



The Coverage and Reception of
the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict



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A battle of David and Goliath: A culture-grounded (de)legitimization narrative of the 2022 Russian-Ukrainian conflict

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Discourse across cultures

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Outline



- Legitimation, framing and narrative
- Data
- Analysis
- Conclusions

Legitimation, framing and narrative

Legitimation is a **discursive macro-strategy** by which speakers warrant certain actions and as such entails micro-linguistic/discursive strategies employed to garner support and acceptance.

(e.g., Amossy, 2022; Ganaah, Nartey & Bhatia, 2023; Rojo & van Dijk, 1997; van Lueewen, 2007)

Framing is **selecting** some aspects of a perceived reality and **making** them more **salient** in a communication act, in such a way as to **promote** a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation. etc.

(e.g., Entman, 1993; van Hulst et al., 2025)

select ➡ make salient ➡ promote

Narrative analysis focuses on how stories influence the way people understand their experiences and the surrounding world

A **story** is a description of events involving characters who are placed in a temporal and spatial setting (e.g., IFIT, 2021; van Hulst 2012; van Hulst et al., 2025).

Data

Corpus compilation procedure:

- FB search: key word: Ukraina (PL)
- Media coverage of conflict (FB specific only)
- Snowballing technique
- Marcin Ogdowski's account

Data: **over 90k word** corpus of FB posts

from Feb 24, 2022 through June 30, 2024

1 post ≈ 570 words (with some longer posts of approx. 3,000 words)

A highly hybrid style: between the style of reporting of objective journalism and the opinion-based analytical style of interpretive journalism; between advocacy and precision journalism

A standard construction of a post consists in presenting a battle field fact followed by an analysis and discussion (data, statistics) with simultaneous evaluation and stance expression.

Analysis and discussion

An overriding legitimation strategy in Ogdowski's corpus hinges upon *moral evaluation* (van Lueewen, 2007), that is, the opposition between GOOD vs. EVIL:

A dla mnie to przede wszystkim wojna Dobra ze Złem. (14.03.2022)

ENG: For me it is, above all, a war between Good and Evil.

➡ Throughout the corpus, Ogdowski consequently depicts Ukraine as a small yet resourceful **hero** (the Bible's David) and Russia as a mighty but incapable **villain** (the Bible's Goliath). Implicit framing of RU-UA conflict in terms of the Biblical tale of David and Goliath can be classified as the *mythopoesis* legitimation type (van Lueewen, 2007).

David	small	underequipped	novice to the battlefield	defender (an Israelite)
Goliath	huge	armored with a sword	experienced warrior	invader (a Philistine)

Importantly, Ogdowski uses a highly expressive and evaluative language to take an unequivocal stance towards the war and its actors.

Warfare equipment

➡ RU: equipment dating back to the USSR times = inefficiency

Rosjanie zamierzają rozkonserwować i przywrócić do linii samoloty Su-17 i MiG-27. To staruszki (taki latający odpowiednik masowo już udrażnianych do służby czołgów T-62)

ENG: The Russians are to revive the Su-17 and MiG-27 planes. These are oldies (flying counterparts of the T-62 tanks, which are already being brought back to service in bulk)

Ukraińskie maszyny znów przedarły się 700 km w głąb rosj, co dowodzi, jak dziurawa jest rosyjska OPL i jej system wczesnego ostrzegania (...) co samo w sobie i tak jest kompromitujące, bo jakim cudem dotarły tak daleko, nad TAKĄ bazę, KOLEJNY raz?

ENG: Ukrainian machines got 700km through russia again, which proves how holey the russian anti-aircraft defense and early warning system is (...) which itself is embarrassing because how come they got that far to SUCH a base ONCE AGAIN?

➡ RU: incommensurability of RU technological expertise (vs. western)

Większość maszyn – szczególnie tych nowszych typów – jest już znacząco zużyta i wymaga remontów. Rosjanie projektują niezłe samoloty, ale jakości wykonawstwa i kultury technicznej obsługi nie da się porównać z zachodnimi standardami

