

Propaganda channels and their comparative effectiveness: The case of Russia's war in Ukraine

International Sociology

1–24

© The Author(s) 2024

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/02685809241232637

journals.sagepub.com/home/iss**Anton Oleinik** 

Memorial University of Newfoundland, Canada

Volodymyr Paniotto

National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Ukraine

Abstract

Since Lasswell, propaganda has been considered one of three chief implements of warfare, along with military and economic pressure. Russia's invasion of Ukraine revives public and scholarly interest in war propaganda. The Russian political leader frames the war as an imperial war. The Ukrainian political leader frames it as a war of national liberation. The discursive battle thus complements the military combat. The outcome of the discursive combat depends on the effectiveness of propaganda deployed by the parties involved. Propaganda effectiveness is the propagation of war-related messages stated by political leaders through various media with no or few distortions. The effectiveness of propaganda is compared (i) across countries, with a particular focus on two belligerents, Russia and Ukraine, (2) in the function of the medium (mass media, digital media), and (iii) using two different methods (content analysis and survey research). Data were collected during the first year of the large-scale invasion (February 2022 to February 2023). Survey data allowed measuring the degree of the target audience's agreement with key propagated messages.

Keywords

Content analysis, digital media, empire, propaganda, Ukraine, war

Introduction

Although sociologists do not neglect war as a subject of study, they started to show interest in researching war relatively recently (Wimmer, 2014). The share of scholarly publications in the field of sociology whose metadata (title, abstract, and

Corresponding author:

Anton Oleinik, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL A1C 5S7, Canada.

Email: aoleinik@hotmail.com

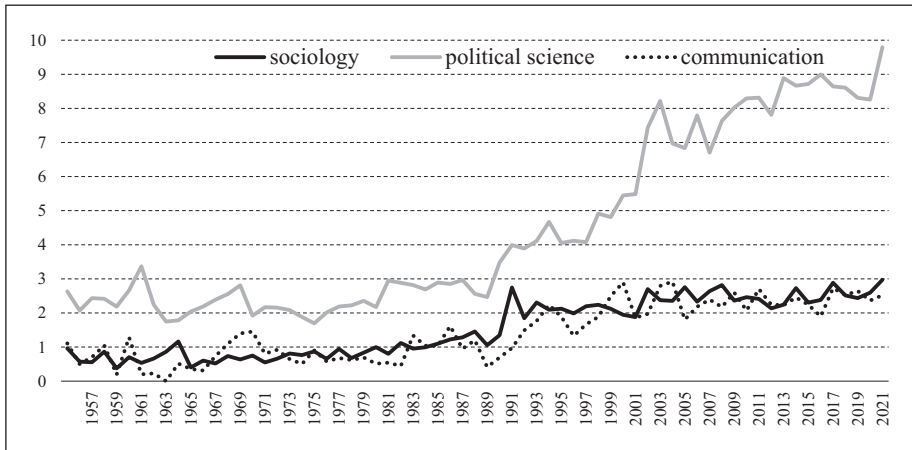


Figure 1. Relative frequencies of publications whose metadata contains the word ‘war’, percentage of the total number of publications in the fields of sociology, communication, and political sciences indexed in the Web of Science, 1956–2022.

Source: Web of Science, as of 11 April 2023; the authors’ calculations.

keywords) contains the word ‘war’ was steady until the end of the 1980s. In the early 1990s, it increased two- to three-fold, remaining without significant changes thereafter (Figure 1).¹ Similar trends characterize the scholarship in communication. The growth of the scholarship on war in political sciences since the end of the 1980s has been more pronounced.

The 1990–1991 Gulf War, started by a US-led coalition in response to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, was a likely trigger for intensifying research on war. Russia’s invasion of Ukraine will likely contribute to the further growth of war-related sociological studies.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has the 2013–2014 Revolution of Dignity (Oleinik, 2018; Snyder, 2018) in the latter country at its origin. The prioritization of dignity allows drawing parallels with the Arab Spring, the large-scale mobilization in Egypt, Tunis, and other Arab countries, manifesting the postcolonial need for dignity (El Bernoussi, 2015). Formally independent since 1991, Ukraine nevertheless remained in the sphere of Russia’s economic and political influence. Russia reacted to the Revolution of Dignity by annexing Crimea and attempting to repeat the same scenario in Donbas, a region in Eastern Ukraine. On 24 February 2022, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine became full-scale, which resulted in the subsequent annexation of parts of Donbas and some parts of the regions of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson in Southern Ukraine.

In addition to the two belligerents, other countries participate in Russia’s war in Ukraine too, albeit indirectly. Iran and North Korea reportedly supplied weapons to Russia. Ukraine Defense Contact Group members, or the Ramstein group, sent military equipment to Ukraine. As of November 2023, 54 countries participated in this initiative.

Warfare has several dimensions: military, economic, informational, social, ecological, and so on. Propaganda represents an informational dimension of war (Lasswell, 1938 [1927]: 9; Taylor, 2003 [1990]: 5). War propaganda is understood here as the process of propagating war-related statements made by actors vested in power to the target group through various media. 'A key feature of successful propaganda is that it propagates' (Oddo, 2018: 37). Propaganda involves the power holder (a member of the power elite), the propagandist (the media), and the propagandee (the public). We focus on statements made by presidents as crucial members of the power elite. Jowett and O'Donnell (2015) tracked US President Bush's narrative on the 'war on terror'. A more fine-grained analysis is required to compare the propagation of messages sent by political and military leaders.²

The emphasis on war-related messages formulated by actors vested in power implies limitations placed on other war-related messages. Media freedom in both Russia and Ukraine during the war appears to be constrained, which creates a breeding ground for propaganda. According to Knightley (2003 [1975]), no modern war was covered objectively. Although the growth in popularity of social networks led Merrin (2018: 196) to develop the concept of participative war 'where everyone can experience and take part in conflict', governments were subsequently able to reestablish their control, having 'arrested the once-chaotic social media dynamics' (Hoskins and O'Loughlin, 2015: 1320).

The Russian government proceeded to criminalize the dissemination of war-related information that did not accord with its position. Since 4 March 2022, it became a criminal offense in this country to publicly transmit, including through social networks, 'deliberately false information about the deployment of the military forces of the Russian Federation', as per amendments in the Penal Code and Articles 31 and 151 of the Code of criminal procedure of the Russian Federation. In addition, the Russian government banned access to Internet sites transmitting information other than officially approved, which includes all Western social networks (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram) and most Ukrainian media.³ Access to Telegram, a messenger, was blocked between April 2018 and June 2020, being unrestricted after that. Telegram positions itself as a libertarian alternative to other social networks' regulatory practices and business models (Nazaruk, 2022: 219).

When assessing war-time restrictions and censorship in Russia, we need to factor in a broader authoritarian environment (Alyukov, 2022). The Russian press had few degrees of freedom even before the war. War propaganda strengthens existing political apathy and cynicism (Shields, 2021).

The Ukrainian government has mandated using a 'united informational platform' to disseminate the news relating to the war since 24 February 2022. Ukraine's most prominent TV channels, 1 + 1, ICTV, Ukraina, 24 Kanal, and Inter, joined their efforts to broadcast one all-encompassing news service to cover the war, United News (Yedyni novyny). Other TV channels, Espresso, Priamyi, and 5 Kanal, were simultaneously excluded from the national T2 digital transmission network, remaining available to cable subscribers and online only. Access to several Russian Internet resources has been restricted since April 2017, including two Russian social networks: VKontakte and Odnoklassniki.⁴ The denial of Russia's aggression and attempts to justify it have been criminalized in Ukraine since 3 March 2022 (Sopilko et al., 2022).

The proposed study aims to assess the comparative effectiveness of propaganda channels varying from mass media to digital media. Newspapers and television represent ‘mass’ or ‘legacy’ media. ‘New’ or ‘digital’ media include online news portals, social networks, and messengers (Soroka and Wlezien, 2022: 14). We address the following research question:

RQ. Through which propaganda channels war-related messages of political leaders of Russia and Ukraine are transmitted to the target audiences with fewer distortions?

We pay principal attention to propaganda in the two belligerents using data collected in Western countries for benchmarking only. Our focus on war propaganda in Russia and Ukraine explains the exclusion of ‘news filters’ that exist in the West from consideration from the scope of the consideration. Advocates of the political economy of the mass media (Herman and Chomsky, 2008; Pedro-Carañana et al., 2018) argue that those news filters are embedded in ownership, advertising, sourcing, negative responses to media coverage and dominant ideology. Due to limited data availability, digital media were analyzed only in the Russian case.

