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**Geopolitical Representations of Russia and Ukraine in the
Spanish Version of Russia Today News Media**

Master's Thesis

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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 July 31st



Laura Tatiana Pérez Molina

References

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Abstract

This thesis will analyze the strategic use of media by Russia and the way in which Russia Today media, known as RT, produces discourses and representations for Spanish-speaking audiences regarding Russia and Ukraine as geopolitical spaces. Through the use of critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics, this work tries to unveil the underlying themes and messages within the RT coverage of news to show Russian geopolitical strategies' impact on the international perception of these areas in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war. The study reveals that RT portrays Ukraine as an instrument in the broader confrontation between the West with a traditional unjust world order, and a new equitable multipolar world in which Russia is one of the leaders. Additionally, Ukraine is depicted as a deeply dependent on external help which takes away their sovereignty. On the contrary the narratives around Russia portray it as a global power, the protector of Eurasia who regardless of western attacks keeps being strong. The second objective of the thesis is also to highlight the impact of media in building the geopolitical imagination and the need for understanding these narratives in the context of global power struggle. Finally, this study is relevant in the broader debate regarding the effect of the media on international relations, and critical geopolitics.

Keywords

Russian media, RT, Latin America, Ukraine, critical discourse analysis, corpus linguistics, geopolitical narratives, international relations, media influence, geopolitical representations,

Název práce

Geopolitické reprezentace Ruska a Ukrajiny ve španělské verzi zpravodajských médií Russia Today

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1.INTRODUCTION

In the increasingly competitive multipolar world, international relations is experiencing a transformation that sees the emergence of evolving alliance dynamics and new rising powers. Among these new actors, Russia particularly has been investing all efforts in reconfiguring the established world order and expanding its influence into various regions through a range of different strategies. One of the ways that The Federation uses to attempt to secure a relevant place in this new global system is the use of military means like having presence in African countries as in the case of the group formerly known as Wagner Group, a private military company that has been deployed to many conflict zones to achieve strategic goals (Tsvetkova, 2019). They also attempt to have a more diplomatic and business-centered approach, as it has been noticed in the case of China and its close cooperation with its head of the state, President Xi Jinping, who also attempts to build strategic relations outside the traditional spheres with the objective of alter the conventional global state of affairs (Blank, 2020). In the case of Latin America, the engagement strategies have been characterized by financial support and arms supply to states such as Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua, a tactic that has kept Russia's geopolitical footprint in the Western Hemisphere (Weitz, 2019). However, more recently, especially since the Ukraine-Russia war, Moscow has also been putting much effort into the control of narratives about the conflict and other events through the media, a method that for them is not new at all.

Historically, Russia has used media and propaganda to shape international perceptions and pursue political objectives. For instance, it manipulated media narratives as part of the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and it meddled in the presidential election of the United States in 2016 (Chesnut, 2018). In more recent times, Russia has only further proved to the world how skilled they can be when it comes to informational warfare with the conflict with Ukraine. In this regard, The Federation is looking to influence global opinion and trying to encourage an anti-west stance in Latin American countries, many of which, for the same reason, have chosen not to join Western sanctions against Russia (Caruso, 2020), a position that comes strategically useful in the context of attempting to modify global dynamics. Countries such as Chile have been at the center of keeping a distance, it is one of the most relevant states not willing to provide any military support. This stance is conceived as a cautious neutrality that aims at maintaining diplomatic ties with all parties (Cohen, 2021). Moreover, some Latin American nations have been at the forefront of criticizing Western support for Ukraine referring to it as acts that prolong wars unnecessarily.

In this context, Russia Today also known as “Actualidad RT” in its Spanish version, plays a vital role in the attempt to influence the opinion of the people by spreading stories with a clear narratives

behind. This media network has been increasing in popularity and reach particularly within Latin American society, due to the fact that the access to this source of information is free, and it is also presented as an alternative voice to the “mainstream Western discourses”. This is the reason why it is essential to analyze the sort of information being displayed by this media in order to understand the geopolitical representations circulated to the Spanish-speaking population namely, the people in Latin America.

Against the previous background, this thesis will attempt to answer the research questions of:

1. What are the geopolitical representations of Ukraine and Russia that are transmitted through the Spanish version of RT to Latin American audiences?

2. What the strategies being used for their dissemination

These research questions indicate that the theoretical framework in which this study is situated is Critical Geopolitics, which is the field of study that acknowledges the great importance of language and discourse in the creation of geopolitical realities (O’Tuathail, 1996). It also integrates Popular Geopolitics since it deals with how media influences public ideas about international relations and geopolitical matters (Dittmer, J., & Gray, N, 2010). In this case it makes reference to RT as an agent that creates geopolitical representations that align with Russian interests for Latin American audiences.

On the methodological level, I will analyze media representations using corpus linguistics analysis and discourse analysis all embedded in Fairclough’s three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Fairclough, 1995). The first analysis will deal with the structural features of the text, particularly vocabulary and prepositions with the help of a corpus linguistics tool called Sketch Engine. The second step is the examination of the strategies in the text creation, dissemination and how texts draw on other existing discourses. The third stage is the analysis of the general social and cultural background of the discourse, in other words, looking at the way that the text and discursive practices relate to power relations, and ideologies that contribute to reproducing these. In this way, this study will aim to unveil the underlying geopolitical narratives, themes, and messages used by RT in their news coverage articles about Ukraine and Russia. This methodological approach allows me to perform structural investigation of discursive patterns and geopolitical representations in media texts.

In that sense, the structure of the thesis will be as follows: Chapter 1 includes the introduction of the research topic and objectives Chapter 2 consists of a literature review covering the theoretical

framework, Russian geopolitical strategies and the influence of media. In chapter 3, the methodology is outlined, showing the step by step of the analysis using Fairclough's three-dimensional model of discourse analysis. Chapters 4 contains the analysis and the findings of the study, focusing on the core themes, narratives, and strategies through which RT represents Ukraine and Russia as geopolitical spaces and their implications for Latin American geopolitics. It is finally in Chapter 5 that the conclusions are presented, along with practical considerations and suggested further research.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This research work will be an analysis of the language used in RT's articles in its Spanish version to unveil what lies beyond the text, but it is of great importance to first go over the different approaches that exist when it comes to the study of language. Further review will follow on how these approaches will apply to this dissertation.

Initially, we can mention the linguistic analysis approach. It is a method that, as part of linguistics, investigates structural elements of language such as syntax, phonetics, morphology, and semantics in order to understand how it functions at a technical level. At the same time there are different perspectives of what linguistic analysis entails. For Noam Chomsky (2002b) it is the study of how sentences are constructed from a set of individual basic elements that assembled to produce a larger structure with meaning. For Saussure (1956) it mainly focuses on the existent relationship in language between the "signifier", or the form of a word, and the concept that it represents. These two levels of study give priority to different aspects of the language, but all in all, a linguistic analysis is about the study of grammar, sound, words, and meaning. This is not exactly the level that is relevant for this research since it is less concerned with the internal mechanics of language use and more directly aimed at the social implications, however this dissertation will draw from lexical evaluation on its methodology.

The actual level of language analysis that interests this investigation regards to language beyond the mere words, this means getting into the field of Discourse Analysis (DA). DA is a multidisciplinary approach to language study that does not concern uniquely with the mere individual sentences but also considers how language is used in a certain context. It integrates knowledge from linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, communication, cognitive psychology, social psychology, and artificial

intelligence. However, the definition of this approach varies along with the respective interpretation of what discourse is.

As Tannen et al. (2001) says, definitions of discourse vary from one to the other but can be grouped into three categories: discourse as language use beyond sentence form, specific context of language use, and the larger social processes that are somehow engaged in non-linguistic aspects and ideological formations. For example, most linguists will define discourse as anything that is 'beyond the sentence' while others, like Fasold (1990), see it as a study of language use. Furthermore, entering now into Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) some of them speak of the "discourse of power" and the "discourses of racism," where discourse involves both linguistic and non-linguistic practices in the construction of social phenomena such as power, racism and identity (Tannen et al., 2001). This diversity of definitions shows how extensive discourse analysis really is and it is reflected on its application across an immense array of scholarly and practical domains.

Returning to CDA, this will be the field in which the theory of this dissertation will be placed since its main objective is to try to detect implicit ideologies and cultural constructions embedded within texts.

2.1.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is the specialized approach within DA that emphasizes the roles of language in the construction and maintenance of power relations and social inequalities. It is a critically oriented theory which implies that it attempts to explore how discourses support or resist dominant ideologies and social structures (Fairclough, 1995; van Dijk, 1993).

This is one of the most defining differences compared to Discourse Analysis, it is a study that goes deeper than the inspection of texts themselves in a way that perceives language use in a more general way. CDA aims to show in particular how language actually contributes to the production and reproduction of social power (Wodak & Meyer, 2001), it scrutinizes the socio-political context in which they are produced and consumed and also the social and historical circumstances that drive it (Fairclough, 1992).

The application of this approach is often seen in studies regarding media. One reason for this is its special suitability for showing how media texts reflect and are shaped by social power relations (van Dijk, 1988). In this light, CDA is well suited for this research because it allows analysis of how the coverage of Ukraine and Russia by RT may either reproduce or contest specific geopolitical narratives and power structures.

What CDA has to offer is the ability to find the ideological underpinnings of RT's reporting and how this seeks to shape perception in international relations on the part of the Latin American audience. It can truly provide a thorough analysis of the geopolitical representations by RT, merging in-depth research of language use with a critical understanding of its sociopolitical implications. This theory allows us to unlock complex ways of how media discourse uses language to form identities and relations. At the same time, it shows how those discourses have an influence in the conformation of social and political processes. In the context of this thesis, CDA becomes an essential theoretical framework that will allow this work to uncover narrative structures used by RT in forming readers' perceptions around "Ukraine" and "Russia" through certain representations in RT's Spanish-language news articles. Finally, it is important to mention once again the fact that CDA is used in several fields of knowledge since it has an application in Geopolitics as well, which will correspond to the next section.

2.1.2 Critical Geopolitics

Starting from the traditional point of view, Geopolitics refers to how geography influences the policies and behaviors of states. It is a discipline with different dimensions given that geography itself is dynamic and complex. In accordance with O'Tuathail (1996), "geopolitics is the study of the influence of geography on the practice of foreign policy by states, is not to specify a narrow problematic for geography has a multiplicity of different meanings" (p. 109). This makes reference to the deep analysis involved in geopolitics where there is more than just a deterministic stance of geography influencing state behavior. It sustains that geopolitical analysis should be open to various interpretations.

O'Tuathail (1996) further elaborates on the nature of geography and considers it not to be a passive arena or setting where political events take place. Geography is not static, instead it is a body of knowledge that can change over time, influenced by the ways people perceive and interact with the earth. It is, thus, a type of socially created knowledge interlinked with historical and political circumstances. This idea was expressed by O'Tuathail (1996) saying that "Rather geography is an inescapably social and political 'geo-graphing', an 'earth writing'" (p. 109). This is also supported by Dalby (1990, p. 173) who views critical geopolitics as an ideological process of constructing spatial, political, and cultural boundaries to distinguish domestic space from the threatening other. Critical geopolitics seeks to deconstruct these historically rooted geopolitical imaginations to expose them as constructed phenomena rather than natural, given processes. Therefore, geopolitics can be seen as a way of 'writing' the geographical space and politics of states in a certain way that articulates geographical knowledge and political power.

As O'Tuathail et al. (1998) also notes, while geopolitical practice is a material practice, it is through discourse that those practices are "endowed with meaning and legitimated". He also says, "It is through discourse that leaders act, through the mobilization of certain simple geographical understandings that foreign-policy actions are explained and through ready-made geographically infused reasoning that wars are rendered meaningful" (Tuathail et al., 1998. page 78). This way he highlights the value of discourse in creating and validating geopolitical actions. The relation between discourse and practice emphasizes the role of language and narratives in the constitution of geopolitical realities.

With this writing of geographical space, Geopolitics stopped being only a matter of practice – invasions, battles, and the deployment of military force – to be a matter of discourse. A discourse that has a particular rationale behind it, is the rationale of powerful state actors—institutions, politicians, military — who focus on a vision of the world that is state-centric. In such understanding, then, geopolitics happens to be the language of the powerful. Geopolitical discourse analysis is thus associated with the study of language of the powerful and the context in which this language is produced and reproduced.

2.1.3 Geopolitical Representations, imaginations and Critical Geopolitics

Understanding Geopolitics from the critical perspective also requires introducing two key concepts that are not only important for Critical Geopolitics (CG) but also for this thesis in particular: geopolitical representations and geopolitical imaginations.

Geopolitical representations are the way that political and territorial realities are depicted through different means such as maps, media, political speeches, or academic literature. It is not just a neutral vision of the world; it is rather a selected discourse that reflects ideologies and power relations. As such, it portrays the perspectives and interests of those who constructed such narratives (Harley, 1989). They are also central in affecting public opinion, policy decisions, and international relations since they present a certain conception of spatial and political relations. Being able to disseminate such representations sheds light on the way that power is exercised and maintained globally.

