



The Coverage and Reception of
the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict



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Visual News Values: Mapping Eliteness, Personalisation, and Ideology in Romanian Media Imagery

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Outline

Research objectives

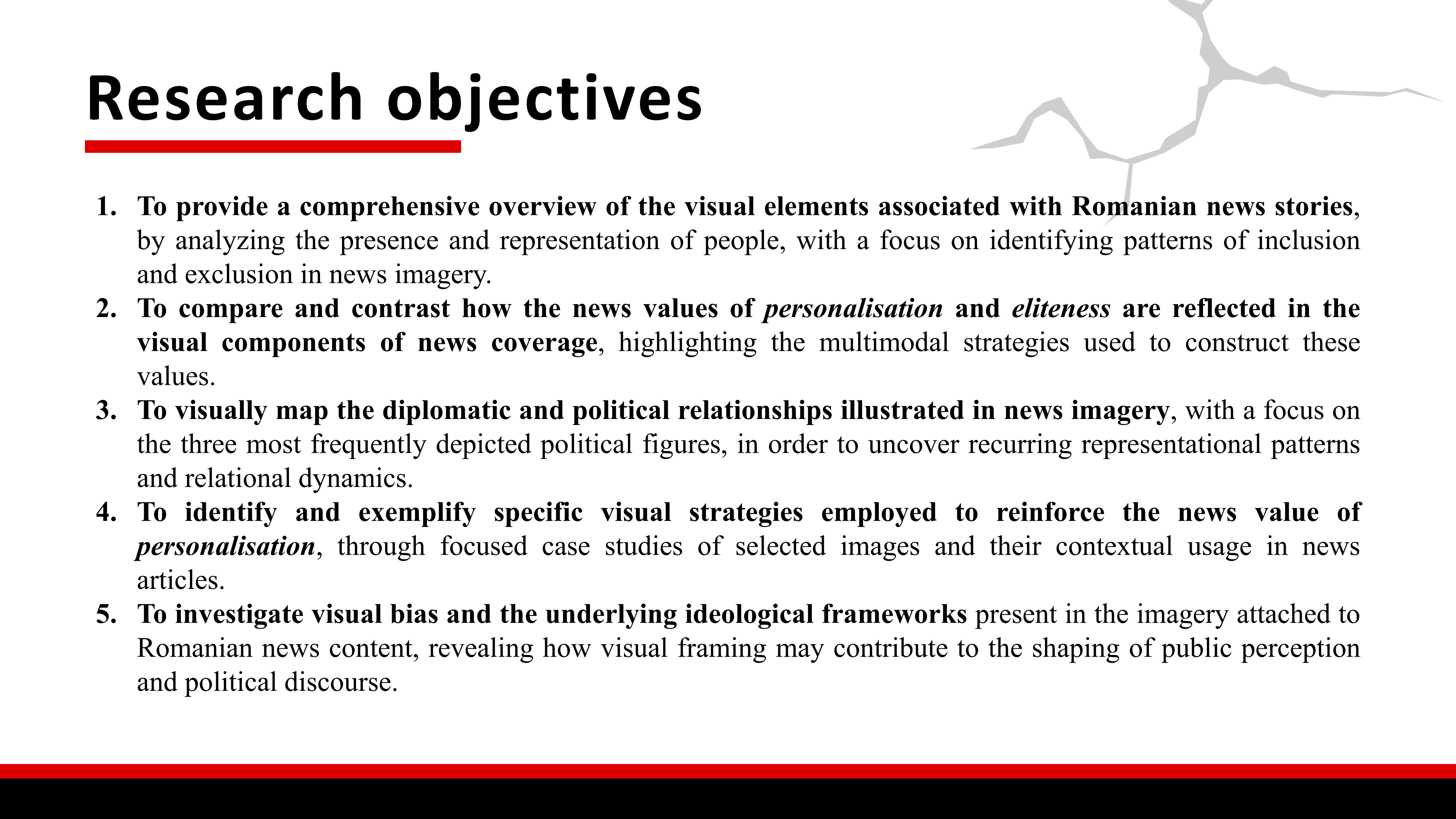
Data & Methodology

Theoretical framework

Data analysis

Final remarks

Research objectives



1. **To provide a comprehensive overview of the visual elements associated with Romanian news stories,** by analyzing the presence and representation of people, with a focus on identifying patterns of inclusion and exclusion in news imagery.
2. **To compare and contrast how the news values of *personalisation* and *eliteness* are reflected in the visual components of news coverage,** highlighting the multimodal strategies used to construct these values.
3. **To visually map the diplomatic and political relationships illustrated in news imagery,** with a focus on the three most frequently depicted political figures, in order to uncover recurring representational patterns and relational dynamics.
4. **To identify and exemplify specific visual strategies employed to reinforce the news value of *personalisation*,** through focused case studies of selected images and their contextual usage in news articles.
5. **To investigate visual bias and the underlying ideological frameworks** present in the imagery attached to Romanian news content, revealing how visual framing may contribute to the shaping of public perception and political discourse.

