

Framing of Russia-Ukraine War: Comparisons of Global News

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Abstract. *This study examined the news framing of the Russia-Ukraine war in global news media outlets. Using the framing theory, a literature review of prominent news frames covering wars and conflicts was drawn. Two hypotheses were set for the major news frames more than others and the relationship between the emphasis on the frames and news organizations' national interests. Based on predicted framing themes, news frames were obtained from topic modeling with 48,364 news stories.*

An analysis with a verification sample was implemented to compare the topics with news publishers' national interests. Five news frames from topic modeling were found: humanism, politics, peace, war, and the economy. In the coverage of the news about the war by global news organizations, the humanism and peace frames were related to Ukraine, whereas the war frame was associated with Russia. The relationship between national interests and pronounced news frames found that European news emphasized humanism more than other regions. The national interest of news outlets was reflected in the news of the war. Study implications and suggestions in terms of news framing and national interests were discussed.

Keywords: News framing; Russia-Ukraine war; Topic modeling; National interest; Global news; Digital journalism.

Introduction

The Russia-Ukraine war in 2022 has received immense media attention due to its impact on the world. The underlying issues of the Russia-Ukraine war point to multiple factors, including geopolitics, ethnicity, territorial sovereignty, economy, and international relations (Cliff, 2023). These issues are channeled through media outlets, particularly news publishers. The aspects of wars and conflicts that the news media cover can influence audience responses and evaluations. When unrelated, misinformed, or contrasting issues are emphasized in the news media, the harm drawn from the coverage can be imposed on the audience (Demarest & Langer, 2021). In other words, the influence of war news framing can lead to severe consequences by forming the audience's perceptions, appraisals, and actions toward the countries.

Wars and conflicts covered by the news media are frequent topics of interest to communication researchers since their impacts can be prominent. The information channels such as news networks, the Internet, and social media platforms are what global audiences rely on to obtain stories today. The news has frames reflecting context, culture, people, and regions. Past studies made diverse approaches to news frame structures of wars and conflicts (e.g., Demarest & Langer, 2021; Singh, 2018). By focusing on the news narratives, the studies revealed that the war-peace frame was dominant (Ojala & Pantti, 2017). Other analyses of wars and conflicts report that politics, humanism, and the economy are emphasized more than others (Echevarria II, 2022). Ideological metaphors, Western centrism, national interest, and security threats are frequent frames in global conflicts (Barahmeh & Fras, 2023).

Several drawbacks of past news framing studies on wars and conflicts should be noted. First, although some research has been conducted on the war (e.g., Nisch, 2023) and past conflicts, they analyzed social media sentiment (Nikolayenko, 2019) or news agendas (e.g.,