

**UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
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**CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF BUCHA
MASSACRE AND KHERSON LIBERATION IN THE
ARTICLES OF NEW YORK TIMES AND LE MONDE**

MA thesis

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ABSTRACT

Ukraine has started to appear frequently in newspaper headlines across the world, sparking a public backlash in reaction to the terrible events after the full-scale Russian invasion on February 24, 2022. A number of national media across the world consistently covers the news about the development of war on the territory of Ukraine. This paper aims to investigate the articles published in two influential media outlets: *Le Monde* and *The New York Times* with attention to two events that happened during the first year of the war: the Bucha massacre and the liberation of Kherson. The articles will be analyzed through the three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis proposed by Norman Fairclough.

The thesis consists of the theoretical framework chapter, which includes a historical background to the conflict, aspects of media representation and news construction, methodology and literature review section, and an empirical chapter, which includes the analysis of 20 articles and a further discussion.

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INTRODUCTION

After the outbreak of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in early 2022, the war in Ukraine has become Europe's largest and bloodiest military conflict since World War II (Masters 2023), as well as one of the most closely watched military situations in the world. Although for many people the Russo-Ukrainian war started on 24 February, 2022, it had begun much earlier and, by February 2024, the war in Ukraine has been going on for already a decade.

In 2013-2014 Ukraine entered a rather unstable political situation due to the refusal of the then pro-Russian president Viktor Yanukovich to sign the association agreement with the European Union. This led to mass protests against the government. Thousands of Ukrainians took to the streets, starting what came to be called the Revolution of Dignity and supporting European integration. President Yanukovich fled the country (Neuman and Ritchie 2014) and, against the background of this unsteady situation inside the country, Russian troops crossed the Ukrainian border and entered the eastern and southern regions. Simultaneously, Russia annexed the Crimean Peninsula, holding a fake Crimea status referendum and then seized control of the region (Herszenhorn 2014).

In April 2014 Russia also proclaimed the creation of Donetsk People's Republic and Luhansk People's Republic, which marked a significant escalation in the conflict. This development, often referred to as the Donbas War, intensified over the following years. This static conflict has resulted in thousands of casualties and refugees, as well as widespread destruction of infrastructure and economic devastation in the affected regions (DeYoung 2014). In February 2015 Minsk agreements were signed by Ukraine and Russia in an effort to broker a ceasefire and to negotiate a peaceful resolution. However, they were not implemented (BBC 2015).

On February 24, 2022, President Putin announced the beginning of a “special military operation” which aimed to, in his words, “demilitarize” and “denazify” the territory of Ukraine (Osborn and Nikolskaya 2022). The Kremlin claims that the Russian army targets only military facilities, but the evidence of destroyed residential buildings and structures, as well as the deaths of thousands of civilians, suggests otherwise. The territory of Ukraine is subjected to constant missile attacks that damage Ukrainian military assets, urban residential areas, and communication and transportation infrastructure. U.S. President Joe Biden has declared the attack “unprovoked and unjustified” and issued severe sanctions against Kremlin officials, including Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (Falconer 2022).

A number of prominent international politicians have condemned this act of aggression, expressing solidarity with and support for Ukraine and its people. For example, Boris Johnson declared that “this hideous and barbaric venture of Vladimir Putin must end in failure”; Emmanuel Macron called the events of the war “a turning point in the history of Europe”, while Olaf Scholz said that “in attacking Ukraine, President Putin is blatantly infringing on international law” (González 2022).

During the first few months of the war, Russian troops managed to enter a number of border and central regions, including the outskirts of Kyiv, as well as to take control of Mariupol, an important port city of strategic importance. In a few weeks, Ukrainian troops managed to liberate several regions, but the retreating Russian army left behind significant war crimes, murders, accounts of summary executions, torture, and rape (Human Rights Watch 2022). These crimes have been reported and documented by *The Economist*, *BBC News*, *The New York Times*, and they are being investigated by the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights (Quell 2022).

After two years of fighting, Ukraine's armed forces have managed to recapture 50 percent of the occupied territory (*Reuters* 2023), but Russia still occupies 26 percent of the country (*TCH* 2024). Ukraine's counterattacks have been halted, while Russia has strengthened its defensive positions in the eastern regions of Ukraine. At the same time, Russia persists in bombarding cities in Ukraine and enforcing blockades on its ports, prompting Ukraine to intensify drone strikes targeting Russian vessels and infrastructure. Combat and aerial attacks have resulted in more than 30,000 civilian casualties, with 3.7 million individuals displaced within the country, and another 6.5 million having fled Ukraine (*The New York Times* 2024).

The events happening in Eastern Ukraine and Crimean Peninsula, as well as the political and diplomatic relations between Ukraine and Russia have been covered in many local and international TV programs, news articles, radio, and Internet publications since 2014 (Krutikova et al 2019). A lot of academic research has been conducted on different aspects of the Russo-Ukrainian war, including the analysis of media coverage. However, there has been less research since the beginning of the full-scale war, specifically on media representation. This thesis aims to cover this research gap and contribute to the academic investigation of media representation.

The thesis seeks to identify means used for the representation of Ukraine in articles of two international media outlets: *Le Monde* (France) and *The New York Times* (the United States). By comparing newspapers from two countries, the thesis will be able to identify to what extent the coverage coincides and to what extent there are differences in the emphases. Because the war has been covered extensively over the past two years, it is impossible to focus on the whole conflict. Thus, the thesis analyzes the coverage of two events from the period after the full-scale invasion and have contrasting emotional coloring: the Bucha massacre (March 2022) and the liberation of Kherson (November

2022). By using the Critical Discourse Analysis methodology proposed by Norman Fairclough, I will analyze how the two events are presented in newspapers articles, analyzing their linguistic features, discursive practice, and social practice. The thesis seeks to contribute to the academic research on the ongoing war in Ukraine and to foster a deeper understanding of the situation in Ukraine within both academic and public spheres.

The thesis consists of two chapters: the socio-historical framework and the empirical analysis. In the socio-historical framework chapter, I will give an overview of the historical background to the conflict, means of media construction and representation, the research that has been already produced on media representation of the war in Ukraine in 2014-2022, the methodology and literature review. The empirical analysis chapter includes the analysis of 20 articles with further explanation of the findings and conclusions.

CHAPTER 1: MEDIA DISCOURSE AND THE UKRAINIAN CONFLICT

1.1. Media representations and politics

Covering world events has been the first and one of the most important functions of media outlets, from the handwritten newsletters in Renaissance Europe and first printed pamphlets to modern newspapers and their digital versions. Most people will not have access to world events, and they rely on various media outlets to find out about what is going on in the world. Sharing information is a major function of the media that delivers news, updates, and analysis on local, national, or global events, thus fostering public awareness. Another media function that follows from the previous one is educative: by disseminating knowledge and perspectives on various subjects, providing insights into domestic and foreign affairs, publishing interviews, documentaries and feature stories, media is a source of knowledge in many spheres of life. This knowledge is necessary for informed democratic participation and hence the media also fill an important public role. Simultaneously, media also serves as an entertainment channel, offering content ranging from sports and film reviews to art, fashion, and celebrities' lives.

Discussing politics is a central part of media discourse. This is a vital process for democratic societies for several reasons (Bjarnøe 2001: 156). Firstly, political discussions promote transparency by providing citizens with information about government activities, policies, and decisions. This transparency enables readers to hold elected officials accountable for their actions and ensures that government operates in the public interest. Additionally, political discussions in media support public debate, allowing citizens to express diverse viewpoints, exchange ideas, and challenge prevailing narratives. Moreover, media coverage of politics serves as a mechanism for political education, helping citizens understand complex issues, such as the functioning of the government in

their own country, as well as the implications of various policies around the world. Thereby, the media plays an important role in strengthening the foundations of democracy. According to Hass (2009: 78), media is a vehicle for political processes which acts as a mediator between politics and citizens.

By covering politics, printed media offers diverse perspectives on a given issue or situation explaining complex political context in a comprehensible manner. In this way media allows the audience to form informed opinions about diverse political phenomena: the readers can choose the candidate to vote for in the elections or the party they want to support based on the information from the media or develop a clear understanding of processes or political situations in the world. Such diversity allows readers to explore contrasting viewpoints and consider multiple angles of intricate issues. Varied narratives in newspapers help the readers to develop an informed and well-rounded perspective on political matters, enabling them to critically evaluate information and make more nuanced judgments. Thus, the multiplicity of viewpoints in printed media contributes to a richer and more dynamic public discourse, ultimately enhancing democratic participation and fostering greater societal understanding.

In addition to presenting other information and covering events, the media always keep an eye on wars and conflicts around the globe. The construction of texts, presented to a large audience, plays a particularly significant role in shaping public perception of events that few people experience firsthand. Understanding the grounds and consequences of such significant yet horrible events halfway across the globe can be difficult, but media coverage serves as a bridge, enabling people who are not directly impacted to comprehend and empathize with such occurrences.

This is why it is important to be aware of the processes of creating news and media narratives. The construction of media narratives extends far beyond mere reporting; it

encompasses the selection of stories, framing, language choice, and the overall portrayal of events. By necessity, not everything can be covered by the media and choices have to be made about what to cover and how.

Galtung and Ruge (1965: 65-71) identify 12 main principles the media follow while selecting the events worthy of covering and constructing the news. Among others, they included such factors as the frequency of events (a murder is more likely to be selected as news than a social trend that takes place over a long period of time), their unambiguity (the event should be understood the same way by the majority of readers), meaningfulness (events that are culturally similar and meaningful for readers) and unexpectedness (rare events), the references to elite nations and people or the level of the negativity of the event. The authors also emphasize that one of the principles of news construction is how well it fits into the overall composition of a media outlet. A story might be incorporated into news coverage not solely due to its inherent newsworthiness but rather because it contributes to the overall structure or balance of a newspaper or news broadcast. This could involve not only featuring “light” stories to offset heavier news but also including positive efforts to address issues like racism, which might typically be overlooked, within the context of reports on alleged institutional racism within the police force.

Harcup and O’Neill (2001: 6) argue that, as journalism has evolved and developed, some other principles for news construction have appeared, in addition to those identified by Galtung and Ruge. Their list includes the power elite, celebrity, entertainment, surprise, bad news, good news, magnitude, relevance, follow-up and newspaper’s agenda. What is new, above all, is the focus on celebrity and entertainment, but they also bring in the importance of follow-up as what has been deemed newsworthy also tends to remain in the news. Herbert (2000: 318) mentions prominence, proximity,

timeliness, action, novelty, human interest, sex, humor. What is shared across the lists, however, is the importance of events that are rare, unambiguous and negative, such as military conflicts.

After presenting the factors involved in the news selection process, Galtung and Ruge also put forward three hypotheses:

1. The more events satisfy the criteria mentioned, the more likely that they will be registered as news (selection).
2. Once a news item has been selected what makes it newsworthy according to the factors will be accentuated (distortion).
3. Both the process of selection and the process of distortion will take place at all steps in the chain from event to reader (replication) (Galtung and Ruge 1965: 71).

These hypotheses are relevant to the articles selected for the analysis in this thesis, as the two events chosen satisfy multiple criteria (rare, unexpected negative or positive events within a conflict that was getting a lot of media attention). Thus, it will be important to look at what factors are accentuated in the coverage in both newspapers.

