



**Title: When the media goes to war:
How Russian news media defend the country's image during
the conflict with Ukraine**

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Overview



INTRODUCTION



LITERATURE
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FINDINGS



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CONCLUSION

Literature Review

State-press relations

Country image repair theory

The Russian press

The legitimacy of warfare

Country image repair

Denial strategy

- *Simple deny,*
- *Shift the blame*

Evasion of Responsibility

- *Defeasibility*
- *Provocation*
- *Accusation*
- *Good attention*
- *Accident*

Reducing Offensiveness

- *Bolstering*
- *Differentiation*
- *Transcendence*
- *Minimization*

Corrective Action

Mortification

Legitimacy of warfare

• After World War II, most of the countries sought to prevent war “at almost all costs,” therefore, wars were to be delegitimized (Shaw, 2002)

→ The effort of regaining the legitimacy of wars, however, is not a new phenomenon.

- World War II has been considered a “good war” because it “halt genocide and other violence against civilians
- A good war can be “the campaign against nuclear weapons” or “humanitarian intervention.”
- In the 1990s, the wars against terrorism, again, raised concern about the calamity it created for civilians.

“Revolution in Military Affairs”:

- *“enhanced precision that computer electronics brings to targeting,”*
- *“avoid the large-scale and widespread massacres of enemy civilians that occurred,”*
- *“mitigate the effects of the ‘small’ massacres that ‘accidentally’ happen.*

Five major elements in this new militarism of transferring risks include

- **killing the enemy,**
- **local allies taking the risks on the ground,**
- **small ‘accidental’ civilian massacres,**
- **media management, and**
- **indirect casualties.**

Theoretical contributions

Image Repair Theory used originally a

- Corporate Communication Theoretical Framework in Crisis Communication
- Public diplomacy strategies used by government agencies (e.g. the embassies)

Journalism in the authoritarian setting (e.g. Russia, China, Vietnam)

Journalism allies with the government

→ *Using country image repair as public diplomacy strategies used by the press !!!*

Research questions

RQ1: How do Russian media outlets restore the image of the country?

RQ2: How do Russian news media justify the legitimacy of their armed attack to Ukraine?

Methods

- Thematic content analysis
- MaxQDA
- Pre-determined coding scheme
- RT and opinion column of Sputnik from February 24, 2022, to May 30, 2022.
- 60 articles on RT and 70 articles on Sputnik

The screenshot displays the MaxQDA software interface. The main window shows a document with the following text:

111 Dmitry Trenin: How Russia must reinvent itself to defeat th...
© Evgeny Biatov / Sputnik
112 The stand-off between Russia and the Western nations, w...
113 2014, escalated into an active confrontation with the start of...
in Ukraine, back in late February. In other words, the Great Game...
has become total war, though a hybrid one so far, since the armed...
of a full-scale nature at present.

114 However, the danger of it intensifying towards a direct collision not only...
increasing.

115 The challenge Russia is facing has no equivalents in our history. It's not just that...
neither allies nor even potential partners left in the West. Frequent comparisons...
Cold War of the mid and late 20th century are inaccurate and rather disorienting. In t...
globalization and new technology, the modern form of confrontation is not only of a...
scale than the previous one, it is also much more intense. Ultimately, the main field...
ongoing battle is located inside the country.

116 Fyodor Lukyanov: The end of an era
117 Read more Fyodor Lukyanov: The end of an era
118 The asymmetry between the opponents is huge, particularly the imbalance betw...
forces and capabilities available to them. Based on this, the US and its allies have s...
more radical goals than the relatively conservative containment and deterrence s...
used toward the Soviet Union. They are in fact striving to exclude Russia from wor...
as an independent factor, and to completely destroy the Russian economy.

On the right side, a coding scheme is overlaid, listing various codes with checkboxes and expand/collapse icons:

- It is a Tragedy
- International agreement on the tension
- Rights of the conflict area's people
- Russian concern on security-being threaten
- Denial
- Evation of responsibility
- Evasion of Responsibility** (highlighted in red)
- Attack accusers
- Provocation
- Reduce offensiveness
- Reduce Offensiveness
- Bostering
- Trancendence
- Differentiation

At the bottom, there is a 'Retrieved Segments' section with a search icon and a text input field: 'Activate documents and codes to retrieve coded segments ...'

Findings

There is no sorry in the warfare (RQ1)

Image repair tactics for the legitimation of war (RQ1 and RQ2)

War of the superpower and the “your words against you” (RQ2)

Discussions

“Biden,” “West/Western” and “NATO” were frequently used in relation to negative connotations of Russia.

Second, aside from the war on the battlefield, the Russian media outlets seem to perform a war of justification with multiple country image repair strategies.

Third, to legitimize the war, multiple tactics were used, especially with the evasion of responsibility tactic.

