

## HUNGARIAN LANGUAGE MEDIA IN ROMANIA: SETTING MINORITY PERCEPTIONS OF RUSSIA'S WAR AGAINST UKRAINE

Angela-Karina AVĂDĂNEI\*, Adrian LESENCIUC\*\*.\*

\*"Mihai Viteazul" National Intelligence Academy, Bucharest, Romania (avadanei.karina@animv.eu)

\*\*"Henri Coandă" Air Force Academy, Braşov, Romania (adrian.lesenciu@afahc.ro)

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**Abstract:** *This paper studies the framing of Russia's war against Ukraine in Hungarian language online media in Romania. It considers the research of various authors and organizations who described the Hungarian language media system in Romania as subject to the Hungarian Government's influence, due to the centralized media ownership and financing structure, but also as supporting ethnic parallelism. As recent surveys show the Hungarian ethnic minority in Romania is less critical towards Russia's aggression of Ukraine, in contrast to the Romanian majority, our research objective is to study how the war in Ukraine was presented to the Hungarian minority. We conduct a content analysis of news published between May 2024 – January 2025, to problematize on the potential of the media to shape the public perceptions of its consumers.*

**Keywords:** *media, Hungarian ethnic minority, Russo-Ukrainian war, public perceptions*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was condemned by the Western society, with NATO and EU leaders expressing firm stances against the aggressor and reiterating over the course of the conflict their support for Ukraine. This support was followed by practical measures across various instruments of power, as NATO and EU member states, conducted efforts to help Ukraine to resist the invasion, and deter Russia.

A full-scale war in Europe was unimagined and it generally shocked public opinion across most European and transatlantic states, mobilizing decision makers to react promptly in support of Ukraine. The level of support and involvement of the states differed, however, from the very beginning, both in terms of taking practical measures (like imposing sanctions against Russia, or cutting previous deals), but also in the leaders' public discourses about the war, with Hungary being considered an outlier in EU, due to its unpopular stances.

The securitization framework referring to the discursive representation of threats that lead to policy measures, proposed by scholars associated with the Copenhagen School [1], provides some clarity on the Hungarian Governments' approach towards the military aggression.

Studying the discourses of the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his apparatus with regards to the Russia-Ukraine war, shortly before the invasion, and in the first months of the war (1 January – 3 April 2022), to describe Hungarian security identity

in the context of the confrontation, Göransson highlights [2], among others, that the war was depicted as an impersonal force, with scarce accusations of Russia. The Hungarian government promoted a “Hungary first” discourse, responsible for itself and its population, including Hungarians leaving in neighboring nations, especially those in Transcarpathia, with no moral obligations for helping Ukraine. Hungarian political leaders discursively constructed the threat posed to their national security in the changing geopolitical environment by victimizing Hungary and promoting the following themes, as the conflict escalated: Hungary as a Central European state risks being a victim in a conflagration between the West and the East; Ethnic Hungarians in Ukraine might be subjected to restrictive Ukrainian minority policy; Hungary will not let itself drift/be drawn into the conflict. While “othering” the West and East, Ukraine (in relation with minority policies) or its political opposition, the Hungarian Government suggested that Hungary is ready to respond together with its allies to a military threat, but more is needed to be done in order to ensure economic and energy security. Thus, measures such as imposing sanctions (proposed by the West and the political opposition) or terminating the contract with Russia for building the Paks II nuclear power plant (proposed by the political oppositions), were portrayed as “immediate dangers” that would draw Hungary into war, even if they did ultimately agree with different sets of sanctions.

