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Perceptions of U.S Media Coverage of
Russia's War on Ukraine: A Thematic
Analysis of 'Chicago Tribune' Newspaper

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Abstract

This research delves into the intricate relationship between U.S newspaper coverage and the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict, offering a comprehensive analysis of how media reporting has evolved over time in the context of major global conflicts. In this context, this study aims to scrutinize the bias of U.S news media and their representation of the war in Ukraine and to provide a unique perspective on their role in shaping public perceptions. Hence a thematic analysis of the Chicago Tribune' newspaper coverage is used within the thirteen articles since the onset of the war on March, 2022. The findings in the analysis of data revealed six major themes: Military Action, Humanitarian Ramification, Global Response, Economic Ramifications, Psychosocial Ramifications and Historical Background, all of which focused on the Russian aggression and depicted Ukraine as a victim and innocent in its coverage. By this consideration, the 'Chicago Tribune' showed bias in how it reported the news by supporting Ukraine and condemning Russia because of U.S special relations with Ukraine and some U.S national interests.

Keywords: Bias, Chicago Tribune, Perception, Russia-Ukraine War, U.S news Coverage

Résumé

Cette recherche examine la relation complexe entre la couverture médiatique américaine et le conflit en cours entre la Russie et l'Ukraine, offrant une analyse complète de la façon dont les reportages médiatiques ont évolué au fil du temps dans le contexte des conflits mondiaux majeurs. Dans ce contexte, cette étude vise à examiner les préjugés des médias d'information américains et leur représentation de la guerre en Ukraine et à fournir une perspective unique sur leur rôle dans la formation des perceptions du public. C'est pourquoi une analyse thématique de la couverture du journal Chicago Tribune est utilisée dans les treize articles depuis le début de la guerre en mars 2022. Les résultats de l'analyse des données ont révélé six thèmes majeurs : l'action militaire, la ramification humanitaire, la réponse mondiale, l'économie. Ramifications, ramifications psychosociales et contexte historique, tous axés sur l'agression russe et décrivant l'Ukraine comme une victime et un innocent dans sa couverture. Par cette considération, le « Chicago Tribune » a fait preuve de partialité dans la façon dont il a rapporté la nouvelle en soutenant l'Ukraine et en condamnant la Russie en raison des relations spéciales des États-Unis avec l'Ukraine et de certains intérêts nationaux américains.

Mots-clés : biais, Chicago Tribune, perception, guerre russo-ukrainienne, couverture médiatique américaine

المخلص

يتعمق هذا البحث في العلاقة المعقدة بين تغطية الصحف الأمريكية والصراع المستمر بين روسيا وأوكرانيا، ويقدم تحليلاً شاملاً لكيفية تطور التقارير الإعلامية بمرور الوقت في سياق الصراعات العالمية الكبرى. وفي هذا السياق، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التدقيق في تحيز وسائل الإعلام الإخبارية الأمريكية وتمثيلها للحرب في أوكرانيا وتقديم منظور فريد لدورها في تشكيل التصورات العامة. ومن ثم، تم استخدام التحليل الموضوعي لتغطية صحيفة شيكاغو تريبيون ضمن المقالات الثلاثة عشر منذ بداية الحرب في مارس 2022. وكشفت النتائج في تحليل البيانات عن ستة مواضيع رئيسية: العمل العسكري، والتداعيات الإنسانية، والاستجابة العالمية، والاقتصادي. تداعيات وتداعيات نفسية اجتماعية وخلفية تاريخية، ركزت جميعها على العدوان الروسي وصورت أوكرانيا في تغطيتها على أنها ضحية وبريئة. ومن خلال هذا الاعتبار، أظهرت صحيفة "شيكاغو تريبيون" انحيازاً في كيفية نقلها للأخبار من خلال دعم أوكرانيا وإدانة روسيا بسبب العلاقات الأمريكية و بعض المصالح الوطنية الامريكية الخاصة مع اوكرانيا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحيز، شيكاغو تريبيون، الإدراك، الحرب الروسية الأوكرانية، تغطية الأخبار الأمريكي

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EU	European Union
NATO	The North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PTSD	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
US	United States
USA	United States of America

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Introduction

Background of the Study

The year 2022 witnessed a dramatic shift in the geopolitical landscape of Eastern Europe with Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This event, which began on February 24th, 2022, has had far-reaching implications and has garnered significant attention from the American press. The invasion marked a significant escalation of the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, which had been simmering since Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its support for separatist forces in eastern Ukraine (Kuzio 1-15).

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked a turning point for Ukraine, with the country gaining independence and forging closer ties with the West. This included aspirations to join The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), a move viewed by Russia with suspicion and as a potential threat. Russia has long opposed NATO's eastward expansion following the Cold War, it saw NATO as a security threat to its interests in the region (Cornell 69-82). Russia has argued that NATO's presence on its borders undermines its national security and that the alliance's actions are aimed at containing Russian influence in Eastern Europe (Mearsheimer 50-61).

NATO's eastward expansion following the Cold War has been a point of contention between Russia and the West for decades. The alliance has grown from sixteen members in 1999 to thirty members today, with several former Soviet republics and Warsaw Pact countries joining its ranks. Russia views this expansion as a threat to its security interests and has repeatedly called for NATO to halt its eastward expansion and to limit its activities in Eastern Europe (Mearsheimer 50-61). However, NATO has maintained that its actions are defensive in nature and that it is committed to upholding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its member states.

American newspapers have extensively covered the Russia-Ukraine war, with a focus on the humanitarian crisis, the geopolitical ramifications, and the ongoing military conflict. The coverage has largely portrayed Russia as the aggressor, highlighting its attacks on Ukrainian civilians and disregarding the international law. This framing aligns with the long-standing narrative in American media of portraying Russia as an adversary and Ukraine as a victim of Russian aggression (Robinson "The US Media and the War in Ukraine").

The American media's coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war has been shaped by several factors, including the historical context of the conflict, the geopolitical interests of the United States (U.S), and the ideological leanings of individual media outlets. The coverage has also been influenced by the availability of information and the ability of journalists to access the conflict zone (Robinson "The US Media and the War in Ukraine").

Despite the extensive coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war in the American press, there have been some criticisms of the media's approach. Some have argued that the coverage has been overly simplistic and has failed to adequately contextualize the conflict within the broader geopolitical landscape of Eastern Europe. Others have criticized the media for its reliance on official sources and its failure to provide a more nuanced analysis of the complex historical and political factors underlying the conflict (Robinson "the U.S media and the war in Ukraine").

The Russia-Ukraine war has had a profound impact on the geopolitical landscape of Eastern Europe and has garnered significant attention from the American press. The coverage largely portrayed Russia as the aggressor and highlighted the humanitarian crisis and the geopolitical ramifications of the conflict. However, some criticized the media's approach for its simplicity and its failure to adequately contextualize the conflict within the broader geopolitical landscape of Eastern Europe.

Aim of the Research

The research analyzes the American media coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war, focusing on how these news media have evolved over time. Taking into consideration thematic analysis of the selected newspaper 'Chicago Tribune', the study examines U.S perception of major events in the conflict and the extent to which these events covered in the American newspaper influenced American public opinion and decision-making.

Through the analysis of the thirteen articles particularly found in 'Chicago Tribune' newspaper and published during the first month of the war, the study aims to explore the bias of the U.S media in covering the Russia-Ukraine war, by examining how the "us" versus "them" narrative is constructed in backing Ukraine despite the reporters' allegations of centrality in reporting major events or in portraying the conflicting sides of the war.

Research Questions

The research focuses on the following main question: How did the American newspaper 'Chicago Tribune' cover the Russia-Ukrainian war?

To answer this question, the research focuses also on the following: How far did U.S media influence decision-making during wars or conflicts? What are the central themes being present in U.S media coverage, with a particular focus on the War in Ukraine? What are the key narratives and perspectives presented by the Chicago Tribune in its coverage of this conflict? How was the American media's portrayal of the Russia-Ukraine War compared to other international media coverages? To what extent is the Chicago Tribune biased in covering the Russia-Ukraine War?

Research Methodology

In order to achieve the objectives of this dissertation, a qualitative research is undertaken, incorporating historical and thematic analysis approaches. The choice of these approaches was deliberate, aimed at providing a comprehensive exploration of U.S news media coverage of major conflicts through history.

Methodological considerations play a crucial role in reaching the aim of this study, guiding the research process toward meaningful insights. The research design of this qualitative study is grounded in a thoughtful selection of historical and thematic approaches, aligning with the overarching research questions and objectives.

By combining these two approaches, an understanding of the relation between media and war reporting is covered, offering a rich tapestry of insights into the subject matter. Data collection employed in this study encompasses a range of techniques, including a thematic analysis of the Chicago Tribune's thirteen articles published in the first month of the war starting from March 1st, 2022 to conduct the research as a primary method. The selection of data sources is meticulously justified, ensuring their relevance and contribution to the study's aims. The process of data collection is transparently outlined, shedding light on the strategies used to gather information that is essential for the analysis and interpretation of the selected newspaper in covering the war.

Chicago Tribune is the biggest organization of news in America's Midwest, and it is the 8th most circulated newspaper nationally. Its political orientation has always been right-leaning, traditionally conservative, "the tribune, politically liberal...became increasingly conservative" ("Chicago Tribune"), only to end up claiming the centralist position. It averages about 500.000 users. On the newspaper's official website, it is said that it is best known for its investigative approach, and its astute reporting of global cultures and affairs.

The research utilizes a range of tools and sources, including a combination of primary and secondary sources. The study has assigned greater significance to primary sources such as newspapers while also considering secondary sources like books, magazines, journal articles, blogs and web articles.

