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Media Framing of the Russian Invasion of Ukraine: An Analysis of the TV Program 'Evening with Vladimir Solovyov'

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Abstract

This study examines how Russian state-controlled media frames Russia's assault on Ukraine by analyzing the coverage of the first year of the full-scale invasion on Russia's most popular political talk show, *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*. Based on content analysis of eight three-hour episodes of the talk show covering the major events in the conflict between February 2022 and February 2023, the research identifies several main frames in the official discourse on the topic, including (1) Nazism, (2) Genocide, (3) West as an Enemy, (4) Slavic Unity, (5) Liberation of Ukrainian Lands, and (6) Russia as a Victim of Western Sanctions and Russophobia. The analysis contributes to political communication literature by unpacking discursive strategies of regime-friendly talk shows in a hard autocracy. Moreover, the study adds to comparative politics literature by highlighting the role of state-controlled media in perpetuating violence and fueling mass support for the war.

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I. Introduction

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, marked the escalation of the largest armed conflict in Europe since World War II (WWII). Yet, the Kremlin defines the Russian attack as a special military operation aimed at demilitarizing, denazifying, and liberating Ukraine. The dissemination of official Russian rhetoric on state-controlled media, along with new censorship laws, underscores the Kremlin's strategic effort to control public perception of current events. The goal of this study is to demonstrate how Russian state-controlled media frame the Russian invasion of Ukraine. To achieve this, the research examines the discussion of the first year of the invasion on the television (TV) political talk show *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*, treating this program as an exemplar of Russian media propaganda. The study explores the common frames used in the show and conducts a qualitative analysis of the verbal content present in the chosen sample of the TV program.

Research Questions

This research addresses two questions concerning the content of frames related to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*. According to Bennett's (1990) indexing theory, media content in the political sphere reflects the perspectives of political elites. Specifically, the media provide a wide range of different perspectives when there is disagreement between political elites, and narrow coverage during times of elite consensus. Recognizing Russia as an autocratic state with neither a strong political opposition nor independent media (Troianovski and Safronova 2022), it is reasonable to infer that Russian media, including political talk shows, fully reflect the Kremlin's perspective, providing narrow coverage of the invasion

limited to the official Russian position. In other words, it is expected that the frames used in *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* align with the official position of the Russian government, making Solovyov's show a suitable exemplar for evaluating Russia's media framing of the invasion of Ukraine as a whole. Thus, the first research question is as follows:

RQ1: How does the Russian political talk show *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* frame the Russian invasion of Ukraine?

The second research question focuses on the distinctive aspects of Russia's media framing of military conflict compared to the framing of similar issues in other political regimes. Previous research indicates that Russian propaganda exhibits distinctive features, such as a lack of commitment to consistency and objective reality, and a tendency to be rapid, continuous, and repetitive (Paul and Matthews 2016). To assess the unique attributes of Russia's media framing, the second research question asks:

RQ2: How does Russian media framing of military conflict compare to that in other political regimes?

The study proceeds as follows. The remainder of this section provides the context for Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and examines the Russian media landscape under Putin. The next section delves into previous research on media framing. The subsequent section discusses the methods of analysis and the selection of data. Following that, this study presents the findings from the qualitative analysis. It then relates the research findings to existing literature. Finally, a concluding section summarizes the findings and suggests potential avenues for future research.

Historical Background: Context for Russia's Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine

In order to understand the context behind the media frames used in *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*, it is necessary to examine the deterioration of Russia-Ukraine relations since the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). This study identifies three pivotal events that function as a prelude to Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine: the Maidan Revolution, the annexation of Crimea, and the war in the Donbas region, composed of the cities of Luhansk and Donetsk.

The annexation of Crimea, which gave Russia access to the Black Sea, and the war in Donbas can be seen as Putin's reaction against Ukraine's Maidan Revolution, the main objectives of which were the democratization of Ukraine and its rapprochement with the EU. The Maidan Revolution started in November 2013 as a peaceful student protest against pro-Kremlin Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovych, who pledged Ukraine's rapprochement with the EU but failed to fulfill his promise. In particular, Yanukovych "refused to sign the long-awaited Association Agreement with the European Union," subsequently receiving a 15-billion-dollar loan from the Kremlin (Sobolieva 2023). Nonetheless, the peaceful protest rapidly transformed into violent clashes between the police and thousands of demonstrators due to the abuse of power by the Ukrainian riot police, Berkut. This escalation, marked by protesters resorting to the use of Molotov cocktails and the occupation of government buildings, was a reaction to disturbing footage of Berkut officers beating protesting students "with batons and kicking those who fell down" (Sobolieva 2023). The Maidan Revolution ended with Yanukovych fleeing to Russia on February 22, 2014, and Putin denouncing the protests in Ukraine as a *coup d'état*, saying that "Russia reserves the right to use all available

options, including force as a last resort" (Putin 2014c, as cited in Houeix 2022). In May 2014,

Putin sent troops to annex Crimea, which had been recognized as Ukrainian territory since its

transfer from the Russian Soviet Federalist Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist

Republic in 1954 (Pifer 2022). The international community responded to Russia's violation

of Ukrainian sovereignty with personal sanctions, asset freezes, import and export bans on

goods from Crimea, prohibition to supply tourist services in Crimea, as well as restrictions on

trade and investment (Kruk 2019).

The armed conflict in Donbas started in April 2014 when Russian separatists declared the

independence of the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and the Luhansk People's Republic

(LPR). To help separatists from Donetsk and Luhansk fight the Ukrainian military and volunteer

battalions, Putin dispatched Russian military forces and Russian far-right recruits, including the

notorious private paramilitary company the Wagner group, labeled as a transnational criminal

organization by the US and known for its war crimes, including "mass executions, rape, and

child abductions" (Becket 2003). In September 2014, Ukraine and Russia signed a ceasefire

agreement known as the Minsk Protocol, which failed to put a stop to fighting after the newly

proclaimed republics held their own presidential elections (Powirska 2022). With the military

conflict persisting, Russia and Ukraine signed Minsk II in 2015. The new agreement forced

Ukraine to amend its constitution to decentralize and grant special status to the republics of

Donetsk and Luhansk, including the right to linguistic self-determination and the establishment

of separate police units (Powirska 2022). Russia maintained its advantage in retaining control

over eastern Ukrainian territory as the agreement stipulated that Ukraine could only regain

control over the border after local elections in Donetsk and Luhansk, which were contingent on

Ukraine deeming security conditions satisfactory. Since Russia never withdrew its troops from

the Donbas region, Ukraine never deemed the security conditions acceptable. Consequently, the elections never took place which allowed Russia-backed separatists to sustain control over the state border and prevented the Ukrainian government from restoring control over the Donbas region (Powirska 2022). The inability to fulfill the terms of Minsk II led to prolonged hostilities between Ukrainian forces and Donbas separatists.

Since 2014, the conflict has never officially ended and eventually served as Putin's justification for the full-scale invasion of Ukraine. In his televised Address to the Nation on February 24, 2022, Putin explained the beginning of the invasion by referring to the political violence in Donbas, allegedly perpetuated by the Ukrainian government: "[F]or eight endless years we have been doing everything possible to settle the situation by peaceful political means . . . The purpose of this operation is to protect people who, for eight years now, have been facing humiliation and genocide perpetrated by the Kyiv regime" (Putin 2022a).

Russian Media Landscape Under Putin

After the dissolution of the USSR, many political analysts perceived Russia as a fledgling democracy finally free from Soviet censorship; however, Putin's regime has marked a "progressive narrowing of media freedom in Russia" (Oates 2007, 1285). According to the 2023 World Press Freedom Index completed by media watchdog Reporters Without Borders, Russia ranked 164 out of a total of 180 states surveyed (Reporters Without Borders 2023). Such a low ranking is attributed to the fact that since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, "almost all independent media have been banned, blocked and/or declared 'foreign agents' or 'undesirable organizations.' All others are subject to military censorship" (Reporters Without Borders 2023).

The foreign agent law, first adopted in 2012 (Human Rights Watch 2022) and significantly expanded in 2022, defines a foreign agent as a "person who received support from foreign states or is under foreign influence and is engaged in political activities in Russia," with foreign influence being defined as the "provision of support [funds or any type of assistance] by a foreign source to a person or influencing a person, including by coercion, persuasion or other means" (State Duma 2022). Among the restrictions imposed on foreign agents is a ban on providing educational activities, receiving state financial support, and organizing public events, with any violation of the law resulting in "administrative, criminal, and other liability" (State Duma 2022). The list of foreign agents on the official webpage of the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation (2023b) includes multiple independent journalists, such as Ilya Varlamov, Yury Dud, Oleg Kashin, as well as distinguished political scientists like Ekaterina Shulman.

As a follow-up to the foreign agent law, the undesirable organization law, adopted in 2015, considers undesirable any "foreign or international organization that allegedly undermines Russia's security, defense, or constitutional order" and requires such organizations to cease all activities in Russia (Aitkhozhina 2021). Violations of the undesirable organization law may entail "administrative and criminal sanctions," including a punishment of up to six years in prison for those individuals who allegedly hold leadership or management roles in an undesirable organization. Some of the most popular entities on the list of undesirable organizations published by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation (2023a) are independent media agencies such as Meduza, Novaya Gazeta, TV Rain, nonprofit organizations such as the Anti-Corruption Foundation founded by Russian opposition leader Alexey Navalny, and environmental groups like Greenpeace.

In addition to the foreign agent law and the undesirable organization law, Gusky (2022) identifies three main censorship laws that were created in response to the media coverage of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Article 207.3 stipulates that disseminating[1] "false information"[2] about the Russian armed forces — including referring to the "special military operation" as a "war" — is punishable by up to 15 years in prison or a fine of up to five million rubles.[3] Article 280.3 criminalizes any public action aimed at discrediting the use of Russian armed forces, including public calls for a cessation of fighting, and imposes higher fines on legal entities such as news agencies. Lastly, Article 284.3 makes it illegal to support "any sanctions or criticisms of Russia, Russian individuals, or Russian entities" (Gusky 2022). All the above-mentioned censorship laws have made it impossible for independent news media to operate without incriminating themselves, which has ultimately resulted in the shutdown of independent media in Russia. In such a restrictive environment, the only remaining space has been preserved for state-controlled media and propaganda.

As of October 2022, the Levada Center[4] (2022b) reports that state-controlled TV enjoys the greatest popularity in Russia, with 64 percent reporting relying on TV as their main source of

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[1] In the context of the fake news law, the term "disseminating" refers to presenting false information in any matter to an unlimited number of people. For further clarification, see Vaganov, "Understanding the Laws Relating to 'Fake News' in Russia," esp. p. 5.