Sociological studies of war

According to Wimmer (2014), four themes structure the current agenda of sociological research on war: long-term historical developments that lead to war; organizational causes and consequences of war; effects of war on political legitimacy, culture, and nation; the role of political power and configurations of power. The proposed study of war propaganda squarely fits the first and third themes.

On one hand, Russia’s war reflects the opposition between empire and nation-state as two models of political and social organization. The rise of a nation-state in Ukraine caused Russia’s attempts to reassert its control over this part of the Russian/Soviet empire by military means (Kordan, 2022). Snyder (2018) describes Russia’s ambition in terms of the Eurasian imperial project. From this perspective, the proposed study contributes to the scholarship on the intersection between (neo)colonialism and warfare.

On the other hand, the nation-state requires strengthening national self-consciousness. According to Smith, war often has such an effect. ‘Protracted and total warfare does generally accentuate national or ethnic self-consciousness . . . and it undoubtedly provides a fund of propaganda images and stereotypes, which government agencies can whip up for the war effort’ (Smith, 2004: 169). The share of Ukrainians who consider themselves foremost as citizens of Ukraine (as opposed to inhabitants of a region/city/town/village or citizens of the former Soviet Union) grew from 45.6% after the 1991 Declaration of Ukraine’s independence to 50.6% in the wake of the 2013–2014 Revolution of Dignity and to 79.7% in December 2022 (Institut Sotsiologii, 2022: 21). The proposed study helps further explore a link between war and national self-consciousness.

Sociologists acknowledge that warfare constitutes a key driver of state-making (Mann, 1986; Tilly, 1985). Military defeat often speeds up the transition to modern statehood. Under the scenario of defensive modernization, the shock of a military defeat creates powerful incentives for attempting to catch up with the victor by reforming the military, then the system of education, then the industry, and so forth (Badie, 1992: 129;

Joas, 1999: 461; Malia, 1999: 31–32). Imperial wars represent a particular case of the relationship between warfare and state-making, highlighting tensions between territory and the market as two alternative foundations of governance (Foucault, 2007).

Empire has territorially unbounded political authority at its origin (Longo, 2017: 757). Classical imperialism manifests itself through territorial expansion. Hoskins and O'Loughlin (2015) note that 'for all of globalization and the networking of global society, the symbolic and material powers of land are at stake in the conflict' (p. 1333) in Ukraine.

Empire can also reproduce itself through economic domination. Under this scenario, the empire's control over market exchanges substitutes for or complements the control over a territory. The domination based on the control over market exchanges is interpreted in terms of neocolonialism (Brunschwig, 1973; Charle, 1966; Langan, 2015; Nkrumah, 1965; Segell, 2019), world-economy (Wallerstein, 2004: 17), or globalization (Banerjee and Linstead, 2001: 694). The transformation of colonialism into neocolonialism does not end wars (Go, 2007; Joas, 1999). Wars help an empire secure control over resources and/or markets or contain the other empire while avoiding direct confrontation, as in the case of proxy or limited wars (Nkrumah, 1965: xi).

The informational dimension of imperial wars has particularities, too. Every empire pretended to be enlightened (Said, 2003 [1977]; Sartre, 2001 [1964]). Imperial wars are said to be waged for the benefit of those allegedly incapable of governing themselves, which explains the importance of their discursive component. True reasons for starting imperial wars are camouflaged. Discourse is understood here 'as an organized and recognizable manner of intentionally transmitting information or knowledge from one person to another' (Said, 1975: 298). Both discourse – so defined – and propaganda pertain to the purposeful transmission of information that benefits those vested in power. 'Propaganda uses communication to convey a message, an idea, or an ideology that is designed primarily to serve the self-interests of the person or people doing the communicating' (Taylor, 2003 [1990]: 7; see also Lasswell, 1938 [1927]: 9; Ellul, 1973: 269; Jowett and O'Donnell, 2015: 7). Compared with other wars, imperial wars further increased the importance of propaganda.

Studies of propaganda necessitate that particular attention be paid to the issues of effectiveness. As Ellul (1973: x) observed, 'whoever handles [propaganda] can be concerned solely with effectiveness'. Effectiveness is distinguishable from efficiency (Bouckaert and Halligan, 2008: 15–18). Efficiency refers to the relationship between input and output (the ratio of resources spent on propaganda to its 'deliverables': publications, ads, etc.). The task of assessing effectiveness calls for comparing output and effect/outcome. The outcome can be operationalized either as the target group's exposure to messages formulated by actors vested in power or as changes induced in the attitude of members of the target group to the war. Is a message propagated to the target group with few or no distortions? To what extent does the attitude of members of the target group change in the direction contemplated by the power holder?

Data and methodological triangulation

To study the effectiveness of war propaganda in the function of the channel used for transmitting a political leader's message, we needed to collect and process data (1) at its source, that is, speeches of political leaders in countries involved in a war; (2) during its

transmission through various media; and (3) at its destination, that is, the perception of the political leaders' statements by the target audience. Such requirements explain the choice of a mixed-methods research design incorporating elements of data and methodological triangulation.

Data triangulation involves using data from several sources, whereas methodological triangulation requires combining several methods when processing data (Perlesz and Jo, 2003). Triangulation does not necessarily produce convergent results. Brannen (2005) identifies four possible outcomes of triangulation: corroboration, elaboration, complementarity, and contradiction. Each of these outcomes is potentially informative.

Political and media discourses about Russia's war in Ukraine (textual data) are content analyzed. Content analysis originates from studying the Second World War propaganda (Krippendorff, 2004: 19–20; Lasswell and Leites, 1949). The public reaction to the political leaders' messages is assessed with the help of mass surveys. Survey data are processed using binary statistic regression analysis. The nominal level of measurement and more relaxed than in the case of multiple linear regression assumptions (there is no requirement of normality of distribution) explain this choice (Warner, 2013: 1007).

A similar research design has several precedents. Hart mixed survey data with content analysis of media discourse (Hart, 2018) and political discourse (Hart, 2020). Fan (1988) and Ivanov (2016) tracked political statements at the source, during their transmission and at the destination, comparing political, media, and mass discourses. Since we collected data at three different stages in the propaganda process, the outcomes of the content analysis and the statistical analysis of survey data do not necessarily converge. Under the chosen research design, the sought result of the triangulation is complementarity.

In contrast to the previous studies, a comparative dimension is added to the analysis. Data were collected in several countries, as opposed to just one. In the context of war, collecting data in one country only may create a bias and make data interpretation less meaningful, which does not mean that all parties to a military conflict shall be treated similarly. Textual data came from the two belligerents and three founding members of the Ramstein group: the United States, the United Kingdom, and France (Table 1). The two belligerents and the United States were covered in greater detail than the United Kingdom and France.

War-related political statements and debates in the national legislatures were identified using the combination of 'Ukraine' and 'war' ('military operation' in the Russian case⁵) as search terms except for Zelensky and Rada. All speeches by Zelensky and all debates in Rada during the first year of the war (24 February 2022 to 24 February 2023) were deemed relevant.

We built the corpora of media discourses using the same selection criterion. In Ukraine, Russia, and the United States, at least one TV channel, at least one newspaper or news agency, at least one online news portal, and at least one medium known for its opposition to the current political leadership were included in the sample. The addition of oppositional media is consistent with previous studies (Chew et al., 2023; Soroka and Wlezien, 2022). The corpora of media discourses contain either newsfeeds devoted to the war or news items/transcripts of broadcasts meeting the selection criterion.

In Ukraine, the sample contains five media: ICTV, a TV channel participating in the 'United News' telethon; the largest online news portal *Ukrainska Pravda*, UP; Liga, an

Table 1. Sources of textual data.

