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A Comparative Analysis of the Russia-Ukraine War Coverage on Arabic News Websites in 2025: Al Jazeera vs. Al Arabiya

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This article examines trends in the coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war on two Arabic websites, Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, three years after its start. The study aims to achieve the following objectives: to analyze and quantify the media content related to the war on these two major Arabic news websites, and to conduct a comparative analysis of the media content on both news websites, focusing on themes, issues, and coverage trends. **Method**. To analyze and quantify media content published on the Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya websites, specifically issues and trends, content analysis was utilized to research 99 pieces of media content from both websites published between February 24, 2025, and June 24, 2025. **Results.** It was observed that both websites primarily focused on the political topics of the war; secondly, both websites demonstrated an emphasis on the military aspect. The humanitarian sphere ranked third, while the economic coverage was relatively low. Both websites demonstrated a shared trend of portraying Ukraine in a more favorable light while framing Russia more negatively. However, the degree of intensity and editorial framing between the two media differed. **Conclusion**. Both websites engaged with various issues of the Russia-Ukraine war, including political, military, humanitarian, social, and economic issues, with different levels of attention. The coverage by both Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya of the Russia-Ukraine war was generally objective to some extent. However, a thorough analysis of the coverage trends indicates a slight bias favoring the Ukrainian perspective.

Keywords: Russia-Ukraine war, Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, issues, trends, media and mass communication

Порівняльний аналіз висвітлення російсько-української війни на арабських новинних сайтах у 2025 році: Al Jazeera проти Al Arabiya

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У цій статті розглядаються тенденції висвітлення російсько-української війни на двох арабських веб-сайтах, Al Jazeera та Al Arabiya, через три роки після її початку. Дослідження має на меті досягти таких цілей: проаналізувати та кількісно оцінити медіаконтент, пов'язаний з війною, на цих двох основних арабських новинних веб-сайтах, а також провести порівняльний аналіз медіаконтенту на обох новинних веб-сайтах, зосереджуючись на темах, проблемах та тенденціях висвітлення. **Метод**. Для аналізу та кількісної оцінки медіаконтенту, опублікованого на веб-сайтах Al Jazeera та Al Arabiya, було використано контент-аналіз для дослідження 99 медіаконтентів з обох веб-сайтів, опублікованих у період з 24 лютого 2025 року по 24 червня 2025 року. **Результати**. Було помічено, що обидва веб-сайти в основному зосереджувалися на політичних темах війни; по-друге, обидва веб-сайти продемонстрували акцент на військовому аспекті. Гуманітарна сфера посіла третє місце, тоді як економічне висвітлення було відносно низьким. Обидва веб-сайти продемонстрували спільну тенденцію зображувати Україну в більш сприятливому світлі, одночасно зображуючи Росію більш негативно. Однак ступінь інтенсивності та редакційне фреймування між двома ЗМІ відрізнялися. **Висновки**. Обидва вебсайти займалися різними питаннями російсько-української війни, включаючи політичні, військові, гуманітарні, соціальні та економічні, з різним рівнем уваги. Висвітлення російсько-української війни як Al Jazeera, так і Al Arabiya було загалом певною мірою об'єктивним. Однак ретельний аналіз тенденцій висвітлення свідчить про незначну упередженість на користь української точки зору.

Ключові слова: російсько-українська війна, Аль-Джазіра, Аль-Арабія, проблеми, тенденції, медіа і масова комунікація

Media coverage of wars and crises has a great power in our life, in fact it can shape the perception of these issues for countries and their governments on the one hand and influence the public opinion all over the world on the other hand, in addition to shaping attitudes towards wars, mobilizing public support, and creating perceptions of the enemy (Zrazhevska, 2025, p. 8). Hence, academic research into the media coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war as one of the most recent and significant current wars in the world, holds considerable significance in many parts of the world.

Currently, the Russia-Ukraine war is considered one of the most prominent events in the world. In fact, the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine began on February 24, 2022, and became one of the greatest threats to humanity since World War II, particularly in Europe. Many world leaders gave this assessment to the events as declared by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg, who stated, "The war in Ukraine is the most dangerous period for Europe since the Second World War" (Krainikova, & Prokopenko, 2025, p. 12).