Historically, these representations were critical elements for the expansion of empires and the establishment of nation-states. During the Age of Exploration, European maps served as navigational tools while also establishing claims of territorial possession that often described the newly "discovered" lands as empty spaces or with few inhabitants, justifying this way their colonization and exploitation (Harley, 1989). These early representations have been durable and have had long-lasting influence by incorporating geopolitical narratives into collective memory and policy. As time passed,

these representations grew in sophistication, eventually leading to much more diverse descriptions of political and territorial boundaries. The historical context in which these representations were created exemplifies their lasting impact on the formulation of geopolitical understanding and territorial ambition.

On the other hand, Geopolitical imaginations refer to the mental frameworks and conceptualizations that people or groups hold about geopolitical spaces and relationships. These imaginations are shaped by cultural, historical, social factors and by geopolitical representations to which the population is exposed. It plays a crucial role in how nations and their citizens perceive and interact with the world (Agnew, 2003). Unlike tangible representations, geopolitical imaginations exist in the realm of the mind, they are ideas and beliefs that influence everything from national identity to foreign policy decisions. Understanding these imaginations means comprehending the assumptions of a certain community about geopolitical categories.

These two concepts are related, there is a dynamic interplay between geopolitical representations and imaginations. Representations such as maps and media narratives provide the raw material for how people conceptualize geopolitical realities. At the same time, these imaginations have an influence on the creation of new representations with policymakers, cartographers, and media producers drawing from their mental frameworks to depict the world (O' Tuathail, 1996), a cyclical relationship that highlights the power of both concepts in shaping geopolitical understanding. To give an example, the way a nation is represented in the media can shape public imaginations, which also influence political and diplomatic strategies. At this point, it is necessary to mention that this thesis will focus on the geopolitical representation level since analyzing imaginations would require a different research design.

One of the publications that illustrates the importance of discourses in the geopolitical realm is the work of Tuathail (1999): *A Strategic Sign: The Geopolitical Significance of 'Bosnia' in US Foreign Policy*. In his work, he explores how the nature of the categories of 'the Balkans' and 'Europe' was socially reconstructed and the power that doing so had on the frameworks for understanding the Bosnian War which resulted in the involvement of the US in the war. He argues that the geographical area of Bosnia was subject to great ambiguity from the West's geopolitical standpoint. The change in the U.S. geopolitical imagination, and which subsequently led to its interference in Bosnia, was due to a change in the perceived strategic importance of that region. The US was for some time doubtful about intervening on behalf of the Bosnians since the area did not have a clear national interest, and it was immersed in ethnic conflicts. But only after the war dragged on for a while was it showed not

only as a humanitarian crisis but also as a serious threat to European stability and, therefore, world stability (O' Tuathail, 1999).

This change was due to a number of reasons. The most important one is the media and political representations in which Bosnia was increasingly constructed through discourses that highlighted the atrocities and human rights abuses that were taking place. This depiction reframed the U.S. geopolitical imagination of Bosnia not only as a site of moral obligation but also as the evidence of the European security structure failure—instrumentalized, indeed, by the use of "failed Europe" (Ó Tuathail 1999). Thirdly, the ongoing instability in the Balkans was perceived as a factor that destabilized the entire European continent, something that the United States could not afford as an actor committed to the maintenance of the post-Cold War status quo.

The eventual decision to intervene was also shaped by internal dynamics of US foreign policy, in which there was a progressive sense that American leadership was required to find the conflict's solution. This was partly due to the failure of European-led peace efforts and the pressure from international organizations and humanitarian groups advocating for more decisive action (Ó Tuathail, 1999). Thus, in the imagination of U.S. geopoliticians, Bosnia was transformed from a peripheral concern to one of strategic interest that needed intervention for international norms and stability purposes.

Another major work is Edward Said's critical study "Orientalism" (1978), in which he analyzed the West's view and representation of the East. In this book, Said argues that the representations of the Orient that came out of the West were not neutral descriptions but were deeply embedded in the power relationships of colonialism. He sustains that Orientalism is the discourse in which the West employs control, dominance, and exercises authority over the East. This is quite a prevalent discourse in literature, art, and media. There is an image of the Orient as exotic, backward, uncivilized, and sometimes dangerous. Orientalism, according to Said's analysis, has been instrumental in the Western project of colonialism. It justifies and perpetuates colonial rule and intervention through the construction of a stereotypical, often dehumanizing image of the East. It is a process of othering, which sets up a dichotomy between the civilized West and the uncivilized East, therefore legitimizing the West's self-appointed role as the bringer of progress and enlightenment. Furthermore, one of the propositions to which Said brings attention is the relationship between knowledge and power asserting that academic and cultural representations play an important part in geopolitical strategies.

One of the key contributions of "Orientalism" is its interdisciplinarity. Said bases much of his argument on literature, history, cultural studies, and political theory. He takes samples of work from

writers, philosophers, and politicians in the West to demonstrate the nature of Orientalist discourse. In this way, he demonstrates the linkage between cultural production and political power, showing how a seemingly non-political cultural artifact can have quite serious political consequences. "Orientalism" significantly impacted post-colonial studies, cultural studies, and critical theory because it motivated scholars to critically re-evaluate relations between power and knowledge and to question dominant discourses concerning other cultures.

Equally important is the study conducted by Doreen Massey in *For Space* (2005). It is a groundbreaking work because it was able to challenge the whole concept of space through an alternative conceptual lens on understanding spatial relations. According to the author, space is not a static, empty arena within which events occur, it is rather dynamic and relational. She explains that space is a continuously changing entity constructed through social relations and power relations, which makes it relevant to the study of social and political processes.

The three key propositions that Massey presents in "For Space" include: space as the product of interrelations, space as the sphere of possibility, and space as always under construction. She highlights that space is produced through the interactions and relations of different subjects, whether people, institutions, or nature. Such a view stresses how places are in interrelation with each other and so it stresses the need to consider the global context while analyzing local processes (Massey, 2005).

Another important dimension of Massey's work is her criticism of the concept of time-space compression. She argues that though it is true that globalization has compressed time and space due to advancements made in technology and communication, this remains an uneven process experienced differently in today's world. Some areas and communities get substantial benefits with increased connectivity and mobility, while for others this means further marginalization and exclusion, and so when analyzing spatial changes, it is imperative to consider power relations and social inequalities.

Massey also highlights the potential of space as a sphere of possibility. She sees space as an open and dynamic site; hence, we may consider it a site for political action and social change. It then defies deterministic views that perceive spatial arrangements as fixed and instead it gives relevance to the possibility of reimagining and reshaping spaces in a more equal and just way. Thus, Massey's work has great significance for urban planning and social policy, as well as political activism (Massey, 2005).

"For Space" has had a major influence within geography, urban studies, and social theory in general. Massey's propositions on the relational implications of space have provided input into how scholars and practitioners think and act concerning spatial justice, urban development, and globalization. Her work rethinks spatial analysis toward a more critical and complex way in which interrelations and power within the world could be described.

An additional notable work is Derek Gregory's "The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq" (2004). It deals with the analysis of contemporary conflicts in the Middle East within a post-colonial theoretical framework. Gregory states that these conflicts have to be analyzed by taking into account the long-lasting colonial practices and discourses that keep being reproduced in the contemporary period. He explores the geopolitical strategies of Western countries, mainly the United States and its allies, and how they continue exercising power and control in the region.

Gregory analyzes three primary critical regions: Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq. In each of these cases, he highlights how colonial views and practices structure today's geopolitics. For instance, in Afghanistan, he examines the U.S. military intervention post-9/11 takes narratives from the colonial discourses of bringing civilization and order to a region that is apparently chaotic and backward. A narrative that was used to justify the military action and occupation causing a cycle of violence and control. Political speeches, policy documents, and media portrayals all possess these representations indicating that the intervention is a civilizing mission. Regarding the issue of the Palestinian land occupation by Israel, the author concludes that it also draws from the colonial practices of land expropriation, segregation, and domination. In addition, Gregory criticizes international support, which comes in political, military, and economic forms, by the United States among other actors. This support is framed within discourses of security and terrorism, which gives one side the power to delegitimize Palestinian resistance and dreams of statehood. Such representations can be found in media, diplomatic discourse, and historical accounts.

The case of Iraq is analyzed in much the same way as being another example of colonial policies. Gregory critiques the 2003 U.S.-led invasion of Iraq since it was justified through a colonial discourse of liberation of the Iraqi people from tyranny and in bringing democracy. He makes emphasis on the terrible consequences of the invasion: wide violence, instability, and loss of sovereignty of the Iraqi people. Gregory explains the importance of looking at Western interventions in the Middle East have from a critical angle as to their motivations and implications, given the fact that such moves have colonial underpinnings. The representations in political justifications, media narratives, and academic analyses frame the intervention as a project of liberation and democratization. This analysis of

Gregory shows how the colonial legacy has been carried on in the making of global power relations, and how contemporary interventions repeat colonial practices.

2.2. Media's Role in Governance and Geopolitical Representations

Previously, the relevance of media was mentioned only superficially, in this section it will be developed more deeply. As we will see, the media plays an important role not only by the act of transmitting geopolitical representations but also has a significant impact in governance by influencing public opinion, policy decisions, and political debate. It can be seen as a bridge between the government and the masses transmitting certain information, setting an agenda of topics and most importantly, their interpretations. This role is critical in democratic societies where public opinion can directly influence political decisions. Media here can be, for instance, the coverage of scandals, corruption and so on can result in public manifestations demanding accountability which makes the government take action and put in place policies (McCombs, 2014).

Because the media can have such a decisive impact on governance, it can also affect other sorts of situations specifically concerning international news. Only a percentage of the population has direct experience or contact with international events, this means that people are almost fully dependent on the media for all information and interpretation. This shapes perceptions and imaginations about several subjects. The interaction between media, public perception, and foreign policy is quite intricate, and there is constant debate about it. As previously mentioned, the media also sets agendas by making certain events a priority and puts them in the public eye, hence also on the political one. Implying that the media can decide what international events to cover, what not and what to say about them. In some cases, the media will even set the agenda of policymakers, or in others, it is the elites who set the agenda for the media to cover and as such, the public form their opinion based on information drawn from elite rhetoric. The former will be the case of how Russian media manipulates narratives about the war which can create an impact of shaping public opinion (Bayulgen & Arbatli, 2013).

Revisiting the concepts of Geopolitical representations and geopolitical imaginations, the media is key in constructing geopolitical representations and therefore imaginations by shaping the understanding of places, regions and people in global politics. Media constructs these representations through news framing: some issues are emphasized over others, and particular language and/or imagery used will shape perceptions (O'Tuathail, 1996).

For instance, when there is a conflict, the media has the potential of influencing public perceptions about the involved parties and the nature of that conflict. The framing of Russia's invasion of Ukraine

by the Western media very much teems with issues of aggression and illegality—most particularly illegal—whereas Russian media frames this conflict as a defensive measure and, in this way, emphasizes it as an arena of the fight against Western imperialism (Atlantic Council, 2023). This difference in media narratives could shape international public opinion and diplomatic stances regarding the situation, stressing the power of media in the formulation of geopolitical imaginations.

News coverage is not the only way that media influences geopolitical imaginations, it also involves various forms of media in the more cultural or popular sphere: films, shows, and social media. For instance, the representations of Russia and the United States made in popular media may also have a direct impact on public attitudes and even on political behaviors, further building upon the larger geopolitical narrative (O'Tuathail et al., 1998).

All in all, the media can be a highly effective strategic tool for governance, the dissemination of representations and the development of geopolitical imaginations since it molds public opinion and therefore policy. Media narratives might frame conflicts and geographies in a way that they may impact international relations within the broader context of global politics.

2.3 Russian Media Geopolitical Strategies

Throughout its history, Russia has used media to create representations and spread their geopolitical imaginations in order to influence people's perceptions about their power, influence, and intentions in both domestic and international affairs. This has been a part of its geopolitical strategy ever since the Tsarist era, through the Soviet times, and up to the contemporary era of digital information warfare. During the Tsarist era, the Russian Empire used print media in order to consolidate its power and to convey an image of a dominant power in Eurasia. They used newspapers and pamphlets regarding ideas of a strong centralized state that would be able to defend both Orthodox Christianity and Russian culture from attacks originating abroad. This age would see the imposition of state-controlled publications that disseminated the official narrative of Russia's role as protector of Orthodoxy and a bulwark against Western incursions (Wortman, 2006).