Already selected narratives go through a more thorough process of framing which involves selecting certain aspects of a story or issue to emphasize while downplaying or omitting others. Framing shapes how audiences interpret and understand the information being presented by providing a particular context or perspective (Goffman 1974). Framing devices used in news discourses may be classified into four categories that represent four structural dimensions (Pan and Kosicki 1993: 59). These are:

- Syntactic structures which refer to a sequential organization of structural elements of the article: headline, lead, episodes, background, and conclusion. Each of these elements is essential, although Pan and Kosicki (1993: 60) identify headline as “the most powerful”, being “the most salient cue to

activate certain semantically related concepts in readers' minds".

Simultaneously, a lead "gives a story a newsworthy angle, suggesting a particular perspective to view the event reported" (ibid.).

- Script structures which refer to a specific structure of the news discourse. The most general form of a news script structure would be "who, what, when, where, why and how" (Pan and Kosicki 1993: 60). Such structure sharpens the reader's attention on the characters, emotions, details and drama inherent in the event.
- Thematic structures of a news story which can be understood as a complex hierarchy, where a central theme serves as the core connecting different subthemes, which act as major focal points. These subthemes, in turn, are linked to supporting elements within the narrative.
- Rhetorical structures which include the usage of stylistic devices such as metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images.

Linguistic choices play an important role in shaping media narratives through all of these structural dimensions. These choices encompass various aspects of language, including vocabulary, syntax, tone, and style. Journalists carefully select words and phrases to evoke specific emotions, convey particular meanings, or frame issues in a certain light. Fowler (1991: 1) states that language is never neutral but is a highly constructive mediator. For example, using terms like "terrorist" versus "freedom fighter" can shape perceptions of individuals or groups involved in a conflict. The language used in media narratives can set the overall mood or attitude toward a particular subject. Whether language is formal, informal, neutral, empathetic, sensationalized, or objective can significantly impact how readers interpret the information presented. In multicultural societies, media outlets must be mindful of linguistic and lexical choices to avoid

inadvertently perpetuating stereotypes or offending particular cultural or ethnic groups. Sensitivity to cultural nuances and diversity is crucial in ensuring responsible and respectful communication also in the case of international news. However, biases enter texts also inadvertently, as some opinions are deeply embedded in language itself.

Puddephatt (2006: 4) states that the media always have to choose: either to be actively involved in the discussion of a conflict, and potentially take responsibility for increased violence, or to stay aside and contribute to the resolution of conflict and alleviation of violence. Despite what position the media choose, the conflict sides are always represented from a certain political perspective.

Wars and conflicts are always newsworthy, and the media tend to take advantage of their newsworthiness to influence people's thoughts and actions (Hass 2009). This can mean informing the public but can also take more extreme forms. According to Puddephatt (2006: 5), "the media played a pernicious role in the Rwandan genocide and the wars in the Balkans that led to the breakup of Yugoslavia by inciting genocide (in the case of Rwanda) and by acting as a vehicle for virulent nationalism (in the case of former Yugoslavia)". It means that the way the information about a conflict is presented to the public may shape or change drastically the understanding of this process, but it can also reduce the tensions around the conflict. Consequently, the way the public views war or conflict often mirrors how the media frames and portrays these conflicts.

As has been mentioned earlier, political processes may be challenging to understand for those individuals who are not directly impacted, especially if conflicts take place in countries that are not geographically proximate. This must be taken into consideration by the reporters and journalists covering these events. Personalization serves as a powerful narrative device employed by media outlets to provide audiences with a more intimate understanding of conflicts. By focusing on individual stories,

experiences, and emotions, media narratives can humanize the impact of war and conflict, fostering empathy and connection among audiences. According to Fowler (1991: 91) we perceive everything in the world by certain established categories, and therefore it is easier to relate to the whole conflict through a lens of only one individual's story.

1.2. Media coverage of Russo-Ukrainian conflict in 2014-2022

Events in Ukraine began to appear in news headlines in media outlets around the world in 2014. The dynamic and complex events were typically presented through simplistic frames, with the most significant focus placed on matters of global importance (Dyczok 2015: 1), such as entry of Russian troops into the territory of Donbas and Crimea, the creation of self-proclaimed republics with centers in Donetsk and Luhansk, the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, battles for the Donetsk airport and Illovaisk. All these key events in the course of the war were discussed not only by local, but also international media.

Dyczok (2015: 1) states, that as of 2015, the public opinion in the world about the military conflict in Eastern Ukraine was quite divided and controversial, and media reports contained a variety of representations for several reasons. The first one was the significant influence of the Russian “information machine”, as Dyczok calls it, that had an impact on international media outlets and their representation of reality. The second reason was that Ukraine, with the mass protests erupting inside a country and rapid change of government, could not deliver a clear message to the international media community. Mainstream media could not depict a clear image of the situation and offer the audience credible information, despite showing some general tendency to be sympathetic to Ukraine (Lane 2014).

As there were several stages that led to the escalation of the conflict that resulted in what Russian propaganda called “Anti-Terrorist Operation” (YII 2014), the representation of the situation in international media was different. During the Euromaidan protests, western media tended to describe Ukrainian society as divided, struggling between Russia and European Union, resisting the government and police with the main focus on the dramatic side of the protests. Some media outlets framed these events as a manifestation of a pro-European choice, an act of courage and resilience, others emphasized the gap between two groups of people: those who wanted to proceed with European integration and those who did not (Dyczok 2015: 2). After the removal of Viktor Yanukovych as president (one of the goals of the protesters) and his subsequent escape to Russia, international reaction was mixed against the backdrop of rapidly developing events. Russia’s statements about the seizure of power in Ukraine by the people they called fascists, as well as the goal of protecting the Russian-speaking population of Donbass and Crimea, which was accompanied by the distribution of dramatic photos with Russian flags and civilians allegedly supporting Russia influenced the perception of the events in the world or at least created a confusion about the interpretation of the events. For uninformed readers the information was ambiguous: it was unclear whether Russia indeed protected civilians or invaded an independent country (Dyczok 2015: 3). This made media representations even more important, as they had to make sense of the contradictory interpretations and create a balanced but at the same time also just narrative for the global audience.

During this period, the term “information war” became increasingly common in discussions and reports concerning Ukraine (Jaitner and Mattsson 2015:1). In other words, the information about the conflict was being explicitly manipulated in the international media and social media feeds by Russian officials and other agents who

were presenting a pro-Russian agenda. They were, in turn, challenged by Ukrainian government and activists, as well as media activists in other countries. In 2014, two clear narratives emerged (Dyczok 2015: 4). One portrayed pro-Russian separatists as opposing the new government in Kyiv, seeking to secede from Ukraine, and willing to resort to force to achieve their objectives. The other depicted Russia as engaging in a hybrid warfare against Ukraine, involving the provision of arms, funds, and personnel to fuel separatist movements with the ultimate goal of destabilizing the nation and reasserting control over it.

From April 2014, the reporting was hindered by the abduction of journalists (Amnesty International 2014). This became evident after journalists and international press were not allowed to investigate the downing of a Malaysian Airlines Boeing over the territory of Ukraine, in which the entire crew and passengers died. In 2022 the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe announced that the most likely scenario is that the plane was shot down by a Russian missile system (BBC 2022). That is, the coverage of the war was complicated by other events that coincided with the events and made it even harder to cover the events in an informed and balanced way, without reproducing propaganda.

Many reports included contrasting statements from both the Ukrainian and Russian side but did not shed light on details that could help foreign readers understand the essence of the conflict. While the armed conflict satisfied many of the news values listed above, the coverage could not reach the unambiguity necessary for creating a coherent narrative. As the conflict persisted, despite unsuccessful ceasefires and negotiations and the rise in the number of casualties and internally displaced persons, the narrative gradually lost its sense of urgency and intensity. It received less frequent coverage in international headlines and new stories. Over time, there was increasing

recognition that certain Russians were involved in what was predominantly termed as “the Ukraine Crisis”. In Ukraine, the reports regarding the resurgence of right-wing factions waned following two Ukrainian elections (the Presidential election on May 25 and the Parliamentary election on October 26, 2014), which demonstrated that Ukrainians were not voting for right-wing candidates and parties. However, the phrase “Ukrainian civil war” remained commonly used by international media (Dyczok 2015: 4). That is, despite the recognition of Russian interference, the event was still internationally represented as Ukraine’s internal problem that does not have broader international implications.

As this short overview of the events shows, the representation of Ukraine and the events that have taken place since 2014 was quite ambiguous and greatly influenced by the Russian side. While Ukrainian government has constantly emphasized that the military conflict taking place in the east of the country is a war (Радіо Свобода 2017), many international media continued to refer to the “Ukrainian crisis”, focusing on the internal problems of the country. In parallel, Ukraine also has increasingly been represented as an object of a power struggle between Russia and the US/EU, rather than an independent subject of international affairs. These twin interpretations frame the international coverage of the ongoing war that is the object of analysis in this thesis, as to make the war meaningful for foreign readers, media outlets had to overcome this conflicted interpretation.

1.2. Critical Discourse Analysis of newspaper articles

Conducting Critical Discourse Analysis approach is an effective way to analyze media discourse and it is a popular methodology used to determine different discursive strategies and social relationships (Wodak and Meyer 2015: 2). CDA is widely used for

the analysis of political speeches, news reports and articles, specifically for those that cover divisive political processes, military conflicts, and wars. CDA, differently from different other methods, attempts to not just look at representations but also investigates the social context and uncovers the hidden ideologies. This makes this method especially relevant in covering events like the present conflict where different ideologies clash. The military conflict in Ukraine that escalated into a full-scale war is no exception. While the conflict continues at the time of writing, there is already some research into media coverage of this conflict that uses CDA. I have also included articles that have analyzed media representations of other similarly complex and divisive conflicts (e.g., in the Middle East) to expand the range of references and to build a stronger framework of previous knowledge. An overview of these works will, first, show what has already been established about international media coverage of the war and, second, help to understand the principles of analysis that also inspire the methodological principles of this thesis.

Amer (2017) uses CDA to examine how political social actors are represented in the media coverage of the 2008–2009 Gaza war. He analyzes news stories from four international newspapers: *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*. Amer aims to find out how the US and UK newspapers discursively represent the social actors in reporting the Gaza war and how the representational categories are used to construct the social actors in news stories and editorials about ceasefire negotiations. Israeli actors are portrayed as official entities, while Palestinian representation is predominantly limited to Hamas, overlooking other Palestinian perspectives. Amer (2017: 9) states that this one-sided portrayal may contribute to a limited understanding of the conflict and reinforce the interpretations for US and UK audiences. Amer concludes that the representation of these social actors is very similar in the US and UK and finds shared discursive practices. However, Amer (2017: 9) also finds

political bias towards the Israeli side, which does not allow the readers to receive “an adequate opportunity or sufficient information to learn about all sides of the war”.

Gruber (2022) conducts a critical qualitative study of two opinion articles by prominent scholars, Jürgen Habermas and Timothy Snyder, concerning the German government’s cautious approach to arms supply for Ukraine during the initial phase of the Russian aggression in 2022. His primary objective is to unveil the discursive strategies employed by Habermas and Snyder in critiquing the German elite media’s portrayal of the Russo-Ukrainian war. The study examines how both Habermas and Snyder depict social actors and advance their respective arguments. Using CDA, Gruber comes to the conclusion that Habermas portrays social actors with a clear bias, favoring the German government while attributing agency primarily to Vladimir Putin. In contrast, Snyder’s critique targets Habermas’ arguments, employing both internal and external norms to challenge them. He shifts the thematic focus to criticize not only Habermas but also previous German governments, demonstrating support for Ukraine.

