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Narratives of the War and Newspaper Photography (Perception of the Full-Scale Russian Invasion of Ukraine by The Guardian)

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In this study, the authors combine a narrative approach to newspaper photography analysis with a quantitative, computer-assisted analysis in order to discover how the perception of the full-scale invasion changed depending on the phase of the full-scale war. **Method**. The study material included 2665 captions for photos in publications from the "Ukraine" section of The Guardian, from February 24 to December 31, 2022. We used Python modules and libraries to process data. With the bs4 module and the lxml library, photo captions were extracted. As far as photo captions are used to describe the photo, the authors used the descriptions to get the stories and then the narratives. We used the Spacy library's dependency parser to get the basic narrative's components. With this instrument, it is possible to automatically analyse the sentence's structure and define subjects, predicates, and objects. The texts were divided according to the full-scale war periodization, according to the General Staff of Ukraine: 1st phase: February 24 – April 2022 (the battle for Kyiv, retreat of Russian troops from Northern Ukraine); 2nd phase: May – August 2022 (the battle for Donbas); 3rd phase: September – December 2022 (Kharkiv, Kherson offensive operations, attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure, blackouts). The proposed algorithm for defining narratives makes identifying similarities and changes within the phases possible. **Conclusions**. The photos used by the Guardian maintain the emphasis on the humanitarian agenda, which is an established focus in war photography, showing war not so much through the perception of the military as through the suffering of civilians. Thus, the narratives reveal a transformation in understanding the full-scale war: from being perceived as horrible and terrifying, provoking a worldwide reaction in the first phase, to being normalised and symbolised in the second and third phases.

Keywords: The Guardian, Russian-Ukrainian war, full-scale Russian invasion, 2022, media narratives, newspaper photography, captions, quantitative analysis

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Наративи війни та газетна фотографія (сприйняття повномасштабного російського вторгнення в Україну газетою The Guardian)

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У цьому дослідженні автори поєднують наративний підхід до аналізу газетної фотографії з кількісним комп'ютерним аналізом, щоб з'ясувати, як змінювалося сприйняття російського вторгнення залежно від фази повномасштабної війни. **Метод**. Матеріали дослідження включають 2665 публікацій з розділу «Україна» The Guardian, опублікованих з 24 лютого по 31 грудня 2022 року. Для обробки даних використовувалися модулі та бібліотеки Python. За допомогою модуля bs4 та бібліотеки lxml було вилучено підписи до фотографій. Оскільки підписи до фотографій слугують для їх опису, автори використовували ці описи для отримання історій, а потім – наративів. Для отримання основних компонентів наративу використовувався парсер залежностей бібліотеки Spacy. За допомогою цього інструменту можна автоматично аналізувати структуру речення і визначати суб'єкт (підмет), присудок (предикат) і додаток (об'єкт). Тексти були розділені відповідно до періодизації повномасштабної війни, згідно з даними Генерального штабу України: 1-а фаза: 24 лютого – квітень 2022 року (битва за Київ, відступ російських військ з півночі України); 2-а фаза: травень – серпень 2022 року (битва за Донбас); 3-я фаза: вересень – грудень 2022 року (Харківська, Херсонська наступальні операції, атаки на українську енергетичну інфраструктуру, блекаути). Запропонований алгоритм визначення наративів дозволяє виявити подібності та зміни всередині фаз. **Висновки**. Фотографії, що використовувалися The Guardian, демонструють акцент на гуманітарному порядку денному, який прослідковується на світлинах, показуючи війну не стільки через перспективу військових, скільки через страждання цивільних. Наративи демонструють трансформацію розуміння повномасштабної війни: спочатку, під час першої фази, вона сприймалася, як щось трагічне та жахливе, те, що провокує усесвітню реакцію, але під час другої-третьої фази воєнні події сприймалися як щось звичайне, а також додавався символічний аспект.

Ключові слова: The Guardian, російсько-українська війна, повномасштабне російське вторгнення, 2022 рік, наративи, газетна фотографія, підписи, кількісний аналіз

Since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the press in Western Europe has mostly supported Ukraine. In doing so, the British media has been particularly active in reflecting national consensus (Martill & Sus, 2024). Researchers concluded that leading British newspapers primarily covered the political aspects of Russia's war against Ukraine (Ediz, Ediz & Yavuz, 2025), the construction of the image of Ukrainian refugees (Pavlichenko & Popivniak, 2022), and the interpretations and visions of the war by various countries' leaders (Dinçer, 2022). However, visual representations were not considered very often.