Discourse	Source	Language	Data source	Size, words
Political	Ukraine's President Zelensky	Ukrainian	Official website	443,626
	Russia's President Putin	Russian	Official website	113,436
	US President Biden	English	Official website	56,755
	Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom: Boris Johnson, Liz Truss, and Rishi Sunak	English	Official website	30,874
	France's President Macron	French	Official website	21,608
	Ukrainian Rada	Ukrainian	Official website	695,688
	Russian Duma	Russian	Official website	2,063,606
	US Congress	English	Official website	6,619,784
	UK Parliament	English	Official website	2,282,241
	French Assemblée Nationale	French	Official website	1,768,992
Ukrainian media	ICTV	Ukrainian	Newsfeed	3,189,083
	RBC-Ukraina	Russian	Factiva	12,729,188
	Ukrainska Pravda	Ukrainian	Newsfeed	1,944,117
	Liga	Ukrainian	Newsfeed	854,798
	Strana	Russian	Newsfeed	2,230,631
Russian media	First TV Channel	Russian	Factiva	855,113
	Gazeta	Russian	Newsfeed	1,417,140
	Kommersant	Russian	Factiva	1,206,092
	Izvestia	Russian	Factiva	548,718
	Meduza	Russian	Factiva	6,049,475
	VKontakte	Russian	Off-the-shelf scraper	11,307,119
American media	CNN	English	Newsfeed	5,334,480
	New York Times	English	Nexis	14,039,613
	Washington Post	English	Factiva	3,440,847
	USA Today	English	Nexis	338,516
	Fox News	English	Factiva	8,904,664
British media	The Times	English	Nexis	6,544,529
French media	Le Monde	French	Newsfeed	3,601,132
Total				98,631,865

online news portal; news agency RBC-Ukraina; and an online portal known for its pro-Russian position, Strana. In Russia, the sample includes First TV Channel with the largest audience; online news portal Gazeta.ru; a business newspaper, Kommersant; a newspaper known for its pro-government position, Izvestia; an oppositional medium,

Meduza; and a social medium, VKontakte. The US sample contains CNN; three mainstream print media: the New York Times, the Washington Post, and USA Today; and Fox News, known for its critique of President Biden. Only one medium was surveyed in the United Kingdom and France, the Times and Le Monde.

The increasingly limited accessibility of Facebook data (Soroka and Wlezien, 2022: 43) explains our decision not to include social media in the Ukrainian and US samples. In total, textual data came from 28 sources. Our sample is not random. We built it using theoretical criteria (mass market media and one oppositional media in each country covered in detail). No known corpus of media discourses is random because of the high heterogeneity of media landscapes. Chew et al. (2023), Soroka and Wlezien (2022), and Hart (2018) all used theoretically constructed samples with comparable parameters.

The 28 corpora were content analyzed using a quadrilingual – Ukrainian-Russian-English-French – custom-built dictionary containing 323 categories. The Annex contains their list. Each category is composed of several words and n-grams. The structure of the dictionary evolved as the war unfolded and more data became available. Its first version included 50 categories (Oleinik, 2023).

A dictionary approach to content analysis was most recently used by Chew et al. (2023), Soroka and Wlezien (2022), and Hart (2020). Like Chew et al. (2023) and Hart (2020), we used words as a unit of analysis, adapting the text as a bag-of-words approach common in corpus linguistic analysis. Fan (1988), Shah and collaborators (Shah et al., 2002), and Ivanov (2016) used paragraphs as a unit of analysis, whereas Soroka and Wlezien (2022: 45) used sentences.

The list of categories was compiled from two sources. On one hand, extant literature suggested the inclusion of such categories as ‘casualties’ (Gartner, 2004; Lasswell, 1938 [1927]: 111), ‘war’, ‘peace’, ‘violence’, ‘aggression’ (Lukin, 2013: 428–430), ‘heroism’ (Lasswell, 1938 [1927]: 98), and names of leaders of enemies (Shlapentokh, 1984: 92). On the other hand, the most frequently occurring words in the corpora of political and media discourses were added to the dictionary: ‘Russia’, ‘Russian’, ‘Ukraine’, ‘Ukrainian’, ‘Kyiv’ (the capital of Ukraine), and so on. Gabrielatos (2018: 238) identified with the help of a meta-analysis that ‘more than half (16) of the studies selected the top N (most frequent) words (between 10 and 1000, with the average being about 100)’. The dictionary was pre-tested with the help of the Key-Word-In-Context operation, KWIC, which led to the formulation of more restrictive rules. The rules helped distinguish between relevant and irrelevant word senses as discrete representations of one aspect of the meaning of a word (Jurafsky and Martin, 2008: Ch. 16). For instance, the word ‘State’ occurring next to ‘Secretary’ was not counted in the English version because of frequent mentions of the US Secretary of State.

Frequencies of words included in the dictionary were calculated using the WordStat computer program for each of the 28 corpora taken separately, for the corpus of speeches of the political leaders, and for each of the five countries. The aggregate figure for a group/country divided by the total word count was considered the expected frequency, F_e . Word frequencies in a particular corpus were considered as observed frequencies, F_o . All frequencies were normalized to the length of the documents. The difference ($F_o - F_e$) divided by the standard deviation was used as a criterion for assessing the relative prevalence of words in speeches of a political leader or war coverage by a particular medium, which is an equivalent of Cohen’s d , an effect-size index (Warner, 2013: 104–105).

Cohen's d represents a measure of keyness. 'The notion of keyness is closely related to the notion of aboutness, that is, the understanding of the main concepts, topics or attitudes discussed in a text or corpus' (Gabrielatos, 2018: 225; see also Chew et al., 2023: 335; Ptaszek et al., 2023: 8). The more significant the difference between a word's observed and expected frequencies, the more significant its keyness tends to be. Keywords tell us what the text is about. Words with an effect-size index exceeding the substantive significance level, $|0.8|$, were shortlisted and used in comparisons. Negative values of d indicate the source's tendency to avoid using specific words. A similar approach was applied in several other studies (Chew et al., 2023; Oleinik, 2023; Ptaszek et al., 2023; Savoy, 2016).

Finally, two surveys administered by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology in July 2022 using a sample ($N=2000$) representative of the Ukrainian population⁶ and by Levada Center in February 2023 using a sample representative of the Russian population ($N=1626$)⁷ also inform the analysis. Since the authors conducted a secondary data analysis in both cases, the formulations of some questions asked in the two countries were not identical. The available control variables were somewhat different, constituting the other limitation of our study.

The two surveys contain questions about the territories temporarily occupied by Russia, which allowed for complementing the outcomes of the content analysis with the results of binary logistical regression. The respondent's attitude to the issue of territorial concessions indicates their reaction to the political leaders' explanation of what the war is about. Territorial expansion and territorial integrity become particularly important in imperial wars and wars of national liberation. The Russian survey also included an open-ended question as to how the respondent explains, in her own words, why Russia invaded Ukraine. Answers to this question (7723 words) were content analyzed using the method described above, constituting the other link between textual and survey data.

Results

Thirteen categories distinguish Putin's discourse about the war from the discourses of the other four political leaders: Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republic, DNR and LNR (Ukraine's territories annexed by Russia in September 2022⁸), Donbas (Ukraine's larger region containing DNR and LNR), fascism, the market, military operation, oil and gas, peace, powers, Russia, Soviet, territory, and the West. Putin devoted significantly more attention than the other political leaders to those categories (relevant values of d all exceed the cut-off value of 0.8). We need to bear in mind that all reported findings are relative. Putin's emphasis is relative to highlights made by Zelensky, Biden, Macron, and the UK Prime Ministers. Compared with his peers' statements, Putin's war-related speeches were 'about' Donbas, LNR and DNR (Figure 2), and the alleged 'fascism' of the Ukrainians who resisted Russia's military operation.

Putin's consistent emphasis on Donbas, as well as on LNR and DNR, is relevant to the interpretation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine as an imperial war. Putin considers Donbas an integral part of imperial Russia before the 1917 revolution. Its status as a Ukrainian territory appears to him a historical error to be corrected by military means:

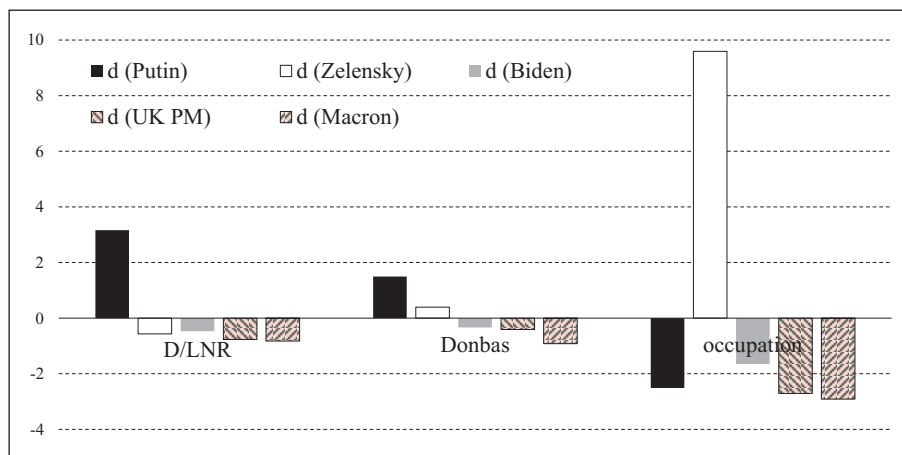


Figure 2. Values of Cohen's *d* for three categories, D/LNR, Donbas and occupation, in war-related speeches of political leaders of Russia, Ukraine, the United States, the United Kingdom, and France, February 2022 to February 2023.