Literature Review

This dissertation has used different types of sources, primary and secondary ones. Scholars have long debated the historical factors that have shaped the relationship between Russia and Ukraine. Cornell Svante in his two journals “Russia’s Policy towards Ukraine and the War in Donbass” and “Ukraine and Russia: One Country, Two Histories” provides a comprehensive analysis of the two countries’ shared history and competing national identities, arguing that Russia's actions in 2014 and 2022 were aimed at preventing Ukraine's integration with the West and drawing it back into Russia's sphere of influence.

Mearsheimer John in his two journals “Why the West is Wrong About Ukraine” and “Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West’s Fault: The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin” offers a contrasting perspective, suggesting that the West's policies, particularly NATO's eastward expansion, were the primary drivers of the conflict. Newspaper sources, such as The New York Times and The Guardian, and naturally Chicago Tribune, have also provided valuable historical context and timelines of the key events leading up to the current war.

The Russia-Ukraine war has significant geopolitical ramifications that extend beyond the region. Hoffmann Allan in his journal entitled "NATO's Eastward Enlargement and the Ukrainian Crisis" examined the role of NATO in the conflict, while Kuzio Taras in his work "The Crimea Crisis: A Challenge for the West" analyzed the Crimea crisis and its tribulations with the West. Geyer offered a broader perspective on the war's impact on global order, arguing that it has ushered in a new era of instability and uncertainty. Newspaper sources,

such as Al Jazeera and Reuters, have reported extensively on the international response and assistance provided to Ukraine.

The conflict has been characterized by the use of hybrid warfare tactics, including disinformation campaigns and the manipulation of energy supplies as a weapon. Gwynne Richard in his book “War in the Donbas: The Unfolding Disaster in Eastern Ukraine” provided an in-depth analysis of the war in the Donbas region, while Gresko Thomas in his book entitled “The Struggle for Ukraine: Independence, Revolution, and War in the Troubled Heart of Europe” offered a comprehensive account of Ukraine's struggle for independence, revolution, and war. Newspaper sources, such as the BBC News and The Los Angeles Times, have documented the use of banned weapons and the impact of the war on Ukraine's infrastructure.

The war has had devastating humanitarian consequences, with millions of Ukrainians displaced and countless civilians killed. Biver Philippe in his journal "Journalism in Times of War and Crisis" examined the challenges faced by journalists reporting on the conflict. Newspaper sources, such as The Washington Post and The New York Times, have provided firsthand accounts of the human toll of the war and the struggles faced by civilians.

In the second chapter, the thematic analysis was based on Chicago Tribune's articles that dealt with Russia-Ukraine conflict's most used one's authors are anonyms. “Russian airstrike on Ukraine maternity hospital draws outrage as talks stall” is an article about a Russian airstrike on a maternity hospital in Mariupol, Ukraine. It discussed the international outrage and condemnation of the attack. The strike resulted in multiple deaths and injuries. Ukrainian officials are calling it a war crime. Talks between Russia and Ukraine to establish a ceasefire have stalled.

While “Russian airstrike escalates offensive on western-Ukraine” is about the Russian airstrike too but on a military base in western Ukraine. It discussed the attack and the response

from world leaders. The attack struck a facility used to train Ukrainian soldiers with help from NATO countries. This has raised concerns that NATO could be drawn into the conflict. The article also details the humanitarian crisis caused by the war.

“President Biden lauds resolve of Ukrainians after visit with refugees” is an article about President Biden visiting Ukrainian refugees in Poland. It covered Biden’s meeting with refugees and humanitarian aid workers. Biden praised the resilience of the Ukrainian people. He promised continued support from the West. The article also details the humanitarian crisis in Poland caused by the influx of refugees. Poland has taken in over 2 million refugees. The U.S. has pledged to accept 100,000 refugees.

Structure of the Study

The dissertation starts with a general introduction that provides context for the evolution of the Russia-Ukraine war, and the tensions that led to the outbreak of this war, and the American mediatic attention it received. It is divided into two chapters. The first chapter entitled “The Evolution of Media Coverage of Major Conflicts through History” provides a historical overview of how major conflicts have been portrayed by the media throughout history. Chapter Two entitled “The American Coverage of Russia-Ukraine War: Chicago Tribune” dives deep into a thematic analysis of the specific case of the Chicago Tribune's coverage of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and critically assesses the centrality and biases present in media narratives. Each chapter contributes to a comprehensive understanding of how media shapes perceptions of international conflicts. The dissertation concludes by giving answers to the research questions and establishes a well-rounded take on the Perceptions of U.S Media Coverage of Russia’s War on Ukraine: A Thematic Analysis of ‘Chicago Tribune’ Newspaper.

Chapter One

The Evolution of Media Coverage of Major Conflicts through History

By the 1980s, the world reached technological milestones that seemed a far stretch into the future, this leap enabled the news sector to be wide-reaching with live and global broadcasting of worldly matters. This was an attestation to history as it was being made, immortalizing various scenes in the forefront of minds, capturing certain instances that fueled the unprecedented media frenzy, and got the witnessing masses exposed to brutality, hypocrisy, fear, and occasionally, hope.

On November 9th 1989, the collapse of the communism was symbolized by the fall of the Berlin Wall, and it became a major news scoop and media events to be communicated to all audiences instantaneously. The collapse of the concrete meant the unification of Germany, and marked the end of division and oppression, television channels, radio stations, newspapers, all gathered to report the scene live from Berlin, with cameras capturing the cheering crowds celebrating the downfall of captivity and welcoming freedom. That was the moment of unprecedented shift, palpable to all viewers, listeners and readers, setting the stage for transparency, information, and reporting.

This chapter titled “The Evolution of Media Coverage of Major Conflicts through History” is composed of three main sections that shed light on sides of media that are central to the purpose of this study. It sets the stage for different approaches utilized by the media through history and from different angles of coverage, centrally, coverage of war, which captured essential and pivotal moments in history of conflicts.

This chapter also explores the emergence of different branches within the practice of journalism ranging in the spectrum from objective to subjective, focusing more particularly on their limitations and ethical consideration. It also delves into the presence of bias and the

overshadowing agendas, as it lays the foundation for a critical analysis of American newspaper coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war.

1.1. An Overview of News Media and War Reporting

Ideally, war diffusing through the different mediatic outlets is set to provide the public with a bird's eye view of current events of conflict in order to give rise to the different perspectives to be analyzed, and judge the circumstances with a complete overthrow of any disservice to the masses. That can only be the case on paper if the general practice of supporting opinion build-up, and providing non-partisan coverages is cultivated enough.

A preface to the British ministry of defense said that “The essence of successful warfare is secrecy; the essence of successful journalism is publicity” (“Media at War: Issues and Limitations”). Abramson layers this by stating clearly that what the people have an insatiable appetite for is not in fact merely the news, but the professional judgement, analysis, and thoroughly investigated synopsis on the matters of the world surrounding us, in a way that “honors their intelligence...with quality pictures and videos” (43), she said as her views on different paths for journalists to take, paths that require a bit more interference on their part, are extrapolated from her promotion of values that further develop the quality of news and cultivate transparency.

Some scholars have agreed that the intersection of media and military is transactional in nature, with the military shouldering the fundings of the news crews conveniently in exchange for press briefings and headlines. While others like lieutenant Colonel Marc Felman writes that the occasional media-military cooperation and conflict are true traces of distrust and admiration by both parties, “generals have frequently viewed the press as nothing more than a nuisance while there is evidence that sometimes the media has been coopted by

the military” (43), he also clarifies the nature of “media-spin”, describing it as “the product of a clash between media and the military that has existed as long as the union itself” (43).

He adds saying that the coexistence of a journalist and a soldier in a warzone will result in an imbalance in priorities, as the journalist operates from the perspective of “absolute right to report the war”, while the soldier’s is “absolute necessity for operational security” (43).

1.1.1. Approaches to Wars Coverage

Knowing that the process of reporting conflict is not merely a reflective surface to the occurring events, by default it cannot be a passive craft, because of its undeniable weight and powerful position, as it is referred to as the fourth estate, next to executive, legislative, and judicial branches, it can prevent conflict and restore peace, or it can detrimentally escalate conflicts and misinform to entice hatred, as Mamdani puts it

The media [reports] on conflict and plays a critical part in building consensus, assuring that the link between the two is “reporting on events is not just a passive process. In constructing a narrative for the reader, the journalist plays an active role in defining the event in question and underlining what is at stake. In so doing, the journalist both reports as well as joins the effort to forge way forward. (11)

Ultimately, the role of media is not just to transmit news, it holds the responsibility of participating in the resolution of issues in a progressive way, by adopting an objective view and presenting all perspectives justly and fairly. Attention is now focused on the various approaches and strategies deployed by the media outlets as they are diffusing conflicts and providing information to the public.

Author and journalist Pavlos Nerantzis reveals, in an interview conducted with the head of communications and media of the ENA institute Vaggelis Vitzileos, that a significant power shift is being felt by the war correspondents in that the center of conflicts has transitioned from the power of weapons to that of information “elites have formulated new communication strategies, promoted media centralization...as well as ‘recycling journalism’ ...resulting in new standards in the coverage and representation of war” (“War through the media and the role of journalism”), all in efforts to encapsulate the complex underbelly nature of war through adopting new forms of journalistic expertise are challenged when it comes to the establishment of the chronological fences to these approaches with complete accuracy as it is difficult to achieve, due to their rapidly changing nature, and the overlap that might create some confusion.

In order to lessen the chances of any uncertainty, establishing a basic introduction of some closely interlinked terms coined with this content is needed. Firstly, media, which is an umbrella term for the main channel to all communication and serves as an outlet to relay information on various platforms like radio, television, newspapers, internet or social media, used not only to report the current events, but also for educational purposes, and advertisement.

