

## **Introduction: An Inclusive Scholarly Perspective on Media and the War in Ukraine**

*By John V. Pavlik\**

Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has proven to be among the world's greatest crises of the period and as such has been a major story for news media across the globe. This special issue of the *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications* is devoted to a diverse, international and scholarly examination of the media and communication implications of the war in Ukraine. This special issue is needed not only because of the magnitude of the topic. It is also vital that scholarly understanding of the war and its media and communication implications is advanced and in a timely and inclusive fashion. We are seeking with this special issue to not offer the typically western research viewpoint. Rather, in the spirit of global inclusion, we are offering research from a variety of scholars from a range of universities in not only in Europe and the U.S. but from other parts of the world including the global south. From Pakistan to Iran, Brazil to South Africa, the research vantage points offered in this article are a diverse collection. We are also seeking to give voice to research that utilizes multiple methodologies and theoretical perspectives, from the qualitative to the quantitative, critical and cultural as well as that grounded in conceptual approaches drawn from the social sciences and the humanities.

We live in an age where media are seemingly ubiquitous and impactful, with mobile media, Internet connectivity, drones and video surveillance often bringing nonstop news and information to a public with an oftentimes thirsty appetite for news. Yet, it is essential that understanding of the role of media, especially during times of conflict, serve as a central part of how we come to have that understanding. Scholarly research and inquiry provides a valuable window into the role of media in society, especially during times of war, in Ukraine or elsewhere. By making research on the media implications of the war in Ukraine available in a timely fashion, we hope that scholars, concerned citizens, journalists and other media professionals, as well as policy makers can make use of the insights offered in this special issue to better understand the complexities that arise from the war in Ukraine and the impact on and by media across the globe.

The eleven articles published in this special issue offer a unique vantage point on how media have responded to the conflict. Two articles provide a perspective from South Africa. In providing a contextualized view of media coverage of the conflict, three leading scholars from South Africa provide a quantitative analysis of Russia-Ukraine war reporting as framed by America's *New York Post*, China's *Global Times* and South African Citizen newspapers. Collaborating on this investigation are Prof. Oludele Akinloye Akinboade, of Africa Resources in Socio-Economics, Prof. Yunus Heske, Department of Communication Science,

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University of South Africa, Muckleneuk Campus, and Prof. Victor Sannyboy, Molobi, all of Pretoria, South Africa. Together, this study reveals how the news media examined all use different news frames in their narratives but that six themes emerge in that coverage, including human impact, economic consequences, and attribution of responsibility.

Prof. Yolanda Sadie, University of Cape Town, provides another perspective from South Africa. In her study, Sadie reveals how South African print media presented the South African government's stance on the Russia-Ukraine war and accounts of the progress of the war. Sadie's investigation focused on the period of 24 February 2022 to 15 September 2022. Her qualitative thematic analysis of media reports used the key words "Russia", "Ukraine" and "war" drawing upon content included in SA Media, a press-clipping database service, which comprises 39 of mainstream publications in South Africa, including 19 daily publications, 17 weekend publications, two weekly publications and one monthly publication. The investigation reveals that there were 1,452 reports on the Russia/Ukraine war and 1,119 of these reports were largely from international news agencies such as Reuters. Most articles described the war with no connection being made to South Africa. But in nearly a third, or 333 reports, South Africa was mentioned, including noting the effects of the war on South Africa and South Africa's position with regard to the war.

Furthering the perspective from the Global South is S. Arulchelvan's examination of how Indian news media view the Russia and Ukraine War. Arulchelvan provides an analysis of news reports of two Indian newspapers, *The Hindu* and *Times of India*, during the first two months of the war, from 24 February 2022 to 30 April 2022. Drawing upon Galtung's Peace and War journalism theory, the content analysis looks at how the papers framed the war. Findings indicate the Russia-Ukraine conflict is reported largely using a peaceful frame and that the newspapers favored Ukraine over Russia.