According to Susan Sontag, "In an era of information overload, the photograph provides a quick way of apprehending something and a compact form for memorizing it. The photograph is like a quotation, or a maxim or proverb" (Sontag, 2003, p. 22). The expressiveness of the visual

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language of photography as a medium, which at the same time, according to Susan Sontag's critical remark, cannot itself explain anything (Sontag, 2005, p. 17) and allows for ambiguous interpretations depending on the context, creates an invariably relevant research problem. The documentary and ethical aspect of covering the Russian-Ukrainian war through photography is the focus of Ukrainian media researchers (Lysenko, 2023; Tabinskyi, 2025).

Photography researchers usually interpret material using a qualitative approach, which is understandable. In this study, however, we decided to combine a narrative approach to newspaper photography analysis with a quantitative, computer-assisted analysis in order to discover how the perception of the full-scale invasion changed depending on the phase of the full-scale war.

Media narratives

Although there is plenty of research where media and narratives are mentioned, in some cases, there are no clear definitions of these terms or of the procedure of narrative reconstruction.

Generally, a narrative is understood as a story. However, when speaking about narrative analysis and shaping public opinion through the media, it is essential to view it at a higher level.

Smith (2016) describes it as 'a resource that culture and social relations make available to us, and which we use to construct our stories', and 'a template – scaffolding of sorts – from which to build and structure [...] the stories'. Thus, narratives help us process our stories, construct meanings, and see the synthesis of 'multiple elements of identity presentation into a coherent identity construct' (Bates, Hobman & Bell, 2020). Mass media are one of the primary sources of narratives.

There is also some confusion surrounding the term in scholarly literature. Sometimes, narratives are used to explore the specific themes of discussions on social networks (Rodrigues et al., 2023). Other times, people's stories are included in media texts (Fletcher-Randle, 2022). However, these are definitely not media narratives; they are just stories.

To reconstruct media narratives, we need to consider patterns that occur more or less constantly in media texts.

One approach to identifying such patterns is frame analysis. E.g., researchers using this approach reconstructed media narratives of war and tourism, concluding that some narratives can "undermine the confidence of tourism practitioners and raise concerns among investors and potential tourists" (Tan & Cheng, 2024). Thus, media narratives can demonstrate how coverage influences stakeholders' perceptions. Another study used frames and content analysis to explore how newspapers covered the war on terror. Hussain & Munawar (2017) demonstrated the difference between 'war' and 'peace' frames. This approach mainly allows us to show the thematic dimensions of narratives, but not their structural elements.

There is also another approach to differentiate some "motiffes" – "recurring aspects of stories (e.g., events/happenings, conflict/tensions, action, certain phrases) that create a web of meanings" (McGannon et al, 2023). Alternatively, there can be some actions, events, and characters. E.g., researchers propose the algorithm for a narrative identification: "characters – usually individuals and institutions – act. Acts are meaningful (i.e., they have social significance and moral worth), and they are undertaken with motive (the emotionally charged desire to achieve or prevent something)" (Mroz, Papoutsi, & Greenhalgh, 2021).

For this study, we define a media narrative as a 'generalised' storytelling construct, in which fact-based stories selected by the media are used as building blocks. We suppose that specific scenarios, characters, and actions will occur more frequently, enabling us to identify the most popular narratives. These narratives, of course, influence readers' interpretations of events. We will not use frames to reconstruct these narratives, as these mainly help researchers see different media coverage perspectives. The basic components of the narrative will be more important to us. First, we will analyse the stories told by the newspapers' photos – the building blocks of the narratives – and then we will identify the most popular storytelling constructs. To this end, the second

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approach described earlier will be more effective as it does not focus on understanding, attitudes, and interpretations but considers the basic elements of storytelling.