Secondly, journalism, which is a practice in the realm of media, Journalism not only commentates on the happenings around the world but can also influence it. Journalism applies to a broad field of activities for example, news, reports, research and can be received through texts and images on television as well as internet platforms (Biver 8). Moreover, the term journalist is nuanced by nature, as both a reporter and a correspondent are journalists by default, since the reporter gathers stories on different events in a conceivable way on a short notice, and the correspondent adequately has a bigger segment as he dissects the history and compiles expertise on the war or conflict. Biver gives the analogy of a storm that wrecks

houses and leaves people with nothing, “a reporter would only describe the storm...the correspondent however will be explaining a deeper and more detailed version” (8).

War and conflict, the former is the armed clash with the intention of overthrowing and overpowering the opponent, the latter is a less violent route taken to settle political disputes or oppositions (“How major sources collect data on conflicts and conflict deaths, and when to use which one”). Lastly, reporting and coverage, with coverage being the presentation of news in the media, taking into consideration the angle, and the attention expected and aimed for, all while spinning a particular narrative, as reporting remains to be the act of gathering information particularly and strictly done by journalists.

Overall, approaches to war reporting can be grouped into different eras of journalism, each with its own advantages, limitations, and disadvantage. Initially, emergence of reporting dates back to prehistoric times, since records of battleships were found in text, parallel to that, war journalism became evident, and it diffused news right from the scene and heart of the events. It carried within it traditional war reporting with its focus being on the military tactics deployed in times of warfare, and on shifting the attention to be on the human loss.

Some would argue that the traditional discourse is becoming marginal mainly because of the ascending social media platforms. McLaughlin, in his book “The War Correspondent”, raises the same case of the questionable future of the traditional and contemporary reporting of wars and conflict, describing it as a “a move away from the professional to the amateur, from the careerist to the citizen”, as he embraces the lean toward the idea of a radically different medium to understand the intel on conflicts around the world (89).

Traditional journalism heavily relies on eye witness accounts, objectively reporting by describing events and attaching direct quotes from the war zones, with commentary and interpretation/analysis being published in separate pieces, all contributing in creating a fog

around the approach, as the journalists and reporters had only their judgement and discernment as a way to verify the truth.

In recent years, investigative journalism has become a nuanced route in uncovering the truths of conflicts, and attempting to reform the world. “[different]forms of journalism are focused on the elements of who, what, where, and when... But the “why”, Becomes the “how” in investigative journalism” (Hunter et al,8). Investigating a report must adhere to certain requirements, it should uncover hidden truths, secrets, and unknown details about the wrongdoings of high profiles.

In the case of the breakthrough of the Russo-Ukrainian war, names of senior investigative journalists who have integrated a combination of field reports, exposed corruption, crimes and violations of human right. Like Yevheniia Motorevska, who is leading the publication of updates on those responsible for the torture held in the Russian-invaded Donetsk against Ukrainian war captives in the Olenivka prison, as well as the illegal deportation of Ukrainian children across the border to Russia. She also exposed the details behind the multiple killings of children by Russian gunfire. As it was all listed in an article published by Reporters Without Borders

The solution-focused approach is considered by many to be a reset in the media, and a less negative and pessimistic approach to deal with societal novelties and problems, revealing the hidden problems is not progressive or productive, but when the public is given the guided expectation of responses and they are convinced of the potential conflict resolution, it improves drastically “the quality and impact of journalism” (SJN, qtd. In Powers and Curry 2237).

Solutions journalism, although impactful, it could not restore and maintain the audiences’ trust in the news broadcasted on various platforms, as described by Lough and

McIntyre “solutions journalism is merely one tool in reporter’s toolbox and not meant to be an end-all method of doing journalism...we see the importance of internal and external factors that help shape the complexity of how a solutions approach may be implemented by a newsroom and received by its audience” (203).

We now turn to another face of the many found in the journalistic practice of war coverage, the journalism of attachment and detachment. The notion of journalistic attachment was given rise to by Martin Bell, a senior reporter of the BBC during the Bosnian war. Who, with great zeal, declares the emergence of “a journalism that cares as well as it knows, that is aware of its responsibilities, and will not stand neutrally between good and evil, right and wrong, the victim and the oppressor” (Bell, qtd. In Sjøvaag 46). However, journalism of attachment received heavy criticism and the whole approach was dismissed as unethical, nor credible and trustworthy (Jepchirchir, 150).

Ann Filemyr, PhD, is the president of Southwestern college, and a professor of cultural and interdisciplinary studies, denotes the notion of the setbacks that need to be overcome by the twenty-first century journalism, by accepting the inclusion and positive involvement and support of readers and citizens. Who, by nature, show better responses to material written by investigative/analytical journalists, that aims to inform, educate, influence and entertain, and be conducive to a cooperative and a beneficial transaction, in the face of conflict (Filemyr, 101).

1.1.2. From Battlefield Dispatches to Digital Updates: A Look at War Reporting Through the Ages

Technological advancements have dramatically transformed how news travel, impacting war reporting. This evolution is evident through centuries from the handwritten accounts of the past to telegraph, radio, television to the immediate updates of the digital age.

1.1.2.1. Early War Reporting: The Power of Print in World War I

Newspapers dominated war reporting during World War I. The Times in UK and Le Figaro in France served as primary news sources for their respective countries, alongside American publications like the Stars and Stripes for American soldiers abroad. However, media coverage during this time was complex. Initially, press reports presented a positive image of the war to promote a sense of unity, humanity and patriotism between the citizens. Rudyard Kipling, a prominent British poet, exemplified this sentiment in his poem "Tommy," which celebrated the bravery of British soldiers.

As the United States (U.S) entered the conflict, the focus shifted to highlight German aggression and savagery fueling anti-Allied slant. The censorship also restricted journalists from depicting the war's true horrors, such as trench warfare's harsh conditions. As historian Paul Fussell noted "The reality of the trenches could not be adequately conveyed in newspapers back home; the experience was simply too different from anything civilians could imagine" (Fussell 98).

1.1.2.2. The Rise of New Media: World War II

Communication developed and newspapers aren't the only way to cover news. There was the radio and photography. The first was gaining popularity and broadcasts could be used in delivering news very fast but the content in those was very limited like those covering the Cuban Missile Crisis gripping listeners worldwide. While the second is about capturing war pictures and of course it was harsh because of the bloody reality, so it was mainly used to capture results of the war, the dead bodies and what the war left. On the other side, the press had a very crucial role allowing information to be disseminated to a large number of audiences to shape the public understanding of the war ("Aberystwyth Centre for Media History "A Social and Cultural History of the British Press in World War Two")

The United States media during this period of time was acting as a woodcock's dance between propaganda, censorship and informing the US public. The government took into consideration the dangers of saying too much as an easy access for the enemy on its troop movements and weapon capabilities. The US implemented a stricter form of control during World War 2 through the Office of War Information (OWI), a censorship commission that monitored news content to safeguard sensitive information like troop movements or weapon capabilities that could benefit the enemy. The topics tackled in the newspapers were describing American victories, enemy atrocities and very importantly, emphasis on civilian contributions to promote patriotism.

1.1.2.3. An Era of Information Warfare: The Cold War

The Cold War witnessed a significant shift in how news was reported and consumed. While print media, particularly newspapers, remained a dominant force offering in-depth analysis. The rise of radio and television presented new avenues for disseminating information, while newspapers played a critical role throughout the Cold War, providing detailed reporting and investigative journalism.

However, some criticized the strong emphasis on portraying the Soviet Union as a major threat, often using sensationalized language to evoke fear of communism. Radio broadcasts proved crucial during the Cold War. Their immediacy made them ideal for disseminating breaking news, like updates during the Cuban Missile Crisis. Furthermore, radio waves, unlike print, could bypass physical barriers.

Television's rise in the Cold War's later stages further reshaped media's influence. With its ability to present news through a storytelling lens and utilize powerful visuals, television fostered a strong emotional connection with viewers. News coverage and documentaries often portrayed the U.S. in a positive light, contrasting it with the Soviet

Union's ideology. This storytelling approach proved highly effective in shaping public opinion (Small 397).

1.1.2.4. The Age of Instant Information: The 9/11 Attacks

As supplementary outlets there were satellite phones, not widely used by the general public, bulky and so much expensive, they were used in emergencies by organizations when the traditional landlines overloaded or were damaged in the attacks, they transmitted live reports directly from the World Trade Center site and the Pentagon and it helped delivering unfiltered events.

Moving to the early citizen journalism in which ordinary people caught in the chaos used personal cell phones with rudimentary photo capabilities to capture images and videos capturing moments of the bombings than share all of it on platforms like email lists and websites and as any media outlet, it had limitations, the quality of the footage varied, and verification was often challenging and hard.

Also, the US government have censored information deemed sensitive to ongoing investigations that may contain for example details about leaders, captured operatives and planned operations that may help the enemy. Also protecting victims from the disturbing footage of those who were affected to avoid trauma (Hughes 652-667).

The US media coverage worked hard on adding a sense of patriotism and national unity through its citizens to get support for the war on Terror by focusing and present storytelling about victories, heroism, and sacrifice. The terrorists have been portrayed through a dehumanizing lens to justify any military action. News outlets leaned towards a patriotic narrative focusing on American resilience and downplaying any criticism of US foreign policy that could be seen as weakening national resolve (Kellner 41-64).

1.1.2.5. A Tale of Two Media Landscapes: The Arab Spring

The Arab Spring witnessed a dramatic clash between traditional and social media in how information flowed and public opinion was shaped. Social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter emerged as critical tools for activists. Unlike traditional media outlets often restricted by governments, social media provided a free and uncensored channel for sharing information with the world. Photos and videos documented protests and crackdowns, garnering international support and pressuring authoritarian regimes for change.