Methodology

VISUAL CONTENT ANALYSIS

MULTIMODAL CRITICAL
DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

MULTIMODAL INTERACTION
ANALYSIS

Visual content analysis

- „visual content analysis is a systematic observational method used for testing hypotheses about the way in which the media represent people, events, situations, and so on. It allows quantification of samples of observable content classified into distinct categories. It does not analyse individual images or individual ‘visual texts’ (...). Instead, it allows description of fields of visual representation by describing the constitutions of one or more defined areas of representation, periods or types of images.” (Phil Bell 2008:14)
- “Content Analysis consists of counting instances that are found within the research data which can be of any kind: textual, verbal, visual or sound and from a variety of sources.” (G. Bouvier 2014:287)

Multimodal critical discourse analysis

- „In MCDA, like CDA, it is important to show how discourses seek to control and shape social practices in the interests of dominant ideology.” (D. Machin 2016:331)
- “For MCDA, I have suggested that we must favour an approach which better locates the sign both as motivated and as having form, but also which roots it in ideology and how this shapes the way the world appears to us – what Foucault realised about discourse and power (...).”(D. Machin 2016:332)

Theoretical framework: News values



„**News values** can be defined in many different ways, but in essence they determine **what is news(worthy)**. In the Journalism/ Communication Studies literature, news values are typically defined as properties of events or stories or as criteria/principles that are applied by news workers in order to select events or stories as news or to choose the structure and order of reporting.” (Bednarek, Caple 2014:136)

Galtung and Ruge's 12 News Factors



1. FREQUENCY
 2. THRESHOLD
 3. UNAMBIGUITY
 4. MEANINGFULNESS
 5. CONSONANCE
 6. UNEXPECTEDNESS
 7. CONTINUITY
 8. COMPOSITION
 9. REFERENCE TO ELITE NATIONS
 10. REFERENCE TO ELITE PEOPLE
 11. REFERENCE TO PERSONS
 12. REFERENCE TO SOMETHING
NEGATIVE
- 

A contemporary set of news values:

Tony Harcup & Deirdre O'Neill

1. THE POWER ELITE
2. CELEBRITY
3. ENTERTAINMENT
4. SURPRISE
5. BAD NEWS

6. GOOD NEWS
7. MAGNITUDE
8. RELEVANCE
9. FOLLOW-UP
10. NEWSPAPER AGENDA

News values

Monika Bednarek & Helen Caple

1. NEGATIVITY
2. TIMELINESS
3. PROXIMITY
4. SUPERLATIVENESS
5. ELITENESS

6. IMPACT
7. NOVELTY
8. PERSONALISATION
9. CONSONANCE

News values and language



1. EVALUATIVE LANGUAGE
2. INTENSIFICATION
AND QUANTIFICATION
3. COMPARISON
4. REFERENCES TO EMOTION
5. 'NEGATIVE' VOCABULARY
6. WORD COMBINATIONS
7. METAPHOR/ SIMILE
8. STORY STRUCTURE

9. REFERENCES TO TIME AND
PLACE
10. REFERENCES TO THE NATION/
COMMUNITY
11. FIRST-PERSON PLURAL
PRONOUNS
12. ROLE LABELS
13. QUOTES FROM 'ORDINARY'
INDIVIDUALS
14. REFERENCES TO INDIVIDUAL

News values and key photographic devices



1. EVALUATIVE ELEMENTS
2. INTENSIFICATION
3. COMPARISON
4. REFERENCES TO EMOTION
5. 'NEGATIVE' ELEMENTS

6. REFERENCES TO TIME AND PLACE
 7. ROLE LABELS
 8. REFERENCE TO INDIVIDUALS
 9. AESTHETIC ELEMENTS
- 

Prominence/ eliteness



- „Stories about ‘elite’ individuals or celebrities are more newsworthy than stories about ordinary people, and sources that are affiliated with an organization or institution or are otherwise officially recognized authorities are preferred over others: ‘The more elite the source, the more newsworthy the story’ (Bell 1991:192). Prominence of sources is sometimes given its own news values label, Attribution.” (Bednarek, Caple 2014:43)
- „Firstly because it is assumed their actions are more consequential than the daily activities of ordinary people – they ‘affect our lives’. Secondly, the social activities of elite people can serve as representative actions – their weddings, opinions, nights out and domestic habits are taken to be of interest to us all, since we too engage in these things.” (J. Hartley 1982:78)