[2] In the context of the fake news law, the term "false information" refers to any information which does not come from official Russian sources. For more information on the interpretation of language used in the fake news law, see Vaganov, "Understanding the Laws Relating to 'Fake News' in Russia," esp. pp. 3–4.

[3] According to the exchange rate as of October 28, 2023, 5 million rubles is 53,078.55 US dollars.

[4] The Levada Center is a Russian independent, non-governmental research organization that monitors Russian public opinion. On September 5, 2016, the Levada Center was classified as a foreign agent by the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation after publishing the results of a poll that showed a significant decline in support for the pro-Putin United Russia party (Newlin 2016).

information and 49 percent trusting this source of information. TV is the least popular primary information source among the youngest respondents, with around 37 percent using it. When examining respondents' preferences based on the size of their place of residence, TV has nearly equal popularity across all types, hovering at around 62 percent, except in cities with a population of up to 100 thousand people, where 71 percent of respondents reported utilizing TV as their main source of information. The trust in TV news coverage is closely tied to respondents' age, with 25 percent of those in the 18–24-year-old age group expressing trust in information presented on TV, as opposed to 64 percent in the 55-year-old and older group. Among residents in various settlements, individuals from Moscow express the least trust in TV — only 41 percent, while residents in cities with populations of up to 100 thousand have the highest level of trust in TV, at 55 percent.

In 2018, the most popular news channels were Channel One, with 72 percent reporting regular viewership, Russia-1 with 57 percent, NTV with 44 percent, and Russia-24[5] with 38 percent (Levada Center 2018). Kiriya and Degtereva (2010) point out that all of the above-mentioned channels are either subject to direct control of the state through ownership or indirect control via state companies or affiliation with pro-Kremlin elites. While Channel One,[6] Russia-1, and Russia-24 are directly owned by the state, NTV is controlled by the state monopoly Gazprom. In May 2022, the US imposed sanctions on Channel One, Russia-1, and

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[5] Formerly known as Vesti.

[6] Until 2019, Channel One was under mixed ownership, with the government holding 51 percent and Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich owning 49 percent. Abramovich sold his shares in the Channel One television network to the National Media Group due to acquiring Israeli citizenship. This move was prompted by the illegality of foreign citizens owning more than 20 percent of any company in Russia (Prokofyev 2019). As of 2022, Channel One is owned by the government, Russian state-owned bank VTB, the National Media Group, and Sogaz, a company founded by Gazprom (Statista 2022).

NTV, aiming to cut off the advertising revenue generated by these three TV networks as well as to counter disinformation (Fossum and Wright 2022).

Until recently, one of the primary avenues for Russians to access non-state-controlled news was through social media. The statistics presented by the Levada Center (2022b) indicate that 39 percent of Russians acquire world and national news from social networks, with 16 percent trusting information posted on social media.[7] The use of social networks as a main source of news is most popular among Russians in the 18–24-year-old group, with 60 percent learning the news from social networks and 35 percent trusting such information sources. Acquiring news from social networks is slightly less popular among respondents aged 25–39, with 53 percent reporting that they learn news from social media, and 22 percent trusting such sources the most. Individuals in the age groups 40–54 and 55 and older exhibit limited interest in utilizing social media for information purposes. Specifically, 38 percent of those aged 40–54 use social networks to access news, with 17 percent expressing trust in such sources. In the 55-year-old and older group, 24 percent use social networks for news consumption, and only eight percent place trust in these sources.

The Levada Center (2022a) also found that the three most popular social networks among Russian users are VKontakte,[8] YouTube, and Odnoklassniki,[9] with usage rates of 65 percent, 47

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[7] The Levada Center considers social networks and Telegram channels, which allow messages to be broadcast to a large number of users of the Telegram app, as two separate categories. This study does account for the use of Telegram in Russia.

[8] VKontakte is a Russian online social media platform, commonly known as the Russian Facebook. In 2021, VKontakte, owned by VK, came under state control after a series of transactions that gave a majority stake to companies linked to the state-affiliated gas giant Gazprom (Ivanova 2021).

[9] Odnoklassniki is another Russian social network service, used predominantly in former Soviet Republics. It is currently owned by the same company, VK, that owns VKontakte (Koryakov 2023).

percent, and 40 percent, respectively. After Russia designated the company Meta as extremist in 2022, effectively banning Facebook and Instagram as part of the "Kremlin's sweeping crackdown on western social media giants" (Sauer 2022a), these two social media apps continued to lose users, with 21 percent and 5 percent of respondents using them at the end of April, as opposed to 23 percent and 6 percent in March of 2022 (Levada Center 2022a).

Overall, the use of social networks to access news is most prevalent in Russian cities with a population exceeding 500 thousand, where 42 percent of respondents utilize social media for news consumption. In these larger cities, 16 percent of the total respondents express trust in social media as a news source. Notably, Moscow deviates from these trends, with only 33 percent of Moscow residents relying on social media as their primary information source and 10 percent trusting news from social media (Levada Center 2022b).

II. Prior Research on the Media Framing of War

Framing Theory

Public perception of the events covered by the media largely depends on the particular way a media platform presents or frames a certain issue. Sociologist Erving Goffman (1974, 21), considered the founder of frame analysis, proposed that individuals interpret any event through the application of a variety of primary frameworks, which allow its users to "locate, perceive, identify, and label a seemingly infinite number of concrete occurrences defined in its terms." These primary frames can be further categorized into two main types: natural frames and social frames, each serving distinct functions. Natural frames assist in making sense of phenomena in terms of their natural determinants, such as the laws of nature, while social frames facilitate the

processing of new information in terms of guided actions that "incorporate the will, aim, and controlling effect of a live agency" (Goffman 1974, 22). Goffman's *Frame Analysis* has greatly influenced social sciences, becoming a multidisciplinary tool to study the effects of media on its audiences (Ardèvol-Abreu 2015, 423).[10]

Goffman's understanding of framing has been incorporated into Communication Studies by Entman (1993, 52), who further developed Goffman's theory and defined framing as "select[ing] some aspects of perceived reality and mak[ing] them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal explanation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." Hence, the purpose of framing is four-fold. Frames identify a problem, explain its causes, provide moral judgments, and, lastly, suggest solutions and their potential effects. To make a piece of information more salient, that is, more meaningful and memorable, media outlets use a variety of strategies, including but not limited to repetition, tactical placement, association with culturally familiar symbols, and appeal to existing stereotypes (Entman 1993, 53; Fiske and Taylor 1991).

To gather evidence on how media frames political issues in news texts, Pan and Kosicki (1993) suggest "conceptualizing news texts into empirically operationalizable dimensions — syntactical, script, thematic, and rhetorical structures." Syntactical structures refer to the organization of structural elements from the most to the least salient, such as "headline, lead, episodes, background, and closure" (Pan and Kosicki 1993, 59). Script structures refer to decisions made by media reporters on how to narrate the news; thematic structures involve causal

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[10] For more information on the origins of framing and the differences between framing and agenda-setting, see Ardèvol-Abreu, "Framing Theory in Communication Research." For more information on the differences between framing, agenda setting, and priming, see Scheufele and Tewksbury, "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models."

explanations, and rhetorical structures describe stylistic choices used to increase the salience of a point (Pan and Kosicki 1993, 59–62). Gamson and Modigliani (1998, 2) suggest that there are five main framing devices that fall under the category of rhetorical structures: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images.

Influence of Media Framing on Public Perception

Kluver et al. assert that media framing is a powerful tool for propagandists because it can shape possible interpretations of an event as well as limit considerations of alternative explanations of events (Kluver et al. 2020, 4–5). To properly identify propaganda, the challenging task of distinguishing between misinformation and disinformation by looking at the intention of the information sender should be undertaken. Misinformation can be defined as "false information that is spread without the intention to mislead," meaning that the sender of misinformation is unaware of its inaccuracy (Kluver et al. 2020, 3). In contrast, disinformation is a propaganda tactic, particularly favored by Russian media, and is grounded in "intentional spreading of misinformation in pursuit of a purpose-driven outcome" (Kluver et al. 2020, 3). Although Kluver et al. propose that social media may be a powerful tool to disseminate disinformation since it takes away information control from the hands of traditional mass media (Kluver et al. 2020, 6), it is worth noting that such a proposition holds true only if the majority of the population relies on social media as their main source of information, preferring it to state-controlled sources. However, this is not the case in Russia, where state-controlled media remain the predominant sources of information, as indicated by the Levada Center (2022b).

The influence of media frames on public perception has been indicated by a series of experimental studies. For instance, the study conducted by de Vreese, Boomgaarden, and

Semetko (2011) investigates the effects of media framing on support for Turkish membership of the EU. By treating positively and negatively valenced media frames and the level of political sophistication as two independent variables and individual perceptions, which include support for Turkish EU membership and the importance of considerations regarding a Turkish EU accession, as dependent variables, the study found that exposure to negatively valenced news frames has a stronger impact on public perception than positive frames despite the varying levels of political sophistication (de Vreese, Boomgaarden and Semetko 2011, 194). While this study shows that media framing has a cognitive impact on media consumers, more research is needed on the effects of exposure to multiple media frames as well as contradictory frames. Conducting such research is especially relevant since media propaganda has a higher influence over an individual's cognitive framework when it avoids conflicting with pre-existing frames and/or creates a lack of counter-frames, which could be used for debunking propagated information (Castells 2009).

Furthermore, other studies aimed at evaluating whether a more knowledgeable or less knowledgeable audience is more susceptible to framing effects show mixed results. Whereas Nelson, Oxley, and Clawson (1997) found that media frames are likely to have a greater impact on individuals with higher levels of political knowledge because knowledgeable individuals have the ability to connect the ideas presented in the frame with their existing opinions, Kinder and Sanders (1990) got the opposite results, proposing that less knowledgeable individuals hold less strong opinions and hence are more susceptible to media framing. Druckman and Nelson (2003) attempted to resolve such a contradiction by asserting that regardless of political knowledge levels, individuals who possess a high need to evaluate new information tend to have stronger

opinions and are less susceptible to the effects of framing because their judgments are formed on the flow of new information over time rather than recent information.[11]

As a framing device, visual images have particularly attracted the attention of researchers. According to Reese, Gandy, and Grant (2001, 219), "viewers [of visual frames] may be less conscious of having been presented with a fully articulated set of claims than they would be if those claims had been made verbally." The use of visual content has two significant effects on public perception: first, it makes the framing process less obvious to viewers through the use of selective representation, and second, it allows the delivery of socially risky messages that would otherwise be met with more resistance if stated explicitly, using subtle cues that evoke stereotypes (Reese, Gandy, and Grant 2001). Zillmann, Gibson, and Sargent (1999) found that presenting an image that emphasizes one side in a balanced news story leads to distortions in issue perception by swaying the respondents in the direction suggested by the images. Newhagen and Reeves (1992) further examined the relationship between compelling negative images in television news and memory for presented information, finding that emotion-laden information from the images was remembered more than semantic narrative information. All this research suggests that communication mediums that are heavily reliant on visual images, such as television, have a much greater ability to influence public perception than non-visual mediums.

