

Mediatisation of Russia's Full-Scale Invasion of Ukraine and Palestinian Terrorist Group Hamas Attack on Israel: Framing Analysis of War Representations on News Portal "LSM.lv" (24 February 2022–7 April 2024)

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Abstract. The aim of the research is to establish how [LSM.lv](#) mediatizes both war conflicts and what kind of framings can be identified in the representations of both wars. The theoretical part of the research includes explanations of mediatization, representation, news values and framing approaches. The methodology consists of quantitative and qualitative content analysis, framing analysis and semi-structured interviews. The results show that the news portal [LSM.lv](#) produces high quality news, not only informative, but also diverse in terms of topics, regarding both the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine and the attack by the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas in Israel. The publications are also objective and, despite the different circumstances influencing the two conflicts, [LSM.lv](#) maintains journalistic professionalism and does not portray journalists' positions or personal views on one or the other conflict.

Keywords: news, war representations, mediatization, framing, journalism

Introduction

In today's world, wars and various conflict situations have taken on new significance and become an integral part of daily life across the globe, affecting the politics, economies, and social structures of many countries. Physical presence in these conflicts remains challenging; therefore, most of the public still relies on news media to obtain information about ongoing wars and conflicts around the world. These media outlets, whether by sending their representatives to the locations or using various information sources, reflect and report on all the situations to the public. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which has already lasted for more than two years, and the relatively recent attack by

the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas on Israel are two conflicts that have generated widespread international attention. Both wars cause significant destruction, claiming thousands of lives, and have a global impact on the political and economic situation. In such circumstances, news media play an especially crucial role, as they bear the responsibility not only for providing and making information accessible to the public but also for shaping the way how society interprets these two conflicts. With the onset of the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas attack on Israel and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the news portal [LSM.lv](#) closely follows and reports on these events to the public. Given various factors from both the media and society's perspectives, [LSM.lv](#) serves as one of the primary sources where the Latvian public can obtain information about the course of both conflicts. This means that the public is subjected to mediation and receives a specific type of representation of these events, which in turn can influence their understanding, opinions, and overall knowledge of the developments in both conflicts. The aim of the study is to determine how the Latvian-language news portal [LSM.lv](#) mediates Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the Palestinian terrorist group's Hamas attack on Israel, as well as to identify the types of framing present in the representations of both wars. To conduct the study, the following research questions have been formulated:

1. How is the process of mediation conducted on the news portal [LSM.lv](#) regarding Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the attack of Palestinian terrorist group Hamas on Israel?
2. How does the news portal [LSM.lv](#) frame publications related to the representations of both wars?
3. What influences the representations of both conflicts on the news portal [LSM.lv](#)?
4. What similarities and differences can be observed in the framing and representations of both conflicts on the news portal [LSM.lv](#)?

Methodology

For the research, the time period from 24 February 2022, to 7 April 2024 was chosen, and framing analysis was applied alongside qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Additionally, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with the foreign news editor of the news portal [LSM.lv](#), Ģirts Kasparāns, the foreign news editor of *Latvijas Radio*, Rihards Plūme, and the foreign news editor of *Latvijas Televīzija*, Ina Strazdiņa. The research was conducted using a deductive approach. Initially, a selection of publications from [LSM.lv](#) was made using the keywords "Russia's invasion of Ukraine", "Ukraine", and "Israeli-Palestinian conflict". These were then systematically organized in separate tables

according to their publication dates. The tables included a content analysis of the publications based on categories developed by the author:

- 1. **Date** – when the news was published;
- 2. **Author** – who wrote the news;
- 3. **Headline** – the title of the news piece;
- 4. **Event** – the event covered in the news;
- 5. **Cover Image** – the main image accompanying the news;
- 6. **Additional Information Sources** – whether the news includes references to social media posts, videos, images, or other types of information.

The tables also featured a framing analysis using a model adapted by the author, based on Johan Vincent Galtung’s concepts of “peace journalism” and “war journalism”, as well as framing categories proposed by Crispin Maslog and Seow Ting Lee for “peace journalism” and “war journalism”. The basis of the framing analysis model is Galtung’s concept, complemented by an additional section from framing categories of Maslog and Ting Lee that addresses language usage in news reporting.

