



**LEBANESE MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR: AN ANALYSIS
OF SAWT BEIRUT INTERNATIONAL.**

BY

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT

I hereby declare that this research is the result of my original research and that no part of this has been presented for another degree in this university or any higher education institute. I further declare that, all sources that I have used or quoted has been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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CERTIFICATION BY SUPERVISOR

This dissertation has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Project Work laid down by the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC).

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ABSTRACT

The Russia-Ukraine war is an ongoing war between the two supposed sister nations, Russia and Ukraine. Erupting from Russia's "invasion" of Ukraine two years ago, the war only seems to be gaining a footing, drawing in the involvement of international actors, reshaping geopolitical alliances, and intensifying global tensions. As a result of the nature of the war, it has garnered extensive media coverage from the West who are mostly sympathizers of Ukraine, and some parts of Asia who are sympathizers of Russia. This research examined how the Lebanese media, Sawt Beirut International (SBI), covered the Russia-Ukraine war. The study investigates how Sawt Beirut International (SBI), a Lebanese media outlet, framed the Russia-Ukraine war using Tankard's framing mechanisms. While existing literature extensively examines Western and Asian media portrayals of the war, there is limited focus on how Middle Eastern outlets have covered the war, hence the reason for the study. This study employed frame analysis, realism and constructivist theories and adopted Tankard's framing mechanism in analyzing how SBI covered the Russia-Ukraine war. Only the online news website of SBI was examined for data collection. Forty (40) news stories were sampled for analysis using the purposive sampling method. A codebook was developed using five of Tankard's (2001) eleven parameters of framing mechanisms; Headlines and kickers, selection of quotes, leads, selection of sources or affiliations and photographs. The study found that Sawt Beirut International covered the war in two prevalent frames; the conflict frame and the sanctions frame.

KEYWORDS: Russia, Ukraine, Sawt Beirut International (SBI), Framing, Geopolitics, Realism, Constructivism, War.

DEDICATION

I dedicate my dissertation to God Almighty, my Father and King, for His love and faithfulness. I also dedicate the dissertation to my mother, Abena Theresa Fokuo Mensah and my brother, King David Banahene. I dedicate this work to the Lebanese community in Ghana for their immense support for my graduate studies.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The Russia-Ukraine war, which began in 2022 with Russia's military invasion into Ukraine, has become a defining 21st-century conflict, reshaping global media narratives. While Western media largely sympathize with Ukraine and some Asian media lean toward Russia, the framing by Middle Eastern outlets remains underexplored. This chapter sets the stage for the study, outlining the background, research problem, objectives, and significance of the research. It establishes the context within which this study is situated, highlighting the gap in the literature on Middle Eastern media coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war and demonstrating the importance of analyzing Sawt Beirut International's framing as a lens to understand broader media dynamics in the region.

1.1 Background to the study

Media reportage during times of conflict is very crucial as it can shape and influence public opinion as well as aggravate tensions. Thus, what the media reports on during conflicts not only informs the masses about the conflict but may lead to polarization, misrepresentation and sensationalism which could further make worse the impact of the conflict. According to Puddephat (2009), the media "often play key roles in conflict" (p. 4). Puddephat (2009) posits that these roles take two different and opposed forms. Livingston and Eachus (1995) also highlight the complexities between media coverage and conflict. According to Livingston and Eachus (1995), media coverage of a conflict has the ability to fuel animosity between conflicting parties or foster understanding and reconciliation. Thus, the mass media frequently exerts significant influence in contemporary conflicts, often adopting contrasting roles. On one hand, it may actively engage in the conflict, thereby potentially escalating violence and assuming responsibility for exacerbating the situation.

Carruthers (2000) describes this as the media being used as a weapon of war. Carruthers (2000) posits that through certain activities of the media such as selective reporting and propagandist messaging, the media assumes a state of being a weapon of war; by fueling animosities which leads to aggravating tensions, as opposed to being an agent of peace. Herman and Chomsky (1988) also state that the media can become a weapon of war when the media is used as a tool for disseminating the agenda of the elite, legitimizing their actions and delegitimizing opposing views. On the other hand, the media can choose to remain impartial and uninvolved in the conflict, thus playing a constructive role in resolving disputes and reducing violence. Galtung (2002) highlights the role of the media in conflict resolution as the media's intentional effort to reduce tensions and violence during war. Galtung (2002) describes this approach by the media as peace journalism. Galtung (2015) states that the role of peace journalism is the media's ability "to identify forces and counterforces for and against peace and to make them and their dialectic visible, creating outcomes that could be potential solutions" (p. 1). Thus, Galtung (2015) suggests that the media during war times are not to only serve as a source of information but also as a platform for reconciliation. According to Lynch and McGoldrick (2005), peace journalism is "when editors and reporters make choices—of what stories to report, and how to report them—that create opportunities for society at large to consider and value non-violent responses to conflict" (p.5), further elaborating on Galtung's (2002) concept on media's role in conflict resolution during war times.

Fearon (1994), asserts that the media plays a crucial role in framing narratives as well as shaping public discourse during conflict. Fearon (1994) further states that the media often serves as both a tool for propaganda and a source of information during conflict, thus highlighting the role of the media as tool to propagate the war or as an information provider. Wolfsfeld (2004) argues that the

impact of the media during war times is highly dependent on the framing of the news stories. According to Entman (1993), framing focuses on selection and salience. Hence, integrating Wolsfeld's (2004) argument and Entman's (1993) statement on framing, what stories are covered, how these stories are structured and the position of the stories have a bearing on how viewers would perceive a conflict thereby shaping their perception about the conflict. For instance, in a documentary by "Free Documentary-History" on the Vietnam war in 1964, the vast majority of the American people believed that America was on top of issues in the war against Vietnam as a result of the "victory" news stories that were being disseminated amongst the American people. An account by "Free Documentary-History" showed that the American media broadcasted press conferences at 5pm daily from Saigon. These broadcasts which quickly became known as "the 5pm dailies" however, were mostly skewed versions of what was actually happening in Vietnam until the Tet Offensive on January 30, 1968, where the American people became first hand viewers bloodbath and the siege against the American Embassy in Saigon. The broadcast of the Tet Offensive featuring Vietcong soldiers in the American Embassy shattered public opinion and the American faith in winning the war against Vietnam.

Rai (2002), describes conflict as the adrenalin of media. Thus, the media is trained to snoop for conflict as well as find conflict irresistible. Zahoor & Sadiq (2021) posit that conflict, being a factor of newsworthiness attracts media attention. This gives off the notion that the media is mandated to cover conflict related stories because they are able to thrive on them. Therefore, during reportage of conflict, the media's quest would not only be to give off information to their audience but to also plan ways to have their audience glued to them for information. This quest can further inform how news stories are framed.

Scholars like Noelle-Neumann (1974) and Wang (2024) state that the media reflects society. Therefore, media frames can indicate society's perspective on a phenomenon. Van der Spuy (2011) ascertains this notion that "media are carriers of the dominant ideologies thereby reflecting that which is favorable to the dominant party in society" (p.1). In spite of all the roles they play during wartimes iterated above, the element of geopolitics plays a significant role on how the stories are reported. Dolman (2005) defines geopolitics as, politics as influenced by geographical factors such as territories, water areas, and space. Thus, countries align to each other based on countries that are neighbors to them. Georgios et al. (2024) argue that the concept of geopolitics has evolved beyond its traditional emphasis on geographical proximity due to advancements in technology, which have significantly reduced spatial distance and enhanced access to information. These developments have shifted the dynamics of international alignments, with nations increasingly forming alliances based on shared ideological perspectives and mutual interests rather than geographic proximity. For instance, in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, Ukraine has garnered substantial media support and favorable coverage from Western nations, a reflection of their shared ideological alignment and strategic interests.

The concept of International Relations (IR) provides a critical framework for understanding the relationship between geopolitics and media narratives. Media, as a tool of soft power, often becomes an extension of statecraft, reflecting national interests and cultural ideologies within the global arena (Nye, 2004). Realism, an International Relations theory that prioritizes state power and national interests, suggests that media narratives during conflict often align with the geopolitical aims of the state (Morgenthau, 2006). In the context of the Russia-Ukraine war, for instance, media coverage in the West and Europe has largely favored Ukraine, reflecting their strategic interests and alliances. Conversely, constructivist theory posits that media narratives are

shaped by shared ideas, norms, and identities, which influence how conflicts are framed and perceived by domestic and international audience (Wendt, 1999). Regarding the Russia-Ukraine war, constructivism provides a framework to understand how shared democratic ideals and human rights concerns in the West have driven media coverage that portrays Ukraine as a victim of aggression. This framing aligns with the values and identities that Western nations and their audiences uphold, promoting a narrative that supports Ukraine while vilifying Russia as a violator of these shared norms.

