



Research Article

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Global Media Framing Russian Invasion of Ukraine

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Abstract

On February 24, 2022, global political landscapes were shaken by Russian invasion of Ukraine. President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly emphasized that his actions were necessary to defend Russia against perceived Western expansionism, with Ukraine being a prominent example due to its expressed intention to join North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European Union (EU). This study aims to analyze the framing of the Russian invasion of Ukraine by four media outlets, namely The Jakarta Post, Al Jazeera, Reuters, and The New York Times. A total of 120 news stories published between the 15th of February and the 15th of March 2022 were analyzed using NVivo software. The four media outlets portrayed Russia negatively, describing the country as aggressive and invading Ukraine while also criticizing its political measures.

Keywords: Russia, Ukraine, Invasion, Framing, Global Media

1. Introduction

During the early 1990s, the collapse of the Soviet Union marked the conclusion of the Cold War. Francis Fukuyama (1992) posited that this event symbolized the end of global ideological warfare, contending that no other ideology could surpass global capitalism, which was under the leadership of the United States (US). Due to its status as the sole country formed from the remnants of the Soviet Union, Russia was derogatorily referred to as "the sick man of Europe" by Western countries, resulting in a further erosion of its international political standing (Eberstadt, 2005). In the late 1990s, Western observers and leaders promoted the idea of "A world without Russia" (Ali Muhammad, Mutia Hariati H., Ahmad Sahide, 2019).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia inherited the Soviet legacy, and its foreign policy

towards America cannot be viewed in isolation from the historical competition for influence during the Cold War. Despite the United States' victory in the conflict, Russia harbored a sense of resentment. However, under President Vladimir Putin's leadership, who held office from 2000 to 2008 and again from 2012 to 2024, Russia is gradually working towards restoring its status as a major player in global politics, challenging the West's hegemony. According to Leichtova, Putin is a "dynamic and energetic leader" who is committed to consolidating Russia's resurgence as a great power, and his popularity among citizens is enviable to many leaders on either side of the Atlantic. Russian foreign policy frequently seeks to showcase the country's resurgence in global politics in line with Putin's ambitions.

The Russian foreign policy aimed at asserting its political power on the global stage is exemplified in the case of Edward Snowden. Snowden, born on June 21, 1983, was a former member of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) who leaked top-secret American documents on June 6, 2013 (Lyon, 2014). After his disclosure, Snowden became a fugitive from the United States, putting his safety at risk. Subsequently, Snowden sought political asylum in various countries, including France, Germany, Ireland, Ecuador, China, Cuba, Brazil, India, Norway, Poland, and Russia. Out of these countries, only Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed to grant Snowden's request for political asylum, while the others refused due to the political repercussions from the United States. When Snowden arrived in Russia, President Barack Obama of the United States requested his extradition, which Putin denied (Ibrahim & Iskandar, 2017).

The Snowden case certainly disrupted the relations between Russia and the United States. However, it provided a political moment for Putin to show the resurgence of Russia as a great power, a status lost after the Cold War. The involvement of Russia in global issues such as the Syrian and Iranian conflicts in the Middle East region demonstrates its continued readiness to take a stance opposite that of the United States (Sahide, 2017b). Putin even intervened in the 2016 United States presidential election, which led to the victory of Donald Trump, a candidate known to have close ties with him. Obama, who was the president at the time, was angered by the expulsion of Russian diplomats from Washington (Sahide, 2017a).

In 2014, Russia annexed Crimea from Ukraine, leading to international condemnation, particularly from the United States. Despite this, Putin remained undeterred by the efforts of America to isolate him from global politics. Moving to early 2022, specifically February 24, Russia once again launched an attack on Ukraine. The primary reason given for this aggression is the perceived threat to Russian security posed by the West, particularly the United States, attempting to persuade Ukraine, a former Soviet Union member, to join North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

This political move by Putin shows the increasing global power of Russia, a country once regarded as "the sick man of Europe." The action of this president now extends beyond simply taking a different political stance from America to assert his rise to power. Putin is willing to take military action, even when it means confronting the United States, as evidenced by his recent attack on Ukraine. America is actively seeking to discredit Russia in international politics, with many perceiving Russian foreign policy as aggressive, particularly regarding its invasion of Ukraine. The political position of the United States is also influencing global framing of news related to Russia and its president, Vladimir Putin, in light of the February 24, 2022 attack on Ukraine. Therefore, this study analyzes how global media is presenting Russia and the action of Putin in Ukraine.

