

# A Corpus-Assisted Analysis of Discursive Construction of Socio-Economic Issues Concerning Romania and Ukraine in Romanian News During the Early Stage of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict

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**Abstract:** This paper investigates the discursive construction of socio-economic issues in Romanian news media reporting on Romania-Ukraine relations through a corpus-assisted discourse analysis (CADS) framework. Anchored in the principles of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and corpus linguistics, the research examines a specialized corpus of Romanian-language news articles published between 2022 and 2024, a period marked by heightened regional instability and shifting geopolitical alignments. The analysis focuses on linguistic patterns, such as keyword prominence, collocational behavior, and evaluative prosody to uncover how socio-economic themes such as labor migration, energy cooperation, and economic interdependence are discursively represented. The study reveals the presence of both solidarity and exclusionary discourses, underpinned by ideologically loaded lexical choices and framing strategies that position Ukraine in relation to Romania's national interests. The findings highlight the role of language in shaping socio-political narratives and contribute to broader discussions on media discourse, national identity, and the linguistics of regional geopolitics. This research underscores the value of CADS in uncovering latent ideological structures within ostensibly journalistic language.

**Keywords:** linguistic analysis of border politics, CADS framework, corpus linguistics, socio-political narratives, linguistics patterns in news

**Citation suggestion:** Drăgulescu, Radu. "A Corpus-Assisted Analysis of Discursive Construction of Socio-Economic Issues Concerning Romania and Ukraine in Romanian News During the Early Stage of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict". *Transilvania*, no. 12 (2025): 62-69.  
<https://doi.org/10.51391/trva.2025.12.09>.



This analysis focuses on specific words and linguistic constructions that tend to become patterns from a specific point of view, examining how language is used to shape, influence, or reflect socio-economic beliefs and ideologies. The object is the discursive construction of socio-economic issues related by specific media, from a linguistic perspective, based on the CORECON project's corpus. The main objective of this approach is to discover a possible pattern of Romanian media coverage in the construction of such news, which could also be based on potential fake news. Politicians and media often use language strategically to persuade, manipulate, or construct narratives. Analyzing how the language is organized and what meanings are constructed and paying attention to things like framing, narrative construction and considering appeals to emotions [pathos], logic [logos], or ethics [ethos], this paper speaks to the importance of media discourse in producing specific ideological stances in the depiction of Romanian-Ukrainian relationships.

## 1. Introduction

The Russian-Ukrainian conflict has triggered wide-ranging socio-economic effects across Eastern Europe and beyond. Recent studies addressing this topic delineate several sub-categories of these social and economic impacts, such as the refugee crisis<sup>1</sup> and the dynamics of humanitarian assistance<sup>2</sup>, as well as inflation and the

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1. K. Khan, "Socioeconomic conditions of Ukrainian war refugees in Moldova and Romania," in *International Scientific Conference "Development Through Research and Innovation" (IDSC-2025)*, The 6th Edition, Collection of Scientific Articles (Chisinau, Republic of Moldova, 2025); A. L. Dumitrescu & V. Constantin, "The socio-economic impact of migration in the EU: In the case of Ukraine refugees," *Global Economic Observer* 10, no. 1 (2022): 7–15.

2. O. Shubalyi & A. Gordiichuk, "The socio-economic consequences of the war in Ukraine: The national, regional, and global dimensions," *Regional Barometer. Analyses & Prognoses* 18, no. 1 (2022): 19–37.



energy crisis.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the geographical dimension represents an additional analytical lens through which these effects may be examined. This is reflected in studies addressing the conflict's global ramifications<sup>4</sup>, alongside those highlighting the heightened intensity of its impact in countries situated in close proximity to the Ukrainian border.<sup>5</sup> As a neighboring country, Romania finds itself at the intersection of geopolitical tensions, economic shifts, and humanitarian responsibilities. Romanian news media play a vital role in shaping public perceptions of these dynamics, particularly concerning relations with Ukraine. Using a corpus-assisted discourse analysis grounded in Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the study explores the representation of economic dependencies and cross-border cooperation. Drawing on a corpus of Romanian-language news articles from 2022 to 2024, this research reveals how the media navigates national identity, economic anxieties, and humanitarian concerns. The analysis highlights a shift from solidarity narratives to securitization discourses, reflecting broader regional political dynamics.