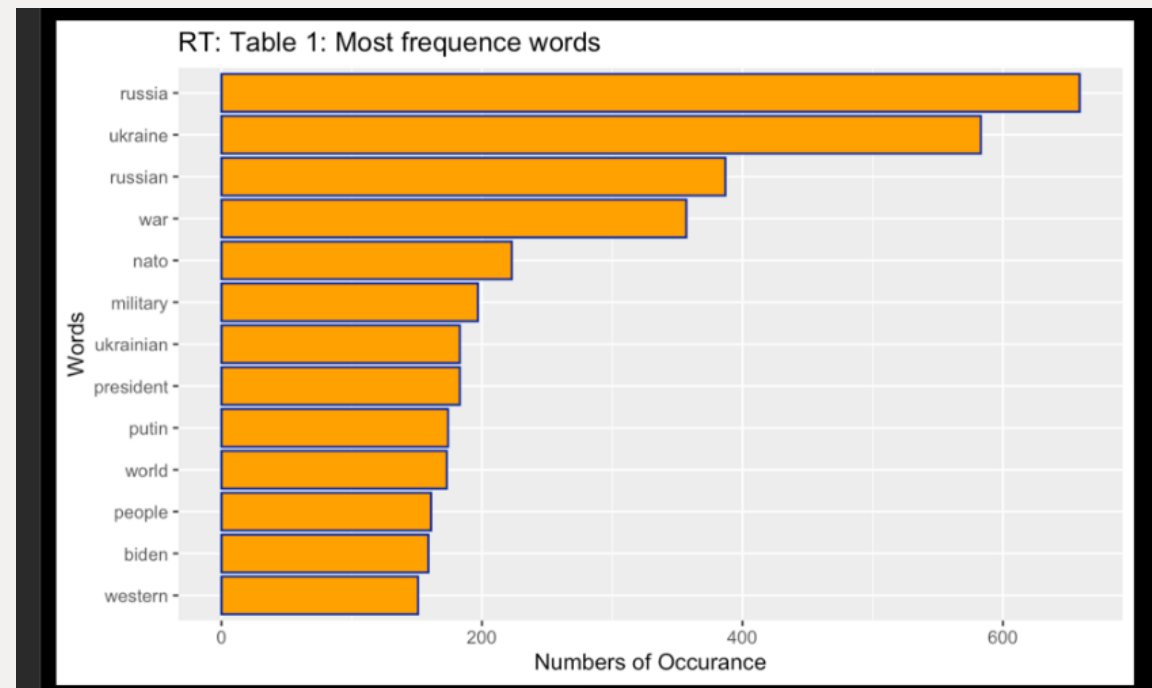
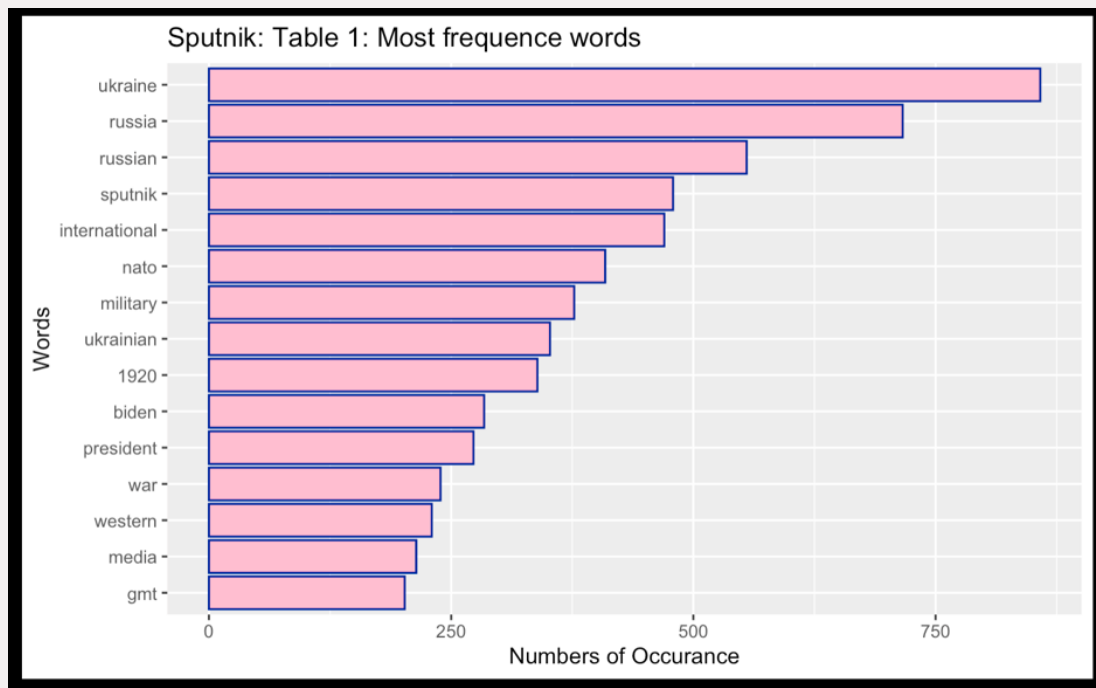
Evasion of responsibility was frequently used to attack those who were accusing Russia of invading Ukraine.

