

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism

Department of Media Studies

**Master's Thesis**

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**Differences in Reporting on the War in Ukraine between  
Slovak and Swiss Print Media**

Master's Thesis

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Study programme: Media Studies

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Year of the defence: 2024

## **Declaration**

1. I hereby declare that I have compiled this thesis using the listed literature and resources only.
2. I hereby declare that my thesis has not been used to gain any other academic title.
3. I fully agree to my work being used for study and scientific purposes.

In Prague on 30.07.2024

Juraj Minarič

## References

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## **Abstract**

This thesis aims to examine the differences in print media coverage on the topic of the war in Ukraine in two European countries—Slovakia and Switzerland—over time. By analysing media content, it is possible to determine the extent to which it is constructed by the social reality in which it arises and its subsequent impact on public opinion. The research is based on a linguistic discourse analysis conducted on articles from six different daily newspapers—three from Slovakia and three from Switzerland. Through this analysis, the discourse on reporting about the war in Ukraine is reconstructed during its initial months and in the current period, i.e., from May to July 2024. The results show that the different social realities in which the analysed articles are created influence the form of reporting on the war in Ukraine. This also results in different perceptions of the conflict on multiple levels—how to approach it and how to resolve it.

## **Abstrakt**

Táto téze má za cieľ zskúmať rozdiely vo zpravodajstve tlačových médií na tému vojny na Ukrajine v dvoch európskych krajinách – na Slovensku a vo Švajčiarsku v čase. Skúmaním mediálnych obsahov je možné zistiť, do akej miery je konštruovaná sociálna realita, v ktorej vznikajú, a aký majú následný vplyv na verejné mínenie. Výskum je založený na lingvistickom analýze diskurzu, ktorá je vykonaná na článkoch z šiestich rôznych denníkov – troch zo Slovenska a troch zo Švajčiarska. Pomocou tejto analýzy sa rekonštruuje diskurz reportovania o vojne na Ukrajine v jejich počiatočných mesiacoch a s aktuálnym obdobím, t.j. máj až jún 2024. Výsledky ukazujú, že rozdielne sociálne reality, v ktorých analyzované články vznikajú, majú vplyv na formu informovania o vojne na Ukrajine. To má za následok i rozdielne vnímanie konfliktu na niekoľkých úrovniach – ako k nemu prístupovať a ako jej riešiť.

## **Keywords**

the social construction of reality, media audiences, agenda setting, media articles, culture, society, linguistic analysis of discourse, war in Ukraine, Switzerland, Slovakia

## **Klíčová slova**

sociální konstrukce reality, mediální publika, nastolování agendy, mediální články, kultura, společnost, lingvistická analýze diskurzu, válka na Ukrajině, Švýcarsko, Slovensko

## **Title**

Differences in reporting on the war in Ukraine between Slovak and Swiss print media

## **Název práce**

Rozdíly ve zpravodajství o válce na Ukrajině mezi slovenskými a švýcarskými tištěnými médii

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## **Introduction**

This thesis deals with the interpretation of events in the war in Ukraine in Swiss and Slovak print media. On February 24, 2022, a military conflict broke out in Ukraine due to direct aggression by the Russian Federation against its Western neighbor. Immediately, information began to appear in the world media about this event. In such situations, the media is a key channel for information. The media in democratic countries, which are the main subjects of research in this thesis, operate in an environment with an accepted plurality of opinions. The media is a cardinal part of the construction of social reality, which affects our perception not only of the world around us but also of where we cannot be physically present (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). The symbolic social reality that the media presents to us and that, in connection with objective social reality, creates in our consciousness what we call subjective reality. Various influences on the media thus form a symbolic reality and thus, in connection with the cultural aspects of the given environment in which a certain media audience is located, shapes the public opinion on every problem or event that is conveyed to us by the media, i.e., it is mediated to us (Adoni & Mane, 1984).

Research to date has so far only dealt mainly with the impact of Russian propaganda (Helmus et al., 2018) on the reporting of this war or the different ways of reporting on this topic. Research from Helmus (2018) is presented the topic of Russian influence abroad, especially through social networks, which has been a central theme since the 2016 US elections. Post-Soviet states are particularly vulnerable due to their historical and linguistic proximity to Russia. Challenges for the US, EU, and NATO lie in the situation of Russian-speaking minorities and a lack of coordination. Recommendations include marking/blocking propaganda, building resilience, expanding local news, and spreading pro-Western narratives (Helmus, 2018).

Research Nygren, Glowacki, Hok, Kiria, Orlova, and Taradai (2018) conducted a study *Journalism in the Crossfire: Media Coverage of the War in Ukraine 2014* is a comparative study examining media coverage in Ukraine, Russia, Poland, and Sweden, complemented by interviews with journalists involved in the content analysis. The study found notable differences in how the conflict was framed, the depiction of the actors, and the language used across these countries. Interviews further highlighted significant differences in journalists' approaches and perceptions. The results indicate that the unique

journalistic culture in each country, self-censorship, and the level of activism among journalists are also critical factors in war reporting. Researchers from all four countries collaborated on this project. Dealing with the tilt towards one party which the media literally puts under fire from two camps: “*During wartime, journalism usually finds itself in a kind of crossfire. Sometimes this crossfire is quite literally between the two sides in the conflict, i.e., the fighting.* (Nygren, G., Glowacki, M., Hök, J., Kiria, I., Orlova, D., & Taradai, D.; 2016, p. 1) “.

In article *Social media and visual framing of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine* from Makhortykh and Sydorova (2017) examines, how social media visually framed the conflict in Eastern Ukraine using a large set of images from the social network *Vkontakte*. Through content analysis, the authors found significant differences in how pro-Ukrainian and pro-Russian online communities depicted the conflict during the peak of violence in the summer of 2014. Pro-Ukrainian groups viewed it as a limited military action against local insurgents, while pro-Russian groups portrayed it as an all-out war against the Russian population in Eastern Ukraine. The study suggests that these divergent framings on social media fostered mutually exclusive perspectives and shaped differing expectations in Ukraine and Russia regarding the conflict's outcome.

Pavlik (2022) in his article on *The Russian War in Ukraine and the Implications for the News Media* claims, that the war in Ukraine has significant consequences for mass communication, especially for the news media. Independent journalism is key to accurately understanding the conflict and seeking the truth. However, journalists face great risks and must have the courage to report honestly and without censorship. Disinformation campaigns, especially on social networks, distort public perception in Russia and globally. In the future, news media should use digital tools to create more engaging and immersive news stories that increase public understanding and empathy (Pavlik, 2022, p. 302).

Study *The quality of coverage of the war in Ukraine* by Udris, Vogler, Eisenegger, Siegen, Weston, and Schäfer (2022) investigates how the Swiss media has reported on the war in Ukraine, focusing on specific quality indicators. Thirteen media outlets were analysed to assess the quality of coverage based on various criteria. The study's overall finding is that the media performed positively. The war, being a significant topic, receives extensive coverage with relatively high thematic diversity. Additionally, the coverage is characterized by a high level of contextualization and includes some self-reflection on the

media's role in the conflict (Udris, Vogler, Eisenegger, Siegen, Weston & Schäfer, 2022).

This thesis has the character of linguistic analysis of discourse with an emphasis on the development of information about the given problem over time. The work discusses the differences in the media environment of two countries – Slovakia and Switzerland. It is based on a linguistic analysis of the discourse of articles from three Slovak and three Swiss print media on the topic of the war in Ukraine. This thesis examines the development of the Slovak and Swiss print media coverage on the war in Ukraine by analysing the first weeks and months of reporting on the war, i.e., February, March, April 2022 and then comparing it with the present, i.e., May, June and July of 2024. I will observe how the selected Slovak and Swiss media reported on the war in Ukraine, which means I will reconstruct the discourses of both countries on the war in the first months of the war and nowadays and observe any possible changes. Finally, I will compare the Slovak and Swiss reporting on the war over time. For this purpose, articles from the various print media of these countries, which also differ in their political orientation, will be selected. Finally, I would like to examine the impact of the specific social, cultural, historical and political background and the correspondingly specific conditions in Slovakia and Switzerland on reporting on the war in Ukraine. The aim of the thesis is to find the existing differences in the coverage of the war in Ukraine in the two countries and to explain their potential occurrence by the different political, cultural, historical and social backgrounds in the Swiss and Slovak environments.

The choice of countries in this work is not random but is derived from my personal observations and experiences that I gained during my stay in both countries. Switzerland is well-known as a consensus democracy that incorporates direct democratic elements. It features a fragmented political party system, recognizes four official languages, and upholds strong federalism, with many of its politicians being semi-professional or part-time. Direct democracy in Switzerland, characterized by popular initiatives and referendums, necessitates strong respect for minorities. The development of a diverse range of well-considered public opinions is regarded as crucial (Bachmann, Eisenegger & Ingenhoff, 2021, p.7). On the other hand, Slovakia is a parliamentary republic with a developing democracy, a brief history of existence, and a heterogeneous population.



## 1. Theoretical part

Before I start to analyse media content, it is necessary to go through the theories that support this thesis. For this research, relevant theories were selected that have the task of providing support for this research. The chapter contains an overview of the literature that deals with the given theories. If we are going to compare the media content of print media in two certain countries, i.e., Slovakia and Switzerland, it is crucial to first clarify how such content is created. For this purpose, I will use the theory from Berger and Luckmann, *The Construction of Social Reality* (1966). Subsequently, this thesis will deal with already conducted research in the field of this theory and use it in the study of media content. It is research by Adoni and Mane with title *Media and the Social Construction of Reality: Toward an integration of theory and research* (1984), which discusses types of social reality construction, and also work by Yan *Image, Reality and Media Construction* (2020), which builds on Berger and Luckmann's (1966) work and discusses the relationship between media and social reality construction, will be presented here. I will also mention Fleischer's *Concept of the third reality* (2006) as it provides an interesting perspective on the construction of reality. Furthermore, it is crucial to examine the specific environment in which this media content is created and also for which specific media audience. Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory described and explained in *Culture's Consequences: Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions and Organizations Across Nations* (2001) will help to better understand the cultural aspects of the media environment from which this work will draw empirical data. This certainly also applies to the media audience to whom the media content analysed in this thesis is intended.

A better understanding of the media environment and media audiences will subsequently help this thesis examine how the media shape public opinion. In addition, it will be supported by McCombs's work *Agenda setting* (1972), which discusses how the media raise topics for the audience, which subsequently perceive them as important. In this process, it will be necessary to mention the concept of *mediation* and *mediatization*, from book *Masová Média* by Jiráček and Köpplová (2009) and also Hjarvard's *Mediatization* (2017) research.

In addition to the philosophical theories themselves, it is naturally important to present the two selected countries from which I will draw content for the empirical part of this thesis. In addition to their cultural framing according to the mentioned theories, their

political, geographical or historical realities will also be presented. These have the task of broadening the view into the interior of their media audience and media environment.

### **1.1 The Social Construction of Reality**

In the book *Social Construction of reality*, the authors Berger and Luckmann (1966) argue that the sociology of knowledge is based on the fact that human reality is socially constructed. This means that what we perceive as real is the result of social processes and agreements. This view is often discussed because the question of how reality is constituted has traditionally been a topic in studies of media. According to them, however, nowadays philosophers are less interested in this problem, so sociologists often fall to the solution of these questions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 211). Berger and Luckmann (1966) show that sociological thinking can contribute to philosophy, especially in the analysis of how people acquire knowledge in everyday life and in discussions of how certain ideas are objectified and institutionalized. Their conception of the sociology of knowledge also suggests that sociology is a discipline that deals with man and his social interactions, and thus is a humanistic science (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 211). According to Berger and Luckmann (1966), it is important for sociology to constantly communicate with history and philosophy. If it did not, it would lose its object of investigation, which is society as part of the human world. This world is created by the people who inhabit it and at the same time shape it throughout history (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 211). Their idea expressed in this work, that humanistic sociology reminds us how amazing it is that people can create and change their society, gives this theory great importance in media research. Berger and Luckmann's (1966) theory of the social construction of reality influences our view of how the media shape social reality. Constructivists argue that the media do not simply depict events, but actively define and shape them. News content is not only a reflection of objective reality, but is a socially created product (Yan, 2020, p. 41). Media construction of reality includes not only the selection of events to be covered, but also their definition and interpretation. By selecting and emphasizing certain aspects, the media influence how the audience understands these events. This process of interpretation is influenced by both internal and external forces (Yan, 2020, p. 41). According to Yan (2020) this constructivist approach to reporting criticizes the lack of balance or equality between different viewpoints. Objectivity in journalism is often seen as problematic because journalists are limited in what they can

cover and how they can cover it. Every choice they make can be seen as a form of bias (Yan, 2020, p. 42).

When discussing how the media portrays reality, it is appropriate to ask whether things exist independently of our observability, or how we know and understand them. In the work of Fengmin Yan (2020) *Image, Reality and Media Construction*, realism says that there is an independent reality that we learn from and reflect upon (Yan, 2020, p. 41). Critics argue that this view ignores how we interpret and construct our understanding. On the other hand, there is constructivism, which claims that reality and meanings are shaped by social processes (Yan, 2020, p. 41). It does not deny the existence of an independent world, but emphasizes that meaning arises from how people use language and symbols (Yan, 2020, p. 41). This approach, known as the "social construction of reality", shows that what appears natural is actually shaped by social interactions and cultural beliefs. Constructivism assumes that individuals actively construct and interpret the world according to their interests, knowledge, and semiotic resources (Yan, 2020, p. 41). From this perspective, cognition is not an objective representation of reality, but an active construction of meaning. When we talk about "social construction", we mean that what appears natural is actually the result of social interactions and culturally defined beliefs (Yan, 2020, p. 42). This expanded version takes into account the importance of both philosophical approaches to the issue of reality and meaning, as well as their criticisms and impacts in the media and social sciences.

In the work *Media and the social construction of reality* by Adoni and Mane (1984), three types of social reality, which is constructed by individuals, are presented. The process of reality construction can be considered social because it is possible only through social interaction (Adoni & Mane, 1984, p. 325). It is a dialectical process in which people act as creators and create their social world. According to Adoni and Mane (1984), we can distinguish three types of reality based on the aforementioned dialectical process. The first is the objective social reality which represents the external surrounding world which is experienced by individuals and which confronts them with facts. The authors consider this to be the so-called reality of par excellence, which is perceived through common sense and does not usually need to be verified (Adoni & Mane, 1984, p. 325).

The second is symbolic social reality, which consists of symbolic expressions of objective social reality, such as art, literature or media content. There are more of these



realities, as their construction depends on various symbolic expressions of reality. It is influenced by various artistic and literary trends or the ideology of media sources (Adoni & Mane, 1984, p. 326).