This paper applies a corpus-assisted Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), guided by Norman Fairclough's theoretical model, to examine the discursive construction of socio-economic issues between Romania and Ukraine during the conflict and to reveal how language shapes perceptions of Romania–Ukraine relations. The patterns identified here highlight not only lexical and syntactic choices but also the ideological orientations underpinning those choices. Thus, this study addresses the following questions: How are the economic relations between Romania and Ukraine presented by the most popular mass-media in the context of the conflict? What discursive strategies are used to represent cross-border cooperation? How does the Romanian press navigate narratives of national interest versus regional solidarity? What are the notable linguistic patterns used by media in shaping the imaginaries of (socio-economical) conflict? What can quantitative and computational investigations tell us about this specific conflict discourse?

## 2. Theoretical Framework

My investigation is based on Norman Fairclough's CDA, which offers the methodology for uncovering the power relations embedded in discourse. His three-dimensional model [comprising text, discursive practice, and social practice] enables an analysis that links linguistic choices with broader ideological structures.<sup>6</sup> The textual level involves lexical choices, grammar, modality, and coherence structures, while the discursive practice focuses on the production, distribution, and consumption of texts. The social practice situates discourse within a historical, contextual frame, emphasizing ideology and hegemony. I combined corpus-assisted CDA with quantitative insights from corpus linguistics<sup>7</sup>, using frequency counts, collocation patterns, and concordance lines, in the search for discursive patterns across the CORECON project datasets.

**3. Methodology. 3.1. Corpus Design.** The corpus consists of the Romanian-language news articles published between February 2022 and 2024. Articles were sourced from leading Romanian outlets such as *Adevărul*, *Digi24*, *stiripesurse.ro*, *stirileprotv.ro*, *Libertatea* and *HotNews*, using keywords such as *Ucraina* [Ukraine], *vecini* [neighbors], *criză* [crisis], *economic* [economic], *granițe* [frontiers]. The corpus was processed using *LancsBox X* [Brezina & Platt, 2025] for frequency, collocation, and concordance analysis. Analytical focus was placed on three thematic areas: (1) economic dependency and energy security, (2) social issues, and (3) regional cooperation. **3.2 Analytical Procedure. Textual analysis** examined vocabulary, modality, and transitivity patterns to uncover ideologies and evaluations. **Discursive practice analysis** explored intertextuality and genre blending (e.g., combining journalistic and political discourses). **Social practice analysis** interpreted findings within the broader geopolitical context of EU-NATO alignment and post-Soviet regional tensions.

## 4. Results and Analysis

A frequency analysis of the corpus revealed several key lexical items that dominate Romanian news coverage of socio-economic themes. The most recurrent content words include: *refugiați* [refugees], *economie* [economy],

3. C. Ilie, M. C. Pârnu & A. M. Niță, "The socio-economic effects of the Russian-Ukrainian war on Romania: A sociological perspective of the impact of the war on the attitudes and behaviors of Romanians," *Revista de Științe Politice. Revue des Sciences Politiques* 76 (2022): 215–227.

4. D. V. Dincă, C. E. Nicolescu, C. D. Dumitrica & T. C. Dogaru (Cruceanu), "The impact of the Ukrainian war on the resilience and sustainability of the local public administration in Romania: An exploratory study," *Romanian Journal of European Affairs* 23, no. 2 (2023): 64–83.

5. F. C. Mărcău, C. Peptan, H. T. Gorun, V. D. Băleanu & V. Gheorman, "Analysis of the impact of the armed conflict in Ukraine on the population of Romania," *Frontiers in Public Health* 10 (2022): 964576.

6. N. Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language* (Longman, 1995).

7. P. Baker et al., "A useful methodological synergy? Combining critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics," *Discourse & Society* 19, no. 3 (2008): 273–306.