However, this open access also presented challenges. As Marc Lynch points out, "the ease with which information could be created and disseminated also meant that verification became a major challenge" (132). Misinformation and propaganda could spread quickly, making it difficult to distinguish fact from fiction.

The Arab Spring also highlighted the changing landscape of war reporting. While traditional media sources like newspapers and television stations remain important for in-depth analysis and trusted reporting, their dominance was challenged. The rise of social media democratized access to information and transformed how audiences experienced these events (Andén and Pantti 2185).

The US media's coverage of the Arab Spring evolved significantly. Initially, there was optimism, portraying the uprisings as a hopeful movement for democracy and freedom in the Middle East. However, as the situation unfolded, the coverage became more nuanced. The media grappled with the complexities of the various movements, the potential rise of Islamic groups, and the regional security implications.

Some argue that US media coverage, particularly by outlets with close ties to the government, was influenced by American foreign policy goals. For example, they might focus on pro-Western factions while downplaying the role of Islamist groups. Additionally,

coverage often sensationalized violence during the uprisings, potentially shaping public perception and overshadowing the peaceful aspects of the protests. The narrative might have been framed through a Western lens, emphasizing democratic ideals without fully considering the complexities of regional politics and social structures (Lynch 20).

1.1.2.6. A Conflict Documented in Print and Pixels: War in Ukraine

The ongoing war in Ukraine presents a unique and multifaceted landscape of war reporting. This conflict unfolds not just on battlefields, but also in a digital arena where traditional media and social media platforms intertwine.

While facing challenges in the digital age, newspapers remain a cornerstone of war reporting. They offer in-depth analysis, verified information, and historical context that social media, for all its immediacy, often struggles to match. The Washington Post's coverage, for instance, delves into the humanitarian crisis in besieged cities ("Inside a besieged Ukrainian city: Fear, defiance and a dwindling hope for escape"), while The New York Times utilizes its global network to investigate potential war crimes and the conflict's economic ramifications ("Bucha Killings: Photos and Videos Corroborate Civilian Slaughter").

Newspapers, with their resources for investigative journalism, can uncover hidden truths, like the Los Angeles Times' exposé on banned cluster munitions used by Russian forces ("Evidence of banned cluster munitions use emerges in Ukraine"). This type of reporting holds those in power accountable and sheds light on the human cost of war.

Social media has become a powerful tool for citizen journalism in Ukraine, similar to its role during the Arab Spring. Ordinary citizens armed with smartphones are capturing the war's devastation and human cost in real-time. Firsthand accounts, often accompanied by photos and videos, have garnered significant global attention and support. Social media has also become a platform for activism and solidarity. Hashtags like #StandWithUkraine have

trended globally, uniting people and raising funds for humanitarian aid, pressuring governments for action, and keeping the war in the public eye (“#StandWithUkraine: Social media rallies behind Ukraine in face of Russian invasion”).

However, both established media and social media face challenges. Newspapers need to find a balance between timely updates and in-depth analysis to maintain readership. Social media, on the other hand, grapples with the rapid spread of misinformation and propaganda.

Traditional and new media outlets, though seemingly distinct, can be powerful partners in war reporting. Social media can act as a springboard for stories, with newspapers following up to provide more comprehensive coverage.

The war in Ukraine underscores the fact-filled, fast-paced world of war reporting in the digital age. While social media allows for immediate, citizen-driven documentation, the need for trusted, verified reporting and historical context remains crucial. This conflict is likely a glimpse into the future of war reporting, a multifaceted landscape where established media and social media co-exist, each fulfilling a distinct and vital role in informing the public and holding those in power accountable. Journalists and media organizations, moving forward, will need to adapt and innovate, leveraging the immediacy of social media while ensuring the rigor of fact-checking and investigative journalism (Entman 299).

1.2. The Impact of Media

In the media-saturated world, brief encounters with information – a news snippet, a social media post, even a catchy advertisement – can leave lasting impressions. These “media mentions” as they are called, have the potential to significantly influence how people perceive the world around them and the choices they make. Media, by its very nature, acts as a filter, curating and presenting information in a specific way. This can shape the understanding of current events, social issues, and even each one’s personal beliefs (Entman, 181). Entman’s

work on media framing highlights how the selection of specific aspects of an issue can influence how people interpret it. The following will delve into the two main areas where media mentions exert their influence: public perception and decision-making.

1.2.1. The Orchestra of Influence: A Deep Dive into Media's Impact on Public Perception

The media's influence on public opinion is undeniable. It acts as a powerful orchestra, shaping what we think is important, how we interpret information, and the perspectives we encounter. Recognizing the power of agenda-setting, framing, and selection bias is crucial to becoming a more informed consumer of information. By critically examining media narratives and actively seeking diverse viewpoints, the media literacy can develop and shape each one's own understanding of the world, independent of the conductor's baton.

One of the most consequential ways media influences public opinions is through agenda-setting. Pioneered by communication scholar Michael Schudson (1987), this is evident that the media doesn't just report the news, it dictates what news is most important. By prioritizing specific stories, conducting in-depth interviews with certain figures, and relegating others to the periphery, the media shapes the public's perception of what matters most. For instance, during a national election, the media's extensive coverage of particular candidates or campaign issues can significantly influence which aspects of the race voters prioritize.

Consider the 2016 US presidential election. The media's relentless coverage of Donald Trump's unconventional campaign tactics and controversial statements undeniably influenced the public agenda. The media, in this instance, became the conductor, directing public attention to a specific aspect of the race, potentially influencing which issues voters prioritized at the ballot box.

Beyond simply dictating what's important, the media also plays a crucial role in how we interpret information. This is achieved through framing, a concept explored by Robert Entman (201). Framing refers to the way an issue is presented, emphasizing certain aspects and potentially downplaying others. By using evocative language, selective visuals, and strategic placement of information, the media can subtly nudge audiences towards particular interpretations of an event. For instance, imagine news coverage of a protest. Headlines might scream "Violent Riots Erupt" while focusing on images of broken windows and clashes with police. This framing evokes a sense of fear and disorder.

Conversely, if the media frames the event as a "Demonstration for Social Justice" and highlights footage of peaceful protestors and their demands, the audience's perception is likely to be more sympathetic. This manipulation of the narrative, through framing, has a profound impact on how the public understands and reacts to current events.

Studies by Iyengar have shown how media framing of immigration issues can influence public attitudes. By framing immigrants as either economic assets or security threats, the media can shape public opinion and policy debates (1). The framing of healthcare reform as a partisan issue can influence public support and understanding. By framing the debate in terms of government control versus individual freedom, media outlets can sway public opinion on complex policy issues (Niederdeppe et al "The Role of Framing in the Individual-Level Effects of News Stories. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*").

Another tactic employed by media to influence public opinion is selection bias. Media outlets are not impartial conduits of information; they have editorial biases and resource constraints that can influence what gets reported (Boyle "Delegated Democracy: How Voters Choose and Elect Representatives"). This selective presentation can create a distorted view of reality, where certain perspectives are amplified while others are marginalized. For example,

during a war, media outlets operating within the nation waging the conflict might focus on heroic acts of their soldiers and downplay civilian casualties. This narrative, while potentially fueling national pride, provides an incomplete picture of the war's human cost.

The impact of these media tactics extends far beyond theoretical discussions. The media's portrayal of the Iraq War serves as a stark example. The relentless focus on weapons of mass destruction, coupled with the downplaying of potential war costs, fostered a climate of national fervor that arguably influenced public support for the invasion (Entman 210). This case demonstrates how framing and agenda-setting can have real-world consequences, shaping public opinion on issues of critical national security.

1.2.2. On Decision Making

As it has been established, chiefly among the motives of news circulation is the profitability, sensationalism prevails since it is polarizing and widely spectated, and this is more and more certified and blatant with the increase in influx of public opinions, with emails and faxes being easily at the disposal of the public, and shared freely to the White House. Dr. Douglass V. Johnson II, army command and cofounder of the school of Advanced Military Studies, backs this up by asking who could possibly be behind these emails, and what could the resulting impact be, "the potential of the public to become informed and to make its voice heard in response to events portrayed in the media is increasing dramatically". He insists on filtering the feedback of the public, referring to it as "the indirect and collective channel of media influence" (Johnson, 2).

All while the media functions under the claim that it is only a medium of messaging, and the people's reaction is entirely controlled by the them, and that it isn't its responsibility. Johnson also explains the media's application of pressure, describing it as a call to action that requires immediate attention and measure, accusing it of "reducing the time for thoughtful

consideration”, adding that time guarantees better decision making and a smoother execution of solutions (Johnson, 18).

Dr. Charles Kgosana, a prominent researcher from South Africa, seconds this point of view, by pointing out the media’s weight during a crisis, reminding us of its cooperation with the military, which was witnessed when the US forces “controlled and influenced all news” in the raid operation on Al Jazeera’s office in 2001, under the claim and pretense that terroristic activity was harbored in the offices (225). He goes on to call the media “Image Enhancers”, bringing attention to the duality of its role, and that the same way it can destroy the public image of world leaders, it can also “build up and support political leaders, and prolong their political lives” (226).

Johnson, at last, restricts and limits the media’s role and impact on decision making as well as on the national security, to be dependent on the media’s access to valuable intelligence and how it presents it to the mob, “the government has the advantage of secrecy and a horde of salesmen should it choose to attempt to sell an issue”. He concludes by saying that the media succumbs to “the popularity of the administration”, since popularity with the mob is equal to strength, and strength equips the government to better handle the reporting, in favor of the set agenda (Johnson, 17).

1.3. Centrality and Bias of Media in Covering Wars and Conflicts

It dawns upon us, especially in times of war and conflict, how valuable reliable information can be, and the reliability of information can be directly linked and deduced from the centrality of the news source, and how well-connected it is, as Öberg and Sollenberg make the case that “the proximity of a source...in time and space to the facts of interest is more reliable than sources further away” (37), further affirming the importance of temporal closeness of the source to the event. To assess the validity however, questioning the source’s

history for any precedents of bias, or any motive or potential gain behind misrepresentation of facts, “a source may misrepresent the facts to protect or elevate someone else’s standing” (37).