The third is the subjective social reality where the two previously mentioned realities provide inputs for the emergence of the individual's subjective reality. Adoni and Mane (1974) claim that the objective world and its symbolic interpretations in art, literature or the media together create individual consciousness. This consciousness is then responsible for creating the subjective social reality of individuals (Adoni & Mane, 1984, p. 326). The authors also discuss the impact and significance of the construction of social reality in the media. Media studies often examine how symbolic reality affects subjective reality, so a natural question arises: How does media content affect the perception of social reality? Several studies show that media content often shapes opinions on everyday topics (Adoni & Mane, 1984, p. 330).

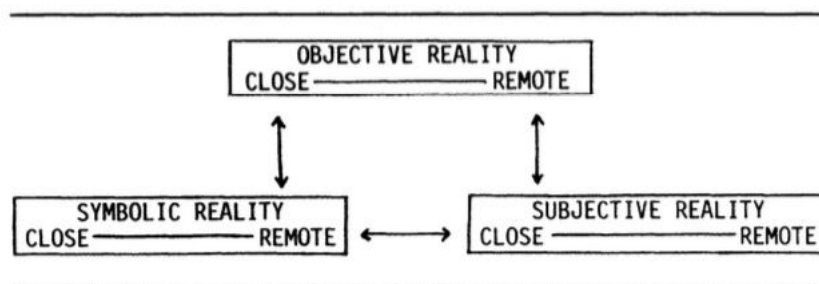


Figure 1

The theory of social construction of reality posits that media plays a significant role in shaping our perceptions and understanding of the world around us.

An insight into Fleischer's *concept of the third reality (die Konzeption der dritten Wirklichkeit)* is also beneficial for this thesis. The author describes “third reality” as a communicative reality, as a product of reality. This is perceived by Fleischer as the first reality (*die erste Wirklichkeit*). The first reality refers to the physical and biological world. The second reality (*die zweite Wirklichkeit*) encompasses the social sphere, which is built upon the biological systems of the first reality, involving human interactions and actions. The third reality (*die dritte Wirklichkeit*) is founded on the use of signs and symbols in communication. This communicative space is specific to each culture, meaning that the communications within it are influenced by a culturally-specific worldview—a

perspective shared by its users about how the world should be perceived. The third reality is anchored in shared values and a collective sense of normality. (Fleischer, 2006, p. 286). Social systems are created and stabilized by the fact that communication as a mechanism creates a third reality in which social system works without finding out why and who actually does it. (Fleischer, 2006, p. 286).

Agenda-setting and framing, where media research has shown that by selectively covering certain issues and events while ignoring others (agenda-setting), and by emphasizing particular aspects of a story while downplaying others (framing), media outlets can influence what the public considers important and how they interpret those issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 182). Another example is stereotyping and representation in media, which is linked to Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions, which is also part of theoretical part of this thesis. Studies have found that media often perpetuates stereotypes and biases through the way it represents different social groups. For example, research has shown how the media's portrayal of gender roles reinforces traditional notions of masculinity and femininity, while racial and ethnic stereotypes in movies and TV can shape public perceptions and attitudes (Brooks & Hébert, 2006, p. 312). Agenda setting and stereotyping in the media will be described in more detail in the second part of the theoretical part of this thesis.

Hofstede's *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviours, institutions and organizations across nations* (2001) is structured around five major dimensions, which are power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism vs. collectivism, masculinity vs. femininity and long-term vs. short term orientation. It argues, that people carry 'mental programmes', which are developed in the family in early childhood and reinforced in school and organizations and that these mental programmes contain a component of national culture (Hofstede, 2001).

According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory, *power distance* is the degree to which members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. In societies with high power distance, people are more likely to accept that power inequality is good and acceptable. They are more likely to accept that there are some powerful people who are in charge and that these people are entitled to special benefits. In contrast, societies with low power distance tend to consider that all members are equal (Hofstede, 2001, pp. 82-84).

According to Hofstede's *Cultural Dimensions Theory*, the *uncertainty avoidance*

dimension reflects the degree to which a culture embraces or avoids uncertainty and ambiguity about the future. High uncertainty avoidance cultures are cultures with high uncertainty avoidance tend to have a low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity. They prefer structured learning situations and seek clear, "right" answers. For example, teachers are expected to have all the answers. Such cultures rely heavily on rules, laws, and regulations to try to control as much of the future as possible. People in these cultures tend to experience higher levels of anxiety and stress about unpredictable situations. They are motivated by job and life security and are resistant to change. Low uncertainty avoidance cultures are more comfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity. They prefer open-ended learning situations and discussions, and teachers may admit when they don't know something. Such cultures see truth as more relative rather than absolute. People in these cultures are more accepting of deviant or innovative ideas that conflict with social norms. They are motivated more by personal achievement and esteem rather than security. In summary, the uncertainty avoidance dimension describes how different cultures cope with and manage the inherent uncertainty about the future, with some preferring more structure and stability and others being more comfortable with ambiguity (Hofstede, 2001).

*Individualism versus collectivism* dimension is a key aspect of national culture that describes the relationship between the individual and the group in a society. In individualist societies, the ties between individuals are loose - people are expected to look after themselves and their immediate family. Individualist cultures emphasize personal achievement, independence, and individual decision-making. In contrast, collectivist societies have strong, cohesive in-groups that protect individuals in exchange for loyalty. Collectivist cultures prioritize group harmony, conformity, and collective decision-making over individual interests. Key differences between individualist and collectivist societies are, that in individualistic societies are people expected to be self-reliant and make decisions independently. The needs of the individual take precedence over the group. On the other hand, in collectivistic societies, people are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups. Loyalty to the group and conformity are highly valued, often taking priority over individual goals. The individualism versus collectivism dimension has significant implications for how people in different cultures approach decision-making, communication styles, and social relationships. Understanding this cultural difference is crucial for effective cross-cultural interactions and organizational

management (Hofstede, 2001).

*Masculinity versus femininity* dimension in Hofstede's cultural model examines the extent to which a society emphasizes traditional masculine and feminine traits. This dimension is crucial for understanding cultural differences and their impact on social norms, values, and behaviours. Key characteristics of masculine society according to Hofstede (2001) are present in social norms, which emphasize assertiveness, competitiveness, and material success then in values, which are money and material possessions. Social norms are clear. Regarding work ethics, people live to work, focusing on achievement and success. Conflict resolutions in masculine society are based on force and competition. Religion plays a significant role in everyday life. Gender roles are based on traditional perception of patriarchy and are dominant in masculine society - men being more assertive and women being more nurturing. Also, traditional family structures are preferred, with clear gender roles.

In feminine society are social norms emphasize nurturing, cooperation, and quality of life. Values derive from quality of life and relationships, which are valued in feminine society. Social norms are more flexible. Regarding work ethic, people work to live, focusing on quality of life and relationships. Conflicts are often resolved through negotiation and compromise and religion is less important in daily life. Feminine society allows more flexible gender roles, with both men and women being nurturing and cooperative. In family life, there are flexible structures, with less emphasis on traditional gender roles (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede's masculinity vs. femininity dimension provides a framework for understanding how cultures differ in their emphasis on traditional masculine and feminine traits. This dimension helps in navigating cultural differences in social norms, values, and behaviours, which are crucial for effective communication and cooperation in diverse environments.

According to Geert Hofstede's research (2001) on cultural dimensions, *long-term orientation and short-term orientation* represent two distinct perspectives on time and priorities. Regarding long-term orientation-based societies, people focus on the future, with an emphasis on perseverance and thrift. Relationships and market positions are seen as important, and good or evil is judged based on the circumstances. Individuals in long-term oriented cultures are more willing to delay gratification for future rewards. Typical examples of such societies are China and Japan (Hofstede, 2001).

In short-term orientation societies, is focus on the present and past, with an

emphasis on respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations. The bottom line and quick results are prioritized over long-term considerations and individuals in short-term oriented cultures place more importance on personal steadfastness and leisure time. Example of short-term society are United States (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede's research found that long-term orientation is more common in Asian cultures, while short-term orientation is more prevalent in some Western cultures. However, there can be significant variation within and between cultures. Understanding these differences in time orientation is important for effective cross-cultural management and negotiation (Hofstede, 2001).

Geert Hofstede created the *Hofstede Cultural Dimensions Theory*, a framework for evaluating and comparing cultural values across different countries. Initially, Hofstede (2001) identified four cultural dimensions using factor analysis of survey data from IBM employees in 40 countries: *power distance*, *individualism-collectivism*, *uncertainty avoidance*, and *masculinity-femininity*. He later expanded the model by adding two more dimensions: *long-term orientation* and *indulgence*. To assess these cultural dimensions, Hofstede designed the *Values Survey Module* (VSM), which has been revised multiple times with changes to its items. The VSM gathers data on cultural values at the country level, rather than individual preferences, focusing on national cultural differences (Gerlach & Eriksson, 2021). Hofstede's cultural dimension scores have been determined for over 76 countries and regions, combining data from the IBM study and other cross-national studies. Despite its influence, Hofstede's work has faced criticism for its reliance on a narrow sample of IBM employees and for potentially oversimplifying complex cultural differences. In essence, Hofstede's methodology involves a survey-based approach to measure and compare national cultural values across multiple dimensions, forming a widely used framework in cross-cultural research (Gerlach & Eriksson, 2021).

In summary, the constructivist perspective views media research and education as an active process of knowledge building by individuals and groups, rather than the passive transmission of information. This approach emphasizes the importance of student engagement, creativity, and connecting learning to real-world experiences.

## **1.2 Media Shaping Public Opinion**

Social construction of reality theory points to the fact that the media have the power to influence perceptions of reality and are therefore likely to be able to shape public opinion. To reinforce this thesis, the following section of the theoretical framework will discuss

concepts such as mediation, mediatisation and agenda setting. It will also provide an explanation of the term media audience.

According to Jiráček & Köpplová *Masová média* (2009) the essence of media is the transmission of information, i.e., the mediation of information. The media stand in the middle between two parties and play the role of mediator. Mediation is generally perceived as a mediation process, and not only in the sphere of media studies, but also in political science. In many political or even military conflicts, a number of countries try to put themselves in the role of a mediator, who has the task of mediating communication between the two parties to the conflict. However, when talking about mediation, it is important what kind of character the mediator has and how it mediates the information. Every medium has its own specifics, and in the concept of mediation, it is also important in what way the given medium conveys information and how it impresses it. Not every medium is able to present information of the same quality or comprehensibility (Jiráček & Köpplová, 2009, pp. 92-93). According to Hjarvard's work (2017) the study of mediation is concerned with how media influence content and communication between people in specific situations, but does not change basic social relationships. Media and communication studies often examine mediated communication - the relationship between senders, media content, and receivers. Traditional studies of media effects considered the media as a factor affecting the audience. Mediation is used by politicians to communicate political agenda, for example when a politician spreads his message through a press release or on social media (Hjarvard, 2017, pp. 4-5).

On the contrary, the study of mediatization focuses on the major social and cultural changes brought about by the media. Jiráček and Köpplová (2009) describe mediatization as a unique social change that came with the rise of network media in the post-industrial era. Society is fully saturated with media, and this is the result of the unusual growth of the media and the availability of information that new types of media provide. According to them, the postmodern society is highly mediatized, which is one of its main features precisely because of the method of mediating information through mass and network media (Jiráček & Köpplová, 2009, p. 95). Mediatization refers to long-term changes in society and culture caused by the increasing presence of the media, such as changes in political institutions or the formation of public opinion (Hjarvard, 2017, p. 4). Later research showed that audiences are active and use media according to their needs. Mediatization studies go beyond just considering media and audiences and emphasize that

media are deeply embedded in social and cultural structures (Hjarvard, 2017, p. 5). The media are not only external factors influencing people, but are an integral part of our culture and society. Mediatization research examines how media change different areas of society, such as politics, sports or children's games. Mediatization is a broad process similar to globalization or urbanization and requires the analysis of specific changes in individual areas. Mediatization theory provides a framework for understanding the long-term relationships between changes in the media and changes in society and culture (Hjarvard, 2017, p. 6).

In work *The Agenda Setting – Function of Mass Media* from McCombs and Shaw (1972) work with the theory of agenda setting. It deals with the role of the media in political life, in the political struggle and campaign. In this work authors claim that nowadays there is contact between the political representation and the masses through the media, and it is precisely this that brings up the topics that the masses are likely to be most interested in. Agenda setting is a powerful media theory that explains how the media influences what issues the public thinks are important. The central claim of agenda setting theory is that the media, through their selection and emphasis of certain issues, events, and topics, can shape the public's perception of what is important. This concept was first described in the 1920s by Walter Lippmann, but the name agenda setting was given to it by McCombs in the second half of the 20th century. According to McCombs & Shaw (1972) the key points of agenda setting theory are definition and function (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 184). Agenda setting refers to the media's ability to influence the salience of topics on the public agenda. The purpose is to direct public attention to certain issues. In this work McCombs & Shaw (1972) claim, that the media doesn't reflect reality, but filters and shapes it, which also supports the theory of symbolic social reality from Adoni & Mane (1984). Also, the media concentration on a few issues and topics leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than others (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 182). According to McCombs, the extent of the influence of different types of media on the agenda-setting process differs in their nature and form. Printed newspapers are published every day and we can browse through their content every time we pick them up. With magazines published weekly or monthly, there is a certain lack of topicality, as opposed to daily magazines. Television newspapers are broadcast every day but have a limited time space (McCombs, 1972, p. 184). Advancements in communication technology, like the internet and social media, have expanded the media's ability to set the agenda and

reach more people than ever before. Network media can provide the media audience with new and new information, which has a tendency to spread in a chain way, and this generally changes the rules in the agenda setting process. Another important part of agenda setting are effects on media audiences. Agenda setting can influence audience beliefs, values, and sensitivity to certain issues. It is more effective on "obtrusive" issues that directly impact people's lives. Dealing with agenda setting is necessary to mention its criticism. It is criticized for oversimplifying complex issues, reinforcing biases, and causing more divisiveness rather than unity. Framing involves how the media influences how people think about and react to an issue by emphasizing certain aspects of it. In summary, agenda setting theory posits that the media, through their selection and presentation of news, have a powerful influence in shaping what issues the public thinks are important, even if the media does not directly tell people what to think about those issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 177). By the words of McCombs: *"In short, the political world is reproduced imperfectly by individual news media. Yet the evidence in this study that voters tend to share the media's composite definition of what is important strongly suggests an agenda-setting function of the mass media."* (McCombs & Shaw, 1972, p. 184).

Jirák and Köpplová (2009) defines the *media audience* as people using the media and consuming their contents. The media itself considers and describes this group of people as a commodity that has a certain value. Just like the media, the media audience goes through development, development of behavior and way of media consumption. It is directly related to the development of the media over time, and with the digitization of the media, which provides easier interaction, today's media audience is oriented towards network media, compared to classic audiences used to print or television, also labelled as a "disappearing" audience (Jirák & Köpplová, 2009, pp. 185-187).