Hungarians’ public perceptions appear to be generally aligned with the stances expressed by the Government. In November 2023 national consultations, it resulted that 69% of the population was against providing support to Ukraine, until Hungary receives the EU funds it is allegedly entitled to, while 74% were against financing Ukraine’s arming [3]. In another survey from October 2024, the number of Hungarian respondents who reported negative perceptions of Russia decreased. Among FIDESZ voters, 41% considered Russia’s activities an aggression, while 44% believed that Russia started the war to defend itself [4]. Another Telex survey [5] showed that the majority of Hungarians (61%) opposed Ukraine’s EU membership in 2024, but in April 2025 the results of another survey [6] showed that the opinions were more polarized. While 47% of respondents agreed with Ukraine’s accession to EU, 46% were against. Hungary announced a referendum on the topic, whose results are to be announced in the summer of 2025. Meanwhile, the FIDESZ Government sent letters to its citizens, explaining the alleged drawbacks for Hungary and its citizens if Ukraine joins EU, emphasizing severe economic issues for families, farmers, but also for security and the labor market [7].

Hungary’s policies towards the Hungarian minorities in neighboring states are widely known as having strengthened since FIDESZ took office in 2010, with some of the measures causing dissatisfaction among “host” states, such as the possibility for Hungarians minority communities to acquire Hungarian citizenship. The investments in kin communities abroad have also been widely common ever since. Hungary considers itself the guardian of Hungarian ethnics abroad, which are considered a part of the “Hungarian political nation” [8] that are expected to contribute to language and culture preservation. As we argued previously, Hungary achieves the “virtual unification” of the “Hungarian political nation” by implementing a “soft power” approach, which is most visible, in Romania’s case, through investments in various sectors, one of the most questionable being the Hungarian language media system [9]. In Romania, Viktor Orbán is highly appreciated in the Hungarian minority community, an opinion poll in 2020 showing that 92% of Hungarians in Covasna (Hungarian majority county in Romania) reported confidence and great confidence in the political leader [10]. Consequently, the Hungarian community members’ consistent stances with the Hungarian Prime Minister, even on the topic of Russia’s war against Ukraine, should not come as a surprise.

In the latest war-related polls with the Hungarian community in Romania, it resulted that 49% of Hungarians (by contrast to 44% in 2022) believed that the war was provoked by Ukraine, because it strengthened relations with NATO. In the Romanian society only 21% expressed agreement on the matter in 2024. Similarly, while 46% of Romanians believed that Russia is the aggressor in 2024 (also decreasing by contrast to 2022), only 19% Hungarians in Transylvania shared the same opinion [11]. Frequently such results are interpreted in the Romanian media landscape as a result of the minorities' consumption of Hungarian government-controlled media.

According to Kiss [12], the Hungarian minority media system in Romania supports "ethnic parallelism" which translates in a lack of participation of the minority members to the public sphere in Romania, as they live in the state but more connected to Hungary. The perspectives presented in Hungarian online media in Romania lack pluralism of perspectives due to the concentration of the media. This favors the Hungarian Government's efforts to frame the reality of the Hungarian community.

The most popular Hungarian news websites in Romania, belong either to the FIDESZ' sponsored Association of the Transylvanian Media Space (ATMS) or are affiliated with the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (DAHR). If prior to 2011 the relation of FIDESZ and DAHR has known some tensed episodes, reportedly a "non-aggression pact" was established between the political parties [13], which resulted in favorable media coverages of both.

Guided by the objective to problematize on the potential of Hungarian-language online media in Romania to shape the perceptions of the Hungarian minority community in Romania, in relation with the war in Ukraine, we conducted a content analysis of the media coverages, with the purpose to investigate the framing of the war and involved parties (belligerents, relevant actors supporting Ukraine).

## 2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

**2.1 Theoretical approach and framework.** The analysis of the media content as a research method is usually used as follows: as an independent method; in research designs that seek to explore the influence over the contents; and in studies that seek to analyze media effects [14]. Our research corresponds with the last approach, as we seek to problematize on the influence that the media coverage about Russia's aggression of Ukraine has on its consumers.

In analyzing the potential of mass media to shape public opinion, we adhere to Georg Gebner's cultivation model, that acknowledges both the power of the media and the selectiveness of individuals in processing contents [15]. This implies that meaning is constructed in accordance with the audience's culture.