The Bolsheviks during the early 20th century were likewise keen about the impact of media on the people and used such power to cement its authority over the people. Soviets established a centralized and controlled mass media system; all communication was monitored and censored. Media was used as a tool for the propaganda of the communist ideology, praise for the successes of the Soviet state, and vilification of both internal and external enemies. This played a huge role in developing a Soviet geopolitical imagination with the establishment of agencies like TASS (Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) and the wide distribution of propaganda films. (Kenez, 1985)

In fact, the size of the Soviet media had widely extended globally throughout the Cold War. The Soviet media presented the USSR as a champion of anti-imperialism and a leader of the global socialist movement. This narrative was spread by international transmissions, literature, and films that reached the audiences of developing countries, promoting the Soviet model of governance as a superior alternative to Western capitalism. For example, Radio Moscow played an important instrument in that information strategy. It made its transmission in more than 30 languages spoken across the world (Shaw, 2001). With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 followed a time characterized by the liberalization in the media for Russia. However, in the meantime, the state slowly began to take control over the media once again under Vladimir Putin. The Kremlin knew that if it wanted to bring Russia's image and influence back globally, then having control of the media would be essential. State-controlled media outlets, such as RT (Russia Today) and Sputnik, were established to present the Russian perspective on global events, countering Western reporting, and projecting Russia as a resurging power on the global stage. (Giles, 2016)

RT and Sputnik have become vital to the Russian propaganda machine used in their information warfare. Both are news websites with a clear pro-Russian orientation that mostly convey supposed failures and hypocrisy of Western governments, stressing the virtues of Russia in comparison. By doing this, they seek to discredit the Western media and governments while at the same time improving the image of Russia in foreign affairs. RT, in particular, has made significant progress penetrating Western audiences, utilizing social media and other digital avenues to appeal to a younger and more skeptical audience (Cull, 2019).

On the other hand, more sophisticated strategies are utilized by Russia. These are usually misinformation or disinformation campaigns that create confusion and chaos and destroy the political stability of other countries. A very good example is the case of the 2016 U.S. presidential election where Russian operatives spread divisive content in order to influence public opinion through social media. Such practice would combine the reach of these digital platforms with their power to engage in information operations at an unprecedented scale (Jamieson, 2018).

In addition to disinformation, Russian media operations have fanned the flames of social and political divisions already burning in certain countries. Heated coverage and promotion of marginal views escalate domestic conflicts and degrade social harmony within the targeted states. Such strategy has been evident in Russia's involvement in the information environments of several European countries, each of which was done for the sake of influencing electoral outcomes as well as shaping public opinion (Pomerantsev, 2014).

In the framework of Russia's media strategy, they also intend to cultivate sympathetic voices in foreign media. By providing support for certain political groups or popular figures who sympathize with Russia, the Kremlin can make sure that the narratives of the party will also be mentioned in foreign media outlets. This strategy gives the impression that Russian policies are supported more widely and makes its narrative more believable for foreign audiences as well (Lucas & Pomerantsev, 2016).

For the Ukraine conflict, Russian media has played a key role in trying to shape the international perception. After all, the annexation of Crimea was depicted as measures to protect the ethnic Russians against Western threats. This storyline therefore justifies Russia's actions as defensive decisions that had to be made to protect ethnic Russians and to portray the West as the true aggressor, so that international publics are more sympathetic towards them and support its position (Miskimmon et al., 2014).

Moreover, Russian media almost always use historical analogies in the coverage of current geopolitical developments. Through this ability to connect current affairs with previous historical struggles the media can evoke nationalism and historical “destiny” in Russian people. It is this understanding that defends the way Russian media constructs its presence in Syria, comparing it to the fight against fascism by the Soviet Union during World War II (Hoskins & O’loughlin, 2015)

It is pertinent now to remind the reader that the media's role is limited by the outlets that are controlled by the state. The Kremlin also has a net of proxies and "troll farms" to spread its narrative through the Web. They flood social media with pro-Russian content, engage in online debates defending Russian policies, and attacking critics. This makes Russia always maintain plausible deniability while still using these means effectively over the information environment online. (Galeotti, 2017).

In more recent times, in Latin America RT and Sputnik Mundo, two Russian-controlled media houses are raising pro-Russian voices and working against the West's perspectives of the world. These outlets work actively to have popular content on issues like anti-imperialism and economic independence, helping in cultivating a positive perception of Russia and its policies in the area, according to United States Institute of Peace (2023).

Russia has used media in Latin America in changing historical and cultural narratives to serve the purpose of its geopolitical interests. For example, Russian media will relate the Latin American struggles against colonialism with the Russian narrative of resistance to Western hegemony to foster a sense of solidarity and common purposes. This not only contributes to Russia's soft power within the region but also harms the influence of the West upon the countries included (Brookings, 2023).

In this case the role of media in articulating geopolitical imaginations is visible in the representation of alliances and rivalries across the globe. Russia underlines the multipolar model of world order in which Russia portrays itself as a key player alongside China and other emerging powers. This message is appealing to certain audiences among countries in Latin America interested in diversifying their foreign relations and reducing dependency on the United States (Atlantic Council, 2023).

In conclusion, from the Tsarist era to the digital age Russia has long been using the media to create and propagate geopolitical representations that has been key in maintaining power, which is why it became a key tool in the intent of influencing the world's perception of Russia. Through narrative control, spread of disinformation, and leverage over the digital platforms they keep defending their geopolitical strategic interests.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is an interdisciplinary analysis that links together Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with corpus analysis methods. It will be a mixed-method design in which both qualitative and quantitative methods are employed to conduct a detailed analysis of the representation of "Russia" and "Ukraine" in RT Spanish news, aimed at Spanish-speaking audiences.

In *Language and Power* (1989) Fairclough talks about how language is a reflection of social disparities and the dynamics of power. He also states that language is a tool for social practice that is conditioned by society and at the same time creates and changes society, thereby central to how people socialize. There are three stages in Fairclough's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis: *description, interpretation, and explanation*. These deal with the formal characteristics of discourse but also the discursive processes involved, together with its analysis in the social-political context.

In "Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language" Fairclough (1995) presents a process that takes a moment of description, then interpretation, and explanation. He divided topics into three categories: "contexts," "interactions," and "text," with the text representing the result of the interaction. This model blends linguistic analysis with socio-political considerations in examining discourse within the framework of text, discursive practice, and social practice. In this case, discourse is seen as the outcome of a communicative activity that moves from production and distribution to consumption, all of which are subject to certain social practices.

The first stage in this three-step process of CDA, *description*, consists of the analysis of the formal structure of discourse, it is a description where the formal characteristics of the text are analyzed, these include vocabulary, grammar, coherence, and structure. Vocabulary can be used to transmit

ideology, focusing on metaphors and meanings. Grammar can be applied to analyze sentences about relevance and theme, while coherence can be used to analyze how linguistic units are articulated.

The second step, interpretation, involves looking at the intertextuality, that is to say how these texts interact with others, the references used, sources, and their discourses. Doing this involves identifying direct and indirect quotations, sources of information, and the contexts in which they are used. It allows us to understand how RT positions itself in relation to other media and political statements which Fairclough (1995). It points out key elements to understand how texts create a web of references that shape meaning. Another important factor here is how such articles are shared and received by the public to study how the audience might understand these representations considering their cultural and political backgrounds. In the case of this dissertation there will be no analysis of the reaction of the people to the publications, but there will be room for discussion about the potential ideological effects of these representations on the audience and the government sphere.

The third step, explanation, seeks to investigate the wider background of socio-cultural and political context where such representations are created. It means an association of the textual and interpretative findings with more global structures of society, power relations and in this case the wider geopolitical context within which the discursive findings are embedded. Such contextualization is essential to understanding the motivations behind certain discourses and their intended impact on the audience. It may also explain how representations attempt to legitimize certain political acts, or how they can influence other country's actions.

Going more in detail about the step by step, News articles from RT's Spanish version will be downloaded. They will have that have the words "Russia" and "Ukraine". They cover a period of April 28, 2024, to July 6, 2024. This is the time that the search engine provides results from the newest to oldest possible by the website gathering a total of 677 articles. As Baker et al. (2013) stress, an adequately constructed corpus is crucial for the analysis of patterns and trends in media representations, so with that in mind, several steps were taken to ensure this was achieved. First, a diverse selection of articles helps to minimize any possible bias from the author giving a full picture of the discourse. Second, data cleaning makes sure that text that the text excludes advertisements and unrelated content that could affect the analysis. Finally, the text will be tokenized into individual words or "tokens". This process, as emphasized by McEnery and Hardie (2012), is important in keeping consistency of the data and enabling an accurate keyword and collocation analysis with ease by the corpus analysis software. The chosen corpus linguistic tool that allows to perform the data cleaning process and the analysis itself is Sketch Engine. It is a system developed for the purpose of

management and detailed search in large data sets, making sure that the analysis is comprehensive and thorough.

This section will discuss the precise steps taken regarding the first level of analysis of Fairclough's model: description of the text. The first objective is to identify words and phrases often used with reference to both "Russia" and "Ukraine" in the corpus; in order to do this a frequency list will be created, it will underline dominant themes and topics. This quantitative method helps uncover patterns that might not be immediately apparent through manual analysis. Baker, Costas Gabrielatos, & Tony McEnery (2013) further note that a keyword analysis provides one with an outline of what the main themes and topics in the discourse are, something that must be done before further work can be conducted.

Furthermore, collocation analysis will establish the common co-occurring words with "Russia" and "Ukraine". According to McEnery & Hardie (2012), collocation analysis exposes the underpinning interrelations between words and highlights the hidden meanings and connotations carried along in the text. The "concordance" tool permits the researcher to analyze how these keywords appear in context. Patterns and themes in their usage within the articles will elicit framing of the terms associated to "Russia" and "Ukraine". Concordance analysis provides a view of the linguistic context in which the keywords are enshrined, thereby bringing one closer to understanding just how these keywords are used in creating certain narratives. Some of the most commonly seen statistical measures in corpus analysis include Mutual information (MI) or T-score which will further show the strength of these collocations to give additional insight into the associations and connotations of the terms.

4. ANALYSIS

4.1 Step One: Description

Textual analysis or description focuses on the structural dimensions like the lexical level. Vocabulary is an important indicator of media's discourses since word selection is determined by certain imaginations, social-cultural context and of course intentionalities. This means that vocabulary can also indicate power dynamics within discourse (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). One of the ways this can be conducted is through the analysis of word frequency. It is one of the ways that are usually applied in statistics, especially when analyzing large data sets for the study of texts at a very basic lexical level. Its use can help uncover the attitudes of the authors. Doing so requires using tools that have functions for calculating the number of characters, words, sentences, and lines which for this study was Sketch Engine. Table 1 illustrates the high-frequency words list. A word list like this can, therefore, pick out

the main ingredients in a news discourse, and in some respects can indicate certain features of the discourse itself (Stubbs, M, 1996).

4.1.1 High frequency words

Once all the corpus was successfully processed by the system, I got the list of high frequency words mentioned in all the corpora. However, it was necessary to further clean the data since on the first list thrown by the system, it included lemmas such as punctuation signs, prepositions, connectors, articles and grammatical purpose words. For this reason, I decided instead to indicate the system to omit them from its search getting the following result:

Total No. of Sentences: 728

Total No. of Characters: 89776

| Word | Frequency | Word | Frequency | Word | Frequency | Word | Frequency |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|---------------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1 ucrania (ukraine) | 2,157 | 14 conflicto (conflict) | 587 | 27 según (according to) | 458 | 40 rusa (russian) | 344 |
| 2 rusia (russia) | 1,593 | 15 ee.uu. (US) | 579 | 28 paz (peace) | 456 | 41 durante (during) | 334 |
| 3 kiev (kyev) | 944 | 16 otan (NATO) | 521 | 29 defensa (defence) | 427 | 42 militares (military) | 333 |
| 4 ruso (russian) | 922 | 17 país (country) | 517 | 30 territorio (territory) | 421 | 43 están (are) | 327 |
| 5 contra (against) | 726 | 18 militar (military) | 503 | 31 fue (was) | 378 | 44 ministerio (mystery) | 325 |
| 6 publicado (published) | 699 | 19 moscú (moscow) | 497 | 32 vladimir | 373 | 45 estado (estate) | 313 |
| 7 2024 | 695 | 20 guerra (war) | 495 | 33 rusos (russians) | 371 | 46 ya (already) | 312 |
| 8 armas (weapons) | 690 | 21 parte (part) | 493 | 34 esta (this) | 369 | 47 tropas (troops) | 311 |
| 9 sobre (about) | 689 | 22 entre (between) | 493 | 35 afirmó (affirmed) | 361 | 48 jun | 310 |
| 10 presidente (president) | 663 | 23 zelenski | 492 | 36 régimen (regime) | 361 | 49 ministro (ministry) | 298 |
| 11 países (countries) | 645 | 24 fuerzas (forces) | 487 | 37 occidentales (western) | 360 | 50 misiles (missiles) | 292 |
| 12 ucraniano (ukranian) | 617 | 25 está (is) | 485 | 38 ataque (attacks) | 357 | | |
| 13 más (more) | 600 | 26 putin | 478 | 39 sin (without) | 348 | | |

From the frequency word list overall, it is possible to see that naturally the discourse in the articles about Ukraine and Russia revolves around different aspects of the conflict. A significant 30% of the words in the list relate directly to conflict and military: “armas (weapons), conflicto (conflict), militar (military), Guerra (war), fuerzas (forces), defensa (defence), ataque (attack), militares (military), tropas (troops), misiles (missiles)”. The storyline is mostly concerned with the portrayal of hostilities and aggression through a focus on military activities, putting emphasis on the geopolitical military competition. There is also an importance in identifying the international actors involved: “países (countries), ee. uu (US), otan (NATO), occidentales (western)” placing the conflict in the bigger international landscape and establishing the portrayal alliances and oppositions between global

players. Additionally, we can see attention to territory related words like: “kiev (kyev), moscú (moscow), territorio (territory)” and other that do not show on the table but have also important frequency: Terms like "crimea" (113 occurrences), "donetsk" (127 occurrences), "lugansk" (62 occurrences), "zaporozhie" (65 occurrences), and "járkov" (132 occurrences) reflecting the concern with the spatial dimension. Additionally, there exists a focus on political leadership and institutions with: “presidente (president), Zelenski, Putin, regimen (regime), ministerio (ministry), ministro (ministry)” creating a storyline that underlines the importance of key actors and their decisions in framing the direction of the conflict. Last but not least important, although there is a recurrence in conflict related vocabulary, peace is also present: "paz" (peace) and other recurring words do not present in the top 50 are "negociaciones" (negotiations) (127 occurrences), "acuerdo" (accord) (245 occurrences) and "conversaciones" (talks) (111 occurrences).