War photography and its challenges

The visual representation of war through photography is a significant and contentious topic with a long history, dating back to the Crimean War (1853–1856) and the American Civil War (1861–1865). While the pioneer of war photography, Roger Fenton, was more of a propaganda mission commissioned by the British government, creating a positive narrative of the Crimean War as a heroic adventure and avoiding depictions of death and the horrors of war, the Americans Matthew Brady, Alexander Gardner, and Timothy O'Sullivan were the first to break this taboo by taking "brutally legible pictures of dead soldiers". They had exclusive permission from President Lincoln to access the battlefield, but were not commissioned as Fenton had been (Sontag, 2003, pp. 50–52). They justified their shocking war photographs by the documentary mission of photography as a dispassionate medium. "The camera is the eye of history," Brady is supposed to have said (Sontag, 2003, p. 52).

Since then, war photographs have been created with a particularly humanistic purpose: influencing public opinion, promoting anti-war narratives, and forming a social consensus against war. Susan Sontag noted: "For a long time some people believed that if the horror could be made vivid enough, most people would finally take in the outrageousness, the insanity of war" (Sontag, 2003, p. 14). However, "The photographs Mathew Brady and his colleagues took of the horrors of the battlefields did not make people any less keen to go on with the Civil War. […] Photographs cannot create a moral position, but they can reinforce one and help build a nascent one." (Sontag, 2005, pp. 12–13). Indeed, the depiction of the horrors of war, and especially the suffering of civilians, has an ambiguous effect depending on the degree of proximity of the viewer to the events. If, for a distant and neutral observer, it is an argument for an immediate end to the war, for others, it can be a call to arms in defence of justice and the continuation of the war. So, viewers' beliefs can result in the radically different narratives that war photography can convey. "The photographer's intentions do not determine the meaning of the photograph, which will have its own career, blown by the whims and loyalties of the diverse communities that have use for it." (Sontag, 2003, p. 39). Therefore, one should not rely on the photo to "speak for itself". "[...] one day captions will be needed, of course. The misreadings, misrememberings, and new ideological uses for the pictures will make their difference. Normally, if there is any distance from the subject, what a photograph "says" can be read in several ways (Sontag, 2003, p. 29).

Another problem, noted by Susan Sontag, is the decrease in society's sensitivity to shocking photographs due to their increase in number and their transformation into clichés. "Conscripted as part of journalism, images were expected to arrest attention, startle, and surprise. […] The hunt for more dramatic (as often described) images drives the photographic enterprise and is part of the normality of a culture in which shock has become a leading stimulus of consumption and source of value. […] The image as shock and the image as cliché are two aspects of the same presence" (Sontag, 2003, pp. 22–23). "Photographs shock insofar as they show something novel. Unfortunately, the ante keeps getting raised—partly through the very proliferation of such images of horror." (Sontag, 2005, p. 14) In addition, the perception of war photographs is influenced by the factor of "war fatigue": "It is because a war, any war, does not seem as if it can be stopped that people become less responsive to the horrors. Compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs to be translated into action, or it withers." (Sontag, 2003, p. 101).

However, despite these warnings, suffering needs to be highlighted, and ethical challenges will arise again and again. These include the dilemma between documenting grief and respecting the victims and privacy of their relatives (see Naidenko, 2023; Lysenko, 2023), or the question of the admissibility of comparing the experiences of suffering of people during the war in different countries, or even on contrary sides of the same war. In particular, after criticism from Ukrainian

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photojournalists, the jury of the World Press Photo 2025 competition recognized the mistake of combining the photos "*Beyond the Trenches*" by Florian Bachmeier and "*Underground Field Hospital*" by Nanna Heitmann into a visual pair, which depict, respectively, a Ukrainian girl from from Kharkiv Oblast who suffers from panic attacks due to the war, and a wounded militant of the self-proclaimed "Donetsk People's Republic" supported by Russia. "There is an obvious difference between a child suffering from the aftermath of war and the torment of a soldier from the occupying forces who causes this suffering," World Press Photo noted (Lobanok, 2025). In this situation, Susan Sontag's reasoning in "*Regarding the Pain of Others*" sounds like a kind of prediction: "To set […] sufferings [of people in besieged Sarajevo] alongside the sufferings of other people was to compare them (which hell was worse?), demoting […] martyrdom to a mere instance. [...] It is intolerable to have one's own sufferings twinned with anybody else's." (Sontag, 2003, p. 113). A narrative that actually equates the victim and the aggressor seems to be caused precisely by the observer's choice of a seemingly "neutral" and "impartial" position. The moral dilemma of peace and justice arises again.

