POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE, DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF UKRAINE, USA AND RUSSIA IN CNN INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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Abstract
This study analyzes CNN International news discursive construction of nations in his reporting based on Van Dijk's Sociocognitive framework. Through a mix -method approach of qualitative content analysis, linguistic analysis, and manual critical discourse analysis, the study investigates and examines how nations are constructed as part of in group and out-group. The findings in the study shows that USA interpretations of freedom, democracy, and human rights are used ideologically to emphasizes the positive aspects of USA, Ukraine and allies as a part of in-group nations and negative aspects of the Russia and allies as an out-group.

Keywords
Critical discourse studies, public diplomacy, media discourse, ideological square, Voice of America

Research Objective
1. To examine how national identities are positively and negatively constructed through discursive strategies in CNN International news coverage.

Research Question
1. How does CNN 's International News discursively construct an in-group and out-group of nations?

INTRODUCTION
The media, in the modern era plays a significant role in understanding and shaping the international relations and their conflicts. The news organization actively construct social realities through the usage of language. They use specific strategies and lexical choices to shape identities. In the reporting, especially related to peace and war, they are important to shape the audience minds. How they perceive them and accordingly understand the discourse through the lens of media portrayal.

The audience perceive the victim, allies, enemies and aggressor accordingly, based on news depiction.

CNN a prominent media outlet had established a powerful position because of global reach and influence in the western media. It had an extensive converges of ongoing Ukraine – Russia Ukraine war which prominent international conflict in the twenty first century. The study investigates, how CNN International news construct nations identities if in group and out group by applying Van Dijk's (CDA) Critical Discourse Analysis framework.

International news is never neutral but they have an ideology, values, represents culture and save interest of the nations. CNN international news, a western based media outlet, demonstrates its institutional affiliation to USA and her allies. It represents geopolitical opinions based on the aforesaid institutional affiliation. This is the positioning of media, how they marginalized or foreground the identities construct the identities. They prioritized voices, construct "out-group," and "in-group". They reinforce ideological positioning of "us" versus "them." In the very research, "in-group consists of Ukraine, USA and allies while "out-group," while consist of Russia and allies.

This war is an important site for examining the discursive strategies and discourse. The global discussions and narratives consistently depicted Ukraine as a victim and Russia as an expansionist power. This kind of portrayal is not through description but through a proper lexical choices and framing techniques in the CNN's coverages. It emphasizes on Ukrainian resistance to war, democratic values, western collaborative efforts for peace and solidarity. On the other hand, it shows the Russia authoritarianism and deception as an expansionist. It construes identities of nations that shape public perception and opinion.

The worth of investigation and examination lies in it's a major worldwide status in the media. The CNN news and narratives circulates through the world and shapes the ideology through discussive strategies and lexical choices. By critically analyzing the news discourse indicates the ideological positioning of the nations. Moreover, the research investigates how political agendas and journalistic practices and interwind. It highlights how identities are constructed, rather than described in the news.

Conclusively, this research investigates national construction of identities through discursive practices and strategies during Russia–Ukraine war through (CDA) Critical Discourse Analysis Van Dijk's CDA framework. It examines selected excerpt and reveals how identities in-group and out-group identities are constructed and framed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary framework that analyzes how language works in the framing and reproduction of authority, ideology, and socio-cultural inequality (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). As opposed to conventional linguistic analysis, CDA deems discourse as a means of social practice deeply rooted in historical, political, and cultural settings. It aims to reveal underlying meanings, ideological propositions, and power relations implicit within a discourse.

In addition, Fairclough (1995) notes that media discourse functions as a pivotal role in framing public perception and social reality. Texts based on news are not scholarly evaluations of events; instead, they are produced through selection and shaped ideologically. Likewise, media organizations have symbolic power, permitting them to highlight social issues, put blame, and legalize political actions (van Dijk, 2008). That said, CDA has turned out into a key methodological instrument in assessing news reporting, especially in times of conflicts and wars.

For Wodak and Meyer (2016), CDA puts linguistic analysis and social theory together. This results in researchers evaluating how discourses shape the status quo of authority and inequality. For instance, during war reporting, CDA reveals how nations are portrayed as victims, attackers, or heroes, solidifying geopolitical power structures.