Considering the main approaches of media discourse analysis, we considered the analysis of media framing as adequate to our research purpose. According to Cotter [16], the concepts of framing and narrative, familiar to discourse analysts, are increasingly more used by media studies scholars. Discourse analysis of (news) media has three components: the textual dimension (the story materialized in spoken, written or visually represented text), the process of news production and its alignment to audiences. As we are interested to study the representations of the war in Ukraine in the media, our research refers to the analysis of the textual dimension of the media. Most linguists studied the text from two vantage points: the first consisted of analyzing the discourse structure and its linguistic function, while the second consisted of studying the impact of the discourse that "bears ideology".

The concept of framing introduced by Goffman [17], was a valuable contribution to the first vantage point, according to Cotter [16], which seeks to provide insights for the study of the structure, function and effects of the text, characterizing the very important role of the media in shaping public discourse.

The framing theory, initially proposed by Gaye Tuchman who compared frames with a window to see the world [18], offers an operational model for studying media framing, by considering Entman's approach [19]. For the theorist, **to frame means to select certain aspects of the perceived reality and to make them salient in the communicating text**, so that **they convey a certain problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation or remedy suggestion**. Entman further details that the functions of frames in a text are either to define problems (determine what an agent does, with the cost and benefits involved, measured by common cultural values) diagnose causes (identify the forces that cause problems); make moral evaluations (evaluate the causal agents and their effects) or suggest remedies (offer and justify problem treatments). While Entman recognizes that frames are common in more elements of the communication process, he explains that texts contain frames that represent reality which are manifest through the presence or sometimes absence of certain words, sentences, phrases or stereotypical images which compose judgement clusters. However, ultimately, the presence of frames in a text is not a guarantee they will influence the audiences' thinking, as salience is a product of the interaction between the text and the receiver.

Another relevant contribution of framing is that it offers an operational definition for understanding the notion of dominant understanding of a text. Entman argues that the dominant understanding is the problem interpretation, cause, evaluation or remedy which has the highest chance of being observed, processed and accepted by most people, and so, naming the dominant content is equivalent to naming the frame suggested in a text [19]. For the theorist, the study of mass communication also benefits from an explicit and common understanding of the concept of frames. In content analysis that seeks to understand the textual dimension of the media discourse, the main task should be to identify and describe the frame. By using Entman's theory we can investigate the salient frames about the war in Ukraine in the discourse of (news) media.

**2.2 Type of research and research design.** For the purpose of our analysis that seeks to understand the dominant contents promoted by Hungarian language online media in Romania on the topic of Russia's aggression of Ukraine, we operationalized the following research question "What are the dominant contents promoted by Hungarian language online media in Romania with regards to Russia's aggression of Ukraine?", establishing the following study variables: frequency of news related to the topic, communicator, media objectivity and pre-eminent frame (as described by Entman's framing theory).

To conduct the analysis with a relevant body of articles, we conducted a multilevel sampling. The first level consisted of selecting relevant media sources – Hungarian language news websites in Romania by their popularity.

The selection of news websites by their popularity was made by the number of unique users in the month of April 2024 as tracked by Semrush – a digital marketing portal. The majority of the top listed websites were those known to be somehow connected or affiliated to the Hungarian FIDESZ Government, or to the major Hungarian political party in Romania – DAHR. For the websites affiliated with the latter, it is still common to receive funding from Hungary. From the list of monitored channels we chose to neglect three publications known as independent (atlatszo.ro, transtelex.ro and uh.ro), given their publishing of investigations that were critical towards the political control over Hungarian media. We were left thus with ten news portals with over 9000 unique viewers per month

at the date of the selection (szekelyhon.ro, maszol.ro, kronikaonline.ro, 3szek.ro, szatmar.ro, e-nepujsag.ro, hirmondo.ro, hargitanepi.ro, foter.ro, erdon.ro) as listed in the figure below (Fig. 1).