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Accordingly, many media scholars inside and outside Ukraine continue to monitor the timeline of the Russia-Ukraine war through numerous studies that focus on media content related to this issue (Lee, 2023; Verbytska, 2024; Vidya Nadkarni et al., 2024; Uluşan, Özejder, 2024; Espírito Santo, 2024; García-Jiménez, Suárez-Álvarez, & Catalina-García, 2024; Wozniak, Liu, & Lind, 2024; Zecchinon, & Standaert, 2024).

A literature review conducted in this context reveals a few studies about Arabic media addressing the Russia-Ukraine war, in particular, the study "Al-Jazeera Arabic and Al-Jazeera English headlines on the Russian–Ukrainian conflict: a Hallidayan transitivity analysis" (Muwafi et al., 2024). This study explores how Al Jazeera Arabic (AJA) and Al Jazeera English (AJE) represented the participants involved in the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian conflict through their headlines. Analysis of transitivity patterns in AJA and AJE headlines highlighted both similar and different representations of the conflict. Another study focuses on the Russian narratives in the coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war in the Arabic versions of Russia Today Arabic and Sputnik (Styszyński, 2023, p. 12). Furthermore, by using a sample content on such websites as The Washington Times, the Russian Trud, the Egyptian Al-Ahram Gate, and the Saudi Al-Riyadh, El-Kholi (2022) studied their frameworks in covering the events of the Russia-Ukraine war (El-Kholi, 2022, p. 47).

This article examines trends in the coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war on Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya three years after its onset. The study aims to pursue the following objectives: to analyze the Arabic media's perspective on the war between Russia and Ukraine, to analyze and quantify the related content on these two major Arabic news websites from February 24, 2025, to June 24, 2025, specifically themes, issues, and trends, and compare these findings with previous analyses of both Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya.

Method

Since its onset on February 24, 2022, the Russia-Ukraine war has become a significant event that garnered extensive media coverage worldwide, including by the Arabic media. Many countries address this crisis through newspapers, TV channels, news websites, etc.

In this study, we choose to analyze the Russia-Ukraine war coverage by two major Arabic news websites : Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, three years into the war. We employed content analysis to quantify the media content published on these two websites. This media content reflects the main issues and trends presented in journalistic reports, news, or articles.

The selected period for this media content analysis corresponds to the beginning of the fourth year of the war (February 24, 2025) through June 24, 2025, totaling 121 days. Using systematic random sampling, we took 10 percent of the total number of days; resulting in 12 days for analysis and yielding 99 media pieces in total (see Appendix 1).

The sample of our study comprises 99 media pieces published on both Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya websites between February 24, 2025, and June 24, 2025. This study consists of two main stages: the first involved the analysis of the media pieces on both websites, and the second focused on comparing the findings.

Results and Discussion

A thematic comparative analysis of journalistic content published on the news websites of Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya regarding the Russia-Ukraine war covered the period from February 24, 2025, to June 24, 2025, and revealed the following findings:

The two news websites differed in the space allocated for covering the war. Al Jazeera features a permanent and dedicated section on its homepage, specially dedicated to the war, titled "War in Ukraine," whereas Al Arabiya includes its coverage of the war within a broader section labeled "Arab and the World." However, the two websites showed convergence in the total number of pieces published about the Russia-Ukraine war.
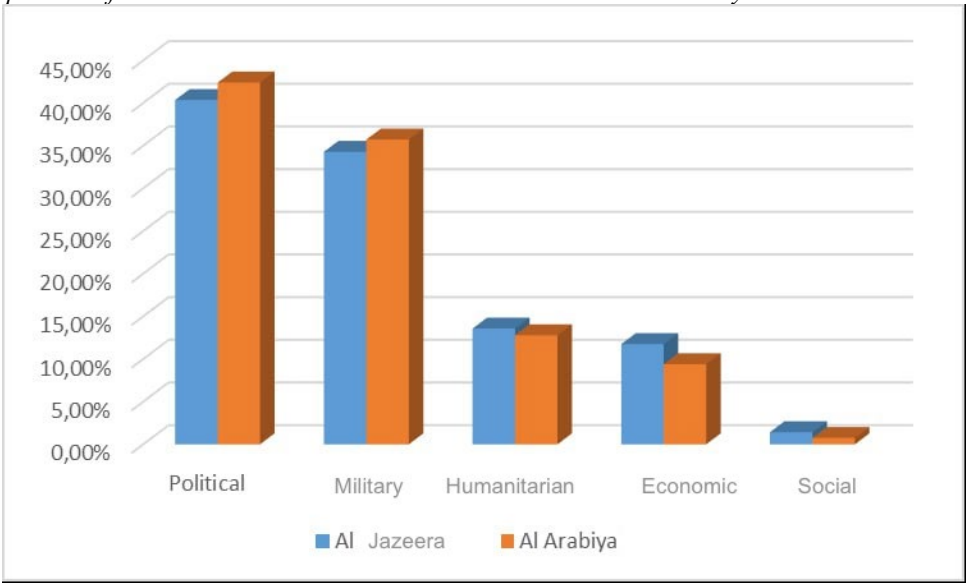
Table 1.

Total number of journalistic content on Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya websites

Media network	Al Jazeera	Al Arabiya
	51	**48**
Total	**99**	

Both Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya demonstrated a shared focus on the Russia-Ukraine war, providing comprehensive news coverage through reports, field dispatches, and analytical articles. These pieces were generally categorized under the labels "Russia News," "Ukraine News," or "Russia-Ukraine News," all of which addressed the conflict from multiple perspectives. The coverage prioritized the following dimensions in order: 1. Political dimension, 2. Military dimension, 3. Economic dimension, 4. Humanitarian dimension, 5. Social dimension.

Comparative analysis of thematic prioritization in the coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war

Figure 1.

Comparison of Thematic Prioritization between Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya

1. The Political dimension

The ascendency of the political dimension on both websites can be explained by the specific period under analysis, which was marked by significant political activity and tensions in international relations. This context was highly influenced by intense diplomatic efforts aimed at containing the conflict and facilitating negotiations and peace initiatives, with the ultimate objective of achieving a ceasefire and ending the war.

Throughout this timeframe, the coverage highlighted the role of the United States, particularly through the statements and positions of its president, Donald Trump, who was persistently

portrayed as a central and influential key actor in shaping the trajectory of the war, both politically and militarily. For instance, headlines such as "Trump urges Putin to cease fire and suggests Zelensky may be ready to relinquish Crimea" illustrate this framing (Al Jazeera). In the same vein, another report stated, "Rubio noted that, to achieve peace, both sides must be genuinely committed, warning that the United States would take a different course of action if Russia and Ukraine were not willing to pursue peace…" Following Washington's threat to withdraw its mediation, Russia affirmed its commitment to resolving the conflict with Ukraine (Al Arabiya).

Both media covered the willingness of Russia and Ukraine to engage in negotiations, along with appeals for a truce and ceasefire. For instance, Al Arabiya reported that "Ukraine expresses readiness for a meeting with Russia... and awaits the 'peace memorandum'" (Al Arabiya). Similarly, articles such as "Lavrov: A New Round of Negotiations with Ukraine Will Be Held Soon" framed diplomatic processes while underlining the mutual accusations between Moscow and Kyiv regarding the failure of talks (Al Arabiya). The coverage also included Russia's announcement of a three-day ceasefire and Ukraine's call for a minimum 30-day truce, both of which underscored the fragility of peace efforts (Al Arabiya).

In summary, both media prioritized the political dimension, yet with different emphases: Al Jazeera contextualized developments within global power reconfigurations, while Al Arabiya foregrounded ceasefire negotiations and the inflexibility of Russia's conditions. Together, their coverage framed the conflict as deeply rooted in the geopolitics of security guarantees.

2. The Military Dimension

Given the limited success of political and diplomatic initiatives, military developments constituted the second major theme in the coverage of the two media.