Chiluwa and Ruzaitė (2022) use textual analysis and CDA to examine linguistic and discursive structures of war rhetoric in selected war speeches of Vladimir Putin and Volodymyr Zelensky. Analyzing grammatical and discursive structures, Chiluwa and Ruzaitė conclude that in their speeches, both leaders frame the conflict in terms of Russian identity, emphasizing the enemy’s role as the aggressor. Putin’s rhetoric is defensive and accusatory, often portraying Western allies as deceitful and aggressive. Zelensky, while engaging in some blame and labeling, focuses more on countering Russian claims and rallying internal and international support. Putin’s discourse reflects a persistent hostility towards Ukraine, tied to Russia’s historical ambitions. The authors analyze such aspects as opening, greeting formula and recognition of addressee in the speeches, the actors involved, the argumentation and formal justification of the war by both politicians.

Chiluwa and Ruzaitė (2022: 14) conclude that the rhetoric used in the speeches is a “polarizing ideological discourse” that heightens ethnic and national consciousness, explicitly highlighted through the construction of We, Us, They and Them dichotomies. These dichotomies will also be relevant in the present study.

Le (2002) investigates how the role of human rights discourse in international relations is presented in the discursive practices in *Le Monde*’s editorials on Russia, specifically during the Chechnya war. The author conducts a linguistic analysis of the texts’ classes of sentences (macrostructures), semantic categories, argumentation structure. Le concludes that *Le Monde*’s editorials on Russia regarding human rights violations in Chechnya led to an “intercultural impasse”. Factors beyond political motives, such as linguistic analysis and contextualization within French culture, influenced this impasse. The discourse’s distortion in the perception of Russian journalists led to the disappearance of facts and perpetuated stereotypes, impacting intercultural relations.

These analyses show that media representation plays an important role in presenting divisive international conflicts like the present war in Ukraine. While the articles use somewhat different methodologies, they all look at the way in which discursive devices are employed for presenting and shaping realities. The articles also reveal the presence of potentially unrecognized biases in media representations that implicitly support one side in the conflict. This is very relevant in my study as well. The studies covered here do not point out, however, that in the case of genocide and crimes against the humanity media also has to take sides to make sure that the world reacts to such acts. In my study, I will come back to this complex task of balancing. Another important element revealed in the studies is the explicit or implicit processes of othering that appear in the representation of conflicts. These elements have been demonstrated for

both English- and French-language media. I was not able to find many articles that would use Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) on French-language texts, unfortunately, because French discourse analysts tend to use other methods that I cannot cover in my thesis. Thus I will test how well CDA work in comparative analysis.

1.4. Methodology

Norman Fairclough (1989) in his book *Language and Power* states that language use is socially determined and contributes to changing social relationships. According to Fairclough (1989: 23), language operates as a dynamic process that is intricately linked to various non-linguistic factors, including political, economic, and cultural dimensions serving as a tool through which power relations are both maintained and challenged within society. He uses the term “discourse” to refer to the “process of social interaction” (Fairclough 1989: 24) where text is only a part. Language also is related to power structures and ideologies: language reflects the power structures and ideologies of a society but also plays an important role in maintaining them. As a result, CDA, as espoused by Fairclough and other scholars in the field, goes beyond traditional linguistic analysis. It also seeks to unravel the layers of power, ideology, and social structures embedded within discourse.

In his work, Fairclough presents a methodology of CDA in which he distinguishes three dimensions or stages:

1. Textual dimension (description): the analysis of linguistic features within a text that includes examining the structure of sentences, choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns, and rhetorical devices. This stage aims to uncover how language is used to convey meaning and how specific linguistic choices

contribute to the construction of particular representations or ideologies. Here Fairclough proposes a set of questions one may pose about a text and introduces three values the words have: experiential, relational and expressive. Experiential values show “text producer’s experience of the natural or social world” and are to do with contents, knowledge and beliefs. Relational values are connected to social relationships embodied within a text, and expressive value shows producer’s evaluation of the reality (Fairclough 1989: 93). By describing word choices in a text, therefore, the analyst can uncover how the authors see the world and what kinds of relationships they seek to build with their readers.

2. Discursive practice dimension (interpretation) focuses on the processes of communication, production, and consumption of texts and goes beyond the analysis of individual texts to consider the broader context in which communication occurs. This dimension explores how social practices, institutions, and power relations influence the way discourse is produced, distributed, and consumed. For the stage of interpretation Fairclough proposes three questions: 1) what interpretation(s) are participants giving to the situational and intertextual contexts? 2) What discourse type(s) are being drawn upon (hence what rules, systems or principles of phonology, grammar, sentence cohesion, vocabulary, semantics and pragmatics; and what schemata, frames and scripts? 3) Are answers to questions 1 and 2 different for different participants? Do they change during the course of the interaction? (Fairclough 1989: 134-135).
3. Social practice dimension (explanation) extends the analysis to the larger social and cultural context in which discourse is situated and considers the

social structures, institutions, and broader cultural norms that shape and are shaped by discourse. Here Fairclough aims to understand how discourse reflects and contributes to social structures and power relations. This dimension emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between discourse and society. According to Fairclough, the stage of explanation helps to reveal the processes of struggle and power relations within a discourse. In order to uncover these aspects Fairclough proposes a list of questions: 1) What power relations help to shape the discourse? 2) What elements of members' resources which are drawn upon have an ideological character? 3) How is the discourse positioned in relation to social struggles? Are these struggles overt or covert? Is the discourse normative with respect to members' resources or creative? Does it contribute to sustaining existing power relations, or transforming them? (Fairclough 1989: 138).

Fairclough (1989: 26) emphasizes a strong connection between these three dimensions and states that changes in one of them can influence the other. For example, alterations in the sociocultural context can affect discourse practices, which, in turn, impact the linguistic features of the text. The dimensions and how they are connected may be seen on a figure 1:

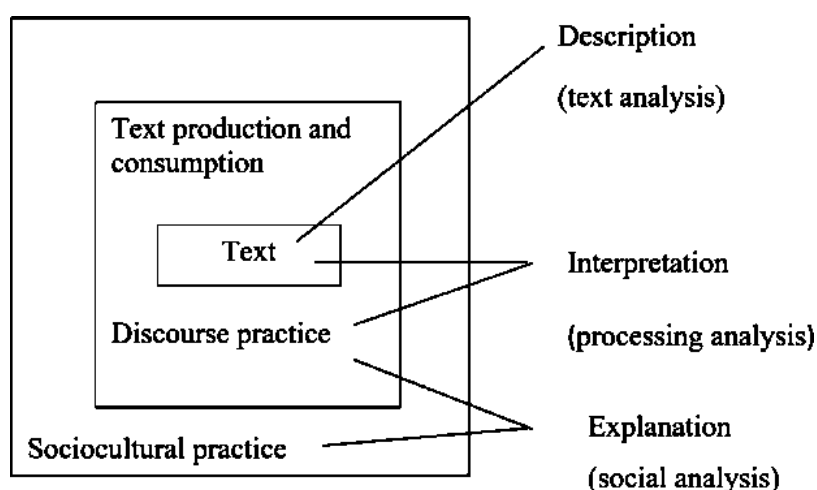


Figure 1. Fairclough's 3D model of critical discourse analysis

Source: Zahid Ahmed

Using Fairclough's framework makes it possible to reveal the manifestations of power relations and the influence the texts have on the potential consumer. For analyzing the articles on the events of Russia-Ukraine war, this technique offers a nuanced understanding of how language constructs and reflects power relations, ideologies, and societal structures.

The first step in my analysis is language analysis (description): identifying linguistic aspects, such as vocabulary and grammar, that may reflect different propaganda techniques, biased language, or framing that may influence readers' perceptions; finding metaphors and symbols. For each article I will describe different parts of speech: nouns (namings for the events described), adjectives, and verbs. I will use a set of questions proposed by Fairclough (appendix 2) and therefore identify the word choices that may bear a covert meaning. The list proposed by Fairclough is broad, hence not all questions will be used in the description stage of text analysis in the present thesis.

The second stage (interpretation) deals with discourse practice: exploring how the linguistic patterns identified in the corpus are produced and consumed in the discourse; investigating attribution of statements, and editorial decisions that shape the narrative. This step also includes the analysis of media practices, such as headlines, framing, and selection of news and the social actors involved in a discourse. I will also focus on the representation of diverse figures involved into the narrative. While I cannot go deep into editorial practices on the basis of a small set of texts, I will try to deduce the editorial stances from the description stage of analysis.

The last step within Fairclough's three-dimensional model (explanation) deals with sociocultural practice and includes placing linguistic patterns within the broader

sociocultural context and considering how the events described and cultural factors influence the use of language. Here the political directions of the newspapers under analysis should be taken into consideration as it is also an important factor in the construction of meaning in the discourse. In the final stage of analysis I will merge all three dimensions as they are all interconnected and create the media representation of the events described.

CHAPTER 2: REPRESENTATION OF THE FULL-SCALE INVASION OF UKRAINE IN LE MONDE AND THE NEW YORK TIMES

Within the global landscape of print media *Le Monde* from France and *The New York Times* from the United States are among the most trusted newspapers in their countries. They play pivotal roles in shaping public discourse and offering perspectives on national and international affairs that resonate with their respective audiences. They were selected for the analysis as two center-left outlets that are thus comparable in their ideological stances.

Although the popularity of print publications has declined significantly over the past decades, and newspapers have been supplanted by television, Internet sources and social media, they continue to be a reliable source of news and information. According to a report by Pew Research Center (2023), an estimated total U.S. daily newspaper circulation (print and digital combined) was 20.9 million for both weekday and Sunday as of 2022. The number of consumers of digital content, including subscribers and occasional websites visitors, is consistently high. According to Delestre (2023), press, whether in paper or digital format, remains the primary source of information in France and nearly 60% of French people consult online newspapers and magazines. Therefore, newspapers were chosen as the subject of analysis because they have not lost their popularity and remain a solid source of information for many people. I will use the online versions of both papers as this is how most media consumers today also use these newspapers.

For the empirical analysis 10 articles from *Le Monde* and 10 articles from *The New York Times* have been selected. The articles archives of both newspapers were accessed through a personal subscription. The selection process included searching the articles that cover two dramatic events during the full-scale Russian invasion: the

occupation and further atrocities in Bucha and the liberation of Kherson. These two events were chosen to get examples of two contrastive types of rhetoric. Both of them became prominent and significant events in the first year of the war, widely discussed by local and international media.

While searching for the articles, the keywords “Bucha”, “Boutcha”, “Bucha massacre”, “massacre de Boutcha”, “Kherson”, “Kherson liberation” and “libération de Kherson” were used and the relevant time frames were set: the period of March – April 2022 for the first event and the period of November 2022 for the second one. Articles that were posted later, but included the target keywords, were also reviewed. The articles that included the target keywords but did not cover the events under analysis were not included in the sample.

In total, *The New York Times* had 257 articles containing the word “Bucha” and 17 articles containing the phrase “Bucha massacre” in the period from March to April 2022, as well as 61 articles containing this phrase for the entire period since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. The word “Kherson” appears in 242 articles in the period of November 2022, and the phrase “Kherson liberation” in 14 articles. In total, this phrase appears in 54 *The New York Times* articles. *Le Monde* has 141 articles containing the word “Boutcha” in the period from March to April 2022, and 50 articles containing “massacre de Boutcha” for the same period. In total there are 94 articles containing this phrase for the entire period since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. The word “Kherson” occurs in 82 *Le Monde* articles for the period of November 2022, whereas “libération de Kherson” – in 22 articles for the period of November 2022 and in 112 articles in total. This shows that both events were covered extensively in both papers, although Butcha received more attention, especially in *Le Monde* where the liberation of Kherson was written about less frequently than in *The New York Times*. It can be guessed,

on the basis of news values introduced above, that negative news are more newsworthy than the positive ones.