Table 1. Adapted Framing Analysis Model

Peace/Conflict Journalism	War/Violence Journalism
<p>1. Oriented towards Peace/Conflict</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explores the formation of conflict; side X, side Y, Z issues; overall focus on mutual benefit.• Open space and time; any causes and outcomes, including historical/cultural contexts.• Ensures transparency and clarity of the conflict.• Gives “voice” to all sides; empathy and understanding.• Views war/conflict as a problem, focusing on conflict creativity.• Humanizes all sides; the more weapons, the worse.• Acts proactively: prevention before violence/war begins.• Focuses on the invisible sides and consequences of violence (trauma and fame, damage to structure/culture).	<p>1. Oriented towards War/Violence</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focuses on the “arena” of conflict; two conflicting sides – one victory, with a zero-sum orientation.• Closed space and time; causes and resolutions are confined to the “arena”, focusing on who “threw the first stone”.• Makes the war opaque and unclear.• “Us-Them” journalism, propaganda, voice for “us”.• Views “them” as the problem, focusing on gaining an advantage in the war.• Dehumanization of “them”; the more weapons, the worse weapon.• Reacts rather than acts: waits for violence before reporting.• Focuses on visible consequences of violence (killed, wounded, and material losses).
<p>2. Oriented towards Truth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exposes untruths from all sides.• Reveals all cases of concealment.	<p>2. Oriented towards Propaganda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exposes “their” untruths.• Helps maintain “our” lies.

Peace/Conflict Journalism	War/Violence Journalism
3. Oriented towards People <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focuses on suffering around the world; on women, the elderly, children, giving “voice” to those without one.• Names all who commit wrongdoings.• Focuses on people who promote peace.	3. Oriented towards Elite <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focuses on “our” suffering; on capable elite men, giving them “voice” and allowing them to speak through the media.• Names those on “their” side who commit wrongdoings.• Focuses on the elite who promote peace.
4. Oriented towards Solution <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peace = absence of violence + creativity.• Highlights peace initiatives to prevent future wars.• Focuses on structure, culture, and peaceful society.• Outcomes: resolution, restoration, reconciliation.	4. Oriented towards Victory <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Peace = victory + truce.• Peace initiatives are hidden until “victory is in hand”.• Focuses on treaties, society controlled by institutions.• Moves to another war or returns if the previous conflict reignites.
Language	
5. Avoids language that favours victims – reports and explains what people have done and could do, and how people are coping.	5. Uses language that favours victims – for example, “poor”, “devastated”, “vulnerable”, “miserable”, “tragic”, “demoralized”, when describing people.
6. Avoids language that incites dislike – uses precise descriptions, names, or terms.	6. Uses language that incites dislike – for example, “cruel”, “horrible”, “brutal”, “barbaric”, “inhumane”, “tyrant”, “savage”, “terrorist”, “extremist”, “fundamentalist”.
7. Uses moderate and objective language – avoids emotional words, uses strong language only in the gravest situations, avoids exaggeration.	7. Uses language that evokes emotions – for example, “genocide”, “murder”, “massacre”, “systematic rape”, or “forced displacement”.

Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted on the basis of fifteen main questions, which were adapted during the interview to the relevant event, namely, Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine or the attack of Palestinian terrorist group Hamas on Israel, and supplemented based on the responses given by the interviewees:

1. What are the main sources from which information about events is obtained?
2. Is it important to confirm the obtained information through multiple sources?
3. Considering the potential risks of fake news and disinformation, how is the information verified?
4. How is the language barrier addressed?

5. Is there any kind of collaboration with other news media – in Latvia and abroad – to obtain information?
6. How about information coming from the government? Can it always be trusted?
7. How is it ensured that news about events is objective and does not give undue attention to one country or the other?
8. What about the choice of language and terminology used to reflect the events?
9. Which events receive the most attention?
10. Which events are not adequately covered?
11. What is the most challenging aspect of creating news about these two events?
12. How important is it to include audiovisual and visual material, such as images from the event location, in the news?
13. How important is it for a correspondent from the media outlet to be on the ground?
14. Does funding affect the representation of news?
15. Is there a set number of journalists who work on and create news about these events?

Johan Vincent Galtung developed the concepts of “peace journalism” and “war journalism” to identify how media outlets frame conflicts. These concepts offer two competing frames, each divided into four categories. “Peace journalism” is oriented towards peace/conflict, truth, people, and solutions, while “war journalism” focuses on war/violence, propaganda, elites, and victory. Each category explains why certain news falls under either frame. According to Galtung, a news piece cannot mix both frames – if it aims to support peace, it cannot adopt the perspective of “war journalism” (Galtung 2003, 178). Crispin Maslog and Seow Ting Lee highlight that “peace journalism” aligns with a framing approach, where framing analysis organizes news content through selection, emphasis, exclusion, and elaboration. They expanded on Galtung's concepts by developing their own model of “peace journalism” and “war journalism,” each with 13 indicators to classify news content (Lee, Maslog 2005, 325–326).