Van Dijk's sociocognitive approach offers a comprehensive approach for comprehending how discourse frames societal beliefs and ideologies. For van Dijk (2012), discourse works via a Discourse–Cognition–Society triangle, where language affects shared mental models that helps guide social attitudes.

Pivotal to Van Dijk's approach is the ideological square, which elucidates polarization in text: underscore things considered positive about "us"

Highlight things deemed as negative about "them"

Downplay negative aspects about "us"

Downplay favorable things about "them"

Such a model has been extensively employed in research on racism (van Dijk, 1993), immigration (Hart, 2010), political discourse (Chilton, 2004), and wartime journalism (KhosraviNik, 2010).

Van Dijk (2008) notes that elites, incorporating journalists, influence significantly in regulating discourse and framing public ideology. By the use of lexical choices, shaping, and sourcing, media house regenerate prevailing political viewpoints. This results in making van Dijk's approach particularly linked with evaluating CNN International's reporting of the prolonged Russia–Ukraine conflict.

Wartime journalistic reporting has long been critiqued for fostering nationalistic and ideological discourse. In Entman's (2004) view, framing includes choosing dimensions of reality and making them more significant to advocating a scant construction of meaning. During the wartime reporting, this generally leads to simplified binary explanations of the narratives, such as good versus bad debate.

Moreover, Chouliaraki (2006) emphasizes that Western media often frames remote suffering through ethical hierarchies, where those affected are depicted as more worthy of sympathy in comparison to others. This resonates with research reflecting those wars involving Western allies are given more empathetic media coverage (Cottle, 2006).

For Kellner (2004), the USA media constructed the Iraq War of 2003 employing nationalistic discourse and othering divergent opinions. Analogous trends resurfaced in the representation of the Russia-Ukraine war, portraying Western intervention as ethically legitimate.

Many scholars have assessed how Russia is misrepresented in Western media outlets. In Yablokov's (2015) opinion, Western media recurrently misrepresents Russia as dominant, aggressive, and imperialist. Such a discourse perpetuates Cold War stereotypes and validates Western foreign policy aims and priorities.

Furthermore, Szostek (2017) argues that Western media portryal of Russia generally counts on biased framing, highlighting corruption, military dominance, and human rights violations. These scant representations serve ideologically by framing Russia as the "other" as opposed to the Western democratic ideals. Analyzing British media construction of the Ukraine war, Ojala, Pantti, and Kangaslampi (2018) identified a strong pattern of portraying Russia as the belligerent while representing Ukraine as an affected party. Such a binary construction simplifies intricate geopolitical realities but functions as hegemonic political descriptions.

As opposed to Russia, Ukraine has been mainly portrayed as a democratic state defending its territorial sovereignty. Past research shows that Western news outlets appreciate Ukrainian resistance, heroism, and ethical legitimacy (Hansen, 2015). Its president, Zelensky, is commonly framed as a charismatic leader embodying resilience and democratic values. For Hutchings and Szostek (2015), Western news organizations put Ukraine within a European identity mechanism, upholding NATO and EU ideological standards. Such a discursive inclusion, as a result, fosters the in-group construction of Ukraine and validates Western backing.

CNN pulls the strings in the global news networks. Thussu (2007) puts into words that CNN International plays a key role in shaping global data streams and setting the tone of public. This network has ability to shape the public narrative and holds away global policy approach; this concept is known as "CNN Effect". (Robinson, 2002). Many experts put forward a point about role of CNN in the heat of the moment and in US international strategic interests (Gilboa, 2005).

CNN's reporting often aligns with the political narratives of West and supports their certain ideas, although it presents itself as taking a middle-of-the-road approach.

A common thread in the media reports is discursively constructing national identity.

Anderson (1983) explained that the nations are socially constructed and established through framed narratives and this concept is known as "imagined communities". Media plays a vital role in keeping the imagined narratives alive and pulling the strings behind.

Billig (1995) proposed the concept of "banal nationalism," showing how national belonging is generated through colloquial language. National fervor becomes unambiguous in war discourse with strong in-group/out-group distinctions.

Van Dijk (1998) debates that identity development is profoundly dogmatic. The discourse of media teaches moral characteristics to nations, framing how nations observe allies and foes.