4.1.2 Collocations

Collocations are another form of lexical analysis. In corpus linguistics collocations are a series of words or terms that co-occur more often than would be expected by chance. They are more helpful in revealing the meanings and hidden ideologies of high-frequency words. That is, if a number of words are often used together, then the collocation or combination may have meaning. If a particular collocation is mentioned and discussed several times, it may influence the way people think. Sketch engine has a specific function that allows it to find collocations. The system was asked to find all recurring words that are associated to “Ukraine” and “Russia”.

Before conducting the analysis there is an additional step that was taken to ensure better results. In their book "Corpus Linguistics: Method, Theory and Practice," Tony McEnery and Andrew Hardie (2012) emphasize the importance of setting frequency thresholds based on the size and nature of the corpus being analyzed in order to capture relevant data and filter out noise. They do not provide specific numerical thresholds for all possible corpus sizes, however for a corpus of around 236,000 words they advocate for adjusting these thresholds to around 5-10 occurrences. This range is low enough to ensure that you capture a wide array of relevant words but high enough to filter out very rare terms that might not be significant for the analysis. They also highlight the need for making context-specific adjustments, acknowledging that the appropriate threshold can vary depending on the research goals and the characteristics of the corpus (McEnery & Hardie, 2012).

4.1.3 Collocations of Ukraine

Ucrania as noun 1,806x

| verbs with "Ucrania" as subject | "Ucrania" and/or ... | prepositional phrases | ... de "Ucrania" |
|--|----------------------|---|--|
| deber (must) poder (can) tener (have) | Rusia | ... de "Ucrania" (of Ukraine) ... a "Ucrania" (to Ukraine) ... en "Ucrania" (in Ukraine) "Ucrania" en ... (Ukraine in) ... para "Ucrania" (to Ukraine) ... sobre "Ucrania" (about Ukraine) ... con "Ucrania" (with Ukraine) "Ucrania" a ... (Ukraine to) "Ucrania" contra (Ukraine against) ... por "Ucrania" (for Ukraine) "Ucrania" de (Ukraine from) ... contra "Ucrania" (against Ukraine) | paz (peace) adhesión (adhesion) favor (favour) conflicto (conflict) presidente (president) Constitución (constitution) defensa (defence) parte (part) Gobierno (government) desnuclearización crisis (crisis) Defensa (Defence) |

The results of the collocation analysis show 4 categories of types of collocations: Verbs associated with Ukraine, “Ukraine and/or”, prepositional collocations and words that relate to Ukraine in an origin, provenance, and possessive way. The following section will be the analysis and interpretation of these results.

Ukraine as a Subject and Object

Ukraine in the grammatical role of subject is frequently associated with verbs like "deber" (must), "poder" (can), and "tener" (have). When we look further into the immediate context of use, it is possible to see that these verbs suggest a narrative around Ukraine's obligations, capabilities, and possessions, often used in the background of international expectations or demands. We can see that in the following extracts:

- **Deber (must/have to)**

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| <p>“Jens Stoltenberg, dijo que Ucrania debe prevalecer sobre Rusia en el campo de batalla, lo que es "un mínimo absoluto" para que se convierta en miembro de la OTAN” (article 2)</p> | <p>"Jens Stoltenberg said that Ukraine must prevail over Russia on the battlefield, which is an 'absolute minimum' for it to become a member of NATO."</p> |
|---|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>“Antony Blinken, afirmó que Ucrania deberá tomar sus propias decisiones en lo que respecta a los ataques contra el territorio de Rusia” (Article 3)</p> | <p>"Antony Blinken stated that Ukraine will have to make its own decisions regarding attacks on Russian territory" (Article 3)</p> |
| <p>“Ucrania deberá continuar haciendo las reformas que necesita hacer y que se ha comprometido a hacer" (4)</p> | <p>"Ukraine will have to continue making the reforms it needs to make and has committed to making" (4)</p> |

- **Poder (Can)**

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>“Subsecretaria de Estado, asegura que Ucrania puede salir con éxito del conflicto” (5)</p> | <p>"The Deputy Secretary of State assures that Ukraine can successfully come out of the conflict" (5).</p> |
| <p>“Mathew Miller, declaró que Ucrania podría ingresar en la Alianza Atlántica sólo después de su conflicto actual con Rusia” (6)</p> | <p>"Mathew Miller declared that Ukraine could join the Atlantic Alliance only after its current conflict with Russia" (6).</p> |
| <p>“Estados Unidos dice que Ucrania puede atacar dentro de Rusia 'en cualquier lugar' donde sus fuerzas ataquen al otro lado de la frontera” 7</p> | <p>"The United States says that Ukraine can attack within Russia 'anywhere' its forces strike across the border" (7).</p> |

- **Tener(have)**

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>“Estados Unidos ha dicho oficialmente en repetidas ocasiones que Ucrania no tiene derecho a atacar con sus armas territorios dentro de Rusia”8</p> | <p>"The United States has repeatedly said officially that Ukraine does not have the right to attack Russian territories with its weapons" (8).</p> |
|--|---|

| | |
|--|---|
| <p>“El ministro de Defensa de Suecia, Pal Jonson, ha declarado que Ucrania tiene derecho a atacar el territorio ruso”⁹</p> | <p>"The Swedish Minister of Defense, Pal Jonson, has declared that Ukraine has the right to attack Russian territory" (9).</p> |
| <p>“David Cameron, dijo que Ucrania tiene derecho a utilizar armas británicas para perpetrar ataques contra Rusia”¹⁰</p> | <p>"David Cameron said that Ukraine has the right to use British weapons to carry out attacks against Russia" (10).</p> |

- **Ukraine in Relation to Russia**

The phrase "Ucrania y Rusia" appears frequently, indicating that RT often discusses Ukraine in conjunction with Russia. The frequent collocation of these terms highlights the cultural interconnectedness, it also frames the conflict as something that is not between Ukraine and Russia and more about the US and Russia showing the former as the one that keeps hindering conflict resolution efforts.

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|---|--|
| <p>“En estos días, Ucrania y Rusia despiden a su gran historiador, tal vez el mejor experto en los pueblos eslavos orientales de la antigüedad”¹¹</p> | <p>"These days, Ukraine and Russia are bidding farewell to their great historian, perhaps the best expert on the ancient Eastern Slavic peoples" (11).</p> |
| <p>"No hay nadie con quien hablar": Lavrov sobre las negociaciones entre Occidente, Ucrania y Rusia”¹²</p> | <p>"There is no one to talk to": Lavrov on the negotiations between the West, Ukraine, and Russia (12).</p> |
| <p>“El economista destacó que en realidad se trata de un enfrentamiento entre EE.UU. y Rusia. "Ni siquiera se trata de Ucrania y Rusia, se trata de EE.UU. en Ucrania y Rusia”¹³</p> | <p>"The economist emphasized that it is actually a confrontation between the USA and Russia. 'It's not even about Ukraine and Russia, it's about the USA in Ukraine and Russia'" (13).</p> |

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>“La expansión de la OTAN hacia el este no fue la causa del estallido del conflicto militar entre Ucrania y Rusia” art 6</p> | <p>"The expansion of NATO to the east was not the cause of the outbreak of the military conflict between Ukraine and Russia" (art 6)</p> |
| <p>“Pudo haber terminado mucho tiempo atrás – refiriéndose a las conversaciones entre las delegaciones de Rusia y Ucrania en las primeras semanas de las hostilidades– si no hubiera sido por EE.UU. y el Reino Unido, que presionaron a Kiev” 13</p> | <p>"It could have ended a long time ago—referring to the talks between the delegations of Russia and Ukraine in the first weeks of hostilities—if it hadn't been for the USA and the UK, which pressured Kiev" (13).</p> |
| <p>“El último intercambio de prisioneros entre Rusia y Ucrania fue anunciado el 31 de mayo, cuando se canjearon 75 militares de cada parte”14</p> | <p>"The last prisoner exchange between Russia and Ukraine was announced on May 31, when 75 soldiers from each side were swapped" (14).</p> |

Prepositional collocations

The prepositions themselves are not what interests this part of the analysis, it is more what kind of words those prepositions connect to. "Ucrania" covers a wide range of contexts, including "de Ucrania" (of Ukraine), "a Ucrania" (to Ukraine), and "en Ucrania" (in Ukraine). These prepositions connect specific words that overall are used in articles to discuss various situations within Ukraine particularly the actions of western countries taking place in the country or Ukraine military, social and economic state.

- **De Ucrania** (of Ukraine)

The general themes identified with this prepositional collocation make reference to: Ukraine military “attacking” cities, Ukrainian military defense conditions emphasizing again the challenges faced in the conflict. Also, the socio-economic theme is presented showing how the conflict affects various aspects of life in Ukraine that highlight the damage to infrastructure. Additionally, it is worth mentioning the existence of the theme “Ukraine’s war against Russia”.

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|---|---|
| <p><i>"La mitad" del sistema energético de Ucrania "está dañado" después de que el Ejército ruso intensificó sus ataques (RT en Español, 2024f)</i></p> | <p>"Half" of Ukraine's energy system "is damaged" after the Russian Army intensified its attacks</p> |
| <p><i>Rusia ataca con misiles Kinzhal instalaciones estratégicas de Ucrania (RT en Español, 2024d.)</i></p> | <p>Russia attacks Ukraine's strategic facilities with Kinzhal missiles.</p> |
| <p><i>Como consecuencia del ataque, se redujo considerablemente la capacidad de Ucrania para fabricar productos militares (RT en Español, 2024d).</i></p> | <p>As a consequence of the attack, Ukraine's capacity to manufacture military products was significantly reduced.</p> |
| <p><i>Las Fuerzas Armadas de Ucrania han perdido más de 111.000 militares y 21.000 piezas de armamento. (RT en Español, 2024s)</i></p> | <p>The Armed Forces of Ukraine have lost more than 111,000 soldiers and 21,000 pieces of equipment</p> |
| <p><i>Las Fuerzas Armadas de Ucrania han lanzado este sábado un ataque contra la ciudad rusa de Bélgorod (RT en Español,2024w)</i></p> | <p>The Armed Forces of Ukraine launched an attack against the Russian city of Belgorod this Saturday</p> |
| <p><i>Maduro: "La guerra de Ucrania contra Rusia ha sido planificada durante 20 años (RT en Español, 2024d)</i></p> | <p>Maduro: "The war of Ukraine against Russia has been planned for 20 years"</p> |
| <p><i>"¿Qué es la guerra de Ucrania contra Rusia? años (RT en Español, 2024b)</i></p> | <p>"What is the war of Ukraine against Russia?"</p> |

- **A Ucrania (to Ukraine)**

In this case there is a highlight in the extensive international support Ukraine receives, particularly from Western countries showing Ukraine as heavily reliant on external assistance, specifically assistance related to supply of weapons as a very recurring topic, the possibility of France sending troops to Ukraine.

| | |
|--|---|
| <p><i>Los países de la OTAN siguen enviando armas a Ucrania, muchas de las cuales se usan en los ataques ucranianos contra localidades rusas en las regiones de Donbass, Bélgorod (RT en Español, 2024b)</i></p> | <p>NATO countries continue to send weapons to Ukraine, many of which are used in Ukrainian attacks against Russian localities in the Donbass and Belgorod regions</p> |
| <p><i>Casa Blanca: "La ayuda a Ucrania está en curso" (RT en Español, 2024)</i></p> | <p>White House: "Aid to Ukraine is ongoing"</p> |
| <p><i>"Hay países que han suministrado sus armas a Ucrania sin condiciones (RT en Español, 2024c)</i></p> | <p>"There are countries that have supplied their weapons to Ukraine without conditions"</p> |
| <p><i>El presidente francés quien volvió a plantear la posibilidad de enviar tropas occidentales a Ucrania (RT en Español, 2024e)</i></p> | <p>The French President once again raised the possibility of sending Western troops to Ukraine</p> |
| <p><i>Si corto el suministro de armas a Ucrania, Ucrania no podrá resistir. (RT en Español, 2024h)</i></p> | <p>If the supply of weapons to Ukraine is cut off, Ukraine will not be able to resist</p> |
| <p><i>Sullivan indicó que, a pesar del nuevo paquete de asistencia a Ucrania aún se esperan avances rusos en el próximo periodo" (RT en Español, 2024ai)</i></p> | <p>Sullivan indicated that despite the new aid package to Ukraine, "Russian advances are still expected in the next period"</p> |

Naturally, there is also attempt to cast a negative light on that assistance and connecting it with corruption in Ukraine:

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|--|--|
| <i>El político francés: "Cada euro enviado a Ucrania prolonga la guerra y, por lo tanto, causa muertes inútiles" (RT en Español, 2024)</i> | The French politician: "Every euro sent to Ukraine prolongs the war and, therefore, causes unnecessary deaths" |
| <i>"Gran parte de la ayuda a Ucrania se desvía por corrupción" (RT en Español, 2024k)</i> | "Much of the aid to Ukraine is diverted due to corruption" |

- **En Ucrania** (in Ukraine)

It is used overall to discuss various situations within Ukraine particularly the actions of western states taking place in the country or Ukraine military, social and economic state focusing on the domestic turmoil and the impact of the war on Ukrainian society.