In addition to the ethical problems of war photodocumentary, a significant threat to the authority of photography as a means of documenting reality and conveying the truth is the possibility of technical falsification or fabrication of the image. This possibility has increased significantly since photography went digital. In digital photography, the traditional physical medium of the photograph disappeared, and the difference between the original image and its copy was eliminated (see Mitchell, 1992). In turn, with the development of neural networks and generative artificial intelligence, this threat reaches a new level, as synthetic, entirely generated images appear to be almost indistinguishable from true photographs, but, in fact, such scenes and people have never existed (see Ritchin, 2025).

Method

For this study, we picked the most popular British newspapers and looked for those that have open access and are open to unlimited automatic parsing (collecting the data). According to Statista (2025) data, in 2024, the most popular papers were "The Sunday Times, The Guardian, and The Sun, with 37 percent of respondents reporting that they had a positive opinion of these publications". However, only the Guardian website allows information collection automatically without limits, which is why it was chosen.

It was possible to download all the texts from February 24 to December 31, 2022.

Python modules and libraries were used to process data.

With the requests module, it was possible to get 2665 publications from the "Ukraine" section.

We divided the texts according to the full-scale war periodization, according to the General Staff of Ukraine:

1st phase: February 24 – April 2022 (the battle for Kyiv, retreat of Russian troops from Northern Ukraine);

2nd phase: May – August 2022 (the battle for Donbas);

3rd phase: September – December 2022 (Kharkiv, Kherson offensive operations, attacks on Ukrainian energy infrastructure, blackouts).

After that, photo captions were extracted from the bs4 module and the lxml library. As far as photo captions are used to describe the photo, we used the descriptions to get the stories and then the narratives.

We used the Spacy library's dependency parser to get the basic narrative's components. With this instrument, it is possible to automatically analyse the structure of the sentence. Let us see the examples.

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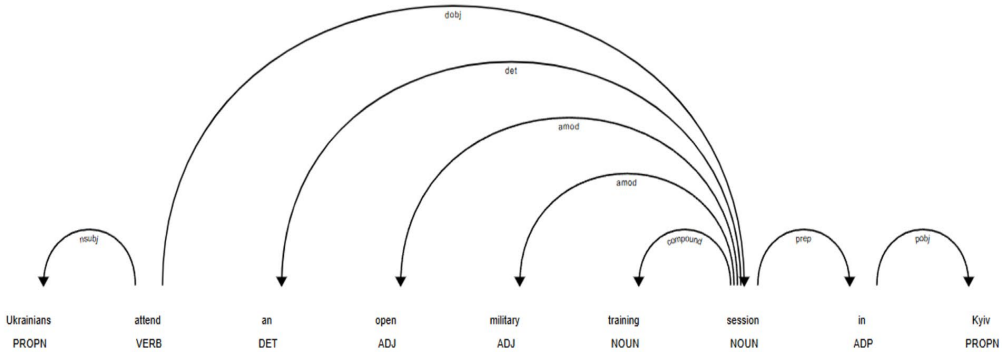
Figure 1.
The results of the sentence dependency analysis of the photo caption

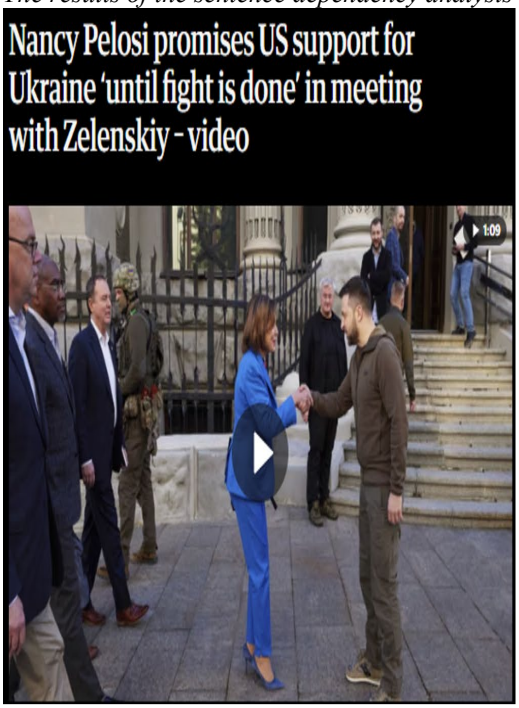
Ukrainians attend an open military training session in Kyiv. Photograph: Sergei Chuzavkov/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