Sollenberg and öberg entirely eliminate the chance of a report complete without misrepresented facts, but they suggest ways to ensure the validity and reliability of a source and its report, chiefly among them, is investigating a source with known biases, arguing that this approach provides “an idea of the degree of uncertainty in the information”, as well as consulting a second source who didn’t get the information from the first one saying that “two newspapers reporting the same information does not mean that we have two independent sources for that information” (38), drawing attention to the commonality of recirculated news.

Dr. Felix Hamborg, in his book, *Revealing Media Bias in News Articles*, defines news and media bias as “a systematic tendencies or patterns in news coverage” (14), he adds that what must be found in a report to be considered biased is intention and sustainability, “reflect a conscious act or choice” and “represent a systematic tendency rather than an isolated incident”, respectively (William, qtd. In Hamborg, 13). Nelson simply puts bias to be “the predisposition for or against a particular point of view...it may result from unintentional or deliberate decisions on the part of the media gatekeepers” (2).

As for the forms we encounter bias in, the Australian College of Applied Professions lists them, but does not limit them, adding that one or more may be implemented at once. Spin bias, which revolves heavily on discourse and words used in a provocative tone, “what’s the difference between ‘refused to say’ and ‘did not mention’? which one makes you think there was something to hide?”.

Slant of viewpoint bias, is bias by omission of parts of the full truth, or not even reporting particular stories. As for unsubstantiated statements, they are opinions and takes presented

and proven facts by undeclared sources, “responsible journalists...should give background information or link to the basis of conclusion” (Baum, and Zhukov, 14).

1.3.1. The War in Ukraine

The Russo-Ukrainian War, a brutal conflict that erupted in February 2022, it is not a sudden eruption of violence, but the culmination of unresolved historical grievances, geopolitical tensions, and failed diplomatic efforts. From the Euromaidan protests to the simmering war in Donbas, the seeds of conflict were sown long before February 2022. Understanding these origins is crucial to navigating the complexities of the current war and the challenging path towards a lasting peace.

In late 2013, Ukraine's President Viktor Yanukovich rejected a trade deal with the European Union (EU) in favor of closer ties with Russia. This decision sparked mass protests known as Euromaidan, fueled by public yearning for democracy and integration with the West (Gresko “The Struggle for Ukraine”). The protests escalated, culminating in Yanukovich's flight from Ukraine in February 2014.

Russia, viewing the ouster of a pro-Russian leader as a threat to its influence, responded by annexing Crimea, a Ukrainian peninsula with a majority ethnic Russian population. The annexation, condemned as illegal by the West, marked a turning point. It shattered any remaining trust between Russia and Ukraine, sowing the seeds of future conflict (Trenin “Ukraine Crisis: What Does Russia Want?”).

Concurrently, eastern Ukraine, particularly the Donbas region with its significant Russian population, saw unrest. Pro-Russian separatists seized government buildings and declared independence for the Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics. The Ukrainian government launched a military operation to regain control, leading to an eight-year war that claimed over 14,000 lives (“Ukraine Profile – Timeline”).

Throughout this period, Russia's involvement in the Donbas was undeniable. While not openly admitting to troop deployments, Russia provided substantial military aid and support to the separatists, blurring the lines between a domestic insurgency and an international conflict (Gwynne "War in the Donbas"). The Minsk agreements, diplomatic efforts to establish a ceasefire in Donbas, failed to bring lasting peace. Russia continued to view the region as within its sphere of influence, constantly testing the boundaries of Ukrainian sovereignty.

A significant factor fueling tensions was NATO's eastward expansion after the Cold War. Russia viewed the potential of Ukraine joining NATO as a security threat, bringing the alliance's military infrastructure to its doorstep (Hoffmann 5). This perception of encirclement by the West contributed to Russia's sense of vulnerability and its determination to maintain control over Ukraine's foreign policy orientation.

Internal political considerations within Russia likely played a role as well. President Putin's need to bolster nationalism and project strength on the world stage may have influenced the decision to launch a full-scale invasion in 2022 (Geyer 79). By portraying himself as the defender of ethnic Russians in Ukraine and restoring Russia's historical greatness, Putin aimed to consolidate his power and garner domestic support.

The pre-dawn hours of February 24, 2022, marked a turning point in the history of Eastern Europe. After months of military buildup and heightened tensions, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This essay explores the events leading up to the invasion, Russia's justifications, and the initial stages of the war that shattered a fragile peace and plunged the region into chaos.

The invasion did not occur in a vacuum. Following Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its support for separatists in eastern Ukraine's Donbas region, a low-level war had

simmered for eight years. Despite the Minsk agreements, diplomatic efforts aimed at ending the conflict in Donbas, tensions remained high ("Ukraine Profile – Timeline"). Russia continued military exercises near the Ukrainian border, amassing a significant force, while Ukrainian pleas for military aid from the West intensified.

In the weeks preceding the invasion, President Putin delivered a series of speeches outlining Russia's grievances. He accused NATO's eastward expansion of threatening Russia's security and portrayed Ukraine's government as illegitimate and beholden to neo-Nazis ("Putin Orders Troops into Eastern Ukraine, Calling It a 'Peacekeeping Mission'"). These justifications, widely condemned by the West as fabricated pretexts for war, shed light on Russia's desire to reassert its dominance over Ukraine and roll back Western influence in the region.

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a multi-pronged attack on Ukraine by land, air, and sea. Russian forces aimed for a swift victory, targeting major Ukrainian cities, including Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odessa. However, they encountered fierce resistance from the Ukrainian military and a highly motivated populace who had mobilized to defend their homeland ("Ukraine War: What Happened on Day One and Why?"). The initial Russian blitzkrieg faltered in the face of Ukrainian resilience and logistical challenges.

The international community responded swiftly and decisively. The United States, the European Union, and other countries imposed crippling economic sanctions on Russia, targeting its financial institutions, key industries, and oligarchs ("The West Unleashes a Barrage of Sanctions Against Russia"). These sanctions, unprecedented in their scope and severity, aimed to cripple the Russian economy and force Putin to withdraw his troops.

The war has inflicted a horrific human cost. Millions of Ukrainians have been displaced internally or fled the country as refugees. The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

estimates that over 12 million Ukrainians have fled their homes, creating Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II. Many have sought refuge in neighboring countries like Poland, Romania, and Hungary, straining social services and resources. Eastern Ukrainian cities like Mariupol have been reduced to rubble, with entire neighborhoods destroyed in the heavy fighting. Civilian casualties continue to mount, with harrowing accounts of indiscriminate shelling and alleged war crimes.

The war has fundamentally reshaped the international order. The West has responded with unprecedented unity, imposing crippling sanctions on Russia and supplying Ukraine with military and financial aid. NATO has strengthened its eastern flank, bolstering troop deployments in member states bordering Russia. The relationship between Russia and the West has sunk to a new low, with diplomatic channels severed and accusations traded on the global stage. The war has also exposed vulnerabilities in the global food supply chain. Ukraine, a major breadbasket of the world, has seen its agricultural production severely disrupted. Coupled with sanctions on Russia, a major fertilizer exporter, this has led to rising food prices worldwide, disproportionately impacting developing nations.

The war has primarily transitioned into a grinding conflict focused on eastern Ukraine, particularly the Donbas region. Following a failed attempt to capture Kyiv in the early stages of the invasion, Russia refocused its efforts on securing territory in the Donbas, where separatists have held control since 2014 ("Ukraine War: Why Is Russia Focusing on Eastern Ukraine's Donbas Region?"). Despite heavy fighting, progress has been slow and costly for Russia. Ukrainian forces, bolstered by Western military aid, including anti-tank missiles and advanced drones, have managed to stall Russian advances. Russia's initial strategy of overwhelming force has been met with fierce resistance and logistical problems. Faced with heavy casualties and dwindling morale, Russia has resorted to heavy artillery bombardments, leading to widespread civilian casualties and accusations of war crimes ("Russia Accused of

War Crimes in Ukraine as Civilian Toll Mounts”). Ukraine, on the other hand, has adopted a strategy of utilizing mobile units, leveraging Western weaponry, and taking advantage of Russia's logistical vulnerabilities.

Peace talks between Russia and Ukraine have yielded little progress. Russia's demands, including Ukrainian neutrality and recognition of annexed territories, are deemed unacceptable by Ukraine. The West continues to provide military and financial aid to Ukraine, with no clear end in sight to the conflict (Reuters "#StandWithUkraine: Social Media Rallies Behind Ukraine in Face of Russian Invasion").

This chapter explored the intricate relationship between media and major conflicts throughout history providing an overview of news, media and war reporting, delving into different approaches taken by journalists and the stark contrast between traditional and digital-age reporting, examining the significant impact of media on public opinion and decision-making during conflicts and finally delved into the centrality and unavoidable bias of media in covering wars and conflicts, using the recent war in Ukraine as a case study.

The evolution of media coverage has been remarkable. From the limited, often censored reports of the past to the instantaneous, globalized coverage of today, the way we consume information about war has been fundamentally transformed. However, the power of media to shape public opinion and influence decision-making remains a critical aspect of war reporting.

The war in Ukraine serves as a potent example of these dynamics. The constant stream of images and information on social media platforms has brought the conflict directly into people's homes, fostering global outrage and galvanizing support for Ukraine. However, concerns about misinformation and the potential for media manipulation highlight the need for critical media literacy in the digital age.