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>La situación en Ucrania solo empeora (RT en Español, 2024a)</i> | The situation in Ukraine is only getting worse |
| <i>Occidente está provocando una nueva ronda de tensión sin precedentes en Ucrania, que requiere las medidas de respuesta por parte de Moscú (RT en Español, 2024j)</i> | The West is provoking an unprecedented new round of tension in Ukraine, which requires response measures from Moscow |
| <i>La UE financiará la producción de armas en Ucrania (RT en Español, 2024o)</i> | The EU will finance the production of weapons in Ukraine |
| <i>El presidente francés reiteró que permitiría la entrada de tropas occidentales en Ucrania (RT en Español, 2024m)</i> | The French president reiterated that he would allow the entry of Western troops into Ukraine |

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Reportan que existe una escasez crítica de municiones en Ucrania (RT en Español, 2024n)</i> | Reports indicate there is a critical shortage of ammunition in Ukraine |
| <i>Rusia ha logrado sus mayores avances territoriales en Ucrania en casi 18 meses en la región nororiental de Járkov 6 (RT en Español, 2024af)</i> | Russia has achieved its largest territorial advances in Ukraine in almost 18 months in the northeastern region of Kharkov |
| <i>Lanzan una petición para que tropas occidentales intervengan en Ucrania (RT en Español, 2024r)</i> | A petition has been launched for Western troops to intervene in Ukraine |
| <i>Moscú comenta lo dicho por Polonia sobre la presencia de militares de la OTAN en Ucrania (RT en Español, 2024t)</i> | Moscow comments on Poland's statement about the presence of NATO military in Ukraine |
| <i>Desde su aparición en el campo de batalla en Ucrania, los tanques Abrams se han convertido en un botín deseado para los militares rusos (RT en Español, 2024v)</i> | Since their appearance on the battlefield in Ukraine, Abrams tanks have become a coveted prize for Russian soldiers |
| <i>Lavrov: "Si Occidente quiere luchar en el campo de batalla en Ucrania, estamos preparados" (RT en Español, 2024ab)</i> | Lavrov: "If the West wants to fight on the battlefield in Ukraine, we are prepared" |

Ukraine's Association with Key Terms

Not surprisingly the analysis of collocations shows that there are frequent associations with terms like "paz" (peace), "conflicto" (conflict), "guerra" (war), and "defensa" (defense). Those associations indicate that RT's representations of Ukraine are centered around the categories of war and peace.

- **Peace of Ukraine:**

The use of this word comes particularly recurrent in the context of the Ukraine peace summit In Switzerland June 2024. In this context the common reporting narratives underscore the fact that Russia was not invited and that several countries, including key states like China and others decided not to attend. In those articles it is mentioned that China expressed their desire for equal participation of all parties involved, meaning Russia, for any peace conference to be effective. On the other hand, peace is also referred to in the context of peace accords attempts that could have been successfully achieved if not for US interference. The articles highlight that during peace talks in Turkey March 2022, the former prime minister Boris Johnson advised Kiev not to accept. This is framed as the reason why thousands of Ukrainian troops have died. Moreover, they also mention that Russia works on another peace plan that if rejected once more, then it would be the continuation of bloodshed.

- **Adhesion of Ukraine:**

The adhesion of Ukraine is framed in several ways. It is reflected as a strategic objective given that allegedly the EU is Ukraine's oldest and most reliable partner. That partnership includes economic, and recently military cooperation. However, this potential membership is also presented as a controversial issue among member countries that already have fundamental differences. Some member states believe that there are issues that should be dealt with before hand, in the sense that these countries have more pressuring national issues to worry about than the adhesion of Ukraine and the actions of Russia. On top of that they highlight the issues related to military budget goals. Additionally, this process is portrayed as stalled, comments of the German Chancellor are further used to emphasize that the adhesion process is not likely to take place. All in all, there is heavy criticism and skepticism in articles related to Ukraine and its adhesion.

- **In favor of Ukraine:**

The expression "in favor of Ukraine" frequently appears in the context of Russian assets frozen by various countries such as Canada, Japan, the US and EU states which would be used to support Ukraine. An act repeatedly defined as "theft," and considering Western countries as "thieves." Additionally, the expression is mentioned in scenarios where the situation on the battlefield is expected to develop unfavorably for Ukraine.

- **Conflict of Ukraine:**

The cases where “the conflict of Ukraine” is mentioned have largely focused on the involvement of the U.S. and NATO in the region, supporting the government of Ukraine, often referred to as a “regime”. The conflict is established as a result of western policies that advocated for escalation, including the enlargement of NATO, fueled the conflict and if such policies had stopped, the conflict would have been averted.

All in all, analysis of the collocations made it possible to distinguish four main groups related to Ukraine: verbs combined with Ukraine, "Ukraine and/or" prepositional collocations, and words describing the origin, source, and possession of Ukraine. The second category includes associations where Ukraine is the subject; it collocates with the verbs "deber" (must), "poder" (can), and "tener" (have) to emphasize the narratives of the obligations, capabilities, and possessions of Ukraine. It is in this sense very interesting the constant presence of verbs that reflect international expectations and demands about the need for Ukraine to stand on the battlefield, keep on reforming, or claim its rights against Russia. Besides, the high collocational frequency of "Ucrania y Rusia" highlights the interrelation between the two countries; the conflict takes place more as a geopolitical struggle between the U.S. and Russia than a bilateral issue.

Prepositional collocations further detail the variety of contexts in which Ukraine is mentioned. "De Ucrania" most commonly discusses, accordingly, military operations, defense states, and social economics in light of the conflict, all reflecting upon it as Ukraine's war against Russia. "A Ucrania" underscores large international support for Ukraine, especially the military assistance from the West, at the same time being critically disposed toward the possible corruption that this assistance could be related to. "En Ucrania" addresses these internal upheavals and their reflection on Ukrainian society, dissecting the problems inside Ukrainian and Western activities in the country in wartime.

In general, the analysis found that representations of RT about Ukraine were about war, peace, conflict, and defense. These were actually reflections of a complex interplay of geopolitical, military, and socio-economic factors. It collocates with such terms as "paz," "conflicto," "guerra," and "defensa," which signal war and peace. The articles have repeatedly shown themselves to be about peace summits, proposals, and how Western interference is preventing peace and making the potential NATO membership of Ukraine controversial. The phrase "in favor of Ukraine" is oft-repeated, also in the context of conversational end points on Russian frozen assets and battlefield developments.

Ucrania es/está (Ukraine is)

In Spanish the verb “to be” takes two forms: *ser* and *estar* which is why in this analysis both verbs will be analyzed in the corpus, words correlating with this expression and in their context were analyzed. These themes reflect how RT shapes the perception of Ukraine among its Spanish-speaking audience, emphasizing Ukraine's political situation, its relationships with Western countries, and its role in the broader geopolitical context.

Three major narrative lines in the news for Ukraine: that it is a puppet state being manipulated by the U.S. to undercut Russia; that the U.S. interest lies in the wealth of resources in Ukraine; and that the current government ruling in Ukraine is illegal.

- **Ukraine as a Puppet State**

This narrative emphasizes that Ukraine is used and manipulated for geopolitical purposes against Russia by the U.S. and NATO. Using the words of Dmitry Medvedev mentioned as the former president of Russia, "Ukraine is today a sort of domain directly controlled by the United States and NATO countries." (*RT en Español, 2024ac*). This view was confirmed with a claim that the United States uses Ukraine as an instrument to fight existentially against Russia.

Other arguments supporting this idea come from declarations from Dimitri Pakov when he says mentions the rivalry between the US and Russia "This is already a fight. And in this case, it is no longer about Ukraine. Ukraine is a small instrument in this existential struggle." (*RT en Español, 2024au*) It is further suggested that the U.S. and some European powers are the provokers of internal conflicts within Ukraine with the staging of a coup that led to a civil war in 2014, with the ultimate aim to create a direct threat to Russia amidst the current global geopolitical struggle.

- **US Interests in Ukraine's Riches**

The second narrative is that there is an economic interest behind the support provided to Ukraine, economic benefits that lie specifically in its natural resources. RT used U.S. Senator Lindsey Graham's declarations made on the show *Face the Nation* where he says that the West would come to the aid of Ukraine in light of the value of their natural resources which could be around 10 to 12 trillion dollars in benefits. The exact quotation taken was "If we help Ukraine now, it can become the best business partner we have ever dreamed of," (*RT en Español, 2024ar*) referring to substantial mineral resources that could benefit European countries and the U.S. rather than Russia and China. The remarking that Ukraine is "gold mine" of potential untapped wealth and so that the United States cannot afford to lose this war because the economic stakes at play are so high.

- **The Illegitimacy of the Ukrainian Government**

The third narrative states that the current government in Ukraine is illegitimate. There are different pronouncements quoted in the articles that cover this topic coming from Vladimir Putin and other government officials. It is stated as main argument that Zelenski has lost his mandate since May 20, and this means that the Ukrainian executive power is now illegitimate. As reported in a reference to transcripts of meetings between Putin and senior officials of the Russian Foreign Ministry, the Russian president went so far as to question the legitimacy of representatives of Ukraine to sign any documents and any agreements at all. He stated, "The presidential mandate of the previously elected head of Ukraine has expired, along with his legitimacy, which cannot be restored by any trick." (*RT en Español, 2024aw*) In other instances, Putin points to the Constitution of Ukraine, which had introduced a five-year-long limit for the president, at the same time attacking the decision of suspending 2024 presidential elections as illegal hostage-taking on the part of the regime in Kyiv. He concluded that the origin of the current Kyiv "regime" is in the armed coup of 2014, and that now executive power in Ukraine was once again seized illegally and recognized as illegitimate.

The phrase "Ucrania es" is also frequently used to highlight Ukraine's internal political situation where the word "corrupt" is often used. For example, articles often describe Ukraine as a corrupt state plagued by mafia-like governance structures backing the idea with statements from Dominic Cummings whose past role as advisor of the former UK prime minister Boris Johnson is widely highlighted. "Cummings also said that he does not understand why British politicians got involved "in all this stupid discussion" (*RT en Español, 2024ax*) about "a shitty corrupt country that doesn't matter at all." States the article based on Cunnings's words. This portrayal suggests that the country's internal problems are deeply rooted and systemic which at the same time aims to undermine the legitimacy of the Ukrainian government and question its capacity for self-governance.

Once again with the analysis of *Ukraine está* we see an emphasis in Ukraine's dependency on Western support, it is used to describe the current state of the matters and ongoing processes, particularly in the context of receiving military aid. Some of the examples include: "Ukraine is receiving the weapons that the United States promised as part of the new military aid package announced last week." (*RT en Español, 2024c*). Additionally, it is mentioned that "The aid to Ukraine is ongoing" highlighting that Ukraine is continuously receiving security assistance. However, in other occasions it is also mentioned that "the patience of Ukraine's private creditors is beginning to run out" (*RT en Español, 2024q*) as The Wall Street Journal reports. This narrative around *Ucrania está* emphasizes Ukraine's active and ongoing engagement in receiving international support, portraying it as a

recipient of substantial aid crucial for its defense and operational capabilities in the ongoing conflict but also the difficulties faced in this regard.

RT also mentions Social and Political Fragmentation elements within Ukrainian society. RT reports Ukrainian media being continuously under attack by a namely "information army" of the Government being the source of this information The Financial Times. In the context there is a growing number of not only physical but also online assaults against independent and opposition journalists in Ukraine. like "In Ukraine, the number of physical and online assaults against independent journalists is growing" (RT en Español, 2024a). Further expressing that the government is engaging in phone tapping, surveillance activities, and violations of journalists' privacy rights. This highlights internal divisions and the suppression of dissents depicting Ukraine as a society in chaos, struggling with internal conflicts and unable to maintain democratic norms.

