

## How Ukraine Won the ‘#Like’ War with Russia Using Popular Mass Media – Dynamic Framing in Online Headlines in Poland

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**Submitted:** 27 Sep 2022; **Accepted:** 05 Oct 2022; **Published:** 09 Nov 2022

**Citation:** Lukasz Nowacki (2022) How Ukraine Won the ‘#Like’ War with Russia Using Popular Mass Media – Dynamic Framing in Online Headlines in Poland. *Current Trends Mass Communication* 1(1): 11-20.

### Abstract

The entire world watched with horror when at the beginning of 2022, Russia attacked neighbouring Ukraine in order to fight with the alleged Nazism and the mistreatment of Russian citizens in Ukraine. The breakout of the conflict gave rise to varying media reports that have been flourishing in global and especially European media. This research analysed framing tendencies in the headlines of media reports from *Onet.pl* – one of the most popular and commonly visited news portals in Poland. The results of the study revealed strong framing leanings with two issue-specific frames dominating the discourse on top of a one-sided bias of the medium and its journalists in favour of Ukraine. At the same time particular framing trends and tendencies have been uncovered which suggest varying political and ideological skews that managed to influence media reports in Poland, allowing for common support of the Ukrainian cause and what followed, a favourable reception of millions of Ukrainian refugees fleeing the country, to find shelter in Poland.

**Key Words:** Ukraine, Russia, Framing, Dominant Frames, War 2022, Putin

Having only recently and rather partially won the battle with Covid-19, the world, especially Europe and the NATO countries welcomed the year 2022 with a surprising and unprovoked attack of Russia on its neighbour Ukraine. The ongoing conflict has brought thousands of deaths on both sides and even managed to shake the global community and the previously established world order to the core. Despite the fact that the actual fighting has been taking place on Ukrainian fields and in their cities, contemporary war does not only mean soldiers carrying guns, but the mass media have become such an indispensable tool in shaping the opinions and beliefs of people that it can be said that in certain cases the way the conflict is presented in popular media can be compared to a parallel war taking place alongside actual fighting. What is worth mentioning, with Ukraine being a smaller and a poorer place than Russia, which used to be considered the second Army in the world, the attacked country needs all the support it can get from other nations to be able to push back the enemy [1]. In this situation, media becomes the replacement weapon that is able to shift the victory in the conflict to one of the sides. Thus, Ukraine’s ultimate goal is spread ‘pro-Ukrainian propaganda’ to convince others that they are a part of the conflict, or soon will be and that it requires and deserves all the support it can get, both financial, political and above all military. At the same time Russian doctrine, with the Russian president Vladimir Putin at the forefront, claim that the ‘special operation’, as the attack on an independent and democratic nation of Ukraine has been described, is a mere act of denazifying Ukraine from fascists and freeing the oppressed Russian citizens living in Ukraine [2, 3]. In this information turmoil, particular

frames and framing strategies emerge as a result of journalistic creative work, which moulds the reality and influences the understanding of the conflict situation by audiences and what goes with that, shifts both interest and particular support to different agendas.

In the contemporary world of globalized interrelations and conflicting interests, the actual truth is displaced by national, political and economic interest [4]. Democratic countries do business with shady regimes and oftentimes turn a blind eye on unjust or even openly harmful acts of some nations in an effort to attain particular gains [5]. The only way of counteracting such processes is to turn the attention of the public to the situation and win the hearts and minds of regular people who will push their politicians to act on behalf of the oppressed or cease cooperation with tyrants. At the same time, certain countries censor or influence the information flow to their citizens, making it even harder for the truth to come out, deceiving and misinforming their citizens which offers them the power and the support they require - casus the overwhelming Russian citizens’ support of the Russian operation in Ukraine [6].