Al Arabiya frequently stressed the immediacy of battlefield events and their humanitarian consequences. Reports such as "More War Crimes and Attacks on Civilians" (Al Arabiya) and "Zelensky: We Arrested Two Chinese Nationals Fighting for Russia, and We Expect a U.S. Response" (Al Arabiya) highlighted both human suffering and international entanglements. The media also described counteroffensives, such as the "Spider Web", as significant escalations (Al Arabiya) and highlighted Russia's framing of the conflict as existential struggle (Al Arabiya).

By contrast, Al Jazeera often linked battlefield dynamics to broader geopolitical strategies. For example, the articles "Russia Announces Retaking of Kursk, Zelensky Announces Arrest of Chinese Fighters" (Al Jazeera) and "Ukrainian Forces Target Kharkiv and Sumy, While Washington Hints at Withdrawing from Peace Talks" (Al Jazeera) explored how military events intersected with diplomatic tensions. Analytical pieces, such as Dr. Mazen Al-Najjar's "Militarization of Europe: The Return of Cold War Atmosphere with Russia" (Al Jazeera), further underscored the war's broader geopolitical stakes.

In comparison, Al Arabiya opted for an event-driven, tactical lens focused on immediate battlefield outcomes and humanitarian fallout, whereas Al Jazeera framed military developments within strategic and Cold War-like geopolitical narratives.

3. The Humanitarian Dimension

Both media prioritized humanitarian issues yet framed them under different lights. Al Arabiya highlighted casualty counts, destruction, and moral narratives. Examples include "Ukraine: 14 Dead and 44 Injured in Russian Attack on Kyiv" (Al Arabiya), "Russian Airstrike on Sumy: 40 Drones Downed Near Zaporizhzhia" (Al Arabiya), and "Russia Accuses Ukraine of Delaying Prisoner Swap, Kyiv Denies It" (Al Arabiya). The media emphasized attacks on civilians, portraying Russia as the primary perpetrator, as seen in "Russian Military Assault on Ukraine's Civilians," where Zelensky described Russia as "the embodiment of evil" (Al Arabiya).

Al Jazeera, while concurrently addressing the issue of civilian casualties, placed more emphasis on humanitarian processes and their limitations. Reports such as "Ukraine Recovers

Bodies of 909 Soldiers Killed in Combat Following a Prisoner Swap" (Al Jazeera) and "Ukraine Recovers a New Batch of Its Children and Thanks Qatar" (Al Jazeera) showcased repatriation and family reunification efforts. Additionally, the medium explored psychological dimensions, as in "It Ended Quickly with One Achievement: What's Behind the Stalled Negotiations between Russia and Ukraine?" (Al Jazeera). In comparison, Al Arabiya presented humanitarian coverage in stark, event-driven terms, stressing Russian atrocities, while Al Jazeera embedded humanitarian issues within frameworks of processes, negotiations, and societal resilience.

4. The Economic Dimension

The economic dimension was equally significant but framed within political and strategic contexts. Al Jazeera underscored Ukraine's rejection of U.S. aid given the attached conditions (Al Jazeera), Kyiv's pursuit of U.S. investment guarantees (Al Jazeera), and Trump's prediction of an upcoming minerals agreement (Al Jazeera). In contrast, Al Arabiya, stressed Ukraine's parliamentary approval of the minerals agreement with the United States (Al Arabiya) and Kyiv's sanctions against China for allegedly arming Russia (Al Arabiya).

Consequently, both media treated economic issues as deeply political; Al Jazeera accentuated aid disputes and conditionality, while Al Arabiya emphasized sanctions and formal agreements. Together, their coverage suggests that economic reporting functioned less as financial analysis and more as a reflection of geopolitical bargaining.

5. The Social Dimension

The social dimension was the least covered by both media, yet their approaches varied. Al Jazeera contextualized social issues within the framework of domestic politics, noting declining support for President Zelensky and increasing pressures to hold elections (Al Jazeera). This framing presented public sentiment as a factor influencing political legitimacy and governance. In contrast, Al Arabiya treated the social dimension only peripherally, usually incorporating it into humanitarian narratives. One example cited the head of tribal affairs, who stated, "We cannot deliver any aid trucks without them being looted" (Al Arabiya). Such isolated mentions reduced social issues to mere logistical challenges in humanitarian aid, rather than reflecting deeper systemic dynamics.