### **1.3 Cultural Aspects of Slovakia**

To get to know the cultural aspects of Slovakia, it is necessary to first state the basic facts about the country. According to the National Statistics Office of the Slovak Republic, which conducted a census in late 2021, Slovakia has a population nearing 5.5 million. However, it's estimated that over one-third of all Slovaks reside outside the current Slovak Republic. The predominant ethnic group is Slovak (83.8%), followed by Hungarians (7.7%) and Romani (1.2%). Other ethnic minorities include Czechs,



Moravians, Silesians, Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Germans, and Poles, all of whom are guaranteed cultural, linguistic, and historical protections under the constitution and specific laws (Zoubir & Lhabitant, 2003, p. 159). Slovakia is a highly religious country, where Catholicism is the leading religion (55.8%), but Protestant and Orthodox churches are also present. The Jewish population significantly declined during World War II (Národný štatistický úrad SR, 2021). Slovakia is administratively divided into eight regions, 79 districts, and 2,878 municipalities (towns and cities included). Bratislava, the capital with 0.45 million residents, serves as the country's political, economic, and cultural hub. Slovak is the official language, part of the West Slavic language group and closely related to Czech (Zoubir & Lhabitant, 2003, p. 159). However, minority languages are commonly spoken in their respective regions, and in areas where minorities constitute more than 20% of the population, their language can be used officially alongside Slovak. The Slovak nation belongs to the Slavic peoples, and the Slovak language is classified within the West Slavic group. Slovaks are culturally closest to Czechs and Poles, though there is also a cultural closeness to all Slavic nations. The Slovak Republic operates as a unitary state with legislative power vested in a unicameral parliament. The regions in Slovakia differ slightly from each other, particularly in the south of Slovakia, where the largest portion of the Hungarian minority resides. The Slovak Radio and Television operates in several minority languages—Hungarian, Romani, and Ruthenian. However, the dominant channel is the one broadcasting in Slovak. Most other media are published predominantly in Slovak, although there is also regional press in the languages of national minorities. All mainstream media are published at the national level and in the Slovak language.

According to Hofstede's scale, presented on the *Countries comparison graphs* (2021), Slovakia can be considered as a country with a high power-distance society with a ranking of 100 points on the scale. Uncertainty avoidance index is 51 points, similar to Switzerland (58). Individualism vs. collectivism was 52 points, which puts this country in the middle of this category. Slovakia is, according to Hofstede's measurement, considered a masculine society with a ranking of 100 points. The long-term orientation index showed in the case of Slovakia 77 points on the scale, which says this country has a long-term-oriented society (Hofstede, 2021).

## 1.4 Cultural Aspects of Switzerland

When examining Swiss culture and identity, it is necessary to begin with a brief description of the political realities of Switzerland and discuss various cultural aspects such as language, religion or political culture. According to Chervier (2009), some scientists also claim that geographical conditions play a significant role in creating Swiss identity. As summarized by Church (2003), Switzerland is a federal country with a long history dating back to the 14th century. In addition to neutrality, it is federalism that is the basic feature of this Alpine country, which is made up of a pluri-cultural and pluri-national society. It is the result of a long and complex process of connecting small territories, later called cantons, where different ethnicities with different cultures and languages lived (Church, 2003, p. 4). An important element of today's Swiss society are the three institutional actors – the federation, cantons, and municipalities, the most important of which are the cantons, smaller homogenous units, that are distinguished from each other precisely by cultural and linguistic features, the main four divisions of these linguistic and cultural areas – German (74%), French (20%), Italian (4.5%) and Romansh, which speaks just around 30,000 people (Chevrier, 2009, p. 173). Chevrier (2009) also notes the federative nature of Switzerland, that beyond language, Switzerland's administrative structure is highly decentralized, with 26 semi-autonomous cantons, each having its own constitution, government, and control over policies like taxation, health, and education. Even districts within cantons have significant autonomy, such as granting Swiss citizenship (Chervier, 2009, p. 173).

The 26 cantons and half-cantons of Switzerland differ significantly in terms of geographical size, population, political influence, and the duration of their membership in the Swiss (con) federation, yet they all enjoy equal rights under the federal constitution (Church, 2003, pp. 15-16). The so-called half-cantons, which originated from the division of whole cantons during key historical events, function almost like full cantons, with the only exceptions being that they have just one seat in the Council of States and count as half a canton when determining the cantonal majority in constitutional referendums. Cantons still view themselves as independent and sovereign entities, at least officially. They maintain some aspects of statehood, such as their own demos and citizenship, full taxation authority, and a 'residual powers' clause (Church, 2003, p. 16). Consequently, cantons in Switzerland are likely more autonomous and self-aware than regional units in other federal systems. Due to their historical independence and precedence over the

federal state, cantons tend to act individually rather than as a unified 'cantonal lobby'. Historically, they have preferred to keep their policy-making autonomy instead of trading it for more influence in federal decision-making (Church, 2003, p. 15). However, in some areas, they have had to cede some autonomy to the central government. Nowadays, cantons are deeply integrated into the federal decision-making process. They are represented in one chamber of the bicameral Federal Assembly and are fully involved in pre-parliamentary consultations on draft legislation, a crucial phase in setting the agenda for Swiss law-making (Church, 2003, p.16). Swiss political system is being often described as a semi-direct democracy, which is connected to popularity of referendum in country (Serdült, 2010, p.165).

There are 26 of these cantons, of which German is spoken in 19, to be exact, a dialect of German called Swiss German (*Schweizerdeutsch*), which, however, does not have an official written form, and therefore written communication uses the written official German (*Hochdeutsch*) (Chevrier, 2009, p. 173). Swiss German is therefore considered a dialect of German, but even within this dialect there are several deviations that make it possible to identify exactly which canton a given person comes from in Switzerland. This linguistic diversity within the Swiss dialect is very special. Foreigners immigrating to Switzerland usually have an excellent command of literary German (Chevrier, 2009, p. 173). French is used in the other 4 cantons and Italian in one. Then there are cantons where multiple languages are used, such as the canton of Graubünden, where three languages are used, German, Italian and Romansh. Another important cultural aspect is the religious diversity of Switzerland. Chevrier (2009) notes that the biggest Catholic population lives mainly in the French- and Italian-speaking cantons, while Protestants predominate in the German ones. Swiss society is marked by significant linguistic and religious divisions, creating psychological borders within the country. Many Swiss people rarely leave their linguistic regions and refer to working in other parts of Switzerland as "expatriation" or "immigration." (Chevrier, 2009, p. 179).

In addition to cultural aspects, it is also necessary to focus on the media audience of Switzerland. Beier, Fiechtner and Trebbe (2020) are discussing the portrayal of ordinary citizens in public debates on Swiss television news as a matter of citizen actors representing the "people's voice" as counterbalance to elite and civil institutional actors. The goal of this research was to understand the representation of ordinary citizens in Swiss public television news, both in general and across different language regions. The

researchers analysed data collected in a previous study by the SRG SSR (German: *Schweizerische Radio- und Fernsehgesellschaft*; French: *Société suisse de radiodiffusion et télévision*, Italian: *Società svizzera di radiotelevisione*; Romansh: *Societad Svizra da Radio e Televisiun*) to examine the appearance of individual and collective actors over one week in fall 2015. In this work, they came to the following five findings. Firstly, citizen actors accounted for about 18% of all identified actors in the news coverage. They were most prominent in news stories on social controversies, and least featured in economic topics (Beier, Fiechtner & Trebbe, 2020, p. 1070). Secondly, citizen actors were significantly associated with political system actors, while civil organizations as social elites were the least-featured group. Next outcome of this research is, that only a small proportion of actors, including citizen actors, were given the chance to make direct statements. Visibility did not equate to active participation in public dialogue (Beier, Fiechtner & Trebbe, 2020, p. 1071). Beier, Fiechtner and Trebbe (2020) found out also differences in journalistic culture. Citizen actors were less present in German-speaking news pieces compared to French and Italian equivalents. The Italian-speaking channel RSI LA 1 used significantly more direct statements than the other channels (Beier, Fiechtner & Trebbe, 2020, p. 1071). The last important finding of their work deals with Inter-cultural dialogue and “*Switzerlandization*” Citizen actors from other language areas were hardly represented at all, and the featured citizen actors were mostly not directly assigned or from an international background. Swiss television news did not seem to be used to portray the country's multicultural society or promote dialogue between different language cantons of Switzerland (Beier, Fiechtner & Trebbe, 2020, p. 1071).

In the work of Bachmann, Eisenegger and Ingenhoff (2021) researchers examine the Swiss media system to test its method for measuring news quality. It analysed the content of 50 news outlets using four criteria based on the deliberative ideal and compared these results to two representative online surveys. The strong correlations between the two methods indicate that this deliberative understanding of news quality is shared by Swiss society and audiences. This study shows that scores from content analysis based on deliberative theory and audience ratings of news media quality are very similar. When scientists rate news coverage highly, audiences tend to agree with them, and vice versa (Bachmann, Eisenegger & Ingenhoff, 2021, p.23). This formula applies at different times and for different samples. The strongest agreement between content scores and audience ratings is in the area of relevance, while the lowest agreement, although still strong, is in

the area of contextualization. A closer look reveals that older and more educated audience members have ratings that more closely match the content analysis scores.

In summary, Switzerland cannot be considered a country with a homogeneous media audience. It is derived from cultural aspects and the various cultural composition of the country, from which the form of the country's media system, which operates on the basis of four official languages, also develops. With words of Chervier “This review of Swiss diversity suggests that if we consider culture as customs or as a specific identity, there is nothing like Swiss culture. However, beyond such diversity, shared conceptions of legitimate forms of social organization, that is, a uniform political culture, does exist.” (Chervier, 2009, p. 173).

According to Hofstede's *Countries comparison graphs* (2021), Switzerland can be considered as country with small power distance with 34 points on the scale. Regarding uncertainty avoidance index is Switzerland in the middle with 58 points on the scale, similar as Slovakia (51). Swiss society is more individualistic, on scale with 68 points. Also, it is more masculine society – 70 points. Talking about long term orientation of society, Switzerland achieved 74 points (Hofstede, 2021).

## **2. Empirical data and research methodology**

In this part of the work, I will focus on the database, that is, how, from where and why this material intended for analysis was collected. Next, the methods that provided the basis for the analysis will be described. This is primarily a linguistic analysis of the discourse, which focuses on the relationship between the text and the social context. Fleischer's concept of normativity, which provided the basis for the analysis of media texts, will be explained here. I will present a system of thematic categories (typology) and describe each of them so that it is clear according to what I assigned the selected sayings to certain categories. In the last part, I will analyse four data files, each of which contains data from 12 articles from the same country at the same point in time. This means that the first data set is *War in Ukraine - Slovak media 2022*, the second is *War in Ukraine - Slovak media 2024*, the third is *War in Ukraine - Swiss media 2022* and the last one is *War in Ukraine - Swiss Media 2024*.

### **2.1 Database**

The database of the empirical part of this work is represented by articles from various

Slovak and Swiss print media. In both countries, three dailies were selected, which are among the best known and most read. For this thesis, I considered it important that the selection of media from the Slovak and Swiss media environment represent a broad spectrum of opinions and the quality work of independent journalists. I also considered it crucial to prevent the use of irrelevant journals such as various disinformation and conspiracy journals. I then selected eight articles from each of the six dailies reporting on the war in Ukraine. Four articles from each newspaper were published at the beginning of the war, where the time span was determined to be from the date of the beginning of the invasion on February 24, 2022 until the end of March 2022. The other four articles were in turn selected from the present days, i.e., from the current period during which I conducted the analysis, i.e., from the middle of May 2024 until the first two weeks of July 2024. This is because, in addition to a linguistic analysis of the discourse in these media, I also want to address its development over time in one part of the empirical part of this thesis. Since there was no shortage of material to examine when searching the database for articles from the beginning of the war, it was sufficient to set the time spans at one month and two weeks. As for articles from the current period, there were signs of a slight decline of the topic in some newspapers compared to February 2024 and thus I needed a larger time frame i.e., from mid-May to mid-July 2024.

In the selection of daily newspapers in Slovakia, the choice was not complicated. The articles to be analysed will be firstly from the conservative daily *Postoj*. This newspaper was founded in 2015 as a reaction to the referendum on the family, which failed (Múčka, 2018). Apart from social, political, economic and cultural issues, he openly inclines towards Christian values. The second daily newspaper from the Slovak media space is the daily *Pravda*, which was founded in 1920. In 1944-1990 it served as a press organ of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and was an instrument of totalitarian propaganda. Since 1990, it has represented left-wing ideas in the Slovak media environment (Michelko, 2018). The third daily is *Denník N*, which was founded in 2015 as an online medium in response to the departure of part of the editorial staff from another popular Slovak daily. This daily is primarily funded by subscriptions and advertising, is primarily devoted to investigative reporting, and holds liberal values (Školkay, 2022).

In the case of the Swiss dailies, the selection was a slightly more complicated. In chapter 2.4 *Cultural aspects of Switzerland*, I discussed the specific realities of Switzerland, based on which there is no single medium in only one official language.

Although the state-owned SRG SSR is such a unified medium, it is still divided into four linguistic variations. For daily newspapers it is even more complicated, as they operate at the cantonal level and in four different languages. But there is one popular Swiss-wide daily newspaper is the daily *20 Minuten* (*20 minutes* in French), which is distributed in print at train stations and bus stops. It is for free and therefore the most widely read. It is concerned as tabloid daily. For the purposes of this thesis, I have worked with its German version, which is the most widely read, given the linguistic conditions in Switzerland. Another Swiss media appearing in this thesis is the daily newspaper *Tages Anzeiger* from Zürich. It is described as the supra-regional print medium in Switzerland and it is published in German since 1893. It is a founding member of LENA (*Leading European Newspaper Alliance*). It is considered as left-liberal daily. The third Swiss daily is *Der Bund*, published in German language in the capital city of Switzerland – Bern and in the canton of the same name. It was established in 1850 and it is considered as liberal oriented media.

## **2.2 Linguistic Analysis of Discourse**

For the linguistic analysis of discourse in this thesis, I have used Fleischer's (2006) concept of normativity (*die Normativik*), which applies to aspects of the third reality (*die dritte Wirklichkeit*) described in the theoretical section of this thesis. The concept of normativity understands communication, regardless of its function and worldview, as something that is constituted by a certain structure and effect. Every content of communication is influenced by the results of normative procedures. Contents do not directly influence normalization procedures, they can only influence them indirectly through the accumulation of statements with a certain content (Fleischer, 2006, p. 332). Aspects of the third reality, i.e., the cultural aspects of the given environment in which the communicative contents are located, are responsible for the specific construction and control of the field that is considered normal within communication. The concept of normativity thus examines both the general systemic properties of normality and the specific characteristics that arise from it (Fleischer, 2006, p. 333).