*energie* [energy], *criză* [crisis], *cooperare* [cooperation], *securitate* [security]. These keywords signal the areas of journalistic and public concern. Notably, the presence of both humanitarian – *refugiați* [refugees], *ajutor* [aid] – and strategic-economic terms – *energie* [energy], *securitate* [security] suggests a dual focus: Romania's moral obligation toward Ukraine and its national interest in maintaining stability. With regard to the linguistic patterns in socio-economic issues, the relations between Romania and Ukraine in Romanian-language news coverage reveal that certain terms occur frequently and carry discursive weight in constructing socio-economic realities. The table below (Table 1) presents a classification of the keywords according to their semantic domain and the discursive function of each individual keyword:

Keyword	Semantic Domain	Function in Discourse
<i>Refugiați</i> [refugees]	Humanitarian/Policy	Signals presence of crisis; also frames social burden
<i>Energie</i> [energy]	Economy/Geopolitics	Central to discussions on dependency and security
<i>Cooperare</i> [cooperation]	Diplomacy/Economy	Frames bilateral actions as strategic or necessary
<i>Criză</i> [crisis]	Conflict/Economics	Used to amplify urgency or insecurity
<i>Ajutor</i> [aid]	Humanitarian	Evokes solidarity and support, especially in early phases

**Table 1** Keyword Prominence: Frequency & Salience

**4.1 Economic Dependency and Energy Security:** The phrase *dependență energetică* [energy dependency] appeared frequently in association with *Ucraina* [Ukraine] and *gaz rusesc* [Russian gas]. Romanian news emphasized the dual role of Ukraine as both a transit country and a vulnerable partner, highlighting as well the Russian strategies that are visible in the effects of the war, as illustrated in examples (1) and (2):

“Costin Georgescu: Putin are în război și clare interese economice. A jefuit Ucraina de cereale, de utilaje agricole, de uleiuri. Acum vizează clar și gazul din Marea Neagră. Și, repet, nu pentru că ar avea ei destul, ci pentru a nu da ocazia României și UE să-și scadă dependența de gazul rusesc.” [Costin Georgescu: Putin also has clear economic interests in the war. He has looted Ukraine of grain, agricultural machinery, and oils. He is now clearly targeting the gas in the Black Sea as well. And, I repeat, not because they do not have enough themselves, but in order not to give Romania and the EU the opportunity to reduce their dependence on Russian gas.] (*Adevărul*, 13 May 2022). “Consilierul pentru securitate națională al președintelui SUA, Jake Sullivan, și omologul său român, Ion Opreșor, au discutat miercuri, la telefon, despre situația din Ucraina, despre consolidarea NATO și despre încercările Bucureștiului de a reduce dependența față de livrările de energie din Rusia.” [The U.S. President's National Security Advisor, Jake Sullivan, and his Romanian counterpart, Ion Opreșor, discussed by telephone on Wednesday the situation in Ukraine, the strengthening of NATO, and Bucharest's efforts to reduce its dependence on energy supplies from Russia.] (*stiripesurse.ro*, 5 May 2022)

This lexical construction aligns with Fairclough's concept of modality-highlighting commitment and necessity [*a reduce*, to reduce]. The discourse signals Romania's strategic repositioning while legitimizing EU energy diversification narratives. Collocation analysis showed frequent coupling of *Ucraina* [Ukraine] with terms like *partener* [partner], *transit* [transit], and *securitate* [security]. The framing emphasized mutual benefit and interdependence yet hedged against Ukraine's instability by highlighting risk terms like *volatilitate* [volatility] and *criză* [crisis], as shown in Figure 1.

The terms that constitute the collocational network of *criză* [crisis] further reflect the multiperspectival lens through which Romanian-language media have represented the effects of the war. Spatially oriented terms such as *globală* [global] are accompanied by economically anchored terms such as *economică* [economic] and *energetică* [energy-related]. In addition, terms from the politico-military sphere, such as *securitate* [security], *politică* [political], and *provocat* [provoked], appear alongside terms from the social sphere, including *refugiaților* [the refugee crisis] and *umanitară* [humanitarian]. Finally, as illustrated in example [3] as well, modifiers such as *gravă* [severe] convey the dramatic and emotionally inflected dimension through which the war is reflected in media discourse.