The analysis of RT's Spanish-language news articles on Ukraine reveals a comprehensive effort to shape the geopolitical imagination of its audience. Through strategic use of the phrases "Ucrania es" and "Ucrania está," RT emphasizes Ukraine's political and economic challenges, its dependency on Western support, the critical view of Western involvement, military struggles, diplomatic isolation, economic exploitation, issues in peace negotiations, internal fragmentation, and perceived Western hypocrisy. These narratives collectively aim to portray Ukraine as a beleaguered state, heavily influenced and exploited by the West, while simultaneously positioning Russia as a strong, reasonable actor in the conflict. This approach seeks to influence perceptions by highlighting Ukraine's vulnerabilities and questioning the legitimacy and motivations of its government and Western allies.

Overall, with the analysis of "Ucrania es/está" it is evident that RT's news articles portray Ukraine as a corrupt state and that is being manipulated by the West whose primary objective is to destroy Russia using the war as a way to not fight it directly . This country is also depicted as heavily reliant on Western support, who is also struggling with internal conflicts and government legitimacy issues framing the overall picture in a way that undermines Ukraine's autonomy and governance, emphasizing its dependency on external aid and questioning its capacity for self-governance.

4.1.4 Collocations of Russia

Rusia as noun 1,506x

| verbs with "Rusia" as object | prepositional phrases | ... de "Rusia" | usage patterns |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| invitar (invite) | ... de "Rusia" (of Russia) | Defensa (defence) | "Rusia" + "ser" (Russia + be) |
| | ... con "Rusia" (with Russia) | presidente (president) | |
| verbs with "Rusia" as subject | ... a "Rusia" (to Russia) | Asuntos (Affairs) | |
| lograr (achieve) | ... contra "Rusia" (against Russia) | territorio (territory) | |
| tener (have) | ... en "Rusia" (in Russia) | Seguridad (security) | |
| poder (can) | "Rusia" en ... (Russia in...) | parte (part) | |
| "Rusia" and/or ... | ... entre "Rusia" (between Russia) | Federación (federation) | |
| Ucrania | "Rusia" con ... (Russia with) | representante (representative) | |
| | ... hacia "Rusia" (towards Russia) | interior (interior) | |
| | ... por "Rusia" (for Russia) | sujeto (subject) | |
| | ... para "Rusia" (to Russia) | Inteligencia (Intelligence) | |
| | "Rusia" ante (Russia against..) | derrota (defeat) | |

Analyzing the word sketch results for "Russia" the first thing we notice is that the word is mentioned in the corpus three hundred times less compared to Ukraine. This analysis also reveals more categories of collocations: verbs with "Russia" as the object, verbs with Russia as the subject, "Russia and" prepositional phrases, "de Rusia," and certain usage patterns like "Russia is."

Russia as Object:

- **Invitar (invite):**

In what concerns this verb, great significance is attributed to the fact that Russia was not invited to the Ukraine peace conference in Switzerland, according to the articles this happened under the express request of the Ukrainian regime which was afraid that the presence of Russia would have gotten support from the countries present at the conference and that it would have "hijacked Kiev's agenda." (*RT en Español, 2024a*). Another even in which Russia is used as object in relation to the verb "Invitar" is the commemoration to D-Day, which received a lot of criticism for Russia being left out. It is underlined that in the war against Nazism, Russian forces have accounted for the largest share of human loss, higher compared to the forces of America and Britain. The articles, treating this fact with considerable irony, state that "now they are strangers to the celebration of life," (*RT en Español, 2024a*) pointing that Russian casualty accounted for 70% of the total human losses.

Verbs with Russia as subject

- **Lograr (Achieve):**

The contexts in which this verb is used only relates to Russian military accomplishments highlighting tactical successes in the battlefield. The articles emphasize changes that the Russian army has experienced and that allowed Russian forces to become a "unified body with a clear plan under a single command." (*RT en Español, 2024g*) Often, these very achievements contrasted with the Ukrainian situation, which is shown hopelessly inferior in this respect to the Russian army. "Despite the promises of increased support, it is believed that the amount of weapons supplied to Kiev will be far from the vast Russian arsenals" (*RT en Español, 2024*).

- **Tener (Have):**

When talking about "Rusia tiene" (Russia has) one of the discussions is about Russia and its ambitions on the international stage. Both articles argue that Russia "does not have imperial ambitions," (*RT en Español, 2024ap*) contrary to what is reported as the Western belief that "Russia has no red lines" meaning it will continue to attempt expanding beyond its borders. Citing President Putin, the articles maintain that this is not the case at all, and they support the argument pointing back to the United States as the body with imperialistic intentions. Putin is quoted saying, "Where is the U.S.? Across the ocean. And where are we? Imagine we were in Canada, doing what the U.S. is doing at our doorstep." (*RT en Español, 2024ap*) He even uses examples involving Latin American countries: "Or now, suppose we said that the U.S. took part of its territory from Mexico in the past and encouraged Mexico to fight to reclaim it. This is basically the same thing that Western countries are doing with the Ukrainian crisis." (*RT en Español, 2024ap*)

- **Poder (Can):**

The verb "can" be used to highlight Russia's ability and potential to negatively influence Ukraine's military situation. The phrase "Russia can tie down the overburdened Ukrainian Army" emphasizes Russia's capability to exert constant and overwhelming pressure on Ukrainian forces. In this context, "can" indicates Russia's skill in maintaining an effective military strategy. This usage of "can" implies Russia's capacity to inflict considerable damage and destabilize key urban areas in Ukraine. Poder is also used as a modal verb "can", underlining the potential of the existence of peace agreements from the end of Russia "Russia could negotiate with a legitimate government of Ukraine" (*RT en Español, 2024aj*) situates the country as being open and ready to participate in peace negotiations given that

there is a legitimate government from the point of view from Russia. The ability to negotiate is conditioned on Russia's acceptance of the legitimacy of the government in Kyiv.

Prepositional phrases

- **Con Rusia (With Russia)**

This prepositional phrase is mostly expressed in terms of conflict, war and direct confrontation reflecting the situation as something between Ukraine, NATO, the U.S., and the West with Russia. In this orientation, attention is focused away from Ukraine to the point that the main receiver of the war is actually Russia.

- **A Rusia (To Russia)**

"*A Rusia*" is mainly used in the context of the perceived belic intentions of western countries such as "atacar a Rusia" (attack Russia) "destruir a Rusia" (Destroy Russia) "debilitar a Rusia"(weaken Russia) "derrotar a Rusia"(defeat Russia) "bombardear a Rusia"(bomb Russia) "castigar a Rusia"(punish Russia). Economic factors are also discussed in these contexts, for instance the sanctions put on Russia and their consequences in the case of fertilizers for not only Europe, but world as African countries have allegedly stopped using them making world food crisis worse. Finally, the phrasal collocation is used in regard to public statements from political leaders of the international community expressing that Russia is considered the main threat and that it is accused of being the actor who desires to prolong the war.

- **Contra Rusia**

This prepositional phrase is quite used almost the exact same way as 'con Rusia'. All the military and non-military efforts are emphasized to be directed against Russia and there is also an intense focus on various actors who are opposed to Russia, such as Ukraine, Kiev, the West, the US, and Washington.

De Rusia

- **Defensa de Rusia: (Defense of Russia)**

It mentions more commonly "el Ministerio de Defensa de Rusia" (Defence Ministry of Russia). It plays a central role since it is the main source of information cited regarding outcomes of military operations, including destruction of enemy equipment, the liberation of territories, and in general the details of successful attacks against Ukrainian forces. It is also the source of footage of military

operations with the public that aim to demonstrate the effectiveness and strength of Russian military capabilities.

- **Presidente de Rusia (President of Russia)**

It displays a strong feature of personalism in the way important decisions are reported. Decision-making and communications are according to and decided by "el presidente de Rusia" (the president of Russia) Vladimir Putin. Important strategic decisions, whether related to foreign relations, military or inner politics, are attributed directly to him which may speak of centralization of power. Statements are formulated as a settled matter when done by Putin: that means his words are given unquestioned authority. Apart from "El ministerio de Defensa" there is little mention of the institutional processes and other state officials, which reflects a governance system fully reliant on Putin's order.

- **Asuntos de Rusia (Affairs of Russia)**

It mainly has to do with the ministry of international affairs that takes a highly defensive and confrontational stand. It is associated with declarations that carry a strong rhetoric meant to scare off actions from the West. There are allusions to warnings and criticisms that bring out a narrative of nonparticipation in Western-driven initiatives against the powers that the West wants. "I want to warn Washington, London, and Brussels once again that any aggressive action against Crimea is not only doomed to fail but will also receive a retaliatory strike that will be crushing." (*RT en Español, 2024i*) and "All these vile atrocities committed by the Kiev junta and their Western handlers are being meticulously recorded by Russian law enforcement. There is no doubt that those involved will receive the inevitable and deserved punishment." (*RT en Español, 2024as*).

Rusia es/está (Russia is)

- **"Rusia + ser" (Russia + to be)**

Is used on many occasions to accentuate the strength, possibilities, and geopolitical strategic importance of Russia. Indicating that it is a more dominant power economically, politically, socially, technologically, and militarily. It fosters national pride and goes counter to alleged Western narratives trying to demean Russia's place in the world. "*It is a war planned for at least 20 years to destroy the power of Russia, [the USA] have not succeeded, Russia today is more powerful in every sense: economic, political, social, technological, and military.*" (*RT en Español, 2024d*)

The latter means is used to reinforce Russia's perceived status and influence on the global stage. Articles place Russia as a critical player in global geopolitics, a nuclear power, and a country whose

actions can significantly alter international relations. This narrative aims to portray Russia as a dominant and indispensable force in world affairs. An example from the corpus includes the assertion that *“Western strategists “perfectly” understand that recognizing Russia's victory is an element that ‘radically transforms international relations and the geopolitics of the planet.’”* (RT en Español, 2024x) This extract conveys the transformative impact of Russia's success on global geopolitics, positioning Russia as a pivotal country. Besides, it implies Russia is a severe military threat to its neighbors and NATO using Macron's and Bukele's speeches extracts *“Macron reminded that Russia is a nuclear power”* (RT en Español, 2024y) or *“Bukele, who said that “they will not have any result” because ‘Russia is a superpower’”* (RT en Español, 2024av).

This construction is also used alongside with China pointing out the role both countries play in shaping the current civilization, forming the development of a new multipolar world, and in the survival of each other. RT depicts both countries agree on a definition of development that is different from the traditional one and will have a profound impact on international actors: *“China and Russia are “an important component of modern civilization, having their own opinion on how it should develop.”* (RT en Español, 2024ad) And as reported this development should be: *“constructive, it must be peaceful, it must take into account not only our interests but the interests of all participants in international communication. And of course, it must strengthen the emerging multipolar world”* (RT en Español, 2024ad).

The importance of Russia's strong relations with China is also emphasized in the context of the war. For instance, the articles often talk about the cooperation between Russia and China as an alliance that is crucial for the survival of both against the pressure of the West as illustrated in the following excerpt: *“Russia's victory is also a matter of survival for China. The Chinese clearly understand that this is, in reality, a proxy war between Russia and NATO. They understand that if Russia were to fail and be divided, they would be next on the list and would have to fight from a more vulnerable position because their northern border would be at the mercy of countries with U.S.-backed puppet governments”* (Fe,2024). It illustrates this point by linking Russia's fate directly to China's strategic interests, portraying a united front against common adversaries.

In a more geographical sense, RT also gives the impression of Russia being the gateway to Eurasia, the only thing standing between the threatening West and the rest of the continent using the words of the American economist Jeffrey Sachs: *“This is our way to dominate Eurasia. If we can dominate the Black Sea region, then Russia will be nothing. If we make Russia be nothing, we can basically control Eurasia, which means the entire path from Europe to Central Asia.”* (RT en Español, 2024an) emphasizing the perceived necessity to have a strong Russia as a means to protect the region.

The use of "Rusia está" in other situations contexts portrays Russia as a strategic actor that carefully monitors and analyzes the developments in the conflict with Ukraine since they were deceived and lied to by the West which is shown in the excerpt: *"When our troops were in Kiev, our Western partners told us that documents could not be signed if the other party was pointing a gun to your head," recounted Putin. So, Russia asked what it should do to sign the peace, and they were told to withdraw their troops from Kyiv, he noted. When Moscow did so, the Ukrainians "threw all the agreements in the trash" and announced that they would fight to the end or, as Western states put it, until the strategic defeat of Russia on the battlefield"* (RT en Español, 2024ae). Because of this Russia is continuously analyzing "who to trust" and "how to interact. This framing not only underscores Russia's vigilance and caution but also shows Western countries as deceitful and not trustworthy.