In this sense, according to Fleischer, it is extremely important to distinguish between normality and norm and *value*. Fleischer (2006) defines normality as: “Semantic mechanisms that are not necessarily reflected but are generally applied, accepted and thus

valid at a given level, and by means of these mechanisms constructed and appropriately filtered components of communication. Considered to be of a type believed to be consensual, they are silently accepted, are not contested, are located and embedded in the communication domain, and function as a (implicitly or explicitly applied) standard for evaluating, standardizing, hierarchizing, interdependence-determining, and system-providing classification of the other elements.” (Fleischer, 2006, p. 334). A norm is an internally and externally determined property of a system, and *values* are sanctioned expression-dependent variables that depend on the basic element of normativity - *the normative*. Cultural values are words that express an ideal or a standard. We consider cultural values to be valuable in themselves. They constitute the basis of the assessment, i.e., the basis from which we qualify things, facts, or properties as valuable or worthless. Cultural values are usually positive terms that formulate a goal, a desirable state, or a desirable characteristic of culture. Cultural *values* have a firmly embedded and at the same time broad meaning in the system of culture, thanks to which they can be used for multiple purposes.

According to Fleischer (2006) *normatives* are elements that are subject to standardization procedures and express normality and the semantization and norm that apply to it (Fleischer, 2006, p. 338). They are the elements that make certain constructive aspects 'normal'. From a linguistic point of view, *normatives* are made up of nouns, adverbs and adjectives, but we also know their more complex form which manifests itself as sentences, syntagms, i.e., some phraseology, proverbs or sayings and ad hoc expressions. *Normative* puts forward an opinion and presents it as a claim in such a way that to challenge it would sound like an expression of ignorance or a complete absence of reality. If we accept the norm, we identify ourselves as belonging to it, and if we do not accept it, we will be excluded or forced to justify our position (Fleischer, 2006, pp. 338-339). *Stereotypes* are evaluative judgments about certain groups and are associated with a sense of stability and general validity. They have a specific historical and social anchoring. Their general validity makes them a social mechanism, influencing detoxification certain groups. Thus, *stereotype* means the classification of certain groups and their representation using simplistic, unverifiable, generalizing statements that express a set of values, judgments and assumptions about the behaviour of these groups and their characteristics (Fleischer, 2006, pp. 344-346). *Stereotypes* can be identified, revealed, subjected to critical analysis, but it is difficult to change them, because they are



part of intuitive knowledge, i.e., the way a person "understands" the society in which he lives (Jiráček, Köppllová 2009, p. 299-300). *Oppositions* are also an important discursive element in the study of communication. They can be used in any communication and represent the differentiation of an event and the formation of a hierarchy, distinguishing between what is one's own and what is other's. The term *opposition* refers not only to opposites that are usually known and considered as opposites according to one's own linguistic and cultural competence, but also opposites that are not generally known, but nevertheless fulfil the function of opposites in some context (Fleischer, 2006, pp. 359-360).

The analysis of discourse in this thesis will work with *normatives, values, stereotypes* and *contradictions*, which, based on Fleischer's definition, will be sought in selected texts from the dailies chosen for this thesis. Schneiderová (2015) is dealing in her book *Analýza diskurzu a mediální text* with the Fairclough's (2003) concept of discourse analysis and claims that analysis of discourse in principle focuses on the relationship between the text and the social context. Important contribution of analysis of discourse to this thesis is precisely its contribution to the discovery of important phenomena depicted by the text and thus reveals how the social reality of a certain social environment is perceived or constructed (Schneiderová, 2015, p. 12). Fleischer (2006) in his book *Allgemeine Kommunikationstheorie* (General theory of communication) analysis of discourse is only interested in the possible effect of a statement that is actually present in communicative situations, without addressing whether or not this effect was intended by the author of the statement. For this, according to Fleischer (2006), there is no answer that meets the scientific criteria. But it is possible to analyse the means of communication and the communications, which are open to scientific reconstruction. From these, one can only determine the possible influence on the participants in the communication of existing and observable utterance practices and accordingly classify the utterance itself concerning its communicative typical characteristics (Fleischer, 2006, p. 336).

### **2.3 The Category System**

The system of categories, typology, represents the division of norms, stereotypes and oppositions identified in the text into different subject areas related to the topic of the analysed content. These subject areas represent variables. In the case of this thesis, it is the war in Ukraine. Thus the categories will correspond to the main actors and

phenomena of this conflict, which repeatedly appear in the texts in the form of norms, stereotypes or oppositions. Some categories have their own subcategories, due to the importance of a more detailed assignment of a given norm, stereotype or opposite. Values, as such, are not categorized because they express an ideal and are valuable in themselves. They cannot be assigned to subject areas. These are the following subject areas, each marked with a capital letter, in the case of a subcategory, a number is assigned to the letter.

### **Typology (Variables):**

#### **A Ukraine as a Nation**

All statements that characterize the Ukrainian nation, their feelings, and values are listed here. Statements that define how they live and their characteristics. Statements that refer to Ukraine not only as a society but also as a state and an actor on the international scene are listed here.

#### **A1 Representatives of Ukraine**

All statements of Ukrainian state officials and statements about them, such as the president or his relatives, members of the government cabinet, oligarchs, members of the Ukrainian parliament, members of the Ukrainian armed forces, or other notable personalities of Ukraine, are listed here.

#### **B Russia as a Nation**

All statements that characterize the Russian nation, their feelings, and values are listed here. Statements that define how they live and their characteristics. Statements that refer to Russia not only as a society but also as a state and an actor on the international scene are listed here.

#### **B1 Representatives of Russia**

All statements of Russian state officials and statements about them, such as the president or his relatives, members of the government cabinet, oligarchs, members of the Russian parliament, members of the Russian armed forces, or other notable personalities of Russia, are listed here.

#### **C Ukraine – Russia Relationship**

All information describing the relationship between Ukraine and Russia, including historical developments before the start of the war in February 2022, is listed here.

#### **D West and Western Representatives**

This category includes all statements about representatives and organizations of the collective West, such as the states of the European Union (EU) and the EU itself, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the USA, and others.

#### **D1 West - Russia Relationship**

All specific statements regarding the relationship and development between the West and the Russian Federation are listed in this category.

#### **D2 West - Ukraine Relationship**

This category includes all specific statements regarding the relationship and its development between the West and Ukraine, especially those on the political level, such as military, financial, humanitarian, and other aid.

#### **E War**

All general statements about the war in Ukraine are listed here.

#### **E1 Migration**

All statements related to the war in Ukraine about migration and refugees are listed here.

#### **E2 Front**

All statements connected to the war in Ukraine, specifically to what is happening on the front, are listed here.

#### **E3 Negotiations**

Here are all statements related to the war in Ukraine, specifically to negotiations and summits about the war and its possible termination.

#### **F Slovakia – conflict relationship**

Here are all statements that characterize the Slovak nation, its feelings, and values . They define how they live and their characteristics. Statements that refer to Slovakia not only as a society but also as a state and an actor on the international scene are listed here.

#### **F1 Slovakia – Ukraine relationship**

This category includes all specific statements regarding the relationship and its development between Slovakia and Ukraine, especially those on the political level, such as military, financial, humanitarian, and other aid.

#### **F2 Representatives of Slovakia**

All statements of Slovak state officials and statements about them, such as the president or prime minister, members of the government cabinet, members of the Slovak parliament, members of the Slovak armed forces, or other notable personalities of Slovakia, are listed here.

## **G Switzerland – conflict relationship**

All statements that characterize the Swiss nation, their feelings, and values are listed here. Statements that define how they live and their characteristics. Statements that refer to Switzerland not only as a society but also as a state and an actor on the international scene are listed here.

### **G1 Switzerland – Ukraine relationship**

This category includes all specific statements regarding the relationship and its development between Switzerland and Ukraine, especially those on the political level, such as military, financial, humanitarian, and other aid.

### **G2 Representatives of Switzerland**

All statements of Swiss state officials and statements about them, such as the president of the Federal Council and its members, the Federal chancellor, members of the Swiss parliament, members of the Swiss armed forces, or other notable personalities of Switzerland, are listed here.

## **H – Third countries**

All statements involving third countries, their representatives, and nations are listed here. Statements defining their engagement and relationship to the war in Ukraine and the actors of this war themselves. These countries are all other countries that do not fall under categories A, B, D, F, and G.

## **I – Others**

All other statements could not be assigned to the above categories.

It is necessary to note that if a statement was classified directly in the main category D or E, it was impossible to classify it in the subgroups of these two categories, i.e., categories D1, D2, E1, E2, and E3.

## **2.4 Data analysis**

As already mentioned, the analysis of the obtained data will now follow. The order of the individual groups is as follows - first, the Slovak media will be analysed in 2022 and then in 2024. Then follows the analysis of the Swiss press, first from 2022 and then from 2024.

### **2.4.1 The War in Ukraine in Slovak Media in 2022**

Slovak media started reporting on the beginning of the military conflict in Ukraine immediately after it began. The Slovak media in the analysed texts began to call the outbreak of armed conflict the term war from the very beginning, and it was this term that dominated the majority of the analysed texts. On the other hand, logically, calls for peace also began to appear, but to a half lesser extent than was the case with the term war. In the analysed texts, the terms aggressor and aggression or war crime also appeared to a higher degree, and these terms were directly associated with the Russian Federation or Vladimir Putin. International law and law as such were also a more frequently repeated expression. In general, Slovak texts also worked with the concept of pan-Slavism, brotherhood, and friendship, which underline the shock of the war between two Slavic nations considered to be one of the closest to each other.

#### **Ukraine as a nation and its representatives**

Ukraine as a country and a nation was depicted in Slovak texts as the weaker, smaller, innocent and suffering country that practically has no chance to withstand this war: "A classic example of an unprovoked aggressive war of conquest by a large country against a small neighbouring country, which did not harm the big one in any way, did not intend to did not harm her and did not pose a threat to her." (SK 2022 Text 2). Comparisons with the Russian Federation appeared very often, and all the reasons why Ukraine has no chance to withstand this attack on its own were emphasized. Ukraine is given labels such as a buffer zone or a neutral state dependent on Western aid or at the mercy of Russia. Despite not much hope regarding the future of Ukraine, statements and convictions appeared that the West will certainly not leave Ukraine alone in this matter. "...America and NATO will not simply look at the television screens and calmly watch what is happening in Ukraine." (SK 2022 Text 9). Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky was mentioned minimally in the analysed texts, in the sense that he probably won't be able to get Ukraine into NATO.

#### **Russia as a nation and its representatives**

In the context of the war, Russia is mentioned as a clear aggressor, which, unlike Ukraine, is a bigger and more powerful neighbour. There is a general narrative that

Russia violates all international laws and commits war crimes and is the biggest security threat not only to Ukraine and Europe but to the whole world. The analysed texts put Russia in the position of an outsider: "The united attitude of almost the entire world against Russia is a fact." (SK 2022 Text 2). In the texts, there is concern about security from a possible conflict between Russia and NATO, but the fact that countries that are not part of NATO are most threatened by Russia is often emphasized. There are many statements mentioning the Russian population's disapproval of Vladimir Putin's actions in the form of fleeing Russia: "Because he knows very well that from there too - from Putin's Russia - people are leaving in droves towards the West." (SK 2022 Text 6). The person of Vladimir Putin is mentioned the most in the articles as the main cause of the whole war. There is a high level of hatred towards him, which reflects the disillusionment of the Slovak media with the start of the war. Putin is the most emotional part of the analysed texts which arouses anger and at the same time hopelessness and helplessness towards his actions: "Vladimir, we know that you can kill us all at any time, you have enough nuclear warheads for that" (SK 2022 Text 4). He is described as a criminal, a tyrant and a tiny man. Rage and hatred alternate with threats against his person, such as, "...it is in the interest of the civilized world and in the interest of the West to start a confrontation, a tough, serious confrontation with Putin..." (SK 2022 Text 9). Other statements take the form of predictions that do not predict a bright heroic future for Putin: "And this war will certainly prove to be the end of Putin, the end of the Putin regime." (SK 2022 Text 9). Probably the most emotional statement in the analysed texts was a well-known quotation by the then current President of the Czech Republic, Miloš Zeman: "The 'madman in the Kremlin' must, according to him, be isolated and not defended against with words alone" (SK 2022 Text 11).

## **Ukraine – Russia relationship**

The relationship between Ukraine and Russia is discussed in the articles mainly from a historical point of view. The Budapest Memorandum signed in 1994, which was supposed to guarantee Ukraine's inviolability and territorial integrity from Russia in return for giving up nuclear weapons (SK 2022 Text 8), is mentioned, and then some texts also discuss the beginning of the conflict, i.e., the revolution in Kiev and the annexation of Crimea in 2014 (SK 2022 Text 1). The relationship between the two countries is often described by the term brotherhood, even in times of military conflict: 'He behaved in a

brotherly manner, embracing his younger Slavic brother, the Ukrainian, in the name of the great Slavic brother of the Russian. Like Cain to Abel." (SK 2022 Text 2) and mentions the fact that Russians and Ukrainians are each other's closest relatives. In the relationship between these two countries, the violation of international law is mentioned once again: "Russia's aggression against Ukraine is a violation of international law." (SK 2022 Text 1).

### **West, its representatives and its relations with Russia and Ukraine**

In the articles, the West is mentioned, firstly, either as a whole and referred to in terms such as the civilised world and the world to which we belong, and then as organisations such as NATO, which is referred to as the West's main defence against Russia. Statements in the articles indicate serious concerns about a clash between NATO and Russia: "This would mean that we would have to shoot down Russian planes, i.e., open war between NATO and Russia." (SK 2022 Text 4) or "Neither alliance will enter the war unless it is directly attacked." (SK 2022 Text 6), which in the articles also contain numerous calls for the initiation of armaments and accusations that the West failed to prevent the war: "The West failed to deter Russia from attacking Ukraine with the threat of subsequent sanctions." (SK 2022 Text 4). The analysis of the texts also reveals that the West, and particularly NATO, is concerned about the consequences of supporting Ukraine: "Although we did not deter Russia from attacking Ukraine, Russia is successfully deterring us, the West, and NATO from providing more active military assistance to Ukraine." (SK 2022 Text 4). There is also a conviction that Europeans must prepare to bear the financial costs that will be related to helping Ukraine and building a strong defence of the West, which also does not bring relief to the listener from Slovakia. In the case of the relationship between the West and Ukraine, the articles indicate that it will likely be impossible for Ukraine to become a member of either NATO or the EU in the near future.

### **War - migration, events on front and negotiations**

War is one of the most frequently mentioned terms in the articles. Opinions on it vary, especially regarding how long it will last. Some articles state that it cannot last long, while others express uncertainty about when it will actually end. There is also a statement claiming: "In this war, the Russian Federation will suffer a serious and terrible defeat."