This article analyses the framing of the 2022 war reality in Ukraine and the employment of dominant frames in article headlines in selected Polish media when contrasted with other European news providers. The choice of particular language and phrases enables to streamline specific perceptions and the reception of the conflict at the same time attracting audiences to the content of the publications. The main goal here is to identi-

fy framing strategies in relation to the portrayal of the conflict by popular online media and what implications it brings outside the online sphere. The source material has been selected due to Poland being a direct neighbour of Ukraine and the fact that the country has accepted over three and a half million war refugees from Ukraine (more than other countries combined) in the first month of the crisis and has been actively supporting the fight of Ukraine for their land [7]. The aim is to compare media reports and define framing tendencies and their origin as well as particular tools and techniques that have enabled to successfully evoke the support of millions of Polish people and allowed to create a safe environment where the refugees can survive the ongoing conflict. Also the narrative of the Polish media changed completely as they abandoned the previously pursued historical conflicts that the two nations (Poland-Ukraine) had had [8, 9].

### Methodology and data

The time frame of the research covers the first month of the conflict since the breakout (24.02.2022) until the end of March 2022. Over 3900 headlines from [www.Onet.pl](http://www.Onet.pl), one of the most

popular and commonly visited, online news portal in Poland, were selected and analysed in terms of content and structure.

The news frame analysis is composed of three parts, namely quantitative analysis performed to identify numerical patterns in headlines framing as well as particular repeating structures [10]. Next, the qualitative content analysis focused on both the deductive and inductive identification of particular frames [11-13]. The final stage of the research involves employment of the new method of identifying dominant media frames in competitive context proposed by one of the modern researchers into frame dynamics [14]. The novel method attempted to fill the previous gap in defining frame dominance [15-18]. The author proposed a technique of identifying particular attributes of frames that are capable of improving frames' potency, thus making them more pronounced (stronger) and at the same time dominating others (weaker ones). The proposed attributes that will be identified within frames, comprise: employment of credible sources, repetition, lexical bias, proximity hype, episodic nature, and negativity bias [14, 19].

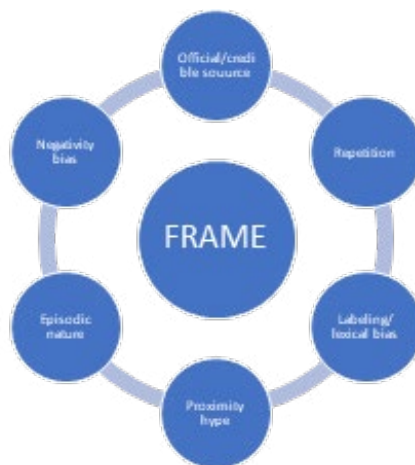


Figure 1: Recurring attributes of frames (Nowacki, 2021a)

### Headlines and bias

Despite common claims of journalistic impartiality in media, the fact that individual stations and editors take stances in their reporting seems omnipresent. Political and societal situation, personal background and beliefs or business incentives all influence media globally [20-22]. The rapid development of social media has led to the shallowing of 'traditional' news reports and enforced the process of reorganizing the way news is presented [23, 24]. Unlike traditional television stations or paper editions of newspapers where particular pieces of news used to be neatly arranged in columns or presented one by one by an anchor, the online sphere embraces fluent and dynamic presentation of news that is aimed at attracting viewers and readers who are easily distracted by the multitude of headlines and pieces of breaking news that they are bombarded with every time they swipe their phones or open their computer browsers.

The primary element that enables audiences to make the decision whether to click or not, is the headline that has been specifically constructed to intrigue, attract and simply lure potential visitors. The main purpose of the headline concept is to subjectively define and optimize the situation and put an angle on a

story, oftentimes with an aim to put forward particular concepts or definition [25]. Following relevance theory, headlines are designed to optimize the relevance of their stories for their readers: 'Headlines provide the readers with the optimal ratio between contextual effect and processing effort, and direct readers to construct the optimal context for interpretation' (1986, p. 1) [26]. In a different paper on news headlines, the authors consider headlines as presenting interesting comprehension problems, as they have a tendency of being syntactically impoverished and, consequently, often syntactically ambiguous [27]. The construction of headlines is limited to a few words that have been contested together to create a luring package with certain omissions and contractions implemented to convey as much message as possible with the minimal use of language. For some researchers, headlines, being read five times more than the actual publications (Ibid), are considered some of the most creative areas of journalistic writing and, in certain aspects, they can be comparable to poetry that borrows extensively from linguistic features generally associated with versification [28].