Media Framing of Wars in Democracies: The Iraq War

Framing has major implications for political communication since "the frame in a news text is really the imprint of [political] power — it registers the identity of actors or interests that

[11] For more information on evaluative tendencies and their effects on processing information, see Bizer et. al., "Need for Cognition and Need to Evaluate in the 1998 National Election Survey Pilot Study," esp. p. 7.

competed to dominate the text" (Entman 1993, 55). Scholars like Bagdikian (1983), Entman (1993), Gamson (1992), Herman and Chomsky (1988) propose that the actors who compete to dominate media, thereby shaping public perceptions, are political and corporate elites.[12] For instance, Entman (1993, 55) found that in the pre-war debate over US policy toward Iraq, the elites reached the consensus not to propagate any remedies to the problem that would include negotiation between Kuwait and Iraq. Instead, two other remedies were proposed, which were war now or war later but sanctions now. Any other remedies or criticism of the proposed two remedies "breached the bounds of acceptable discourse" and were regarded as not noteworthy by media outlets, receiving no publication and, hence, no public support (Entman 1993, 55). Luther and Miller (2005, 84–90) further found that from January 29, 2002, to May 1, 2003, US news coverage of demonstrations in favor of elite positions was more sympathetic than coverage of demonstrations that opposed elite positions, and that anti-war protestors were associated with the "image of a discordant, disruptive group."

Media framing also affects how the audience interprets causal relationships and assigns responsibility to the agents under consideration. Iyengar (1991, 2) draws a distinction between episodic frames, which focus on isolated specific events, and thematic frames, which describe a broader social context. He found that in most cases, audiences exposed to episodic framing were more likely to attribute responsibility to the individuals in the news story, while audiences exposed to thematic framing were more likely to attribute responsibility to the government and society (Iyengar 1991, 3). Dimitrova (2006, 82) argues that "framing is not a static phenomenon but a dynamic process," meaning that media coverage can shift from episodic to thematic

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[12] In this context, the word "elites" refers to government officials, major media companies, and individuals with significant financial resources.

framing. She analyzed the first five weeks of the Iraq war, from March 20 to April 22, 2003, and found that while the early coverage of the *New York Times* focused heavily on episodic frames of military conflict and violence, later coverage shifted to thematic and prognostic frames, focusing on the rebuilding of Iraq (Dimitrova 2006).

In another study, which compared the framing of the Iraq war in elite newspapers in Sweden and the US, Dimitrova and Strömbäck (2005) analyzed breaking Internet news coverage of the Iraq war from March 20 to May 1, 2003. The scholars found that the US media followed official government rhetoric, treating responsibility for the war as a non-issue and utilizing the episodic frames of the military conflict. In contrast, Swedish media relied on thematic frames of responsibility and anti-war protests, reflecting the opposition of Swedish foreign policy to the war (Dimitrova and Strömbäck 2005). Carpenter (2007) followed Dimitrova's (2006) and Dimitrova Strömbäck's (2005) findings that elite media primarily utilize military conflict frames, and found that unlike elite media, US non-elite media primarily use human interest and anti-war frames because non-elite media reporters "experience the war through the eyes of local residents" due to their limited access to financial and human resources.

Media Framing of Wars in Authoritarian Regimes

Baum and Zhukov (2015) examined news coverage of the 2011 Libyan civil war in autocracies and democracies, finding that media coverage in non-democracies largely under-reported stories casting the regime in a negative light, such as government atrocities, but over-reported crimes perpetrated by rebels. In democratic states, the opposite patterns were evident in the media, which tended to emphasize anti-government stories and align with the rebels. The scholars conclude that media coverage in democracies and autocracies tends to be

one-sided, yet for different reasons. Media coverage in democracies is largely free from government influence; however, it is still subject to institutional bias, such as newsworthiness criteria that "originate from the commercial preferences of reporters and editors, who seek to maximize readership" (Baum and Zhukov 2015). In contrast, news coverage in autocratic states reflects the regime's preferences for maintaining political power, and, therefore, media in autocracies tend to emphasize the legitimacy and inevitability of the prevailing order (Baum and Zhukov 2015).

Moreover, as Egorov, Guriev, Sonin (2009, 645) note, both democratic and non-democratic states impose their own preferences regarding appropriate media coverage; however, autocratic regimes with oil-rich economies tend to be particularly hostile to press freedom because a dictator in a resource-abundant autocracy would suffer higher losses from a revolt caused by the free flow of information. Baum and Zhukov (2015) identify three ways in which a state may shape the news media agenda:

1. Direct ownership and control of media resources.

2. Indirect forms of influence on media firms, such as licensing requirements and legal limitations on certain forms of expression.

3. Provision of strong incentives to self-censor and avoid watchdog reporting.

In the case of Russia, acknowledging the mass ban of independent news sites, Putin's censorship laws, the country's low ranking in the World Press Freedom Index, and Russia's reputation for being one of the "worst countries in the world for journalist murders, with reporters covering beats such as official corruption and human rights violations routinely targeted for their work" (Committee to Protect Journalists 2022), it becomes clear that all three methods of state influence on the media agenda are present.

Shirikov (2023) conducted a survey study in Russia to investigate how effectively people discern misinformation in authoritarian regimes and to examine the relationship between susceptibility to propaganda and vulnerability to fake news. He found that although Russians' capacity to recognize falsehood is comparable to that found in democracies, consumers of state media give less accurate evaluations of both real and fake news than consumers of independent media. Moreover, the results of Shirikov's study show that government supporters are more susceptible to pro-regime false narratives due to their tendency to reject true messages that are inconsistent with their political beliefs. In the analysis of the Donbas war from April 2014 to March 2015, Roman, Wanta, and Buniak (2017) found that channel Russia-1 relied heavily on WWII symbolism in its reporting of the war in eastern Ukraine, employing terms such as "fascists" and "extremists" to describe Ukrainian defense forces. In light of Shirikov's research, the results of the joint Chicago Council-Levada Center (2022, 4) survey, which indicate that 21 percent of Russians believe that the goal of Russia's current full-scale invasion of Ukraine is denazification, become less surprising, given that the Nazism narrative has been present in Russian media since the Donbas war.

In essence, this present study adds to the existing body of literature on the use of media framing as an instrument of state-sponsored propaganda by analyzing what key media frames are featured in the show *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*. The research also demonstrates how media coverage in autocratic regimes bolsters support for pro-regime positions, particularly during times of military conflict. Lastly, the study situates its findings within a broader discussion of the unique features attributed to Russian propaganda, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the Kremlin's use of information warfare to justify military action against Ukraine.

<h1 style="text-align:center">III. Methodology</h1>

Timeline of Key Events in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine

The scope of this analysis is limited to the first year of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, mainly from February 24, 2022, to February 24, 2023. Incorporating insights from the research of Duggal and Ali (2023), Kottasova (2023), and Defense Priorities (2023), Figure 1 shows the identified key events in the invasion, with a predominant focus on the major developments on the battlefield, including Russian failures and successes in the occupation of new territories. Additionally, the timeline includes Russia's announcement of mobilization as a significant development, as it resulted in more Russian soldiers being sent to the front.

April 1, 2022: Photographic evidence of the Bucha massacre emerges after Russian forces withdraw from Kyiv oblast.

July 3, 2022: Russia seizes control over Luhansk, Lysychansk, and Severodonetsk.

September 21, 2022: Russia announces a partial mobilization.

November 9, 2022: Russian forces withdraw from Kherson.

FEB. 2022
MAR.
APR.
MAY
JUNE
JULY
AUG.
SEPT.
OCT.
NOV.
DEC.
JAN.
FEB. 2023

February 24, 2022: Russia invades Ukraine.

April 21, 2022: Putin claims control of Mariupol.

September 30, 2022: Russia holds referendums and annexes Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts.

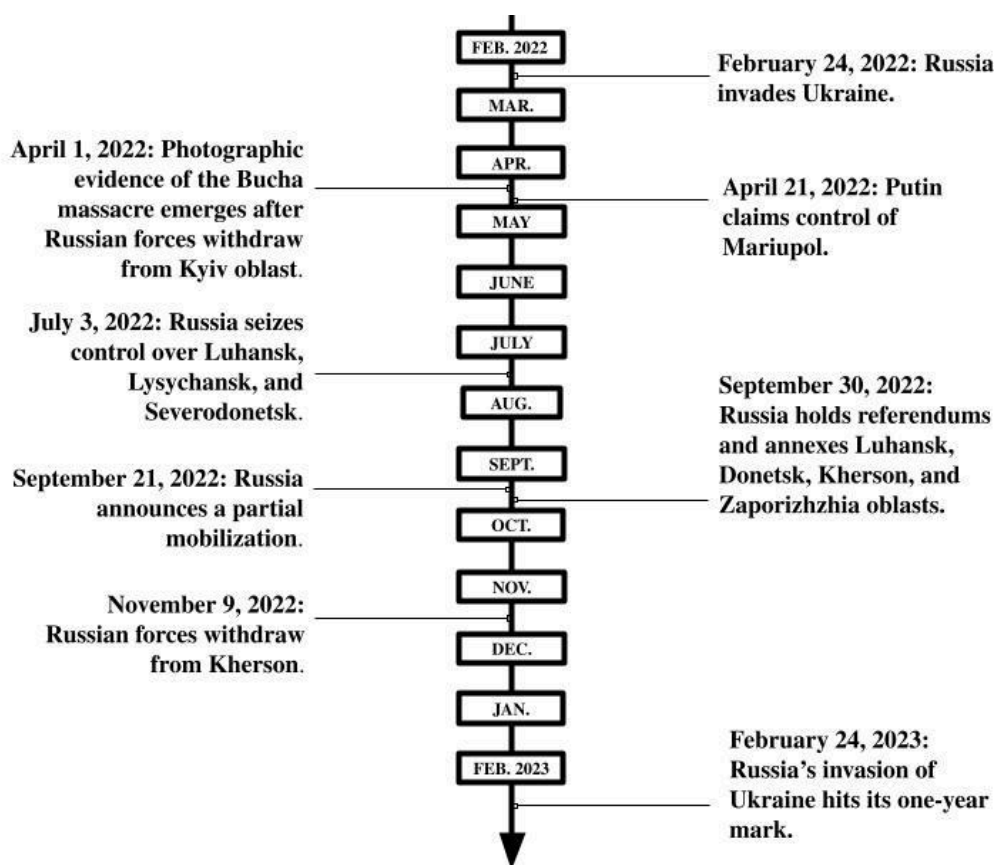February 24, 2023: Russia's invasion of Ukraine hits its one-year mark.