Professors Patti M. Valkenburg and Holli A. Semetko argue that news frames act as “conceptual tools” used by media and the public to convey and interpret messages. How news is framed influences the message received, shaping public perception, beliefs, and opinions about global events (Semetko, Valkenburg 2000, 94). Framing analysis in media can be conducted inductively or deductively. The inductive approach freely explores news without predetermined frames, identifying them during the process. It suits small samples but is difficult to replicate. The deductive approach uses predefined frames, identifying only those

during the study. It is suitable for large samples, allows for comparing different media, and can be reused in other studies (Semetko, Valkenburg 2000, 94–95).

In analysing [LSM.lv](#) publications, content analysis categories were developed. Quantitative analysis provided numerical data on publication frequency, authors, dates, and topics, while qualitative analysis offered in-depth examination of news and interview content. Content analysis is a method for systematically identifying message characteristics to infer meaning. It can analyse various forms of social communication, including documents, transcripts, photos, and videos (Berg 2001, 240). Divided into quantitative and qualitative methods, content analysis can address either numerical aspects or the deeper meanings of communication (Berg 2001, 2–3). Though they can be used independently, both approaches are often combined – quantitative analysis measures frequency and duration, while qualitative analysis interprets the meaning. Content analysis can study nearly any form of communication from either a quantitative or a qualitative perspective (Berg 2001, 241). In media research, content analysis is widely used to classify and analyse communication systematically based on predefined categories. However, it cannot determine the impact of content on its audience, focusing solely on the material itself (Berger 2016, 390–392).

The selected publications on the news portal [LSM.lv](#) allowed content analysis to determine how Russia's invasion of Ukraine and Hamas's attack on Israel were framed. To further understand the media's process, three semi-structured interviews were also conducted with key editors: Ģirts Kasparāns ([LSM.lv](#)), Ina Strazdiņa (Latvian Television), and Rihards Plūme (Latvian Radio). These interviews provided insights into decision-making processes, source verification, and news framing. A semi-structured interview is a type of qualitative interview that is in-depth and flexible, with a clear purpose. It encourages the interviewee to express their views and provide explanations on specific topics (Byrne 2004, 180–182). Interviews in research offer flexibility in adapting questions, provide richer, in-depth answers, and allow for observing nonverbal cues like expressions and gestures. They also give the interviewer control over the environment and question flow, enabling spontaneity and ensuring responses are genuine and independent. Interviews ensure completeness, as questions can be revisited if needed. They also allow for the documentation of key details, and the ability to ask complex questions with explanations helps gather deeper insights that other methods might miss (Bailey 1994, 157–158). Interviews have several drawbacks, including high costs, the time required for preparation, conducting, and analysing, and difficulties in reaching respondents, especially those in different regions or reluctant to share openly. Interviews can be hard to anonymize and standardize, often needing adjustments for each participant. Moreover, not all questions may be answered meaningfully, even if responses are provided (Bailey 1994, 158–159).