Among numerous types of headlines, the traditional ones have been aimed to provide an overview of a story (e.g. New York

Times), indicate a problem or instigate an issue, other commonly employed types include human interest centred or confrontational headlines that are supposed relate to people personally, evoke emotions and to intrigue us into reading the content [29, 30]. Nevertheless, with the development of tabloids and recently social media sphere, the newly arriving leaders have become the so called ‘clickbaits’, in other words headlines that are supposed to clash with audiences understanding of certain issues either by sensationalizing events or shocking the viewers or readers [31, 32]. The sole purpose of the technique is aimed at increasing the number of clicks, regardless of the actual message of the

text, which often has not much or even nothing to do with the headline (ibid).

In terms of headline functionality, two schools of thought have emerged with summarizing their functions as ‘the negotiators between stories and readers’ that serve four basic purposes: to summarise, to highlight, to attract and to select [33]. A different but complementary findings were provided by who perceived headline functionality as being informative, indicative and eye-catching [34]. These corresponding analyses may be divided into umbrella and macro/micro functionality as presented below.

**Table 1: Headline functionality levels (Isani, 2011)**

<b>Umbrella function (Dor 2003)</b>	<b>Macro-function (Gattani 2005)</b>	<b>Micro-function (Dor 2003)</b>
<b>"Negotiators between the stories and the readers"</b>	<b>Informative</b>	<b>To summarise</b>
	<b>Indicative</b>	<b>To highlight To enable selection</b>
	<b>Eye-catching</b>	<b>To attract</b>

From the linguistic perspective, the characteristic of headlines has been a major focus of a number of research studies [35]. Among detailed divergences that would require greater scrutiny, the most common and recurring elements that characterize headlines are: omission of articles, conversion (nominalization) use of present tense, omission of conjugation, acronyms and abbreviations, metaphors, alliterations, assonance, punning, clichés or colloquialisms, along with a number of other pieces of evidence of journalists creativity [36-38].

### Media Framing

Framing is one of the theoretical concepts that many political science and mass communication scholars have repeatedly applied to study media coverage. Nevertheless, the early concept of frames and framing comes from the field of cognitive psychology and anthropology (Van Gorp, 2007). Goffman (1974) recovered the concept of frames for the use in sociology, the scientist referred to frames as primary framework and a sort of mental schema that allows users to organize experiences [39]. Later on Gitlin claimed that frames are constructed by selecting, emphasising and excluding elements of reality. He perceived frames as ‘persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation and presentation, (...) by which symbols handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual’ [39]. Other researchers like, and followed Gitlin’s notion of selection in their works [40-42]. Recent studies on framing, however, have moved beyond identification of particular frames [43-47]. In his paper on framing effects considers frames as having two points of reference. One comprises frames in communication, which are supposed to emphasise and select some information by means of ‘words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a speaker uses when relaying information to another’ (p.227) while the other type refers to individual’s (cognitive) understanding of a given situation (frames in thought or framing effects). At the same time, following other researchers he claims that when particular media frames are contested together they exhibit varying potency that allows them to compete over the attention of audiences [48-51]. This concept of weak and strong frames has been the focus of

numerous studies, yet there has transpired a lack of solid research into elements that would increase strength of particular frames at the same time causing other (weaker) frames to be less prominent, thus lacking in strength. In order to remedy this gap in methodology, proposed a frame strength attribution model, which has been employed in this research. The method is rooted in the recurrence of particular frame attributes that are supposed to boost frames’ influence, thus making them stronger.

### Quantitative analysis

In the reporting on the war in Ukraine, Onet.pl portal, being the major source of information for almost 10 million people monthly (32,12 % range), devoted a staggering 91% of its total news reports to Ukraine, Russia and the ongoing conflict during the timeframe of this research [52]. When we compare it with only between 15% up to 20% content focused on the above countries before the war breakout it paints a picture of the dynamic increase in the significance of the situation in the neighbouring countries. Given that, a little over a one-month period created almost three and a half thousand publications devoted solely to one topic, it allowed to elicit almost 800 generic as well as issue-specific frames in the reporting, with the employment of deductive and inductive framing analysis [53]. With regard to generic frames, the research revealed the prevalence of human interest stories that focused on the drama of individual people affected by the war (over 500 different publications framing the conflict from humanitarian perspective), along with numerous conflict frames that transpired from the texts. Additionally, attribution of responsibility frames were also noted, however, for this research assigning blame for the conflict to the president of Russia was considered as a component of ‘Putin and his actions’ issue specific frame discussed further [54]. Nevertheless, the issue specific frames focused predominantly on the leader of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin and his decisions and actions and less on Russia. War itself was also framed from different angles as well as the reaction of Ukraine and the Global world.