Figure 1. The Timeline of Key Events in the Russian Invasion of Ukraine.

The key events from the timeline were matched with the episodes of the state-controlled TV program *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*, broadcast on channel Russia-1. *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* is one of Russia's leading informational-political programs, with 34 percent of Russians reporting regular viewership of Solovyov's show (Levada Center 2018). The duration of episodes ranges from 90 to around 180 minutes. The program format includes TV presenter Vladimir Solovyov engaging in dialogue with guest speakers who are introduced as experts in various fields, including journalism and politics.

As each episode is followed by a synopsis of its main talking points, the episodes being analyzed in this research were matched with the events from the timeline based on their synopses rather than their release dates. Consequently, some discrepancies between the dates on the timeline and the release dates exist. It should be noted that the methodological decision to select episodes based on their synopses led to the exclusion of events not explicitly stated in the descriptions of the episodes. Specifically, the present research excluded major Russian advances and setbacks in capturing Kharkiv and Sumy since neither of these cities was referenced in the synopses accompanying the episodes. This observation held true even when cross-referencing with the expected dates of Russian advances and failures in these territories.

Content analysis was performed on the matched episodes from February 24, 2022, to February 26, 2023, in order to identify common media frames used by Solovyov to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In total, eight episodes were analyzed. Figure 2 displays selected episodes aligned with the events on the timeline. All episodes are accompanied by their assigned numbers, which are used in this research to refer to each individual episode.

Event	Episode Name and Release Date	Designated Episode Number
February 24, 2022: Russia invades Ukraine.	February 24, 2022: "The Rubicon Has Been Crossed: A Russian Special Operation Has Begun."	1
April 1, 2022: Photographic evidence of the Bucha Massacre emerges after Russian forces withdraw from Kyiv oblast.[13]	April 5, 2022: "Bucha: Looking For the Truth."	2
April 21, 2022: Putin claims control of Mariupol.	April 21, 2022: "Free Mariupol and the Fight Against World Nazism."	3
July 3, 2022: Russia seizes control over Luhansk, Lysychansk, and Severodonetsk.	July 4, 2022: "Social Evolution of the Modern World."	4
September 21, 2022: Russia announces a partial mobilization.	September 22, 2022: "New Russia Is Being Forged."	5
September 30, 2022: Russia holds referendums and annexes Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts.	September 30, 2022: "Four New Regions Became Part of Russia."	6
November 9, 2022: Russian forces withdraw from Kherson.	November 9, 2022: "In the Kherson Direction."	7
February 24, 2023: Russia's invasion of Ukraine hits its one-year mark.	February 26, 2023: "Wars Always Live Their Own Lives."	8

Figure 2. Episodes that Correspond to Events in the Timeline.

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[13] Oblast refers to a large administrative region or province.

Data Collection

The episodes were accessed online from the archive of the streaming platform

Smotrim.ru, located at https://smotrim.ru/brand/21385. The video materials were converted to

MP4 format and uploaded to Trint's AI-powered software to transcribe each of the episodes. The

transcripts were then reviewed alongside watching the episodes and manually edited for

accuracy. All Russian materials used in this research were translated by the author.

Key Media Frames in the TV Program *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*

The study identified the presence of the following six frames in the eight episodes that

were analyzed:

1. **Nazism frame** – focus on the alleged presence of Nazism in Ukrainian politics and
   society and the need to denazify Ukraine.

2. **Genocide frame** – emphasis on the alleged genocide of Russian-speaking residents in
   Donbas.

3. **Anti-West frame** – focus on the alleged use of Ukraine by NATO for eastward expansion
   and Russia's position against the collective West.

4. **Unity frame** – emphasis on the denial of Ukrainian sovereignty and the treatment of
   Russians and Ukrainians as one people.

5. **Liberation frame** – emphasis on the protection of both Russians and Ukrainians from
   fascism, Nazism, and Western influence.

6. **Russian Victimhood frame** – focus on Russia's ostracism from the global community
   and the need to safeguard Russia from external threats.

Coding Procedures

Eight episodes were coded for the six frames: Nazism frame, Genocide frame, Anti-West frame, Unity frame, Liberation frame, and Russian Victimhood frame. The presence of these frames in each episode was determined based on verbal content in each of the episodes. Figure 3 shows what trigger words correspond to each of the frames.

Frame	Trigger Word: Russian (Original Language)	Trigger Word: English (Translation)
Nazism frame	*Нацизм, фашизм, денацификация, вторая мировая война, деды воевали, Гитлер, Муссолини, 1939 год, 1940 год, 1941 год, 1942 год, 1943 год, 1944 год, 1945 год, Гестапо, СС, Великая Отечественная война, Вермахт, Третий Рейх, свастика, Нюрнберг.*	Nazism, fascism,[14] denazification, World War II, grandfathers fought,[15] Hitler, Mussolini, year 1939, year 1941, year 1942, year 1943, year 1944, year 1945, Gestapo, SS, Great Patriotic War (the Eastern Front), the *Wehrmacht*,[16] Third Reich, swastika, Nuremberg.
Genocide frame	*Геноцид, Бабий Яр, Освенцим/Аушвиц, Дахау, Холокост, концлагерь.*	Genocide, Babi Yar,[17] Auschwitz, Dachau, Holocaust, concentration camp.
Anti-West frame	*Холодная война, США/Америка – враг, коллективный Запад – враг, НАТО – враг.*	Cold War, the US/America as an enemy, the collective West as an enemy, NATO as an enemy.

[14] The reason for including fascism in the Nazism frame is due to the historical tendency to interchangeably use the terms "fascism" and "Nazism" in the Soviet Union, a practice that has been preserved in modern Russia.

[15] *Деды воевали*, that is, "Grandfathers fought," is a common expression in Russia used to refer to the Soviet victory in WWII.

[16] The *Wehrmacht* refers to the armed forces of the Third Reich.

[17] Babi Yar is the site of the extermination of Jews carried out by the Nazis during WWII, located near Kyiv, Ukraine.

Unity frame	*Новороссия, русский мир, братский народ, единый народ, один народ, славянство, православие, наш народ, наша земля, общая родина.*	Novorossiya (New Russia),[18] *Russkiy mir* (Russian world),[19] brotherly people, united people, one people, Slavism, Orthodoxy, our people, our land,[20] common homeland.
Liberation frame	*8-летняя война, освободить, признать ДНР/ЛНР/Крым, поддержать ДНР/ЛНР/Крым, демилитаризация, возвратить/вернуть ДНР/ЛНР/Крым, защитить ДНР/ЛНР, помочь ДНР/ЛНР, спасти ДНР/ЛНР/Крым, не оккупация, избегание гражданских/мирных жертв/ударов по гражданским объектам, не вторжение.*	The 8-year war,[21] liberate, recognize the DPR/LPR/Crimea, support the DPR/LPR/Crimea, demilitarization, return the DPR/LPR/Crimea, protect the DPR/LPR, help the DPR/LPR, save DPR/LPR/Crimea, not an occupation, avoidance of civilian casualties, not an invasion.
Russian Victimhood frame	*Фейки о России, демонизация России, дегуманизация русских, угроза России, защита России, антироссия, санкции, отказы русским в визах, замороженные российские активы, отключение России от СВИФТа, изоляция России, русофобия, издевательство над Россией, нападение на Россию, риски безопасности для России, москаль, отмена русской культуры.*	Fake news about Russia, demonization of Russia, dehumanization of Russians, threat to Russia, Russia needs protection, anti-Russia, sanctions, visa refusals for Russians, frozen Russian assets, Russia's removal from SWIFT, Russia's isolation, Russophobia, mockery of Russia, attack on Russia, security risks

[18] Novorossiya, also known as New Russia, is an expansive concept referring to the territories of eastern Ukraine, which is used by Putin and the Russian media to perpetuate the rhetoric of the need to protect ethnic Russians: "The essential issue is how to ensure the legitimate rights and interests of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in the southeast of Ukraine. I would like to remind you that what was called Novorossiya (New Russia) back in the tsarist days – Kharkov, Lugansk, Donetsk, Kherson, Nikolayev and Odessa – were not part of Ukraine back then. These territories were given to Ukraine in the 1920s by the Soviet government" (Putin 2014b).

[19] *Russkiy mir,* translated as "Russian world" or "Russian civilization," is the idea of a common identity rooted in Russian traditions, cultural values, language, and Orthodox Christianity, used to justify Russia's intervention in the affairs of neighboring countries as well as to assert Russia's influence in the post-Soviet space.

[20] Both "our people" and "our land" were only counted when the speakers in *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* referred to the DPR, LPR, and Crimea.

[21] The 8-year war refers to the Donbas war, a conflict between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces that started in February 2014.

		for Russia, Moskal,[22] cancellation of Russian culture.

Figure 3. Frames and Their Corresponding Trigger Words.

It is worth noting that this study did not count on-screen visual images and text quotes, focusing only on the lexicon of Solovyov and the invited speakers. Each time a trigger word, including its various related grammatical forms[23] and synonyms,[24] was spoken in the episode, it was counted. Since Entman (1993, 53) suggests that the purpose of framing is to make a piece of information more salient, which can be done by "placement or repetition," repeated trigger words in the same sentence were counted as separate instances of framing. To illustrate, in the sentence "*Когда был Трамп, то вводились против России санкции, санкции, санкции, санкции*" (Solovyov 2022g), translated as "When Trump was in office, he introduced sanctions, sanctions, sanctions, sanctions against Russia," the trigger word "sanctions" appears four times to make the reality of the propagated Russian victimhood more salient. Thus, it was counted four times.