Source: The authors' calculations.

The Soviet Ukraine emerged due to the policies implemented by the Bolsheviks. For this reason, today's Ukraine can better be called 'Ukraine named after Vladimir Lenin'. He is its actual creator. Historical documents confirm this fact, including Lenin's directions regarding *Donbas*. *Donbas* was simply given to Ukraine. (21 February 2022⁹)

Today, volunteers of *Donbas* fight together with soldiers of Russia's Army on their land, where earlier the retainers of Svyatoslav and Vladimir Monomakh, the soldiers of Rumyantsev and Potemkin, Suvorov and Brusilov crushed the enemies, where the heroes of the Great Patriotic War Nikolai Vatutin, Sidor Kovpak, Liudmila Pavlichenko stand to the death. I address now to our military personnel and *Donbas* volunteers. You fight . . . against the executioners, punishers, and Nazis . . . [They were openly] preparing for a punitive expedition in *Donbas*, for an invasion of our historical lands, including Crimea. (9 May 2022)¹⁰

President Zelensky placed different emphases in his war-related speeches. He mentioned more frequently than the other political leaders the following 18 categories: defense, enemy, freedom, Kharkiv (a megapolis near Ukraine's border with Russia), liberation, life, Mariupol (a city at Azov Sea that was practically destroyed by the Russian army), missile, occupation, peace, sanctions, shelling, the State, terror, Ukraine, Ukrainians, victory, and war. Zelensky's emphasis on occupation is of particular interest. On one hand, the keyness of 'occupation' in Zelensky's speeches exceeds the keyness of this category in Putin's war-related statements by the value of 12.11 (Figure 2), which is second to the difference in the keyness for the category 'Ukraine' only ($\Delta d = 16.06$). The categories 'Ukraine', 'occupation', and 'war' ($\Delta d = 11.65$) distinguish between the two discourses the most.

On the other hand, Zelensky's stress upon Russia's occupation of Ukraine's territories indicates a national-liberation character of the war. For him, the war is for national

liberation. Ukraine's war of national liberation is waged in response to the imperial war commenced by Russia. Zelensky wanted to reestablish Ukraine's control over the territories currently occupied by the Russian troops:

It is a kind of heroism to protest when one's city is temporarily *occupied*. One has no arms but receives shots in response. One does not escape, nevertheless. One has no armour but sees an armoured fighting vehicle approaching. One does not escape. The *occupation* is temporary precisely for this reason. The *occupation* is unnatural (*shtuchna*). (5 March 2022¹¹)

[Our defenders] will return to Ukraine's borders. You will see again our borders and the backs of the enemies. You will see happiness in the eyes of our people and the retreating *occupier's* heels. The *occupiers* will call this a manifestation of their goodwill. We will call it a victory. (11 September 2022¹²)

President Biden's war-related speeches focused on law, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), people, Putin, Russia, Ukraine, and the United States. The keyness of 'NATO' indicates a geopolitical dimension of the war. When discussing the war, the UK Prime Ministers focused on energy, friends, government, invasion, Kyiv, NATO, people, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, and Zelensky. Frequent mentions of France, law, mobilization, Moldova, and powers distinguish President Macron's war-related speeches. Because of space limitations, the other leaders' discourses are not discussed in detail. The analysis used them as a benchmark against which the relative prevalence of the three categories relevant to interpreting Russia's invasion of Ukraine as an imperial war was established and measured (Figure 2). The same goes for the media surveyed in the United States, the United Kingdom, and France. We can better understand a discourse by comparing it with other similar discourses.

Using the Cosine of the angle between pairs of vectors of observed frequencies of 323 categories included in the dictionary as a measure of similarity (Chew et al., 2023: 326; Jurafsky and Martin, 2008: Ch.20), it is possible to visualize distances between various discourses about the war. S_c varies from 0 (no similarity) to 1 (identical vectors). The closer the dots on the 2D map, the more similar the discourses they represent. Ukrainian, Russian, and American sources form clusters which indicates that between-country differences tend to exceed within-country differences (Figure 3). Lasswell (1938 [1927]: 38) noted that 'the truth seekers find different truths and . . . the differences are territorially segregated according to national boundaries'. Figure 3 may also illustrate the 'arrested war' since the national media discourses tend to cluster around the relevant national political discourses.

Several Russian-language media appear to convey Putin's discourse about the war with few distortions, VKontakte ($S_c=0.803$) and Kommersant ($S_c=0.797$) being the closest match. The appearance of the social medium in the proximity of the dot representing Putin's war-related speeches is noteworthy. VKontakte propagates Putin's messages better than 'legacy' media, which is consistent with the 'arrested' character of the war. The oppositional media, Meduza, is expectedly further away from the Russian President's discourse ($S_c=0.64$) and closer to the Ukrainian cluster ($S_c=0.761$ with Zelensky). Meduza's headquarters are in Latvia because of its status as an undesirable

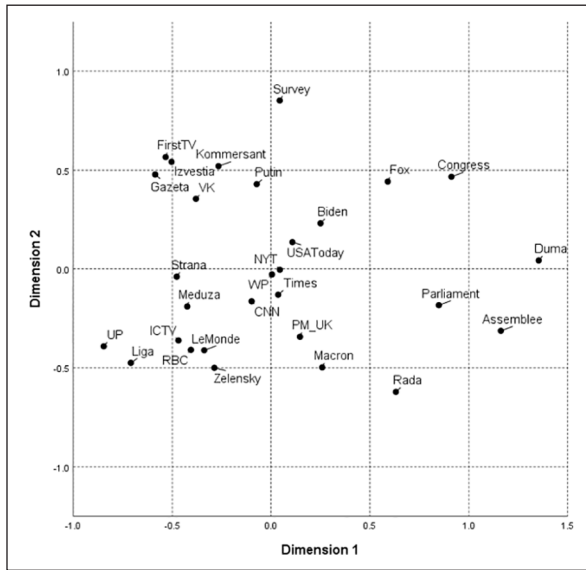


Figure 3. Distances between political, media and mass discourses about the war, Ukraine, Russia, the United States, the United Kingdom and France, February 2022 to February 2023, multidimensional scaling.

Legend: PROXSCAL, Normalized Raw Stress: 0.025; Stress-I: 0.157.

organization in Russia. In contrast, Strana, the Ukrainian media oriented mainly to Russian speakers, is an ‘outlier’ for the Ukrainian media ($S_c = 0.65$ with Putin, $S_c = 0.717$ with Zelensky).¹³

For the proposed analysis, a medium’s take on the categories relevant to interpreting Russia’s invasion of Ukraine as the imperial war and the war of national liberation needs to be considered in more detail. At this stage, the frequencies of categories ‘D/LNR’, ‘Donbas’, and ‘occupation’ in the speeches of Putin and Zelensky were considered as F_c when calculating d values in the subsamples including Russian and Ukrainian media. The lower the values of d , the further away a medium’s war coverage tends to be from the priorities set by the political leader. Most Russian media amplified Putin’s emphasis on D/LNR and transmitted his emphasis on Donbas without alteration (Figure 4). Only Kommersant substantially lessened those emphases. The Russian population perceived the D/LNR ($d = 8.89$) and Donbas-related ($d = 3.16$) messages in an amplified form. The Russians’ emphasis on Putin’s other keyword, fascism, was equally strong, $d = 7.03$. The legislator’s discourse tended to be highly legalistic and ‘political-economic’ (prioritizing the issues of law-making and budgeting) in all countries included in the sample, being an outlier throughout.