Khosravi Nik (2010) analyzed British media discourse followed powerful motifs of othering and omission of refugees and war. CNN employs kinder strategies in war reporting, where Russia is treated as the "other".

Machin and Mayr (2012) examined and explored how lexical choices in media reporting frame ideology of the nations. This work highlights the importance of examining grammatical structures, metaphors, and evaluative adjectives.

Al-Ghazzi (2014) investigated Al Jazeera's war reporting and uncover that there is similarity in western media and Al Jazeera in framing ideology, it shows that news discourse explains the geopolitical position of the world.

Cooper (2024) noticed Voice of America's international media reports and noticed that VOA emphasizes the US as a positive agent while portrays the negative picture of rival states. The outcomes of his study states that media discourse plays a vital role in public diplomacy, ideological narratives of democracy and basic rights of human beings.

This study employs Cooper's analytical pattern to CNN International. VOA is government-established, while CNN is a endorsed network. Nevertheless, these both media platforms illustrate polarization of in-group/out-group and ideological harmony with Western geopolitical interests.

Research Gap

Media framing and war discourse have examined by numerous studies but only few researchers focus on CNN International's broadcasting of the Russia-Ukraine was using Van Dijk's framework.

The bulk of studies scrutinize governmental media or social media networks. The present study bridges that gap by examining a major commercial global news platform.

Moreover, few studies unequivocally apply Van Dijk's ideological square to CNN's war discourse. This research facilitates to CDA scholarship by extending the framework to current international disputes.

Methodology

This study makes use of a qualitative critical discourse analytical approach underpinned by Van Dijk's Sociocognitive framework. It states as follows;

"In the following theoretical account of discursive manipulation, I follow the overall multidisciplinary framework I have advocated in the last decade, triangulating a social, cognitive and discursive approach (see, e.g., Van Dijk, 1998, 2001). That is, manipulation is a social phenomenon – especially because it involves interaction and power abuse between groups and social actors – a cognitive phenomenon because manipulation always implies the manipulation of the minds of participants, and a discursive–semiotic phenomenon, because manipulation is being exercised through text, talk and visual messages. As claimed earlier, none of these approaches can be reduced to the other and all three of them are needed in an integrated theory that also establishes explicit links between the different dimensions of manipulation."

The study analyzes how CNN International articulates national identities in its reporting on the Russia–Ukraine war. The concept of ideological square employed in this analysis to reveal how discourse emphasizes the positive aspects of the in-group while highlighting negative aspects of the out-group, and attenuates in-group flaws and out-group breakthroughs in parallel.

Research Design

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This research adopts qualitative content analysis and quantitative approach. It is human-coded qualitative approach in conjunction with corpus-informed Critical Discourse Analysis. With this, it also highlights the quantitative frequencies of the nations as a part of in-group and out-group.

This dual approach ensured both breadth and depth and bolsters analytical reliability and in-depth interpretative analysis. The study utilizes an interpretivist approach, seeing discourse as shaped by society and influenced by ideas and beliefs.

Data Selection

Using purposive sampling, fifteen CNN International news articles published in 2022-2026, were selected covering key political, military establishment, and diplomatic efforts in the Russia–Ukraine conflict. The articles were selected to ensure representation of major war-related events, peace negotiations, cyber operations, and diplomatic interactions. One analytically significant paragraph was elicited from each article. These excerpts were chosen because they categorically represented analytical language, perspective-setting techniques, and agent positioning relevant to in-group and out-group construction.

Delimitation of the Study

This research is delimited with wide eyes open, taking several important factors in order to maintain data-driven focus and procedural rigor. This research is constrained to CNN International English-language news articles. Only the English-language news articles are examined in this research, while CNN International broadcasts in seven different languages worldwide. To avert interlanguage variations and to maintain evenness in linguistic analysis, this delimitation was very essential. CNN's non-English services may deploy different discursive strategies adapted to particular regional audiences, ergo the findings cannot be generalized to these services.

As a second point, this study is theoretically confined to Van Dijk's Sociocognitive framework to CDS, specifically his concept of the ideological square. Critical Discourse Analysis includes multiple analytical frameworks i.e., Fairclough's three-dimensional model and Wodak's Discourse-historical Approach, this study is limited to Van Dijk's Sociocognitive model. This restriction helps in a targeted assessment of in-group and out-group fabrication. And it omits explicative lenses that may uncover different dimensions of media discourse.