In conclusion, media coverage has become an inseparable element of major conflicts. As technology continues to evolve, so too will the ways in which wars are reported and consumed. Understanding this complex relationship and remaining vigilant in the face of potential bias is essential for citizens navigating a world increasingly shaped by real-time information and its interpretation.

Chapter two

The U.S Coverage of Russia-Ukraine War in the Chicago Tribune Newspaper: A Thematic Analysis in Perspective

Historically speaking, the United States of America (U.S.A) has been interested in Ukraine since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with the central aim of building nuclear disarmament, after Ukraine's inheritance of weapons, and the trilateral alliance of America, Russia, and Ukraine began with the Budapest Memorandum in 1994, when Ukraine was guaranteed security by the US, the united kingdom, and Russia, in exchange for their agreement to becoming a nuclear- free state, and "transferring all the soviet-made nuclear warheads...to Russia...in order to carry forward the bilateral Moscow-Washington nuclear arms process" (Yost, 505-507).

Russia annexes Crimea, thus violating the agreement and making it clear, that Ukraine won't be protected by the agreement. And it has been stated on public record that the US sees the Russian invasion of Ukraine as a threat to "global stability, security, and economical interests", all backing up the claim that America's aid to Ukraine is purposeful only to maintaining global stability in the face of "the dangers of the increasing alignment of authoritarian regimes" ("the importance of U.S. assistance to Ukraine").

It is established that the public is strongly, and directly interested in the events and issues that are mediatized and as the news outlets enlarge their scopes of coverage, their power to influence and shape public perspectives grow exponentially.

This chapter deals with the coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war through the American newspaper Chicago Tribune. With a particular focus on thematic analysis, this chapter analyzes the key themes and provides a critical reading of the thirteen articles of the Chicago Tribune.

2.1. Method: Thematic Analysis of Chicago Tribune's Coverage of the Russia-Ukraine War

A qualitative thematic analysis is seen best fit for the study, as thematizing the data gives better ground to flexibility, interpretation, and meaning intended behind words, by profoundly examining the given implicit textual material. Braun and Clarke define thematic analysis as “a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (6).

Essentially thematic analysis is examining the data in search for repetitive ideas, then coding them, these codes are interpolated and used in the generating of the main and common emerging themes, “some initial codes may go on to form main themes, and others may be discarded” (Braun and Clarke 20). Then the resulting themes need to be reviewed, merged, or separated, in case of conceptual overlap, then named, and described. Finally, the reporting process in which powerful excerpts are utilized or attempted to answer the research questions.

2.2. Data Collection

This study will be collecting and interpreting a total of thirteen selected articles from Chicago Tribune as data corpus. Published over the span of the month of March 2022, as the outbreak of the war was recent, and the circulation of news was at its peak.

The data was acquired through a basic prompt entry in a search engine, and the time range has then been specified, and articles with Ukraine or Russia featured in the headlines were qualified for coding and analysis according to their relevance to the topic while disregarded the irrelevant articles. Abiding by the aforementioned steps to conduct a thematic analysis, six essential and central themes are emerged.

2.3. Findings

The results of identification of the repetitive patterns across our gathered data are six prominent themes spun by Chicago Tribune during times of heightened global instability, and they are ‘Military Action’, ‘Humanitarian ramifications’, ‘Global Response’, ‘Economical Ramifications’, ‘psychosocial impact’, and ‘Historical Background’.

Descriptions and brief definitions of the themes and sub-themes are as follows:

- a. **Military Action:** this theme highlights the dynamics of military exchanges in the Russia-Ukraine war presented in the articles.
- b. **Humanitarian Ramification:** this theme details the situation created by the war, from civilian casualties, refugee crisis, and the tarnished infrastructure.
- c. **Global Responses:** this theme is inclusive of foreign ~~governmental~~ responses, and the public’s reaction and position to the war.
- d. **Economic Ramifications:** this theme looks at the economic setbacks caused by the war, such as sanctions, and other financial repercussions.
- e. **Psychosocial Ramifications:** this theme brings attention to the marks of the war that affects the psychological wellbeing of the community in Europe.
- f. **Historical Background:** this theme provides the pre-war sentiments and tensions, and it sets the stage for the rationale behind the Russia-Ukraine war.

Table1: Frequency and percentages of articles per main theme

	Military Action	Humanitarian Ramifications	Global Response	Economic Ramifications	Psychosocial Ramifications	Historical Background
Frequency and Percentages	7(53,84 %)	7(53,84 %)	7(53,84 %)	2(15,38 %)	2(15,38 %)	1 (7,69 %)

The total number of articles is 13

The table was inserted to illustrate the measured frequency of emergence of every theme, the highest percentage of emergence was recorded in three themes, ‘Military Action’, ‘Humanitarian Ramification’, and ‘Global Response’, with 53.84% occurrence across the data. ‘Economic Ramification’ and ‘Psychosocial Ramifications’ appeared in two articles, scoring equally 15.38% across all thirteen publications. ‘Historical Background’ had the remaining 7.69%, appearing in only one article from the selected data.

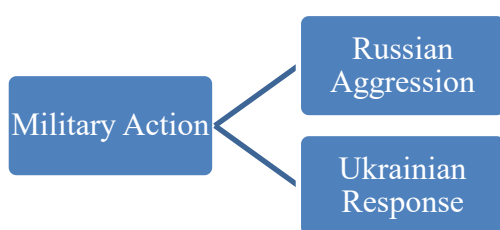
2.3.1. Military Action: Russian Aggression and Ukrainian Response

This theme is chief among the rest when it comes to its frequency with 7 out of 13 articles primarily focusing on the Russian military aggression, and touching very lightly and vaguely the Ukrainian response. The Chicago Tribune immediately spins the narrative that Ukraine merely holds the reactive role, and that the attacks are fully instigated by the Russian forces, like the article published on March 2nd, which denotes Russia’s siege tactics to hinder and cut off the supplies and aids from reaching Ukraine. Juxtaposes that to Ukraine’s response to this tactic, which was creating barricades to resist the occupation. In the same article, figures of war casualties came through, with Ukraine’s claim of losing 2000 civilians, compared to Russia. The latter declares a loss of 6000 soldiers, a claim which is falsified and dismissed by Russians as disinformation, stating that the losses were “nearly 500 of its troops

have been killed and almost 1600 wounded” (“Russian forces besiege Ukrainian ports while armored column remains stalled outside of Kyiv”).

Articles released from the 9th of March till the 16th, continuously reported Russia’s relentless bombing on, initially Mariupol, then Kyiv, starting with the airstrike on hospitals which heavily damaged the infrastructure, not to forget the three lost civilian lives, and the 17 wounded in the attack. On the 10th of March, an article was released with the international condemnation of Russia of war crimes, the Ukrainian president, Vice Prime Minister, and the French president all labelled the attack an atrocious war crime. This was the tone the newspaper had for the few days of the attack with persistent descriptions of Russian aggression were countered only by unspecified “stiffer than expected [Ukrainian] resistance” (“Russian airstrike escalates offensive in western Ukraine”). Yet the articles did not fail to point out defects and shortcomings in the Russian military regimes, which was a tactic employed by the Ukrainian president Zelensky to preserve the morale of his troops and create doubt in that of his enemy.

Table 2: sub-themes under the theme ‘Military Action’



2.3.2. Humanitarian Ramifications: The Human Cost of Conflict and Infrastructure

Destruction

Closely after the military action aspect of the war, the selected articles were dominated by the costly consequences of this armed conflict on human life. Logically intersecting the articles previously introduced on the Russian aggression, with 6 out of 13 articles denote and

track the pricy loss of human lives subsequently to Russian attacks. On March 9th, following the strike on the maternity home, the article emphasizes “people, children under the wreckage” (“Russian airstrike hits Ukraine maternity hospital, officials say, with at least 17 wounded”). As the evacuation of Kyiv and Mariupol hasten to tip over 2 million refugees, the Ukrainian government declared 1200 deaths in the siege of Mariupol, a declaration refuted by Russia, as it claims that the toll is significantly higher.

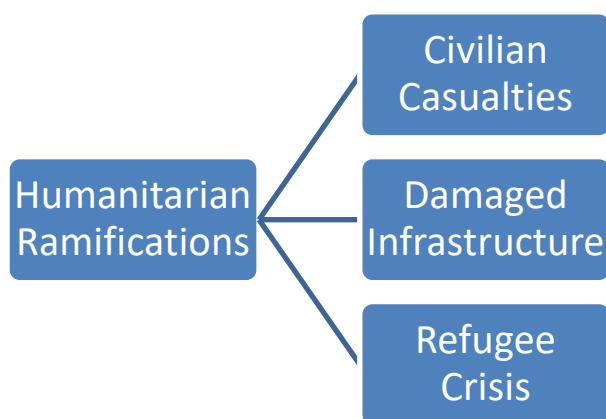
There was concern for the radioactive fuel stored at the scene, since the bombing could jeopardize the cooling of active substance, which would result in an extreme nuclear hazard he U.N dismisses as “no critical impact on safety” (“Russian airstrike on Ukrainian maternity hospital draws outrage as talks stall”). The bombing on the 10th cost three people their lives in addition to a still-birth, and seventeen people were severely wounded including “women waiting to give birth, doctors, children buried in the rubble” (“Russian airstrike on Ukrainian maternity hospital draws outrage as talks stall”).

On March 13th, another attack ensued, killing 35 people, the article concludes with “Zelensky reported Saturday that 1300 Ukrainian soldiers had died in the war” (“Russian airstrike escalates offensive in western Ukraine”), while the Russian government chose not to disclose its losses at the time.