“Încă din primele zile de la declanșarea acestei crize de Securitate și umanitare, cea mai gravă criză din Europa ultimelor decenii, autoritățile române au sancționat unitar, coordonat, în deplină solidaritate cu poporul ucrainean, pentru a acorda asistență de urgență, dar și pe toate celelalte dimensiunile relevante.” [From the very first days following the outbreak of this security and humanitarian crisis, the most severe crisis Europe



has faced in recent decades, the Romanian authorities responded in a unified and coordinated manner, in full solidarity with the Ukrainian people, in order to provide emergency assistance as well as support across all other relevant dimensions.] (stirileprotv.ro, 24 October 2022)

**4.2 Migration and Refugee Narratives:** Romanian news media initially framed Ukrainian refugees in humanitarian terms using phrases such as *solidaritate europeană* [European solidarity] and *ajutor umanitar* [humanitarian assistance]. However, by mid-2023, a subtle discursive shift occurred. While some early examples tended primarily toward the perspective summarized by statements such as “refugiații ucraineni sunt bineveniți și sprijiniți de comunitățile locale” [Ukrainian refugees are welcomed and supported by local communities], later there also emerged declarations that proposed a shift in viewpoint, this time placing the emphasis on “presiunea asupra serviciilor sociale din România crește pe fondul unui număr tot mai mare de refugiați” [the pressure on Romania’s social service is increasing against the backdrop of growing number of refugees]. This shift reflects Fairclough’s idea of recontextualization. The same phenomenon [refugee arrival] is re-articulated from a narrative of welcome to one of burden. The modal verb *crește* combined with passive constructions (*presiunea... crește* [the pressure grows]) obscures agency while foregrounding systemic strain. Concordance analysis of *refugiați* [refugees] revealed increasing proximity to economic terms such as *costuri* [costs], *buget* [budget], and *servicii sociale* [social services]. This transition from moral discourse to economic rationality illustrates a neoliberal discursive logic. This terminological distribution shows that Romanian media construct Ukrainian displacement primarily as a matter of identity politics through a process of labelling and categorization. The results confirm the construction of a dichotomy between the “refugee” vs the “migrant” / “emigrant” / “immigrant” that pervades general discourse, reflecting the ideological struggle over classification. The numerical distribution of the terminological appearances is the following: 481 mentions of the term “refugiat” [refugee], 15 for “imigrant” [immigrant], 11 for “migrant” [migrant], and only 4 for “emigrant” [emigrant]. The primacy of the use of “refugee” is evident, so that Ukrainians are discursively located closer to the category of “refugee” than “migrant,” signaling higher legitimacy for their protection.

This argument is supported by the semantic fields and discursive frames these terms appear in collocations with. On a scale from positive to negative contextualization, the order of the four terms would be the following: [1] “refugiat” – positive; “emigrant” – neutral; “migrant” – ambivalent; “imigrant” – negative (more about that in a future study). Additionally, the classes of collocates for “refugiat” [Fig. 2] overall foreground generic and impersonal categories – “persoane” [people], “oameni” [humans], or ethnic and national markers – “ucraineni” [Ukrainian], “romi” [Roma], followed by quantifiers such as “milion” [million], “mii” [thousands], “sute” [hundreds], “zeci” [tens] that function with degree modifiers – “aproape” [almost], “aproximativ” [approximately], stressing the impossibility of fully establishing the influx of refugees in real-time. There are also collocates for generic, displaced and vulnerable groups, as in children and families – in reference to mothers, children, grandparents. Collocates referencing humanitarian needs and aid also occupy an important position: “cazare” [housing], “adăpost” [shelter], “sprijin” [support], “centru” [center], “ONU” [UN], “program” [agenda], “guvern” [government], “român” [Romanian], “România” [Romania], “Polonia” [Poland], “Moldova” [Moldova]. Importantly, Romanian media outlets do not frame aid to refugees as a systematic burden but rather as a necessary action for “our” neighbors and cultural “brethren”.

On an agency level, terminology used in reference to refugees represented them in subject positions, also by stressing the position of Romania as a place of refuge. Only at times was the refugee an object in discourses about humanitarian aid. Ukrainian refugees, therefore, become active agents in the process of escaping the war. The term “refugiat” was personalized by stressing the arrival of displaced children and families, and also being impersonalized in numbers-oriented reports. Discursively speaking, the patterns of Romanian media coverage regarding Ukrainian immigrants, particularly in the context of the ongoing war in Ukraine, can be broadly categorized into several trends, with variations depending on the political, social, and historical context, with a largely positive framing. Namely, the Romanian media outlets highlight Romania’s role as a key support and transit hub for Ukrainian refugees fleeing the war. The coverage often focuses on the humanitarian aid provided, Romania’s open borders, and everybody’s (the government and civil society) efforts to accommodate displaced people. There is extensive reporting on governmental and grassroots initiatives to help Ukrainian refugees. This includes donations, housing, medical care, and volunteer organizations assisting displaced Ukrainians. The coverage emphasizes Romania’s solidarity with Ukraine and depicts Ukrainians as victims of a gruesome attack. Early reports, especially in the initial stages of the Ukrainian refugee crisis immediately after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, often highlighted humanitarian aspects, focusing on the suffering of Ukrainian civilians, particularly women, children, and the elderly. News outlets commonly framed the situation as a humanitarian catastrophe, emphasizing Romania’s role as a haven for refugees.