Following that, rather than political figures, establishments, media developers, this study concentrates on discursive configuration of nation-states. Though political figures such as presidents and government officials pop up in the measurements, their contribution in the representation of their nations is analyzed. This parameter validates that the investigation persists aligned with the primary objective of examining national identity configuration.

Eventually, as the research diagnoses ideological figures in CNN's narrative, it does not attempt to calculate deliberately bias or claim premediated advocacy by media professionals. Rather than motivations, this research remains focused on discourse structures, in conformity with Critical Discourse Studies core concepts. Therefore, interpretations are based on linguistic evidence rather than assumptions about journalistic intent.

QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

Analytical Framework

The analysis draws on Van Dijk's Discourse–Cognition–Society model, which treats discourse as filtered through mental representations shaped by ideology and social power relations. The framework facilitates the examination of Referential strategies (how actors are named and categorized), Projective strategies (how attributes are assigned to actors), Agency patterns (who is represented as acting), Evaluative framing (positive or negative judgment) and Framing devices (conflict, security, morality). Van Dijk's Ideological Square framework is employed to analyze each excerpt how CNN International emphasizes "our" (in-group) positive aspects

and "their" (out-group) negative aspects, and de-emphasizes "their" positive aspects and "our" negative aspects. In this study the in-group consists of Ukraine, the United States, NATO, and European allies while the out-group consists of Russia and its allied actors.

Excerpt (Article 1)

"The point of the highly choreographed meeting between Putin and his top military brass was to show the world that Russia is winning in Ukraine."

Analysis

Russia is represented as manipulative (out group). The country Russia in the phrase *"highly choreographed"* recommends artificiality and propaganda. The News CNN establishes Russia as not truthful but speculative while Ukraine (in-group) is sound and war effected.

The word *"Choreographed" is highlighting dishonesty.* Russia's claim is framed as not factual but based on speculation.

Moreover, Russia is portrayed as deceptive and authoritarian. On the other side Western allies and Ukraine are implicitly lucid and truthful.

Excerpt (Article 2)

"Zelensky is meeting with European leaders in London, in a show of solidarity..."

Analysis

European countries and Ukraine (in-group) are outlined as cooperative and united. The phrase *"show of solidarity"* represents an identity as a whole. It has highlighted that both are connected to a single identity.

The Russia is backgrounded as the cause of uncertainty, however, the Kremlin is portrayed as praising America's harsher posture.

"Solidarity" showing Ukraine and allies as positive and united. President of Ukraine Zelensky is highlighted as diplomatic and working for collaborative peace. West collectively working for peace and stability.

Excerpt (Article 3)

"Putin told reporters his country intends to seize Ukraine's eastern Donbas region by any means."

Analysis

In the very statement Russia (out group) is shown as an imperialist and hostile. The phrase *"by any means"* shows cruelty and disregard for international law.: *"intends" modal verb indicates* signals hostile futuristic plans. The word *"Seize" shows illegality of the actions by the Russia and allies forces. Russia is identified as a power oriented and brutal in their stances.*

Excerpt (Article 4)

"Ukraine dismissed what it said were 'loud statements' by Moscow aimed at influencing negotiations."

Analysis

The war effected Ukraine is highlighted as logical (in group) that is resisting the Moscow operations to hindrance the peace negotiations. Russia on the other hand is influencing the talks towards war while Ukraine is highlighted as critical and practical towards peace. Russia is only limited to talks (Out-group) only that exaggerates. The word *noise* is used as a metaphor just for hollow actions by Russian side.

Russia is framed as using power and pressure tactics. (Out-group)

Excerpt (Article 5)

"Russia launched its largest barrage of drones and missiles... killing at least three people."

Analysis

Russia (out group) launching of countless drones and missiles are indicating aggressiveness on the part of Russia. The powerful country is leading the war tactics to damage the peaceful country and its people. It is targeting civilians and fragile targets in the territory of Ukraine.

While on the other hand Ukraine and USA (in group) allies are portrayed as peace makers and constructive in their approach. They are trying their level best to maintain peace and stability in the region.

