiences.

Multiword Expression Lists

Quadrigrams, or sequences of four words, offer a constrained but insightful glimpse into the linguistic and rhetorical strategies that underpin the media’s depiction of the conflict.

Table 2. Top ten four grams for the Sputnik Russia-Ukraine conflict corpus

Type	Freq	Range
military operation in Ukraine	2311	937
special military operation in	1548	676

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joins us to discuss	1187	80
Russian President Vladimir Putin	1179	575
the conflict in Ukraine	1092	530
Donetsk and Lugansk people	906	403
the Donetsk and Lugansk	827	372
at the same time	755	386
the United States and	685	329
US president Joe Biden	662	351

The initial use of the phrases “military operation in Ukraine” and “special military operation” at the beginning of the conflict was so prevalent that it couldn’t have happened by chance. The author(s) were clearly trying to construct an explanation for it which favored formal names over colloquial or derogatory ones like “war” or “invasion”. According to Lukin (2019), not calling warfare wars is a powerful way to make them appear less savage and more justified, which makes sense because this language could be employed to justify actions taken by representing them as rational planned projects rather than random acts of aggressiveness. The expansive reach of these terms, encompassing their focus on the surrounding issues, suggests that this narrative is equally prevalent as it is present in their use in various reports and discourses across the corpus.

In addition, the use of the phrase “joins us to discussion” implies a dialogical form of presentation and a certain interactivity. Thus, the discussion or analysis is positioned as an organic element of the media structure. This form of exposure might be interpreted as an attempt to engage the audience. Therefore, the message presents information as a part of a dialogue in order to create the illusion of involvement and distribution, trying to focus public opinion and form a social perception through an open narrative structure.

Additionally, encomium written for “Russian President Vladimir Putin” and “US President Joe Biden” also refer to the themed aspects of media representations – the roles and the positive and negative necessity of influential personalities’ contributions and decisions. Indeed, such personalization seems to grind and translate the complex narrative of geopolitics into a more comprehensible language for an audience, imaging readers as individuals capable

of discerning the morally guilty and responsible – aligned with their prior, more or less articulated political sympathy.

Moreover, references to “the conflict in Ukraine”, along with “Donetsk and Lugansk people”, and “the Donetsk and Lugansk”, encapsulate the geographic and societal aspects of the ongoing conflict, delineating the regional and communal impacts entwined within this turmoil. The use of “people” in these phrases could signify an attempt to humanize the conflict or focus on the human impact, especially in certain regions. And the differentiation between the general conflict and specific regions suggests a nuanced coverage that acknowledges the varied impacts and stakes across different areas, perhaps downplaying its international significance or impact. However, the linguistic framing here could also serve to either highlight or downplay certain aspects of the conflict, depending on the narrative goals and ideologies, because “all language use involves ideology, and so ideology is ubiquitous” (Lukin, 2019, p. 16).

Finally, phrases like “at the same time” and “the United States and” suggest a broader geopolitical context and the involvement of international actors. This indicates an attempt to situate the conflict within a larger narrative of international relations and tensions, potentially framing it as part of a wider struggle between global powers.

Table 3. Top ten four grams for the BBC Russia-Ukraine conflict corpus

Type	Freq	Range
the war in Ukraine	299	236
Russian president Vladimir Putin	288	267
Russia s invasion of	221	188
Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky	205	188
US president Joe Biden	165	149
the start of the	152	135
told the BBC that	146	123
the invasion of Ukraine	121	114
since the start of	97	89
is not responsible for	93	78

A striking pattern emerges from the frequency and range of specific phrases: the conflict is personalized and politicized through the frequent mention

of key political figures, suggesting an emphasis on leadership dynamics in the narrative. For instance, phrases like “Russian President Vladimir Putin” and “Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky” not only underscore the personalization of the conflict but also highlight a range of coverage, suggesting these figures are central to the narrative across various contexts.

The use of “the war in Ukraine”, “Russia’s invasion of”, and “the invasion of Ukraine” suggest a clear framing of the conflict; the terms “war” and “invasion” imply an identified aggressor-victim binary in the discourse. This also shows that US President Joe Biden has an international dimension to the conflict which hints at a wider geopolitical story involving world leaders and extending outside Russia and Ukraine themselves.