In light of the preceding discussions, it is clear that the relationship between geopolitics and media narratives plays a crucial role in shaping coverage of global issues, such as the Russia-Ukraine war. Geopolitical factors—such as national interests, ideological alignments, and strategic alliances—significantly influence how conflicts are portrayed in the media. Against this backdrop, this study aims to explore how Lebanese media, specifically Sawt Beirut International (SBI), has covered the Russia-Ukraine war. By examining the role of geopolitics in shaping media narratives.

Using the Tankard's (2001) eleven mechanisms of news frames; *headlines, photos, leads, quote selections and source affiliations*, the study seeks to determine how the Sawt Beirut International covered the Russia-Ukraine war.

1.2 Brief History About the Russia-Ukraine War

Russia and Ukraine are two countries whose history is inextricably linked together. This is mostly a result of the geographical and geopolitical circumstances surrounding Ukraine, the centuries-long political, economic, and cultural ties that bind these two nations together, as well as Russia's inexorable dominance in their interactions with one another (Olszafski, 2001).

Ukraine means borderland and is bordered by seven countries. These include Slovakia, Poland, Belarus, Russia, Romania, Moldova and Hungary. Olszafski (2001) posits that although Ukraine has many border countries Russia has the biggest impact on the country.

The joint history of the two nations dates back over a millennium, to a period when Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine today, served as the hub of Kyivan Rus, the first Slavic state and the cradle of both Russia and Ukraine. The pagan prince of Novgorod and grand prince of Kyiv, Volodymyr the Great, converted to Christianity and underwent baptism in the Crimean city of Chersonesus in the year 988 (Conant, 2023).

Mongol invasion weakened the bond between the two states and this laid the foundation for Ukrainian Nationalism. According to the World Fact Book, the Cossack Hetmanate, a new Ukrainian state was founded in the middle of the 17th century following an insurrection against the Polish. The Hetmanate remained independent for well over a century despite constant pressure from the Muscovites. Most of the territory in Ukraine was annexed by the Russian Empire in the latter half of the 18th century. Ukraine, which has long been known as the "bread basket" of the region due to its agricultural production, gained brief independence (1917–20) after czarist Russia fell apart in 1917. However, the nation was later retaken and suffered under Soviet rule, which caused two famines (1921–22 and 1932–33) that claimed over eight million lives.

Ukraine gained independence again when the Soviet Union was dissolved in 1991. Their independence aided a transition within the market economy which led to an eight-year recession in Ukraine. In 2013 a political crisis began when President Viktor Yanukovich canceled an association agreement with the European Union but instead chose to seek closer ties with Russia, this led to a protest and later the Revolution of Dignity. Viktor Yanukovich was impeached in 2014 by the Ukrainian parliament.

Russia began a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, prompting massive international criticism and harsh sanctions against the country. Russia's ambition to assert control over Ukraine, concerns about NATO's growth, and a purported necessity to defend Russian-speaking people in Ukraine all contributed to this invasion.

This war has had a massive impact on the world and has further consolidated geopolitical lines. The media is no exception to this impact and several studies about the effect of the war on international media have pointed out how geopolitics has impacted news frames from such media. Therefore, a critical look at the way the media in a region or country churns the news can give an idea about whose side they are taking. Hence purpose of this study; to examine Sawt Beirut International's coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war.

1.3 Problem Statement

Osei (2023) posits an influence loop comprising geopolitics, the influence on global media, and how global media shapes content produced by the local press. Osei (2023) emphasizes that there is an interplay between global media and local media in terms of global media dominance; the quest of local media to remain sovereign and push national agenda. Thus, according to Osei (2023), geopolitics shapes global media narratives, which, in turn, influence the content produced by local press outlets. Preston and Kerr (2001) state that the media still reserve some sovereignty in terms of their media content largely based on local culture and elements specific to the nation-state. Thus, the local media strive to maintain their sovereignty, counterbalancing this dominance by promoting national interests and advancing localized agendas. Based on this premise, it is safe to conclude that the content churned on the local media can determine a nation's stance on a global phenomenon as in the case of the Russia- Ukraine war. The media reflects society, as such, its contents can inform a dispassionate viewer about the beliefs and general cognition of the society

(Wang 2024). The Russia-Ukraine war seems to put the concept of the media reflecting society on a larger scale.

Applying the assertions of Osei (2023) and Wang (2024), numerous studies have explored how geopolitics—a country's affiliations with other nations—shapes media narratives. Studies conducted by Lin (2022), Rudakova (2024) and Nordenstreng et al (2023) seem to demonstrate this phenomenon. From the studies of the above-mentioned scholars, it was noted that the media from countries that aligned with Ukraine, that is, the West and Europe wrote favorably about Ukraine and vilified Russia. It was also noted that their studies were conducted using media outlet from the Western, Asian and European countries and as such there is limited focus on how Middle Eastern outlets have covered the war. Based on this premise, this study seeks to examine how the geopolitical ties of Lebanon to either side of the warring parties have shaped media reportage in the country with Sawt Beirut International as the case under study.

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To analyze how Lebanon's geopolitical affiliations with either of the warring parties, influence SBI's coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war.
2. To understand the media frames used by Sawt Beirut International.
3. To explore the role of SBI's news framing in their stance on the Russia-Ukraine war.

1.5 Research Questions

1. How did Sawt Beirut International frame the Russia-Ukraine war?
2. In what ways have Lebanon's geopolitical affiliations with either of the warring parties shaped Sawt Beirut International's reportage of the Russia-Ukraine war?

3. How does Sawt Beirut International's news framing reflect their stance on the Russia-Ukraine war?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Understanding the geopolitical dynamics of the Russia-Ukraine war is important because it enables academia to understand why news by the media is framed the way they are. Studies suggest that pro-western media tends to frame the news to favor Ukraine whereas Russia seems to gather some support from its Asian compatriots that is China, North Korea amongst others evident in the works by Lin (2022) and Rudakova (2024). Barakat (2011) iterates on the ability of the media to shape opinions and decisions as she espouses how in the post-Cold War era, the term "CNN effect" denoted the ability to influence government decisions through extensive live coverage of certain events on the international scene.

This study also seeks to understand the relationship between global media and local media and whether the local media that is Sawt Beirut retains sovereignty in pushing local nationalist agenda as opposed to the global media narratives.

1.7 Organization of the Study

This study shall be categorized into 5 chapters. Chapter One sets the tone for the study. It contains the background and rationale for the study including other sections like the introduction, problem statement research questions and objectives. Chapter 2 seeks to delve into issues pertinent to the topic by synthesizing literature to understand various perspectives on the study. Chapter 2 also provides theoretical frameworks employed in the study. Chapter 3 focuses on the research methodology, sampling methods and the samples used in this study whereas, in Chapter 4, the data

will be analyzed, and findings will be presented and discussed. Chapter 5 summarizes the work and gives recommendations.

1.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter discussed the background to the study, the problem statement, the research objectives and questions, significance of the study and organization of study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the body of existing literature on media coverage during conflicts, with a particular focus on the relationship between geopolitics and media narratives. It explores how various media outlets have framed conflicts like the Russia-Ukraine war, reflecting the ideological and political alignments of their countries. This chapter establishes a foundation for understanding how the framing theory and international relations theories, such as realism and constructivism, inform media framing during conflict. Additionally, it highlights the gap in scholarly attention to Arab media perspectives, particularly Lebanon's Sawt Beirut International, thereby positioning this study within a broader academic discourse on global media and geopolitical dynamics.

2.1 Brief History of Sawt Beirut International

Sawt Beirut International (SBI) is a Lebanese audio-visual platform that began operations in 2005. According to information from the platform's official website, the initiative was launched to amplify Lebanon's voice globally, particularly addressing the Lebanese diaspora. Its mission includes keeping expatriates informed about Lebanon's socio-political realities and connecting them to their cultural heritage through a wide array of programs (SBI, n.d.). SBI's programming reflects a commitment to bridging the gap between Lebanon and its expatriates by broadcasting 24/7 news, cultural, and entertainment content. These efforts aim to strengthen the connection between new generations of Lebanese expatriates and their homeland, ensuring they remain engaged with Lebanon's traditions, customs, and current affairs. Additionally, the platform offers cultural and folkloric programming, showcasing Lebanese villages and cities to foster nostalgia among its audience (SBI, n.d.). The platform operates as an internet-based Web TV, a pioneering

move toward the future of media dissemination. SBI also emphasizes real-time reporting, particularly following Lebanon's October 17, 2019 revolution, by providing comprehensive coverage of political, economic, and security developments in Lebanon and beyond. Its online portal extends to lifestyle content, addressing health and beauty topics, while its social media presence enables live news coverage in collaboration with Beirut City and a network of correspondents spread across the country (SBI, n.d.). Through its efforts, SBI has established itself as a vital conduit between Lebanon and its global expatriate community (SBI, n.d.).