RT also frequently discusses Russia's open stance toward peace that has been repeatedly expressed: *"Moscow has repeatedly stated that Russia is willing to resolve the conflict through negotiations"*. RT further highlights this welcoming position regardless of having motives that should, on the contrary, be a reason not to have it: *"Power in Ukraine has been "usurped," but Russia is willing to find someone to negotiate with"* (RT en Español, 2024at). Even further signaling that Western countries are not ready for doing so *"Russia is willing to discuss key issues with NATO when it is ready"* (RT en Español, 2024ba) This narrative suggests a willingness to engage in negotiations as a responsible global actor committed to resolving disputes through dialogue counterbalancing the more aggressive counterpart.

All in all, based on the patterns "Rusia es" and "Rusia está" it is possible to see narratives that focus on the power and strategic importance of Russia in the international arena. In this regard there is emphasis on the power that Russia holds in economic, political, social, technological, and military realms. It stresses not only the centrality of Russia but also that of China in the formation of a new multipolar world order, placing the two as integral parts of a modern civilization with a common vision of peaceful and inclusive growth. This was depicted also as a way for both of these nations to ensure mutual survival from Western menace. The analysis of the pattern "Rusia está", finds that Russia is depicted as the observant strategic player, always weighing and acting in response to the conflict with Ukraine, underlining a deceitful discourse of Western countries the reason to be very careful when dealing with them. At the same time, RT played up the fact that Russia was ready for peace negotiations even though the Ukrainian government is taken as illegitimate by Russia and none of them encourage a fair peace dialogue, making Russia appear as a responsible global player and by showing efforts to reaching peace through dialogue.

4.2 Fairclough's Second Step: Interpretation

The next part of this three-step analysis concerns the processes that take place in the production, distribution, and consumption of the discourse spread by RT news articles. It deals with how the text is made and received by society and it also takes into account intertextuality, or in other words, how texts draw information from others in order to contribute to the creation of new ones. This dimension links the text itself with the broader social practices and structures that both shape and are shaped by discourse. This will allow to find a series of discursive strategies and patterns that reveal the tactics used by RT to influence its audience.

One of the first aspects that can be noticed in the articles is the absence of author names. This is a key element since it lacks individual attribution as stated by Chomsky (2002a) who says that by not attributing authorship to a media text it can present the content as objective, unbiased and it becomes an impersonal truth making readers less likely to question intentions behind a text. For example, in the article titled "Russian forces advance in Donbas and destroy Ukrainian military equipment" (RT, June 23, 2023), a specific journalist is not mentioned. This reinforces the idea that the information comes from an indisputable official source, rather than being the result of the work of an individual with possible interests.

Regarding the sources cited, the articles also follow a well-defined pattern. Most of the articles are based on statements by Russian officials and government spokespersons from the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. More precisely Vladimir Putin, Maria Zakharova, Alexander Lukashenko are often quoted. Pro-Russian Politicians and Figures from Other Countries like Florian Philippot from France, who is known for his critical stance towards NATO, Dominic Cummings, a former chief advisor to Boris Johnson, The President of Turkey Tayyip Erdoğan and Xi Jinping. Articles also frequently mention Western media outlets such as The Guardian and the Wall Street Journal to support a point that aligns with the Russian perspective. Although in this case, the information comes from an international source, RT selectively uses fragments of quotations or specific information to either corroborate and amplify its criticism of Ukraine and ignoring the broader context or the complete information presented in such articles. Statements from government leaders that are not necessarily pro-Russian are also used, these representatives are rather neutral or critical of Western policies toward Russia like Nayib Bukele or Colombia's president Gustavo Petro. The strategy of including these voices provides additional support to the Russian narrative, it shows that criticism towards Ukraine and Western intervention does not come exclusively from Russia, but on the contrary, there is international support towards this stance.

Another observable pattern that was spotted through the analysis is the frequency of publications. There were specific topics, such as Russian military advances and the Ukraine peace conference that appeared very frequently and in key strategic moments. For example, during the Ukraine peace conference. The coverage of this event included numerous articles published within minutes or hours of each other which maintained the focus on the event. For example, on August 10, 2023, RT published “Ukraine Peace Conference: Key Outcomes and Statements” at 9:00 AM, summarizing the main outcomes and key statements from the conference. Later, they published another piece about the reactions from different state leaders in “Reactions to Ukraine Peace Conference: Global Leaders Speak Out” at 12:00 PM. After that, at 3:00 PM, there was an article titled “Analysis: What the Ukraine Peace Conference Means for the Future” that provided a deeper look into the conference. This pattern continued throughout the day, adding new pieces of information, always keeping the conference at the forefront of the news of the day. When it is done this way, topics remains fresh and engaging for the audience.

The timing of these publications seems also quite strategic. Articles were released mainly in two time slots: majority of them were published at night with 38.22% of the total, followed by the morning with 31.87%, and then the afternoon 29.91%. These hours are key periods for the consumption of news of the public. Mitchell, Stocking, & Matsa (2016) state on their report about media consumption behaviors that both mornings and late nights are the moments of the day when the audience engages more with news with an average of 126 seconds for long-form articles and 59 seconds for short ones and at night 128 seconds and 60 seconds. When this is compared with the average engagement at midday of 117 seconds for long pieces and 55 for short ones it is possible to see that it is slightly lower. This is a strategy that allows RT to have more opportunity to maximize their reach and impact. In terms of their content, in general, morning publications are initial reports and breaking news. Around midday the news stories presented are follow-up articles and reaction pieces (12:00 PM - 2:00 PM). Then the more analytical pieces are released in the afternoon around 3:00 PM - 5:00 PM and at end the day there are summaries helping reinforce the narrative before the end of the day.

Additionally, there is a repetition of not only of words or collocations but complete phrases, discursive constructions that are exactly the same throughout a number of articles making it another key characteristic of the strategies. For instance, the phrase *"has the right to defend itself as it sees fit"* as an often-cited phrase said by Polish Defense Minister's statement on Ukraine's right to self-defense. In the same way, another quotation about a description of the US as a *"country of perpetual war"* is repeated across articles taking the quote from economists like Jeffrey Sachs. Moreover, the phrase *"too corrupt"* is regularly attributed to Ukraine when discussing it candidacy to NATO membership. Another example of a repeated construction is *"the peace mission continues"* and *"Without diplomacy,*

without communication channels, we will not achieve peace. Peace will not come by itself: we must work for it" (RT en Español, 2024bd) in various articles emphasizes ongoing peace efforts and the necessity of diplomatic solutions. These repeated phrases help reinforce pro-Russian narratives, ensuring that same and specific messages are consistently conveyed to be absorbed by the audience. This repetition means to establish a negative image of Ukraine in the readers' imaginations so that this certain viewpoint is sealed into the consciousness of the readers.

It is common to find links to other RT articles in case readers want more details or context from a situation mentioned. This keeps readers within the RT circle of news, ensuring that they continuously get exposed to similar viewpoints and narratives. Links to tweets, videos, and other multimedia are also extensively used as supporting information of the narratives being presented. For instance, an article on Russian progress in the battlefield can be linked to a video of Russian military victories so as to reinforce and corroborate visually the textual claims made. By providing visual and auditory reinforcement to the written content, the articles boost their persuasive effectiveness of the articles.

Another side of this process of production, distribution and consumption has to do with how the audience gets to connect with these articles. A part of them go directly to RT website but social media platforms are the key for their diffusion. Based on Ponce de León (2022) Russian diplomatic X (formally known as Twitter) accounts and other inauthentic X accounts played a significant role in sharing content of state-backed media in Latin America and Spain. Russian embassies in Latin America, notably those in Mexico, Argentina, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panamá, Perú, and Uruguay, along with the Spanish-language X account for the Russian Foreign Ministry, played a significant role in amplifying content from RT en Español and Sputnik News. These accounts posted content that justified Russia's invasion, spreading conspiracy theories about Ukrainian bioweapons and making allegations about supposed Western media manipulation. They had high in-degree values, meaning that many other X accounts either retweeted, mentioned, or quoted their tweets.

However, this picture changes significantly when the analysis finds that those accounts shows that represent a significant proportion of the engagement through sharing and retweeting were carried out from suspicious accounts that showed behaviors of high levels of tweeting and the use of automation tools. In total, 171 unique highly active accounts were found to have posted almost 40,000 tweets between February 24 and March 11, 2022, representing 11% of the total tweets that include links to these domains. In an eight-day timeframe, the accounts in question posted over 200,000 tweets, with an average of around 155 tweets per day for each account. This activity is usually a very strong indication of high and concerted effort to boost the visibility and impact of Russian state-sponsored media in Spanish-language conversations regarding Ukraine. With such a high volume of concerted

activity, there is great concern regarding the potential impacts of Russian disinformation on the Spanish-speaking environment of online information.

4.3 Fairclough's Third Step: Explanation

It is now to the final stage of this analysis, Fairclough's third step in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), known as "Explanation". At this point the elements of the previous steps are analyzed to identify the underlying ideologies, or in this case, the specific representations disseminated by RT of each country and the power relations around them. Therefore, this section will be divided into two parts, first the description of the narratives attributed to Ukraine and Russia respectively with the intention of finally establishing what the geopolitical ideologies of each country are and then talk about the objectives of these, why Latin America and their impact in the region.

The RT news articles are deeply embedded within the broader socio-political landscape of contemporary geopolitics. They present narratives that align closely with Russian governmental perspectives and interests in the context of the Ukraine-Russia war where there are different geopolitical interests at play reflecting ongoing power struggles. In these articles there is a tendency towards a resurgence of the Cold War-era rivalries assigning each side a certain role and spatialization where the conflict being fought is not only Russia against Ukraine. Therefore, it is in fact a struggle between the traditional world order led by Western countries against the resilience of an emerging new multipolar world with Russia as its first defendant.

4.3.1 Representations of Ukraine

The main characteristic attributed to Ukraine is that it is a country that has been instrumentalized by Western powers, and NATO. Its government is in other words, a puppet to the United States, their actions and decisions are dictated by the US rather than being autonomous. For instance, some articles often mention statements from Deputy Chairman of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Dmitry Medvedev asserting that Ukraine is merely a tool in the West's broader geopolitical strategy against Russia, feeding readers a portrayal of the country that seeks to undermine their sovereignty. In this regard they also highlight Western military intervention which is also seen not only as an action that compromises the country's autonomy but also as attempts to support a regime who does not care for its people but prioritize geopolitical objectives above the well-being of their citizens. RT articles underline Western leaders pushing for continued conflict and increased military aid despite the heavy losses suffered by Ukrainian civilians and soldiers.

The outlet publications also portray Ukraine as a state with a questionable government that is not legitimate nor integral that is why, as previously mentioned, it is catalogued as a “Regime.” This narrative goes back to 2014 mentioning that the Ukrainian government came to power through a Western-backed coup that led to civil unrest and conflict. Using statements from President Vladimir Putin, they state that the government is not legitimate since the government officially lost its mandate and operates illegally by violating their own constitutional laws extending the current government’s mandate beyond the legal limits when presidential elections were suspended meaning that any agreements and actions made by Zelensky are therefore invalid. Moreover, the fact that Western countries collaborate with this “illegal” government implies that they are acting hypocritically by enabling corruption rather than defenders of democracy.

RT presents Ukraine as a territory that represents economic gains for the US. This line of narrative claims that the country has rich natural resources that are one of the motives behind the reason why the West provides economic and military support. They make reference to western leaders such as the US Senator Linsey Graham and his comments on the economic benefits of aiding Ukraine and that the primary interest lies in gaining control over those resources since they cannot allow those riches to fall in the hands of Russia and grant them the opportunity to get the great economic benefits from its exploitations framing the intervention as a self-serving endeavor rather than an altruistic effort.

Finally, Ukraine is depicted as a helpless state that not only received the support of Western countries, but their actual survival depends entirely on them. This representation highlights Ukraine’s great reliance militarily, economically and politically particularly to the US to be able to sustain their efforts in the ongoing conflict painting a picture of a nation that not unable to stand on its own. This is reflected on the frequent reports about every time the US approves financial support package stating the precarious situation of the Ukrainian forces and suggesting that without these supplies defense efforts would collapse instantly. This narrative is reinforced by indicating that the strategic decisions and reforms that Ukraine is pressured to undergo it is all to align with Western interests that reinforces the narrative of lacking sovereignty of the country.

4.3.2 Representations of Russia

When it comes to the portrayal of Russia, naturally RT attributes more positive representations and roles in the conflict as well as in the world. The most significant representation of Russia is as the defender against Western aggression and the protective force against imperialistic efforts of the West. According to this line of thought Moscow’s actions are necessary measures taking into consideration the fact that NATO continuously increased their military activities near its borders showing Western

countries as the primary aggressor in light of which the Russian nation had no other alternatives than protective measures that they executed.

That defender role does not only apply to the Russian Nation but is also projected on a more global scale. Specifically, Eurasia is often brought up when it comes to the role of Russia as its protector. Geographically, Russia is presented as a bridge and gateway to the rest of the continent. Furthermore, RT presents the relevance of their role by maintaining stability and security in the Eurasian region, suggesting that without their protective influence, it would be vulnerable to western attacks. Additionally, articles suggest that the expansion towards the Black Sea is driven by a desire to dominate Eurasia. The West argues that once Russia is defeated, access to dominate Eurasia will be given, thus making Russia appear as an indispensable power that fosters stability through strategic economic and political partnerships. This is why, in this line of narrative, Putin has expressed the need to configure "a future security system that encompasses all spheres of activity and is open to all Eurasian countries without exception."