**Table 2: Generic vs issue specific frames**

Generic frames	Issue specific frames
Human interest	Putin and his actions
Conflict	War in Ukraine
Russia	Ukraine fighting back
	Global reaction

**Qualitative analysis – dominant frames – frame strength**

When analysing the outbreak of the conflict in Ukraine, it has to be noted that the reaction and position of Poland and Polish media can be attributed to its historical and political background and above all geographical location. Having been invaded by the Soviet Union before and being a direct neighbour of both Russia and Ukraine, Poland as a country has been taking an indirect but active part in the conflict by supporting Ukraine in defending their country, which can also be reflected in the reporting on the war [55, 56]. Having said that, in principle journalistic practice strives for impartiality and lack of bias in the reporting, which can hardly be said when qualitatively studying the reporting of the above mentioned portal.

**Human interest**

The observed overemployment of human interest frames in the publications can be attributed to showing the human side of the conflict by personalizing it and evoking humanitarian emotions in audiences. The techniques that were used involved relating to basic human instincts by starting headlines with ‘People are dying of hunger’, ‘Genocide of Ukrainian people’, ‘Putin is killing Ukrainian children’, ‘Brutal fighting in Ukraine [57, 58]. Three children are dead. Her name was Polina. She was a fourth-grader’, ‘Russian soldier: we are shooting civilians’ [59]. ‘A small boy is running away from Kiev. “We left our dad there” [60]. Just to quote a few from almost five hundred headlines in a similar tone. The reporting shows drama, heart-breaking stories and the cruelty of war through individual people, oftentimes children and what is more in order to make it even more dramatic, the voice is given to those fleeing people which makes the headlines even more interesting and alluring to potential viewers or readers. The most common themes in human interest framing of the war in Ukraine revolved around refugees fleeing Ukraine and coming to Poland, Polish solidarity and support, updated numbers of dead people with particular emphasis on children and their drama, accusations of mass murders and stress on humanitarian crisis in Ukraine. One prominent theme transpiring from the publications is the heroization of the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskyy who was presented as the newly arriving hero-leader of the nation both in political, military but also human terms [61]. Numerous stories presented him in an uncritically favourable light, most likely as an effort to create a structure of resistance with a distinct face to the fighting of the Ukrainian people. What is worth mentioning is the fact that the framing of the Ukrainian president has shifted significantly since the war broke out, as in the past he was ridiculed and disdained for his previous profession which was an actor and a comedian in a popular TV series [62].

**Conflict Frame**

At the same time the way conflict was presented in the portal, allows to draw conclusions on the unified, one-track message that the medium attempted to convey. Namely, the conflict reporting focused on presenting heroic fighting of the Ukrainian people in face of the brutal aggression of Russia. What can be observed in the headlines is the omission or silencing of almost any negative or unfavourable events in the course of the conflict if it related to Ukraine or Ukrainian military efforts. The lack of the above mentioned negativities can be attributed to the journalistic selection and framing of the conflict as victorious to Ukraine, even before it actually ended. Conversely, the aggressor was painted in dark, brutal and rather gloomy pictures, with omnipresent defeat and failure in sight. Russian army was considered ill-equipped - ‘Grotesque ineptitude of the Russian troops’, not really well trained and doomed to fail – ‘Russia feeds their army out of date food rations’ [63, 64]. The brutalities of the attacker were mixed with reports of significant losses in soldiers and equipment along with failing morale of Russians. Common headlines screamed: ‘Putin’s blitzkrieg failed’, ‘Russians are frustrated’, and ‘Army is demoralized and hungry’. Those are just a few headlines that were aimed to reaffirm audiences that the aggressor had no chance and was doomed to fail. The specific selection of the themes in the reporting might be the result of following the available information and news reports that Ukraine and the Ukrainian government was providing [65]. Their strategy seemed to assume limiting the message when it comes to Ukrainian losses and actively publishing brutality of the conflict, but also mistakes and defeats of the Russian army in the social media and in their official announcements [66]. This strategy works twofold, namely it attempted to stop Ukrainian citizens and supporting nations from losing faith in the faithing and supporting Ukraine but at the same time to record the events for fear of Russian propaganda and the disinformation that has been flourishing in Russian media and the internet [67, 68].