**4.3 Regional Cooperation and Geopolitical Framing:** The discursive construction of regional cooperation prominently featured *sprijin NATO* [NATO support], *relații bilaterale* [bilateral relations], and *interes strategic*

[strategic interest]. Ukraine was framed not just as a neighbor, but as a geopolitical ally. News items referencing joint infrastructure projects and cross-border trade initiatives also discuss the acceleration of rail and energy-connectivity projects, as shown in example (4):

“Bogdan Aurescu: Din acest punct de vedere, ținând cont de situația deosebit de dificilă a Ucrainei privind tranzitul cerealelor, și noi am ajutat Ucraina și o ajutăm în continuare atât pe cale rutieră, feroviară, cât și prin porturi; lucrăm la dezvoltarea capacităților pentru a face față unei cantități mai mari de grâne (...).” [Bogdan Aurescu: From this perspective, given Ukraine’s particularly difficult situation regarding the transit of grain, we have assisted Ukraine and continue to do so by road, by rail, and through the ports as well; we are working on expanding capacities in order to handle a larger volume of grain (...).”] (*Digi24*, 13 July 2022)

Fairclough’s social practice dimension helps situate these texts within broader NATO-EU agendas. The Romanian media echoed transnational discourses of resilience and deterrence, aligning national discourse with Western political narratives. Yet, tension emerged in discussions of Romania’s national interest. Lexical patterns such as *interes național* [national interest], *autonomie energetică* [energy autonomy], and *siguranță economică* [economic security] co-existed with appeals to *solidaritate regională* [regional solidarity]. This dual discourse reflects a balancing act between realpolitik and European values.

**4.4 Collocational Behavior and Ideological Shifts:** Collocation analysis revealed the following word pairings and phrase structures as particularly salient: **4.4.1. Refugiați [refugees]:** Positive co-occurrences [2022] include terms such as *sprijin* [support], *solidaritate* [solidarity], *comunități locale* [local communities], *ajutor umanitar* [humanitarian assistance], whereas negative co-occurrences [2023 onward] emerge from phrases such as *presiune socială* [social pressure], *costuri mari* [high costs], *sistem de sănătate copleșit* [an overwhelmed healthcare system]. This lexical shift marks a discursive evolution from compassionate humanitarianism to a rational-economic discourse that problematizes refugees. The initial framing emphasized Romanian empathy and hospitality, aligning with European values of solidarity. However, as the crisis prolonged, news articles increasingly linked refugees with systemic strain, budgetary pressure, and national fatigue. Thus, one observes a shift from moral/emotional appeal (pathos) to pragmatic/economic framing (logos). **4.4.2. Energie [energy]:** Typical collocates such as *dependență energetică* [energy dependence], *autonomie* [autonomy], *gaz rusesc* [Russian gas], *tranzit prin Ucraina* [transit through Ukraine], and *interconectare regională* [regional interconnection] emphasize Romania’s strategic objectives to reduce reliance on Russian gas and to bolster bilateral infrastructure with Ukraine. Here, Ukraine is simultaneously represented as a partner and a potential risk due to its geopolitical vulnerability. Thus, the emphasis on energy security constructs Ukraine as both a strategic partner and a vulnerability.

**4.5. Evaluative Prosody and Sentiment Orientation:** Evaluative prosody refers to the broader semantic atmosphere surrounding specific topics. In Romanian news articles, discourses involving Ukraine often contain both supportive and cautionary evaluations, thereby producing an ambivalent construction of Ukraine as both opportunity and risk. The positive prosody emerges from expressions such as *partener strategic* [strategic partner], *colaborare eficientă* [effective cooperation], and *relații bilaterale* [bilateral relations], whereas the negative prosody derives from *instabilitate politică* [political instability], *criză umanitară* [humanitarian crisis], *volatilitate economică* [economic volatility] and *amenințare regională* [regional threat]. This dual tone reflects a tension between Romania’s political alignment with Ukraine and concerns about long-term consequences. For instance, while economic partnerships are praised, Ukraine’s ongoing instability is frequently emphasized, particularly when reporting on energy and border security.