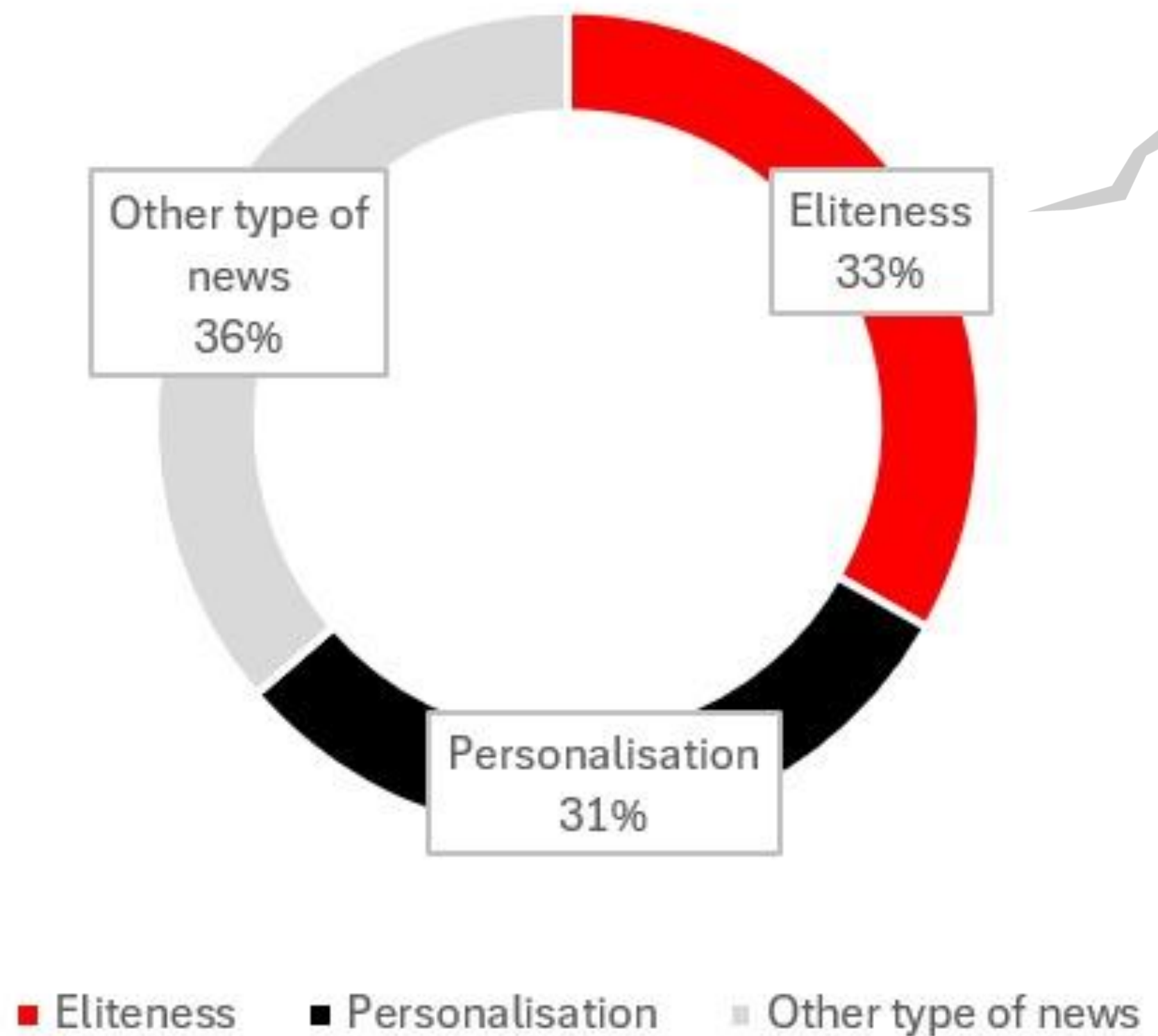
Prominence/ eliteness

News analysed: n = 1993

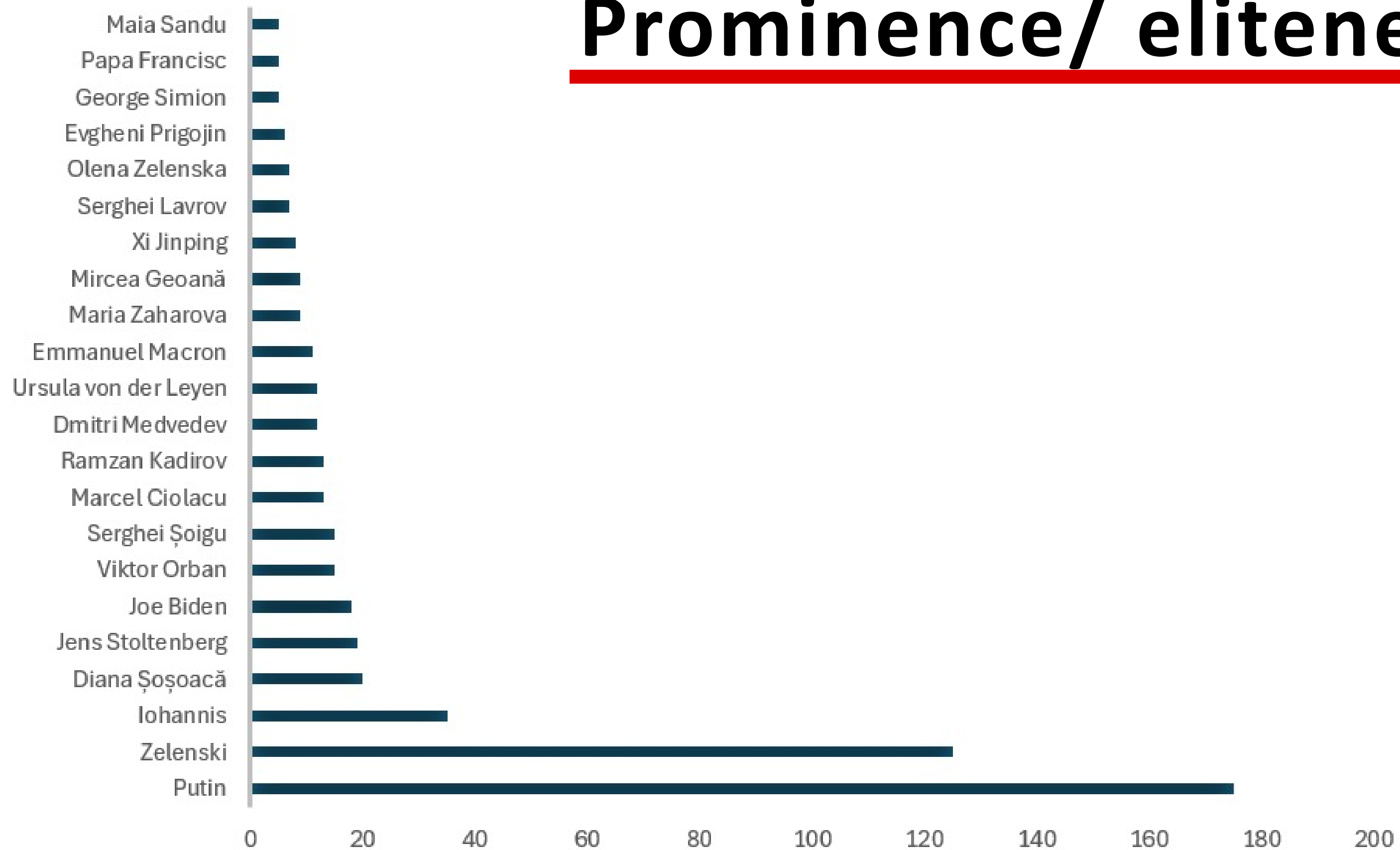
Eliteness: n = 662

Personalisation: n = 606