(SK 2022 Text 9) and that this war signifies the end of Putin. The term "war" is also associated with concerns that it could escalate due to an attack on NATO, which would mean that Slovakia would also be involved in the war. There is a statement, which claims: "We are at war, we must think in military terms." (SK 2022 Text 10). Another emotionally charged term mentioned in the articles is "nuclear war." War is linked to the migration of people fleeing from it, which Slovak media also notice: "More and more Ukrainians are crossing the EU borders." (SK 2022 Text 5), contrasting this with the fact that during the 2014 conflict, most Ukrainians from eastern Ukraine fled to Russia. In relation to the war, Slovak media also discuss the situation on the front lines, writing about the weapons and other assistance Ukraine needs to prevent its defence from collapsing: "We should initiate (...) massive deliveries of military equipment and advisors (...)" (SK 2022 Text 10). It is evident that migration and the situation on the front lines are important topics in Slovak media articles, as Slovakia shares a direct border with Ukraine.

### **Slovakia - its representatives, relationship to conflict and to Ukraine**

Slovakia is clearly identified in the articles as a member of NATO and the collective West, yet statements highlighting the fact that a portion of Slovak society harbours pro-Russian sentiments still appear: "Many in Slovakia also long for a brotherly Russian embrace." (SK 2022 Text 2), including some members of the Slovak political representation: "Fortunately, we are not a neutral country, as many, especially our opportunistic opposition politicians, would wish." (SK 2022 Text 6). The texts reflect strong concerns that Slovakia could become a neighbouring country to Russia and mention that Slovakia will have to get used to greater responsibility for its own security: "In any case, no one from outside will come to save us if we don't make an effort ourselves." (SK 2022 Text 3). The texts mention the solidarity of Slovaks with Ukrainians but also express that over time, this solidarity may diminish.

### **Third countries and their relations to conflict**

In this context, the article particularly mentions post-Soviet countries that have experienced Russian aggression, as they have shown interest in joining the EU: "Notice: Putin always intervened where post-Soviet countries sought to deepen economic cooperation with the European Union" (SK 2022 Text 10). However, it is often claimed that almost the entire world is against Russia.



## **Others**

This group includes statements that could be classified as general expressions concerning the new reality that Slovakia is facing, specifically statements rejecting violent border changes and asserting that it is necessary to accept the reality and not attempt to change it through force.

### **2.4.2 The war in Ukraine in Slovak media in 2024**

In the analysis of Slovak articles from 2024, it emerges that terms such as peace, peace process, or peace plan appear very frequently. War is also frequently mentioned, often with the adjectives Russian or cold. Additionally, security, including nuclear security, is commonly discussed. There is also considerable mention of international law, international order, and norms and rules violated in this conflict. The texts contain several statements about democracy, including liberal democracy. The terms victory, sovereignty, and nation also appear multiple times.

#### **Ukraine as a nation**

Ukraine is mentioned as a country under attack. This victim is effectively defending itself against the aggressor. There is a frequent presentation of the view that only Ukraine should decide when and under what conditions to conclude peace: "Ukrainian allies should primarily state openly that while the final decision on any peace or ceasefire must be made by Kyiv" (SK 2024 Text 10). The suffering of the country's population, who face daily Russian shelling, is also noted: "Anyone staying in the city realizes that tomorrow it could hit their home, their loved ones." (SK 2024 Text 8). Ukraine is portrayed as a country that proudly and persistently fights for its future and democracy, and its ability to deal with occupying forces is praised: "There is either democracy or non-democracy, and Ukraine's ability to drive out the murderers is as valuable to those with conservative agendas as it is to liberals – as anyone who has ever lived in a totalitarian state can confirm." (SK 2024 Text 10). However, it is also mentioned that without Western assistance, Ukraine would not be able to defend itself. The country is also facing a shortage of soldiers, and it is noted that prisoners have been recruited in Ukraine. However, Ukrainian officials are convinced that: "The motivation of our prisoners is stronger than that of regular soldiers" (SK 2024 Text 12). Several plans

are mentioned on how to assist Ukraine with its post-war recovery: "...he mentioned that companies need to be given business reasons to invest and spoke about Ukraine's potential in sectors including renewable energy, IT, and the pharmaceutical industry." (SK 2024 Text 4). The president Zelensky is mentioned as the one who will have to negotiate with Russia and seek compromises sooner or later: "Kyiv will have to be ready for a 'difficult compromise' if it wants to end the war, added the Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister" (SK 2024 Text 7).

### **Russia as a nation**

Russia is mentioned in the articles as part of the conflict and as an aggressor. It is repeatedly stated that without negotiations with Russia, the conflict cannot be resolved, that negotiations without Russia are pointless, and especially for the often-mentioned reason: "Putin's Russia will not voluntarily leave the conquered territories." (SK 2024 Text 1). Russia is perceived as wanting to dictate the terms of peace also because it is blackmailing Ukraine and the world with the unstable situation in the nuclear power plant it occupies. Putin and his regime are described as dictatorial, criminal, and extortionate, dictating their terms to Ukraine. He threatens Western countries: "Putin also says that if Ukrainians use German weapons on Russian soil, relations between Germany and Russia will be destroyed." (SK 2024 Text 9). Statements in the articles also indicate that Putin does not have much time left and that "Contrary to the general belief that 'Putin has time,' he actually urgently needs to consolidate Russia's military advantage in Ukraine." (SK 2024 Text 3).

### **Ukraine Russia relationship**

The relationship between these two countries is mentioned in a historical context, especially their shared Soviet history and the dissolution of the Soviet Union: "...Russia's geopolitical position has diminished after the collapse of the USSR and the more autonomous actions of Ukraine, Kazakhstan, and other republics" (SK 2024 Text 1). It is emphasized that Russians and Ukrainians are not the same: "We must show that we are not the same as the Russians," said Petrenko (SK 2024 Text 12). Generally, it is expected that the relationship between Ukraine and Russia will eventually lead to an agreement to end the conflict.

## **West, its representatives and its relations with Russia and Ukraine**

The West is mentioned as a key supporter of Ukraine and a supplier of weapons for the Ukrainian army. Western leaders are described as those giving Ukraine free rein to decide what a just peace means for it and under what conditions it will make peace with Russia: "The leader of European diplomacy, Josep Borrell, declared that the aggressor 'cannot dictate the terms of peace.'" (SK 2024 Text 11). Western leaders are also mentioned as those trying to pressure Russia and help Ukraine overcome Russia. The West is portrayed very critically in relation to Russia and Putin: "He does not ask for negotiations, he asks for capitulation," US Vice President Harris said (SK 2024 Text 7). The concept of a new Cold War between Russia and the West is mentioned, as well as that Russia represents the greatest security threat to the West. However, according to the articles, the West does not have a long-term strategy to support Ukraine, even though the increased level of support, unimaginable at the start of the conflict, is emphasized: "The West has intensified its support for Ukraine to a level that was unthinkable at the beginning of the invasion." (SK 2024 Text 9).

## **War - migration, events on front and negotiations**

The war is described in the analysed articles as great, brutal, and costly—something that cannot be accustomed to and something that requires a demanding compromise. The statement, "If you want peace, prepare for war, is an old proverb and undoubtedly a stern message for some." (SK 2024 Text 2) complements this portrayal of war in the analyzed articles. The war and its cause are directly linked to Russia: "If Russia were interested in peace, there would be no war." (SK 2024 Text 7). Migration related to the war is not mentioned, but developments on the front are. Falling bombs that threaten the homes of ordinary Ukrainians and especially the shelling of the nuclear power plant are mentioned. The gradual cessation of the use of Western weapons on the Russian side of the front is most frequently noted: "The lifting of the ban on the use of weapons made by the West against legitimate targets in Russia is therefore not only very important but also morally correct." (SK 2024 Text 6). Concerning the war, there is significant mention of the need for negotiations to end it. The peace summit in Lucerne, Switzerland, is particularly mentioned;. However, it is referred to by the media as a peace summit, it is portrayed as a summit that will not bring peace: "From the beginning, it was clear that this summit would not immediately bring peace to Ukraine." (SK 2024 Text 11).

According to the views presented in the articles, this is also because Russia did not participate in the summit.

### **Slovakia - its representatives, relationship to conflict and to Ukraine**

Slovakia is mentioned as part of NATO, which should start allocating more financial resources to its defence. It is noted that Slovak interests must be based on supporting Ukraine: "We all need to support Ukraine in various ways because its security is our security." (SK 2024 Text 2). The articles also contain criticism of the current Slovak government, which is described as "collaborative": "Slovakia faces a serious choice: either it will fight for what our parents, grandparents, dissidents, and victims of communism and fascism endured and fought for, or it will continue to collaborate with the evil that the current Slovak government has begun." (SK 2024 Text 1).

### **Switzerland – its representatives, relationship to conflict and Ukraine**

Switzerland is also mentioned in Slovak articles as the host of the first summit on the road to peace. On this occasion, Swiss President Viola Amherd was also mentioned in the analysed Slovak media articles: "Swiss President Viola Amherd and Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan pointed out in their speeches that any peace process with hope for success must also involve Russia." (SK 2024 Text 7).

### **Third Countries**

The countries most frequently mentioned in the analysed articles were China and Saudi Arabia, which were discussed as potential mediators of the military conflict. However, China is depicted as not neutral because it sides Russia and is not seen as a suitable candidate for this role: "China is not a neutral arbiter, and therefore is not a viable mediator for Ukraine today." (SK 2024 Text 3). Saudi Arabia is attributed much greater chances, partly because: "...Saudi Arabia has the best chances, not only because it has sufficient international weight to play such a role, but also because it has good relations with both warring states." (SK 2024 Text 3). The Kenyan President was also mentioned, who has tried to maintain neutral views and condemned Russia's attack on Ukraine, while also criticizing the freezing of Russian assets in the West.

### **Others**

Statements that are not categorized but are essential in this analysis are the traditional mutual criticisms between conservatives and liberals regarding their views on this conflict: "In the era of culture wars, anything labelled as 'liberal' is immediately a red flag for conservatives." (SK 2024 Text 10).

### **2.4.3 The war in Ukraine in Swiss media in 2022**

Swiss media began reporting on the conflict on the first day it started. From the beginning, it has been referred to in Swiss media as a war initiated by Vladimir Putin. In the analysed articles from 2022 in Swiss media, the most frequently mentioned terms are war, war crimes, war law, territorial aggressive war, and fear. This reflects the shock this conflict has also caused in the Swiss media environment. The articles also increasingly use terms like peace, humanitarian aid, and assistance. The term neutrality is mentioned multiple times, and there is intense discussion about international law and European values. Less frequently, terms such as nation, sovereignty, solidarity, democracy, and defense appear. Switzerland is also often referred to as "our country." Terms such as friendship, courage, hope, patience, and humanity also appear rarely.

#### **Ukraine as a nation**

Ukraine is portrayed in the articles as an invaded country that is dependent on EU aid. Its people are assessed by the Swiss media as courageous, professing European values. It is a nation that has long resisted pressure from its larger neighbour and has had much experience of various kinds of aggression. Still, there is also the statement that: 'To many people, Ukrainians are just ordinary workers'. (CH 2022 Text 4). The articles mention President Volodymyr Zelensky, who relied on Swiss assistance to mediate negotiations for ending the war. He is also noted as a skilled orator who can persuade the masses, and especially the West, to come to his aid: "He tries to turn this unease into concrete fear when he speaks about the Baltic states being next, and that Putin could advance as far as the Berlin Wall." (CH 2022 Text 5).

#### **Russia as a nation**

Russia is mentioned in the articles as the aggressor and as a country that has trampled on international law and committed gross violations of human and other rights.

Swiss media are harsh in their statements about Russia and its representatives: "This is geopolitical terrorism, pure and simple." (CH 2022 Text 9). Russia is described as an oligarchic system with which all economic relations must be severed. The person of Vladimir Putin is mentioned in the articles as responsible for the entire war. Generally, he is criticized for exerting pressure on Ukraine and the West, and his untouchability is also highlighted: "According to international law expert Matthias Hartwig, it is practically impossible for Vladimir Putin to end up in the dock because of the Ukraine war." (CH 2022 Text 12). Putin is perceived as someone who wants to protect Russians living in Ukraine.

### **Ukraine Russia relationship**

The relationship between Ukraine and Russia is described in the articles from a historical perspective, seeking to identify the point at which disagreements between Russia and Ukraine began to escalate. Their relationship is also illustrated by the later Minsk Agreements of 2014 when the international community attempted to resolve the conflict in Donbas: "The Minsk agreements were supposed to bring peace to the war that had been raging in eastern Ukraine for years." (CH 2022 Text 7). However, as mentioned in the articles, these agreements failed, resulting in deteriorated relations between Russia and Ukraine, eventually leading to war. Additionally, the articles include various statements suggesting that Russians and Ukrainians like each other: "‘They would not dare invade Ukraine, Russians love Ukrainians,’ assured another source" (CH 2022 Text 2), and Swiss media contrast this with reality.

### **West, its representatives, and its relations with Russia and Ukraine**

The West is mentioned in the articles primarily as Europe and America. The need to stick together is frequently highlighted: "Europe must stand together. Switzerland is part of it." (CH 2022 Text 1). Although Switzerland is not a NATO member: "Switzerland is not a NATO state, but it cannot escape the geopolitical risks (...)" (CH 2022 Text 6). It is clear that Swiss media view Switzerland as part of the West and support all Western institutions tasked with stopping the war. International courts and the UN are mentioned. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen is noted as calling for the cessation of the war. There is also a claim that some people view Americans as the real villains and should reconsider this opinion: "Those who have given

the impression that the danger exclusively comes from the supposedly evil Americans or NATO must come to their senses." (CH 2022 Text 3). The relationship between the West and Russia is discussed through the Minsk Agreements and Russia's position on the UN Security Council. It is also mentioned that Russia mostly ignores Western institutions. The relationship between Ukraine and the West is also discussed concerning various international courts and institutions. Still, it is emphasized that Ukraine often ignores these courts as well: "Even if the ICJ were to – as requested by Ukraine – determine that Russia is unjustly accusing Kyiv of genocide, it would likely have no practical consequences." (CH 2022 Text 12).

### **War - migration, events on front and negotiations**

The articles mention an urgent plea for the immediate end of the war, which is a violation of international law. The articles discuss children who have to get used to the war: "It is distressing to have to explain the war to children..." (CH 2022 Text 3). Sanctions do not have a significant impact on the war, but it is necessary to block all Russian funds used to finance the war, because: "By hesitating or standing aside, Switzerland would not only tolerate Russian aggression but also finance it." (CH 2022 Text 3). Against such a violation of international law, neutrality is ineffective, the articles state: "Putin's war against Ukraine is a blatant breach of international law." (CH 2022 Text 1). In the early Swiss articles about the war, there is a strongly positive attitude towards refugees fleeing the conflict. Statements such as: "(...) Switzerland must be open to Ukrainian refugees." (CH 2022 Text 3) and "We help everyone" (CH 2022 Text 4) are mentioned. For every refugee, the reason for fleeing is the same - the war. The articles about people fleeing the war state that they have to travel a very long distance and face numerous threats if they stay at home. The situation on the front is not mentioned at all, but there are calls for negotiations between the hostile countries: "We must try to live together in peace somehow" (CH 2022 Text 8). According to the statements published in the articles, at least a ceasefire should be achieved, as expecting immediate peace is impossible.