2.2 The Influence of Geopolitics on Media Framing of International Conflicts

The media plays an important role in shaping public perceptions of conflicts and wars, acting as both an information provider and a tool for shaping narratives. Academic discourse on media coverage of conflict often focuses on how media outlets frame events to reflect national interests, ideologies, and geopolitical alignments. These frames not only influence how audiences perceive conflicts but also serve to amplify or mitigate tensions. By analyzing existing studies on media coverage during war times, this review seeks to explore the many ways in which media narratives are constructed, particularly in relation to the Russia-Ukraine war. It highlights the alignment between media coverage and geopolitical interests while identifying gaps in the literature, such as the limited exploration of Arab media perspectives.

Rai (2000), in his studies, "Media at War: Issues and Limitations", found that there has always been a special relationship between the media and conflict, thus the media is fashioned to chase down conflict and also find disagreements irresistible. Rai (2000) also found that media coverage or reportage of conflicts or disagreements heightens when the conflict is what he described as "our war" (p.1681). Thus, the media is more interested in covering conflicts or wars that are of concern to them. These findings can be used to explain America's great media involvement in the Vietnam

war and this was because of the American soldiers that were deployed to Vietnam to fight. Citing the Kargil conflict of India as a case study, Rai (2000) sought to demonstrate how great media involvement is in wars that concern them. The Russia-Ukraine war however by time and space differentiation, should not be of concern to Lebanon as to incur their media involvement, however, the news values of prominence, proximity or nearness, and human interest may warrant that Sawt Beirut International cover the Russian-Ukraine war.

Lin (2022) posits that there is media bias in international war reporting. Lin (2022) states that these biases stem from the reporting country's national ideologies and political agendas. In Lin's study of the coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war by the Los Angeles Times and China Daily, Lin (2022) found that the Los Angeles Times reported from a "vulnerability" point of view, on the part of Ukraine, "since the journalists placed more emphasis on the harm done to the innocents" (p. 25). This stance taken by the Los Angeles Times showed the American mindset towards the war; with Russia being the oppressor and Ukraine being the oppressed. However, China Daily was found to have echoed the stance of the Chinese government on the Russian-Ukraine war, which was "China's willingness to work with the international community to play a positive and neutral role in the early return of peace" (p. 26). Lin's (2022) findings are consistent with Wang's (2024) assertion that the media reflects society as well as Van der Spuy's (2011) assertion that "media are carriers of the dominant ideologies thereby reflecting that which is favorable to the dominant party in society" (p.1).

Rudakova (2024) findings also portray Wang's (2024) position that media reflects society. Rudakova (2024) in his studies of the news framing of the Russian-Ukraine war by America's New York Times and Russia's TASS, found that TASS portrayed Ukraine and the United States as "aggressors and provocateurs of the war" (p. 43) while Russia was portrayed as the victim of the

actions of the aforementioned countries. New York Times, however, portrayed Russia as the “aggressor” and Ukraine as the “victim” (p.43). Rudakova (2024) concluded that from the frame narratives portrayed by the New York Times and TASS, it was obvious that New York Times was reinforcing American mindset about the war whereas TASS was serving as the “mouthpiece of the government” (p.40). Sun (2022) demonstrates the nuances involved in Wang’s (2024) position on media reflecting society. In Sun’s (2022) research on the dividing opinion of the Chinese media on the Russian-Ukraine war, Sun (2022) found that the Chinese private media is largely influenced by the government-owned media. Sun (2022) posits that even though the government’s neutral position on the war is to pave way for a more diverse opinion by the media, the private media chooses to stick with the government narrative because the media find themselves in an authoritarian regime. Kwei (2022) extends the discussion by arguing that media alignment with government sentiments is not exclusive to authoritarian regimes. In Kwei’s (2022) study of the online news framing by news portals from the United States, Russia, Ukraine and China, Kwei (2022) found that even in a democratic country like the United States, news portals largely reflected the sentiments of the government.

Nordenstreng et al (2023) corroborate Lin (2022) and Rudakova’s (2024) findings. In their study of media coverage of the Russian-Ukraine war by five Western countries and BRICS, they found that the countries from the West presented emotive narratives, highlighting the damages being caused by Russia and aligning with Ukraine. According to Nordenstreng et al (2023), even though the coverage by the West called for a cease-fire, the coverage was minimal because the West “were involved in the war politically and economically, providing military aid for Ukraine, and thus not directly furthering peace” (p. 6868). Nordenstreng et al (2023) found that coverage by BRICS was more “detached from the war and therefore focused on peace and negotiation”. (p.6868).

These findings further explain the role geopolitics plays in international news coverage. Thus, reporting countries seem to align with and support countries they have good relations with and the vice versa for countries they do not have a good relation with. Wang (2023) highlights the role of geopolitics in international news coverage during war times. Using the coverage of the Bucha incident in Ukraine by New York Times and the Chinese media, Wang (2023) found that New York Times was more devoted to “amplifying the voices of those affected and bringing attention to their stories” (p. 262) by translating social media messages to English Language. Wang (2023) also found that New York times concentrated on the “casualties and the humanitarian impact of the Bucha incident” (p. 262). The Chinese media however played the role of an information provider. Thus, the Chinese media focused on presenting on the causes and consequences of the Bucha incident. Nordenstreng et al (2023) posit that the West is mostly aligned with Ukraine, thus, explaining why the New York Times would write favorably and throw their weight behind Ukraine but would do the vice versa for Russia.

Reese and Lee (nd) state that “framing provides a way to tie news content to larger structures and develops new ways of capturing the power of media to define issues visually and verbally, thereby shaping audience perceptions” (p.752). Thus, according to Reese and Lee (nd) acquiring a better understanding of the ideological stance of the larger structures of a society on a particular subject is tangent to understanding the framing of their news stories on the particular subject. Reese and Lee’s (nd) accession also shows that the media has the power to direct a narrative. Entman (1993) also posits that framing in communication is done “in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52). This position by Entman (1993) shows that framing in communication is a deliberate process to shape how information is perceived by the audience. It is therefore no coincidence, from the

prior studies reviewed above that the frames used by media outlets from the West, Asia , Russia and Ukraine themselves seem to reflect their stance on the ongoing war.

Despite the existing body of literature on media coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war, it was noted that those studies were centered on coverage by the West, Asia specifically China, Russia, and Ukraine. There seems to be minimal research on how countries in the Arab Spring have covered the Russia-Ukraine war; hence the reason for this study as it gives a different perspective to the war from the Arabian world as opposed to the regular Western and Asian narratives. This study concentrates on how the Lebanese media, Sawt Beirut International covered the Russia-Ukraine war.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

Grant & Osanloo (2014) define theoretical framework as the “blueprint for an entire dissertation inquiry” (p. 13). Thus, theoretical frameworks serve as a guide for a researcher so as not to “deviate from the confines of the accepted theories” to result in scholarly work (Adom et al, 2018. p. 438). Grant and Osanloo (2014) posit that theoretical framework provides the foundation for the study, offering a framework to shape and support the research. For this study, the framing theory to understand how Sawt Beirut International covered the Russia-Ukraine war.

2.4 Framing Theory

Entman (1993) defines the framing theory as how media content is structured to highlight certain aspects of reality while omitting others, thereby shaping how audiences perceive and interpret issues. According to Entman (1993), framing involves selecting “some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment

recommendation” (p. 52). This process influences the way information is organized and presented, which ultimately impacts public understanding and responses to events. Thus, the use of frames is evident with regards to the framing theory. Gamson & Modigliani (1987) state that frames are “a central organizing idea or story line that provides meaning to an unfolding strip of events, weaving a connection among them. The frame suggests what the controversy is about, the essence of the issue” (p. 143). Simply put, frames refer to how media organizations curate news stories to elicit a particular interpretation from the audience. Framing involves selecting certain aspects of perceived reality to make them more noticeable, often simplifying the message to mobilize people and garner (Amis, 2022). Framing often thrives on using stereotypes to create messages. This makes it easier for the audience to understand news stories under the context desired by the media. Arowolo (2017) justifies this point by positing that framing explains how the media introduces news stories with already defined contexts for the purpose of enhancing understanding or used as cognitive shortcuts to link several stories to a bigger picture.