2. Literature Review

Since the Russian attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022, political scientists worldwide have produced scientific articles analyzing the event from various perspectives. At least 20 Scopus-indexed articles are openly accessible (Open Access) and were processed using VosViewer, which allows for Network, Overlay, and Density Visualization. The analysis results showed that the most frequently used keywords in the 20 articles are "Influence", "West", "View", "Ban", "Ukraine", "Russian Invasion", "Activity", "Force", and "Exercise". These findings indicated that few political scientists who

responded to the attack considered framing aspect of the news-making process. Therefore, this study differs from the aforementioned works by examining global framing of news related to Russian attack on Ukraine on February 24, 2022. Four news stories were selected for this analysis, specifically The New York Times, Reuters, Al Jazeera, and The Jakarta Post.



Figure 1: Network Visualization

Source: 20 articles from Scopus indexed journals processed using the VosViewer application

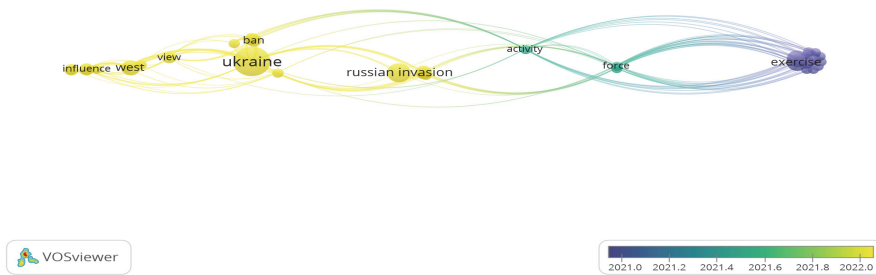


Figure 2: Overlay Visualization

Source: 20 articles from Scopus indexed journals processed using the VosViewer application

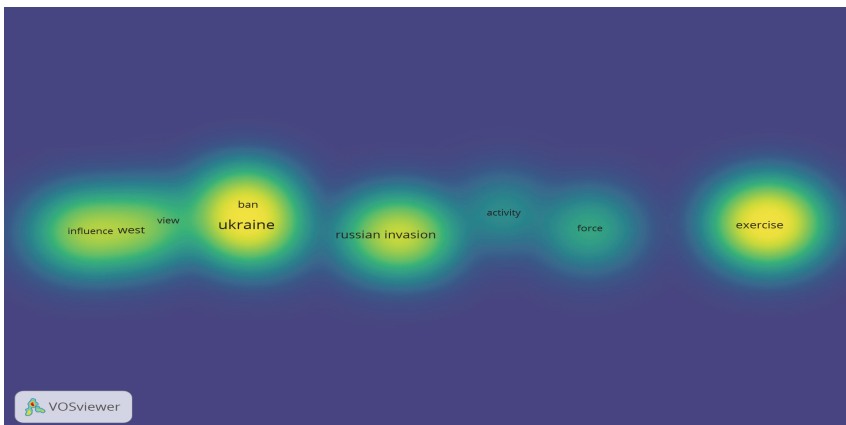


Figure 3: Density Visualization

Source: 20 articles from Scopus-indexed journals processed using the VosViewer application