In the case of Ukraine, three mass media, UP, RBC and Liga, amplified Zelensky’s emphasis on occupation (Figure 5). ICTV transmitted the relevant message without alteration since the value of d , -0.75 , does not exceed the cut-off level of $|0.8|$. Strana’s war coverage substantially lessened the emphasis on Ukrainian territories being occupied by Russia, $d = -8.24$.

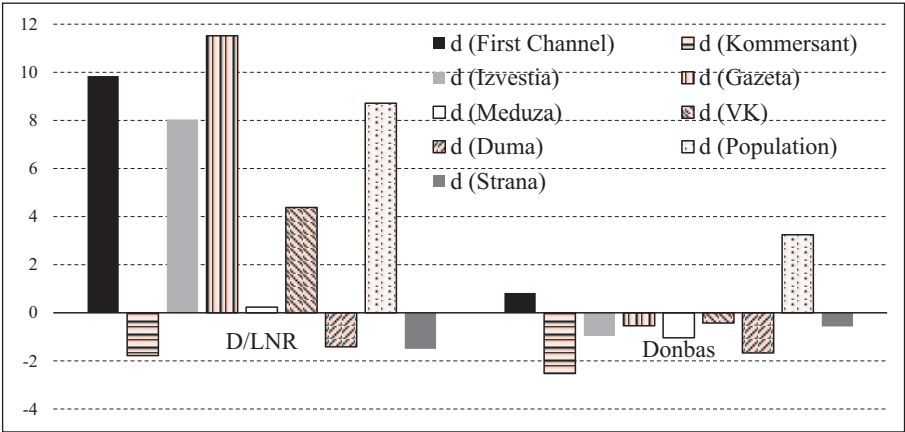


Figure 4. Values of Cohen’s *d* for two categories, D/LNR and Donbas, in Russian-language media and mass discourses about the war, February 2022 to February 2023.
Source: The authors’ calculations.

Both surveys, in Russia and Ukraine, included similarly worded questions about conditions under which a peace agreement could be reached. One of those questions refers to the status of D/LNR. 71.3% of respondents in Russia believed that the return of D/LNR to Ukraine is unacceptable,¹⁴ which is consistent with Putin’s stated rationale for waging the imperial war. In total, 88% of respondents in Ukraine believed that agreeing on Russia’s control over D/LNR is unacceptable,¹⁵ which is consistent with Zelensky’s framing of the war as a national-liberation war. In total, 12% of respondents in Ukraine held the opposite view, which aligns with Putin’s messages. The groups of those who opposed returning D/LNR to Ukraine in Russia and those who accepted the idea of Russia’s control over D/LNR in Ukraine were retained for a comparative analysis.

A binary logistic regression was run to determine if there is a relationship between sources of information used and trusted by the respondent (alternative propaganda channels) and the respondent’s acceptance of the status of D/LNR as part of Russia (Table 2). The audience of Russian TV, both in Russia and Ukraine, tended to align with Putin’s position that Russia should keep control over D/LNR. Although Russian TV channels are banned in Ukraine, along with access to their websites, it is still possible to use satellite to watch them. The Wald ratios for the *B* coefficients associated with relying on Russian TV as a source of information turned out to be statistically significant in both countries, $\chi^2(df=1)=-0.478$, $p=0.003$ in Russia and $\chi^2(df=1)=-1.008$, $p=0.002$ in Ukraine. $\text{Exp}(B)$ were 0.62 and 0.365, respectively, which indicates that the odds of agreeing with Putin’s position for members of the audience of Russian TV channels were higher than the same odds for those who do not watch Russian TV.

The reliance on Russian social networks did not significantly impact the odds of accepting the status of D/LNR as part of Russia in either country, which is consistent with an earlier study (Golovchenko, 2022). $\text{Exp}(B)$ was close to 1 in both Russia (1.051) and Ukraine (0.961), where some users can circumvent the technical restrictions. At the

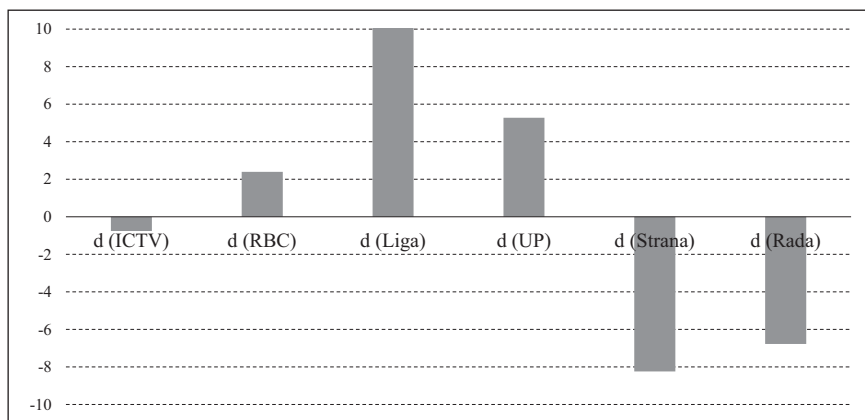


Figure 5. Values of Cohen's *d* for category 'occupation' in Ukrainian media discourse about the war, February 2022 to February 2023.

Source: The authors' calculations.

same time, the opinion of active Internet users in Russia appeared to align better with Putin's stance than those who use the Internet less frequently than several times per week. The Wald ratio for the *B* coefficient associated with actively using the Internet was statistically significant, $\chi^2(df=1)=-0.653$, $p=0.001$. $\text{Exp}(B)$ was 0.52, indicating that the odds of agreeing with Putin's position for active Internet users were higher than for less frequent Internet users in Russia.

The reliance on Telegram is more consequential in Russia. Members of the audience of the Telegram channels tended to be more receptive to Putin's messages than the Russians, who do not rely on this source of information. The Wald ratio for the *B* coefficient associated with using the Telegram channels as a source of information was statistically significant, $\chi^2(df=1)=-0.464$, $p=0.02$. $\text{Exp}(B)$ was 0.629, which indicates that the odds of agreeing with Putin's position for members of the audience of the Telegram channels were indeed higher. Although no specific question about reliance on Telegram was asked in Ukraine, this messenger is the most popular social network in this country, with 44% of respondents indicating it as a source of information, Facebook (36%) being a second (Opora, 2022: 27).

Discussion

The reported results show that data and methodological triangulation is required to study propaganda. Content analysis, if not complemented by survey data, does not suffice to assess the impact of propaganda unless the effectiveness is operationalized as the target group's exposure to propaganda. The regression analysis of the survey data complements the content analysis of political and media discourses about the war.

The content analysis allowed for identifying the political leaders' messages at their source and tracking them during transmission by mass and social (in the Russian case) media. The content analysis helped determine the extent to which the target audience is

Table 2. Results of the logistic binary regression to predict the respondent's acceptance of the status of D/LNR as parts of Russia from the respondent's sources of information and social-economic background.

	Russia				Ukraine			
	B	SE	Wald	Exp (B)	B	SE	Wald	Exp (B)
Male	-0.825***	0.13	40.254	0.438	0.156	0.153	1.042	1.169
Higher or incomplete higher education	0.062	0.142	0.189	1.063	0.033	0.154	0.046	1.033
Married or in a civil union	-0.142	0.124	1.308	0.868	0.142	0.150	0.902	1.153
Ukrainian nationality					-0.042	0.277	0.023	0.959
Ukrainian Orthodox Church					0.379**	0.153	6.094	1.461
Responded in Ukrainian					0.134	0.305	0.193	1.143
Speaks Ukrainian at home					0.492**	0.209	5.543	1.635
Speaks Ukrainian in private life					0.328	0.221	2.201	1.389
Internet user: every day or several times per week	-0.653***	0.195	11.2	0.52				
Inhabitant of Moscow	-0.556*	0.275	4.085	0.573				
Inhabitant of 0.5 million + cities	0.057	0.148	0.148	1.059				
Urban dweller					-0.203	0.172	1.382	0.817
Federal district								
North-Western	0.022	0.216	0.01	1.022				
Central	-0.002	0.173	0	0.998				
Southern and Caucasian	0.01	0.173	0.004	1.011				
Far Eastern	-0.08	0.282	0.08	0.924				
Macro region								
West					-0.501	0.287	3.048	0.606
Center					-0.142	0.243	0.341	0.868
South					-0.118	0.233	0.255	0.889
Age	0.022***	0.005	22.317	1.022	0.009	0.005	3.074	1.009
Low income	0.131	0.138	0.901	1.14				
High income	0.442	0.412	1.148	1.555				
Putin's supporter	-1.729***	0.161	115.637	0.177				