According to Zamith (2022), “journalistic frames often impact audiences' understandings of and attitudes toward a topic or issue” (p.46). In this way, they influence the realities that those audience members construct. This may include interpretations not only of basic elements, like what happened, but broader (and no less impactful) notions about what is most important or problematic about a topic or issue, who are the good and bad people involved, and what are or aren't sensible solutions to a given problem. (Zamith, 2022).

Similarly, Matthes & Sikorski (2020) agree that the media adopts and modify the frames that strategic communicators propose as competing for public and media attention, which in turn influences the frames of audience members on an individual basis. Thus, the concept of framing explains the ability to create and modify meaning.

Chong and Druckman (2007) state that framing theory is a phenomenon in opinion research that explain how changes in news presentation can change audiences view about a subject. Framing ultimately changes peoples thinking orientation or idea about an issue.

Framing theory has been extensively applied in the study of conflict to examine how media narratives shape public perceptions of wars and conflicts. Taylor (1992) argues that media organizations often adopt frames that align with national interests, political ideologies, or cultural biases to present conflicts in ways that resonate with their audiences. For instance, Entman (1993) highlights how frames are used to emphasize specific aspects of a conflict, such as victimization, aggression, or heroism, while downplaying others to promote a particular moral evaluation or treatment recommendation. This is evident in the coverage of the Gulf War, where Western media framed the conflict as a fight for freedom and democracy, casting the United States and its allies as liberators while portraying Iraq as an aggressor (Taylor, 1992). Such framing not only influenced public support for the war but also shaped global narratives surrounding the legitimacy of military intervention.

Similarly, researchers (Lin, 2022; Nordenstreng et al, 2023, Wang, 2024; Rudakova, 2024) have applied framing theory to study media coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war, emphasizing how different frames have been employed to mobilize domestic and international support. Nordenstreng et al. (2023) observed that Western media predominantly framed Russia as an aggressor violating international norms, while Ukrainian resistance was portrayed as heroic and just. In contrast, Russian media employed counter-frames that depicted their actions as defensive measures against NATO encroachment. Such contrasting frames demonstrate the media's role in legitimizing political and military actions, reinforcing the notion that framing shapes not only individual perceptions but also broader public opinion. By examining these case studies, framing

theory provides insights into how media narratives are constructed during conflicts and their subsequent impact on audience attitudes and policy decisions.

2.5 Realism

Realism as an International Relations theory was first propounded by Hans Morgenthau in 1948 after the Second World war in Han's quest to develop an international theory for politics. The theory has three positions. Firstly, it posits that "nation-state is a principle actor in international relations" (Antunes & Camisão, 2018, p.1). And that, even though other organizations like individuals and institutions exist, they do not have absolute power (Antunes & Camisão, 2018). Secondly, it posits that the state is a unitary actor such that in times of war the state speaks and acts as one voice in order to safeguard their national interest (Antunes & Camisão, 2018). It finally posits that decision-making processes should only lead to the pursuit of the national interest (Antunes & Camisão, 2018). Thus, taking decisions that would make the state appear weak or vulnerable is not rational. In sum, the theory suggests that international relations are fundamentally driven by the pursuit of national interest and power, with the nation-state serving as the primary actor. It emphasizes the unitary nature of states in decision-making during critical moments, such as war, to protect their sovereignty and maintain their strength. It also highlights that rational decision-making in international politics should align with safeguarding and advancing a state's national interest, avoiding actions that could lead to weakness or vulnerability. Morgenthau (2006) states that realism prioritizes state power and national interests which suggests that media narratives during conflict often align with the geopolitical aims of the state.

Studies have demonstrated how realism influences the coverage of conflicts by showing how media narratives often align with the national interest and geopolitical goals of states, as Morgenthau (2006) suggests. For instance, Lin (2022) highlights that during the Russia-Ukraine

war, the American media portrayed Russia as the aggressor and Ukraine as the victim, reflecting the United States' geopolitical stance and support for Ukraine. Similarly, Rudakova (2024) found that Russian state-controlled media, such as TASS, framed the United States and Ukraine as aggressors, aligning with Russia's national interests by portraying itself as a victim of Western provocation. Historical conflicts such as the Vietnam War also provide evidence of realism's influence on media coverage. Hallin (1986) demonstrated that the American media coverage of the Vietnam war was initially supportive of the government's narrative, focusing on the necessity of American involvement to contain communism, a critical aspect of America's foreign policy during the Cold War.

2.6 Constructivism

Wendt (1999) posits that constructivism theory views reality and knowledge as socially constructed through shared ideas, beliefs, and perceptions. Wendt (1999) argues that material objects derive their meaning from socially construed contexts challenging the concept that material objects possess inherently fixed meanings. Wendt (1999) explains this by illustrating how five hundred British nuclear weapons would be perceived as less threatening to the United States as opposed to five North Korean nuclear weapons. Wendt (1999) argues that this perception is not determined by the material structure of the weapons but by the ideational structures—such as shared understandings and social relationships—between the states involved; the United States views the British as an ally and North Korea, an enemy. The application of the constructivist theory to media coverages would mean that the media reportage of any incident has the tendency to reflect and reinforce already existing socially constructed meanings emphasizing ideational factors such as values, alliances, and cultural norms in their coverage. Thus, by the constructivist theory, media narratives are shaped by shared ideas, norms, and identities, which influence how conflicts are

framed and perceived by domestic and international audience (Wendt, 1999). Constructivism has been employed to examine how media coverage of conflicts reflects existing norms, values, and identities. Scholars like Strömbäck and Esser (2014) have demonstrated that media narratives during conflicts often align with the ideological and cultural frameworks of the reporting nation. For example, during the Iraq War, Western media projected narratives of democracy promotion and counterterrorism, aligning with the America's constructed identity as a global defender of freedom. Similarly, in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, Western media have framed the war as a struggle between democracy and authoritarianism, highlighting Ukraine as a sovereign state resisting Russian aggression (Chong & Druckman, 2007).

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a brief history of Sawt Beirut International, discussed studies related to this work and the theories that underpinned the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

The methodology details how the research is done. It also increases the credibility of a work by making it transparent and reproducible. The chapter focuses on the research approach, design, population under consideration, sample size and sampling techniques. This chapter considers how data will be collected and analyzed.

3.1 Research Design

The research design is the overall approach and analytical technique that a researcher has chosen to integrate the numerous components of the study coherently and logically. This ensures the research problem is properly addressed (De Vaus, 2001). A research design's function is to ensure that the evidence acquired allows you to handle the research problem logically and concisely properly. Various textbooks and scholars have dissenting views on what a research design is. Some opine it is the choice between qualitative and quantitative methodology whereas others define it as the type of data you will collect and analyze (Jansen & Warren, 2020). Khanday and Khanam (2023) posits that a researcher can define what their methodology is therefore, this paper employs a qualitative design.

3.2 Research Approach

The research strategy refers to the study designs and set of procedures that include hypothetical assumptions as well as detailed information on data collecting and analysis of the overall stages. Thus, the research methodology should be selected based on the study design and techniques, as a

research design states appropriate. (Modirrousta et al, 2022) It also involves broad assumptions and precise strategies for data gathering, analysis, and interpretation.

3.2.1 Qualitative Research Approach

This approach explores and provides deeper insights into the human world by gathering participants' views, experiences, perceptions, and behaviors (Tenny et al, 2022). It gathers and analyzes non-numerical data. In this type of research, the interviewer tries to understand the motivation and feelings underpinning the phenomena under study. Qualitative methods include focus group discussions, in-depth interviews, observations, ethnographic research, case studies, framing, and content analysis. Hsieh and Shanon (2005) define qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (p .1278). Thus, according to Hsieh and Shanon (2005), qualitative content analysis allows for a detailed and subjective interpretation of data by giving meaning to data rather than a mere description; hence the choice of qualitative content analysis to give meanings to the news stories churned out by Sawt Beirut International on the Russian-Ukraine war.

3.2.2 Framing Analysis

Pan and Kosicki (1993) assert that framing analysis is presented in a constructivist approach to examine news texts into operationalized and empirical forms; and into themes so that how a media frames the news may be gathered. Scholars believe that news frames prove that media organizations are taking proactive steps to amplify their voices on issues. Essentially, framing analysis in communication research delves into how a media represents a specific topic by amplifying certain aspects against others and projecting certain actors and factors compared to

others (Entman,1993). Frames can either take an inductive or deductive approach. With inductive frames, the frames emerge during analysis whereas with deductive approach, the frames are clearly defined and operationalized before analysis.

For the purpose of the study, the Tankard (2001) list of framing mechanism was adopted as a deductive framing analysis approach for this research. Tankard's (2001) list comprises of Headlines and kickers, Subheads, Photographs, Photo captions, Leads, Selection of Sources or Affiliations, Selection of Quotes, Pull Quotes, Logos, Statistics, charts, and graphs, Concluding statements. However, only five parameters; headline and kickers, selection of quotes, leads, selection of sources and affiliations and photographs, was used to analyse the news stories.