### **Switzerland – its representatives, relationship to conflict and to Ukraine**

In the articles, there are several calls for how Switzerland, as a neutral country, should act. Sanctions must be imposed because the hesitation of the Federal Council only

helps the aggressor, and Switzerland must demand the end of the war: "One can indeed invoke neutrality, but one should not forget that our neutral country owes its existence to those who fought against the dictatorship of the Third Reich (...)" (CH 2022 Text 1). Statements in the articles mention the state of the Swiss army and call for an increase in the number of soldiers and greater armament because "The army is there to protect and defend the population against possible external attacks." (CH 2022 Text 6). It is claimed that Switzerland could contribute to de-escalating the conflict through its neutrality (CH 2022 Text 8), and also because good traditional relations with both warring states are mentioned: "We have a good relationship with Ukraine and traditionally also with Russia, but it would have to be accepted by these parties that we are involved here." (CH 2022 Text 8). Furthermore, the articles mention the Ukrainian diaspora living in Switzerland, which is urging the Federal Council to immediately impose sanctions against the Russian Federation (CH 2022 Text 1). The political representation is portrayed as determined to act against Russia's actions together with the West, but some parts of the political spectrum still strongly emphasize maintaining neutrality: "The SVP also condemns the acts of war, but especially now, the principle of neutrality must be paramount." (CH 2022 Text 3). Some politicians, according to the articles, are trying to gain political capital from the war (CH 2022 Text 6). However, the political representation is united in their efforts to help refugees: "Everyone from left to right agreed that Switzerland must be open to Ukrainian refugees." (CH 2022 Text 3).

#### **2.4.4 The war in Ukraine in Swiss media in 2024**

In the analysis of articles from Swiss media in 2024, the term peace is frequently mentioned and associated with various other expressions that support ending the conflict. The peace process, peace talks, and sustainable and just peace in Ukraine are mentioned. The term war also appears often, along with war crimes and the Ukrainian war, but these are not the dominant terms in the analysed articles. Victory and various types of law—from national to European to international—are also mentioned more frequently. The articles often mention freedom, security, solidarity, and sovereignty.

##### **Ukraine as a nation**

Ukraine is mentioned as a country whose population still believes in victory and



should be enabled to achieve it by providing adequate military aid. Ukraine is also discussed concerning corruption, with several calls for Ukrainian representatives to urgently start reforms: "In the entire Ukraine, corruption must be pushed back, human rights protection and the rule of law must be strengthened." (CH 2024 Text 3). Ukraine should have the right to strike targets on Russian territory to prevent attacks on its own population. There are demands for Ukraine to regain control over all nuclear reactors and restore access to both the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea as it was before the war. Another important topic in Swiss media is the return of deported children and Ukrainian soldiers back to Ukraine (CH 2024 Text 8).

### **Russia as nation**

Russia is mentioned in the articles as a country against which Europe must arm itself and be prepared for any scenario. It is referenced in the context of destroying infrastructure in Ukraine and also in the sense that it likes to show off its new weapons: "Russia likes to make a big fuss when it comes to new weapons." (CH 2024 Text 4). Putin is mentioned in relation to his ultimatums to Ukraine, such as demands to surrender occupied territories and withdraw from NATO. Putin is seen as someone who does not want to withdraw from Ukraine and is therefore perceived as not interested in ending the war. Despite this, there is frequent mention of the fact that Russia should be at the table in any future peace conference: "Russia must be at the table in the next conference." (CH 2024 Text 1). Putin is perceived in the articles as the greatest threat to Europe, and if he wins in Ukraine, he will make Europe much more dangerous than it is now. (CH 2024 Text 2).

### **Ukraine Russia relationship**

The relationship between Russia and Ukraine is perceived in the articles as irreconcilable, even though there are statements suggesting that Ukraine should consider initiating negotiations with Russia. To demonstrate Putin's view on their relationship between these two countries, his statement is mentioned: "'We urge to turn this tragic page of history and step by step restore the unity between Russia and Ukraine and Europe in general,' said Putin." (CH 2024 Text 6). Ukraine is demanding the return of its children and soldiers from Russia. (CH 2024 Text 8).

## **West, its representatives and its relations with Russia and Ukraine**

The West is mentioned in the 2024 articles as continuing to support Ukraine in its fight against Russia. Statements have been published such as: "(...) Ukraine must have the opportunity to 'neutralize' bases used for attacks in Russia" (CH 2024 Text 5), demonstrating the West's readiness to stand by Ukraine. Various studies are presented, showing that while some countries might prefer Ukraine to lay down its arms and reach peace with Russia, other Western nations refuse to accept Ukraine's surrender. According to Swiss media, most Europeans do not believe in Ukraine's victory. There are concerns in the West due to Putin's statements that arms supplies are making the West a party to the conflict; however, several Western officials refute this: "NATO will not, in a legal sense, make itself a party to the conflict" (CH 2024 Text 12). The articles also publish threats from Russia and its representatives: "Western countries supplying weapons for attacks on Russian soil would face consequences" (CH 2024 Text 9). Despite this, all states belonging to the collective West exclude the possibility of war with Russia. The articles emphasize that the West is pushing Ukraine towards legal reforms and anti-corruption efforts so that it can become a full member of the EU and NATO after the war.

## **War - migration, events on the front and negotiations**

These articles mention the war will only end when both sides come to terms or when one side wins and imposes peace on the other. (CH 2024 Text 2). The war is attributed to Putin, and there are ongoing concerns about a potential nuclear version of it. The situation on the front line is also discussed—there are mentions of fighter jets promised to Ukraine by Western allies and the possibility of intervening on Russian territory. Stories about soldiers on the front line are included to give the Swiss an understanding of the conditions there. "Yet an end is not in sight, and we must continue to fight for our freedom." (CH 2024 Text 11) similar statements convey the desperate and complicated situation on the front line, which is the daily reality for the soldiers fighting there. A peace summit held in June in Lucerne, Switzerland, is mentioned as the first attempt to resolve the conflict at the negotiating table, with the media describing it as a summit that Russia cannot ignore. Statesmen from the West and other countries participated, but it is noted that neither Russia nor China attended, leading to some voices suggesting that the summit is pointless: "The fact that Saudi Arabia and the BRICS countries did not sign the final declaration is likely related to China, with whom they do

not want to fall out.” (CH 2024 Text 8). However, it is also mentioned that future negotiations should include Russia.

### **Switzerland – its representatives, relationship to conflict and Ukraine**

Swiss politicians appear in the articles as the organizers of the peace summit in Lucerne. They are portrayed as those who care about demonstrating Switzerland's diplomatic skills while maintaining their neutrality. The Swiss President declared: "We will not be able to negotiate or even announce peace for Ukraine today (...)" (CH 2024 Text 1). However, some articles criticized them nonetheless for the summit's lack of success: "The final statement is also sensitive for Viola Amherd and Ignazio Cassis. If it is too vague, criticism will arise that nothing was achieved at the Bürgenstock." (CH 2024 Text 1). The Swiss party SVP is mentioned in the articles as a strong advocate for maintaining neutrality.

### **Third Countries**

In this group, former Soviet republics are mentioned and described in the articles as victims of Russia's aggressive policies, which have tried to change their borders through force: "In the Baltics, Moldova, and Georgia, the Kremlin is already actively trying to shift borders and expand Russian influence." (CH 2024 Text 2). Saudi Arabia and China are also mentioned, with China depicted as trying to dissuade other third countries from participating in the summit. Third countries were generally not mentioned very often and did not play the same role in the analysed texts as Western countries.

## **3. Results**

In this chapter, I will summarize the results of the discourse analysis and create an overall media image of the war in Ukraine as presented in Slovak media, while also looking for potential changes in the interpretation of the war over time. I will then reconstruct this media image in the section on Swiss texts, where I will also compare changes over time. Finally, I will compare the results of the Slovak media analysis with those of the Swiss media as a whole. This comparison should provide insight into the similarities or differences in the media environments of these two countries. I will also connect the results with the realities of the countries and other factors that may influence the nature and character of the examined media content.

### **3.1 The war in Ukraine in Slovak Print Media**

"We are at war." "Europe is at war." "On Thursday, Putin started a world war in which Russia will suffer defeat." This is how Slovak dailies, analysed in this thesis, began reporting on the conflict immediately after it started. Based on text analysis, it can be asserted that the main feature of all analysed articles in Slovak media is the strong sense of the conflict's proximity, both physically and culturally. Ukraine is a neighbouring state and also an integral part of Slovak history, so it was expected that this topic would evoke unprecedented turmoil, fear, and uncertainty in Slovak society. The Slovak society identifies as Slavic - both linguistically and culturally - and based on this, the conflict between two other Slavic nations is perceived more sensitively. In the articles from selected Slovak media, there was a clear distinction between the aggressor and the victim in this war. Russia, as a country, with which Slovakia also has rich historical experiences, is portrayed mostly negatively.

Evidently, the Slovak media analysed in this thesis managed to differentiate between good and evil in this conflict and subsequently present it to the media audience in this manner. Various lines of historical development were presented, from the dissolution of the Soviet Union, which significantly impacted the formation of Slovak society's history in then Czechoslovakia. The so-called Budapest Memorandum was mentioned extensively, which was supposed to guarantee that such a conflict between Ukraine and Russia would never start, and subsequent comments on the revolutions in Ukraine in 2004 and 2014, which strained relations with the Russian regime. These events are generally known in Slovakia, but the analysis of political developments in Ukraine in the texts showed an effort to explain and understand the conflict in a deeper context. At the beginning of the conflict, the texts had a high degree of uncertainty, hopelessness, and fear. The articles tried, on the one hand, to explain to the audience why this war started and what to expect from it, but with a high degree of uncertainty and many statements about the brutal conquest war or Russian aggression. According to the analysis, it seems that to calm the demanding security situation, the analysed dailies used arguments about Slovakia's belonging to the West and emphasized the fact that Slovakia is a member of both NATO and the EU and is, therefore part of a larger and more powerful entity that does not need to fear an attack from Putin's Russia. There was a certain differentiation between the citizens of NATO countries, Slovaks, and the others: "Russia is a threat to those countries that are not members of NATO." (SK 2022 Text 2). According to similar

statements, Slovaks should feel safe. Despite this, Vladimir Putin is portrayed in the articles as very dangerous, unpredictable, aggressive, and warlike, a criminal who trampled international law: "(...) even many who did not see it before now see under the mask of a rational, though tough, but stable and predictable statesman is the face of a bloody tyrant and criminal." (SK 2022 Text 2). Therefore, even calming the public with statements about our NATO membership may not have been enough to keep Slovak society calm if it is aware that a few hundred kilometers east, an army led by a "bloody tyrant," who is also armed with nuclear weapons and is not afraid to use them against the collective West, is raging. At the beginning of the conflict, the analyzed Slovak media did not give Ukraine much chance of successfully defending against this aggression if it were to fight alone. Of course, from the beginning, it was mentioned that the West, and thus Slovakia, would help Ukraine manage this attack. The Slovak media present Western support for Ukraine as something inevitable and point out the direct connection between this support for Ukraine and Slovakia's existence in a safe, peaceful, and democratic Europe: "We all must support Ukraine in various ways because its security is our security." (SK 2024 Text 2). In this sense, the media tried to explain to the Slovak media audience how much our future depends on this support and, therefore, in addition to discussing the war in general, also focused directly on the events on the front lines and what weapons Ukraine would need from the West to defend itself against Russia. Slovakia itself donated a large number of weapons to Ukraine, including old Russian fighter jets, and this topic was frequently discussed in Slovakia. Although Slovakia is a country bordering Ukraine, the articles in this analysis did not cover migration as intensively as might be expected. Due to the cultural and linguistic closeness between Slovakia and Ukraine, Ukrainian refugees were not portrayed as a security threat. Sympathy was consistently expressed for the people from Ukraine. While at the beginning of the conflict, there was an undeniable sense of disillusionment and fear of war, in articles from 2024, there is a noticeable hope or rather a call for seeking some peace agreement. In the articles from 2024, the topic of the peace conference in Lucerne, Switzerland, also dominated. This was because it was the most discussed event related to the war in Ukraine during the months in which the analysed articles were published. This event created a small intersection between the two examined countries, with Switzerland and its representatives appearing to some extent in Slovak articles. These peace meetings were welcomed, but the overall narrative in Slovak media was that there would be no

peace in Ukraine without negotiations with Russia. This sentiment was echoed by the Swiss president and the Saudi foreign minister, who were quoted by Slovak media in connection with the conference: "Swiss President Viola Amherd or Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan noted in their speeches that any peace process with a hope for success must also include Russia." (SK 2024 Text 7). However, there is an emphasis that peace must not be imposed or disadvantageous for Ukraine because, in the end, only Ukraine can decide what a just peace means for it. Support for Ukraine in the analysed articles has not diminished; the analysed media express the same level of support for Ukraine in 2024 as two years ago, and there are no signs of its decline. It is evident that Slovak media approached this topic from a moral-value perspective, where the main values are democracy, freedom, independence, law, equality, and other values, which are important elements of liberal democracy and the entire free world, to which Slovak media undoubtedly align themselves. Although the analysed articles came from three different newspapers representing various viewpoints, all three maintained the same level of support for Ukraine from the beginning till nowadays. Differences arose in opinions about when and under what conditions Ukraine should make peace, but none of the media openly supported the conditions and ultimatums set by Russia. It can thus be concluded that despite the natural fear and uncertainty about the war at the beginning, the reporting on the conflict evolved into a consistent promotion of the principles and values of the Western world, which includes unwavering support for Ukraine, as was often asserted by Western representatives in the analysed articles.

### **3.2 The War in Ukraine in Swiss Print Media**

Swiss media began covering the conflict at its onset, labelling it as Russian aggression against Ukraine. As a neutral country in central Europe, Switzerland does not share a direct border with Ukraine, nor does it have many historical parallels, which is reflected in the coverage of this conflict. From the articles in Swiss media, support and sympathy for the attacked Ukraine are evident, portraying it as pro-Western and pro-European. At the same time, Russia is criticized and accused of violating international law. The analysed Swiss media articles reveal a sense of hopelessness: "At the moment, there is a search for the interpretation and meaning of the event. In this regard, there is a 'high level of perplexity'; in the coming days, it must be determined 'how to address it.'"