Others: n = 725

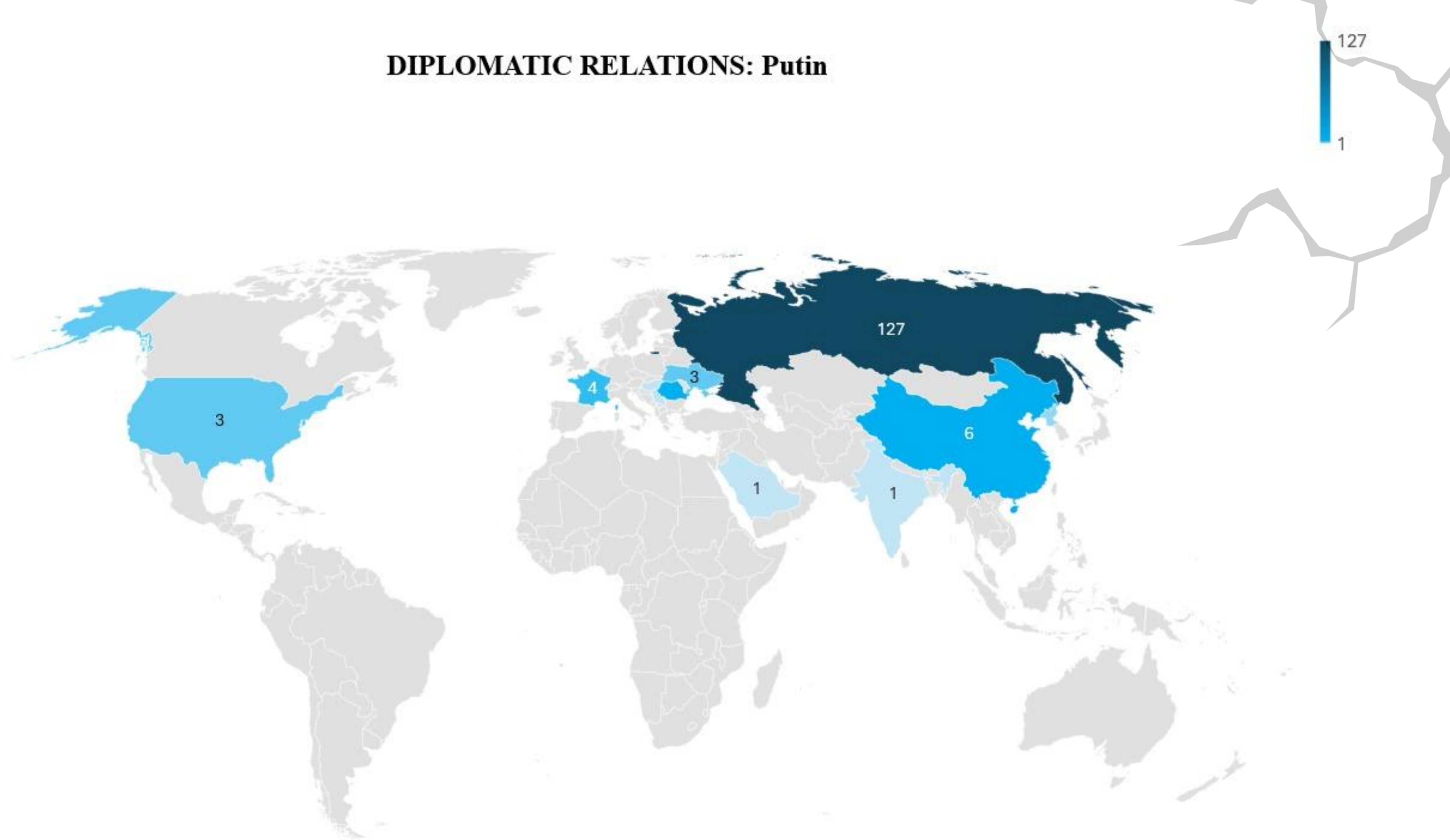


Prominence/ eliteness



Putin: n = 175
Zelenski: n = 125
Iohannis: n = 35
Diana Șoșoacă: n = 20
Jens Stoltenberg: n = 19