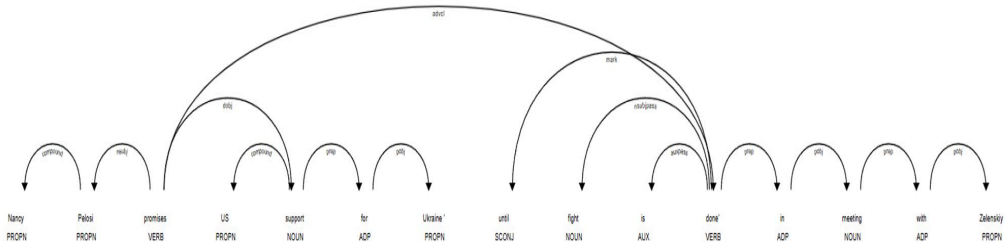


In Figure 1, the results of the sentence dependency analysis are visible. The subject (nsubj, “Ukrainians”), the predicate (VERB, “attend”), and the object (dobj, “session”) were defined.

ISSN 2312-5160
online ISSN 2786-4502

Figure 2.
The results of the sentence dependency analysis of the video caption





In Figure 2, there are results of video caption analysis: the subject (nsubj, “Pelosi”), the predicate (VERB, “promises”), and the object (dobj, “support”).

Thus, with this type of semantic analysis, it is possible to automatically define the basic narrative’s components: the subject / the main character, who acts; the action, and the object, which can also be understood as the goal of the subject.

Now, let us see the basic narratives from the three phases.

ISSN 2312-5160
online ISSN 2786-4502

Results and Discussion

1st phase: life of civilians during the war, refugees, politicians' statements and protests

Table 1.
The most popular subjects, predicates, and objects during the 1st phase

mentions	subject	mentions	predicate	mentions	object
52	people	46	say	20	city
50	woman	44	destroy	16	part
36	Russia	29	damage	16	placard
32	Ukraine	28	shell	14	building
32	Zelenskiy	26	leave	14	war
28	Putin	25	show	12	border
22	civilian	24	hit	12	bus
20	family	21	take	12	refugee
18	protester	17	hold	12	Russia
18	resident/ soldier	15	flee/help/walk	12	train

We can see that the primary focus was on civilians (people, women, civilians, families), the consequences of the war (destroy, shell, hit, building, city), movements (leave, refugee, bus, border). Politicians and states were also mentioned. The verb 'say' indicates the paper's interest in politicians' statements. Another topic is protests in Russia and worldwide (protesters, hold, placard).

Thus, here we have four leading narratives:

1) Civilians (primarily women) suffer because of the war, they are rescued by military, emergency specialists; the emotions are showed: "Firefighters help a woman to evacuate from a damaged apartment building in Mariupol"; "A woman is helped to cross a river on an improvised path under a destroyed bridge in the town of Irpin"; "A woman cries near her house in Bucha, where the mayor said 280 people had been buried in a mass grave".
2) People fleeing, crossing the border, using different types of transport (e.g., a bus): "Thousands of people brought to safety in a convoy of Ukrainian buses – video"; "People fleeing the besieged city of Mariupol in Ukraine on Monday".
3) Politicians declare something about the war: interpretations, definitions, attitudes: "'We will defend ourselves' from Russia, says Ukraine president Volodymyr Zelenskiy in

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speech– video"; "Boris Johnson vows to help refugees fleeing Ukraine, says Putin talks were a 'charade' – video".

4) People all over the world are protesting against the war: "'No to war!': Russian protesters defy Putin – video report"; "A banner calls on the UK government to help Ukrainian refugees at a protest in London against the Russian invasion".