Trigger words that are either homonyms or appeared out of the context of the frame were not counted. For example, in the sentence fragment "*в соответствии со статьей Седьмой Устава ООН с санкции Совета Федерации России*" (Putin 2022a, as cited in Solovyov 2022g), translated as "In accordance with Article 51, Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, with permission of Russia's Federation Council," the word "*санкции,*" that is, sanctions, is taken to

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[22] In the context of Russian propaganda, the word "Moskal" is an ethnic slur against Russians, which is used to depict Russophobic sentiments in Ukraine.

[23] Various grammatical forms delineate all versions of the same root word. For example, for the trigger word "*антироссия*" (anti-Russia), its adjective forms — "*антироссийский*" and "*антирусский*" (anti-Russian) — were also counted.

[24] One of the examples of synonyms that were counted as the same trigger word is "*единый народ*" and "*единые люди,*" both of which mean "one people." The actual trigger word that is of interest in this case is "*единый*" (one), not "people." The same logic applies to other cases. To illustrate, for the prompt "NATO as an enemy," a variety of verbs used to delineate Russia's hostility towards NATO, such as "abuse," "violate," "disregard," and the like, were considered.

mean permission and not penalty. Hence, it does not relate to the Russian Victimhood frame. Similarly, in the sentence "*Преступник Турчинов, который запустил армию в нарушение Конституции, вообще освободил зэков и отправил воевать*" (Solovyov 2022g), translated as "Criminal Turchynov, who launched the army in violation of the Constitution, actually freed the prisoners and sent them to fight" the word "*освободил*," that is, to free or to liberate, is taken out of the context of the Liberation frame because it does not carry the meaning of returning Ukrainian territories back to Russia; therefore, it was not counted.

Limitations

There exist a number of methodological limitations that restrict the potential scope of this study's findings. The chosen sample of eight episodes in this research is small, limited to the analysis of only some major events on the battlefield. Due to the time constraints of this study and Russia's rapid advance in establishing military control over multiple Ukrainian territories in the first half of 2022, many combat events were omitted. A less conservative analysis of how *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* frames Russia's military conflict with Ukraine would necessitate expanding the sample size to incorporate more occurrences on the warfront.

The focus on Russia's successes and failures on the battlefield led to other aspects of media framing of military conflict being excluded from the research. For instance, this study does not encompass how *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* frames humanitarian impact, post-conflict reconstruction, or peace processes, which could have served as an alternative foundation for creating a timeline and selecting a different sample of episodes.

In addition, the study confines itself to analyzing only six identified frames: (1) Nazism, (2) Genocide, (3) Anti-West, (4) Unity, (5) Liberation, and (6) Russian Victimhood. This

methodological choice, however, does not imply that the selected frames are the only existing frames, as it is also possible to include frames such as Nuclear Conflict and Civil War, both of which would provide additional dimensions for the analysis and require a new set of corresponding trigger words.

Although efforts were made to ensure the comprehensiveness of the sampling method, specifically in the choice of trigger words, there remains a possibility that some words have been excluded from the created lists of trigger words corresponding to each frame. It is also possible that in the process of counting trigger words for each of the episodes, some may have been overlooked due to the risk of human error.

Lastly, it is imperative to note that *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* is originally broadcast live, but the episodes used for this analysis were accessed in their recorded format. Sergeev (2019) and Davis (2022) point out that some recorded episodes of the show undergo revisions, which include deleting the parts that may be deemed inconvenient by the Kremlin. It is unclear how much of the original content was removed from the live streams of the episodes chosen for this study; therefore, all insights are based on the edited versions of the episodes.

IV. Findings

The study identified the use of a total of 823 trigger words that correspond to the six identified frames. As seen in Figure 4, the most common frame in the selected sample from *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* was the Anti-West frame, as the trigger words corresponding to this frame constituted 25.6 percent of the total occurrence of trigger words. The Russian Victimhood frame came in second with 23.2 percent, followed by the Liberation frame with 22.8 percent. The least popular frames were the Genocide frame and the Unity frame, with 2.3 percent

and 4.9 percent of all trigger words accounting for each of these frames, respectively. The instances of individual trigger words in each of the episodes can be found in the Appendix.
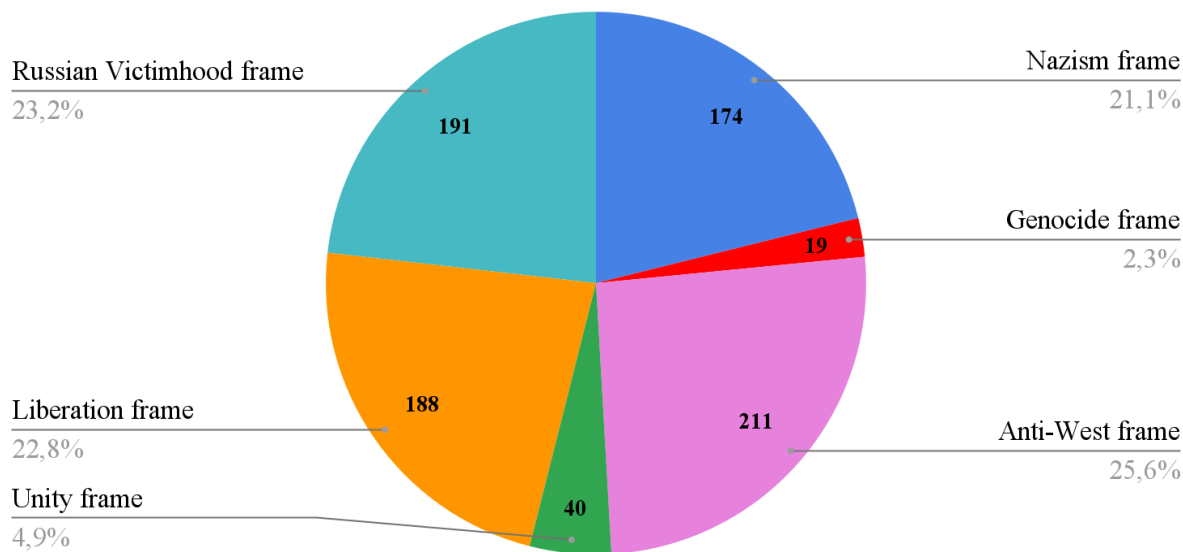
Figure 4. Overall Distribution of Trigger Words Corresponding to the Identified Frames in *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*, Episodes 1–8.

Applying Entman's (1993, 52) concept of a fourfold framing purpose — locating a problem by selecting which aspects of reality to emphasize, explaining the causes of the problem, providing moral evaluation, and recommending solutions to the problem — to the six frames identified in this study, the overarching message of *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* can be summarized as follows.

The program presents a Ukraine problem, characterized by Ukraine's alignment with the collective West and NATO against Russia, which results in the rise of Nazism and the oppression of ethnic Russians in Ukraine. Furthermore, the increasing Western influence on Ukraine poses a threat to Russia's national security and necessitates an immediate solution in the form of the demilitarization of Ukraine. Due to the shared cultural and historical legacy, Russia asserts the

right to intervene in Ukraine with the higher goal of ensuring the safety of the Russian state and liberating people in eastern Ukraine, who have been subjected to genocide and other forms of persecution.[25]

The consistent use of each of the six frames in the chosen sample ensured a high salience of this discourse, which remained largely unaltered throughout the analyzed period. Still, the episodes saw significant fluctuations in the popularity of each frame, which can be attributed to the dynamic events unfolding on the battlefield and the resulting variety in the underlying themes explored across the episodes.

| Frames	Frequency Episode 1 Date released: 02/24/22	Frequency Episode 2 Date released: 04/05/22	Frequency Episode 3 Date released: 04/21/22	Frequency Episode 4 Date released: 07/04/22	Frequency Episode 5 Date released: 09/22/22	Frequency Episode 6 Date released: 09/30/22	Frequency Episode 7 Date released: 11/09/22	Frequency Episode 8 Date released: 02/26/23
Nazism	34	35	68	17	20	3	29	57
Genocide	6	5	6	1	1	1	0	2
Anti-West	35	37	38	45	56	77	59	94
Unity	24	8	2	0	6	17	12	10
Liberation	76	23	24	37	28	20	36	3
Russian Victim-hood	81	55	15	8	32	14	9	54

Figure 5. Frequency of Trigger Words Corresponding to the Identified Frames in *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*, Episodes 1–8.

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[25] Opinions expressed in *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* do not represent the views of the author of this research.
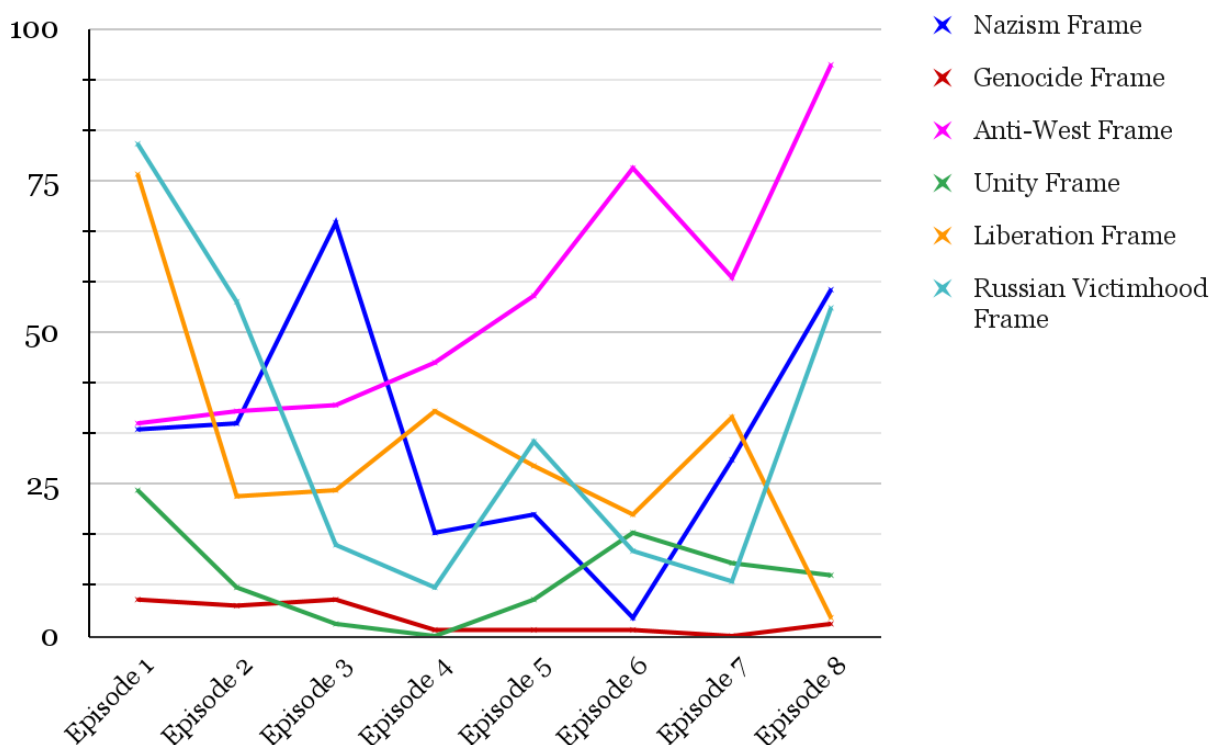
Figure 6. Visualization of the Frequency of Trigger Words Corresponding to the Identified

Frames in *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*, Episodes 1–8.