3. Theory

This study aims to analyze the framing of the news related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, by global mainstream media, using framing theory as the analytical method. The theory is a method that scrutinizes how media tells stories about an event, while framing analysis assesses how media frames reality (Eriyanto, 2015). Framing has been used in the communication research literature to examine how the selection and construction process the reality of a medium performed by a medium (Kurniawan et al., 2020). According to Littlejohn, Foss, and Oetzel (2017), media framing is also called second-level agenda-setting (Safitri & Ayunita, 2022). Framing involves selecting and emphasizing salience, which refers to making a piece of information more noticeable, meaningful, or memorable to audiences. Also, it aims to highlight a specific problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the issue described. Framing entails several functions, including defining problems, identifying causal agents, evaluating moral judgments, and suggesting remedies. Although a single sentence may perform more than one of these functions, many sentences in a text may not perform any of them. Furthermore, a frame in a particular text may not necessarily include all four functions (Entman, 1993).

Framing is a technique that draws attention to key information in communication by increasing its salience. This can be accomplished through placement, repetition, or association with culturally familiar symbols (Robert M. Entman, 1993). However, framing is not limited to just meaning, as it also encompasses involvement. It has normative expectations regarding how deeply and thoroughly individuals need to engage with the framed activity (Erving Goffman, 1986).

4. Methodology

In this study, 30 news stories from various countries representing different continents were analyzed. The selected media outlets included The Jakarta Post, representing Southeast Asia, Al Jazeera, a widely-read Middle Eastern media outlet, Reuters, a reputable European media outlet, and The New York Times, a mainstream American media outlet with a large readership.

The framing and sentiment of each news story were analyzed using keywords such as "positive," "negative," "aggressive," and "invasion." The NVivo software was employed to analyze the framing and media sentiment of the 120 news stories obtained from the aforementioned media outlets. Subsequently, the collected data was processed for further analysis.

Table 1: Data Source from media

News	Website	total news
The Jakarta Post	thejakartapost.com	30
Reuters	reuters.com	30
New York Times	nytimes.com	30
Aljazeera	al-jazeera.com	30

5. Results

The results of data processing showed a clear trend of negative framing and sentiment towards Russia and President Vladimir Putin in the four media sources analyzed. For instance, The Jakarta Post contained approximately 42% of news content expressing negative sentiments towards Russia and Putin, largely stemming from the recent invasion. Framing in about 31% of news content employed the term "invasion" to portray Russia, while an additional 18% used the term "aggressive." Conversely, only 7% of news content presented a "positive" framing of Russia.



Figure 6: World Cloud News from Reuters
Source: News from Reuters processed using the Nvivo application

The New York Times adopted a slightly different approach, as indicated by the news content. Notably, the term “invasion” appeared in 38% of the news stories, surpassing the prevalence of negative sentiment framing at 35%. Additionally, approximately 22% of the news content presented the conflict as a reflection of an aggressive political stance from Russia. In contrast, only 3% of the news content conveyed a positive sentiment.



Figure 7: World Cloud News from the New York Times
Source: News from the New York Times processed using the Nvivo application

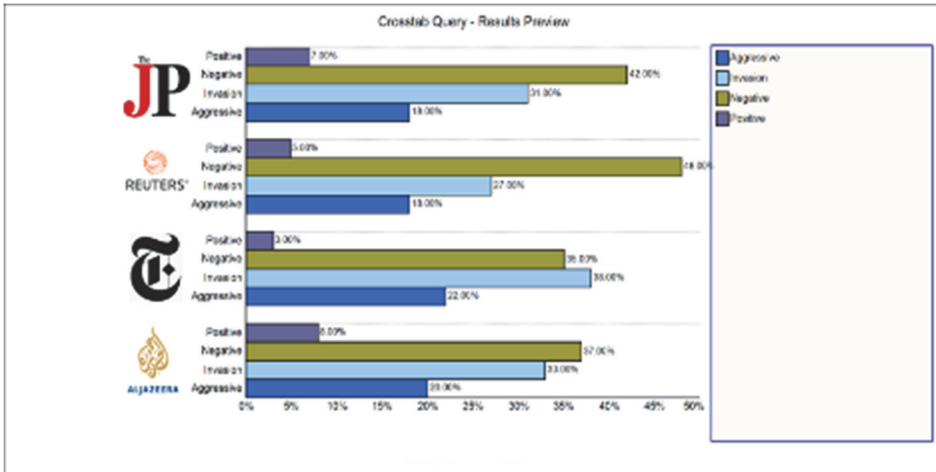


Figure 8: Russian-Ukrainian War News Framing

Source: News from The Jakarta Post, Aljazeera, Reuters, and New York Times processed using the Nvivo application