Three articles provide a North American viewpoint. Prof. Margaret Cassidy, Adelphi University, United States of America (U.S.A.), offers a western viewpoint on how U.S. news media have covered the conflict. In particular, Cassidy considers the assault on the Donetsk Academic Regional Drama Theatre in Mariupol. Through an exploratory content analysis, Cassidy found patterns in the diverse sources used in covering of the incident, word choice, photos and video. Among the findings presented here is that during the early days of the bombing of the Mariupol theater, news organizations struggled not so much with what images and video to show, but whether any images were even available to provide an authentic visual report on the siege.

Prof. John V. Pavlik, Rutgers University, U.S.A., offers a complement to the above vantage, outlining a set of ten implications of the war in Ukraine for news media generally. Among the most vital of these are the pursuit of truth, maintaining independent journalism, freedom of speech and press, and utilizing emerging digital media forms that can expand news gathering and the accuracy of journalism about the conflict.

Prof. Gennadiy Chernov School of Journalism, University of Regina, Canada, offers an examination of the Russian-Ukrainian war in terms of the persistence of

frames and media issue-cycles. Notably, finding that in addition to heightened interest, the Canadian news coverage reflects the nature of media systems in democratic and authoritarian societies.

One article provides a vantage point from a joint examination by scholars based in Germany and Iran. Collaborating on an analysis of the sociopolitical implications of the war are Prof. Amir Ekhlassi, ESB Business School, Reutlingen University - Germany and Prof. Amir Rahideh, Industrial Management, Imam Khomeini International University, Qazvin, Iran. This paper offers a typology of the sociopolitical stance of international brands in the Ukraine war. Among the key insights gleaned in this study is that brands appear to have reacted to the Ukraine war because of a number of reasons including the influence of stakeholder pressure.

Several scholars provide research from European nations. Irena Femic, Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University, Turkey (considered both in Europe and Asia) and Mina Medjedovic, The Westminster Foundation for Democracy, Montenegro offer a view of the war in Ukraine from the vantage point of Montenegro. Based on evidence garnered from content presented in media of Montenegrin and official views of the Montenegrin establishment, the primary conclusion is that it is a divided country regarding the war. Among these divisions are how the Embassy of Ukraine in Montenegro organized a support march in Cetinje while the city also has been home to protests in support of the Russian invasion. Likewise, while Montenegro joined European Union (EU) sanctions against Moscow in April, with a ban on Russian airlines in its airspace, it was not so until after three failed attempts arising from differing views within the government of Zdravko Krivokapić.

Prof. Raquel de Caria Patrício, the University of Lisbon, Portugal, offers an examination of Brazilian media's coverage of the war. Focusing on reaction to and coverage of the war in Ukraine in the early days of the invasion the study provides a content analysis of Brazilian media presentations of the conflict. The content analysis includes three Brazilian daily newspapers during the period of 25<sup>th</sup> of February to 15<sup>th</sup> of September 2022. Patrício offers two major conclusions, notably that all newspapers studied condemned the invasion of Ukraine and criticized President Bolsonaro's political behavior. It's worth noting that subsequent to this investigation, the Brazilian presidential election has been held and Bolsonaro was defeated, perhaps in part due to his ideological stance relative to the war in Ukraine.

Dr. Gregory Papanikos, President of ATINER, provides findings from a quantitative and qualitative content analysis of three daily Greek newspapers' coverage of the conflict during the pre-invasion and day of phases of the invasion. His unexpected findings indicate that these newspapers unequivocally condemned the Russia-Belarus invasion. Moreover, despite Greece's long ties with Russia, these leading news media considered the invasion unacceptable.

Finally, one paper provides a perspective from the Netherlands, but is a study of Pakistani media. Dr. Muhammad Tarique, a Postdoc Fellow & Faculty, Media and Cultural Studies, is based at Utrecht University, NL. Tarique's investigation offers a critical discourse analysis of the Russo-Ukraine conflict as represented in the Pakistani elite national press. Based on a one-month examination of coverage

immediately before the war, the study reveals that Pakistani national journalism did not follow the rules of conflict resolution. Moreover, overall War Journalism (WJ) syntax ensued sometimes with meaningless hyperbole.