Results

The study analysed a total of 191 news articles on Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and 162 articles on the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas attack on Israel. The publications were analysed over the period from 24 February 2022, to 7 April 2024. Additionally, three semi-structured interviews were conducted with [LSM.lv](#) foreign news editor Ģirts Kasparāns, Latvijas Radio foreign news editor Rihards Plūme, and Latvian Television foreign news editor Ina Strazdiņa. The news portal [LSM.lv](#) has consistently followed both conflicts – Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the attack of Palestinian terrorist group Hamas on Israel – since their early days, regularly publishing updates almost every day on the developments of both events. However, greater attention has been focused on Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as evidenced by the large number of news articles published nearly daily on this topic. Nevertheless, there have been several days when [LSM.lv](#) did not publish any news regarding one or the other conflict. Through the analysis of publication framings, it was determined that “peace journalism” framings were identified in all the analysed news articles, indicating that both conflicts are framed within the context of “peace journalism”. In the news portal [LSM.lv](#) publications covering Russia's full-scale invasion, the most dominant factor within the “peace journalism” framing is an orientation towards peace/conflict, identified in all 191 analysed articles. The next most prevalent factor is a focus on people, which was observed in 113 articles. This is followed by a focus on truth, identified in 87 articles, and a focus on solutions, which appeared only in 21 articles. Additionally, the framing analysis revealed that [LSM.lv](#) uses moderate and objective language in its news, avoiding language that provokes hostility and refraining from language that overly favours victims – these three factors were found in all the analysed articles. In the [LSM.lv](#) news articles covering the attack of Palestinian terrorist group Hamas on Israel, the most frequently identified “peace journalism” framing factor is an orientation towards peace/conflict, found in all 162 analysed articles. Similarly, the next most prevalent factor is a focus on people, identified in 142 articles. This is followed by a focus on truth, which appears in 123 articles, and finally, a focus on solutions, identified in 98 articles. Just as with the coverage of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, [LSM.lv](#) also employs moderate and objective language in its publications about the Hamas attack on Israel, avoiding language that provokes hostility or overly favours victims – these language factors were identified in all 162 analysed articles. The data obtained for both conflicts indicate that they are framed within the context of “peace journalism”. The similar number of factors identified for each conflict suggests that [LSM.lv](#) follows a similar approach or principle in reporting on both Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas attack on Israel. This approach involves

thoroughly investigating and explaining the causes, reasons, and consequences of the conflicts, providing extensive information on the events, thereby enhancing transparency. The news articles incorporate perspectives from multiple parties involved, uncovering truths and falsehoods from both sides of the conflict. They also focus on people, detailing how the events and the conflicts as a whole affect them, and they make efforts to explore potential peace solutions to end the conflicts. All these aspects are communicated using language that is generally objective, avoiding emotional manipulation. The news does not use sensationalist language or terms that could overly attract the audience's attention or provoke specific emotional reactions. The information and data obtained from the semi-structured interviews with the foreign news editors of [LSM.lv](#), Latvian Radio, and Latvian Television not only complement the news analysis but also confirm it. The journalists' statements in the interviews affirm that the primary goal is to produce publications that explain the conflicts to the audience, ensuring that they receive as accurate and truthful information as possible, presented in an objective manner. Although all three media outlets acknowledge that they have maintained a neutral position in one conflict – the Hamas attack on Israel – while taking Ukraine's side in the other hostility – Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine – the statements made in the interviews, emphasizing that the news is still produced objectively regardless of the media's stance, are corroborated by the news analysis and the data obtained.

Conclusions

The study determined how the Latvian-language news portal [LSM.lv](#) mediates Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas attack on Israel, as well as identified the types of framing present in the representations of both wars. In total, the study analysed 353 publications from the news portal [LSM.lv](#) during the period from 24 February 2022 to 7 April 2024. This included 191 publications on Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, selected using the keywords "Russia's invasion of Ukraine" and "Ukraine", and 162 publications on the attack of Palestinian terrorist group Hamas on Israel, selected using the keywords "Israel and Palestinian conflict". The study was conducted based on theories of mediatization, representation, news values, and framing approaches. The analysis was carried out by the author of the study, who adapted and applied Galtung's concepts of "peace journalism" and "war journalism", as well as Maslog's and Lee's framing categories for "peace journalism" and "war journalism". Using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis, specific categories were created for the analysis of the publications, and three semi-structured interviews were conducted with [LSM.lv](#) foreign news editor Ģirts Kasparāns, Latvian Radio foreign news editor Rihards Plūme, and

Latvian Television foreign news editor Ina Strazdiņa. In the research section, based on the theoretical framework described in the master's thesis, a study was conducted involving the analysis of LSM.lv publications on Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas attack on Israel, as well as three semi-structured interviews with the foreign news editors of LSM.lv, Latvian Radio, and Latvian Television. The mediatization process and the identified framing in the publications related to the representations of both wars were examined. Thus, summarizing the theoretical framework and considering the data obtained in the study, it can be concluded that the news portal LSM.lv provides high-quality mediation for both Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas attack on Israel. It creates and delivers well-crafted, informative publications to its audience, incorporating a wide range of information sources. The content is reliable, as the portal carefully selects and verifies information while covering both conflicts, even going to the conflict zones to ensure the information is as open and truthful as possible. Additionally, the news coverage of both conflicts is highly diverse.

Author's note. The current paper is based on a master's thesis developed and defended in the master's study programme "Communication Science" at the University of Latvia Faculty of Social Sciences. The research supervisor of the thesis is Professor Vita Zelče.

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