**4.6. Modality and Hedging: Expressing Certainty and Doubt:** Modality plays a crucial role in projecting certainty, obligation, or speculation in media language. Romanian articles exhibit two dominant modalities which reveal the degree of certainty or obligation (see Fig. 3). On the one hand, high modality [early 2022] is evident in structures that can be summarized as “România trebuie să sprijine Ucraina” [Romania must support Ukraine], “România trebuie să reducă dependența de gazul rusesc” [Romania must reduce its dependence on Russian gas], “este necesară consolidarea cooperării energetice” [It is necessary to strengthen energy cooperation], “este esențial să cooperăm cu Ucraina”, or [It is essential that we cooperate with Ukraine]. On the other hand, hedging and epistemic modality [late 2023–2024], which conveys caution, emerges from statements referring to “se pare că numărul refugiaților va crește în continuare” [it appears that the number of refugees will continue to increase], “unii experți sugerează că România riscă o criză bugetară” [some experts suggest that Romania risks a budgetary crisis], or “unii experți sugerează că presiunea economică va fi resimțită” [some experts suggest that the economic



pressure will be felt], as also shown in example (5): “Statul este responsabil pentru serviciile și siguranța refugiaților. Acum, că societatea civilă îi ajută sau că autoritățile sunt copleșite de numărul mare de refugiați și au nevoie de ajutor din partea societății civile, asta e altceva.” [The state is responsible for the services and safety of refugees. Now, whether civil society is assisting them or whether the authorities are overwhelmed by the large number of refugees and require support from civil society, that is another matter.] (*HotNews*, 28 February 2022) This evolution signals growing public ambivalence. The firm assertions of early solidarity give way to expressions of uncertainty and conditional concern, reflecting both media skepticism and a shift in political rhetoric. Therefore, earlier firm stances give way to more cautious or speculative tones as fatigue and uncertainty grow.

#### 4.7. Framing Strategies and Conceptual Metaphors

Framing determines how issues are interpreted. Conceptual metaphors play a key role in this process by organizing complex realities into more relatable or emotionally charged terms. Conflict metaphors such as *luptă cu criza energetică* [fight against the energy crisis] or *bătălia pentru securitate regională* [the battle for regional security], or *bătălia pentru resurse* [the battle for resources] occur alongside burden metaphors related to refugees, such as *val de refugiați* [wave of refugees], *impact sever asupra bugetului* [severe impact on the budget] or *povara asupra sistemului de sănătate* [burden on the health system], as well as solidarity metaphors, including *întindem o mână de ajutor* [extend a helping hand] and *punți de colaborare* [bridges of cooperation]. These metaphors reveal ideological stances and emotionally charge the discourse and reveal underlying ideologies, either inclusionary or exclusionary. Conflict and burden metaphors contribute to securitization and exclusionary discourses, while solidarity metaphors construct a morally responsive national identity.

**4.8. Pronouns and Ideological Deixis:** Personal and spatial deixis further reveal implicit ideological boundaries. The use of pronouns such as *noi* [we] and *ei* [they] creates social dichotomies and reinforce identity, as in “noi, românii, sprijinim poporul ucrainean” [we, Romanians, support the Ukrainian people], an example that conveys inclusive solidarity, in contrast with “ei beneficiază de ajutoare în timp ce noi suferim” [they receive aid while we suffer] or “ei vin și ne afectează economia” [they come and affect our economy], in which exclusion and resentment (distancing) are evident. This shifting deixis reflects the discursive tension between a humanitarian narrative and one that positions Ukraine or Ukrainian refugees as “others” who challenge Romanian stability or fairness. Shifts from empathy to resentment are reflected in changing pronoun use and spatial/temporal deixis.