The temporal framings “the start of the” and “since the start of” show how long this conflict has lasted and changed over time. Such a story may try to map out what happened during that period or point out which problems have persisted throughout its history. Also, telling something “told the BBC that” demonstrates media as an intermediary between people who say things and those who hear them, potentially influencing what becomes known about a conflict among wider audiences by choosing whose views are reported.

Lastly, the phrase “is not responsible for” is intriguing because it implies blame and accountability without explicitly stating them. In the narratives, these words can be signifiers of denial or deflection which may signal controversies or disagreements on who should take responsibility in the war. This manipulation of language shows that there is more narrative power being exercised at this stage of reporting where news organizations do not just tell about events but also mold people’s understanding by telling them what to think and whom to trust.

Table 4. Top ten four grams for the Fox News Russia-Ukraine conflict corpus

Type	Freq	Range
Russian President Vladimir Putin	822	447
Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky	594	285
told Fox News digital	445	236
prev next image of	432	77
s invasion of Ukraine	384	234
afp via getty images	356	211
the war in Ukraine	251	174
of the United States	181	103
in the United States	175	115
said in a statement	175	108

These narratives often mention “Russian President Vladimir Putin” and “Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy”, which implies a personalized approach to the conflict story. By focusing on individual leaders, it becomes easier for people to understand what is happening around them in terms of international relations or power games played out between countries with different interests at stake.

The phrase “Told Fox News digital” shows that this outlet wants its audience/readers to believe they have access to exclusive information – one way would be through having direct conversations with decision makers themselves; such as politicians who are involved in these events or their spokespersons etc. This strategy may also serve another purpose: making news more human by pointing out that there were talks between those who make news happen (newsmakers) and those who report on it (media).

It’s worth noting that “prev next image of” suggests reliance upon visual means storytelling; very likely for breaking down a complex story into smaller pieces digestible by viewers – photos can be used either evoke emotions or provide some additional context which words alone cannot do. Moreover, this kind of narrative may include specific captions/descriptions like “AFP via Getty Images”, thus making them more authentic and closer-to-life while at the same time keeping things related more to reality than abstraction (geopolitics). Such visuals supported

by pictures' texts create an illusion that we deal with something present here now rather than distant somewhere else before behind our backs.

References to “s invasion of Ukraine” and “the war in Ukraine” without direct attribution to Russia highlight a linguistic strategy that might be aimed at generalizing the conflict or avoiding direct blame in certain contexts.

Lastly, the mention of the United States, both “of the United States” and “in the United States”, alongside “said in a statement”, indicates an effort to contextualize the conflict within American geopolitical or domestic perspectives. This not only serves to relate the distant conflict to the outlet’s primary audience but also to weave the narrative into the broader tapestry of US foreign policy and public opinion.

Concordance

The concordances reflect a diversity of narratives and terminology that underscore the geopolitical complexities and the media’s role in framing these events.

Table 5. Concordances for the lemma “invasion” (Sputnik Russia-Ukraine conflict corpus): Keyword in context (KWIC) view

Left Context	Hit	Right Context
the Ukraine in February. “In light of Putin’s illegal	invasion	of Ukraine and weaponisation of energy, str
a result of the sanctions imposed on Russia for its	invasion	of Ukraine and what it means for dollar heg
published a pre-written headline about Russia’s	invasion	of Ukraine and soon thereafter deleted it, ad
erg, which erroneously broke the news of Russia’s	invasion	of Ukraine and kept the fake headline for ar
western countries condemned the operation as an “	Invasion”	of Ukraine and slapped harsh sanctions agai
Zelensky announcing a surrender to the Russian	invasion	of Ukraine and the danger that the use of
ted GDP at 2.2% next year and 2% in 2024, “the	invasion	of Ukraine and related events represent a do
mployed by the US before Russia launched its	invasion	of Ukraine and why the US would repeat th
of the Russian mission to the	invasion	of Ukraine by the Russian