(CH 2022 Text 8), and outrage over the situation: " Putin's war against Ukraine is a blatant violation of international law." (CH 2022 Text 1). Putin is depicted as the man who shattered Europe's dream of lasting peace, and the media remains critical of him both at the beginning of the conflict and two years later. Significant coverage in the analysed media was given to direct statements from politicians who condemned the invasion. Swiss media posed two fundamental questions: what can Switzerland do about it, and what does it mean for us? The content often emphasized that Switzerland is a diplomatic powerhouse that has hosted numerous negotiations between representatives of other contemporary military conflicts. They aim to depict Switzerland as a country that may not have much cultural or historical commonality with Ukraine but has much to offer in resolving the conflict. A constructive approach from Swiss officials is evident and subsequently presented in the media content of the analysed articles: " Perhaps there is a chance that we can mediate. We have a good relationship with Ukraine and traditionally also with Russia, but it would have to be accepted by these parties that we get involved here." (CH 2022 Text 8). Reporting on the conflict from the beginning revolved around when Switzerland would mediate peace talks while also considering the consequences of the conflict for Switzerland. Arguments for armament and increasing the number of military personnel were presented by media commentators and various Swiss politicians. Another consequence considered by Swiss media was the increased number of refugees, but there was a consensus that Switzerland could help everyone who asked for help, emphasizing readiness to aid those in need. This narrative is confirmed by multiple statements from Swiss representatives on this issue: "Everyone from left to right agreed that Switzerland must be open to Ukrainian refugees.." (CH 2022 Text 3). Swiss media provided reports directly from the Ukrainian-Slovak border (CH 2022 Text 11), highlighting another intersection between the two analysed countries. Interestingly, despite emphasizing their neutrality, Swiss media fully expressed the narrative of Swiss affiliation with the Western world, asserting that Switzerland must clearly stand on the right side of history: "Although Switzerland is not a NATO state, it cannot escape the geopolitical risks (...)." (CH 2022 Text 6). There was no reporting on military aid, as Switzerland, being a neutral state, refused it. However, financial sanctions against Russia were intensively mentioned, an area where Switzerland holds significant influence. Switzerland is renowned as a global financial centre known for its banking secrecy laws, with many Russian oligarchs having their money stored in Swiss financial institutions.

The emphasis that Russian money in Swiss banks is used to finance the war was frequently felt in the analysed texts: "By hesitating or standing aside, Switzerland would not only tolerate Russian aggression but also finance it." (CH 2022 Text 3). The emphasis on the need for peace negotiations eventually materialized, and in 2024, Swiss media reported on a peace conference in Lucerne, Switzerland. This summit was presented in the articles as the first attempt to agree on the necessity of peace between Russia and Ukraine, although it was widely emphasized in the media that no peace could be negotiated without Russia. Swiss media critically assessed the results of the summit, which were not very convincing: "The final declaration is also sensitive for Viola Amherd and Ignazio Cassis. If it is too vague, criticism will arise that nothing was achieved at Bürgenstock." (CH 2024 Text 1). According to the interpretation of the analysed Swiss dailies, the biggest failure of the summit was the failure of China, Saudi Arabia, and other BRICS countries to sign the final declaration. In the analysed Swiss texts, continuous support for Ukraine is evident and does not decline over time. There are increasing calls for resolving the conflict, but both the Swiss political representation and the analysed media support the narrative of a just peace, with the primary decision resting with Ukraine itself. The reporting on the conflict shows a certain physical distance, as the conflict is not fought near Swiss borders, and the cultural differences with the countries involved do not lend a deeper emotional character to the reporting. However, there is an emphasis on the European nature of this conflict and the need to engage in resolving it, especially since Switzerland considers itself a diplomatic power. Swiss media provide constructive criticism of domestic politicians as well as foreign leaders, particularly Russian ones. Emphasizing neutrality is an important aspect in the analysed texts, along with the need to oppose injustice. Generally, the report focuses more on the diplomatic and political aspects, although some articles also describe the situation on the battlefield.

### **3.3 Comparison**

After analysing articles from selected print media in both countries, I would like to present the differences in reporting on the war in Ukraine and outline possible reasons for this phenomenon based on certain differences between the two countries under study.

First, the position of Ukraine in these articles is that of an invaded country, which is supported equally in both countries and is labelled as a victim of aggression. Support



for Ukraine is in the articles from both countries, although in the Slovak articles the need for military support is highlighted more than just diplomatic or humanitarian support, as was the case in the Swiss articles. In Swiss media, unlike in Slovak media, assistance is mentioned in mediating negotiations between Ukraine and Russia. This is because Slovakia is part of NATO and the EU and also shares a border with Ukraine. The Slovak media also strongly emphasise this political affiliation to the transatlantic structures. Switzerland, as a neutral country, has decided to remain neutral on the issue of military aid, even though it wants to cooperate more closely with the West in terms of financial and diplomatic sanctions and not to take risks. Another difference is the different relationship of these countries to the invaded Ukraine. As I have already mentioned, Slovakia borders Ukraine directly and shares a certain part of its history with it - both with Ukraine as part of the Soviet Union and as an independent country. President Volodymyr Zelensky was mentioned in Swiss media articles as a president determined to lead his country into NATO and the EU, however, there were doubts expressed about whether he would ultimately succeed. The emphasis was placed particularly on the need for him to combat corruption and uphold the rule of law in Ukraine. In Slovak media, he was portrayed as someone who would have to make a difficult compromise with Vladimir Putin. Statements in Slovak articles following the invasion of the country were often strongly emotionally tinged, which is a sign of deeper sympathy for the invaded country because of similar experiences of occupation by Russia. Switzerland extends further west from Ukraine, and so the urgency to resolve the situation is not as present in the articles as it is in the Slovak articles. Even though Swiss articles exhibit strong indignation and helplessness regarding the situation and the violation of international law, the greater geographical distance between the countries is clearly evident, as well as the different perceptions of the conflict through the lens of history and historical experiences with Russia, which Switzerland practically lacks.

Another difference can be seen in the relationship with the Russian Federation. Slovak articles fully express concerns about the security and existence of Slovakia, whereas in Swiss articles, the conflict is perceived as a danger to Europe but not a direct threat to Switzerland. The articles show the same level of condemnation towards Vladimir Putin and his aggressive policies. Media in both countries similarly describe Vladimir Putin as a tyrant and a criminal who violates international law. In Slovak articles, however, more expressive terms are used for Putin, such as "little man," and they call on

the West to confront him directly. In Swiss media, Putin is criticized, but no one calls for direct confrontation with him. This again shows the more moderate tone of Swiss newspapers compared to Slovak ones. The relationship between Russia and Ukraine is described similarly often in the media of both countries, although Swiss articles explain the situation more from the perspective of the conflict's progression since 2014 and the Minsk peace agreements. The historical and political development of Ukraine is not as familiar to Swiss readers as it is to Slovak readers. In contrast, Slovak articles mention the breakup of the Soviet Union and the Budapest Memorandum of 1994 more frequently. This is because, from a historical standpoint, the Soviet part of Ukraine's history and the 1990s, when the Slovak public was getting used to a new neighbour country – an independent Ukraine – are closer to Slovak readers. The West, in relation to Ukraine, is mentioned in articles from both countries as being determined to help Ukraine and as the only entity capable of assisting Ukraine. However, there is a difference in how these media outlets present their relationship to the West. Both countries identify themselves as part of the Western world in their articles, but while Slovak media directly express Slovakia's affiliation with the West, NATO, and the EU, Swiss articles emphasize the concept of neutrality. They highlight that even though Switzerland is not directly a member of these organizations, it must stand with the West and support all paths to ending the conflict except for direct military confrontation. Articles from both countries expect the West to further cool its relations with Russia and impose sanctions and other measures against it. Regarding reporting on Slovakia in Swiss media, one analyzed article featured a Swiss reporter at the border with Ukraine in Slovakia, monitoring the migration of Ukrainians towards the West. The topic of migration appeared more frequently in Swiss media than in Slovak media. On the other hand, Slovak media reported on Switzerland in connection with the peace conference held in Lucerne, Switzerland. Aside from this, the countries did not frequently appear in each other's media content. When reporting on the war itself, both media outlets aimed to provide information from the front lines, including interviews with soldiers and details about the weapons used in the conflict. Both media emphasized the need for peace negotiations, although hope for peace was written about more in Switzerland. After all, the peace summit was held in Switzerland and was covered in more detail in Swiss articles than in Slovak media. Swiss media viewed the summit more sceptically because of Russia's absence. Slovak media were more optimistic about the summit, although they made it

clear that the results would not be impressive. However, they positively noted that so many statesmen were able to meet and adopt a joint declaration. This declaration was described as vague in Swiss media. In the Slovak articles analysed in this thesis, Slovak representatives were not given much space, but there was criticism of the Slovak opposition (the current government, according to the author), which they considered pro-Russian. Swiss media, on the other hand, highlighted the unity of their political representation in their stance on the war in Ukraine, although there were small differences in the level of support for Ukraine, mainly due to Switzerland's status of neutrality. Some third countries are perceived by both media as potential mediators of the conflict. Although Swiss media initially tried to portray Switzerland as a suitable candidate for this role, over time Saudi Arabia was mentioned much more frequently. In both countries, the media describe China as an ally of Russia and therefore unsuitable for this role.

In summary, the media in both countries share the same view on who the victim is and who the aggressor is in this conflict. In both countries, the media call for support for Ukraine in its fight, but the manner of assistance that these countries advocate differs. The perspective on the conflict mainly differs in relation to the countries' attitudes towards the attacked Ukraine. Slovak media present the issue more emotionally due to cultural and historical closeness to Ukraine, whereas Swiss media view the conflict more objectively, focusing on international law. Another difference is that Swiss media are aware of their country's diplomatic strength and understand what Europe and the world expect from Switzerland; this is directly expressed by Swiss representatives and is reflected in their reporting. Slovakia views the conflict as an EU and NATO member, and therefore some statements are more direct and emotionally charged. Slovak media are aware that NATO could become part of a direct armed conflict with the Russian Federation, and therefore, the Slovak Republic as well. Media in both countries call for a just peace and recognize Ukraine's right to defend itself and its sovereignty and independence. The reporting on the war in Ukraine is less emotionally perceived in Swiss media, while emotional expressions are much more common in Slovak media.

## **Conclusion**

In the conclusion of this paper, I would like to return to the theory of the construction of social reality. The results demonstrated how Slovak and Swiss media report on the war in Ukraine, thus constructing a certain social reality through which the media audience,

and therefore society, perceives this conflict. The differences in the coverage of the war in Ukraine in these two countries primarily stem from the political realities of each nation. For Slovakia, this political reality is shaped by its membership in NATO and the European Union. Slovakia's reality also includes its cultural and historical proximity to Ukraine, which influences the media content in the country. It is evident that Slovak media rely on Slovakia's factual affiliation with Western structures, and this objective reality (Adoni & Mane, 1984) shapes the media content into a symbolic reality (Adoni & Mane, 1984), which further influences the Slovak media audience's perspective on the conflict. In contrast, Switzerland's political reality derives from its long-standing neutral status, yet it also belongs to the Western world. From the perspective of Fleischer's (2006) concept of the third reality, each of these countries has its own communicative reality, but together they belong to the communicative reality of the Western world. It is unlikely and even unnatural to see open support for Russia in the media, whether Swiss or Slovak. Such support would directly contradict the communicative reality in which both countries find themselves. It would directly undermine the value order and norms that prevail in both countries. The media highlight the need to assist Ukraine and impose sanctions on Russia. This is a consequence of the norms prevailing in our society, which are embedded in international and European law, clearly defining how to act in such situations and guiding the direction our efforts should take to resolve this conflict. Assisting Ukraine, as the weaker party in this conflict, is seen as natural because it aligns with the "Western reality" where such norms underpin legal obligations to which both examined countries are committed. The form of assistance mentioned by the media can be described as agenda-setting. It informs the media audience that imposing sanctions on Russia and providing military, diplomatic, and humanitarian aid to Ukraine is the correct course of action and that this is a topic that all political representatives should currently address or be addressing. The logical resolution to this conflict is, of course, the conclusion of peace, but it is necessary to determine under what conditions and when. Here again, the answer is provided by the norms embodied in international law. At the beginning of the conflict, the media sought to grapple with the disruption of what Europe, or more broadly the Western world, had been accustomed to for many years: peace. The breach of peace represents a disturbance of the reality in which we live, a reality constructed by certain norms. If we look at Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions, we find that both Slovakia and Switzerland are positioned higher on the uncertainty avoidance index. This means

that the societies of these countries either embrace or avoid uncertainty and ambiguity about the future. The outbreak of the war, which no one expected and was highly unlikely, brought the same shock to the societies of both countries because it introduced uncertainty into their "reality." In the articles, one can observe the determination to cope with and eliminate this uncertainty. This effort involves discussing and proposing various actions that both countries can or should take regarding the war in Ukraine, in order to mitigate this uncertainty. Examining media content on the topic of the war in Ukraine reveals that the media in both countries are committed to responding to the conflict within the bounds of our "Western reality," and thus strive to maintain the norms that define it as valid. If we were to look at media content in Russian outlets, we would find that it is constructed within a completely different environment, in a different political reality, shaped by entirely different norms, and aimed at shaping public opinion in a direction contrary to the majority view on the conflict in the West. This could also be a subject for further research, although it is questionable how relevant and appropriate such state-controlled media would be for research purposes. It is important to recognize that the media content analysed in this thesis was produced in a free and democratic environment, and therefore, apart from the objective reality, its content was shaped by the political orientation of the newspapers but not by any other political interventions. Of course, it cannot be claimed that everyone in Slovakia or Switzerland adheres to the norms that guide our society. However, it is noteworthy that reporting on the war in Ukraine in both countries, while influenced by different cultural aspects, aligns with the Western civilization's shared belief in supporting Ukraine in the conflict and adhering to international law—norms that are considered international because they have been agreed upon by the entire international community, or at least by its substantial majority.