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued)

	Russia				Ukraine			
	B	SE	Wald	Exp (B)	B	SE	Wald	Exp (B)
Negative opinion about Stalin					0.874***	0.155	31.585	2.396
Source of information								
Russian TV	-0.478**	0.159	9.043	0.62	-1.008**	0.320	9.930	0.365
Ukrainian TV					-0.056	0.171	0.108	0.946
Russian radio	-0.097	0.273	0.125	0.908				
Ukrainian radio	-0.082	0.314	0.069	0.921				
Russian print media					0.306*	0.161	3.598	1.358
Ukrainian radio and print media	0.109	0.178	0.373	1.115	0.206	0.150	1.903	1.229
Friends and acquaintances	-0.028	0.158	0.031	0.973				
Russian online media					-0.040	0.388	0.011	0.961
Russian social networks	0.05	0.152	0.109	1.051	0.215	0.163	1.728	1.240
Western social networks								
Telegram	-0.464*	0.2	5.407	0.629	0.442**	0.153	8.333	1.556
The respondent's own eyes								
Trusts as a source of information								
TV	0.197	0.179	1.212	1.218				
Radio	0.503	0.274	3.38	1.653				
Print press	0.106	0.308	0.118	1.112				
Friends and acquaintances	0.278	0.213	1.711	1.321				
Online media	0.073	0.196	0.137	1.075				
Social networks	0.363*	0.179	4.112	1.437				
Telegram	0.255	0.22	1.343	1.29				
Others	0.083	0.769	0.012	1.087				
No one	0.329	0.232	2.009	1.389				
Agrees that a strong leader is better suited to lead Ukraine's post-war rebuilding					0.654*	0.212	9.512	1.922
Constant	-0.436	1.366	0.102	0.646	-2.586***	0.679	14.529	0.075
Cox & Snell R ²	0.147				0.078			
Nagelkerke R ²	0.211				0.149			

*p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

exposed to propaganda. The clustering of national sources (Figure 3) indicates that no truth can be distilled from the war coverage. Several ‘truths’ appear to coexist. Truths about war are not the subject of empirical verification. They are outcomes of propaganda. The Russian propaganda aims to persuade the target audience to interpret the ‘special military operation’ as an attempt to recreate the empire. From this perspective, Donbas and Crimea must be returned to imperial Russia, where they allegedly belong. In Ukraine, the war-related propaganda conveys another message: Ukraine’s military confrontation with Russia is a war of national liberation.

Based on the analysis of textual data, the channels through which the political leader’s war-related statements were propagated with fewer distortions were, in the Russian case, VKontakte and several legacy media, such as Izvestia, Kommersant and First TV Channel ($S_c=0.739$). In the Ukrainian case, their list includes RBC-Ukraina ($S_c=0.89$), ICTV ($S_c=0.888$), Liga ($S_c=0.787$), and, surprisingly, Meduza.

The regression analysis allows taking a step further in assessing propaganda effectiveness. It showed whether exposure to propaganda is associated with changes in the attitudes of members of the target audience and whether the intensity of such changes depends on the propaganda channel. The exposure to Russian propaganda contributed to getting one’s opinion aligned with the position formulated by Putin. Members of the audience of Russian TV and the Telegram channels tended to accept Putin’s framing of the invasion as an attempt to establish the imperial status quo.

Compared with the other social media, Russian and Western alike, Telegram is the least regulated. Military correspondents, the so-called ‘voenkory’, capitalize on this relative freedom by disseminating information that could not be found elsewhere through Telegram channels. The Russian authorities, in their turn, recruit the most influential voenkory either by coopting them or by threatening them. Several voenkory were invited to personally meet Putin on 17 June 2022 (Arenina et al., 2022). As the analysis suggests, the systematic ‘work’ with the voenkory paid off. Telegram emerged as a propaganda channel whose effectiveness is second to that of TV only. The effectiveness of the other Russian digital media lagged far behind during the period considered in this study.

Ukrainian propaganda appeared to be less effective. Although TV was the most controlled medium, only the Ukrainian radio and print media audience produced a reaction contemplated by the political leader. The Wald ratio for the B coefficient associated with relying on Ukrainian radio and print media as a source of information approached the level of statistical significance, $\chi^2(df=1)=0.306$, $p=0.055$. $\text{Exp}(B)$ was 1.358, indicating that the odds of disagreeing with Putin’s position for readers of Ukrainian newspapers and magazines and listeners of Ukrainian radio were higher than those of users of other information sources. Being an eyewitness to the consequences of Russia’s invasion was associated with an even more critical position toward Putin’s imperial war. The Wald ratio for the B coefficient related to being an eyewitness was statistically significant, $\chi^2(df=1)=0.442$, $p=0.004$. $\text{Exp}(B)$ was 1.556, that is, the status of an eyewitness increased the odds of disagreeing with Putin more than the exposure to any other propaganda channel except for Russian TV, whose effect goes in the opposite direction. The actions of the Russian army mitigate the impact of Russia’s TV propaganda to some extent.¹⁶

The results of both methods suggest the superior effectiveness of Russian TV as a propaganda channel. First TV Channel’s war coverage aligned with Putin’s statements.

The audience of Russian TV, both in Russia and Ukraine, had more chances to adopt the attitude to territorial concessions consistent with Putin's stance.

A caveat must be made. Content analysis is poorly suited for establishing causal relations. The impact of 'control' variables is particularly difficult to discern. The list of controls in the binary logistic regression was not long either. However, content analysis is compatible with abduction, aiming to provide a range of plausible explanations, none of which is definite (Oleinik, 2022). Peirce (1997: 250) wrote that 'any hypothesis . . . may be admissible, in the absence of any special reasons to the contrary, provided it be capable of experimental verification and only in so far as it is capable of such verification'. Thus, the hypothesis of the effectiveness of Russian TV as a propaganda tool during the first year of Russia's full-scale invasion can be tentatively admitted.

An alternative explanation is also plausible regarding the tentative assumption that Ukrainian counterpropaganda efforts during the same period were less effective. The view that Ukraine's military confrontation with Russia is a war of national liberation may manifest the emergence of a nation, as predicted by Smith, instead of resulting from war-related propaganda only. The exposure to various sources of information in Ukraine had a lesser impact than the respondent's social background. Being a member of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (autocephalous) and speaking Ukrainian at home increased the odds of disagreeing with Putin's way of framing the invasion. The Wald ratios for the B coefficients associated with membership in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church and speaking Ukrainian at home were statistically significant, $\chi^2(df=1)=0.379$, $p=0.014$ and $\chi^2(df=1)=0.492$, $p=0.019$, respectively. $\text{Exp}(B)$ were 1.461 and 1.635, respectively. Religion and language are essential components of national identity. The respondent's negative perception of Stalin, whose name is closely associated with the Soviet empire, was also a predictor of the odds of disagreeing with Putin's interpretation of the war, $\chi^2(df=1)=0.874$, $p<0.001$ and $\text{Exp}(B)=2.396$. War mobilization in Ukraine may have less to do with propaganda efforts than other, more profound, nation-building processes.

Conclusion

The proposed study has both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it contributes to the scholarship on the discursive dimension of colonialism and post-colonialism. Said (2003 [1977]) initiated studies of colonial discourses with his pioneering work on what he calls Orientalism. Russia's invasion of Ukraine revives scholarly interest in analyzing and comparing imperial discourses with discourses that emerge in response to them. The discourse of the war of national-liberation challenges in Ukraine Putin's imperial discourse. Although Ukrainian counterpropaganda was less effective than Russian war propaganda, the nation-state-building process in Ukraine emerged as the other driver of the postcolonial discourse.

To what extent the Russian population can understand and accept the Ukrainian national liberation discourse remains to be seen. To succeed in the discursive battle for the opinion of ordinary Russians, the mediatic and intellectual components of the Ukrainian discourse about the war need strengthening. Power elites, media and intellectuals in this country developed Russian imperial discourse. The concept of empire attracted relatively more attention from Russian scholars than other concepts related to

ideology, such as liberalism, socialism, nationalism, or Orthodox Christianity (Zavershenie Sovetskoi epokhi: Otsenki s distantsii v 30 let, 2021: 11–15).