Figures 5 and 6 above illustrate the frequency of the summation of trigger words

corresponding to each of the frames. The Unity, Liberation, and Russian Victimhood frames

were most popular in the first episode and did not reach the same level of popularity in

subsequent episodes. This trend can be attributed to the fact that the first episode primarily

delved into the historical background influencing Putin's decision to deploy troops to Ukraine.

Consequently, these three frames worked together to create a picture of an isolated Russia with a

national duty to liberate ethnic Russians in Ukraine from the oppressive anti-Russia project,

which includes the alleged genocide, perpetuated by the Genocide frame. The translated

three-minute excerpt from the first episode illustrates how these frames crafted such a depiction:

"These [Ukrainians] are our brothers, blood relatives . . . Ukraine must be liberated from external influence . . . For eight years, we observed the neighboring country, sharing a 2200-kilometer border with ours, effectively becoming a springboard for the West, for NATO . . . And, in general, all this went under the anti-Russian slogan" (Solovyov 2022g). In this context, referring to Ukrainians as the same people as Russians effectively erases Ukrainian identity and the right of Ukraine to exist independently of Russia. There is a clear attempt to absolve Russia of responsibility for violating Ukraine's sovereignty by portraying Russia as a victim by shifting blame to what Russia perceives as its historical enemy — the West — which must be held accountable for the spread of anti-Russian influence in Ukraine. This narrative asserts that it is the West that has compelled Russia to resort to military means to save its misguided Ukrainian relatives and lead them back onto the path of unity with Russia.

The second episode, dedicated to discussing photographic evidence of executions and indiscriminate shelling in Bucha after the withdrawal of Russian troops from Kyiv oblast, featured a reduced use of all frames except the Anti-West and Nazism frames. Although the deployment of trigger words associated with the Russian Victimhood frame decreased from 81 to 55, it is noteworthy that there was an increased use of the trigger word "fake." This term was utilized to dismiss reports about war crimes committed by Russian soldiers in Bucha. While acknowledging the massacre in Bucha, the TV program actively questioned responsibility for the war crimes, ultimately asserting that the emerging evidence was staged by the Ukrainian government as part of an anti-Russia campaign aimed at acquiring more resources from the West. The program questioned, "What campaign is launched? The dehumanization of Russian troops . . . This signal is sent to the Western world . . . And under this story, they [Ukrainians], in general, can obtain anything [from the West]. They can secure additional weapons, extra finances, and

even procure the possibility of NATO troops being deployed" (Solovyov 2022a). Following the

declaration that "NATO is fighting with us [Russians]" (Solovyov 2022a) in the second episode,

the use of the Anti-West frame steadily increased, with the exception of episode seven, which

discussed Russia's withdrawal from Kherson and was primarily devoted to the explanations for

the withdrawal as well as the discussion of US-Russia relations after the 2024 US elections.

The Nazism and Genocide frames were brought up the most in the third episode, the main

topic of which was Putin's claim of control over Mariupol. The popularity of the Nazism frame

in this episode can be explained by the presence of the Azov battalion in Mariupol's

metallurgical facility, the Azovstal Iron and Steel works. Solovyov specifically focuses on the

Azov battalion, describing its members as "a group of Nazis within the ranks of Azovstal"

(Solovyov 2022c). Founded as a volunteer paramilitary militia aimed at fighting pro-Russian

separatists at the start of the Donbas war, the battalion was later integrated into the Ukrainian

National Guard in 2014 (John and Lister 2022). As Rassler (2022) and John and Lister (2022)

observe, the Azov members have been reportedly known for their ultranationalist and far-right

ideology.[26] Choosing to fixate on the Azov battalion, which constitutes only a minor part of the

Ukrainian National Guard, allows *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* to amplify the presence of

far-right recruits in the Ukrainian army, thereby framing Russia's war in Ukraine as both an

ideological struggle and national vengeance against the genocidal Nazi enemy.

Episode four discussed Russia's successful seizure of control over Luhansk, Lysychansk,

and Severodonetsk and was marked by lower popularity in all frames except for the Anti-West

and Liberation frames. This episode primarily focused on criticizing the West for misinterpreting

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[26] For more information on the history of the Azov battalion and the reaction of the international
community to the Azov's association with far-right ideology, see Rassler, "External Impacts and
the Extremism Question in the War in Ukraine: Considerations for Practitioners," esp. pp. 18–20.

Russia's intervention in Ukraine as an assault instead of assistance to the DPR and LPR in the

"civil war in Ukraine" (Solovyov 2022f). By employing civil war rhetoric,[27] Solovyov not only

further perpetuates Russia's claims of oppression of ethnic Russians and amplifies alleged

regional divisions in Ukraine but also advances the narrative that the collective West fails to

respect "the right of the people to choose their destiny" because Western politicians want to

"build a colonial world" (Solovyov 2022f). The juxtaposition of the West as a colonizer and

Russia as a liberator is an attempt to guide the audience of the TV program from questioning

Russia's accountability for the violation of Ukraine's sovereignty to interpreting the military

operation as resistance to Western colonialism and protection of pro-Russian separatists.

In episode five, Russia's announcement of mobilization was discussed with a significantly

increased use of the Anti-West and Russian Victimhood frames. These frames were employed to

explain the reasoning behind Russia's need to deploy more troops. In particular, Solovyov

(2022e) accused the West of "preparing a new scenario of confrontation with Russia," arguing

that the partial mobilization ahead of the upcoming referendum is portrayed by the West as an

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[27] In the 2019 public opinion poll conducted by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation in conjunction with the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology, only 12 percent of Ukrainians believed that the war in Donbas was exclusively an internal conflict in Ukraine. The interpretation of the Donbas conflict as a civil war was shared by 21 percent in the eastern regions and 22 percent in the southern regions. The poll emphasizes that 31 percent of respondents who endorsed the civil war interpretation of the conflict were supporters of the opposition platform, For Life — a currently suspended pro-Russian political party led by Viktor Medvedchuk, known to have close ties with Putin (Sauer 2022b). In contrast, 45 percent of Ukrainians interpreted the conflict in the Donbas region as Russian aggression against Ukraine with the use of local belligerents, 17 percent interpreted the war in Donbas as an internal conflict in Ukraine in which one side is supported by Russia, and 13 percent argued that the conflict was a war between Russia and the West on the territory of Ukraine. For additional statistics, see the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation's report, "The Ways of Achieving Peace in Donbas: Public Attitudes, Expectations, and Concerns." Jensen (2017) suggests that Russia's control of Donbas proxies negates the applicability of the term "civil war" in describing the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.

escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Solovyov (2022e) then concluded that the "US and Europe are only increasing aggression themselves," referencing new sanctions, the growing support for Ukraine, the refusal to use Russian energy sources in the West, and Liz Truss' comments of being ready to use the UK's nuclear arsenal if she were to become the Prime Minister.[28] The nuclear war discussion in Solovyov's show echoes Putin's announcement of mobilization, where the Russian president vaguely referred to "the statements made by some high-ranking representatives of the leading NATO countries on the possibility and admissibility of using weapons of mass destruction — nuclear weapons — against Russia" to declare that Russia not only has "more modern" weapons but also that "[i]n the event of a threat to the territorial integrity of our country and to defend Russia and our people, we will certainly make use of all weapon systems available to us" (Putin 2022b). A slight increase in the Unity frame, propagating the idea of a common homeland shared by Russians and Ukrainians, contributes to the existential threat of nuclear war since the "threat to the territorial integrity" Putin refers to, without defining what such a threat encompasses, directly precedes the referendums in Russian-occupied Ukraine and the subsequent annexation of these territories.

Episode six, which corresponds to Russia holding referendums in Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia oblasts, witnessed a surge in the Anti-West and Unity frames but also experienced a significant decrease in the use of the Nazism and Russian Victimhood frames. It can be inferred that the emphasis on the West was strategically made to present an alternative perspective to the widespread denunciation of the referendums by Western politicians and media. For example, this episode specifically underscored that the "Western elites deny not only national

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[28] For the excerpt from Liz Truss' interview, see Kate Buck, "Cheers as Liz Truss Says She's Ready to Press Nuclear Button and Unleash 'Global Annihilation.'"

sovereignty and international law. Their hegemony also exhibits a distinctly pronounced

character of totalitarianism, despotism, and apartheid" (Solovyov 2022b). Similar to episode

four, Solovyov leverages a negative portrayal of the West to frame Russia's invasion as a gesture

of respect for the national sovereignty of the DPR and LPR. Given that the episode primarily

focused on praising Russia for annexing new territories and contrasting Russian ideology with

"political nationalism and racism," which Solovyov (2022b) asserts are two distinctive features of

Western neoliberal culture, the decreased use of the Nazism and Russian Victimhood frames can

be explained by the reduced need to invoke negative images associated with Russia's invasion of

Ukraine. Instead, the TV show put more emphasis on the Unity frame to reinforce the idea that

Russia is "recreating *Russkiy mir*" (Solovyov 2022b), which would be based on the principles of

equity and inclusion, as opposed to the hegemony of the colonizing West.

Episode seven, concerned with Russia's withdrawal from Kherson, saw a decline in the

use of all frames besides the Liberation and Nazism frames. The main purpose of this episode

was to portray Russia's failure to seize control of Kherson as a "difficult but wise choice between

meaningless sacrifices for the sake of grand statements and the salvation of invaluable soldiers'

lives" (Solovyov 2022d). While praising the wisdom of Russian generals, Solovyov also

explained that the predominant reason for the lack of Russian successes after the seizure of

Mariupol was not due to Russian incompetence but rather NATO's active engagement in the

conflict: "We did not anticipate that NATO would be the one fighting against us on such a scale .