Phrase *"largest barrage of missiles and drones"* indicating the brutality and aggression by the Russia. On the other hand, Ukraine and allies are shown as moral and peaceful actors.

Excerpt (Article 6)

"Trump said there was a 'good chance' we can make a deal."

Analysis

USA is seeking peace, not a war. Urging for peaceful deal. President Trump is solving the war problem. It highlights that USA with Ukraine and allies are steering towards dialogues process instead of war. Their approach is based empirical evidences of peace rather than holistic and destructive. The word *"good chance"* indicates that USA is an active mediator and participant for the long due peace process.

Contrary to this, the Russia is counted as necessary but problematic in the way of peace and dialogues process. It has portrayed as an obstacle that needs management in peace process.

Excerpt (Article 7)

"Another reminder to Russia that all its enterprises working for the war are legitimate targets."

Analysis

Ukraine (in-group) war attacks are justified as it is the victim of Russian attacks. it is strategically justified and has the right to respond the attacks with full power to bring stability and power balance in the region. The attacks are rationalized. It is just defending its territory and sovereignty.

The word *"legitimate targets"* justifies morality of the targets. While Russia is framed as a conflict creator and war monger.

Russia (out-group) is on the war side by consecutively attacking the Ukraine. It has the responsibility of all the war disaster that compelled Ukraine to respond with attacks and to maintain the peace.

Excerpt (Article 8)

"The proposal called for security guarantees for Ukraine in line with NATO's Article 5."

Analysis

It shows that Ukraine along NATO (in-group) allies are the protectors of peace. They are portrayed as security provider. Through this framing strategy they are an authority to establish NATO legitimacy and to mobilize it. They are propagating it for sake of necessity, reinforcing in group identity. It is defensive and mandatory amid threat.

Conversely, the Russia is indicated as threat, a security threat to the peace and aggressive. This portrayal function as the legitimacy of the European defense and their responded strikes on the Russia. It highlights that these actions are defensive and mandatory to normalize the situation of geopolitical order. The language, overall plays a significant role in shaping identities of the nations as in group and out group actors.

Excerpt (Article 9)

"The SBU continues to take active measures to reduce oil dollar revenues to the Russian budget."

Analysis

The relation between power and identity is prominent through these lines that how these relations are constructed through the use of language. Through the language, Ukraine (in-group) is depicted having rational, effective and strategic approach towards the peace. It has

positioned as competent and legitimate actor in the conflict. It elevates Ukraine morally and strategically.

On the other hand, Russia has delegitimized in the discourse. A clear distinction has made between an aggressor and peaceful defender. It reinforces this framing, especially using the word *economic warfare.*

The usage of active verbs like "*continues"* and "*reduce"* highlight agency and ongoing process of resistance and suggesting the Ukraine consistent efforts to weaken the economy of Russia.

Excerpt (Article 10)

"Pro-Russian hacking groups have targeted unsecured industrial computers."

Analysis

Russia is linked with sabotaging and cybercrime as an out-group actor. It is discursive framing by which Russia is associated with digital criminal activities positioned as a criminal and hostile internationally which destroy peace in the region through these kinds of heinous activities. Repeatedly linking of Russia to illegal cyber activities indicates Russia as assign of insecurity and instability. The discourse broadly justifies the defensive measures taken by the Ukraine, USA and allies. It is aggressive versus victim and justifying security responses.

While, the other side, USA, Ukraine and allies (out- group) stated as law abiding and world peace protector. Moreover, the FBI quotations make it strengthen to make this framing through voice of expertise institution. It highlights the moral superiority of USA, Ukraine and allies' protection and defense system.

Excerpt (Article 11)

"Several explosions were reported throughout Ukraine before the end of Russia's proposed ceasefire."

Analysis

It undermines Russia's credibility towards peace that explosion happened before the ceasefire talks. It prominently contradicts the notion of peace from Russia and sabotage the talks amid crisis. Through temporal framing strategy, Russia is depicted as deceptive (out- group). It delegitimizes Russia stance and reveals it just a notion, not a peace move. however, Ukraine (in- group) is shown as vulnerable, in search of peace seeking and victim of war. The allies, USA and other are supporting the great cause of peace and stability in the region. It justifies their moral legitimacy to defend the victim.