At the practical level, this study shows how propaganda effectiveness can be assessed empirically and quantitatively. Combining the content analysis of political, media and mass discourses with the statistical analysis of survey data offers a solution. Due to the limitations of the available data, no comprehensive study of mass discourses on the war was carried out at this stage.

The unavailability of time series data gathered with the help of mass surveys represents one. More than one data point is required to analyze dynamic aspects of the interaction between political, media and mass discourses in detail and establish causal relationships with greater confidence. For instance, Ivanov (2016) used data gathered with the help of week-by-week public opinion polls in Ukraine from 2005 to 2008. Shah and collaborators (Shah et al., 2002) had results of 671 mass surveys conducted in the United States from 1993 to 1998.

Author Notes

An early version of this article was presented at the XX International Sociological Association World Congress of Sociology (Melbourne, Australia).

Acknowledgements

The authors are grateful to the participants in the discussion and three anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

ORCID iD

Anton Oleinik  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5229-1052>

Notes

1. The Web of Science primarily indexes articles as opposed to monographs written in English as opposed to other languages (Belaïd and Besagni, 2007).
2. Although Gen. Zaluzhnyi, the then Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, is also a media personality, his Russian counterpart, Gen. Gerasimov, avoids publicity, which complicates a comparison of their discourses.
3. The Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media updates the list of banned Internet resources at <https://blocklist.rkn.gov.ru/>.
4. Their list is appended to the Presidential decree from 28 April 2017, <https://www.president.gov.ua/documents/1332017-21850>.

5. The use of the term 'war' is officially banned in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in Russia.
6. The sample does not include the population on territories temporarily occupied by Russia. The authors of the other study (Knappe et al., 2023) kindly permitted to use answers to some questions included in the omnibus survey at their request.
7. The authors are grateful to Dr Lev Gudkov, General Director of Levada Center, for his kind permission to use this dataset and Oksana Greben for its preparation for secondary analysis.
8. Neither DNR and LNR nor their annexation by Russia is internationally recognized.
9. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/67828>, emphasis added throughout. Putin made the same claim in his speech on 1 September 2022 (<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69245>). Here and thereafter, the translation is the authors'.
10. <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/68366>. Putin used similar words in his speech on 8 September 2022 (<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/69314>).
11. <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/ukrayinci-ne-vidstupayut-ne-zdayutsya-ne-zupinyayut-sprotivu-73373>
12. <https://www.president.gov.ua/news/ce-zvernennya-hochu-prisvyatiti-tim-hto-muzhno-stoyit-200-dn-77701>
13. Although Strana is criticized for its pro-Russian position in Ukraine, access to its website was banned in Russia because Strana's war coverage allegedly contains 'fake' information. Access to Meduza's website is banned in Russia as well.
14. Do you agree or disagree that the return of LNR and DNR to Ukraine is unacceptable as a condition for reaching a peace agreement?
15. Do you agree or disagree that Russia's control over regions of Donetsk and Luhansk is acceptable as a condition for reaching a peace agreement with Russia that would allow reestablishing peace and saving the lives and economy of Ukraine?
16. Ecological fallacy must be considered when comparing the effects of reliance on various sources of information: those who watch Russian TV are not the same as those who eyewitness.

References

- Alyukov M (2022) Propaganda, authoritarianism and Russia's invasion of Ukraine. *Nature Human Behavior* 6: 763–765.
- Arenina K, Rubin M and Badanin R (2022) The house of little fame: The tale of Kremlin's fight against the bad news. *Proekt*, 19 December. Available at: <https://www.proekt.media/en/narrative-en/kremlin-telegram-meduza-en/>
- Badie B (1992) *L'Etat importé: Essai sur l'occidentalisation de l'ordre politique*. Paris: Fayard.
- Banerjee SB and Linstead S (2001) Globalization, multiculturalism and other fictions: Colonialism for the new millennium? *Organization* 8(4): 683–722.
- Belaïd A and Besagni D (2007) Meta-data extraction from bibliographic documents for the digital library. In: Chaudhuri BB (ed.) *Digital Document Processing: Major Directions and Recent Advances*. New York: Springer, pp.329–350.
- Bouckaert G and Halligan J (2008) *Managing Performance: International Comparisons*. London: Routledge.
- Brannen J (2005) Mixing methods: The entry of qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research process. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 8(3): 173–184.
- Brunschwig H (1973) Décolonisation, néo-colonialisme: essai sur le vocabulaire de la politique coloniale: II. *Cahiers D'études Africaines* 13(49): 5–8.
- Charle E (1966) The concept of neo-colonialism and its relation to rival economic systems. *Social and Economic Studies* 15(4): 329–337.

- Chew P, Fort M and Chew J (2023) *Digital Disinformation: Computational Analysis of Culture and Conspiracy Theories in Russia and Eastern Europe*. Cham: Springer.
- El Bernoussi Z (2015) The postcolonial politics of dignity: From the 1956 Suez nationalization to the 2011 Revolution in Egypt. *International Sociology* 30(4): 367–382.
- Ellul J (1973) *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Fan DP (1988) *Predictions of Public Opinion from the Mass Media: Computer Content Analysis and Mathematical Modeling*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Foucault M (2007) *Security, Territory, Population*. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1977–1978. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gabrielatos C (2018) Keyness analysis: Nature, metrics and techniques. In: Taylor C and Marchi A (eds) *Corpus Approaches to Discourse: A Critical Review*. London: Routledge, pp.226–258.
- Gartner SS (2004) Making the international local: The terrorist attack on the USS Cole, local casualties, and media coverage. *Political Communication* 21(2): 139–159.
- Go J (2007) Waves of empire: US hegemony and imperialistic activity from the shores of Tripoli to Iraq, 1787–2003. *International Sociology* 22(1): 5–40.
- Golovchenko Y (2022) Fighting propaganda with censorship: A study of the Ukrainian ban on Russian social media. *The Journal of Politics* 84(2): 639–653.
- Hart RP (2018) *Civic Hope: How Ordinary Americans Keep Democracy Alive*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hart RP (2020) *Trump and Us: What He Says and Why People Listen*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Herman ES and Chomsky N (2008) *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. London: The Bodley Head.
- Hoskins A and O'Loughlin B (2015) Arrested war: The third phase of mediatization. *Information, Communication & Society* 18(11): 1320–1338.
- Institut Sotsiologii (2022) Sotsiologichnyy monitoring 'Ukrayinske suspil'stvo' [Sociological monitoring 'Ukrainian society']. https://kiis.com.ua/materials/pr/20230115_g/%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B7%D0%B5%D0%BD%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%86%D1%96%D1%8F%20%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BD%D1%96%D1%82%D0%BE%D1%80%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B3%D1%83%2C%202022%20%E2%80%94%D1%84%D0%B8%D0%BD%D0%B0%D0%BB.pdf (in Ukrainian).
- Ivanov O (2016) Representation of people's foreign policy orientations in the public communication of Ukrainian power elites. *Władza Sądzenia* 8: 13–40.
- Joas H (1999) The modernity of war: Modernization theory and the problem of violence. *International Sociology* 14(4): 457–472.
- Jowett GS and O'Donnell V (2015) *Propaganda & Persuasion*, 6th edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Jurafsky D and Martin JH (2008) *Speech and Language Processing: An Introduction to Natural Language Processing, Computational Linguistics, and Speech Recognition*, 2nd edn. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Knightley P (2003 [1975]) *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero, Propagandist, and Myth-Maker from the Crimea to the Gulf War II*. London: André Deutsch.
- Knuppe A, Pechenkina A and Silverman D (2023) Civilian mindsets toward peace in wartime: Evidence from Ukraine. Working Paper. Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4459106
- Kordan B (2022) Russia's war against Ukraine: Historical narratives, geopolitics, and peace. *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 64(2–3): 162–172.
- Krippendorff K (2004) *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Langan M (2015) Budget support and Africa–European Union relations: Free market reform and neocolonialism? *European Journal of International Relations* 21(1): 101–121.
- Lasswell HD (1938 [1927]) *Propaganda Technique in the World War*. New York: Peter Smith.
- Lasswell HD and Leites N (1949) *Language of Politics: Studies in Quantitative Semantics*. New York: George W. Stewart.
- Longo M (2017) From sovereignty to imperium: Borders, frontiers and the specter of neo-imperialism. *Geopolitics* 22(4): 757–771.
- Lukin A (2013) The meanings of ‘war’: From lexis to context. *Journal of Language and Politics* 12(3): 424–444.
- Malia M (1999) *Russia under Western Eyes: From the Bronze Horseman to the Lenin Mausoleum*. Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.
- Mann M (1986) *The Sources of Social Power. Vol. 1: A History of Power from the Beginning to A.D. 1760*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Merrin W (2018) *Digital War: A Critical Introduction*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Nazaruk T (2022) Subscribe and follow: Telegram and responsive archiving the war in Ukraine. *Sociologica* 16(2): 217–226.
- Nkrumah K (1965) *Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism*. New York: International Publishers.
- Oddo J (2018) *The Discourse of Propaganda: Case Studies from the Persian Gulf War and the War on Terror*. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Oleinik A (2018) *Building Ukraine from Within: A Sociological, Institutional, and Economic Analysis of a Nation-State in the Making*. Stuttgart: Ibidem.
- Oleinik A (2022) Content analysis as a method for heterodox economics. *Journal of Economic Issues* 56(1): 259–280.
- Oleinik A (2023) War propaganda effectiveness: A comparative content-analysis of media coverage of the two first months of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*. Epub ahead of print 6 March. DOI: 10.1080/15456870.2023.2187801.
- Opora (2022) Demokratiiia, prava i svobody gromadian ta mediaspozhyvanniiia v umovakh viyny [Democracy, rights, civil liberties and media consumption during the war]. https://www.kiis.com.ua/materials/pr/20220817_z/%D0%94%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%BB%D1%96%D0%B4%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8F%20%D0%94%D0%B5%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%BA%D1%80%D0%B0%D1%82%D1%96%D1%8F%2C%20%D0%BF%D1%80%D0%B0%D0%B2%D0%B0%20%D1%96%20%D1%81%D0%B2%D0%BE%D0%B1%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%20%D0%B3%D1%80%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%B4%D1%8F%D0%BD%20%D1%82%D0%B0%20%D0%BC%D0%B5%D0%B4%D1%96%D0%B0%D1%81%D0%BF%D0%BE%D0%B6%D0%B8%D0%B2%D0%B0%D0%BD%D0%BD%D1%8F%20%D0%B2%20%D1%83%D0%BC%D0%BE%D0%B2%D0%B0%D1%85%20%D0%B2%D1%96%D0%B9%D0%BD%D0%B8.pdf (in Ukrainian).
- Pedro-Carañana J, Broudy D and Klaehn J (2018) *The Propaganda Model Today: Filtering Perception and Awareness*. London: University of Westminster Press.
- Peirce CS (1997) *Pragmatism as a Principle and Method of Right Thinking: The 1903 Harvard Lectures on Pragmatism*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Perlesz A and Jo L (2003) Methodological triangulation in researching families: Making sense of dissonant data. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 6(1): 25–40.
- Ptaszek G, Yuskiv B and Khomych S (2023) War on frames: Text mining of conflict in Russian and Ukrainian news agency coverage on Telegram during the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. *Media, War & Conflict*. Epub ahead of print 20 April. DOI: 10.1177/17506352231166327.
- Said E (1975) *Beginnings: Intention and Method*. New York: Basic Books.