No.	News website	Addressability	Unique visitors/ April 2024 (Semrush)	Affiliation
1.	szekelyhon.ro	regional (Covasna, Harghita, Mureş counties)	411820	Hungarian Government ASMT
2.	maszol.ro	national	215116	RMDSZ Progress Foundation
3.	kronikaonline.ro	national	79675	Hungarian Government ASMT
4.	3szek.ro	local (Covasna county)	72218	Editorial staff (It promotes however on the portal websites that are part of ASMT conglomerate)
5.	szatmar.ro	local (Satu Mare county)	37049	RMDSZ Communitas Foundation
6.	e-nepujsag.ro	local (Mureş county)	17915	RMDSZ Communitas Foundation and supported by the Hungarian Government through The Bethlen Gábor fund
7.	hirmondo.ro	local (Covasna county)	13348	Hungarian Government ASMT
8.	hargitanepi.ro	local (Harghita county)	11660	Harghita County Council
9.	foter.ro	national	9502	Hungarian Government ASMT
10.	erdon.ro	local (Bihar county)	9208	Inform Media, owned by an investor that is close to the Hungarian Government

**FIG.1** First level sampling (popular websites)

The second level consisted of collecting the news by using as a sampling model the “constructed week”. According to Hester and Dougall [20], this model of sampling is more efficient than random sampling or consecutive day sampling, assuming that there is a systemic or cyclic variation of news, depending on the day of the week. While these authors argued that for a study population comprised of six months of Yahoo!News, two constructed weeks are sufficient for content analysis due to cyclical variations, in our research design, where we were interested in the framing of a specific topic in the news and its frequency, we studied the articles published over a period of almost eight months (26 May 2024 – 29 January 2025), by constructing 4 weeks and 4 days (news published over 32 days in total), with a sampling interval of 8 days (Fig. 2).

Month Day	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February
Monday		3-Jun-24	29-Jul-24		23-Sep-24		18-Nov-24		13-Jan-25	
Tuesday		11-Jun-24		6-Aug-24		1-Oct-24	26-Nov-24		21-Jan-25	
Wednesday		19-Jun-24		14-Aug-24		9-Oct-24		04-Dec-24	29-Jan-25	
Thursday		27-Jun-24		22-Aug-24		17-Oct-24		12-Dec-24		06-Feb-25
Friday			5-Jul-24	30-Aug-24		25-Oct-24		20-Dec-24		14-Feb-25
Saturday			13-Jul-24		7-Sep-24		02-Nov-24	28-Dec-24		22-Feb-25
Sunday	26-May-24		21-Jul-24		15-Sep-24		10-Nov-24		05-Jan-25	

**FIG.2** Sampling structure by “constructed week” model

We collected the news both by using Feedly news aggregator and manually for the websites that were not compatible with it. This solution was less costly than the alternative represented by automated brand marketing tools which collect news (or mentions) based on key words. The latter solution would have allowed us to collect more news published during the eight months period that we covered, specifically on the topic of interest, but would have lacked one essential condition of research – replicability.

The research universe is represented by the total number of articles published by the news outlets during the study period, in the 32 days included in the sampling plan. We observed the variables in the published articles by manually analyzing the texts published in relation to the topic.

### **3. MEDIA FRAMING OF RUSSIA'S WAR OF AGGRESION AGAINST UKRAINE**

**3.1 Frequency of war-related articles.** The number of articles collected during the 32 monitored days, from the ten selected news websites, totalled 6160 news. We excluded the collection of sports and weather news, which are usually in dedicated sections on news websites, considering that we did not expect to find relevant coverage about the studied topic there. Out of the total number of collected articles, we selected primarily the titles that appeared to be referring to the research topic, which made up 220 articles. As the number shows, the topic of Russia's war against Ukraine has a low frequency in the news publishers' agenda. The highest number of relevant articles was published by erdon.ro website, which functions partly as a news aggregator, reposting news both from Hungary and Romania. As pointed on the media portal, daily developments in relation with the war, are selected from a selection of news published by the Hungarian media agency MTI, and the Hungarian media portals Magyar Nemzet, Mandiner and Origo. Both erdon.ro and the other monitored websites published both original and re-distributed contents from other news assets in Romania and Hungary.