6. Discussion

Russia, as the post-collapse successor of the Soviet Union, maintains an inseparable connection between its foreign policy and relations with America, rooted in the historical competition for influence during the Cold War. Despite its defeat at the end of the Cold War, Russia harbors a historical grudge against America (Muhammad, Hariati H., Sahide, 2019). However, Russia recognizes the importance of establishing relations with the United States, considering its status as a wealthy and powerful nation. Russian policymakers and intellectuals understand that engaging in open confrontation with the United States would yield limited gains (Mankoff, 2009).

Since Vladimir Putin assumed leadership in 2000, Russia has pursued a foreign policy aimed at reestablishing its global political influence, which had waned since the collapse of the Soviet Union, as a counter to American hegemony (Nitoiu, 2017). While Russia and the United States cooperate in the war on global terrorism, it does not indicate Russian submission or acceptance of American leadership. During the period, both Putin and then-American President George Walker Bush shared the belief that terrorism poses a global political threat in the 21st century (Mankoff, 2009). However, it is crucial to underscore that this cooperation does not make America the leader from Russian perspective, as America continues to be regarded as an 'ideological enemy' (Muhammad, Hariati H., Sahide, 2019).

Russian foreign policy perceives America as an 'ideological enemy' due to the historical struggle for influence during the Cold War. This view extends beyond the elite level to society at large. Russian generally view America as a powerful nation that disregards their national interests and displays arrogance. Additionally, they believe America employs a double standard approach towards Russia, maintaining a relationship while simultaneously attempting to limit its global political influence (Mankoff, 2009). America regards both Russia and China as threats to its global political supremacy (Sahide, 2021).

Former Soviet Union countries have gradually aligned themselves with the Western alliance. On February 5, 2017, a significant gathering of over 7,000 NATO troops occurred near Russian border. The Baltic states, Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria host troops from all 28 NATO member states. In Estonia, the United Kingdom leads with 800 troops stationed at the Tapa base, about 50 miles from

Tallinn, supported by French and Danish troops. British troops are also part of a United States-led NATO mission in Poland, totaling around 4,000 troops, with further assistance from the Romanian army (Muhammad, Hariati H., Sahide, 2019).

The United States, as the leader of NATO, significantly contributes to diplomatic tensions with Russia due to the deployment of NATO troops along Russian border. This has led to heightened tensions as Russia perceives it as a direct threat. In response, the country has strengthened its alliance with China to counter perceived Western expansion that threatens its political interests. Under the leadership of Putin, Russia has strategically asserted its confidence as a global superpower and prioritized the consolidation of its political landscape to regain power lost after the Cold War (Leichtova, 2014).

During the efforts of Putin to showcase Russian resurgence following the collapse of Soviet Union, United States and its allies have increasingly isolated Russia. This includes inviting countries close to Russia, such as Ukraine, to join NATO. President Putin has voiced concerns about the expansion of NATO and the potential membership of Ukraine, perceiving them as political threats. In response, Russia has bolstered its military capabilities and intensified its condemnation of NATO expansion (Bilefsky et al., 2022). Importantly, Putin does not claim an attack on Russia by NATO but perceives a future threat requiring a response (Green et al., 2022). Russia views NATO expansion as politically unfriendly (TSVETOV, 2016). Putin has previously attributed the 2014 uprising in Ukraine, which led to the removal of President Viktor Yanukovich, to a United States-orchestrated "coup" with the support of European allies, calling for increased cooperation on the continent (Al Jazeera, 2021).