. . We are opposed by 50 percent of the world economy, which produces weapons for the sting

aimed at the heart of our country, which is not only Ukrainian Nazism but also a large number of

direct trainers and mercenaries of NATO" (Solovyov 2022d). Due to the undeniable sentiment

that Russia is not making any progress in annexing new territories, which gave rise to speculation

about Putin losing the war, Solovyov proposed the start of WWIII and a nuclear attack. While

recognizing that such an outcome would result in mutual assured destruction, Solovyov cited

Putin's well-known statement: "We, as the righteous, will go to heaven, and they [Russia's

enemies] will simply drop dead" (Solovyov 2022d).[29] He then proceeded to discuss the need to

identify divisions in US partisan politics that could be used to weaken NATO, emphasizing that

NATO not only creates multiple obstacles for Russia's victory in the war but also presents a

fundamental danger to the existence of Russia as a country. Overall, the overarching narrative of

the TV program host was that Nazis and fascists from all corners of the world come to Ukraine

to fight Russia, backed up by the West. Throughout the episode, Solovyov continued to appeal to

the historical trauma of Nazism, highlighting the difficulties the Soviets faced in WWII and the

fact that, unlike Stalin, contemporary Russian generals prioritize the preservation of their

soldiers' lives, urging his viewers not to succumb to negative emotions.

Almost all frames, except for the Unity and Liberation frames, peaked in the last episode,

which was dedicated to the discussion of the anniversary of the start of the war. Since Solovyov

had just returned from visiting the occupied territories, most of the episode focused on him

describing life within the Russian military and presenting it in a positive light to attract more

soldiers. The decline in the Unity frame was insignificant, with only a two-trigger-word decrease

from episode six. However, there was a sharp drop in the Liberation frame, from 36 to three. This

can be explained by the fact that Solovyov purposefully avoided mentioning Russia's territorial

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[29] First articulated by Putin (2018) at the Valdai International Discussion Club Meeting, the statement "*Мы как мученики попадем в рай, а они просто сдохнут,*" translated as "We will go to heaven as martyrs, and they will simply drop dead," was used to answer the question about the possibility of nuclear war. In the interview, Putin claimed that Russia does not entertain the idea of a preemptive nuclear strike but only a nuclear retaliatory response. Putin's statement became widely popular among Russian propagandists.

advances, as no progress was made after the capture of Mariupol. Instead, the TV show host focused on promoting the idea of Russian victimhood, arguing that "the goal of the West is the collapse and liquidation of Russia" (Solovyov 2023). The Anti-West frame was used most frequently, with 94 instances out of a total of 211 instances of the use of trigger words associated with this frame being mentioned in the last episode. The second most common frame in the last episode was the Nazism frame, with 57 instances, followed by the Russian Victimhood frame with 54 instances. Since denazification was brought up as one of the main purposes of Russia's intervention in Ukraine by Putin in his declaration of the so-called special military operation, propagandists in the show referred back to their discussion of Nazism to reinforce the goal of denazifying Ukraine when summarizing the results of the first year of the war, claiming that Russia will declare victory only after "we finish off the Nazis that Stalin missed" (Solovyov 2023).

V. Relating Research Findings to Existing Literature

The Myth of Historical Unity and *Russkiy Mir*

Solovyov's treatment of Russians and Ukrainians as one people, a concept captured by the Unity frame, is not a new strategic construct fashioned specifically for justifying the current invasion of Ukraine. Kohut (2001, 70) argues that the unity paradigm, which explains the Russian default view of Ukraine and Belarus as lacking an independent national identity, can be traced back to the 17th century.[30] The imperial narrative of the tripartite of all-Russian people,

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[30] For more information on the origins of the unity paradigm and its relation to the history of Kyivan Rus, the Rurik dynasty, Orthodoxy, and East Slavic ethnicity, see Kohut, "Origins of the Unity Paradigm: Ukraine and the Construction of Russian National History (1620s–1860s)."

composed of Great Russians, Little Russians — Ukrainians, and White Russians — Belarusians, has not lost its popularity since then.

Putin's policy toward Ukraine, manifested in the annexation of Crimea, the Donbas war, and the current invasion, is predicated on the assumption that the national identity of Ukraine is artificial and, hence, fragile. Such thinking is picked up by propaganda, resulting in three major narratives associated with the Unity, Anti-West, and Russian Victimhood frames:

1. Denying Ukrainian territorial sovereignty.

2. Invoking the "organic unity of the Russian Empire — especially its Slavic, Orthodox core" (Mankoff 2022, 1) as well as emphasizing ethno-linguistic ties.

3. Creating an image of Russia as a victim of the collective West, arguing that the national identity of Ukraine is a product of foreign manipulation (Mankoff 2022, 1).

The first two narratives are intertwined in the concept of *Russkiy Mir* or Russian World, which "implies that national borders are viewed as secondary to ethno-linguistic ties; at its core, it describes Russia not as a country but as a people" (Cotter 2016). *Russkiy mir*, as an ethnocentric concept focused on *славянство*, that is, Slavism, is reflected in Solovyov's use of trigger words such as "brother nation," "one people," and "united people." In asking "Who are we? We are brothers. We are one people who fight against each other" (Solovyov 2022a), the speakers in the show undermine Ukrainian national identity, reinforcing the idea that Ukrainians cannot exist independently of Russia since the two are "connected by a centuries-old history, a common language, a common culture, and a shared destiny" (Solovyov 2022b).

As highlighted by Cotter (2016), since Russia is characterized as a community of people rather than a nation defined by physical borders, the overarching implication is that the Russian state, as one of the main sources of Orthodox Slavic identity, asserts the right to expand its

influence to any territories with a Russian-speaking population. To illustrate, at the conference

devoted to the discussion of protecting Russia's national interests, Putin (2014a) said, "When I

speak of Russians and Russian-speaking citizens, I am referring to those people who consider

themselves part of the broad Russian community; they may not necessarily be ethnic Russians,

but they consider themselves Russian people." In the Russian language, there are two words that

mean "Russian:" *русские* (*russkiye*) and *россияне* (*rossiyane*). Whereas *russkiye* refers to the

people who share Russian cultural identity, *rossiyane* is used to describe people with Russian

citizenship. Although the Kremlin and state-controlled media propagate the idea of *Russkiy*

rather than *Rossiyskiy mir*, the ethno-linguistic boundaries of *Russkiy mir* still "conveniently

align with the Kremlin's perceived geopolitical sphere of influence" (Cotter 2016).

Furthermore, the *Russkiy Mir* narrative is used by the Russian government and

propaganda to conceal their geopolitical ambitions by shifting blame to the collective West,

creating a narrative of a foreign threat. Snyder (2018) refers to the tactics of manufacturing

artificial crises and manipulating the resultant emotion as politics of eternity, which aims to place

"one nation at the center of a cyclical story of victimhood." In Solovyov's show, Russia is faced

with the returning threats of the Cold War and Nazism, which allegedly is not only widespread in

Ukraine but also supported by the West.

The first main narrative of Russia's victimhood revolves around the idea that the US, as a

leader of the collective West, is using Ukraine as a pawn in a "conspiratorial anti-Russian plot"

(Cotter 2016). To illustrate, one of the speakers in Solovyov's show claims that "the West has

revived the project that existed for many centuries before — the creation of a center in Ukraine

for the actual division and destruction of the East Slavic Orthodox ethnos, opposing it to Russia"

(Solovyov 2022g). In addition to the cultural threat, the West also poses a geopolitical threat to

Russia since the US turned Ukraine into a "state controlled by Americans, [which now] represents a threat to Russian security" (Solovyov 2022g). The cyclical story of the Cold War thus returns, but now Ukraine, which is no longer part of the USSR, is on the side of Russia's enemy.

Another cycle of threat, clearly aimed at provoking a stronger emotional response from the audience, comes in the form of Nazism, which Solovyov claims is rampant in Ukraine. Straus (2022) points out that the references to genocide and Nazism in official Russian rhetoric are instances of the weaponization of the vocabulary of violence, intended to manipulate traumatic memories. The employment of the Genocide and Nazism frames can be seen not only as antagonization of Ukraine but also of foreign powers that support Ukraine in the conflict. Straus (2022) explains that "accusing one's enemies of atrocity in conflict is a mechanism of simultaneous denunciation (of the other) and sympathy (of one's own)." Thus, Solovyov's utilization of the Nazism and Genocide frames, as part of the weaponization of the vocabulary of violence, is directed at the condemnation of the Ukrainian government, denunciation of all external parties in the conflict that support Ukraine as Nazi collaborators, and further promotion of the image of Russia as a victim of the returning threat of Nazism.

What Makes Russian Propaganda Unique?

Paul and Matthews (2016) describe the contemporary Russian propaganda model as the "firehose of falsehood" due to its four distinct characteristics:

1. It is produced in large volumes and broadcast on multiple channels.
2. It relies on continuous exposure to repetitive statements while also generating rapid responses to emerging events, manufacturing both information and its sources.

3. It lacks any commitment to objective reality.

4. It does not prioritize consistency, easily changing its narrative.

Ostapchuk (2023) reports that Vladimir Solovyov's presence in Russian media has been increasing steadily since the early 2000s. On October 21, 2019, he set a "Guinness World Record for the most hours of live television presented by a host in one week: 25 hours, 53 minutes, and 57 seconds." In 2023, alongside hosting *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*, he also runs his personal show *Solovyov Live*, the Telegram channel *@SolovievLive*, and the *Full Contact* program on Vesti FM radio. Thus, Solovyov, serving as a representative case among Russian propagandists, conforms to the characterization of Russian propaganda provided by Paul and Matthews (2016) as high-volume and multi-channel.

In addition to the dissemination of "text, video, audio, and still imagery propagated via the Internet, social media, satellite television, and traditional radio and television broadcasting" (Paul and Matthews 2016), the Kremlin employs web brigades, also known as Internet trolls, as part of its disinformation campaigns. For instance, the Internet Research Agency in St. Petersburg, founded by the leader of the Wagner Group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, and commonly referred to as the troll factory, reportedly operates on a 24-hour cycle (Krever and Chernova 2023; Volchek and Sindelar 2015). In 2015, former troll factory employees disclosed that writing 135 comments during a 12-hour shift makes them 700 US dollars. The mechanics of writing posts as an Internet troll follow a villain-picture-link structure that requires a team of three to join a discussion forum on a municipal website. One person makes an anti-government comment, and the other two join a debate, with one posting an image or a graph relevant to the context of the debate, and the other sharing a link to any content in support of the pro-government position (Volchek and Sindelar 2015).