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS: Putin

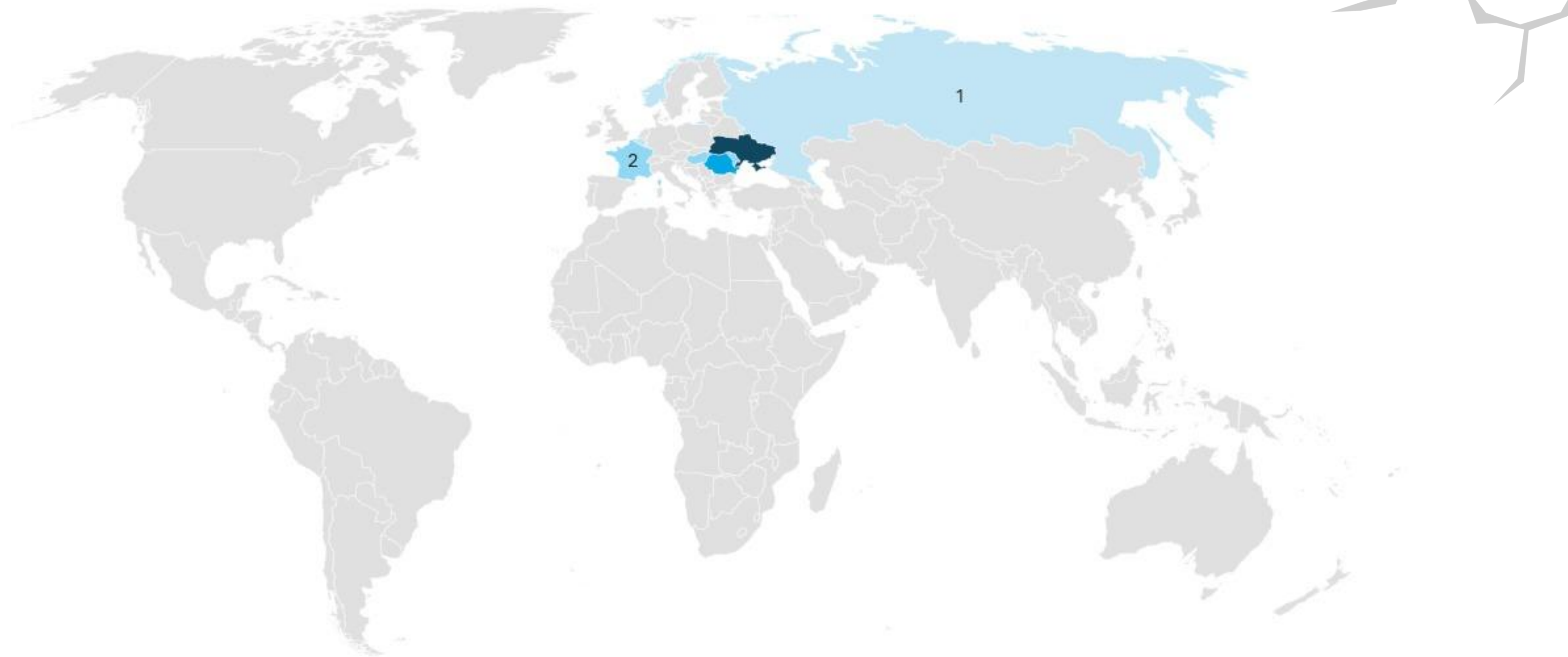


DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS: Zelenski

54
1



DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS: Iohannis



Personalisation



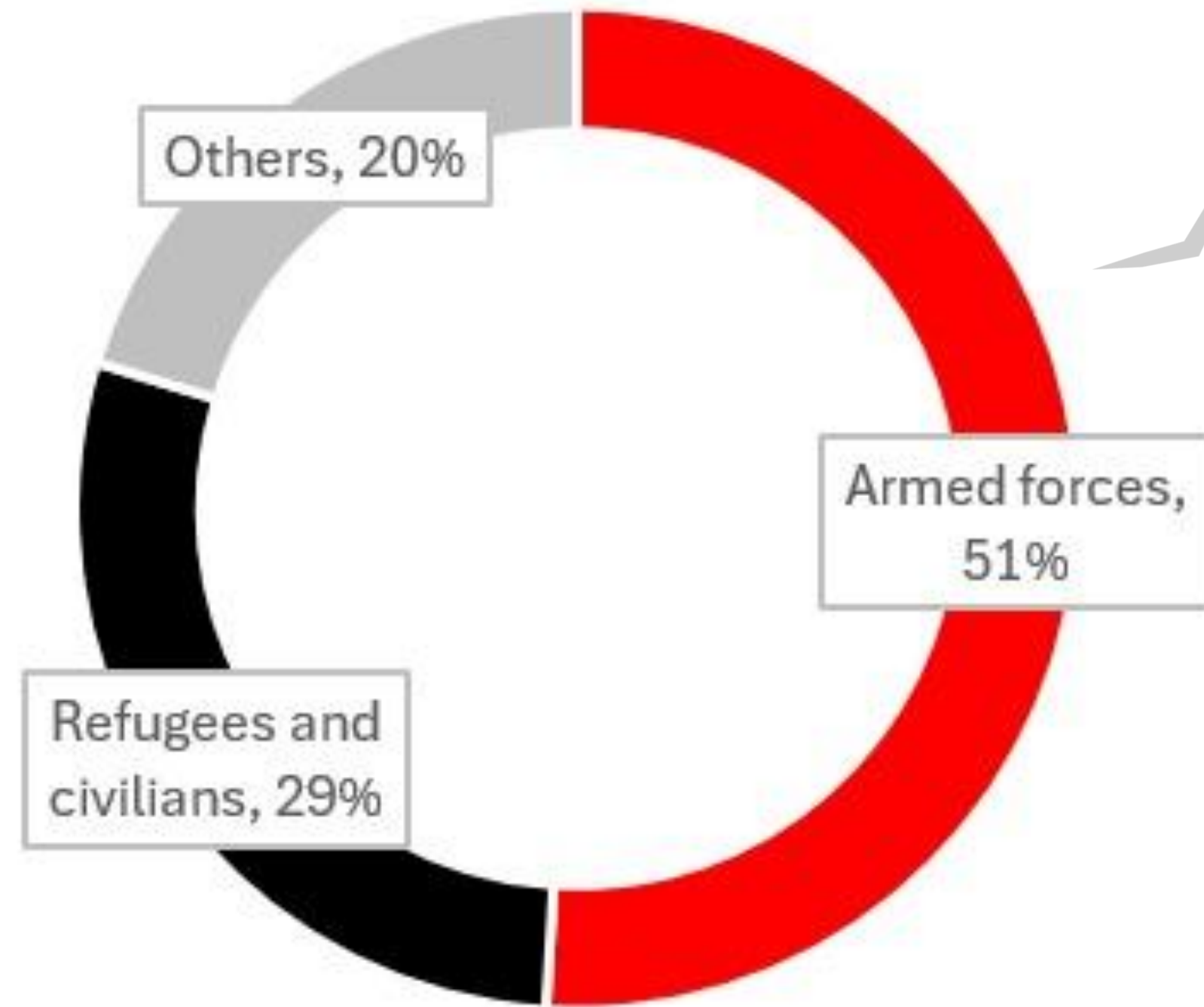
„News stories that are personalized attract audiences more than the portrayal of generalized concepts or processes. For example, a science story can be made more newsworthy if it directly impacts on a news actor who is willing to tell their story. Eyewitness accounts, for example, of survivors, also clearly increase news value. Personalization is thus about the many ways in which a human face is given to the news.” (Bednarek, Caple 2014:43)