Comparatively, Al Jazeera linked social themes to internal governance, while Al Arabiya reduced them to incidental references. Both media marginalized the social dimension relative to political, military, economic, and humanitarian narratives.
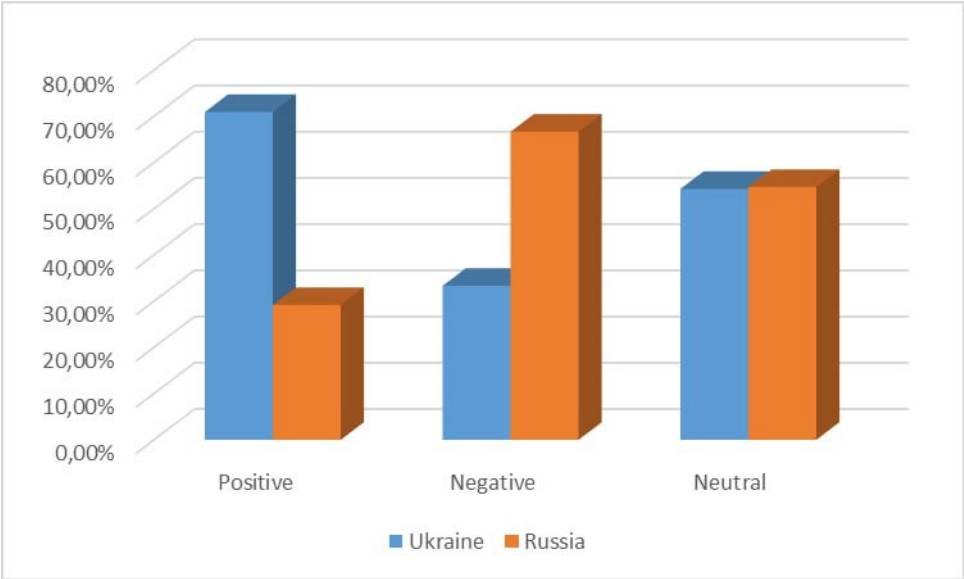
Overall, the comparative analysis of Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya demonstrates that both media framed the Russia-Ukraine war predominantly through state-centric and elite-driven narratives, with marked differences in emphasis across the five thematic dimensions. Politically, coverage converged on negotiations and ceasefire initiatives, though Al Jazeera placed these within the context of global geopolitical shifts while Al Arabiya foregrounded tactical diplomacy and Russian conditionality. Militarily, Al Arabiya adopted an event-driven, battlefield-centered approach, whereas Al Jazeera contextualized combat within broader strategic and Cold War legacies. Humanitarian reporting by Al Arabiya stressed casualties, destruction, and a moral condemnation of Russia, while Al Jazeera highlighted humanitarian processes such as prisoner swaps and child reunifications, linking them to the psychological toll of the war. Economically, both media treated financial issues as inseparable from politics: Al Jazeera underscored aid conditionality and negotiations, while Al Arabiya emphasized sanctions, agreements, and formal institutional processes. Finally, both media marginalized the social dimension, albeit with differing emphases: Al Jazeera framed it as a measure of political legitimacy and governance pressures in Ukraine, while Al Arabiya reduced it to sporadic humanitarian references. Collectively, these findings suggest that despite thematic variations, both media consistently privileged geopolitical and elite

perspectives over sustained engagement with the real-life experiences of ordinary people, thereby reinforcing the dominance of state-centric frames in international conflict reporting.

Comparative analysis of Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera coverage sentiment

Figure 2.