The corpus includes 20 articles, each of them was coded for further abbreviated use in the empirical analysis. I chose texts that focused specifically on one of the two events and covered them in detail. Since no generalizations can be made on the basis of such a small qualitative study, the fact that these texts need not be representative of the whole range is not a major shortcoming as I am above all interested in the linguistic strategies used in the texts and what ideological positionings they reveal. I chose the same number of texts from both papers, to make my results comparable. In the following analysis, I will summarize the findings for both papers, but will cite examples using a code assigned to each text. The code consists of the first letters of each word of the name of the newspaper (NYT for *New York Times* and LM for *Le Monde*) and a serial number from 1 to 20. The full list can be seen in Appendix 1.

The size of a corpus is 7179 words for articles about Bucha in *The New York Times*, 5633 words for the articles about Kherson in *The New York Times*, 8082 words for the articles about Bucha in *Le Monde*, and 6478 words for the articles about Kherson in *Le Monde*. Thus, it can be seen again that Butcha gets more attention also on the level of text length. It can also be seen that while the numbers of texts in the overall corpus of the study was bigger for *The New York Times*, the texts tend to be longer in *Le Monde*.

Each article was analyzed with the help of Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA described earlier in the methodology section. The analysis includes description, interpretation and explanation stages for each of the articles and aims to find direct connections between text with its linguistic component and social practices. The analysis treats each event separately in the two newspapers, before coming to a comparative discussion.

2.1. Bucha in The New York Times

The articles portray the situation in Ukraine, specifically in Kyiv region, right after the withdrawal of Russian troops that followed almost a month of Bucha occupation. All articles provide detailed and vivid descriptions of the war crimes committed by Russian soldiers. The articles describe the events in detail, to show the violence committed against common people, similar to the readers. The language serves to create a powerful mental image for the audience, as the chosen words carry strong connotations of violence and suffering, evoking strong emotions. Appealing to the audience's emotions, the authors seem to seek to engage their empathy through the descriptions of a violent death that leaves only terrible feelings and a realization of brutal reality.

Emotive language is the most prominent and noticeable aspect in the articles. The atrocities of Russian army are described in detail, including specific depictions of death causes: "corpses with their wrists bound" (NYT2), "tortured, raped and executed civilians" (NYT1), "His hands were bound, he had been shot in the back and the legs, and one of his eyes was burned out" (NYT3). These word choices convey a strong experiential and expressive values, as they try to both describe the events but also use detailed descriptions of death to evoke an emotional response in the readers. The same effect is achieved by the use of specific numbers of victims: "40 bodies had been deposited during the occupation" (NYT2), "more than 100 bodies" had been collected "during and after the fighting" (NYT1), "The bodies of 410 people" (NYT2), "400 bodies of Ukrainian citizens were discovered" (NYT3). The numbers are large and this is shocking, as the bodies are frequently identified as those of civilians, not soldiers.

Painting a vivid image of the victims seems to be the central objective of the articles: the words "body" and "bodies" appear a total of 50 times in the 5 articles, the word "corpse" 7 times and the word "dead" 21 times. There is a noticeable focus on the

civilian status of casualties: the word “civilian” appear in the texts 37 times. This, again, has a strong experiential value but also relational value, as it seeks to create a parallel between the reader and the victims, thereby increasing readerly empathy.

The focus on death circumstances and causes is an example of what Fairclough calls “overwording” and this, in turn, may reveal a “focus of ideological struggle” (Fairclough 1989: 96). The articles convey the contrast between the Russian army (aggressor, who uses military equipment and weapons) and Ukrainians (civilian population). This contrast is a part of a victimization process, where the Ukrainian side and Ukrainian people are represented as those who suffer. The emphasis on the civilian status allows readers to draw a parallel between Ukrainians and themselves.

With a similar aim the authors frequently make the victims individuals, not as part of a nameless mass by providing personal names and ages, as well as descriptions of everyday activities (“Volodymyr Feoktistov, 50, set out on foot around 5 p.m. to pick up a loaf of bread from neighbors who were baking at home” (NYT1)), specific spatial details (“Yablunska, or Apple Tree Street” (NYT1)), elements of household and everyday life (“The dead woman’s feet, in woolen socks and galoshes” (NYT4)). These, first, paint a very specific scene that is memorable and expressive, and, second, they have a strong relational value as the descriptions include details and activities that are close to average reader and that also make the audience relate more to people the people who have died in a faraway country.

The nouns with a strong emotional connotation such as *atrocities*, *massacre*, *terror*, *killing* are also used by authors in relation to the actions of the Russian army. These emotionally charged words are used to describe extremely cruel acts. It is possible to trace expressive values in these words, which Fairclough describes as the author’s evaluation placed in a system of evaluation or a specific scheme: by employing these

terms, the authors immediately set a tone of condemnation and emphasize the severity of the actions committed in Bucha. These words invoke a sense of moral outrage, suggesting that the events are not just acts of war, but crimes against humanity. The terms carry connotations of indiscriminate and brutal killing on a large scale, implying that the violence in Bucha was not isolated or sporadic, but rather systematic and intentional: “Russians killed recklessly and sometimes sadistically” (NYT1). By describing the events as a *massacre*, the articles suggest that the perpetrators deliberately targeted civilians in a concerted effort to inflict maximum harm and instill fear. The use of these namings serves to frame the events in Bucha as not just acts of war or isolated incidents of violence, but as egregious violations of human rights and international law.

While describing the events in Bucha after the withdrawal of Russian forces the articles use strong emotionally charged adjectives, such as *horrific*, *grueling*. These are adjectives of the highest negativity that convey a strong emotional impact and imply extreme shock, terror, and revulsion, suggesting that the events in Bucha were deeply disturbing and beyond ordinary comprehension. The choice of such emotionally charged language amplifies the sense of tragedy and victimization, highlighting the extreme nature of the atrocities committed. This amplification may serve to draw attention to the severity of the situation, urging readers to confront the human suffering and moral implications of the events in Bucha.

The atrocities committed by the Russian army in Bucha against civilians are described in detail by the authors of the articles. The authors use different types of verbs to describe the actions: active, when the focus is on the Russian soldiers, such as “soldiers *tortured*, *raped* and *executed*” (NYT1) and passive, when the focus is on the victims: “hands *bound*” (NYT5), “*shot* through the face” (NYT4). The use of active verbs emphasizes the agency and responsibility of the perpetrators and by framing the actions

in the active voice, the authors attribute direct responsibility to the soldiers, highlighting their role as agents of violence. Such linguistic choice underscores the deliberate and intentional nature of the Russian army's atrocities committed in Bucha, portraying it as the agent of harm against the victims. Active verbs also foreground the actions themselves, drawing attention to the specific acts of violence and aggression. On the other hand, the occasional use of passive verbs brings in the experiences of the victims and shift attention away from the perpetrators towards the victims.

NYT3 was published a month after the Bucha massacre and the language used there bears a different rhetoric. There are fewer descriptions of the committed crimes, but, instead, the authors draw attention to a revival of the city. The article creates a contrast in the general mood and language with previous articles. Here it is possible to see one of Galtung and Ruge's news selection principles, according to which negative news are balanced with positive ones. NYT3 includes the description of the renewal of spring nature despite all the horrible events and serves as a parallel to the people who try to come back to normal life. "Cherry blossoms in bloom" and "leafy springtime streets", "newly paved street with freshly painted white lines" emphasize the recovery of the city and normal life, where even "couples are applying for marriage licenses". All of these word choices use images associated with renewal and rebirth: spring, blossoms, weddings, to stress hope and to show that normality can be restored even after the most tragic events. The authors frequently use verbs and adjectives with a prefix -re to indicate returning to a "semblance of normal life": restore, reopen, return. Nevertheless, the authors claim that "while the frenetic activity of city workers and residents has helped clear the city of much of the debris of the Russian occupation, the scars of what happened here run deep" and that residents still "remained traumatized". In other words, although the expressive value

is on hope, the experiential values are also recalling negative past experiences that must not be forgotten, not just by local citizens but also international readers.

The articles also refer to a variety of social actors, who may be subdivided into three groups: the Ukrainian side (the armed forces, the politicians, and the civilian population), the Russian side (soldiers and the government) and the representatives of international community (politicians and organizations). Ukrainian civilians emerge as central figures, quoted and mentioned 21 times throughout the articles, embodying the human cost of conflict and contributing to the humanization and individualization strategies used by NYT. Their experiences, struggles, and resilience highlight the devastating impact of the atrocities committed in Bucha.

Ukrainian politicians' statements were quoted or mentioned 6 times in total, while foreign representatives and international organizations were cited 10 and 8 times in total, respectively. This discrepancy suggests a focus on external actors and their influence in shaping the narrative, making the information provided in the article more credible and understandable to a foreign reader. International politicians can use their political and diplomatic power to influence global narratives and policy agendas. Their prominence in the discourse indicates the importance of international intervention, support, and advocacy in the military conflict in Ukraine. This is evoked in the story to also remind the readers that they need to continue to pressure their politicians to support the Ukrainian cause. Simultaneously, the emphasis on international politicians may also reflect ideological positioning and solidarity with Ukraine from the international community. By prominently featuring statements and actions of foreign leaders who condemn the atrocities in Bucha and advocate for justice, *The New York Times* underscores the global outrage at Russian aggression. It also creates a sense of Western solidarity.

This framing aligns with broader narratives of human rights, democracy, and international law, positioning Ukraine as a victim. Providing the statements of both local and global perspectives, the *NYT* allows its readers to consider different views. In contrast, statements of Russian government are mentioned more implicitly, with no names of the politicians provided: “Russia’s Ministry of Defense denied...” (NYT5), “Russia claimed...” (NYT5), “Russian government has consistently denied” (NYT2). The only name mentioned is Vladimir Putin, in context of the phrase “President Vladimir V. Putin’s bloody invasion” (NYT1). Presented in contrast to the rest of the coverage by *NYT*, including photos and interviews, these statements critique the official narrative of Russia and, through that, they implicitly challenge the credibility and legitimacy of the Russian government. Allegations of human rights abuses and war crimes are juxtaposed with Russia’s denials to express skepticism towards official Russian narratives, which is particularly highlighted in NYT5: “An analysis of satellite images by *The New York Times* rebuts claims by Russia”. In these kinds of statements the newspaper positions itself explicitly as a critic of Russia.

Nevertheless, there are also some efforts to humanize Russian soldiers: “Some [soldiers] were polite”, “They handed me my walking stick” (NYT1). These phrases acknowledge moments of unexpected civility amidst the brutality and aim to portray the soldiers as individuals capable of empathy and decency in certain instances. In other words, the newspaper does not blame individual soldiers but the politicians behind them.