2nd phase: life of civilians, military actions, Russian war crimes, and military ceremonies

Table 2.
The most popular subjects, predicates, and objects during the 2nd phase

mentions	subject	mentions	predicat	mentions	object
44	People	107	say	13	body
37	soldier	94	destroy	10	Flag
31	Zelenskiy	56	damage	10	Part
26	Putin	47	leave	9	Area
22	Ukraine	44	take	8	aftermath
20	smoke	41	show	8	people
20	troop	41	walk	8	Russia
20	woman	40	shell	7	City
15	man	33	kill	7	Fire
15	Russia	32	hit/rise	7	guard/vehicle

Some changes can be seen in the narratives: while civilians remain essential, other topics have emerged or become more popular, such as military actions (soldier, troop, smoke, rise, aftermath, guard, vehicle), everyday life during the war (walk, man), Russian military crimes and death during the war (body, kill), and the symbolisation of war (flag). Some topics, such as politicians' claims, destruction, and shelling, remain similar.

Let us define the narratives:

1) People are getting used to the war (people just standing near the debris or walking next to damaged buildings); women and men are shown: "People walk next to an apartment building hit by shelling"; "A man walks next to heavily damaged buildings and destroyed cars in Bakhmut, Donetsk region, eastern Ukraine".

2) Soldiers on duty, actions of the troops from both sides, injured soldiers, who are getting medical treatment: "Smoke and dirt rise in the city of Sievierodonetsk during fighting between Ukrainian and Russian troops this week"; "A Ukrainian soldier holds a Next Generation Light Anti-tank Weapon (NLAW) that was used to destroy a Russian armoured personnel carrier in March"; "Vasyl, a soldier being treated at a hospital in Dnipro".

3) People, media, or other institutions discover Russian war crimes: "Russian president, Vladimir Putin, and defence minister Sergei Shoigu. Western military officials claim the Russian leader could have made a catastrophic error that led to the deaths of 500 soldiers at the Siverski Donets river"; "Volunteers carry an exhumed body near Borodyanka, north-west of Kyiv"; "Graves dug by residents for civilians killed in Mariupol, photographed in April".

4) People, soldiers using flags to celebrate events, mostly connected with the war; military ceremonies: "A boy waves a national flag atop a seized Russian tank in Kyiv"; "Russian

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cosmonauts pose with a flag of the self-proclaimed Luhansk People's Republic at the International Space Station"; "A Russian national guard soldier with an attached letter Z, which has become a symbol of the Russian military, stands guard during a rehearsal for the Victory Day military parade".

3rd phase: Putin's announcements, liberation of Ukrainian territories, and the life of civilians on the lands destroyed by Russia

Table 3.
The most popular subjects, predicates, and objects during the 3rd phase

mentions	nsubjs	mentions	verbs	mentions	objects
75	Putin	122	say	235	Ukraine
71	soldier	96	destroy	151	region
46	People	73	damage	139	Kyiv
45	Zelenskiy	53	show	99	Russia
41	resident	53	take	97	strike
33	Russia	45	make	90	Kherson
33	woman	45	walk	73	building
31	man	43	stand	65	city
28	troop	41	see	62	attack
25	force	40	hit	60	war

The most obvious change is that Putin has become the most popular figure. It is also interesting that Ukraine has changed from being the subject to being the object. Russia can be described in both roles. We can also see two Ukrainian regions: Kyiv and Kherson. This change can thus be explained by the liberation of Ukrainian territories, when the regions or Ukraine were mentioned as objects in the captions.

Therefore, it is possible to define the narratives:

1) Putin's announcements (in particular – the mobilization), participation in the ceremonial events: "A young Russian hugs his mother at a military recruitment centre in Volgograd after Vladimir Putin ordered a mobilization"; "Vladimir Putin addresses crowds at a concert to celebrate the claimed annexation of Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia".

2) Ukrainian troops, forces, soldiers, liberating the occupied territories; everyday life of the soldiers: "Russian armoured vehicles abandoned in Balakliia, Kharkiv region on Saturday, September 10. Ukrainian forces confirmed they had entered the town of Kupiansk in eastern Ukraine, in a lightning counter-offensive that has seen swathes of territory recaptured"; "A Ukrainian soldier helps a wounded comrade as troops move down a road in the Kharkiv region".

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3) Life of civilians during the war: the residents near the destroyed property, the life of people near the frontlines: “A man walks by a street market destroyed by military strikes in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on September 6”; “A woman rides past a destroyed building in Izium, Kharkiv region”.