- Said E (2003 [1977]) *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.
- Sartre J-P (2001 [1964]) *Colonialism and Neocolonialism*. New York: Routledge.
- Savoy J (2016) Text representation strategies: An example with the state of the union addresses. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 67(8): 1858–1870.
- Segell G (2019) Neo-colonialism in Africa and the cases of Turkey and Iran. *Insight on Africa* 11(2): 184–199.
- Shah DV, Watts MD, Domke D, et al. (2002) News framing and cueing of issue regimes: Explaining Clinton's public approval in spite of scandal. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 66(3): 339–370.
- Shields P (2021) Killing politics softly: Unconvincing propaganda and political cynicism in Russia. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 54(4): 54–73.
- Shlapentokh VE (1984) Moscow's war propaganda and Soviet public opinion. *Problems of Communism* 33(5): 88–94.
- Smith AD (2004) *The Antiquity of Nations*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Snyder T (2018) *The Road to Unfreedom: Russia, Europe, America*. New York: Tim Duggan Books.
- Sopilko I, Svintsytskyi A, Krasovska Y, et al. (2022) Information wars as a threat to the information security of Ukraine. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly* 39(3): 333–347.
- Soroka S and Wlezien C (2022) *Information and Democracy: Public Policy in the News*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Taylor PM (2003 [1990]) *Munitions of the Mind: A History of Propaganda from the Ancient World to the Present Era*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Tilly C (1985) War making and state making as organized crime. In: Evans PB, Rueschemeyer D and Skopol T (eds) *Bringing the State Back*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp.169–191.
- Wallerstein I (2004) *World-System Analysis: An Introduction*. Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press.
- Warner R (2013) *Applied statistics: From Bivariate through Multivariate Techniques*, 2nd edn. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wimmer A (2014) War. *Annual Review of Sociology* 40: 173–179.
- Zavershenie Sovetskoi epokhi: Otsenki s distantsii v 30 let (kruglyi stol) [The end of the Soviet epoch: Assessments from the 30-year distance (round table)] (2021) *Sotsiologicheskie Issledovaniia* 12: 3–26 (in Russian).

Author biographies

Dr. Anton Oleinik is a professor of sociology who taught in Canada (Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's), Kazakhstan (Academy of Public Administration, Astana), Mongolia (National University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar) and Russia (Smolny College, St. Petersburg). His areas of interest include political sociology, text-as-data, research methods, with specific focus on mixed research methods and content analysis, and Ukrainian studies.

Dr. Volodymyr Paniotto is a professor of sociology at National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy in Kyiv, Ukraine. He is the co-founder and president of the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, a leading Ukrainian pollster. Dr. Paniotto is also the vice-president of Ukrainian Association of Marketing, a member of Government Body of Sociological Association of Ukraine, a member of ESOMAR, WAPOR, AAPOR.

Résumé

Depuis Lasswell (1938), la propagande est considérée comme l'un des trois principaux instruments de guerre, avec la pression militaire et économique. L'invasion de l'Ukraine par la Russie a ravivé l'intérêt du public et des chercheurs pour la propagande de guerre. Le dirigeant politique russe présente cette guerre comme une guerre impériale. Le dirigeant politique ukrainien la présente comme une guerre de libération nationale. Ainsi la bataille discursive complète-t-elle le combat militaire. L'issue du combat discursif dépend de l'efficacité de la propagande déployée par les parties en présence. Celle-ci consiste en la propagation des messages relatifs à la guerre énoncés par les dirigeants politiques à travers divers médias, avec peu ou pas de distorsions. L'efficacité de la propagande est comparée (i) d'un pays à l'autre, en s'intéressant plus particulièrement à deux belligérants, la Russie et l'Ukraine, (ii) en fonction du média (médias traditionnels, médias numériques) et (iii) en utilisant deux méthodes différentes (analyse de contenu et recherche par sondage). Les données ont été collectées au cours de la première année de l'invasion à grande échelle, entre février 2022 et février 2023. Les données d'enquête ont permis de mesurer le degré d'accord du public visé avec les principaux messages propagés.

Mots-clés

analyse de contenu, empire, guerre, médias numériques, propagande, Ukraine

Resumen

Desde Lasswell (1938), la propaganda ha sido considerada uno de los tres instrumentos principales de guerra, junto con la presión militar y económica. La invasión rusa de Ucrania ha reavivado el interés del público y de los investigadores por la propaganda de guerra. El líder político ruso enmarca la guerra como una guerra imperial. El líder político ucraniano la enmarca como una guerra de liberación nacional. La batalla discursiva complementa de esta forma el combate militar. El resultado del combate discursivo depende de la efectividad de la propaganda desplegada por las partes involucradas. La efectividad de la propaganda es la propagación de mensajes relacionados con la guerra expresados por líderes políticos a través de diversos medios con poca o ninguna distorsión. Se compara la efectividad de la propaganda (i) entre países, con especial atención a los dos beligerantes, Rusia y Ucrania, (ii) en función del medio (medios tradicionales de masas, medios digitales) y (iii) utilizando dos métodos diferentes (análisis de contenido e investigación mediante encuestas). Los datos se recopilaban durante el primer año de la invasión a gran escala (de febrero de 2022 a febrero de 2023). Los datos de la encuesta han permitido medir el grado de acuerdo del público objetivo con los mensajes clave propagados.

Palabras clave

análisis de contenido, guerra, imperio, medios digitales, propaganda, Ucrania