3.3 Corpus

Kennedy (1998) defines a corpus as “a collection of texts assumed to be representative of a given language, dialect, or other subset of a language, to be used for linguistic analysis” (p. 1). Thus, corpus refers to the entire text, articles or media content to be studied. For this study, the corpus comprises of all news stories published by Sawt Beirut International on the Russia-Ukraine war between 22nd to 28th February, 2022.

3.4 Sample Technique and Sampling

This research employed the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is a technique whereby researchers deliberately choose participants who possess particular traits or distinct experiences that are relevant to the research subject. The aim is to find and enlist people or samples that can contribute rich and varied data to improve the research findings.

Purposive sampling also known as judgmental sampling stands in contrast to random sampling or probability sampling, which aims to collect data randomly to ensure the generalization of findings

across an entire population. Instead, the objective of purposive sampling is to target a specific subset of people to more deeply understand the unique or diverse variations in a culture or context.**Invalid source specified..**

For this study, all news stories on the Russia-Ukraine war as covered by Sawt Beirut International served as the population, however, only stories covered in the month of the inception of the war were considered. Therefore, the news stories selected were from between 22nd to 28th February, 2022. There were a hundred and twenty (120) stories posted by Sawt Beirut International during this period. Given that the study employs qualitative content analysis, which requires in-depth examination of textual data, analyzing all 120 stories would be impractical. Consequently, a quarter of the total stories—40 news stories—will be purposively selected for analysis to ensure a manageable yet representative sample that provides meaningful insights into the Sawt Beirut International’s framing of the Russia-Ukraine war.

3.5 Unit of analysis

Dolma (2010) defines unit of analysis as the entity to be analyzed. The unit of analysis for this study is the news stories. According to Tognini-Bonelli (2001), the unit of analysis is a portion of language data that reflects the typical features and patterns of use in a specific domain or context. Thus the unit of analysis in the context of a corpus refers to a subset of texts selected from a larger body of language data, chosen to be representative of the language or linguistic phenomenon under study. Similarly, McEnery and Hardie (2012) define a unit of analysis as a curated selection of texts intended to encapsulate the linguistic features of a larger population of texts, ensuring that the corpus maintains both depth and breadth in representing its target language or genre. For this research, using five of Tankard’s (2001) eleven (11) framing mechanisms only the headlines and kickers of the 40 stories sampled, the quotes, leads, selection of sources or affiliations and

photographs would be analyzed. These parameters were chosen because they represent essential linguistic and structural elements that reflect the typical features and patterns of framing within the sampled texts, aligning with Tognini-Bonelli's (2001) emphasis on contextually representative language data. As McEnery and Hardie (2012) suggest, the curated selection of these elements ensures that the unit of analysis captures both the breadth and depth of framing practices in the corpus. Headlines and kickers are particularly significant because they contain the dominant narrative, setting the interpretive framework for readers. Quotes and leads provide cues to the perspectives and ideational constructs emphasized in the stories, often highlighting specific frames through the choice of language and focus on certain actors or issues. The selection of sources or affiliations also the alignment or bias within the stories, illustrating which voices are amplified and how credibility is constructed. Lastly, photographs visually reinforce or contradict textual frames, offering an additional layer of meaning that shapes audience perceptions. In sum, these parameters from Tankard's (2001) framework provide the lens through which framing mechanisms used in this study can be identified and analyzed.

3.6 Data Analysis

Five of Tankard's (2001) eleven (11) framing mechanisms were used as a code to analyze the data. The samples will be examined using these framing mechanisms to identify the frames. To identify the frames, an in-depth analysis of the news stories was conducted by a closely reading the new stories to identify recurring themes, which were subsequently categorized and coded.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the methodology adopted by the study for data collection and analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the presentation and analysis of the findings gathered for the study. The data was analyzed using framing analysis five of Tankard's (2001) eleven parameters of framing mechanisms (i.e, Headlines and kickers, selection of quotes, leads, selection of sources or affiliations and photographs). The chapter focuses on how Sawt Beirut International covered the Russia-Ukraine war, examining data in relation to the research objectives to answer the following research questions;

1. How did Sawt Beirut International frame the Russia-Ukraine war?
2. In what ways have Lebanon's geopolitical affiliations with either of the warring parties shaped Sawt Beirut International's reportage of the Russia-Ukraine war?
3. How does Sawt Beirut International's news framing reflect their stance on the Russia-Ukraine war?

This chapter presents the findings of this study.

4.1 Findings

RQ. 1. How does Sawt Beirut International frame the Russia-Ukraine war?

This research question addresses the frames used by Sawt Beirut International in covering the Russia-Ukraine war. As stated earlier, the unit of analysis is the news stories. The news stories were carefully read to identify recurring themes which subsequently informed the frames. Sawt

Beirut International covered the Russia-Ukraine war in two frames; the conflict frame and the sanctions frame.

Table 1

Frequency distribution of the frames used by Sawt Beirut International in covering the Russia Ukraine war

Frames	Frequency	Percent
Conflict frame	28	70.0
Sanctions frame	12	30.0
Total	40	100.0

Note. This table shows the frequency distribution frames used by Sawt Beirut International in covering the Russia-Ukraine war.

Figure 1

Bar Graph of the frequency distribution of the frames used by Sawt Beirut International

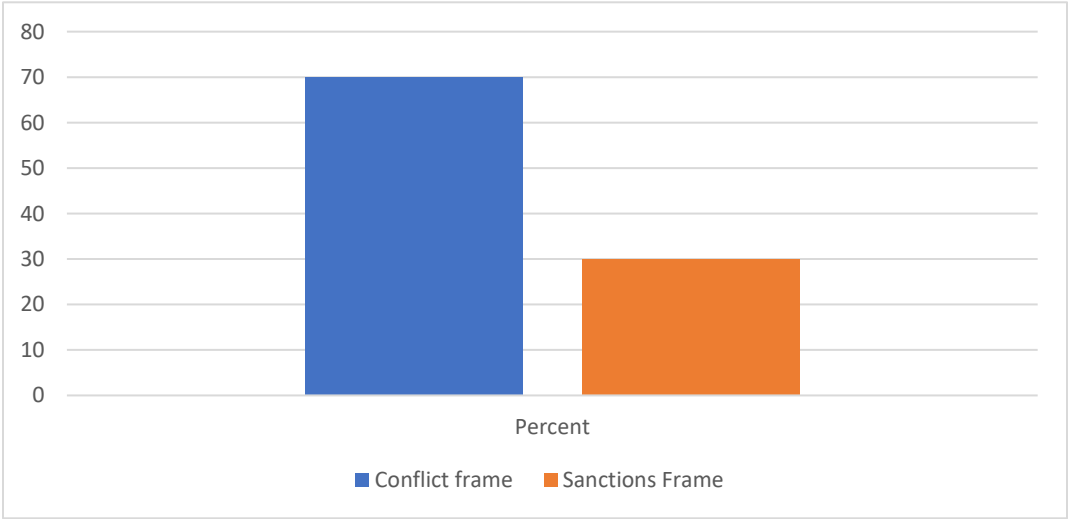


Table 2

A Simplified Table for the Frames, Themes & Sub-themes

Frame	Theme	Subtheme
Conflict	Russian Military Aggression	Russia as an oppressor, Ukraine as a victim
	Ukrainian Resistance	Defense
	Impact on Ukrainian Civilians	Destruction, Displacement, Aid
Sanctions	Economic Sanctions	Penalties
	Global Coordination	Unity

Note: This table demonstrates the frames, the themes and the sub-themes derived from analysing the news stories

4.1.1 Conflict Frame

One of the major frames used by Sawt Beirut International is the “conflict” frame. Out of the 40 stories sampled, 28 stories, thus 70% of the stories, fell within the conflict frame. The conflict frame focused on the military unrest between Russia and Ukraine, such as Russia’s deployment of soldiers into Ukrainian territories and the Ukrainians’ fightback against Russia’s oppression. With this frame, Sawt Beirut International sought to highlight the military actions taken by both parties in the war and the humanitarian crisis for victims due to the war. The conflict frame was informed by the Russian military aggression theme, Ukrainian resistance theme as well as the impact on civilians’ theme.