Taken as a whole, these eleven articles provide a diverse, international perspective on how media around the globe offer a complex account of the war in Ukraine. Although there are some general patterns in the coverage, there is also much range in how media report on the conflict, with some relying on international news services to give a general accounting of the conflict. Localizing the war by framing coverage in terms of each country's official governmental stance on the war, or in terms of how the war may be impacting each nation is another general trend. Still, media independence is often seen in coverage of the conflict, with news media often questioning or in conflict with federal governmental or political leaders and their stance on the war.

The articles included in this special issue offer important observations about the media and the war in Ukraine. In South Africa, research shows that the media employ different news frames in their narratives but that there are some common themes, including human impact, economic consequences, and attribution of responsibility of the war. Quantitative content analysis of South African media further reveals that most reports about the war are drawn largely from international news agencies such as Reuters. Most articles described the war without making a connection to South Africa, though almost a third of the reports do make a connection with South Africa, including noting the effects of the war on South Africa and South Africa's position with regard to the war. A study from the U.S. looked at how the war has been told visually. The study reveals that the first days of reporting on the bombing of the Mariupol theater, news organizations struggled not with what images and video to show, but whether any images were even available, limiting the role of visual news reporting. Analysis of news coverage of the conflict also supports the need for a continued dedication to the pursuit of truth, independent journalism, freedom of speech and press, and utilization of emerging media technologies to help ensure accurate reporting. Research from Canada finds that while there is strong heightened interest in the conflict during its early days, Canadian news coverage reflects the nature of media systems in democratic as contrasted with that of authoritarian societies. A study of Greek newspaper coverage of the conflict reveals that leading newspapers unequivocally condemned the Russia-Belarus invasion, despite Greece's long ties with Russia. An international collaboration between colleagues in Germany and Iran looks at how international brands reacted to the war. The study offers a typology of the sociopolitical stance of international brands in the Ukraine war, including the influence of stakeholder pressure. Research from Montenegro reveals that as may be evidenced elsewhere, viewpoints on the war demonstrate a divided country with no clear consensus on the war and its responsibilities, especially between those in government or with political power and the media. A study of Brazil's major news media reveals that newspapers both condemned the invasion of Ukraine and criticized President Bolsonaro's political behavior. A study on the period of build-up to the war shows that Pakistani national journalism did not follow the rules of conflict resolution. Moreover, overall War Journalism (WJ)

syntax ensued sometimes using meaningless hyperbole that does little to advance a truthful or factual discourse.

The papers included in this special issue of the *Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications* underscore the importance that engaged scholarship and international voices can and will play in how scholars and others around the world understand the war and its consequences. We hope that the research presented here in a fashion that is both timely and systematic can help stimulate a discourse about the media and war in Ukraine as well as further study of this enduring international crisis. Importantly, while these ten papers and their authors represent multiple international venues and theoretical approaches, they are a far cry from a full or comprehensive representation of the globe and we hope that future studies of the media implications of the Russia-Ukraine war will ensue and contribute to a growing body of research that is both systematic and theoretically grounded. Although we all hope the war in Ukraine will come to a speedy conclusion and in a form that is least harmful for all those involved or affected, we know that future war in other places and times will likely occur. Perhaps the lessons learned and presented in this special issue devoted to media and communication and the war in Ukraine will resonate in a form that helps to shed more light than heat and can contribute to a more peaceful world. The outbreak of war in Israel-Gaza in October of 2023 underscores the continuing need for understanding how the world's media report on such complex and tragic conflicts. Scholarly research plays an essential role in providing systematic and reasoned assessment and analysis of not only news media reporting of such conflict, but also the role of citizens in producing and distributing video and other content to document the situation, acting as citizen reporters in complement to the reporting of professional journalists. Social media platforms play a key role in the production and distribution of news about the conflict, and there remains a great need for independent scholarly examination of this process and its consequences. Scholarly research can provide critically important insight into the content, methods of production, systems of delivery and nature and extent of public engagement with news of conflict in the Middle East, Ukraine and beyond.