The authors also focus on political angle of the situation by describing the consequences in terms of international law: “War crimes cases can be brought before the International Criminal Court in The Hague, but successful prosecution is a steep climb, experts say”. The reactions of world’s leaders are given as well who “said Moscow was to blame for the violence and should be held accountable” (NYT1). References to war

crimes appear together with references to applying sanctions “on Russian oil and gas”. This reflects the broader context of geopolitical tensions and the implications of the conflict on global security. The articles underscore the significance of holding perpetrators accountable for their actions and the role of international institutions, such as the International Criminal Court in The Hague and the International Court of Justice. This is not all, though, as the newspaper also reminds its readers of the importance of supporting Ukraine in its war effort: “the accounts from Ukraine and the grisly images may spur additional military aid to Ukraine, aside from more punishment on Russia” (NYT1). This indicates that the article creates sympathy and evokes international support for the Ukrainian side.

The New York Times’ coverage of the Bucha massacre clearly condemns the actions of the Russian government and military forces. This condemnation is evident in the strategic use of emotive language, descriptive details, and portrayal of social actors. By framing Russia as the aggressor and perpetrator of human rights violations, the discourse seeks to mobilize international support for Ukraine. The choice of language, such as describing the atrocities as “horrific” and “grueling”, aims to evoke strong emotional responses from readers and reinforce the narrative of victimization. The emphasis on the suffering of Ukrainian civilians and the urgent need for accountability and justice highlights the political agenda of the discourse, positioning Russia as a violator of international norms and laws.

The coverage of the Bucha massacre also contextualizes the events within broader narratives of conflict, power dynamics, and geopolitical tensions in the region. This contextualization is crucial for understanding the complexities of the situation and the enduring consequences of unresolved conflicts. By framing the massacre within the context of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine and historical precedents of aggression and

territorial expansion, the discourse sheds light on the historical roots of the conflict and the complexities of navigating post-Soviet political landscapes.

2.2. Bucha in Le Monde

The articles of *Le Monde* offer a more diverse, comparing to *NYT*, perspective on the events in Bucha, involving more participants and social actors. LM1 provides a chronological overview and general information on the “carnage” (“massacre”) in Bucha; LM2 gives an expert opinion of French specialists regarding the casualties; LM3 and LM4 provide an information about the scale of destruction and number of victims together with the reactions of Ukrainian, Russian, and international communities and comments on their further actions; LM5 is devoted to the anniversary of liberation of Bucha.

Unlike *The New York Times*, which covers the event in the form of a reportage, articles in *Le Monde* are more like a story that includes sometimes even fiction-like descriptions: “De villes en villages, sur les routes et les sentiers, le spectacle de la dévastation foudroie le cœur” (“From towns to villages, on roads and trails, the spectacle of devastation strikes the heart”) (LM1). The sentences are more emotional and more subjective. This narrative emphasis stands in contrast with the inclusion of specific details, such as the descriptions of military actions and military terminology, the methods of forensics and investigation of war crimes: “Les armes antichars et les drones d’attaque ont joué un rôle considérable dans le fait de stopper les attaques dans les faubourgs. Les défenseurs ont évité que le conflit ne se transforme en une guerre de position ponctuée d’impitoyables duels d’artillerie” (“Anti-tank weapons and attack drones played a significant role in stopping attacks in the suburbs. The defenders prevented the conflict from turning into a positional war punctuated by merciless artillery duels”) (LM1); “En figeant chaque scène de crime, en recueillant sur place les indices matériels, en analysant

les traces laissées par les obus, en récoltant éclats et débris ou en cartographiant les lieux en 3D, les gendarmes transmettent à la justice ukrainienne des éléments déterminants pour étayer certains de ses dossiers.” (“By freezing each crime scene, collecting material clues on site, analyzing the traces left by shells, collecting fragments and debris or mapping the locations in 3D, the gendarmes transmit to the Ukrainian justice system decisive elements to support certain of his files”) (LM2). This brings in the voice of the experts (often French experts, closer to the reader) to the emotional scene and adds experiential values to the expressive ones. The authors use a vocabulary derived from military discourse and it can be seen in such word choices as “anti-tank weapons”, “attack drones”, “positional war”, “artillery duels”, “crime scene”, “shells”, which place the event within the broader military context and common understanding of military actions, as well as text producer’s knowledge and experience, which is embodied in the experiential values of the words chosen.

Relational values are represented by describing the social relations (e.g., in the phrases “artillery duels” or “the gendarmes transmit to the Ukrainian justice system decisive elements”). In this way the authors show social relations behind the actions of discourse participants. The expressive values of the quotations above, intended to show the author’s evaluation of the reality, according to Fairclough, may be seen in evaluative adjectives such as “significant” or “decisive”.

By adding specific details, the authors give context, depth, and credibility to the coverage of the Bucha massacre. The authors do not try to hide shocking details that are appalling for average readers, as they are relevant in understanding the atrocities of war: “Comment tenir le coup face à des corps si dégradés qu’il faut parfois ôter ce qui reste de peau sur les mains, en la retournant comme un gant, pour espérer recueillir des empreintes digitales exploitables?” (“How can we hold on when faced with bodies so degraded that

we sometimes have to remove what remains of the skin on the hands, turning it inside out like a glove, in the hope of collecting usable fingerprints?”) (LM2). This is an interesting example in many ways. It, first, is more disturbingly detailed in describing the bodies than *The New York Times*. This expressive choice underlines the inhumanity that should not be hidden under euphemisms. Second, it uses a rhetorical question as a device that implicitly seeks consent from the reader. The words of a forensic expert, quoted by the author, reflect his personal knowledge and experience and hold experiential values in words like “bodies”, “remains of the skin”, “usable fingerprints”. The phrase “tenir le coup” (“hold on”) is an example of an expressive value, depicting personal evaluation of the situation of this specific social actor. Yet, because the expert is somebody who is used to dead bodies, his shock only increases the desired strong emotional effect on the common reader.

Repeated phrases such as “crimes de guerre” (“war crimes”), “massacre délibéré” (“deliberate massacre”), and “genocide” throughout the narrative convey moral outrage and condemnation, similarly to *The New York Times*, framing the actions of Russian forces as morally reprehensible and bear the expressive values, showing the evaluation of the event described.

The withdrawal of Russian forces after the occupation is described as a defeat of the Russian army while the advance of Ukrainian forces and the liberation of the city is called a victory: “Le retrait de l’armée russe est une victoire pour l’Ukraine” (“The withdrawal of the Russian army is a victory for Ukraine”) and at the same time for Russia it is “une défaite aux portes de Kiev” (“a defeat at the gates of Kyiv”) (LM1). Such framing reflects the strategic positioning of the conflicting parties and the efforts to shape the perceptions of the conflict. The labeling of military actions as a *defeat* or as a *victory*

also reflects the newspaper's support of the Ukrainian side and the belief in further military success.

For the descriptions of the war crimes the authors use certain categories of words, some of which are repeated throughout the narrative. Human casualties and killings of civilians are mentioned frequently in all of the articles. Hence, the word "corps" ("corpse") is used 32 times in five articles, the word "cadavre" ("dead body") is used 17 times and the words "mort", "morte", "morts", "mortes" ("dead") 19 times. Many descriptive adjectives are used, especially those indicating causes of death: "execute" ("executed"), "brûlés" ("burned"), "calcines" ("calcined"), "blessé" ("injured"), "assassiné" ("murdered"), "mutilés" ("mutilated"). The aspect of experiential value that marks the "ideological differences" (Fairclough 1989: 94) can be clearly seen in these word choices. They are ideologically contested because they have different interpretations within the specific discourse of the article, as these adjectives are usually used with quite different interpretations and associations: burned or charred objects, not people, for example. These adjectives also form a synonymous series, which Fairclough characterizes as overwording that shows the authors' preoccupation with a certain aspect of reality. The relational value here lies in the establishments of power by one group of actors (Russian soldiers) over another (Ukrainian civilians) and can be traced through such adjectives as "executed", "murdered", "mutilated". Power imbalances are also expressed through grammatical features, such as past participles of verbs that usually require an agent: *executed by whom*, for example. Expressive values, which express the author's evaluation of the situation, can be seen here in the focus on the casualties and civilian population.

The choice of adjectives that describe violent and unnatural death paint the incident not as a war but as a massacre. Along with the human toll the authors provide

the descriptions of other destructions in the region: “Maisons ravagées, brûlées, éventrées” (“Ravaged, burned, gutted houses”), “bombardements aériens et à des tirs d’artillerie” (“aerial bombardments and artillery fire”) (LM1), “des jets de grenades dans des caves” (“throwing grenades into cellars”), “violents affrontements” (“violent clashes”), “bombardements intensifs” (“intensive bombing”) (LM3). These descriptions bear an experiential value, as they are derived from the authors’ knowledge regarding the situation in the area. Relational value, again, can be seen in the focus on violent uses of power, while expressive values are conveyed through evaluative adjectives, such as “ravaged”, “burned”, “gutted”, “violent”, “intensive”.

The terminology used to describe the events in Bucha includes such terms as “tuerie” (“killing”), “carnage”, “massacre”, and “atrocités” (“atrocities”) and reflects the deliberate framing of the discourse to convey the brutality of the violence perpetrated against civilians. These namings serve to underscore the gravity of the situation and elicit strong emotional responses from readers.

The majority of the verbs about death are used in a passive form: “tués d’une balle” (“killed by a bullet”) (LM1), “les mains liées dans le dos” (“hands tied behind the back”) (LM2), “civils executes” (“executed civilians”) (LM5). Although the passive voice may shift the focus from the perpetrators of violence to the victims, here it is used to emphasize that the individual perpetrators are unknown and the responsibility for the atrocities lies on Russian army in general. This linguistic choice serves to humanize the victims and highlight the brutality and inhumanity of the acts committed against them. It evokes a sense of powerlessness and victimization, emphasizing the vulnerability of civilians. The use of passive voice also contributes to the portrayal of the victims as passive recipients of violence, further emphasizing their innocence and the unjust nature of their fate.

Le Monde includes different types of social actors in the narrative. Like in *The New York Times*, the testimony of witnesses and residents of the city, who became first and immediate participants of the events in Bucha, are described in detail. Their stories take the lead in the narrative, as can be seen merely from the fact that they take more space in the articles and cover more details:

Et soudain, après un dernier éclat de rire, le visage de Yuriy Kurus s'est éteint. Ses traits se sont figés et ses yeux se sont remplis de larmes. Svytlana, son épouse, a cessé de raconter avec émotion leur évacuation de la ville alors occupée par les forces russes de Boutcha, le 12 mars 2022. Le silence du couple a duré quelques secondes, puis Yuriy a repris la parole d'une voix étranglée : "Nos fils ont été tués ici". (LM5).

(And suddenly, after a last burst of laughter, Yuriy Kurus' face faded. His features froze and his eyes filled with tears. Svytlana, his wife, stopped recounting with emotion their evacuation from the town then occupied by Russian forces of Boutcha, on March 12, 2022. The couple's silence lasted a few seconds, then Yuriy spoke again in a strangled voice : "Our sons were killed here.")

Le Monde also provides the perspective of the Russian side and mentions its losses: "des blindés russes calcinés avec des corps de soldats figés dans la mort" ("charred Russian armored vehicles with bodies of soldiers frozen in death") (LM1). As mentioned above already, individual Russian soldiers are not demonized in the articles and instead appear as yet another range of victims of their own government. Statements of Russian politicians are also provided, but their words are openly questioned. For example, the title of LM4 is "Guerre en Ukraine: 'Les images des massacres de Boutcha ont permis de déconstruire immédiatement la propagande russe'" ("War in Ukraine: 'The images of the Boutcha massacres made it possible to immediately deconstruct Russian propaganda'"). The authors of the article explicitly call the position of the Russian stance propaganda and challenge Russian lies, which claimed that the corpses of civilians were staged by the Ukrainian authorities. In contrast, the authors refer to factual proof, such as numerous images and testimony, including representatives of French organizations, indicate the opposite.