**Putin and his actions frame**

When we move on to the issue specific frames that were analysed in the publication headlines, a great attention was paid to the leader of the Russian Federation. However, what has to be noted is the fact that the overall tones were strictly negative and unilaterally biased with predominant vilifying tendencies toward Vladimir Putin. The headlines were oftentimes emotionally charged with aggressive accusation and invectives portraying him as a madman, psychopath, dictator, neo-Nazi, despot, terrorist or a desperate butcher. Different headlines compared him to Hitler, Stalin or Kim Jong-un – ‘Putin like Stalin. Ukraine’s representative to the UN: they use the same tactic’, ‘Putin destroying Mariupol like Hitler destroyed Warsaw’ [69, 70]. The headlines openly framed the leader of the Russian Federation by

augmenting any headline about him with strongly biased adjectives and descriptions, thus telling people not only what to think but also how to think [71]. The framing strategies assumed total dehumanization of the person and a subjective portrayal of the decision to attack Ukraine as evidence of complete lack of logical and human feelings – ‘Putin’s regime, insidious and thieving’ [72]. At the same time the journalists go as far as to declare Putin’s imminent fall and defeat in a number of publications by supposedly augmenting headlines with foretelling slogans e.g. ‘fiasco of Putin’s toxic masculinity’; ‘P. insane’; ‘making mistakes’; ‘P. before Criminal court in Hague’; ‘P. must go and give up power’; ‘end of P.’; ‘P. left alone loosing’; ‘P. living in illusion’ and numerous others. According to, the dehumanization of particular individuals or groups excuses aggression towards them and escalates conflict [73]. Having said that, the journalists portraying Russian leader in a certain way, ground the support for Ukraine and lead way towards an aggressive response of enraged and shocked audiences and mediate potential actions that the country (Poland) would have to undertake to support Ukraine. The above-mentioned authors compare the subjects of dehumanization to parasites which supposedly do not think or feel, as a result the usual rhetoric mostly refers to methods of eliminating them. In the same manner Putin in Onet.pl is referred to, as an insane war criminal who understand nothing else but force and should be taken down by it, or one who already lost. In some publications, the journalists detach him from Russia by suggesting ‘de-putinization’ of the country in order to return to the status quo, advocating for a change of power in the Russian administration, most likely by force due the danger that Putin poses [74, 75].

### Russia frame

When studying the ways Russia is framed, what can be observed in the first place, is the split between three meanings of the word Russia that are used by journalists. Namely, it is either the administration that makes decisions for the country; Russian army and the military; and finally Russian citizens. The headlines refer to these three interchangeably, nevertheless almost always in a negative or diminishing context in order to signal a total separation from the aggressor country. The headlines other the country as a one with a lesser culture, antagonizing it and questioning its development ‘This is a clash of civilizations’ when referring to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine [76]. Russia in the sense of the country’s administration is portrayed in the headlines as a total propaganda machine that spreads disinformation both locally as well as globally – ‘The war may be the end of the success of Russian disinformation in the world’ [77]. They are considered bandits and thieves and some headlines openly compare the authorities of the country to Nazis and divagate over Russia being on the border between dictatorship and totalitarianism [78]. The ‘othering’ of the country is clearly visible in another publication where the Federation is referred to as a ‘world pariah’ which is aimed at indicating the solitude in the decision to attack Ukraine. In a similar manner, the military of the country is framed as barbarians and brutal attackers, with headlines full of accusations of war crimes and dehumanized corrupt acts [79, 80]. ‘Scourges and executioners’; ‘Russians barbarians’; ‘murderers of civilians’; ‘forces of darkness’; ‘demoralized and hungry’. These are just a few headlines that present the Russian

army. The employment of particular key words serves to frame the military in the negative light and ensure the right message to be conveyed to the audiences.