Central to the “conflict” frame are the military actions taken especially by Russia against Ukraine. Sawt Beirut International mostly covered the military actions taken by Russia including Russia’s

military deployment in Luhansk and Donetsk and the capture of the Chernobyl power plant as opposed to Ukraine's retaliation to Russia's actions. This could be as a result of the pro-Western sources they relied on, especially Reuters-UK. For instance, in a story posted by Sawt Beirut International on the 23rd February, 2024, which was captioned: 80% of Russian forces near Ukraine borders ready to go in Ukraine: US official, was sourced from CNN Arabic; the Arabic-speaking version of America's CNN. This denotes that CNN Arabic would most likely align to the views of CNN as it is serviced and owned by CNN. Hence, Sawt Beirut International reliance on CNN Arabic only amplifies the pro-Western views about the Russian-Ukraine war. The quotes used by Sawt Beirut International seem to amplify the Western views of the war; thus Russia being the oppressor and Ukraine being the victim. This is very consistent with Rudakova's (2024) findings on his study of the Russia-Ukraine war. In one of their news stories, Sawt Beirut International (2022) wrote:

“We assess that the Russian military forces arrayed around Ukraine and Belarus are as ready as they can be,” said the official. (80% of Russian forces near Ukraine borders ready to go in Ukraine: US official, para. 3)

The official voiced concern about Russian President Vladimir Putin's “full range of capabilities,” including “everything from significant offensive missile capability to offensive ground power.” (80% of Russian forces near Ukraine borders ready to go in Ukraine: US official, para. 4)

In another story posted by Sawt Beirut International on 24th February 2022 captioned – “Missiles rain down around Ukraine” - it highlighted the military actions taken by Russia against Ukraine. Again, this story was sourced from Reuters, a United Kingdom-based media house. The story featured quotes from Western figures like America's Former President Joe Biden accompanied by

a photograph of resident standing in an apartment that received a shelling in Kharkiv, depicting the destruction Russia was causing to Ukraine. In this story, Sawt Beirut International (2022), wrote:

“This is a premeditated attack,” U.S. President Joe Biden told reporters at the White House as he unveiled harsh new sanctions coordinated with allies. “Putin is the aggressor. Putin chose this war. And now he and his country will bear the consequences.” (Missiles rain down around Ukraine, para. 3)

“What we have heard today are not just missile blasts, fighting and the rumble of aircraft. This is the sound of a new Iron Curtain, which has come down and is closing Russia off from the civilised world,” Zelenskiy said. (Missiles rain down around Ukraine, para. 11)

Another key theme that is most prevalent under the “conflict frame” is the Ukrainian Resistance. In as much as Sawt Beirut International gives spotlight to the various attacks by Russia, there is the coverage of Ukraine’s actions to counteract the attacks by Russia. The coverage of the Ukrainian resistance to Russia’s attacks portrays Ukraine as a nation resisting supposed oppression and aggression. It presents Ukraine as a nation resolutely determined to resist external pressures and assert its sovereignty, refusing to yield to the demands or influence of Russia.

For instance, in a story posted on the 24th February, 2024, captioned, “Ukraine’s Zelenskiy calls on citizens to fight, promises weapons”, Sawt Beirut International covered Volodymyr Zelenskiy’s clarion call to all Ukrainians to arise and fight back. However, the story did not have any quotes from Zelenskiy; just a summarized version of his speech. This style of coverage appears to downplay Ukraine’s efforts, potentially framing Russia's attack as an overwhelming and insurmountable force. It however featured Zelenskiy’s photograph with a stern looking face.

Another story posted by Sawt Beirut International depicting Ukraine's resistance to Russia's oppression was captioned, "Ukraine calls on hacker underground to defend against Russia". Even though President Zelenskiy made that call to defend against Russia, the caption denotes a different meaning. The caption indicates the collective effort being made by all Ukrainians to resist Russia, hence President Zelenskiy was not quoted in the story, only two volunteers on the underground hacker's team. The absence of President Zelenskiy's direct quote in the story shifts the focus from state-led efforts to grassroots, civilian-led initiatives, portraying Ukraine as a united front where all individuals contribute to the national defense. A photograph of a bombed place in Ukraine accompanied the story. That choice of a photograph further reinforces the urgency and severity of the situation, showing the devastation caused by Russia's attacks and the resilience of Ukrainians against those attacks.

The final theme that informed the "conflict frame" was the impact on civilians theme. This theme focused on how Sawt Beirut International covered the impact of the Russian aggression on Ukrainian civilians. Sawt Beirut International covered two aspects with regards to impact on the Ukrainian civilian; destruction of homes leading to displacement of civilians and the emotional toll on the Ukrainian civilians as well as empathy from countries and international bodies as a result of the conflict. To better demonstrate the aforementioned aspects, Sawt Beirut International resorted to the vulnerability appeal portraying Ukraine as the vulnerable party in the conflict.

A story posted on the 24th of February 2022, captioned "Russia's Putin wants to destroy our state, says Ukraine president," emphasizes the casualties Russia's attacks have caused Ukraine. Even though President Zelenskiy made the statement in the caption, he was not quoted in the story; rather, the empathizing words of President Joe Biden were captured. In this story, Sawt Beirut International (2022) wrote:

In reaction to an invasion that the US had been expecting for weeks, US President Joe Biden stated his prayers were with the people of Ukraine “as they face an unwarranted and unjustifiable aggression,” and promised strong penalties in retaliation. (para. 3).

Three of the stories posted on the same day captioned, “Leaving behind possessions and pets, Ukrainians flee to Poland”, “Germany offers Poland help with refugees from Ukraine”, “Central European countries prepare to receive Ukrainian refugees”, also had similar tones of empathy for Ukraine, however, emphasizes on the displacement of the Ukrainian civilians. All three of the stories also focused on the destruction of the homes and the lives of the Ukrainian civilians hence the fleet to find places of refuge. Photographs for these stories mostly featured Ukrainians on the move. Sawt Beirut International (2022) selected these quotes from the stories above. They are as follows respectively;

“I have no sentiments other than fear,” Bazhanov said at a pedestrian border crossing roughly 400 kilometers from Warsaw. “I’m going to see my father in Spain, but I don’t have any money and have no idea how I’ll get there.” (Leaving behind possessions and pets, Ukrainians flee to Poland, para. 5)

“This can’t just happen when the people are here. And above all, they won’t stay for only three weeks,” the association’s general manager Gerd Landsberg told the Stuttgarter Zeitung. (Germany offers Poland help with refugees from Ukraine, para. 7)

“We will do everything to ensure that every person who enters the territory of Poland has access to healthcare, including hospitalization,” the ministry said. (Germany offers Poland help with refugees from Ukraine, para. 8)

“We can predict with near certainty that Russian aggression will drive out many Ukrainian women and men from their country,” Prime Minister Eduard Heger said. “Please let’s have compassion and understanding for them. (Central European countries prepare to receive Ukrainian refugees, para. 11).

4.1.2 The Sanctions Frame

Some of the stories on the Russia-Ukraine war as covered by Sawt Beirut International featured the sanctions being metered out to Russia for their actions. The economic sanctions theme and global coordination theme informed the sanction frame. Out of the 40 stories sampled, 12 stories representing 30%, fell within the Sanctions Frame.

The economic sanctions theme outlines the various penalties Russia has suffered as a result of invading Ukraine. These sanctions from the news stories included the freezing assets, banning trade, and targeting Russian elites and financial institutions. The economic penalties as covered by Sawt Beirut International within the Sanctions Frame show the strategic effort taken by the international community to deter Russia’s aggression through non-military means. By targeting key sectors of the Russian economy, including financial institutions, state-owned enterprises, and the assets of influential elites, these penalties are intended to undermine Russia’s capacity to sustain its military actions and signal global disapproval of its violation of international law.

The stories captioned “Britain sanctions Russian oligarch Timchenko, five banks” and “Japan imposes sanctions on Russia over actions in Ukraine,” published on the 22nd and 23rd February, 2022, respectively, highlight the measures Western-aligned nations are taking to deter the escalation of the conflict. Both articles highlight the imposition of sanctions as a strategic tool to

halt the war. The coverage of these stories includes photographs of the respective prime ministers, alongside notable excerpts from their speeches. Sawt Beirut International (2022) reported:

Johnson said, “It is vitally necessary that we maintain in reserve further powerful penalties... in light of what President Putin may do next.” (Britain sanctions Russian oligarch Timchenko, five banks, para. 5)

“We aim to make it impossible for Russian enterprises to raise finance in sterling or dollars,” Johnson stated. (Britain sanctions Russian oligarch Timchenko, five banks, para. 13)

“Russia’s actions very clearly damage Ukraine’s sovereignty and go against international law. We once again criticise these moves and strongly urge Russia to return to diplomatic discussions,” Fumio Kishida said. (Japan imposes sanctions on Russia over actions in Ukraine, para. 4).