#### 4.9 Intertextuality and Institutional Echoes

Romanian news frequently references European institutions (EU, NATO), as in “conform declarațiilor oficialilor UE” [according to EU officials] or “NATO subliniază importanța cooperării regionale” [NATO emphasizes the importance of regional cooperation] – see examples (6) and (7) – and foreign political voices to legitimize particular narratives. Such intertextual references function to align Romanian discourse with Western ideological frameworks and to provide authority to certain national policy choices. Therefore, Romanian media borrows authority from international institutions to legitimize local policy and sentiment. Simultaneously, the voices of Ukrainian individuals, particularly refugees, are notably underrepresented, with Romanian political figures dominating the discourse space. Thus, politicians’ voices dominate over refugee voices: they are spoken about, not spoken with: “Potrivit oficialilor NATO, armata ucraineană a surprins prin faptul că sistemul Delta a fost disponibil pe scară largă trupelor pe câmpul de luptă, fapt care le-a permis să ia decizii într-un ritm mai rapid decât armatele moderne.” [According to NATO officials, the Ukrainian army has shown remarkable performance in that the Delta system was widely available to troops on the battlefield, which enabled them to make decisions at a faster pace than modern armies]. (*Adevărul*, 16 November 2022); “Potrivit oficialului american de rang înalt există un decalaj de câteva zile până la 2-3 săptămâni după ce ajutorul militar aprobat de președintele american Joe Biden ajunge în Ucraina.” [According to the high-ranking U.S. official, there is a lag of several days to 2-3 weeks between the approval of military assistance by President Joe Biden and its arrival in Ukraine.] (*Libertatea*, 4 January 2024)

### 5. Discussion

The corpus-assisted analysis reveals a dynamic and not so contradictory discursive landscape. The analyzed Romanian media construct Ukraine substantially more as a partner than a risk, and as a victim not as a burden. This is not accidental but ideologically significant. Fairclough’s model helps us understand how textual features [e.g., modality, collocations] serve larger discursive strategies that reflect Romania’s shifting position in regional politics. Economic discourse is central – often overriding humanitarian or cultural narratives, especially as the conflict persists. The media’s framing practices are not neutral reflections but active constructions of reality. They shape public attitudes, legitimize political decisions, and reproduce power relations. This is particularly evident

in the securitization of socio-economic issues, a consistent trend that was obvious even during the electoral propaganda in the late 2024 and early/mid 2025. The table below (Table 2) synthesizes the main discursive strategies identified in the corpus:

Strategy	Function
Humanitarianism	Justifies aid and solidarity narratives, especially early in the conflict.
Economic Rationalization	Frames refugees and cooperation in terms of cost, benefit, and efficiency, especially in the later stages of the conflict, invoking budgetary impacts
Securitization	Discursively associates Ukraine with national risk, energy vulnerability, and instability.
National Identity Assertion	Constructs Romania as a strategic actor on the European stage, thereby elevating its strategic positioning.

Table 2 Summary of Ideological Discursive Strategies

6. Conclusion

Romanian news media, through specific discursive strategies, construct the socio-economic implications of the Ukrainian-Russian conflict in ways that reflect and reinforce broader ideological positions. Through a Faircloughian lens, we see how linguistic choices are embedded within and contribute to shaping geopolitical narratives. Corpus-assisted CDA proves a powerful method for capturing these nuances, enabling scholars to bridge the gap between discourse theory and empirical linguistic evidence. As the conflict evolves, future research will examine audience reception and cross-linguistic media comparisons to further reveal the complexities of regional discourse in Romania and Eastern Europe. The linguistic patterns identified in this analysis underscore the dynamic and often contradictory nature of Romanian media discourse on Romania–Ukraine socio-economic relations during the Ukrainian-Russian conflict. Early emphases on solidarity and cooperation gradually gave way to narratives of burden, threat, and caution. These shifts are neither accidental nor apolitical; they reflect changing national interests, public sentiment, and regional geopolitics. Therefore, this study demonstrates the power of language in shaping not only public understanding but also policy legitimacy and national self-perception. By applying CADS and CDA, this research reveals the discursive undercurrents of Romanian news reporting and contributes to a deeper understanding of media’s role in socio-political meaning-making.

**Acknowledgement:** This work was funded by the EU’s NextGenerationEU instrument through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan of Romania - Pillar III-C9-I8, managed by the Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitalization, within the project entitled The coverage and reception of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict in Polish, Romanian and English-language media: A comparative critical discourse study with recommendations for journalism training (CORECON), contract no. 760244/28.12.2023, code CF 25/27.07.2023.