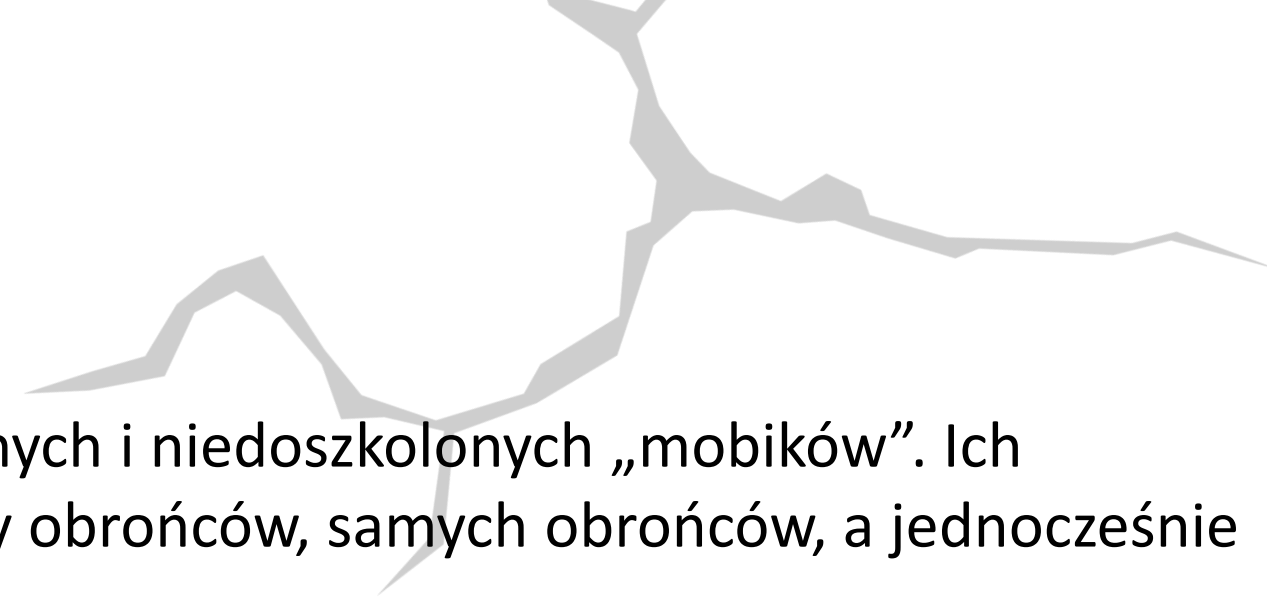
ENG: The majority of machines – especially the newer types – are significantly worn out and require renovation. The Russians design pretty good planes but their quality and technology cannot be compared to western standards.

Lecz T-14 to dziecko rosyjskiej zbrojeniówki, trawionej koszmarną korupcją, technologiczną i intelektualną zapaścią.

ENG: But t-14 is a baby of russian arms industry consumed by terrible corruption, technological and intellectual incapacity

➡ UA: NATO & USA equipment = precision & efficiency

Warfare tactics



RU: old-fashioned and inefficient tactics

„raszyn-stajl” sprowadza się do pchania w „ukraińską paszczę” kolejnych fal źle wyposażonych i niedoszkołonych „mobików”. Ich jedynym zadaniem jest przyjęcie na siebie ukraińskiego ognia, by tym samym zużyć zapasy obrońców, samych obrońców, a jednocześnie zdemaskować ich pozycje ogniowe

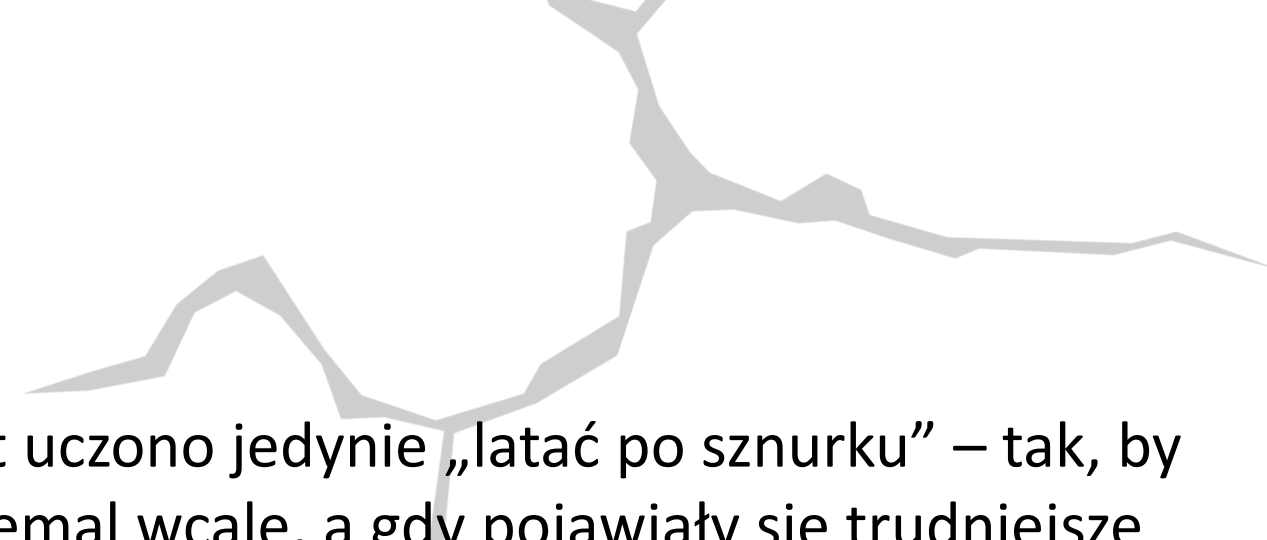
ENG: A russian-style consists in pushing newer and newer waves of the badly-equipped and undertrained newly “mobilized” right into the “Ukrainian jaws”. Their only task is to take the Ukrainian fire to deplete the defenders’ ammo, the defenders themselves and at the same time to expose their positions.