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- CH 2022 Text 1 «*Nun muss auch die Schweiz Sanktionen ergreifen*», Zürich, 24.2.2022, <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/nun-muss-auch-die-schweiz-diplomatische-und-wirtschaftliche-sanktionen-ergreifen-406773869348>
- CH 2022 Text 2, «*Die Russinnen und Russen erwachen in einer neuen Realität*», Zürich, 24.2.2022, <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/die-russinnen-und-russen-erwachen-in-einer-neuen-realitaet-673356608089>
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- CH 2024 Text 3, *«Historischer Tag» für die Ukraine: Wie es weitergeht mit dem EU-Beitritt*, Zürich, 26.6.2024, <https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/ukraine-eu-beitritt-wie-weiter-nach-dem-historischen-tag-448153945363>
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- CH 2024 Text 5, *Ukraine darf jetzt begrenzt westliche Waffen in Russland einsetzen*, Zürich, 31.5.2024, <https://www.20min.ch/story/verteidigung-ukraine-darf-jetzt-begrenzt-us-waffen-in-russland-einsetzen-103117535>
- CH 2024 Text 6, *Unter zwei Bedingungen: Putin will Waffenruhe im Ukraine-Krieg*, Zürich, 14.6.2024, <https://www.20min.ch/story/russischer-praesident-unter-zwei-bedingungen-putin-will-waffenruhe-im-ukraine-krieg-103126766>
- CH 2024 Text 7, *Was von der grössten Friedenskonferenz der Schweiz zu erwarten ist*, Zürich, 15.6.2024, <https://www.20min.ch/story/buergenstock-das-ist-von-der-groessten-friedenskonferenz-in-der-schweiz-das-ist-zu-erwarten-103127446>
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- CH 2024 Text 9, *Putin versucht es mit einer Einschüchterungsshow gegen den Westen*, Bern, 6.6.2024, <https://www.derbund.ch/ukraine-hilfe-so-droht-putin-dem-westen-760782293563>

- CH 2024 Text 10, *Frieden – aber zu welchen Bedingungen?*, Bern, 04.07.2024, <https://www.derbund.ch/ukraine-news-umfrage-frieden-aber-zu-welchen-bedingungen-798138489246>
- CH 2024 Text 11, *Selbst die Nacht bietet keinen Schutz*, Bern, 2.7.2024, <https://www.derbund.ch/ukraine-krieg-selbst-die-nacht-bietet-keinen-schutz-745288571531>
- CH 2024 Text 12, *Nato beschliesst Start von Ukraine-Kommando in Deutschland*, Bern, 10.07.2024, <https://www.derbund.ch/nato-beschliesst-start-von-ukraine-kommando-in-wiesbaden-227083805568>

25.3.24  
SCHVÁLENO

Institut komunikačních studií a žurnalistiky FSV UK	
Teze MAGISTERSKÉ diplomové práce	
<b>TUTO ČÁST VYPLNUJE STUDENT/KA:</b>	
<b>Příjmení a jméno diplomantky/diplomanta:</b>	<b>Razítko podatelny:</b>
<i>Minarič Juraj</i>	
<b>Imatrikulační ročník diplomantky/diplomanta:</b>	
<i>2021/2022</i>	
<b>Fakultní e-mail diplomantky/diplomanta:</b>	
<i>50290462@sv.cuni.cz</i>	
<b>Studijní program/forma studia:</b>	
<i>Mediaální studia/prezenční</i>	
<b>Název práce v češtině:</b>	
<i>Rozdíly ve zpravodajství o válce na Ukrajině mezi slovenskými a švýcarskými tištěnými médii.</i>	
<b>Název práce v angličtině:</b>	
<i>Differences in reporting on the war in Ukraine between Slovak and Swiss print media.</i>	
<b>Předpokládaný termín dokončení</b> (semestr, akademický rok – vzor: ZS 2022/2023) (diplomovou práci je možné obhajovat <u>nejdříve</u> šest měsíců od schválení teze)	
<i>LS 2023/2024</i>	
<b>Charakteristika tématu a jeho dosavadní zpracování</b> (max. 1800 znaků):	
<i>This thesis has the character of comparative analysis with an emphasis on the development of information about the given problem over time. The work discusses the differences in the media environment of two countries – Slovakia and Switzerland, based on content analysis of articles from three Slovak and three Swiss print media on the topic of the war in Ukraine. Researches to date have so far only dealt mainly with the impact of Russian propaganda (Helmus et al., 2018) on the reporting of this war or the different ways of reporting on this topic. These are areas of research focusing on information warfare, countering disinformation or the impact of any propaganda on media production. Dealing with the tilt towards one party which the media literally puts under fire from two camps: “During wartime, journalism usually finds itself in a kind of crossfire. Sometimes this crossfire is quite literally between the two sides in the conflict, i.e. the fighting. (Nygren, G., Glowacki, M., Hök, J., Kiria, I., Orlova, D., &amp; Taradai, D.; 2016 “.</i>	
<b>Předpokládaný cíl práce, případně formulace problému, výzkumné otázky nebo hypotézy</b> (max. 1800 znaků):	
<i>The work examines the development of the Slovak and Swiss print media coverage on the war in Ukraine by analysing the first month of reporting on the war, i.e., February 2022 and then comparing it with the present, i.e., December 2023. I will observe changes in the way Slovak media report on the war</i>	

over wartime. Parallel I will reconstruct the way in which Swiss media report on the war in the first month of the war and today, i.e., December 2023 and observe changes. Finally, I will compare the Slovak and Swiss reporting on the war over time. For this purpose, articles from the most widely read print media of these countries, which also differ in their political orientation, will be selected. Finally, I would like to examine the impact of the specific social, cultural, historical and political background and the correspondingly specific conditions in Slovakia and Switzerland on reporting on the war in Ukraine. The aim of the thesis is to find the existing differences in the coverage of the war in Ukraine in the two countries and to explain their potential occurrence by the different political, cultural, historical and social backgrounds in the Swiss and Slovak environments.

**Předpokládaná struktura práce** (rozdělení do jednotlivých kapitol a podkapitol se stručnou charakteristikou jejich obsahu):

**1. Introduction**

*In this part, there will be an introduction to the subject of the diploma thesis, the current state of media research in both countries, the purpose, content of the thesis and its potential contribution to this field of research will also be explained.*

**2. Theoretical part**

*The theoretical basis of the work, which will contain the theories supporting the research in this work.*

**2.1. The social construction of reality**

*Clarification of the theory of social construction of reality and its role in the media. Giving examples in media research.*

**2.2. Media shaping public opinion**

*Mediation and medialization*

*The constitutive (cultural) model of communication*

*Agenda setting*

**2.3. Cultural aspects of Slovakia**

*Introduction to the realities of Slovakia, the media environment and the media audience of this country.*

**2.4. Cultural aspects of Switzerland**

*Introduction to the realities of Switzerland, the media environment and the media audience of this country.*

**3. Empirical data and research methodology**

**3.1 Database** – *Delimitation of the empirical material.*

**3.2 Content Analysis** – *Description of the methods used to analyze the empirical text material, i.e., a qualitative content analysis with elements of linguistic discourse analysis.*

**3.3 The category system**

**3.4 Data analysis**

**4. Results**

*Presentation and summary of the results found and their use in further research on this or a similar topic.*

- 4.1 The war in Ukraine in Slovak print media
- 4.2 The war in Ukraine in Swiss print media
- 4.3 Comparison

## 5. Conclusion

*A summary of the overall research and its contributions to future research in this area.*

**Vymezení podkladového materiálu (např. titul periodika a analyzované období):**

**SLOVAK PRINT MEDIA:**

*SME  
Pravda  
Denník N*

*These three Slovak print media are among the best-selling and best-known on the Slovak market. They are also different in their opinion orientation, while all of them are independent, Pravda is more oriented towards social democracy, SME is liberal oriented and Denník N represents new left.*

**SWISS PRINT MEDIA:**

*20 Minuten  
Neue Zürcher Zeitung  
Blick*

*The daily 20 Minuten is by far the most widely read print media, distributed free on the streets. The Blick is also one of the most widely read opinion dailies, but it is more tabloid in nature. Neue Zürcher Zeitung is a Swiss liberal daily.*

**Metody (techniky) zpracování materiálu:**

*In this thesis will be used content analysis with elements of linguistic discourse analysis. A detailed analysis of selected articles from these print media will focus on linguistic categories, i.e., normatives, values, contrasts and stereotypes. These categories will include different variables such as human rights, international law, European Union, Ukraine, Russia, corruption...*

**Základní literatura (nejméně 5 nejdůležitějších titulů k tématu a metodě jeho zpracování; u všech titulů je nutné uvést stručnou anotaci na 2–5 řádků):**

*Bonfadelli, H., Keel, G., Marr, M., & Wyss, V. (2020). Journalists in Switzerland: Structure and attitudes. In The global journalist in the 21st century (pp. 320-330). Routledge.*

*Switzerland is a small, multi-cultural country in Western Europe with international ties but also a strong national and regional media landscape. Different historical, political, and cultural backgrounds have resulted in a series of regional characteristics that differentiate Switzerland not only from its neighbours, but also by the different language regions (French-, Italian-, and German-speaking) within the country.*

*Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (2011). The social construction of reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge. Open Road Media.*

*The social construction of reality theory is a media theory that originated with American sociologists Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann in 1966. It was described in the book The Social Construction of Reality by these two authors. The book was voted the fifth most important sociological book of the 20th century.*

*Fairclough, N. (2003). Analysing discourse: Textual analysis for social research. Psychology Press.*



This book is a detailed guide to textual analysis for students and researchers in the humanities. Fairclough's approach is illustrated throughout the book with a wealth of examples.

*Fleischer, Michael, 2001: Kulturtheorie. Systemtheoretische und evolutionäre Grundlagen. Oberhausen. Athena.*

This book is about cultural theory, focusing on system-theoretical and evolutionary foundations. The book explores the relationship between culture and systems, drawing on evolutionary perspectives.

*Helmus, T. C., Bodine-Baron, E., Radin, A., Magnuson, M., Mendelsohn, J., Marcellino, W., Bega, A., & Winkelman, Z. (2018). Russian social media influence: Understanding Russian Propaganda in Eastern Europe. Rand Corporation.*

This thesis discusses the impact of Russian propaganda on media coverage of the conflict in Ukraine in Eastern Europe.

*Hofstede, G. (2001). Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations. sage.*

The book is structured around five major dimensions: power distance; uncertainty avoidance; individualism versus collectivism; masculinity versus femininity; and long term versus short-term orientation. It argues that people carry 'mental programmes' which are developed in the family in early childhood and reinforced in school and organizations, and that these mental programmes contain a component of national culture.

*Jiráček, J., & Köpplová, B. (2009). Masová média: 2., přepracované vydání. PORTÁL sro.*

The authors, who have considerable theoretical and practical experience in the functioning of the media in the Czech Republic, offer a detailed introduction to the study of the media from the perspective of the social science discipline.

*Makhortykh, M., & Sydorova, M. (2017). Social media and visual framing of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Media, war & conflict, 10(3), 359-381.*

The article discusses how social media visualizes the conflict in Ukraine. It highlights the differences in reporting between the pro-Russian and pro-Ukrainian camps.

*McCombs, M. (2009). Agenda Setting: Nastolování agendy; masová média a veřejné mínění. PORTÁL sro.*

The book presents one of the basic concepts of contemporary media studies, which builds on the ideas of W. Lippmann, a classic of media theory.

*Notarp, Ulrike, 2020: Cultural Differences in Concepts of Life and Partnership. A Comparative Study on Lifestyles in Europe. Praha. Karolinum.*

This study explores and compares cultural variations in perspectives on life and partnership across different European societies. The study aims to describe value-formations in the area of family life and partnership in West and East Germany, the Czech Republic and Poland. The analysis of personal advertisements allowed the identification of basic values and attitudes that shape a culturally specific concept of life and partnership in each society.

*Nygren, G., Glowacki, M., Hök, J., Kiria, I., Orlova, D., & Taradai, D. (2018). Journalism in the crossfire: Media coverage of the war in Ukraine in 2014. Journalism Studies, 19(7), 1059-1078.*

Content analysis of media coverage of the war in Ukraine on the example of articles from various media from four European countries.

*Pavlik, J. V. (2022). The Russian war in Ukraine and the implications for the news media. Athens Journal of Mass Media and Communications, 8, 1-17.*

The thesis focuses on the media's mistakes in reporting on wars, with a focus on the conflict in Ukraine.

*Schneiderová, S. (2015). Analýza diskurzu a mediální text. Charles University in Prague, Karolinum Press.*

The thesis presents discourse analysis, its basic procedures and common methodological foundations inherent in various disciplines. However, most attention is paid to the linguistic analysis of the text, to what discourse analysis brings to the understanding of certain phenomena of the text.

*Sciarini, P., Hug, S., & Dupont, C. (1997). Example, exception or both? Swiss national identity in perspective.*

The thesis discusses the Swiss identity. The country where several European cultures meet is an interesting example of the perception of a unified Swiss identity, which is more political than cultural-ethnic.

Udris, L., Vogler, D., Eisenegger, M., Siegen, D., Weston, M., & Schäfer, S. (2022). *The quality of coverage of the war in Ukraine*.

This thesis examines the quality and manner of media coverage of the war in Ukraine in a sample of thirteen Swiss media outlets. The thesis uses a content media analysis.

**Diplomové a disertační práce k tématu (seznam bakalářských, magisterských a doktorských prací, které byly k tématu obhájeny na UK, případně dalších oborově blízkých fakultách či vysokých školách za posledních pět let)**

PANCHÁRTKOVÁ, Zuzana. *Mediální obraz války na Ukrajině v dětském pořadu Zprávičky na ČT :D*. Diplomová práce, vedoucí Jirák, Jan. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra mediálních studií, 2023.

DZIUBA, Daryna. *Ukrajinská krize v ruském a ukrajinském televizním zpravodajství*. Diplomová práce, vedoucí Nečas, Vlastimil. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra žurnalistiky, 2021.

NAIMUSHINOVA, Anastasiia. *Analýza mediálního obrazu války na Ukrajině ve vybraných médiích*. Diplomová práce, vedoucí Miessler, Jan. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra mediálních studií, 2021.

SMRŽOVÁ, Aneta. *Využívání sociálních sítí jako nových informačních platforem během války na Ukrajině*. Diplomová práce, vedoucí Jirků, Jan. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra žurnalistiky, 2023.

ZÍTKO, Tomáš. *Vizuální rámcování války na Ukrajině*. Diplomová práce, vedoucí Lábová, Sandra. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra žurnalistiky, 2023.

KALLISTA, Petr. *Vztah sportu a politiky: Mediální pokrytí počátku války na Ukrajině ve vybraných sportovních rubrikách českých médií*. Bakalářská práce, vedoucí Turková, Kateřina. Praha: Univerzita Karlova, Fakulta sociálních věd, Katedra žurnalistiky, 2023.

Datum / Podpis studenta/ky

29.01.2024

**TUTO ČÁST VYPLŇUJE PEDAGOG/PEDAGOŽKA:**

Doporučení k tématu, struktuře a technice zpracování materiálu:

Případné doporučení dalších titulů literatury předepsané ke zpracování tématu:

Potvrzuji, že výše uvedené teze jsem s jejich autorem/kou konzultoval(a) a že téma odpovídá mému oborovému zaměření a oblasti odborné práce, kterou na FSV UK vykonávám.

Souhlasím s tím, že budu vedoucí(m) této práce.

Ulrike Lütke Notarp, Ph.D.

Příjmení a jméno pedagožky/pedagoga

Datum / Podpis pedagožky/pedagoga

## List of Appendices

Appendix no. 1: Figure 1

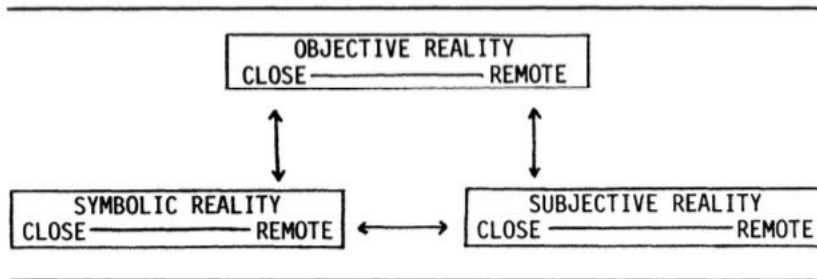


Figure 1