Personalisation

Armed forces: n = 309

Refugees and civilians: n = 174

Others: n = 123



■ Armed forces ■ Refugees and civilians ■ Others

The aestheticization of suffering (1/3)



“The aestheticization of suffering (on television) is thus produced by a visual and linguistic complex that eliminates the human pain aspect of suffering, whilst retaining the phantasmagoric effects of a tableau vivant.”

(Chouliaraki 2006:261)

VS

„atrocit  photos” (Barbie Zelizer 1998:1)



The aestheticization of suffering (2/3)



<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/sase-luni-de-razboi-in-ucraina-principalele-momente-de-la-inceputul-invaziei-rusiei.html>

The aestheticization of suffering (3/3)



<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/analisti-militari-liderii-rusi-zmisogini-impiedica-recrutarea-femeilor-in-armata.html>

<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/aproape-40-000-de-femei-sunt-inrolate-in-armata-ucrainei-cate-lupta-in-prima-linie-a-frontului.html>

Close-ups representations of the war (1/8)



- “Looking at the viewer, or the right to do so, in itself suggests power. Hartley (1982) has shown that in news broadcasts, trade union officials are not allowed to speak to the camera, whereas politicians, journalists and presenters are. (...) So a worthwhile question to ask is what kinds of people are allowed to look out of the frame and engage with us and what kinds of people are not?” (Bednarek and Caple 2012:82)
- „Sometimes photographers or picture editors crop photos back to close-ups of non-transactional Reactors who look bored, or animated, or puzzled, at something we cannot see. This can become a source of representational manipulation.” (Gunther Kress, Theo van Leeuwen 2006:68)

Close-ups representations of the war (2/8)

Non-frontal perspective: “When we do not approach, or see, people face-to-face, but from the side or from behind, or at a long distance, there is no address. Non-frontal perspectives signal that we are some kind of observers, as if given a snapshot of a reality we are not part of, possibly as a bystander or at time as an eavesdropper.

Here, no potential for engagement or interaction with the people depicted are coded. We are, as viewers, not called upon for a response. The images are rather offering information available for scrutiny.”

(Bednarek and Caple 2012:82)

Close-ups representations of the war (3/8)



https://www.stiripesurse.ro/o-femeie-a-fost-captiva-in-iadul-de-la-azovstal-a-trecut-prin-mainile-rusilor-iar-acum-a-nascut-o-fetita_2573660.html

<https://www.digi24.ro/stiri/externe/ucrainenii-au-descoperit-o-camera-de-tortura-pentru-copii-in-hersonul-eliberat-2184091>

Close-ups representations of the war (4/8)



https://www.stiripesurse.ro/foto-un-preot-indragit-si-contestat-a-fost-snopit-in-bataie-in-ucraina-totul-a-avut-loc-noaptea_3223499.html

<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/povestea-unei-ucrainence-violate-si-torturate-de-un-soldat-rus-mi-a-spus-sa-fac-ce-spune-daca-vreau-sa-imi-mai-vad-copilul.html>

Close-ups representations of the war (5/8)



<https://adevarul.ro/stiri-externe/europa/un-paramedic-britanic-descrie-ca-a-vazut-cadavre-2171780.html>

<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/actualitate/rusii-au-cautat-pe-google-zcum-sa-ti-rupi-o-mana-acasa-imediat-ce-putin-a-anuntat-mobilizarea-la-razboi.html>