Unlike *The New York Times*, which does not provide any names of Russian representatives, *Le Monde* mentions several politicians and gives direct quotes of their statements: “Maria Zakharova, a une nouvelle fois parlé du massacre comme d’‘une provocation grossière et cynique’ de Kiev” (“Maria Zakharova once again spoke of the massacre as ‘a gross and cynical provocation’ from Kyiv”). This adds a layer of transparency and accountability to the coverage, allowing readers to attribute statements to specific individuals and assess the credibility and motivations behind their remarks. The statements, however, are presented as quotations, to show that they should not be confused with the newspaper’s own stance and to also indirectly show the ways in which the Russian government presents lies.

The articles also contain official statements of the Ukrainian government, including President Zelenskyi, the mayor of Bucha, and several other officials. Quotations selected by the authors include such descriptions of military actions as “genocide” (Vitali Klitschko), “deliberate massacre” (Dmytro Kuleba), “the hell in the 21st century and the worst crimes of nazism are back in Europe” (Mykhailo Podoliak). The parallels between Nazism and Russian occupation are drawn several times in LM1, LM3 and LM4. The words of President Zelenskyi who refer to “des actes que les habitants n’avaient jamais vus, même pendant l’occupation nazie, il y a quatre-vingts ans” (“acts that residents had never seen, even during the Nazi occupation eighty years ago”) are mentioned in L3. By drawing comparisons to one of the most notorious and universally condemned regimes in history, the discourse seeks to show the readers the gravity of the crimes committed by Russia. The comparison is especially symbolic considering the fact that one of the proclaimed aims of Russia is to “denazify” the territory of Ukraine. References to Nazism serve to contextualize the atrocities committed during the Russian occupation within a broader historical framework of totalitarianism, genocide, and human rights abuses. This

comparison not only emphasizes the severity of the violence but also invokes historical memory and collective trauma associated with past atrocities.

The authors also mention The Hague, where many international institutions such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) are located. In sentences like “Aujourd’hui, à Kharkiv comme à La Haye, les premières enquêtes réalisent un travail de documentation” (“Today, in Kharkiv as in The Hague, the first investigations are carrying out documentation work”) the authors again draw a parallel between the trials of World War II: “comme cela a été le cas en 1945” (“as it was in 1945”). LM4 contains historical details of the end of World War II, specifically the Nuremberg Trials. The author emphasizes the importance of preserving and disseminating images of war crimes, placing the war in Ukraine into a wide historical context, where the deaths in Bucha are as important as the losses of the Second World War.

The historical parallels drawn in the articles also include significant events like the Timisoara massacre and Srebrenica massacre. In the first case, the corpses of civilians turned out to be a staging, and in the second a confirmed mass murder, officially recognized as genocide. The authors argue that the Bucha massacre also requires a detailed investigation but do not suggest that the murders could be faked and call such claims propaganda (LM4). While talking about the occupation, previous Russian army’s “aventures militaires” (“military adventures”) are brought to light: Russian invasion of Georgia in 2008 and Ukraine in 2014 (LM1); Russian intervention in the war in Syria, with “la responsabilité russe dans le bombardement d’hôpitaux” (“Russian responsibility for the bombing of hospitals”) (LM4). Calling these campaigns adventures portrays them in an ironic light.

The authors also describe the reaction of the international community to the discovery of the bodies in Bucha as a factor that “provoked the indignation of the international community” (“provoqué l’indignation de la communauté internationale”), which, in turn, led to diplomatic expulsions and discussions on new sanctions. Such portrayal of the international community’s reaction reflects a complex interplay of social relations. The discourse presents diplomatic measures as a form of collective accountability and justice-seeking in response to the events in Bucha. It also seeks to create a sense of a broad consensus of Western nations against Russia’s actions.

The discursive strategies outlined earlier may be interpreted as the techniques of constructing specific ideologies, power dynamics, and social relations. By drawing historical parallels to events like World War II, Timisoara massacre, and Srebrenica massacre, the discourse positions the Bucha massacre within a broader narrative of totalitarianism, genocide, and human rights abuses. These historical references evoke collective memories and shape perceptions of the conflict among French readers who whom the memory of WWII is an important emotional touchstone, framing Russia’s actions as morally reprehensible and aligning with narratives of historical memory and values. The inclusion of diverse social actors, such as Ukrainian witnesses, Russian politicians, and international community reactions, serves to depict a complex web of power relations and moral stances. Providing the opinions of French specialists also contributes to a more trustful attitude of the readers to an information in the articles. This device also brings the events in faraway Ukraine closer to the French reader. The emphasis on testimonies from Ukrainian civilians and condemnation of Russian propaganda aims to garner sympathy and support for the Ukrainian cause among the readers. Additionally, by openly questioning Russian narratives and holding Russian

officials to account, the discourse asserts a position of journalistic integrity and commitment to truth.

2.3. Kherson in The New York Times

Articles depict the liberation of Kherson by Ukrainian armed forces after nine months of Russian occupation. In contrast to the coverage of the Butcha massacre, NYT6, NYT7 and NYT8 focus on the emotional experiences and sentiments of the residents, who felt “unbridled jubilation and a fragile sense of relief” (NYT6) after Ukrainian soldiers entered the city. This is the most important element of the texts, although NYT9 places the event in a broader geopolitical context by explaining why controlling Kherson is strategically important for both sides, and NYT10 gives an overview of the hardships faced by civilians during the occupation and Russian “regime”.

The primary focus of the articles is to show joy of liberation and the word choices throughout the articles tends to be positive and expressive: “unbridled jubilation”, “joy”, “a fragile sense of relief”. Although a month of occupation had left the scars on people’s spirit, had led to casualties and destruction, and the citizens were still scared of possible missile attacks, this “historical day” is portrayed as a positive event, unlike the liberation of Bucha, which shocked the local and international community. The newspaper stresses positive emotions, described in expressive detail (“a wave of excitement, pride and pure joy unlike anything else since the war began”). The strong positive emotion is conveyed by showing its contagion across the whole nation: “Crowds flooded into the streets of Kyiv; they danced around a glowing bonfire in Kherson; and people popped champagne in Lviv and other Ukrainian cities” (NYT8). The event, thus, is framed as a triumph for whole Ukraine. The author’s choice of vocabulary that describe the event in a positive light shows a variety of positive words marking strong emotions, such as “joy”,

“jubilation”, “excitement”, “pride”. This carries both expressive and relations values; the inclusion of the people present during the events also adds experiential values. The relational value is expressed through the positively marked vocabulary, as it depicts the social relationships between two social groups: the soldiers and the residents who express their gratitude and respect to the former.

The articles refer to national Ukrainian symbols, such as flags, national anthem and songs, national colors: they are portrayed as symbols of cultural belonging that the occupation regime failed to delete. The authors portray them as a symbol of opposition to a “Russian bear” (NYT6). This can be seen in the following sentence: “Residents who had hidden their Ukrainian flags pulled them out and slowly made their way to the city center to await the arrival of Ukrainian troops”. The flag becomes not only a national symbol, but also a symbol of resistance and the end of Russian rule. The words of a translated song at the end of the article serve as a parallel between the occupation: “a red kalyna has bent down low” and liberation: “we’ll take that red kalyna and we will raise it up!” (kalyna is Ukrainian name for viburnum – a widespread plant that often grows near houses and is also one of the national symbols of Ukraine). The use of strong symbols can be classified as an example of expressive values.

Additionally, the article portrays the role of media channels and government agencies in disseminating and reinforcing the narrative of liberation, for example by issuing commemorative stamps: “the Ukrainian postal service issued a new stamp featuring the prize product of the nation’s agricultural heartland: the watermelon, and the adoption of new official logos featuring national symbols: “all government agencies changed their official logos to include images of watermelons”. This very mundane detail helps to create a contrast between the atrocities of war and the hope for a peaceful future.

The newspaper indirectly also comments on the importance of shared national symbols, as a source of relational values.

The occupation is framed as a coercive attempt to impose cultural assimilation and subjugation. The deployment of Russian currency, adoption of a “Russian curriculum” in schools, and influx of “Russian businesses” (NYT6) exemplify mechanisms of cultural hegemony aimed at erasing the distinct identity and autonomy of the local population. This asymmetrical power dynamic is reinforced by the repetition of the adjective “Russian”, to contrast it to the defiance of the locals, who are portrayed as victims of cultural imperialism and control.

The articles also delineate the relational dynamics within the administrative framework imposed by the Kremlin in Kherson, describing the intricacies of power distribution and manipulation within the occupied territory such as forced elections “at gunpoint” and “formalizing the illegal annexation of the territory” (NYT6). The word choices highlight the undemocratic and enforced nature of the measures and portray a hierarchical structure dominated by the Kremlin, with “proxy leaders” appointed to administer civilian affairs on behalf of the Russian authorities. The word choices help to create the picture of Russian occupation as illegal and based on brutal imposition of force. The sudden demise of one of the appointed leaders, allegedly in a car crash, hints at the precariousness of their position and the potential risks associated with collaboration with the occupying forces.

The authors depict Ukrainian soldiers as protagonists, who “arrived like heroes”, amidst cheers, kisses, and songs of gratitude from the liberated residents. They “were mobbed by crowds wanting to touch them, kiss them, shake their hands” (NYT6). Ukrainian army emerges as the central figure in the narrative of liberation, described as the catalysts of change, freedom, and hope. The words of a Kherson resident about the

“immense, boundless gratitude to the Armed Forces, to whom he mentally bows” are mentioned in NYT8. In contrast, Russian soldiers are portrayed as the antagonists of the narrative, who made the locals “vote at gunpoint” and “sought to Russify a defiant local population”, their retreat marking a symbolic defeat and the end of a repressive regime. An example of this is the description of residents tearing down a poster that says, “Russia is here forever”.

The narrative constructs a binary opposition between the oppressed (residents of Kherson) and the oppressors (Russian forces), framing the liberation as a victory of the former over the latter, citing the example of liberation from Nazi occupation: “residents said the emotional moment harked back to March 13, 1944 – the day the city was liberated from Nazi forces” (NYT6). This metaphorical framing imbues the liberation with historical significance and a sense of collective memory and continuity with past struggles and positions it within a larger historical frame. The opposition is distinctly visible in the quotation of one of the residents in NYT7: “When our soldiers drove in, their machine guns were pointed up, into the air,” Mr. Bloshko said. “When the Russians drove in, their guns were pointed at the people”.

The discourse of the articles includes a representation of varied power establishments, primarily from the Russian side that controlled the region through military invasion and occupation. This is portrayed as act the aim of which is to assimilate the local population and suppress Ukrainian identity. The occupation regime imposes its authority through various means, including curfews, propaganda, and coercion. This helps to implicitly challenge Russian claims about its actions in Ukraine. The discourse also sheds light on human rights abuses perpetrated by the occupying forces (NYT10), including torture, detention, and forced deportations. This underscores the asymmetrical power dynamic between the occupiers and the local population, where the latter are

subjected to violence and repression. The choice of details also reveals the pro-Ukrainian stance of the newspaper.