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United Nations. “The has evidence of Russia fabricating a pretext for an	invasion	Federation was il of Ukraine by using operatives to carry out
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The corpus has a feature that stands out above all others: the word “invasion” is used again and again, but with different connotations. Western media outlets seem to be in a hurry to declare an invasion, or maybe they are just overly eager to predict one – at least according to some snippets which talk about Bloomberg’s premature or wrong reports on this matter. The fact that they were repeatedly corrected shows how fast news organizations can act without checking their facts properly. Media accuracy could have been compromised by speediness as well as the phrase “inadvertently published” being used instead of “erroneously broke the news”, which implies that these were accidental slip-ups rather than deliberate falsehoods and thus lowers public blame for what happened on them.

Also, Western sources and Russian statements can be easily distinguished by their terminology. An “invasion” is what the military actions are consistently referred to as by Western media and officials. This term is used because it implies that such action is illegal and aggressive. The rest of the world responded with sanctions and widespread condemnation which are aligned with this choice of language. However, in the same set of texts, different events were talked about by Russian sources as being “alleged” or “purported”. If taken literally these words may aim at weakening the idea that something aggressive had happened or contesting Western media’s narrative about it.

Moreover, one of the excerpts talks about President Zelensky surrendering which never happened; this kind of framing Ukraine’s response introduces a demoralizing or misleading storyline for public consumption. Such unchecked instances breed misinformation thus underscoring how vital accurate reporting is during conflicts.

As “the concordance lines indicate an awareness of the well-worn paths of language use” (Partington et al., 2013, p. 280), economic repercussions are also a theme within the concordances, with mentions of GDP projections and the impact

of the conflict on global markets. These snippets not only illustrate the direct consequences of military actions but also integrate the economic dimension into the narrative, thereby broadening the scope of the discussion from a purely military and political crisis to a global economic concern.

Overall, the concordances illustrate how the media's function is not just reporting but also constructing reality through words. The choice of linguistic conceptions, with the pronouncing statements as 'decisive invasion' by Western media or 'the so-called "invasion"' by Russian sources, shows inner preconceptions and expectations, which influence public understanding of the event and, consequently, international responses. The investigation suggests how war narratives constitute a delicate play of words in which the use of terms and phrases can sway public opinion, affect international relations and change the course of events.

Table 6. Concordances for the lemma "invasion" (BBC Russia-Ukraine conflict corpus): Keyword in context (KWIC) view

Left Context	Hit	Right Context
presence has drastically strengthened as Russia's	invasion	of Ukraine has suffered multiple setbacks. In
bership negotiations that started in 2014. Russia's	invasion	of Ukraine has turned a long-running balanci
lasco BBC News Mundo April 27, 2022 Russia's	invasion	of Ukraine has exposed an international land
It comes as US defence officials said Moscow's	invasion	of Ukraine has been a "massive strategic blu
h countries are militarily non-aligned but Russia's	invasion	of Ukraine has prompted increasing public s
rious Facebook 'superfans' on a mission Russia's	invasion	of Ukraine has been widely condemned in m
ater said: "Vladimir Putin's outrageous and illegal	invasion	of Ukraine has resulted in thousands of death
g Nato move its forces further westwards, Putin's	invasion	of Ukraine has achieved the exact opposite. "
sian state was always uncomfortable and Russia's	invasion	of Ukraine has led the government to think it
sure Mr Putin's "act of aggression" fails. Russia's	invasion	of Ukraine has provoked condemnation from

First, the wording often sends an impression that's sensational and urgent. "Massive strategic blunder", "prompted increasing public support for joining", and "has sent shivers of fear" are examples of a trend toward more emotionally charged language that amplifies the reader's feelings, stressing the level of priority and intensity in each event. This not only engages the reader's attention but also orients the reader's feelings toward the critical nature of the event as forecast by the media.

Moreover, passive constructions (eg, 'has been condemned', 'has led the government to think') and nominalisation (eg, 'invasion', 'thinking') are consistently used in the excerpts to describe actions and consequences of the conflict. Turning agents of actions (Russia) into objects of actions (the invasion) potentially depersonalises the aggressor, and the focus on the action and its effects (invasion and thinking, respectively) rather than the actor that prompts it might have a subtle influence of foregrounding consequences rather than the aggressive behavior itself.