Close-ups representations of the war (6/8)



<https://www.libertatea.ro/stiri/ce-spun-bancile-din-romania-despre-conturile-deschise-refugiatilor-ucraineni-4543645>

https://www.stiripesurse.ro/vot-referendum-copii-ucraina_2569775.html

Close-ups representations of the war (7/8)



<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/mai-multi-soldati-rusi-au-murit-intr-un-an-in-ucraina-decat-in-toate-luptele-purtate-de-rusia-dupa-al-doilea-razboi-mondial.html>

<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/un-obiect-neidentificat-a-intrat-in-spatiul-aerian-al-poloniei-dinspre-ucraina-armata-a-fost-mobilizata-de-urgenta.html>

Close-ups representations of the war (8/8)



<https://adevarul.ro/stiri-interne/evenimente/lunetistul-roman-care-lupta-pe-frontul-din-2247514.html>

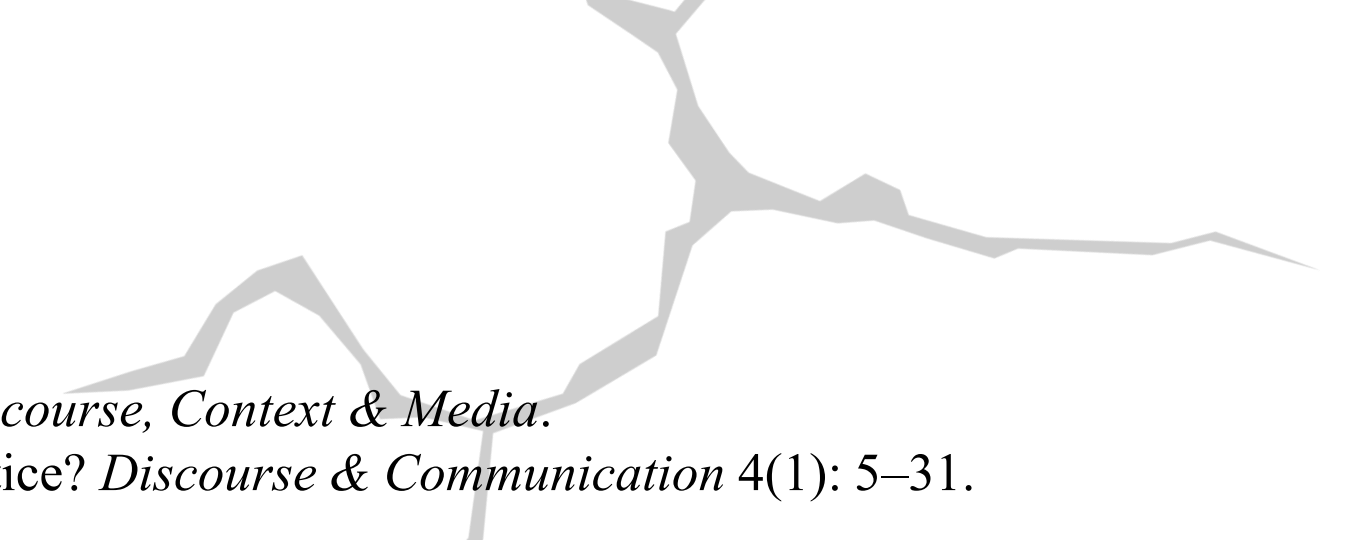
<https://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/international/grupul-wagner-recruteaza-carne-de-tun-in-scolile-rusesti-mercenarii-au-ajuns-sa-se-lupte-cu-pumnii-pe-front-cu-ucrainenii.html>

Conclusion and further directions



- The Romanian press relies heavily on visual elements to reinforce key news values, particularly eliteness and personalisation. Images do not merely illustrate the news, they actively participate in the construction of meaning and public perception.
- The dominance of elite political figures in news imagery suggests a strong tendency toward authority-centric framing. The same few leaders appear repeatedly, often in settings that emphasize status, power, and international alignment. This contributes to a visual hierarchy of political relevance and influence.
- Visual strategies of personalization, such as emotional close-ups, informal settings, or family presence, serve to humanize political actors, making them more relatable and emotionally accessible to the audience. These strategies, however, are unevenly applied, often benefiting particular figures or parties.
- The analysis uncovered patterns of visual bias and ideological framing, often aligned with broader political or editorial agendas. Whether through inclusion, exclusion, or symbolic framing, news images contribute to the ideological shaping of public discourse.
- A multimodal approach to news analysis is essential for understanding contemporary media practices, especially in highly visual and politically polarized environments like Romania

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