Russian propaganda's reliance on continuous exposure to repetitive statements is exemplified in this study by Solovyov repeatedly using the same trigger words. As shown in the Appendix, every episode analyzed includes words such as "Nazism," "liberate," "threat to Russia," as well as statements portraying the West, NATO, and the US as enemies of Russia. Previous studies have demonstrated that repeating a false statement increases its perceived truth, a phenomenon known as the illusory truth effect (Calvillo and Smelter 2020; Hasher, Goldstein, Toppino 1977).

Paul and Matthews (2016) further point out that Russian propaganda prioritizes the agility to be the first to interpret emerging events in a way that favors the overall narrative, providing the opportunity to create a lasting first impression. In the program, Solovyov creates such impressions through the use of frames that build upon the statements made by the Kremlin. Previous research on first impression bias suggests that people tend to evaluate all subsequent information in the direction of the initial influence (Lim, Benbasat, and Ward 2000; Lewandowsky et al. 2012).

Another prominent characteristic of Russian propaganda, including *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*, is its disregard for journalistic ethics, lack of commitment to objective reality, and fusion of factual truth with manufactured information and fabricated sources (Paul and Matthews 2016). The combination of these three factors creates what Cotter (2016) describes as a "climate of doubt in which it is nearly impossible to believe anything at all." Some notable examples of propagated falsehoods in Solovyov's show include accusations of Ukraine committing genocide, claims that the Bucha massacre was staged, and assertions that the Ukrainian government is affiliated with Nazi ideology. Greenberg (2022) traced the number of

civilian deaths in Ukraine reported by the UN Commission of Human Rights, pointing out that there is no evidence to support claims that genocide took place in eastern Ukraine between 2014 and 2021. Horton et al. (2022) compared satellite images from three space technology companies — PlanetLab, Apollo Mapping, and Maxar — and consulted forensic pathologists with previous experience investigating war crimes. Their conclusion was that all available evidence contradicts Russian claims that the Bucha massacre was staged. According to Likhachev (2018), none of the "far-right radicals and extremists at present can claim significant parliamentary representation or any plausible path to power in Ukraine." In Ukraine's 2019 parliamentary elections, support for far-right political parties was only two percent (Colborne 2019). As for Zelensky, who is Jewish and lost relatives in the Holocaust, no evidence suggests that Nazism is present in his politics (Brockell 2022).

Lastly, Russian propaganda is known for its ability to change its narrative easily. Although in this study Solovyov remained a key supporter of Russia's invasion of Ukrainian territories, his statements from previous years on the possibility of military intervention in Ukraine are strikingly different. Before his career as a Russian TV host, Solovyov delivered political recitals at the Moscow Art Theater. Taking a look at Solovyov's earlier recitals sheds light on the radical alteration of his view on Ukraine in subsequent years. For instance, in 2008, Solovyov stated, "There will never be a war between Russia and Ukraine because any person who seriously attempts such an action is a criminal, and I cannot imagine the scale of it" (Solovyov 2008). In 2013, a member of his audience asked Solovyov about the possibility of

returning Crimea to Russia, to which he replied, "But Khrushchev[31] did so [transferred Crimea to Ukraine] legitimately . . . Why do you need Crimea? It means war. Do you want to go to war with Ukraine? How many Ukrainian and Russian lives are you willing to sacrifice to capture Crimea?" (Solovyov 2013). In 2015, Solovyov touched on the topic of the Donbas war, suggesting that people who migrated to Russia from the affected region should "take up arms and go defend your homeland [Donbas], because it seems like you want others [Russians] to come, die, fight, and struggle for you . . . Is this your homeland? Fight for it" (Solovyov 2015). Solovyov's current narrative, filled with aggression toward Ukraine, which is supposedly justified by Russia's need to liberate the people of Donbas, radically contradicts his previous stance.

VI. Conclusion

The study examined media coverage of the first year of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, from February 2022 to February 2023, on the regime-friendly political talk show *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*. Employing a qualitative analysis of six identified media frames in eight episodes of the TV program, the research revealed that the most popular frames were the Anti-West frame, the Russian Victimhood frame, and the Liberation frame. In contrast, the Genocide frame and the Unity frame were least popular. All six frames were predominantly used to provide a justification for Russia's invasion in Ukraine. Such a justification revolves around Russia's refusal to continue tolerating the alleged prevalence of Nazism and ethnic oppression of Russian-speaking communities in Ukraine, as well as Ukraine's alignment with the collective

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[31] Nikita Khrushchev was the first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1953–1964) and premier of the Soviet Union (1958–1964) (Encyclopedia Britannica 2024). In 1954, Khrushchev transferred Crimea from the Russian Soviet Federalist Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

West. In Solovyov's view, Russia is not only fighting against Ukraine but also against all foreign forces that endanger the concept of *Russkiy Mir*, which transcends territorial boundaries as it is based on shared cultural, linguistic, and historical ties.

This study contributes to the existing literature on propaganda and disinformation by highlighting two primary tactics used in Solovyov's program to increase the salience of the propagated message. First, the speakers in *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* aim to justify Russia's invasion of Ukraine by making emotion-laden historical references to WWII, Nazism, and genocide. Second, in line with Baum and Zhukovs' (2015) observation that media in autocracies tend to underreport government atrocities, this study found that another tactic employed in *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov* was to shift blame from Russia to external forces siding with Ukraine, with the purpose of creating an image of Russia not as an aggressor but as a victim.

Future research could further analyze whether there are differences in how Russian state-controlled media apply the concept of *Russkiy Mir* to Ukraine, which, as of 2023, is not a NATO member, as opposed to former Soviet states currently in NATO, such as Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. Another aspect that could be analyzed in the future is the differences in how Russian state-controlled media frame military conflicts in Ukraine and Georgia, considering the Kremlin's perception of these countries as parts of the *Russkiy Mir*. Although the main focus of this study was to analyze the framing strategies employed by Russian state-controlled media to promote the official position of the Kremlin, future research should also investigate how to strategically employ counter-framing strategies in authoritarian regimes to counteract disinformation. For instance, while there is a substantial body of research on the efficacy of pedagogical interventions in enhancing citizens' ability to recognize false information in

democracies (Guess et al. 2020; Hameleers 2019; Badrinathan 2021), considerably less attention

has been paid to the effectiveness of media literacy interventions in countering both

disinformation and misinformation in authoritarian regimes. It is crucial to examine the impact of

counter-framing in autocracies, along with the approaches and methods that citizens of

non-democratic states can develop themselves to identify false narratives.

VII. Appendix

Table 1: Frequency of Trigger Words in Identified Frames in *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*, Episodes 1-8.

	Episode 1	Episode 2	Episode 3	Episode 4	Episode 5	Episode 6	Episode 7	Episode 8
Nazism frame	34	35	68	17	20	3	29	57
Nazism	12	16	49	9	14	2	14	48
Fascism	2	7	2	1	1	0	5	2
Denazification	7	1	1	0	1	0	1	0
World War II	0	0	0	2	0	1	1	0
Grandfathers fought	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
Hitler	6	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
Mussolini	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1
Führer	0	0	5	0	0	0	0	0
Year 1939	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Year 1940	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Year 1941	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Year 1942	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
Year 1943	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year 1944	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year 1945	0	4	1	0	0	0	0	1
Gestapo	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0
SS	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Great Patriotic War	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	1
Wehrmacht	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1
Third Reich	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0
Swastika	0	4	2	0	3	0	1	0
Nuremberg	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Genocide frame	6	5	6	1	1	1	0	2
Genocide	6	2	0	1	1	1	0	0
Babi Yar	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2
Auschwitz	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dachau	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Holocaust	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Concentration camp	0	1	5	0	0	0	0	0
Anti-West frame	35	37	38	45	56	77	59	94
Cold War	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
The US/America as an enemy	6	9	7	21	21	23	22	27
The collective West as an enemy	12	21	22	20	30	42	15	45
NATO as an enemy	17	7	9	4	5	10	22	21
Unity frame	24	8	2	0	6	17	12	10
Novorossiya (New Russia)	0	0	0	0	0	5	0	4
Russkiy mir (Russian world)	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
Brotherly people	7	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
United people	1	2	0	0	0	1	0	0
One people	1	4	0	0	0	0	2	0
Slavism	4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Orthodoxy	2	0	0	0	0	2	7	5
Our people	5	0	1	0	1	2	1	0
Our land	3	0	0	0	1	5	1	0
Common homeland	1	0	0	0	4	1	1	0
Liberation frame	76	23	24	37	28	20	36	3
8-year war	13	1	10	3	8	2	1	0
Liberate	10	1	8	18	5	7	13	2
Recognize the DPR/LPR/Crimea	6	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Support the DPR/LPR/Crimea	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Demilitarization	6	4	1	0	0	0	1	0
Return the DPR/LPR/Crimea	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	0
Protect the DPR/LPR/Crimea	6	0	0	0	5	5	0	0
Help the DPR/LPR/Crimea	3	7	1	2	5	1	1	1

	Episode 1	Episode 2	Episode 3	Episode 4	Episode 5	Episode 6	Episode 7	Episode 8
Save the DPR/LPR/Crimea	9	0	2	12	3	2	3	0
Not an occupation	5	0	0	2	0	0	0	0
Avoidance of civilian casualties	13	9	2	0	2	0	15	0
Not an invasion	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russian Victimhood frame	81	55	15	8	32	14	9	54
Fake news about Russia	4	15	0	0	1	0	0	0
Demonization of Russia	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dehumanization of Russians	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Threat to Russia	13	2	1	1	5	1	3	2
Russia needs protection	3	0	0	3	1	0	2	1
Anti-Russia	10	1	0	0	2	1	1	1
Sanctions	28	20	12	0	9	8	0	39
Visa refusals for Russians	2	4	0	0	0	0	0	0
Frozen Russian assets	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Russia's removal from SWIFT	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russia's isolation	1	0	0	0	5	0	0	4
Russophobia	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1
Mockery of Russia	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0
Attack on Russia	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	0
Security risks for Russia	6	3	0	1	3	1	1	6
Moskal	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	0
Cancellation of Russian culture	5	5	0	0	0	1	0	0

Note: The table above provides the frequency of trigger words corresponding to the six frames

identified in the eight episodes of *Evening with Vladimir Solovyov*. The gray rows indicate how

many times each frame appeared, while the white rows show the frequency of each specific

trigger word associated with its corresponding frame.

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