The concordances also highlight the impact of the invasion on international relations, notably its effect on accelerating Ukraine's engagements with Western entities like NATO and the EU. The narrative of increased alignment with Western powers in response to the invasion underscores a significant shift in regional dynamics, illustrating the conflict's role in reshaping alliances and geopolitical strategies. This is particularly evident in the discussions about Ukraine's accelerated path towards European integration and NATO's strategic realignment.

Another extraordinary approach is the framing of the war in phrases of world implications and strategic mistakes, respecting global condemnation and strategic mistakes, as seen in 'massive strategic blunder' and 'provoked condemnation from countries. This no longer only contextualizes the struggle within a broader worldwide framework, however additionally categorizes it as a massive geopolitical misstep, potentially framing the aggressor in a bad mild in the world.

The humanitarian and societal impacts of the invasion, with reference to civilian suffering, displacement, and the broader social upheaval are highlighted as well through the terms such as “resulted in thousands of deaths” and “torn apart the lives of millions”. These convey the scale of human tragedy and serve to evoke empathy as well as a call for a moral stance from the audience.

Furthermore, BBC’s concordances around ‘invasion’ reveal an act of intentionally focusing attention on solidarity with Ukraine and condemnation of Russia. These lexicons: “illegal”, “outrageous”, and “condemnation” reflect a consensus among the reported narratives against Russia’s actions. This linguistic choice informs the reader’s understanding as well as mobilizes international discourse against Russia.

In short, the linguistic essences employ a combination of emotional amplification, strategic depersonalization, international contextualization, and a strong focus on humanitarian consequences by framing Russia’s actions in a particularly negative light, while highlighting the resilience and legitimacy of Ukraine’s responses and its alignment with Western values. These tactics collectively serve to shape public perception by emphasizing the urgency, severity, and broad-reaching implications of the conflict.

Table 7. Concordances for the lemma “invasion” (Fox News Russia-Ukraine conflict corpus): Keyword in context (KWIC) view

Left Context	Hit	Right Context
popped up in conversation following the Russian	invasion	of Ukraine and with the potential Chinese in
ns do not self-identify as Russian. Since Russia’s	invasion	of Ukraine and Crimea, the United Nations e
it and they got what they wanted, which is an	invasion	of Ukraine and a war with Russia, which is
, which he believes likely contributed to Russia’s	invasion	of Ukraine and China's increasing threats to i
policy iungodlyî. He also spoke about the Russian	invasion	of Ukraine and the cost of living crisis at
O allies are united in their opposition to Russia’s	invasion	of Ukraine and will not back down on the
to abstain from U.N. votes condemning Russia’s	invasion	of Ukraine and annexation of Ukrainian territ

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ofiting" off of Russian President Vladimir Putin's	invasion	of Ukraine and complained that green subsid
in gas prices in Europe is caused by Putin's	invasion	of Ukraine and Putin's energy war against Eu
rom Warsaw, Poland, nearly a year after Russia's	invasion	of Ukraine and a day after making a surprise

Incipiently, the repeated use of “invasion” underscores a clear linguistic choice to portray Russia’s actions in Ukraine not just as military operations but as aggressive, unsolicited encroachments on sovereignty carrying strong connotations of illegitimacy and violation, aligning with international law perspectives that condemn unprovoked attacks on sovereign nations. The frequent coupling of “invasion” with “Russia” or “Putin” personalizes the conflict, directing responsibility towards the Russian state and its leader, with emphasizing a narrative of individual culpability over systemic or historical complexities. As well as, the mention of a “potential Chinese invasion” suggests a portrayal of a broader global instability, rather than an isolated regional conflict, potentially influencing the audience’s perception of the conflict as a significant global threat, which necessitates international attention and action.

Besides, discussions regarding the international implications of the invasion are prominent, mentioning the economic and strategic consequences of the rising gas prices, geopolitical instability, and falling NATO ties. Most of such discourses tend to extrapolate on how the situated conflict in Ukraine is related to global issues and mobilize a vision where the invasion prepares a basis for the subsequent changes in the economy and politics at large. The linkage serves as a discursive way to relate to a wider audience that may be concerned with subsequent economic issues related to the conflict demographically excluding regional post-soviet politics.