Excerpt (Article 12)

"Kyiv dismissed Putin's call for a ceasefire as 'hypocrisy' and 'propaganda.'"

Analysis

The use of evaluative term *"propaganda, "*and *"hypocrisy "*the news reported Ukraine as a powerful voice. The choices of words morally undermine Russia and propagates Ukrainian cause of peace and maturity in the time of crisis. Russia stance is politically motivated, rather than based on peace humanitarian causes. The news is labelling Russia as an invader while showing Ukraine as a peace seeker and mature.

Excerpt (Article 13)

"We are playing for Ukraine."

Analysis

The usage of inclusive pronoun *"we"* develops a joint identity between the Ukrainian nation and the football players. Playing football is a collective effort to symbolizes unity against war and a joint pillar to the Ukrainian nations. It also highlights the solidarity and empathy of western countries towards Ukraine (in- group). It is not only fighting as a military force but a moral force for dignity. It legitimizes Ukraine ideological positioning against Russia (out-group).

Excerpt (Article 14)

"Western allies need to 'step up' military support for Ukraine."

Analysis

Phrase *"need to step up* "functioning as a moral directive of the western countries towards peace against war and position the Ukraine and allies as an ethical and responsible. It justifies the action of western nation towards Russia. Through the Van Dijk's socio -cognitive framework Russia is portrayed as and Ukraine, USA and allies are indicated as in-group.

Excerpt (Article 15)

"At least 11 people were killed across Ukraine after Moscow fired 70 missiles."

Analysis

The numbers *"70 missiles"* are intensifying the narratives of Ukraine as a victim and foreground the civilian casualties. The syntactic structure rotates itself around the suffering of war by Ukraine nation. However, it delegitimizes Russian narratives and indicates them as war-seeking through power. It emphasizes negative actions by out-group.

Excerpt (Article 16)

"Poland plans to send 60 more modern battle tanks to Ukraine."

Analysis

The word *"plans"* as a an actional verb signals determination and commitment, while usage of word "modern" characterizes technological and responsibility superiority. However, Poland as an ally and her agency is foregrounded. Presented it as moral actor and peace-seeking country. Here, the CNN international news outlet constructs Ukraine allies as an active and supportive in-group, demonstrating unity and solidarity with Ukraine through supporting them with military aid. CNN international news outlet frame Ukraine allies as protectives (in-group), rather than directly taking part into the conflicts. It propagates them as responsible and helpful in the disasters.

Excerpt (Article 17)

"EU accuses Russia of 'indiscriminate attacks' against civilians."

Analysis

By quoting European Union (EU), the CNN international news uses an institutional authority to legitimize the claim of European Union (EU). European Union (EU) reinforces that Russia (out-group) consecutive attacks on civilians are inhumane and aggressive. The phrase *"indiscriminate attacks"* intensifies moral disgrace and represents Russia as violating war-laws and humanitarian norms.

According to Van Dijk ideological square, it exemplifies, the positive aspects of Ukraine, Russia and allies. Whereas, on the other hand, it portrays negative aspects associated with Russia and allies.

FINDINGS

The analysis in the research reveals that CNN international news consistently polarized that aligns with Van Dijk's framework and ideological square. It follows a continuous pattern of construction of in – group and out-group division in the articles. It systematically made groups i.e., Ukraine, USA and allies are in-group actors whole Russia and supporting countries are out- group actors. The construction is made through different linguistic choices and strategic strategies.

The news outlet frequently portrays Ukraine, USA and allies through words, such as, "commitment" "support," "solidarity," "unity," and "defense," are repeatedly used to position and frame the western countries as a positive, united and peace-seeking in the region. For example, it reports that "European leaders are meeting Zelensky". It shows the collective efforts and wisdom of European leaders for solidarity and collaboration towards peace and stability and unity against aggression. It emphasizes as in-group portrays that unite them in one frame.

In the same way USA has portrayed as peace- seeker and protector. The statement by the president of USA that "we have a good chance to make a deal" shows strong commitment and solution-based leadership. The usage of ("we") an inclusive pronoun establishes the shared identity between CNN news and USA. The military support by the USA and western countries has framed as ethical and peace- seeking responsibility.