### ‘Will the Russians finally face reality? This society lives in a bubble of illusion’

Finally, the third meaning of the Russia frame, regarding Russian citizens [81]. The journalists frame Russian people as being under the influence of total propaganda; they are being lied to and are mostly unaware of what is happening. There are headlines presenting Russians as being crushed by their governmental machine. In general, the rhetoric towards the regular people is slightly different when compared to the above two meanings of the Russia frame. There seems to be a dissonance from the accusations of the war breakout and rather a sort of pity over the situation for regular citizens. Some journalists go even as far as to foretell the situation after the war - ‘What will Russia and the world be like after Putin? Is a “miracle on the Dnieper” possible? [82]. The way the situation is framed by the journalists suggests the parties to blame, namely in the reporting the administration and directly the military is responsible for the war with regular Russians as passive participants, unable to react. ‘In Russia, it doesn’t take much to fall in the wheels of the governmental machine that starts to crush’ [83].

### War frame and Global reaction frame

Another issue specific frame – war, is framed as a ‘brutal act of rape’ that is perceived in terms of a conflict against the world [84]. Journalists frame it as a meanness, lawlessness and madness specifically calling it a ‘shameful aggression’ [85]. The headlines relating to war itself are limited yet, the ones that frame it in a specific way exhibit strongly biased language that serves the purpose of shocking and alarming audiences.

On the other hand, the final frame identified in this research – Global reaction, is a perfect example of the framing and the changing message dynamics. Namely, the initial headlines, right after the breakout of the conflict, frame the involvement of the global community negatively by showing its naivety in previous dealings with Russia [86]. Soon the scolding tones are replaced with an invocation to join the war efforts on the Ukrainian side, ‘The whole world is protesting against the Russian invasion. Hundreds of thousands of people on the streets’ [87]. With the development of the fighting and the general support proclaimed from a growing number of countries, the headlines shift in tone to start debating over the global situation with mentions of new cold war reality and urges to ‘de-putinize the world’ [88]. The media strongly advocate for a total military blitzkrieg against Russia and a complete halt of cooperation with the country. There are even voices comparing Russian war symbol Z to a Nazi swastika building analogies to the WWII German army, which are clearly aimed at pointing out the aggressor and cause of the entire conflict.

### Frame dynamics – frame competition

Early studies into framing were aimed at identifying individual frames and limited themselves to proving the prevalence of certain framing effects on audiences - the so called ‘single-message framing’ e.g. in [89]. Nevertheless, frames, especially those in

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media messages, do not exist in a vacuum [90]. Recent studies have embraced the idea of competing frames influencing and, in some cases also shallowing the effects of different frames when contested together [91]. This approach is especially valid when studying headlines, which, by nature, are designed to augment the importance of certain elements in the texts. When employing the novel taxonomy of frame boosting elements in this research, the frame dominance analysis revealed interesting results. Namely, despite the numerical hegemony of human interest frame headlines (almost five hundred), they failed to completely dominate the message of Onet.pl portal headlines. The analysis of the headlines containing human interest frames demonstrated that they possessed only one or two attributes that are believed to strengthen the message. In most cases the frames were episodic with negativity bias as a prerequisite, only in limited cases possessing credible sources as their frame boosting element. Having said that, the strongest frames in the headlines researched, belonged to two issue-specific frames: Putin and his actions and Russia. Those frames were on average, equipped with three or more frame strengthening attributes, making the headlines lauder and more pronounced. The frames were built on common employment of credible sources that would boost the message, omnipresent lexical bias (which was analysed in previous sections), complete negativity bias and in some cases the employment of proximity hype to foresee the outcomes of the conflict or the supposed faith of the aggressor. The selection of these two frames as dominating in the headlines suggests a deliberate act of the journalists to expose the party/ (ies) considered responsible for the conflict. At the same time the way Russia and its leader were presented allows to clearly state the journalistic bias which is aimed at skewing the perception of the audiences into support for Ukraine by stressing the inhumane nature of the conflict and the demonization of the leader of Russia.