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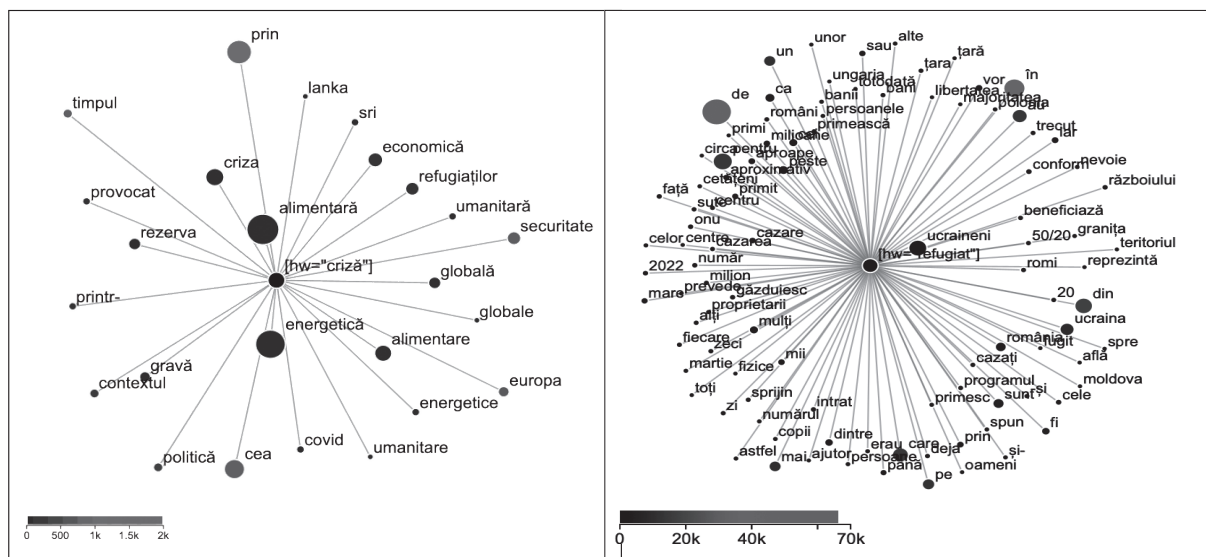
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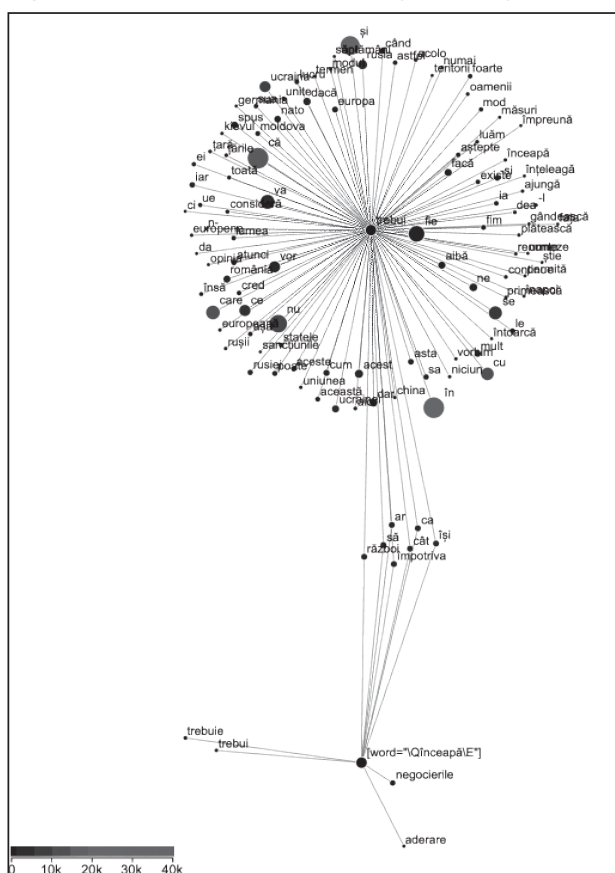
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**Fig. 1** Collocates of the lemma “criză” [crisis] in Romanian

**Fig. 2** Collocates of the lemma “refugiat” [refugee] in Romanian



**Fig. 3** Collocates of the verb “trebui” [must] in Romanian