Reducing offensiveness was used in the form of bolstering by explaining that Russia was providing humanitarian aid, reinforcing to their readers that Russia would win the war, thus protecting the citizens of Ukraine and Russia.

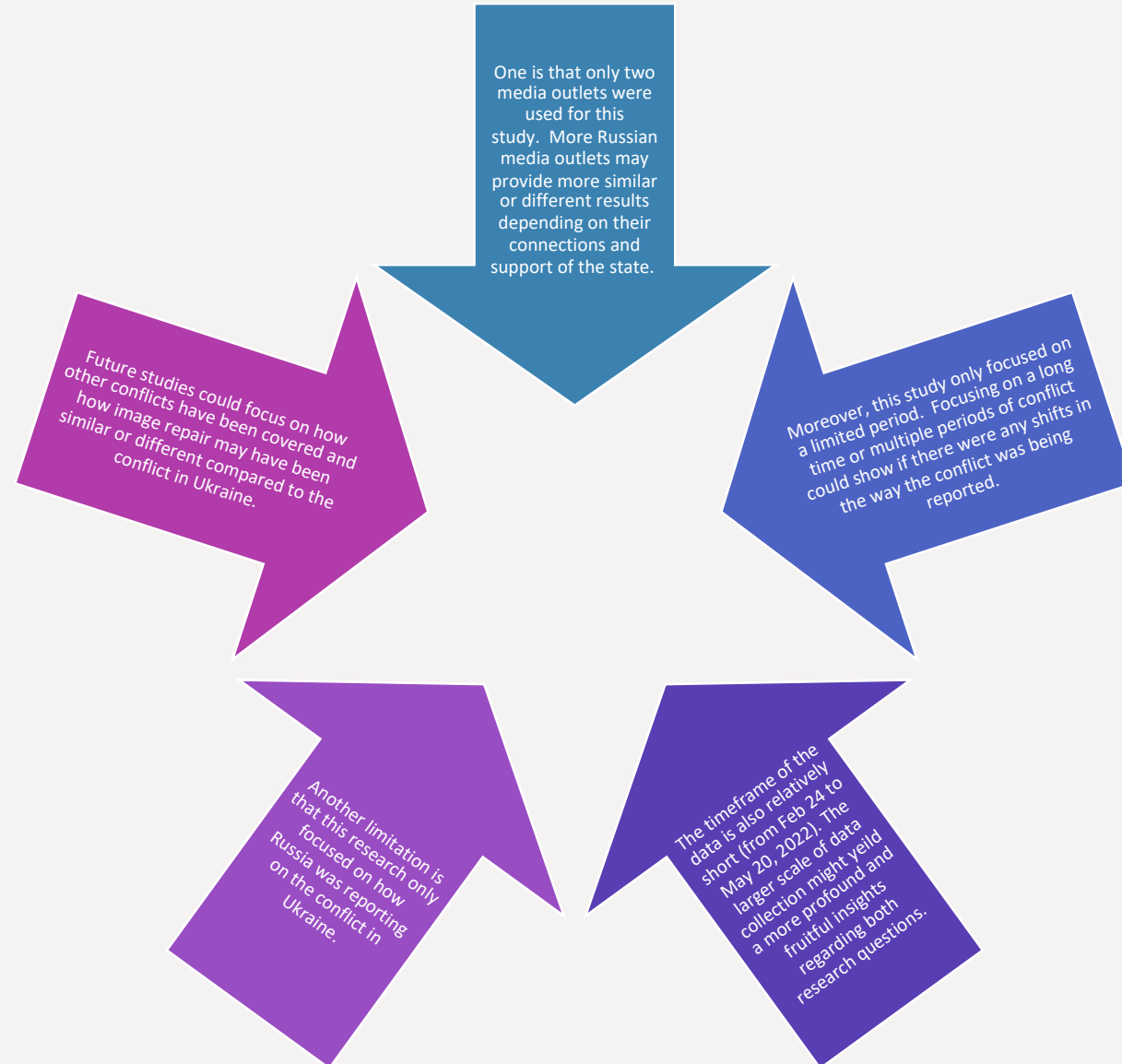
Corrective action was used, but not extensively by these two Russian outlets.

→ This study found that in both, the use of image repair tactics and legitimizing the war, the media outlets in this study took on the view of the government and promoted the government.

Occurrence of Words



Limitations and Future Research



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- The slide features a white background with decorative elements consisting of various colored circles (cyan, purple, blue, orange, pink) scattered in the corners. The main content is a single bullet point.
- **Thank you for your attention!!!**