### Conclusions

In light of the analysed framing representations of the headlines, the direction of the framing seems to clearly suggest a total support for the Ukrainian cause by the journalists and what is more, following a line that goes alongside that set by the Polish government in helping the attacked country [92, 93]. The persistent negative framing of Russia and its leader was aimed at building social awareness and engagement of people in helping Ukrainians. Notorious employment of episodic human interest frames set foundations for evoking personal interest in the lives of the neighbours of Poland, who were forced to flee their country and also to elicit higher emotional response, thus generate more clicks. What followed was the setting of the narrative to blame Putin and his country for the entire situation with clear indication as what should be done to resolve the issue on top of foretelling the potential outcomes of the military conflict. The way Russia and Ukraine were framed was designed to present striking contrasts between the countries in order to clearly mark the one that the portal supported.

The reality portrayed in Onet.pl painted a dramatic but unfortunately a simplified picture of the reality. The station's journalists

and editors decided to silence or omit any challenging voices or alternative rhetoric and focus on unilateral message of a heroic country fighting the inhumane and abnormal aggressor. The result is a one sided report that does not allow for a wholesome picture of the conflict or potential alternate solutions. What we get is a romanticized version of the war with no half-measures or outcomes that would be only partially successful or those that would force the Ukrainians to renegotiate their borders due to the (potentially) unfavourable results of the war. Additionally, when we compare the headlines of the portal with other international news portals in Europe e.g. Politico, Europorter, NewEurope, or Euronews, it turns out that Onet.pl is gradually leaning towards 'tabloidization' of its content by over relying on strong framing its headlines to boost their message and attract more audiences [94, 95]. In the ongoing media competition, especially digital ones, the attractiveness of the medium is counted by the number of clicks and likes and the more evoking and challenging a story, the more times it will be shared on social media [96]. Nevertheless, the 'clickbait' headlines employed by the researched portal moulded the reality creating an over-victorious (to Ukraine) version of the reality with over relying on the information provided by the Ukrainian side and not enough solid analytical news that would thematically build the conflict in the medium. On top of that when portraying the Russian side, the headlines were predominantly sensationalized with lack of solid information or correct and confirmed data. The reporting oftentimes focused on scandalous or shocking events for lack of hard data or actual news items. The same for the leader of the attacking country, instead of focusing on the actual news conveying, the reports were central on disgusting and dehumanizing Putin to audiences. With a clear agenda of the portal, there is a threat of losing credibility and objectivity in reporting the news, despite good intentions to support Ukraine and plant a seed of support in audiences. Also following the institutional framing patterns that align with the official policy of the Polish government in reporting the conflict seems to undermine the role of the medium as a 'watchdog' of the governmental policies [97]. We can build an analogy here to the common acceptance of 'war on terror' frame proposed by Bush administration as a reason to justify and rationale the decision to invade Iraq in 2003, which was soon after commonly accepted by journalists who easily adapted the perspective of allies against the Iraqi terrorists, border security and national threats [98, 99]. Uncritical and one-sided reporting might lead to the shallowing of the message in the long run by becoming the extension of the governmental line which poses a threat of the authorities abusing power and making decisions that would not be acceptable in face of media and public scrutiny. On the other hand, the selection of dominant frames and the type of framing techniques that were employed might have been dictated by the notion of 'patriotic journalism' with media refraining from questioning or criticizing foreign policy especially when it comes to war or the promotion of national interest [100]. It would coincide with the Polish government having expressed actual concerns over the war spreading to other regions and what goes with that general safety of Poland as a direct neighbour of Ukraine [101]. Confirmed that e.g. Amer-

ican media tend to avoid critical analysis and accept censorship when they believe it protects vital national interest, especially at time of war: 'When we're at war, we're Americans first and journalists second'. There is also a claim that governments actually make use of the media to propagate support for their actions, using journalists as emissaries of patriotic message that is aimed at winning over the opinions of the viewers (Ibid).

Having considered the above, regardless of the premises for the types of headlines used in the reporting, the actual winner is Ukraine, which was able to receive the needed support both in the form of media messages and endorsement but later on in a tangible format from the audiences who personally aided the people fleeing from the war in Ukraine [102-104].

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