**3.2 Media objectivity.** In most articles, the news websites covered the Russia-Ukraine war objectively, with scarce subjective interpretations with regards to the war or the concerned parties. However, as the framing theory states, despite apparent objective reporting, the news can still make salient a certain dominant content, by promoting a certain problem statement, moral evaluation, causal interpretation or suggest a remedy [19]. In the context of our study, the frames were most often identified in the quotes from communicators or paraphrases of the communicators' perspectives that were prioritized.

**3.3 Communicator.** The most active communicators quoted in media coverages about the war were the political leaders. As a significant part of the news referred to the Hungarian Government's perspective about the conflict, the most quoted leaders were the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, followed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs Péter Szijjártó, and, to a lesser extent, other Hungarian Government representatives. In another set of articles that did not refer to Hungary's perspective but were instead coverages of the war-related developments, the most quoted communicators were the president of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, Russia's president Vladimir Putin, but also other military/ diplomatic representatives of the belligerent states. From the states supporting Ukraine, the most quoted communicators were US representatives, including the former US president Joe Biden, and in specific instances European leaders, as certain support measures for Ukraine were announced. The perspective of Romanian leaders about the war had a low media coverage, with the former president Klaus Iohannis being the one quoted on most related mentions.

**3.4 Pre-eminent framing of the war and of the parties involved.** The war-related media coverage in the collected sample can be grouped in a few broad categories, with identifiable frames for each, as follows: Hungary's political approach/ vision about the war; EU & US support for Ukraine; Belligerent's perspectives of the war and battlefield developments.

**a. Hungary's political approach/ vision about the war**

In this category we have grouped an important number of news (73 articles), as Hungary likely sought to legitimize its approach towards the war and warring parties. With reference to Göransson's research [2], who studied the representation of Hungary's security identity as resulted from Hungarian government representative's speeches at the beginning of the full-scale war, we identified through frame analysis in news articles how Hungarian perspectives were presented in relation with the war itself, belligerent parties, partner states and organizations supporting Ukraine. In this regard, the following frames were salient:

- **The Hungarian Prime Minister is the only one who can avoid the war upon Hungarians:** This problem statement was particularly promoted during the European Parliament (EP) elections campaign, with the suggested remedy for Hungarians to "say yes to peace", by voting Orbán (and FIDESZ). A related frame was the one that presented Hungarian leaders responsible to keep Hungarians out of war.

- **The Hungarian Prime Minister is on a mission for peace:** This frame was several times presented in association with the frame that there is a "war psychosis" in Brussels [21]. Referring to Campbell's [22] definition of "othering" (articulate "other" as a threat to define own security identity) and Göransson's observations that processes of "othering" were used by the Hungarian Government at the beginning of the war to describe Hungary as a Central European country, situated between Russia and "the West", exposed to the effects of policies and actions of the parties in Ukraine [2], it was interesting to note how "othering" processes continued. In the news articles included in our sample, Orbán and his apparatus did not antagonize any partner state in particular, "othering" Brussels instead, understood as the EU block overall which is in the wrong side of history, and isolated in the United Nations [23]. Viktor Orbán even suggested that Brussels's approach could lead to the Third World War which Hungary fights to avoid, given its history and understanding of the consequences. Another problem statement about Brussels was that it is trying to silence those who support peace: under this frame, FIDESZ-KDNP also accused EU of sanctioning Hungary on its immigration policies, because it is against war. In some instances, Hungary also legitimized the Russian narrative that Ukraine is just a proxy in the war between the collective West and Russia, with Péter Szijjártó stating that **the West wants to fight until the last remaining Ukrainian youth** [24].

- **The Hungarian political opposition is pro-war "háborúpárti":** This frame, making a moral evaluation of the opposition, was also part of the FIDESZ EP campaign, with billboards stating "Stop háború. Június 9. Csak a FIDESZ" ("Stop war. June 9. Only FIDESZ.") while depicting the faces of political opposition leaders and George Soros. The Hungarian Government frequently antagonized the opposition with this name-calling technique.