Oczywiście, ponosząc straty [Ukraińcy], ale nie są one wyższe od rosyjskich. I być nie mogą, wszak to Rosjanie dokonują frontalnych ataków, a ich walce artyleryjski (...) non stop się zacina, bo Ukraińcy skutecznie paraliżują dostawy amunicji, ładując HIMARSami po rosyjskich tyłach. No i ów walec „zawsze” był przereklamowany – bił gęsto, lecz na oślep, po pozycjach, które na czas nawały były (i są) przez obrońców opuszczane.

ENG: Obviously, [Ukrainians] are incurring some loss but it’s not higher than that of the russians; and it cannot be as it is the russians who make frontal attacks and their artillery roller (...) is constantly jamming because the Ukrainians effectively paralyze ammo deliveries by shelling the russian’s rear with HIMARS rockets. And this roller has “always” been overrated – it hit densely but blindly: the target positions have been abandoned by the defenders in time.

UA: precision of attacks (quality over quantity)

Military training



RU: lack of proper training

Ano takie są konsekwencje lipnego szkolenia kadr. Młodych rosyjskich pilotów od wielu lat uczono jedynie „latać po sznurku” – tak, by dali radę odpowiednio zaprezentować się na paradzie (...) Taktyki lotniczej nie było tam niemal wcale, a gdy pojawiały się trudniejsze zadania, za sterami i tak siadali doświadczeni piloci.

ENG: And such are the consequences of phony staff training. Young russian pilots over the years have only been taught to fly “on the rope” – to be able to appear during a parade (...) Air combat tactics has been almost nonexistent and when more demanding tasks appeared, experienced pilots took over.

Niski poziom zabezpieczenia medycznego i jeszcze niższej jakości szkolenia z medycyny pola walki dla zwykłych żołnierzy, podbiły wskaźniki śmiertelności.

ENG: Low level of medical support and even lower quality of training on battlefield medical support for regular soldiers have boosted the mortality rate.

UA: NATO training

David vs. Goliath reinterpreted... 😊

29.05.2023 (a post on the mechanisms of Russian propaganda in the media)

The excerpt refers to the alleged Russian warfare success communicated to the Russians.

Goliat złego Zachodu stanął na drodze rosyjskiego Dawida, lecz Dawid nie w ciemną bitwę, wie, jak miotać kamieniami. Łup! – przywalił w oko olbrzymowi (Bachmut wzięty!), łup! – zadał kolejny cios (bohatera armia wyparła dywersantów z terytorium Rosji). Sru! – kamień trafił Goliata w czoło, wielkolud się chwieje i krwawi (kontrofensywa nie będzie...). Same sukcesy na drodze do zwycięstwa.

ENG:

A Goliath of the evil West has come in the way of a Russian David but David sure is a clever one: he knows how to fling stones. Bang! – he hit the giant's eye (Bakhmut has been taken); bang! – another blow (the heroic [Russian] army has forced saboteurs out of Russia). Whack! – a stone has hit Goliath's forehead; the giant totters and bleeds (there's gonna be no counter-offensive...). Nothing but success on the way to victory.

Thank you.



David defeated Goliath with a sling and a rock. He killed him without even using a sword. David ran over and pulled out Goliath's sword. Then he used it to cut off Goliath's head.

1 Samuel 17:50-51 (Bible (CEV), n.d.)

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