Contrary to this, Russia has framed as an aggressor, deceptive and violent through words like "hypocrisy" "barrage," "indiscriminate attacks," and "seize,". It is a moral blame to Russia. The CNN news frequently foregrounds the causalities, and emphasizes on Russian attacks i.e., "killing at least 11 people" and "70 missiles fired". This is clearly demonstrating out-group representation. It intensifies the actions a perception of the audience towards Russia as brutal and aggressive.

Moreover, it highlights Russia only propagates for peace but continues war. It reports explosions in Ukraine amid peace talks. It delegitimizes Russia statements ad narratives while covering Ukraine, USA and allies.

In the same context, it raises institutional voices such as NATO, EU and USA officials validate framing. The morality is reinforced through aforesaid authoritative and powerful voices. The strategies are aligned with Critical Discourse Analysis Van Dijk's framework that talks about power production, and how powerful institutions shape public opinion.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study, academically shall contribute in the field of Critical Discourse Studies by extending Van Dijk's socio-cognitive framework in contemporary war reporting. It holds significant social, political and academic values. This research demonstrates how CNN's coverage of Russia and Ukraine war establishes nations identities, how media discourse shapes ideological production in media discourse.

The research, socially promotes media awareness and literacy in the contemporary world. Audience often consumes news and reporting uncritically where media world is load with information. It exposes language to the audience that how media shapes perception through their reporting. It helps to recognize different narratives and ideological biases.

Furthermore, politically it unmasks in-group and out-group through examining the language and strategies that how western media power shapes global opinion. It raises voice about marginalization and legitimization of power through discursive strategies.

Conclusively, the study serves as a pathway for future research. Researchers can modify and extend the same analysis to the other news outlets, time periods and different international conflicts. Comparative studies between non- western and western media would further shed light on ideological differences in war reporting.

QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

This data represents the frequencies, how nations are represented as part of in-group, Ukraine, USA and allies. While Russia and allies are presented as part of out-group.

The number of frequencies is extracted by using Micro Soft Excel software (version 2024).

In-group Nations/ Actors	Frequency	Out-group Nations/ Actors	Frequency
Ukraine / Ukrainian	54	Russia / Russian / Moscow	43
United States / US / America	39	President Vladimir Putin	22
President Zelensky	21	Russian military forces	8

Europe / European / EU	18	Kremlin	13
President Trump	15	Russian cyber hackers	9
NATO	8	Russian allies / pro-Russian groups	7
Western allies	5	Russian energy infrastructure / oil	9
Britain United Kingdom /	6	Shadow fleet (Russia-linked)	5
Total Out-group References	**166**	**Total Out-group References**	**116**

Conclusion

The lack of strategic values in coverage of US military actions is another important aspect of CNN's discourse. CNN's generally emphasized on democracy and human rights but these are ignored when the focus shifts to USA military interventions.

Conversely, military maneuvers are described through the use of positive language such as "successes" and "gains," and are rightful as legal defensive measures taken to protect allied forces. This fastidious exclusion illustrates Van Dijk's principle of emphasizing positive aspects of in-group and de-emphasizing negative aspects of the out-group.

Through evading moral scrutiny of USA military supremacy, CNN safeguards the USA from critique and normalizes intercession as valid and legitimate.

This research uncovers and examines CNN's far-reaching broadcasting, putting forward a misalignment between audience demographics and discursive priorities. The marginalization of specific nations and empowerment of powerful nations are embedded within CNN's media narratives. United States of America and Ukraine are granted agency, voice and visibility, while Russia remains marginal in CNN's media discourse.

The powerful nations dominate international media narratives while outlying areas are silenced, this shows the media imperialism. Consequently, CNN's discursive strategies play an important role in framing ideological divisions and regenerates power structures in the world.

Aggregately, the findings of this study reveal that CNN's news discourse is not only illustrative but also declarative. USA diplomatic policy objectives are perfectly aligned with the meanings generated by CNN's news narratives. Albeit CNN international news outlet presents itself as a neutral news agency but this research reveals that it works as diplomacy tool.

The CNN international news impacts international audiences, political figures and governments, and illustrates the worldly events through US ideological eye. This research substantiates the concept that information and news outlets play an important role in struggle for power in the world and does not remain an objective source of news.

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