Articles released on March 15th-16th, update on both major cities after heavy shelling and bombing on Kyiv and Mariupol, counting colossal damages to infrastructure, “barrages hit four multi-story buildings...and killed dozens, the shelling ignited a huge fire in a 15-story apartment” (“Russia bombards Kyiv as European leaders plan visit to Ukraine’s embattled capital”), “airstrikes and shells have hit a maternity hospital, the fire department, homes, a church, a field outside a school” (“The Ukrainian city of Mariupol, devastated by Russian attacks, has fallen into despair”). On the 26th of March, following a visit from U.S president

Biden, the refugee toll was confirmed to be 3.7 million displaced Ukrainian citizens, and most of the crossing was to Poland, making Warsaw have an increase in population of 17% in one single month.

Table 3: sub-themes under the theme ‘Humanitarian Ramifications’



2.3.3. Global Response: International Governmental Diplomacy and the Public’s Perception

The findings explore the multifaceted global response to the Russo-Ukrainian War based on seven articles. They revealed a complex interplay of factors shaping the international response under six sub-themes such as public outrage and solidarity, international sanctions, diplomatic efforts and prolonged communication, military aid and shifting public opinion.

The Russo-Ukrainian War sparked a wave of public outrage and solidarity across the globe. It highlighted how public pressure played a significant role in shaping the international response. In the article published on the 6th of March describes hundreds of protestors gathering at Daley Plaza in Chicago, chanting slogans and holding signs condemning the Russian invasion “Roughly 1,000 protestors, most of them donning blue and yellow”. This Chicago protest exemplifies similar demonstrations happening worldwide,

reflecting the global public's outrage at the war's brutality and violation of Ukrainian sovereignty and it was not merely symbolic.

Protests often translated into demands for governments to take action against Russia. These demands included imposing sanctions, providing aid to Ukraine, or even advocating for stronger military action “Protestors are pushing for NATO to make the airspace over Ukraine a no-fly zone for Russian aircraft” (“‘It’s a cry for humanity’ Hundreds of protestors gather at Daley Plaza to rally against Russian invasion”). Also, social media platforms became a powerful tool for expressing public outrage and solidarity.

International sanctions emerged as a central pillar of the global response to the Russo-Ukrainian War. The two articles published on the 12th and 15th of March mentioned sanctions imposed by the US and its allies on Russia. These sanctions targeted a broad spectrum of entities, including Russian financial institutions, Russian individuals, Russian businesses and the ultimate objective of these sanctions was to pressure Russia to withdraw its forces from Ukraine “Hundreds of companies have similarly announced plans to curtail ties to Russia” (“As companies leave Russia, their assets could be seized”). By inflicting economic pain, the hope was to force the Russian government to reconsider the war's costs and incentivize a negotiated settlement.

Diplomatic efforts played a crucial role in seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The articles highlight the involvement of various international actors in diplomatic efforts. This includes the United Nations (UN), with its Security Council holding a pivotal role. The article published on the 7th of March discusses the complexities of navigating the UN Security Council, where Russia holds a veto power. Other international organizations and individual countries also played a role in facilitating dialogue and proposing ceasefire agreements “Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called for the removal of the Russian Federation from its seat on the Security Council of the United Nations” (“James R. Stocker:

Russia can't -and shouldn't- be kicked of the United Nations Security Council”).

Despite initial efforts, diplomatic talks faced significant challenges. The article published on the 10th of March exemplifies this by mentioning the outrage following a Russian airstrike on a maternity hospital, highlighting the difficulty in finding common ground amidst ongoing hostilities. Russia's demands, which might have included Ukrainian concessions on territory or NATO membership, could have been deemed unacceptable by the Ukrainian government and further complicated the negotiations process.

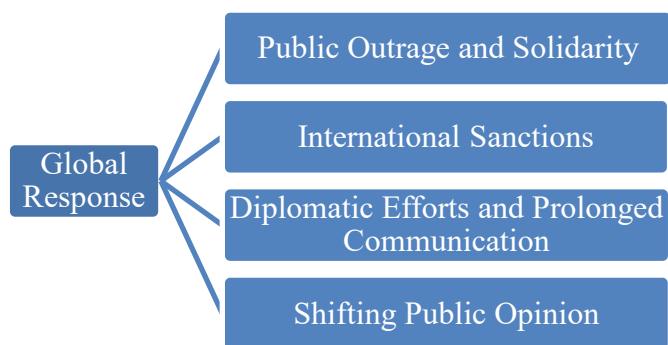
Diplomatic efforts were a vital component of the global response to the Russo-Ukrainian War. International organizations and individual countries actively sought and failed to facilitate dialogue and de-escalation “The highest-level talks held since the invasion began two weeks ago yielded no progress ... and Kyiv braced for an onslaught”, “The two sides discussed a 24-hour cease-fire but made no progress” (“Russian airstrike on Ukrainian maternity hospital draws outrage as talks stall”). However, these efforts faced significant challenges, including the complexities of the UN Security Council, the severity of the conflict, and potentially irreconcilable demands from both sides. While initial talks stalled, diplomatic efforts continued throughout the war, highlighting the ongoing pursuit of a peaceful resolution.

While not explicitly mentioned in the Chicago Tribune articles under scrutiny, military aid undoubtedly played a significant role in the global response to the Russo-Ukrainian War. This sub-theme explores the potential forms of military aid and its impact on the conflict. Several countries, including the US, likely supplied Ukraine with military equipment and weapons to bolster their defense capabilities.

The global response to the Russo-Ukrainian War was a complex and multifaceted endeavor. Public outrage fueled international action, leading to crippling sanctions. Meanwhile, diplomatic efforts, though not explicitly covered in these articles, provided

crucial support for Ukraine's defense. Therefore, it is important to note that the global response continues to evolve as the war progresses, with potential shifts in public opinion and ongoing diplomatic efforts to find a resolution.

Table 4: sub-themes under the theme ‘Global Response’



2.3.4. Economic Ramifications: Russia’s Isolation and Ripple Effects on Global Markets

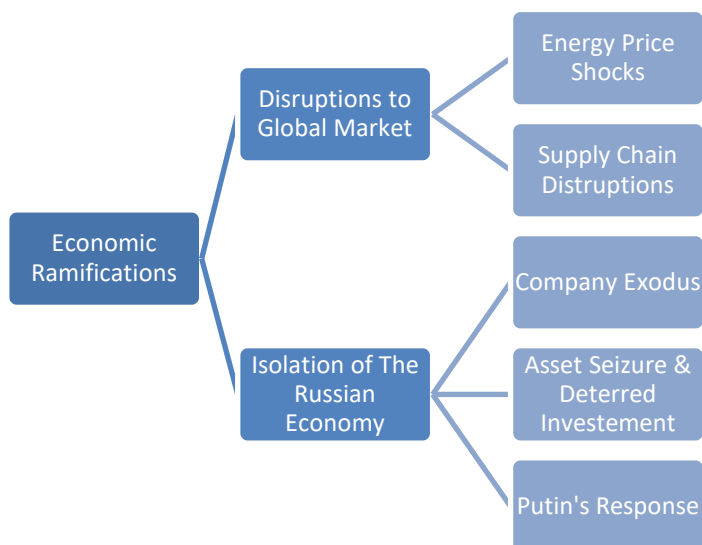
Three articles out of thirteen explore the economic ramifications of the Russo-Ukrainian War which are categorized into two sub-themes, disruptions to global markets, and isolation of the Russian economy. Disruptions to global markets were found in the second article on the 2nd of March on energy price shocks, highlighting the war's immediate impact on global oil prices. The article states that oil prices soared to \$112 per barrel, the highest since 2014. This surge disrupts global energy markets, potentially leading to higher transportation costs and inflationary pressures for consumers worldwide. The disruption extends beyond oil, as the war can also affect natural gas prices, impacting heating costs and energy security in Europe. The same article (“Russian Forces Besiege Ukrainian Ports while Armored Column Remains Stalled Outside of Kyiv”) mentions companies like Airbus and Boeing halting spare parts and technical support to Russian airlines.

As for the isolation of the Russian economy, it was apparent in the company exodus in the eighth article, of 12th March that mentions companies like car manufacturers and other multinational corporations, severing ties with Russia, “If the owners refuse to resume operations or to sell, the company’s shares could be auctioned off” (“As companies leave Russia, their assets could be seized”).

While the articles do not explicitly discuss Putin's response, it can infer from later events that Russia attempted to counter sanctions by imposing capital controls, raising interest rates, and limiting exports “Putin responded Thursday by saying that if foreign companies shut down production in Russia, he favored a plan to “bring in outside management” (“As companies leave Russia, their assets could be seized”). These measures might stabilize the ruble in the short term but could hinder long-term economic growth. Capital controls restrict the movement of money out of the country, which discourages foreign investment and hinders economic activity.

Raising interest rates can curb inflation but can also slow down borrowing and investment. Limiting exports might hurt Russia's ability to generate revenue to fund its economy and rebuild after the war “But now large parts of the seven-story shopping center have gone quiet after Western brands from Apple to Victoria’s Secret closed their Russian operations ” (“As companies leave Russia, their assets could be seized”).

The combined elements paint a picture of a war with significant economic consequences that extend far beyond the immediate conflict zone. The disruption of global markets, particularly in energy and commodities, creates a ripple effect that can impact economies worldwide. Additionally, the isolation of the Russian economy through sanctions and company departures could lead to long-term stagnation and hardship.