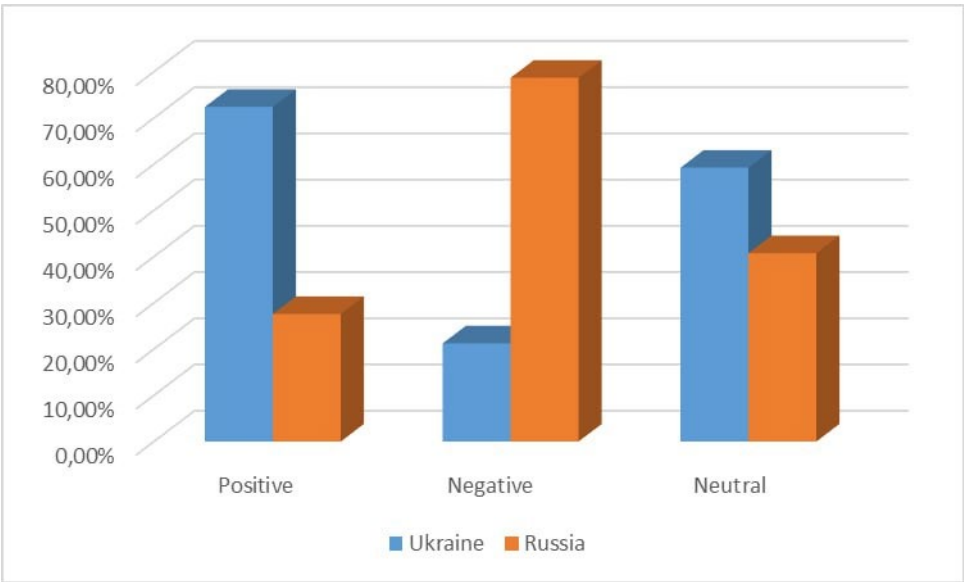*Al Arabiya coverage sentiment towards Russia and Ukraine*

The thematic analysis of Al Arabiya's reporting on the Russia-Ukraine war demonstrates a range of perspectives that fluctuate between positive, negative, and neutral framings depending on the context of the event. Quantitatively, Ukraine received the majority of positive coverage (70.83%), while negative framings were primarily directed at Russia (66.67%). Neutral portrayals were more frequently associated with Ukraine (54.29%) than with Russia. A closer examination of Ukraine-related coverage shows a relatively balanced distribution: neutral (37.25%), positive (33.33%), and negative (29.42%). Neutral reporting typically involved a balanced presentation of both Ukrainian and Russian viewpoints, particularly in diplomatic contexts, such as ceasefire negotiations and peace initiatives. Positive framings depicted Ukraine as a victim of aggression, legitimizing its right to self-defense, highlighting its military successes, and emphasizing its willingness to engage in peace efforts. Negative coverage of Ukraine was less frequent and largely stemmed from external criticism by international actors (e.g., Donald Trump, Elon Musk) or narratives of failed offensives.

Russia's portrayal was predominantly negative (56.60%), with frequent depictions of aggression, civilian targeting, and obstruction of peace efforts. The use of highly charged language, such as "terrorist state" or "criminal acts," reinforced this framing. Neutral portrayals (30.19%) were limited to factual reporting without evaluative language, whereas positive coverage (13.21%) was rare and largely associated with Russia's participation in peace talks or its ability to repel Ukrainian offensives. Overall, Al Arabiya's stance can be described as neutral-to-positive regarding Ukraine and predominantly negative toward Russia.

Figure 3.

Al Jazeera coverage sentiment towards Russia and Ukraine

The analysis of Al Jazeera's reporting reveals a clearer editorial bias toward Ukraine. Positive coverage made up 72.41% of Ukraine-related reporting, with a significant portion of neutral coverage (59.26%). Negative portrayals of Ukraine (21.28%) were relatively infrequent. Detailed results show that Ukraine was represented positively in 44.68% of cases, neutrally in 34.04%, and negatively in 21.28%. Positive narratives emphasized Ukraine's victimhood, humanitarian suffering, and tactical ingenuity, particularly in operations such as the "Spider Network," which was framed as a strategically impressive success. Neutral coverage was more prevalent in diplomatic contexts and discussions of international mediation, while negative portrayals were limited and largely stemmed from criticism by external figures or Russian skepticism regarding Ukrainian intentions.