The second theme that informed the sanctions frame was the Global Coordination theme. With this theme, Sawt Beirut International sought to show the unity among nations in their response to Russia. This includes actions taken by countries like United States of America, Japan, and Canada and alliances like the European Union and North Atlantic Treaty Organization, which impose sanctions and coordinate efforts to hold Russia accountable for their actions against Ukraine.

Stories with the headlines, “U.S. and allies step up sanctions pressure on Russia over Ukraine”, and “U.S., G7 allies ready response to Russia’s attack on Ukraine -Biden” as covered by Sawt Beirut International shows the solidarity of the West behind Ukraine and against Russia. The choice of quotes for these stories places more emphasis on the determination of the West to incapacitate Russia to halt the war. Sawt Beirut International (2022) reported the following quotes:

“There will be even more tough sanctions on key oligarchs, on key organizations in Russia, limiting Russia’s access to the financial markets, if there is a full-scale invasion of Ukraine,” Truss said. (U.S. and allies step up sanctions pressure on Russia over Ukraine, para. 10)

“Our European, American, British colleagues will not stop and will not calm down until they have exhausted all their possibilities for the so-called punishment of Russia,” he said. (U.S. and allies step up sanctions pressure on Russia over Ukraine, para. 11)

“We have to make sure that if Putin goes forward with this invasion more fully ... that the costs to Putin and Russia are just crippling,” he said. (U.S., G7 allies ready response to Russia’s attack on Ukraine -Biden, para. 12)

4.2 RQ. 2. In what ways have Lebanon’s geopolitical affiliations with either of the warring parties shaped Sawt Beirut International’s reportage of the Russia-Ukraine war?

This question addresses how Lebanon’s geopolitical affiliations with either of the warring parties shaped how Sawt Beirut International reported on the Russia-Ukraine war. To answer this question, the editorial priorities of Sawt Beirut International like where news stories were sourced from was analyzed. It was however noted that, Sawt Beirut International rarely opined on the Russia-Ukraine war. Most of the stories posted were sourced from Western and European news outlets.

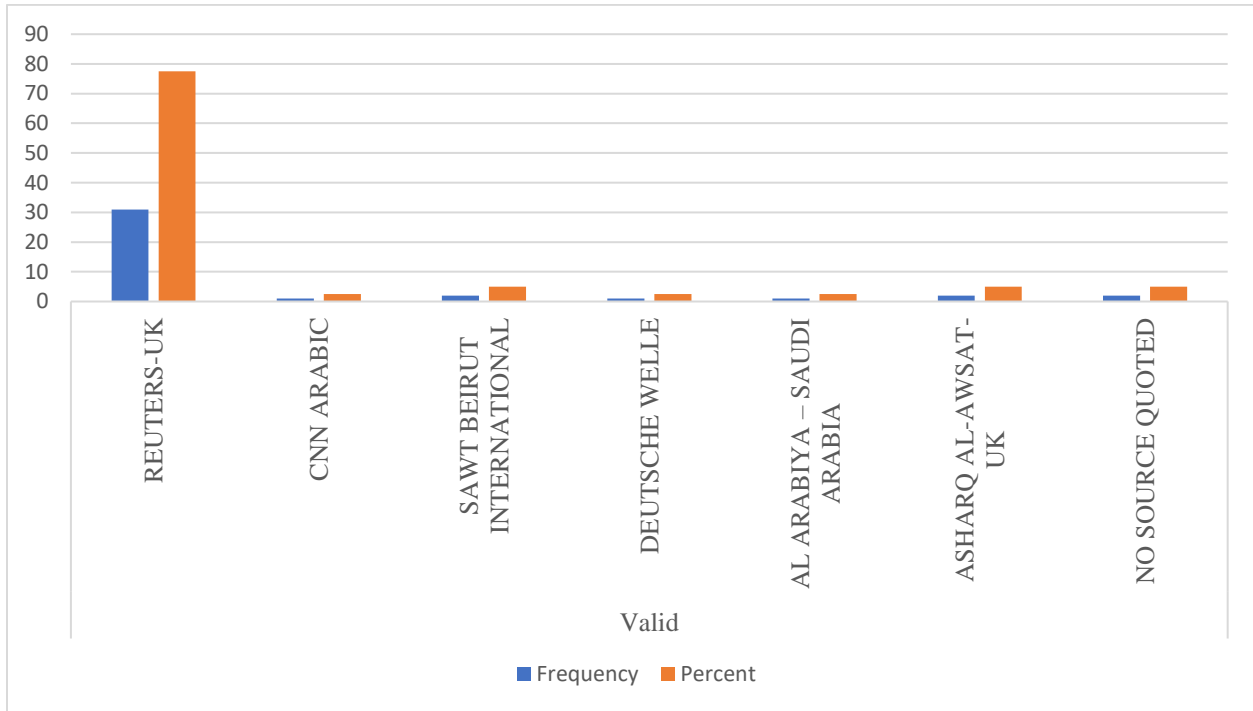
Table 3*Frequency Distribution of the Sources of the News Stories*

News Source	Frequency	Percent
Reuters-UK	31	77.5
CNN Arabic	1	2.5
Sawt Beirut International	2	5.0
Deutsch Welle	1	2.5
AL Arabiya – Saudi Arabia	1	2.5
Asharq AL-Awsat- UK	2	5.0
No source quoted	2	5.0
Total	40	100.0

Note. This table shows the frequency distribution of where Sawt Beirut International sourced their news stories.

Figure 2

Bar Graph of the frequency of the sources of the news stories



Lebanon’s geopolitical stance is shaped by its internal political landscape, where different factions maintain varied alignments with global powers. Some Lebanese political groups, such as Hezbollah, have historically expressed support for Russia, while others align more with Western nations. Therefore, the expectation was that Sawt Beirut International may explicitly project either of these stances through their editorial views on the Russia-Ukraine war. However, Sawt Beirut International abstained from directly writing news stories that projected their own views on the Russia-Ukraine war, instead they outsourced from Western media outlets.

From Table 3 and Figure 2 displayed above, it is noted that out of the forty (40) stories, Sawt Beirut International outsourced thirty-one (31) stories from Reuters-UK representing 77.5%, one story from CNN-Arabic, Deutsche Welle and Al Arabiya – Saudi Arabia representing 2.5% each. Still

two stories were sourced from Asharq Al -Awsat -UK and two others did not have sources, representing 5% respectively. Sawt Beirut International however directly editorialized only two stories, representing 5% of the forty stories sampled. These stories which were posted on the same day were captioned, “Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemns the invasion of Ukraine and calls on Russia to withdraw immediately” and “Resorting to Chapter VII to implement resolutions on Lebanon is currently out of question”. Both stories quoted no political figure in particular. Both stories were posted with the photograph of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Lebanon and the flag of Lebanon respectively.

It is noted evidently by the statistics that besides Al Arabiya, thirty-five stories were sourced from Western and European news outlets. There were no Russian news outlets sourced in covering the war.

4.3 R.Q 3. How does Sawt Beirut International’s news framing reflect their stance on the Russia-Ukraine war?

This question addresses the Sawt Beirut International’s stance on the Russia-Ukraine war. By examining the frames and the sources of the news stories, the question seeks to address the Sawt Beirut International’s stance on the Russia Ukraine war.

To start with, Sawt Beirut International’s (SBI) news framing of the Russia-Ukraine war reflects an alignment with Western narratives on the war. This is as a result of SBI’s reliance on the Western and European media outlet such as Reuters-UK whose attention was on portraying Russia as an aggressor and Ukraine as a victim. SBI covered the war in the Conflict Frame, which highlights the military unrest between the warring parties and impact as a result, and the Sanctions Frame, which focused on the global punitive measures imposed on Russia by Western nations.

From the data gathered as displayed in Table 3, no Russian news outlet or Pro-Russian news outlet was sourced. The absence of Russian-affiliated sources and the limited representation of Russia's official justifications further indicate that SBI did not provide a balanced perspective but instead aligns with Western media framings. However, SBI does not explicitly take an editorial stance, mirroring Lebanon's diplomatic neutrality in the war. By relying on Western media while avoiding direct editorialization, SBI's coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war reflected Lebanon's broader geopolitical positioning, that is, maintaining alignment with its Western allies while refraining from overtly opposing Russia.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the research topic, presents the study's key findings, identifies its limitations, and offers recommendations for future research based on the findings. The primary aim of this study was to qualitatively examine the frames employed by the Lebanese media, Sawt Beirut International, in their coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war. By analyzing these frames, the study sought to gain insights into Lebanon's perspective on the conflict, to determine whether the local media's portrayal of the war aligns with Lebanon's abstention from the United Nations General Assembly votes on resolutions calling for Russia to cease its invasion.

5.1 Summary of Findings

This study examined how the Lebanese media, Sawt Beirut International, covered the Russia-Ukraine war by analyzing how the news stories were framed.