Conclusion

The proposed algorithm for defining narratives makes identifying similarities and changes within the phases possible.

Generally, the photos used by the Guardian maintain the emphasis on the humanitarian agenda, which is an established focus in war photography, showing war not so much through the perception of the military as through the suffering of civilians.

Civilians were represented throughout all the phases; however, the topic of civilian suffering due to the war was most prominent in the first phase. This outcome contradicts previous findings (Ediz, Ediz & Yavuz, 2025) regarding Ukraine-related publications’ political and economic focus in the British press. While the researchers analysed the verbal texts, this discovery regarding the ‘humanitarian focus’ of the visual texts suggests that news about politics and economics was contextualised regarding the impact on civilians whose lives and property were endangered by the full-scale invasion. Further research could consider the gender roles portrayed by photographers, as women were often depicted as victims. It is also possible to see that the focus of the narratives about civilians changed: in the first phase, the circumstances of the war were depicted as extraordinary; in the second and third phases, scenes from everyday life were predominantly chosen by photographers. Additionally, families were mentioned as subjects during the first phase; afterwards, only men and women were mentioned. Thus, family ties/stories were not so important.

In the context of refugees, this topic was also the most popular during the first phase. Afterwards, the journalist mentioned topics such as evacuation, fleeing due to war, and displacement. However, the term ‘refugee’ was not popular. Captions mostly referred to ‘people’ or ‘women’. This can be explained by more empathetic attitudes towards Ukrainians in the British press when discussing refugees. They were seen not just as refugees from a faraway country, but as people similar to the British.

The popularity of the political dimension is also visible in our case study. Politicians were mostly shown while making a declaration; Zelensky and Putin were the most popular, but Putin had the most mentions during the third phase. This can be explained by the partial mobilisation announcement, in which British journalists tried to contrast “ordinary Russians”, who were “forced” to join the army, with the Kremlin. Additionally, this war criminal was shown at various events connected with the ‘celebration’ of the illegal annexation of occupied regions. This was also an attempt to oppose the Russian retreat on the frontlines and the official reaction of the Kremlin.

As for the narratives about military actions, it is interesting that these were not among the most popular during the first phase – the narratives about civilians displaced them. The everyday life of soldiers was mostly depicted. It is also interesting that individual scenes with soldiers were more popular than generalised scenes about the troops’/forces’ actions. (Surprisingly, this seems to be reminiscent of Roger Fenton’s approach, which focused on portraits and scenes from soldiers’ daily life rather than on combat). Additionally, the ‘humanitarian’ focus was evident here too, as numerous photographers showed injured soldiers and attempted to convey their suffering.

The British press can also present a more generalised representation of the sides. Russian soldiers or troops were depicted as part of the Russian military machine, whether during parades or other celebrations, guarding military objects, or in the context of war crimes. In contrast, the everyday life of Ukrainian soldiers was described. Thus, the public saw them as more relatable than the Russians. In the context of the 2022 counter-offensive operation, Ukrainians appeared as liberators. The Russians, on the other hand, remained occupiers.

There were also plans to show ordinary Russians against the war and Putin. This was evident during the first phase of Russian protests against the full-scale invasion. Afterwards, there were infrequent mentions in the captions, and the term 'protester' was not used; mostly words such as 'people' and 'woman' were used instead. This suggests that journalists did not perceive these protests as being particularly significant. A second opportunity to show Russians that they opposed the war emerged during the third phase. Mobilised Russians were shown in situations of 'forced' mobilisation. However, there was no constant repetition of the narrative of ordinary Russians trying to stop the war. Furthermore, while covering numerous Russian events in support of the war, journalists also showed ordinary Russians greeting the full-scale invasion.

Thus, the narratives reveal a transformation in understanding the full-scale war: from being perceived as something horrible and terrifying, provoking a worldwide reaction in the first phase, to being normalised and symbolised in the second and third phases. This echoes Sontag's note on the audience's desensitization to shocking images. The humanitarian perspective remains important in this context, with photos of civilians usually accompanying political issues.

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Declaration of generative artificial intelligence and technologies using artificial intelligence in the writing process.

The authors did not use artificial intelligence tools in the preparation of this article. The authors of the article bear full responsibility for the correct use and citation of sources.

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