In contrast, Russia's coverage was explicitly negative (66.07%). The country was consistently depicted as the primary aggressor and as an obstacle to peace, with frequent use of emotive language such as "invasion," "brutality," and "terrorism." Negative framings also emphasized the humanitarian consequences of Russian actions while downplaying the Russian civilian perspective. Neutral coverage (19.64%) appeared mainly in reports about international negotiations, while positive portrayals (14.29%) were scarce and typically linked to Russia's participation in peace talks or its temporary tactical successes.

Comparative Framing across Al Arabiya and Al Jazeera

Both media demonstrated a shared trend of presenting Ukraine in a more favorable light while framing Russia more negatively. However, the degree of intensity and editorial framing differed. Al Arabiya exhibited a more fluctuating stance, alternating between neutrality and positivity in its portrayal of Ukraine, while maintaining a predominantly critical tone toward Russia. Al Jazeera, in contrast, displayed a stronger alignment with Ukraine through consistently sympathetic coverage and harsher criticism of Russia, thereby presenting a more polarized narrative overall. This comparative framing underscores how linguistic choices, evaluative labels, and thematic

emphasis contribute to shaping the perception of the conflict. Although both media converge in depicting Ukraine as the victim and Russia as the aggressor, the degree of emphasis placed on this framing reflects their distinct editorial sentiments and possibly their broader institutional or geopolitical alignments.

Conclusions

Both Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya covered the Russia-Ukraine war from February 24, 2025, to June 24, 2025. An analysis of 99 journalistic pieces from both websites revealed that the war was addressed in various dimensions, including political, military, humanitarian, economic, and social facets.

It was observed that both media primarily focused on the political dimension of the war during this period, largely due to the numerous regional, especially European, and international political initiatives - most notably from the United States, under President Donald Trump – encouraging both sides to engage in negotiations and agree to a ceasefire.

Secondly, both media placed a noticeable emphasis on the military aspect, given the military escalation witnessed during this period, including increased military alliances, arms acquisitions, and on-the-ground combat. This was particularly evident in the significant counteroffensive launched by Ukraine against Russia, marking the largest and most substantial counterattack of the war since February 2022.

Another noteworthy observation is that the coverage of the war by both media tended to give considerable attention to the humanitarian side, especially in articles that covered Russian military attacks and the issue of prisoners of war, all within the broader context of the political trajectory of the conflict.

Due to the overwhelming political and military developments in the war, economic coverage was relatively limited. However, there were pieces dedicated to the most significant economic aspects between Ukraine and the United States, including topics such as aid and loans, mining agreements, and Ukraine's potential accession to the European Union.

Regarding the social aspect, which appeared the least covered, it was largely overshadowed by the political and military dimensions.

Based on the aforementioned, it can be concluded that the coverage by both Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya of the Russia-Ukraine war was primarily informative and reportorial, addressing the regional and international ramifications of the war and covering its various dimensions (political, military, humanitarian, economic, and social). The coverage was generally objective to some extent and balanced in terms of the number of published pieces, the variety of topics covered, the sourcing of information, and the presentation of both Russian and Ukrainian narratives. However, a thorough analysis of the coverage's sentiment indicates a slight bias toward the Ukrainian perspective. The tone of the coverage was more favorable to Ukraine and more critical of Russia, which was held responsible for the failure of negotiations, the hindrance of peace efforts, issues of prisoners of war, and the humanitarian suffering caused by Russian military attacks on civilians.

In conclusion, both Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya, through their coverage, provide timely news updates that reflect developments in the Russia-Ukraine war, positioning themselves as primary sources for shaping knowledge, attitudes, and opinions among Arab audiences regarding this conflict.

intelligence tools were used to create, write, or edit the text during the preparation of this manuscript. All results are original and obtained without the help of AI. We mention that we used Chat GPT only to correct the translation of the articles and reports we analysed. The authors of the article are fully responsible for the correct use and citation of sources.

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Appendix 1

بعد تلويح أميركا بسحب وساطتها.. روسيا تؤكد جديتها بحل الصراع مع أوكرانيا الكرملين: الأمر الذي .(Al Arabiya. (2025, April 18
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