The study revealed that all the stories published by Sawt Beirut International were sourced from external media conglomerates, with a notable reliance on Reuters, originating from the United Kingdom, and CNN-Arabic, a subsidiary of CNN – United States of America. This reliance on outsourced content suggests a limited production of original reporting and highlights SBI's dependence on international news agencies for coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war. This observation is consistent with Gilboa (2006) finding that global media is indispensable to the local media, especially for the coverage of global issues. Hence it is reasonable to conclude that Sawt Beirut International's dependence on external media conglomerates for stories on the Russia-

Ukraine war only reflects the broader trend. Wang (2024) states that the media reflects society. Thus, the media shows the ideals and culture of the society. Van der Spuy (2011) ascertains this notion that “media are carriers of the dominant ideologies thereby reflecting that which is favorable to the dominant party in society” (p.1). Therefore, the media narrative can be a giant reflection of society’s beliefs. The assumption is that the media frame can be indicative of society’s social cognition and position on phenomena whether global or local. However, in this instance, Sawt Beirut International depended solely on external sources for stories on the Russia-Ukraine war. Therefore, there is a tendency for their reports to be influenced by the narratives of the West rather than solely reflecting the indigenous perspectives or local editorial priorities. Be it that there is bias in international reporting stemming from the ideologies of the global media.

Nevertheless, as stated by Simonovits and Vig (2023), journalists and news media are more “likely to cite and share stories from sources which lie closer to their own ideology” (p.2). Hence if Sawt Beirut International is sourcing news from Reuters and CNN-Arabic it is only indicative of the fact that they align with the views about the war aside from the fact that Reuters and CNN-Arabic are bigger media conglomerates and have the logistics to cover global issues.

With regards to frames, Sawt Beirut International covered the Russia-Ukraine war in two major frames; the conflict frame and the sanctions frame. There were three sub-themes that informed the conflict frame; the military action theme, the Ukrainian resistance theme, and the impact on civilians’ theme.

Throughout their coverage, it was noted that Sawt Beirut International reported more on Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and their activities in the towns where Russia had taken siege. Sawt Beirut International employed the use of evocative headlines for the stories on Russia’s activities in Ukraine. This tactic by Sawt Beirut International was to help readers feel very strongly about war

and to help readers envisage what was happening in Ukraine. For instance, one headline to a story posted on the 24th of February read, “Missiles rain down around Ukraine”. This headline first helps readers to envisage literal missiles falling in Ukraine. The visual imagery in the reader’s mind would then make the reader feel strongly about the war and elicit some kind of hatred for Russia and empathy for Ukraine. Besides the use of evocative headlines, the photographs that came along with the stories were quite graphic, either featuring a bombed place in Ukraine or a group of displaced people. All these tactics are to help readers understand the pain of Ukraine and to elicit empathy for Ukraine. Quotes to these stories were mostly those of political actors of the West like President Joe Biden, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Prime Minister Boris Johnson who were condemning Russia’s actions.

The Ukrainian resistance theme featured Ukraine’s actions to counteract Russia’s aggression. It featured the clarion call from President Zelenskiy to Ukrainians to fight back and not submit to Russia. However, very rarely was President Zelenskiy quoted in the stories. For instance, in a story posted on the 24th of February, 2024, captioned, “Ukraine’s Zelenskiy calls on citizens to fight, promises weapons”, only a summarized version of his speech was posted, and not one quote from his speech. In another story captioned, “Ukraine calls on hacker underground to defend against Russia”, only citizens were quoted in the story. This style of coverage appears to downplay Ukraine’s efforts, potentially framing Russia’s attack as an overwhelming and insurmountable force. On the other hand, the absence of President Zelenskiy’s direct quote in the stories shifts the focus from state-led efforts to grassroots, civilian-led initiatives, portraying Ukraine as a united front where all individuals contribute to the national defense

In demonstrating the theme of impact on citizens, Sawt Beirut International resorted to an emotive style of reporting. Headlines to such stories included “Russia’s Putin wants to destroy our state,

says Ukraine president”, “Leaving behind possessions and pets, Ukrainians flee to Poland”, “Germany offers Poland help with refugees from Ukraine”, “Central European countries prepare to receive Ukrainian refugees”, portraying Ukraine and Ukrainians as the oppressed who need salvage from Russia. It demonstrates to readers the extent of damage Russia has caused Ukraine. For these stories to have an emotive effect, only Ukrainian citizens were quoted as well as featured in the photographs.

“I have no sentiments other than fear,” Bazhanov said at a pedestrian border crossing roughly 400 kilometers from Warsaw. “I’m going to see my father in Spain, but I don’t have any money and have no idea how I’ll get there.” (para. 5)

Regarding the conflict frame and the three themes that informed the frame, covered by Sawt Beirut International (SBI), their stance on the war remains ambiguous, as it refrains from explicitly expressing its opinions and predominantly relies on outsourced content. However, an analysis of their coverage allows for an assertion about the selection of sources used in their stories, which may reflect implicit framing choices. Simonovits and Vig (2023) argue that journalists and news media are more “likely to cite and share stories from sources which lie closer to their own ideology” (p.2). Based on this premise, it can be inferred that Sawt Beirut International (SBI) likely did not support the war, as their primary sources—Western media outlets such as Reuters-UK and CNN-Arabic—have consistently expressed opposition to the conflict.

There were two themes found that informed the sanctions frame; the economic sanctions theme and the global coordination theme.

Sawt Beirut International also covered stories on the economic sanctions Russia was faced with as a result of its actions in Ukraine. This strategy by Sawt Beirut International was to show the world

the measures being taken to control situations in Ukraine. Since most of the economic sanctions were from the West, the stories featured quotes from political actors from the West and their photographs. This style of coverage rather positioned the West as the powerful group who determined the course of action in this war. It also positioned the West as the savior of Ukraine

Johnson said, “It is vitally necessary that we maintain in reserve further powerful penalties... in light of what President Putin may do next.” (para. 5)

“We aim to make it impossible for Russian enterprises to raise finance in sterling or dollars,” Johnson stated. (para. 13).

In the global coordination theme, Sawt Beirut International sought to show the unity amongst the nations in their response to Russia. Stories with the headlines, “EU’s Russia sanctions to take effect on Wednesday”, “U.S. and allies step up sanctions pressure on Russia over Ukraine”, “U.S., G7 allies ready response to Russia’s attack on Ukraine -Biden” shows the solidarity amongst the nations in the West to salvage Ukraine.

The Sanctions Frame and the themes that informed the frame only reinforced the Western stance on the war. Through the consistent coverage of the economic penalties and coordinated global efforts to deter Russia’s aggression, Sawt Beirut International depicts a narrative that aligns with the broader international condemnation of Russia's actions. The framing of sanctions as both necessary and effective tools to counter Russian aggression reflects an implicit alignment with the West’s stance on the conflict.

5.2 Limitations of Study

One significant challenge encountered during this research was the difficulty in identifying an English-speaking Lebanese media outlet, as the majority of media organizations in Lebanon

predominantly publish in their native language, Arabic. Additionally, time constraints limited the scope of the study, preventing a comparative analysis of stories across multiple media outlets.

5.3 Recommendation for Further Studies

Future research could explore this topic further by conducting a comparative analysis of two media outlets to examine how each covered the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

5.4 Conclusion

This study examined how Sawt Beirut International framed the Russia-Ukraine war, how Lebanon's geopolitical affiliations shaped its reportage on the war, and how SBI's framing reflected its stance on the conflict. From the framing analysis, the study identified that SBI covered the Russian Ukraine war in two dominant frames: the Conflict Frame (70%), which emphasized on Russia's military aggression, Ukrainian resistance, and civilian impact, and the Sanctions Frame (30%), which highlighted the economic penalties and global coordination against Russia.

Findings revealed that Sawt Beirut International exclusively sourced its news from Western media outlets, particularly Reuters-UK (77.5%), with no pro-Russian news outlets sourced. The reliance on the Western media outlet influenced Sawt Beirut International's framing of the Russian Ukraine war resulting in the reinforcement of how the West portrayed the war; Russia and the oppressor and Ukraine, the victims or oppressed.

The study also found that Sawt Beirut International did not publish their own views on the war, reflecting Lebanon's neutral position on the UN votes on the war.

Overall, the study concludes that SBI's framing of the Russia-Ukraine war was shaped more by its dependence on the Western media outlet than by their explicit editorial position. While Sawt

Beirut International's coverage aligned with Western perspectives, their avoidance of publishing their own views on the war reflected Lebanon's geopolitical positioning—maintaining ties with Western allies while refraining from overtly opposing Russia.

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