Table 5: sub-themes under the theme ‘Economic Ramifications’

2.3.5. Psychosocial Ramifications: The Shattering Impact of Trauma, Displacement and Global Anxiety

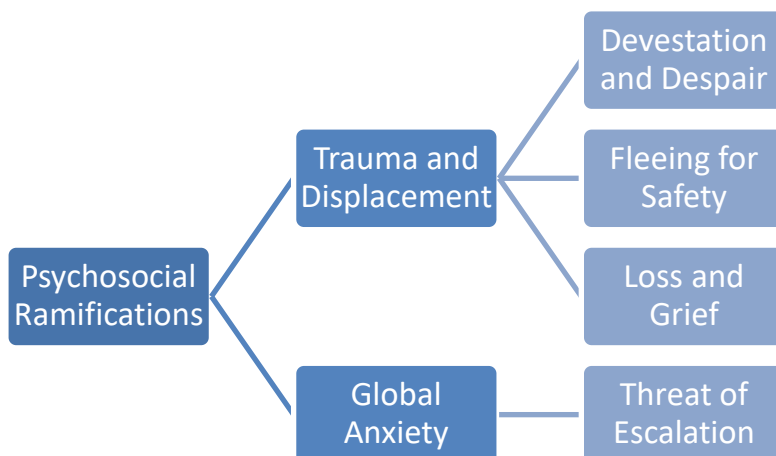
This analysis explores the psychosocial ramifications of the Russo-Ukrainian War based on two Chicago Tribune articles under the two sub-themes trauma and displacement, and global anxiety. The eleventh article published on the 16th of March paints a grim picture of the psychological toll the war takes on civilians. It describes Mariupol as a city devastated by attacks, with residents living in despair. Witnessing violence, destruction, and the loss of loved ones can cause severe psychological trauma, including Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. It also mentions the displacement of civilians due to the war. People are forced to flee their homes, leaving behind their belongings and communities. This displacement can lead to feelings of up rootedness, fear for the future, and difficulty accessing mental health services.

The twelfth article of the 26th of March mentions Biden's visit with Ukrainian refugees in Poland. While the focus is on Ukrainian resolve, the very existence of refugees

implies loss and grief. The war has likely led to the deaths of loved ones, “Some of the women and children told Biden that they fled without their husbands and fathers, men of fighting age” (“president Biden lauds resolve of Ukrainians after visit with refugees”), the destruction of homes, and the severing of social connections. These experiences can cause significant psychological distress, with complicated grief manifesting in various ways, including social withdrawal, emotional numbness or anger.

The global anxiety tackled in both articles shows the threat of escalation, the possibility of the war escalating, the use of nuclear weapons, or the spread of the conflict to neighboring countries can create feelings of fear and uncertainty on a global scale. The war in Ukraine has a significant psychological impact on those directly involved and the wider world. Civilians caught in the war zone experience trauma, displacement, and loss “Some parents have even left their newborns at the hospital, perhaps hoping to give them a chance at life in the one place with decent electricity and water” (The Ukrainian city of Mariupol, devastated by Russian attacks, has fallen into despair).

These experiences can have long-lasting consequences for mental health. Additionally, the global community experiences anxiety due to the threat of escalation and the potential for a wider conflict “Western leaders have spent the past week consulting over consulting plans in case the conflict spreads” (President Biden lauds resolve of Ukrainians after visit with refugees).

Table 6: sub-themes under the theme ‘Psychosocial Ramifications’

2.3.6. Historical Background: The Brewing of the Geopolitical Context

The article released on the 1st of March alone could be found to lightly cover the geopolitical context leading up to the Russia-Ukraine war, the article ranks Russia’s perceived imminent threat following Ukraine’s potential membership in NATO to be the primary cause of the tension, then the outbreak of war, providing context from the 1990s “Russia believes it needs to reclaim Ukraine, which prior to 1990 was part of the Soviet Union”. Then circling back to the NATO inclusion, the article speculates that Russia’s “main trigger” about the NATO expansion through Ukraine is not having economic access and power which will marginalize Russia, “any kind of idea of being a great power, one that matters...must include Ukraine” (“Ukraine war might have been avoided, Oakton College professor says”). and it would also mean that in the case of a Russian invasion, Ukraine would be defended by all European poles belonging to NATO.

The article considers a path that should have been taken to avoid the conflict altogether, which is a collectively signed treaty that ensures Russia’s security through no expansion of NATO towards Ukraine, the latter was actually said to be ill-advised by the U.S

“that’s the nightmare, the worst-case scenario. There are really no benefits to Ukraine being in NATO”. As joining the NATO is not seen as good interest and beneficial to Ukraine. “[we] don’t understand why the United States would insist in Ukraine joining NATO” (“Ukraine war might have been avoided, Oakton College professor says”).

Table 7: sub-themes under the theme ‘Historical Background’



In conclusion, this thematic analysis affirms the presence and influence of narratives that were spun by the Chicago Tribune newspaper in its process of covering the Russia-Ukraine war, which affects the public perception and policy decisions, in an extensive way, and simultaneously promotes cultivating critical and thorough readings of all consumable media.

Conclusion

This dissertation sought to overtake the evolution, impact, and bias of the American coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war in the Chicago Tribune newspaper, by taking a closer look at pivotal moments in history of the complex relationship of the trilateral power scheme, through the lens of reports and coverage that have influenced the public's perception and execution of decisions during times of war.

This study investigated how the coverage of this war subdued a lot of pressure from actively changing external elements, consequently having influence on the responses of the readers as coverage is prone to be micromanaged by factors like technological advancements. That was a big part of the information war between Russia and Ukraine. As Ran and Liu who affirm that real-time diffusing of military combat, humanitarian loss and displacement are far reaching in this day and age and "influence the morale and perception of us, our enemies, and the public of the third-party countries" (7).

Other factors of mutual influence on the coverage of the war and the war on the coverage would be economic implications, military events. Conveniently, they both intersected in this war when America supplied Ukraine with financial and military aid, which caused a media up-roar and frenzy. Political and geopolitical ties to alliances and public display of unity against the common enemy came to play a role in the American coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war.

Shedding light on the connection of these elements, it contextualizes the relevance of agenda-setting in the realm of news coverage, knowing that agenda-setting is the mediatic outlets' selection of issues by diffusing and covering them frequently in a pervasive way. This was the case in the findings of the thematically analyzed data set in this study.

From the analysis of the American newspaper Chicago Tribune's coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war, the presence of potential leaning and bias is evident prominently in the themes extracted from the data corpus, which consisted of 13 articles, released over the month of March 2022. The prominence of the theme military action is focused on the decentralization of the framing, as the overwhelming majority of the articles was heavily critical only of the Russian aggression, and Russia's military tactics, while completely pacifying, downplaying, and in instances, completely overlooking the Ukrainian resistance, which was notorious for its employment of guerrilla tactics, according to Col Rudibert Kilian who claimed that "traditional defense...used to increase the occupancy costs and harass supply lines" ("Analysis of the Conflict Between Russia and Ukraine").

Guerrilla tactics are sneak attacks, ambushes, targeting infrastructure, and commanding officers. An article released by the RAND, a nonprofit news organization, undeniably confirms the bias by omission that Chicago Tribune is scrutinized for, "using unorthodox and imaginative tactics, Ukraine's irregular warriors are notching stunning gains", the article enumerates the damages made onto Russia by the Ukrainian resistance, "officials and turncoats in Russian-occupied areas are routinely assassinated" ("Bolstering Ukraine's Irregular War Against Russia"). The newspaper did not fail to denunciate Russia's flawed execution to boost the morale of their troops and create doubt in that of Russia. The RAND article speculates the west's involvement in aiding the resistance "The West could help by providing greater support to Ukrainian operations behind Russian lines", yet it fails to recount for the Russian perspective.

Chicago Tribune's approach for the coverage of the equally emerging theme of the humanitarian impact the war marked, was to personalize the victims, it focused more on the vulnerable women and children, and had a firm grip on the emotional involvement of the readers, while vilifying Russia through loaded statements and vivid descriptions of the victims

of the conflict. the frequency of covering the military side of the war was equal to the humanitarian, and Ukraine was portrayed in a vulnerable, reactive, and minimally resistant role, when the newspaper remained silent about the civilian harm on the Russian side. All of this aligns with the aforementioned definition of bias. When coupled with the newspaper's profound, and cyclical descriptions of the mental and psychological state of the residents in the war-struck cities, and the highlighted element of displacement and instability with complete disregard to the affected and wounded on the Russian border, it can only be another push in the direction of detectable journalistic bias.

The global coordinated reaction and position of the public were used by the journalists to amplify the public's protests and extreme opposition to the Russian belligerence, diplomatic talks were also showcased, but always focusing on Russia's intent to make them unsuccessful and resulting in complicating the situations even more, and portraying Russia and its president as instigators and peace fighters.

When it came to the punitive procedures and international imposing of economic restrictions on Russia, the U.S anti-Russian ideation was directly palpable in the repetitive and similar statements across the articles. As the condemnation and global agreement to isolate Russia economically was emphasized upon incessantly to instill the image of weakness and demise of Russia. And it Further decentralized the coverage of this newspaper.

The article does not steer the coverage in the central and impartial direction. When it comes to covering the past tensions that led up to the breakthrough of the war, it still frames Russia as the only and primal instigator of any security concern, domestically or internationally. It provides no understanding or more context on Russia's predictions of imminent threat caused by the expansion of the NATO.

In the case of the Russo-Ukraine war, the ulterior agenda, and long-term objectives America strived for were weakening Russia's military by aiding Ukraine and financing its arsenal, hoping that the resistance would cause more damage to Russia. Coupling that with the punitive sanctions, it becomes clear that the aim is to destabilize Russia and turn the war from a "war that Moscow has seen as an occasion to boost its force, became instead a bloody and embarrassing display of weakness" (Slimia, Otham, 52). America hopes to create an inside revolution in Russia in hopes to overthrow president Putin.

The U.S went above and beyond to condemn the "outcast state" especially economically with the most "restrictions ever imposed against a major economic power" (52). It went as far as promising the same treatment to any other country that supports Russia. This divided strategy appears to be highly efficient at the moment, since the general consensus and predictions are proving it, "the war in Ukraine appears to be setting the stage for a long-term conflict between Russia and the U.S" (52), warning also about the possibility of Russian nuclear outbreak.

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