The other detail that places the event in broader geopolitical context is mentioning Western weapons given to Ukraine: “Ukraine finally gaining the upper hand – in part by firing Western-provided precision rockets to destroy bridges Russia needed for supply lines”. Some of the references are very expressive. The words of one of the locals are also quoted: “Thank God for America, Canada and Great Britain, and thank God for Grandfather Biden,” she said, noting the Western military aid that helped Ukraine repel the Russians from her city”. The military assistance of Western countries strengthens Ukraine’s military capabilities and enables them to effectively combat Russian forces, but it also signifies Western nations’, especially the United States’, broader support of Ukraine’s sovereignty and territorial integrity. The telling quote in fact creates a close family relationship between Ukraine and the United States, thus stressing that Ukraine considers itself a member of the Western family of nations, not the Russian sphere of influence.

2.4. Kherson in Le Monde

The articles, like those of *The New York Times*, describe the emotional experience of the residents of Kherson following the liberation of their city by Ukrainian armed forces after eight and a half months of Russian occupation. LM6 describes the first day of liberation and also provides statements from local residents who were eagerly awaiting the liberation. LM7 exposes the horrors and crimes committed by the Russian military against civilians during the occupation period and provides testimonies of the victims. LM8, LM9 and LM10 describe the significance of the liberation of the city in a military context and reveal the nature of this turning point of the war for both sides.

The texts describe the initial disbelief and gradual realization of liberation among the residents of Kherson: “Ces drapeaux ukrainiens partout, je n’en crois pas mes yeux” (“These Ukrainian flags everywhere, I can’t believe my eyes”), as a woman from Kherson is reported to say. This sense of disbelief helps to emphasize the hardness of the occupation, without stating it outright. LM6 captures the emotions of joy and relief, and as residents witness the Ukrainian flag being planted in the central square with a symbolic name of Liberty, symbolizing the city’s liberation: “Rares sont ceux ayant eu le privilège de participer aux premières célébrations de libération de la ville, la veille au soir, en dansant autour d’un brasero” (“Few had the privilege of participating in the city’s first liberation celebrations the evening before, dancing around a brazier”). The details given help to make the scene vivid for the reader and thereby make the joy of the Ukrainians shareable by the French audience. Here, like in *The New York Times*, is shown through the experiences of the residents to whom intense expressive meanings are attributed.

To describe this event significant for the Ukrainian army and to show the joyful experience of the locals the authors use specific vocabulary. The liberation of Kherson is described by employment of such namings as “l’événement historique” (“historical event”) (LM6), “une victoire” (“victory”) (LM8), “un tournant” (“turning point”) (LM10) for the Ukrainian side, as well as “une retraite humiliante” (“a humiliating retreat”), “échec cinglant” (“bitter failure”) (LM6) and “un revers militaire et politique immense” (“an immense military and political setback”) (LM10) for Russians. The experiential value of these word choices lies in the author’s knowledge of military tactics. Hence, they use a specific vocabulary to create contents out of this knowledge: “turning point”, “retreat”, “setback”. Moreover, the word choice also shows the relationships between two sides, creating the verbal opposition with the antonyms, such as “retreat” and “victory”, “failure” and “success”. Specific evaluative words, such as “historical”, “humiliating” or

“immense” represent author’s attitude of the event and form the expressive value of the words.

For the local residents, who were subjected to the Russian regime and propaganda for almost nine months, the liberation of the city is a celebration: they dance, sing national songs and joyfully welcome the Ukrainian military. Here, too, we get references to national symbols as carriers of Ukrainian unity. Immediately after the liberation, people are described as taking out the hidden Ukrainian flags and yellow-blue ribbons, which were forbidden during the occupation. The commemoration of those who died for the independence of Ukraine in 2014 – the year when the Russian-Ukrainian war began – is symbolic in the context of the liberation of the city from Russian forces. The authors also mention Maidan – a historical event in Ukraine’s struggle against the pro-Russian government. Both then and after the liberation of Kherson, Ukrainians are represented as remaining anti-Russian. A monument dedicated to the heroes of those events was “détruit par les forces russes dès les premiers jours d’occupation militaire” (“destroyed by the Russian forces from the first days of military occupation”) (LM6). The discourse incorporates cultural references to underscore the significance of the moment within the broader context of Ukrainian identity and history. The mention of the Ukrainian flag being planted at the site of a monument dedicated to the heroes of the Maidan revolution invokes notions of national pride and resilience: “Il flotte au vent sur ce qui fut un monument dédié aux héros de la révolution de Maïdan” (“It flutters in the wind on what was a monument dedicated to the heroes of the Maidan revolution”). Not only is the national symbolism used, but the people involved in the Maidan events are identified as “heroes” and the protest itself given the evaluative framing of a “revolution”.

Several toponyms are also mentioned in the articles: place de la Liberté (Liberty Square) and cinéma Ukraine (cinema Ukraine), which emphasize belonging to Ukraine

despite the attempt of the Russian army to Russify the city. The authors describe the scene at Liberty Square, where residents embrace soldiers and share patriotic sentiments, painting a picture of overwhelming joy and relief. The phrase “s’accrocher à une bouée de sauvetage” (“clinging to a lifebuoy”) metaphorically captures the depth of gratitude and desperation felt by the residents as they welcome the returning soldiers. The choice of the location, Liberty Square, also is not accidental.

Additionally, the discourse employs direct quotations from residents to convey their personal experiences and emotional responses to the liberation. For instance, one resident expresses disbelief and gratitude, stating, “C’est surréaliste... je n’en crois pas mes yeux” (“It’s surreal... I can’t believe my eyes”), while another describes the moment as “le plus beau jour de ma vie” (“the most beautiful day of my life”). These scenes use hyperbolic emotional references to heighten the sense of relief and thereby to also stress the horror of occupation for the French readers who otherwise may have forgotten about the event in the long narrative of the war. Furthermore, the discourse explores themes of resilience and defiance in the face of adversity, as residents reflect on their experiences under occupation and express determination to rebuild their lives. The mention of the city being previously “coupée du monde” (“cut off from the world”) and “infestée d’agents russes en civil” (“infested with Russian agents in civilian clothing”) highlights the challenges faced by people and their unwavering commitment to reclaiming their autonomy and dignity.

The social actors involved into a narrative are Ukrainian soldiers, Ukrainian civilians and Russian soldiers. The latter are depicted in the articles as perpetrators of brutal crimes against the civilian population. The narrative of establishing power is particularly clearly traced in LM7. The author describes a “centre de torture” (“torture center”) as a place for torturing civilians and details like being tortured by using electric

current through wires connected to his testicles and nipples are provided through first person testimony. This indicates the use of not only physical, but also brutal psychological violence which to some extent can be attributed to sexual violence. The prisoners of these centers were also forced to “marcher courbé” (“walk bent”) and “il était interdit de les regarder dans les yeux” (“it was forbidden to look them in the eyes”) – actions that also indicate the purposeful establishment of control and power over Ukrainian civilians. The metaphors adopted from the residents of Kherson, the names of “la Kommandantur” (“Commandant”) and “la Gestapo” (“Gestapo”) – military organizations of the Soviet Union in Nazi Germany. Such a comparison draws a parallel between the military dictatorship, the methods of which are still being used by Russia.

The articles also explore the relationship between the residents and the broader geopolitical context, particularly their experiences under Russian occupation: “certains habitants, voyant la présence d’un premier journaliste, commencent à évoquer spontanément les mois d’occupation, ‘la peur des Russes’, ‘le manque de tout’, ‘l’attente du retour de nos gars’ – (“Some residents, seeing the presence of a first journalist, began to spontaneously talk about the months of occupation, ‘the fear of the Russians’, ‘the lack of everything’, ‘the wait for our guys to return’”). By incorporating perspectives from diverse individuals, including a doctor, a photographer, and ordinary citizens, the discourse highlights the interconnectedness of personal experiences within the broader societal and political landscape. The texts also use the contrast between “us” and “them” in the representations, creating a sense of a unified Ukrainian nation, in contrast to the Russian occupiers.

Social relations of the actors involved into the discourse also include the relationship with Western countries. Authors suggest that Russian strategists wanted to wait until the elections in the United States so as not to weaken the camp of those within

the Republican Party who condemn military support for Ukraine (LM9). The preservation of the democratic majority in the US Senate the day after the midterm elections and the White House's commemoration of Kherson's "extraordinary victory" places the Ukrainian events in a global context (LM10).

Like in *The New York Times*, the authors highlight the important role of western weapons in successful counterattack of Ukrainian forces: "L'Ukraine remporte une victoire avec de beaux paramètres, en premier lieu l'absence d'effusion de sang civil. Usant depuis le mois d'août de lance-roquettes Himars et de pièces d'artillerie occidentales, Caesar français, M777 américain, PzH 2000 allemand" ("Ukraine won a victory with good parameters, first and foremost the absence of civilian bloodshed. Using Himars rocket launchers and Western artillery pieces since August, French Caesar, American M777, German PzH 2000"). The references to the weapons from American, French and German sources present a picture of Western unity. At the same time Russians are using "drones iraniens et des missiles de croisière russes" ("Iranian drones and Russian cruise missiles") (LM8). This, in turn, shows that the number of Russia's allies is more limited. By using a specific vocabulary for military equipment, such as "French Caesar", "American M777", "German PzH 2000", including the description of their origin country, the authors use a pre-existing classification scheme and also emphasize the relationship between the West and Ukraine. They also add evaluative aspects, such as "good parameters", "absence of civilian bloodshed" or "extraordinary victory". The word "victory" here may be interpreted as a metaphor, since it represents a different experience – a successful counteroffensive in only one military operation. According to Fairclough, the usage of metaphors may have ideological attachments and show particular interests of society.

Several Russian media channels, such as Meduza and Rossiya 1, and political figures are also mentioned in the articles: “Des personnalités comme Margarita Simonian, patronne de RT, Evgueni Prigojine, chef des mercenaires de Wagner, ou Ramzan Kadyrov, président de la Tchétchénie, allaient jusqu’à saluer ‘le courage d’une décision difficile’” (“Personalities like Margarita Simonian, boss of RT, Evgueni Prigojine, leader of Wagner’s mercenaries, or Ramzan Kadyrov, president of Chechnya, went so far as to salute ‘the courage of a difficult decision’”). They are mentioned in the context of expressing support for the retreating Russian forces, but the authors emphasize that no special attention was paid to the “defeat” of the Russian army. This testifies to the silence of the real situation at the front, and therefore to the unreliability of the Kremlin’s media channels. Speaking about the past military achievements of the Russian army, such as the occupation of Crimea, the seizure of eastern Ukrainian territories, or the entry of troops into Kherson, the authors of the articles shift the responsibility to Moscow, the Kremlin, or Putin himself: “la Crimée, annexée en 2014 par Vladimir Poutine” (“Crimea, annexed in 2014 by Vladimir Putin”) (LM8). This creates a narrative of “Putin’s bloody war”, where the responsibility lies with the dictator, and not with the “ordinary” Russian soldiers, who, however, still occupied Crimea. Such a strategy can create a false image of Russia in the perception of the international community.

CONCLUSION

The ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war is one of the key international events of the 21st century that is extensively covered in international media. Like any war, it, too, in many ways meets many of the news values: it is unexpected, negative and involves an elite nation. Yet, the war is not as unambiguous for the Western reader as to be an easy event to represent as the Russian propaganda machine has been actively distorting international news and social media coverage. There are also political forces in many Western countries that either outright support Russia or at least are against the extensive military expenditures required to support Ukraine. Thus it is important to study how international media portrays events in the long war and how it seeks to influence its readers.