- **Hungary is pro-peace:** was another frequent moral evaluation frame invoked, in contrast to Brussels. It was vaguely explained how this alleged pro-peace path could be put into practice by the belligerents besides referring to peace talks. According to the Hungarian Government representatives' stances there are no solutions for war on the battlefield. When further developing what is at stake if the war continues, it is notable that Hungary avoids referring to wins/ losses for the parties and explains instead that the war has created enough damage for the whole world: energy prices increase, inflation and affected food security.

As a partner supporting this “pro-peace” position, from the EU block, Slovakia was seldom mentioned, given the known friendship of the two Prime Ministers. Such an example was the Slovakian Prime Minister’s, Robert Fico, accusations towards Ukraine that even if they restrict petroleum exports from Russia his state will not change its pro-peace approach [25].

- In relation with Ukraine, the pre-eminent problem statement was that **Ukraine does not recognize minority rights**, a frame reiterated in the context of the topic of EU accession. Another contentious issue with Hungary referred to the fact that Ukraine is blackmailing Hungary for preventing arms delivery, by blocking energy supply (to both EU “pro-peace” states Hungary and Slovakia). In return, **Hungary is presented as helping Ukraine with the largest humanitarian action in its history** [26]. Moreover, following Hungary’s take-over of the rotational presidency of EU Council, Viktor Orbán went on a visit to Russian President V. Putin, allegedly as a peace negotiator without consulting with EU partners or Ukraine. The accompanying frame in this case was that **Hungary can act as a peace negotiator**. In relation with Ukraine’s request to join NATO, Orbán also clearly presented this as dragging NATO into war with Russia.

#### **b. EU and US support for Ukraine**

The monitored websites published constantly neutral news with regards to the military and financial support for Ukraine to resist war. Even if such news were narrated rather in an impersonal and informative manner, they do support legitimizing the Hungarian official perspective that **money and military equipment from the West serve Ukraine to continue the war**. We exemplify by the following:

- “Pentagon: the United States will send another arms shipment worth a quarter billion dollars to Ukraine” [27].

- “...it is essential to continue supporting Ukrainians for as long as necessary to guarantee the defense and security of the country and the entire continent”, as stated in the official statement of the French President, Emmanuel Macron [28].

In contrast to the articulation of Hungarian Government’s leaders’ vision with regards to the war, there were significantly fewer contents where the Romanian political leadership presented perspectives on the war itself, the belligerents or about cooperation with partners on tackling war-related challenges. The identified frames were the following:

- **Romania is a safe state that will not be attacked by Russia** (a problem statement by the Romanian Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu): While the frame likely sought to reassure the domestic audience, it is observable how, by contrast to Hungary’s political leaders’, in Romania the aggressor is portrayed as being Russia. Similarly, the Romanian President Klaus Iohannis referred to **Russia as the biggest risk for European security**.

- **Romania supports Ukraine**: this was salient mostly in news about the Patriot air defence system that was given to Ukraine, and training of pilots, even if the first issue was covered together with the disagreements on the matter.

#### **c. Belligerent’s perspectives of the war and battlefield developments**

Another set of articles consisted of perspectives by the Ukrainian and Russian side with regards to the war. Part of these articles are political statements especially by the Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky and the Russian president Vladimir Putin, and another set consists of battlefield developments where it resulted that both states did damage to each other, and that their actions were both offensive and defensive.

In news covering **Zelensky’s** quotes, oftentimes he is **presented as asking for more from the West to resist Russia**:

- “There is no nation that can stop such a war only by its own efforts. We need the participation of world leaders” [29].

- “Ukraine is grateful for Western partners’ support, but the aid is coming too late, which complicates the situation in the first line” [30].

- “Inviting Ukraine to NATO would be a step towards peace” [31].

In news quoting Russian officials’ perspectives, some dominant causal interpretation and problem definition frames were the following:

- **Inevitability of war escalation if the West continues arming Ukraine.**

- **Nuclear damage could be caused by Ukraine**, in the context of Putin’s accusations that the Ukrainian armed forces attacked Kursk nuclear power plant [32].