The attack on Ukraine is a Russian forceful response to a perceived threat from the West, which undermines its security. President Putin expressed his opposition to Ukraine joining NATO and demanded assurances against the deployment of offensive weapons in the country. Additionally, Putin seeks to restore Russian influence in the region based on the unchanged European strategic map since the 1990s (Wirengurit, 2022).

Despite Russian messages to Ukraine and opposition from the West regarding being a member of NATO, Ukraine persists in its pursuit of joining this association. The message of Putin has been disregarded by the United States and its allies. Therefore, Putin has attacked Ukraine to bolster his political standing in the West and global arena. It is crucial to note that the support of Russia for pro-Russian groups in the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces of Eastern Ukraine is widely condemned.

Global community, including the mainstream media, perceives Russian actions as a political response by the West aimed at isolating it. Unlike the United States, which is a member of NATO, Russia lacks formal political alliances. Tatiana Zonova and Roman Reinhardt have highlighted the significant challenges Russia faces in regaining its status as a great power, such as territorial reduction, strained relations with the fourteen former Soviet Republics, an ongoing economic crisis, the need to reinforce borders, and growing social inequalities (ZONOVA & REINHARDT, 2014).

The aforementioned media outlets portray a highly negative image of Russia and President Vladimir Putin, depicting their actions as invasive and politically aggressive. Furthermore, the ambition of Putin to restore Russia as a great power and challenge Western hegemony, particularly under United States leadership, is emphasized. Western concerns grew when Moscow warned Europe against cooperating with the United States in deploying missile defense components in Eastern Europe in May 2007. The annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014 further heightened these concerns (Pupcenoks & Seltzer, 2021). On February 24, 2022, Russia once again invaded Ukraine in response to what it perceived as political expansionary measures by the West, NATO, and European Union (EU). This invasion significantly damaged the international reputation of Russia. Despite consistently asserting that Russia had no intention of invading, Putin and his diplomats amassed forces on the border of Ukraine and ultimately launched invasion (Stoner, 2022).

Ukraine, with its millennia-long history, is a diverse nation with a rich cultural heritage. It is home to numerous minority ethnic groups including Russian, Jews, Belarusians, Moldovans, Greeks, Crimean Tatars, Gagauzes, Bulgarians, Poles, Hungarians, and Romanians. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, independent multiethnic states faced significant challenges in terms of nation-building

and economic transformation. These challenges were exacerbated by complexities related to identity formation, border disputes, and the protection of vulnerable ethnic and linguistic minorities (Stryamets et al., 2022).

The past affiliation of Ukraine with the Soviet Union and its cultural ties to Russia tends not to be used as an excuse by Putin to pressure the country against joining NATO. As an independent nation, Ukraine has the right to exercise its political sovereignty and make decisions regarding its political stance, including its pursuit of NATO membership.

Russia has to refrain from resorting to military measures to prevent the accession of Ukraine to NATO, despite perceiving the country as military inferior. Instead, Putin should have pursued diplomatic strategies to manage the situation. The four media outlets including The Jakarta Post, Reuters, The New York Times, and Al Jazeera predominantly depict Russian actions as an aggressive political maneuver. The Jakarta Post and Reuters provide 18% of the news coverage with an “aggressive” framing, while The New York Times and Al Jazeera contribute 22% and 20% respectively. Furthermore, Russian history of aggression is evident in its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014. Svitlana Biedarieva asserts that 2014 marked the onset of this war of aggression. In this pivotal year for Ukraine and its artistic society, a series of unprecedented events unfolded, shattering the prevailing sense of peace that characterized civic life (Biedarieva, 2022).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, has significantly damaged the global reputation of Russia in the political arena. The analysis of the four media outlets consistently portrayed Russia in a negative light, characterizing its actions as aggressive towards its neighboring nations, which were formerly part of the Soviet Union. This poses a significant diplomatic challenge for Russia as it seeks to reclaim its status as a great power. The negative media portrayal will undoubtedly shape international opinions of Russia, particularly as it aims to assert itself as a prominent nation.

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