The aim of this thesis was to identify means of representation of Ukraine in articles of two international media outlets: *The New York Times* from the United States and *Le Monde* from France. Both countries have been active supporters of Ukraine, but both also face somewhat divided domestic audiences. The war has become long and therefore difficult to cover as a whole. Therefore, two events—one negative and one positive—were chosen as the focus of analysis to understand the strategies used by the two newspapers.

Because of the information disorder around the war, the introduction first gave an overview of the ongoing conflict and the way in which media has responded to it. As the war is still ongoing, there is not yet much academic research on specifically this conflict and hence the critical analysis of the coverage of other divisive international conflicts was introduced. These analyses show that international news media play an important role in presenting divisive international conflicts and thereby also shaping audience reactions. Previous studies also reveal the presence of potentially unrecognized biases in media

representations that implicitly support one side in the conflict. This is a complicated question as quality media have to be balanced and yet they also have to make sure that they do not condone crimes against humanity. This question was not raised in the articles studied but it is something this thesis will also address.

Because the thesis is interested in how the war is represented, but also the broader ideological processes behind it, it chose to use Norman Fairclough's version of CDA. The main focus of the analysis was on the description phase, looking at the word choices (experiential, relational and expressive) used to portray the two events. The other stages of analysis (interpretation and explanation) were touched on, but will be elaborated here in the conclusion where the systematic discussion of empirical results will be presented.

Both *The New York Times* and *Le Monde* offer their readers a detailed overview of the events happening in Ukraine during the full-scale Russian invasion. The main focus of the articles is shifted to the human toll, since the texts include the descriptions of deaths and their causes, the number of victims, cite the testimony of witnesses and descriptions of personal experiences. The empirical analysis of twenty articles showed that the linguistic choices made by the authors greatly influence the perception of the events and reveal the ideological views behind the narrative. The word choices create a link between the text producer and the audience and determine how the reader consume the political discourse offered by the newspapers.

The analysis helped to understand the discursive structures of the articles analyzed. A discursive structure refers to the organization or arrangement of ideas, arguments, or topics within a written discourse and encompasses how information is presented, the logical flow of ideas, and the relationships between different elements of the discourse.

The main discursive structure that emerged from the analysis is the human toll of the events. The words describing dead bodies are the most numerous in the articles and the victims are quoted the most in both newspapers. Both *The New York Times* and *Le Monde* describe social relationships established between civilians and aggressors, civilians and Ukrainian soldiers, soldiers and politicians. The articles involve a variety of social actors: local and international politicians and organizations, military representatives, civilian population. *Le Monde*, though provides more detailed statements from the Russian side, giving the names and the status of these participants. This, however, does not mean that Russian positions are condoned. Rather, these statements help the readers see the often callous attitudes of Russian politicians and thus can be seen as undermining the Russian position.

Both *The New York Times* and *Le Monde* aim to place the events described into a broader historical context, mentioning, among others, the events happening in Ukraine before the full-scale invasion (Maidan and 2014 invasion) and drawing parallels between the Russian occupation and Nazi occupation during World War II. Additionally, *Le Monde* mentions previous Russian military operations, such as the invasion of Georgia in 2008, and uses the examples of other tragic events, such as Timisoara massacre and Srebrenica massacre. The authors of *Le Monde* frequently operate with terms connected to victory or defeat, describing, for example the retreat of Russian troops as a defeat, while the liberation of the city by Ukrainian army as a victory. These terms may be described as ideologically contested but they also express the newspapers stance on the ongoing conflict.

The practice of overwording, described by Fairclough in relation to the experiential values of the word choices, is common for both newspapers, especially when it comes to synonyms for death and violence, but also joy of liberation. However, there

are no examples of euphemisms, which mask the negative force of the word. This is an example of a discursive practice which does not avoid negative connotations but offers the readers truthful facts and hence creates more expressive texts. Among the grammatical features used, active and passive forms of verbs are extensively used, which, depending on the context, shifts the focus either to an agent or an action.

To conclude, both *The New York Times* and *Le Monde* apply similar discursive practices in their coverage of the events in Ukraine during the Russian invasion, emphasizing the human cost and portraying the social dynamics and historical context surrounding the conflict. Despite some differences in detail and emphasis, both newspapers utilize similar discursive strategies to convey their narratives and engage their readers with the complexities of the situation. Through linguistic choices, direct quotations, and contextual framing, the articles construct a vivid portrayal of the events, shaping readers' perceptions and inviting critical reflection on the underlying ideological perspectives embedded within the discourse.

The analysis also shows that both newspapers take a strong pro-Ukrainian stance and try to make their readership feel sympathy for the struggle. The many references to the geopolitical context and international solidarity also make it possible to argue that the newspapers try to explain to their readers why continued and therefore costly military support for Ukraine has to continue. This suggests that both newspapers agree that in the case of some conflicts in which human rights violations occur cannot ethically be presented in a balanced manner.

The present study only focused on a small corpus of texts and primarily focused on the description of word choices. This is the major limitation of the present study. The analysis could be expanded by a more systematic analysis, covering all questions suggested by Fairclough. The scope of research can be broadened to the analysis of events

that happened later (in 2023-2024) or the comparison of representations from different time periods. The analysis could also be improved by a more systematic comparisons with previous research on French media discourse.

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APPENDIX 1

Carlotta Gall “Bucha’s Month of Terror” – NYT1;

Carlotta Gall, Andrew E. Kramer and Natalie Kitroeff “Reports of atrocities emerge from Ukraine as Russia repositions its forces” – NYT2;

Jane Arraf “In Bucha, a Symbol of Death and Atrocity, Life Returns” – NYT3;

Carlotta Gall, Ivan Nechepurenko “More evidence of atrocities in Bucha emerges after Russian forces withdraw” – NYT4;

Malachy Browne, David Botti and Haley Willis “Satellite images show bodies lay in Bucha for weeks, despite Russian claims” – NYT5;

Marc Santora, Anna Lukinova and Maria Varenikova “Ukrainian Soldiers Sweeping Into Kherson Are Greeted With Jubilation” – NYT6;

Andrew E. Kramer “Russia Tried to Absorb a Ukrainian City. It Didn’t Work” – NYT7;

Andrew E. Kramer, Marc Santora “Ukrainian Forces Enter Kherson, a Strategic Prize, in a Blow to Putin” – NYT8;

Matthew Mpoke Bigg, Marc Santora “Why Control of Kherson City Is Important to Russia and Ukraine” – NYT9;

Andrew E. Kramer “Electrical Cords, Metal Pipes: In Kherson, Signs of Torture Emerge” – NYT10;

Rémy Ourdan “A Boutcha et dans la région de Kiev, des scènes de carnage” – LM1;

Antoine Albertini “Dans la ville martyre de Boutcha, une “scène de crime” géante pour les experts de la gendarmerie française” – LM2;

William Audureau, Assma Maad, Pascaline David and Pierre Breteau “Massacre de Boutcha : ce que l’on sait sur la découverte des corps de civils” – LM3;

Christian Delage “Guerre en Ukraine: ‘Les images des massacres de Boutcha ont permis de déconstruire immédiatement la propagande russe’” – LM4;

Thomas d’Istria “‘Nous ne pardonnerons jamais’: à Boutcha, ville martyre d’Ukraine, la population commémore la libération” – LM5;

Rémy Ourdan “Dans la ville de Kherson libérée, des habitants incrédules : ‘Ces drapeaux ukrainiens partout, je n’en crois pas mes yeux’” – LM6;

Rémy Ourdan “Dans la ville libérée de Kherson, des récits d’horreur après l’occupation russe” – LM7;

Emmanuel Grynszpan “Guerre en Ukraine: ce que change la reprise de Kherson” – LM8;

Benoît Vitkine, Cédric Pietralunga, Emmanuel Grynszpan and Faustine Vincent “Le retrait de Kherson, un revers militaire et politique immense pour la Russie” – LM9;

“La libération de Kherson, un tournant de la guerre en Ukraine” – LM10.

APPENDIX 2

Fairclough's ten questions for CDA analysis

A Vocabulary

- 1) What experiential values do words have?
 - What classification schemes are drawn upon?
 - Are there words which are ideologically contested?
 - Is there rewording or overwording?
 - What ideologically significant meaning relations are there between words?
- 2) What relational values do words have?
 - Are there euphemistic expressions?
 - Are there markedly formal or informal words?
- 3) What expressive values do words have?
- 4) What metaphors are used?

B Grammar

- 5) What experiential values do grammatical features have?
 - What types of process and participants predominate?
 - Is agency unclear?
 - Are processes what they seem?
 - Are normalizations used?
 - Are sentences active or passive?
 - Are sentences positive or negative?
- 6) What relational values do grammatical features have?
 - What modes are used?
 - Are there important features of relational modality?

- Are the pronouns we and you used and if so, how?
- 7) What expressive values do grammatical features have?
- Are there important features of expressive modality?
- 8) How are (simple) sentences linked together?
- What logical connectors are used?
 - Are complex sentences characterized by coordination or/ subordination?
 - What means are used for referring inside and outside the text?

C Textual structures

- 9) What interactional conventions are used?
- Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?
- 10) What larger scale structures does the text have?

RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

ANGLISTIKA OSAKOND

Kateryna Osyka

Critical Discourse Analysis of Bucha Massacre and Kherson Liberation in the Articles of New York Times and Le Monde [Butša massimõrva ja Hersoni vabastamise kujutamise kriitiline diskursusanalüüs New York Timesi ja Le Monde'i artiklites]

Magistritöö

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Lehekülgede arv:

Annotatsioon:

Ukraina on alates Venemaa täiemahulist sissetungi 24. veebruaril 2022 olnud maailma meediaväljaannete tähelepanu keskpunktis. Kuna aga sõda on eri riikides tekitanud vastuolulisi reaktsioone, siis on oluline uurida, kuidas sõda erinevates riikides kujutatakse ning kuidas nende tekstidega luuakse suhtumisi sõja osapooltesse.

Antud uurimus keskendub artiklitele, mis on avaldatud kahes mõjukas meediaväljaandes, Le Monde'is (Prantsusmaa) ja The New York Timesis (Ameerika Ühendriigid), keskendudes kahele sündmusele, mis toimusid sõja esimesel aastal: Butša massimõrv ja Hersoni vabastamine. Neid artikleid analüüsiti Norman Fairclough'i kolmedimensioonilise kriitilise diskursusanalüüsi mudeli abil.

Töö teoreetiline peatükk tutvustab konflikti ajaloolist tausta ja uudiste konstrueerimist, metoodikat ja annab kirjanduse ülevaate varasematest uurimustest vastuoluliste konfliktide meediarepresentatsioonide teemal. Empiirilises peatükis kasutatakse Norman Faircloughi kriitilise diskursusanalüüsi mudelit, et analüüsida 20 artiklist koosnevat korpust.

Uurimus näitas, et väikestest erinevustest hoolimata kasutasid mõlemad ajalehed sarnaseid diskursiivseid strateegiaid, eelkõige ekspressiivseid väärtusi, keskendudes inimohvritele ja sündmuste asetamisele laiemasse geopoliitilisse konteksti. Mõlemad ajalehed võtavad selgelt Ukrainat toetava positsiooni ning võib väita, et nad soovivad oma lugejatele seletada, miks on vaja jätkuvalt Ukrainat toetada. Inimõiguste rikkumise kontekstis on mõlemad ajalehed otsustanud, et sündmuste tavapärane tasakaalustatud kujutamine oleks ebaeetiline.

Märksõnad: meediadiskursus, kriitiline diskursusanalüüs, Butša massimõrv, Hersoni vabastamine, Ukraina

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Raili Marling