Furthermore, the coverage regularly emphasizes the unity and actions of Western institutions such as NATO and the EU against Russia’s aggressions. In this manner, it not only depicts a joint ethical and military stand but also creates a narrative of a morally and strategically united Western. It essentially creates an

image of “Western values” in opposition to Russian reality, frequently implying that such are against international standards and morals knowingly or otherwise.

Likewise, the discourse around the invasion often invokes themes of resistance and resilience, from Ukrainian forces and international bodies. A narrative of active opposition and denouncement of Russian actions is underscored by strategic language usages: “condemn”, “demand”, “criticize”, and bringing up sanctions and resolutions which reinforces a portrayal of a proactive international community and a resistant Ukraine, countering any narrative of passivity or acceptance.

In conclusion, *Fox News* utilizes a consistent linguistic and discursive framework that emphasizes the illegitimacy of the Russian invasion, the moral and strategic unity of the West, and the broader implications of the conflict on global stability and economic conditions.

RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

To wrap up, media narratives are not impartial or unbiased; instead, they are deliberately created and controlled to shape public perception and validate political decisions, which echoes Robert Evans (2013) words: “There are three sides to every story: yours ... mine ... and the truth. And no one is lying. Memories shared serve each differently” (p. xix). News outlets’ linguistic choices reflect their editorial stance, geopolitical alliances, strategic storylines, and ideologies, because “ideology requires language” (Lukin, 2019, p. 16). As Liao (2012) states, strategic narratives have the potential to shape collective memory, thereby influencing collective identity and justifying policies, Sputnik’s coverage frequently uses terms like “military operation” and avoids the term “war,” framing the conflict as a defensive and legitimate action. This narrative strategy serves to justify Russia's actions and aligns with a broader Russian geopolitical narrative that portrays Ukraine not as a victim but as a participant with radical elements, thereby reshaping perceptions of aggression and defense. Because Bhatia (2005) states, the act of colonization begins not with physical invasion, but with the imposition of a dominant culture’s language and naming systems. This linguistic

and symbolic takeover aims to erase the existing identity and history of the colonized, paving the way for physical subjugation.

In contrast, BBC presents the conflict as an aggressive invasion by Russia, using terms that emphasize violation and aggression. This framing paints Russia as the clear aggressor and Ukraine as a victim, which aligns with Western diplomatic narratives and supports international condemnation of Russia's actions. Though there is a saying that BBC gives preferential treatment to the more powerful side of the conflict (Timotjevic, 2022; Kryzhanivska, 2022), it is not the case with Russia, implying that its coverage may be influenced by its own agendas and interests.

Fox News, while similar to the BBC in its portrayal of the conflict as an invasion, also emphasizes the personal roles of political leaders, particularly highlighting the US's perspective and response. The narrative here is rich with themes of leadership, international ramifications, and the moral high ground held by Western allies, framing the conflict within a broader narrative of global instability and Western solidarity against Russian aggression.

Moreover, Lukin (2019) states, "Language is always ideological, and ideology depends on language. Language cannot escape ideology" (p. 16). Thus, in the portrayal of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, ideologies wrestle for dominance wielding language and media as their weapons. This study highlights the significance of media literacy and critical analysis while consuming news, particularly in an age of excessive information. Media consumers should be cautious of inherent flaws in news reporting and look up different viewpoints to develop a comprehensive picture of intricate geopolitical events. Furthermore, Liaropoulos (2022) states: humans have always wielded the double-edged sword of information. Therefore, media outlets should strive for greater transparency in their reporting processes and be clear about their editorial biases, enhancing the credibility and ethical standing of journalistic practice.

This study, written amidst the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, acknowledges limitations due to time constraints. It only analysed online articles from February 2022 to February 2023, focusing on three news sources and English

texts, and excluding other media forms like editorials and cartoons. Thus, further research can expand the time frame, source variety, language, and media types for analysis.

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