- **Russia is ready to negotiate for peace with the new US administration** [33].

The battlefield related news show that the actions conducted by the states cause similar damages to the other. In the covered period, this become particularly possible as Ukraine was allowed by the US to strike into Russian territory with Western weapons but also following the invasion in the Russian region of Kursk. Thus, Russian perspectives on damages suffered are also reported, showing with similar claims that Ukraine has when presenting damages or war crimes by Russia, as follows: “...soldiers of the Ukrainian army destroyed the Church of the Ascension of Christ (...). Houses were destroyed in the bombings, and civilians were killed or injured...” [34].

Across the three pre-established categories, the dominant frame types we identified, were the following: nine problem statement frames; two causal interpretations; two moral evaluations and one remedy suggestion (for the category of news covering “Hungary’s political approach/ vision about the war”); four problem statements and one moral evaluation (in news referring to EU and US support for Ukraine), four problem statements and two remedy suggestions (in news referring to the belligerents’ perspectives of the war and battlefield developments. The dominance of problem statement frames served in highlighting the approach and perspectives of the war, held by the parties.

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The Hungarian-language online media present the topic of Russia’s war against Ukraine in a reduced number of articles, with the Hungarian Government’s vision about the war making up a significant portion of the coverages (one third in our research sample).

As previously documented by Göransson [2] who studied the official Hungarian Government’s discourse at the beginning of the war, the conflict continued being presented as an impersonal force that must be stopped immediately, with no sensitivity on what this would mean for the aggressed state, Ukraine. The Hungarian officials’ discourses referred rather to the consequences of the war for the rest of the world, implicitly tangible security effects for their audiences, that are likely more appealing at an individual level as people can directly relate to them (price increases, energy and food security issues). The main Hungarian communicators, the Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Péter Szijjártó employed “othering” to Brussels, Ukraine and their political opposition for continuing the war and thus affecting Hungarians, whose security they are protecting, but they avoided making any accusations against Russia.

On the other hand, in neutral media coverage presenting related developments, the war was covered as a conflict between two belligerents who blame one another for damage and crimes.

Russia was, however, accused and named as the aggressor in statements by EU, NATO and quoted member states leaders, including Romania, whose discourses were not however as frequent and arguably, not adapted to the Hungarian audience. On the other hand, Russian communicators were also quoted with their perspective on the war and Westerners' involvement in it which could lead to escalations.

While the effects of media representations on public opinion are a result of the interaction between the text and the reader, we argue that Hungarian online media coverage of Russia's war against Ukraine has the potential to shape minority perceptions for several reasons. The first argument is that, as evident in Bourdieu's definition of symbolic power [35], the speaker's authority gives power to the statement he is articulating. Considering the high level of confidence that the Hungarian minority has in Viktor Orbán, his war-related perspectives are likely more appealing and convincing for the Hungarian minority.

A second argument goes back to the framing theory notion of dominant contents, which as resulted, abound in a specific problem statements of the conflict, where Ukraine does not appear as much as a victim and nor does Russia appear as much as an aggressor. Rather, the conflict is an impersonal force in the "neighborhood" that brings losses to everybody.

Arguably though, the Hungarian minority in Romania is subject to a complex information environment and not just the Hungarian-language online media. However, we argue that the media consumed by Hungarians (including media outlets in Hungary) set the discourse, from where sub-discourse in other channels, such as social media further emerge.

A third argument we believe may be found in the perception of the audiences with regards to the conflict, as fewer Hungarians perceive Russia as an aggressor, in contrast to the beginning of the conflict. Likely, the shock generated by a surprising full-scale war in 21st century in Europe, determined the public to name with more certainty the aggressor as the invader. However, as the war unfolded and conflicting narratives were built around it, the Hungarian community in Romania adhered to those that made more sense for their own culture and reality, as represented by the media and trusted opinion leaders.

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