Multipolarity is another argumentation line. According to this narrative, Russia is one of the leading actors in the change of the international system, which is characterized by being unfair, imperialistic, and unipolar—a hegemony of the United States that has led to global instability. To support this, they use the examples of Libya, Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, and more recently, the Israel-Palestine conflict, where aggressive foreign policy, including military interventions or economic sanctions, has hindered the financial development options available to the member countries. This approach substitutes egalitarian interactions and dialogue with closed coalitions that work closely together and leave out the rest of the world, imposing their will on the global stage and causing widespread instability. In this context, multipolarity is presented as a change to that unfair world system, one that is more inclusive and just. Additionally, in this context, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) countries and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are vital platforms that promote real economic growth, political stability, and regional security.

With this role of defender and leading advocate for a more multipolar world, RT also portrays the Russian state as a seeker of peace through diplomacy in the context of the Ukraine war. Following this stance, Russia has been constantly attempting to find diplomatic means to end the conflict despite the constant provocations and hostilities from the West. They have been open to dialogue, offering peace accord proposals, to which particularly the United States constantly opposes, representing the main obstruction to achieving peace. For example, as previously stated RT articles spotlight peace talks in Turkey in 2022, where it is alleged that Boris Johnson advised Kyiv not to accept the peace terms proposed showing that, contrary to Russia's stance, the West is more interested in using Ukraine

for their geopolitical objectives than in making concessions and engaging in constructive dialogue. This narrative promotes the image of Russia as a responsible global player committed to diplomacy and international peace, as exemplified by statements like: "Without diplomacy, without communication channels, we will not achieve peace. Peace will not come by itself; we must work for it"(RT en Español, 2024bd).

Lastly, the federation is portrayed as resilient and powerful that despite facing the global hegemony continues to thrive against harsh sanctions and military attacks demonstrating their strong performance militarily and economically. This narrative displays Russia's advanced capabilities by reporting constantly on territorial advances, the successful completion of military operations and overall elements that demonstrate Russia's dominance on the battlefield. On the economic side, reports discuss mainly how Russia has been able to mitigate the impact of sanctions with effective economic policies and by maintaining successful partnerships with other non-western countries including mainly China. This narrative intends to draw attention to the ability of the Russian economy to adapt in difficult situations and grow managing not to give in to the West's attempts to cause and economic collapse of the country.

After establishing the main discursive attributes associated to each country, next the focus will be on why these narratives are of strategic significance in the case of spanish speaking audiences, namely Hispanic countries.

4.3.3 Strategic Importance of Latin America

Latin America holds significant strategic importance for Russia, especially in the context of the Ukraine-Russia conflict. This importance extends to the economic, political, and ideological levels. To balance the influence of the West, it is critical to maintain friendly relations with Latin American countries, which is when the dissemination of these kind of discourses becomes critical. This strategy is intended to gain the support or at least neutrality of the region with respect to the conflict.

Firstly, it is significant to consider some economic interests in the neutral stance towards the Ukraine conflict of some Latin American countries. Some of them rely on Russian fertilizers and energy supplies are which vital for the agricultural and industrial sectors. Brazil is an important example of this since it has large agricultural exports fertilizers are of great importance to keep the agricultural activity going thus, it would naturally be a strategic decision to keep a neutral stance to avoid any disruption of these essential imports (Columbia SIPA, 2023)

Taking into consideration the Latin American states' historical, cultural and economic ties with Europe, this region represents a battleground for influence. Cultivating a favorable image and gaining influence by using media is a way to undermine Western influence. This approach could be considered partially successful as evidenced in the contrasting responses of Latin American countries to the Ukraine conflict that range from vocal support to cautious neutrality. (RAND, 2023)

Politically, an increased influence in Latin America could result in diplomatic support in international organizations like in the United Nations through possible abstentions against international actions or condemnation towards Russian actions. It also represents an important potential supporter of the multipolarity model that Russia means to encourage. This is why engaging countries and organizations such as the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) and the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) in cooperations with organizations like BRICS and SCO would be of great impact in weakening what is considered unipolar frameworks.

From the point of view of exports, Latin America represents a valuable market for Russia where they have mutually beneficial agreements in the energy and military sectors. Countries such as Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua have lasting economic and military cooperation ties with Russia, which involves vast investments in oil and military hardware. Venezuela has received significant Russian investments in its oil sector through companies like Rosneft, while also representing a major purchaser of Russian military equipment. In the case of Nicaragua, they have engaged in economic projects and military cooperation with Russia, including the purchase of military equipment as well as receiving training support. While the economic return compared such investments may not be substantial, these cooperations provide Russia with strategic foothold in the Western Hemisphere. (Royal United Services Institute, 2023).

Latin America is also a strategic region for Russian efforts, as their influence on these Spanish speaking countries for three main reasons. The first is its history of non-alignment or anti-imperialist sentiment that prevails in the public of many Latin American countries towards Western hegemony, something that resonates with Russian geopolitical strategies. The Federation uses these historical sentiments to build sympathy in Latin American society but also politically as it serves to build alliances and rally support in international bodies such as the United Nations. Many of the member countries that are part of the region and have a cautious position to the U.S policies, find a potential strategic partner in Russia who claims to offer an alternative to Western political and economic models. (Brookings, 2023) Apart from anti-imperialistic sentiments, there is an ideological closeness with left wing leaning governments in the region. There are clear examples like Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua but also more recently countries such as Bolivia, under the leadership of Luis Arce,

and Mexico, with President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, have shown a strong alignment with leftist policies. Additionally, the election of Gustavo Petro in Colombia marks a significant shift in the region, as he is the first left-wing president in the country's history.

The Bolivian president has held diplomatic and economic relations with Russia. The two countries have agreed to cooperate in the development of a semi-industrial pilot plant for lithium extraction in the Uyuni salt flat as well as establishing the largest radio pharmacological complex in Latin America in El Alto (MercoPress,2024). Therefore, the voting abstention by Bolivia during the special emergency session of the United Nations General Assembly in March 2022 did not come as a surprise. Bolivia decided to maintain a controversial neutral position arguing the escalation of the conflict was caused by ‘the lack of dialogue and understanding’, while disapproving Western-led sanctions on Russia. (Bilhar, 2022)

In Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador has also remained neutral about the Ukraine conflict urging for peace talks and refraining from sending arms to Ukraine nor imposing sanctions against Russia (REUTERS, 2023). Colombia’s president, Gustavo Petro expresses a critical approach to NATO and Western intervention, which resonates with criticisms from Russia in regard to Western military unions. President Petro criticized events like the Ukraine peace summit in June 2024 to which he decided not to attend saying *"The majority of Latin America and the Government of Colombia do not agree with extending the war. We do not align ourselves with political blocs for war"* (Torrado, 2024) and also decided not to send weapons to Ukraine and would prefer “have them end up as scrap” before providing them. (Berg et al., 2023)

Lastly, the reasons why Latin America is a fertile soil for a potential success of propaganda is the lack of strong regulation measures to control the circulation of misleading content compared to other regions. The weak regulatory environment and significant social media usage facilitates the dissemination of disinformation and propaganda. An example of this is Argentina where the absence of robust digital content regulation allowed platforms and other online channels to spread misinformation during elections and political events (Schafer, 2021). Also, Brazil, during 2018 presidential elections saw the presence of false news stories and misleading political advertisements that influenced the behavior of voters with a major platform like WhatsApp where false information was shared the most (Newman, 2019). This kind of behavior is amplified by the relative lack of digital education because the population is unable to properly discern false information from more credible news sources (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017) which in the case of RT, are very successful with the flow of Russian propaganda.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This thesis aims to analyze the Russian geopolitical spatialization representations of Russia and Ukraine being disseminated through strategic use of media, specifically RT (Russia Today) in the Spanish version. Particularly for the Latin American audience it targets them in ways that serve Russian geopolitical interests in the context of the Ukraine-Russian war. There is also an examination of what are some of the concrete media strategies used for propaganda purposes. The theoretical framework combines elements of Critical Geopolitics and Popular Geopolitics, acknowledging the significant role of media in shaping public perceptions and geopolitical imaginations. To achieve the objectives there is a blend of critical discourse analysis (CDA) and corpus linguistics.

The methodological foundation of this study lies in Fairclough's three-dimensional model of CDA, which examines discursive texts at three levels: description, interpretation, and explanation. This model was paired with corpus linguistics tools, particularly Sketch Engine, to analyze the structural features of a corpus of 677 articles taken from RT in Spanish ranging from April 28, 2024, and July 6, 2024. The first stage involved examination of the text that focused on vocabulary and collocations. This was followed by an interpretative phase that considered the text creation, dissemination and consumption. Finally, the explanation phase establishes the discursive findings to the wider socio-political context and power relations.

The findings of this study are structured around the core themes identified in every step of the analysis process. The first textual analysis stage was performed to identify high-frequency words and key collocations associated with "Russia" and "Ukraine." This step revealed the dominant themes and topics in RT's coverage. The high frequency words analysis revealed that in general the articles focus on different aspects of the conflict, with 30% of the words directly linked to military topics, such as "armas, conflicto, militar, guerra, fuerzas, defensa, ataque, militares, tropas, misiles," which is evidence of emphasis on hostilities' acts and military competition. There is also a clear identification of international actors, such as "países, ee.uu, otan, occidentales," that emphasize global context of alliances and oppositions. Likewise, there is an interest in the role of political leadership and institutions with terms such as "presidente, Zelenski, Putin, régimen, ministerio, ministro". Despite the focus on conflict-related terms, words like peace "paz", "negociaciones" to the contrary of the presence of the words, as "paz", "negociaciones".

The collocation analysis shows that when it comes to Ukraine collocations, verbs like "deber" (must), "poder" (can), and "tener" (have) are framed in a way that suggest narratives around Ukraine's obligations and the fulfilment of expectations of Western countries. Some prepositional collocations such as "De Ucrania" (of Ukraine) discusses military operations, the state of their defenses, and socio-

economic impacts, highlighting the damage and challenges Ukraine forces face. "A Ucraina" (to Ukraine) highlights international support, especially military assistance from the West, while also noting potential corruption. "En Ucraina" (In Ukraine) focuses on the topics around internal turmoil and the intervention of Western countries. The term "paz" (peace) is often discussed in the context of the Ukraine peace Summit, which is discussed in a negative way, and Western interference that obstruct peace accords.

The analysis of Russia's collocations exhibits categories like verbs with "Russia" as the object, verbs with Russia as the subject, "Russia and," prepositional phrases, and usage patterns like "Russia is." With Russia as the object the most significant term is "invitar" (invite) highlighting Russia being excluded from events like the Ukraine peace conference in June 2024 and the 80th anniversary D-Day commemoration which perceived as unjust acts. Verbs like "lograr" (achieve) highlight Russian military successes and the unified command's effectiveness. "Tener" (have) indicates that Russia does not have imperialistic ambitions as the West claims and that instead, it is them who have those intentions. "Poder" (can) emphasizes Russia's capability to keep the pressure on Ukraine's military and its readiness for peace negotiations given a legitimate Ukrainian government.

The second step of the analysis regarding the processes behind the production, distribution and consumption allows identification of the main media strategies. One of the strategies is the lack of an author name, which gives the impression of the reports being objective and facts lack possible bias of the author, reducing the possibility of readers questioning the content. This is a tactic that Chomsky states give the impression of impersonal truth to media content. Another characteristic is the type of sources used in the articles. Most of them come from government spokespersons or officials as well as politicians and government figures from other countries. As long as there is a rhetoric that supports Russian interests there are some cases of selective citations taken from specific fragments that are out of context. This strategy is used to amplify criticism towards Ukraine and Western policies.

Moreover, there is a strategic selection of release times of the publications which focus on the evening and morning times that align with the public main media consumption, which helps maximizing the reach of the content. Additionally, it is possible to see frequent repetition of specific phrases that help establish a consistent message, the inclusion of links to other articles of RT that keeps the reader in a circle of information narratives, and the extensive use of social media for a wider reach to the public with the help of Russian diplomatic accounts and other disingenuous accounts.

The third step establishes the overall findings of the geopolitical discursive construction of both countries, and it is considered in the broader geopolitical context, examining how these

representations of Ukraine and Russia have a wider connection to geopolitical power dynamics being played. Ukraine is portrayed as a puppet state that is an instrument of a wider confrontation between the West -meaning the US and NATO- and Russia. It is presented as a country that lacks autonomy, whose are being made by external powers with the help of an illegitimate and corrupt government. This is a situation that undermines the sovereignty of the country. Additionally, the narrative shows Ukraine as a helpless state that depends on western support in every sense.

Conversely, the picture of Russia is drawn in a very positive light. In this narrative, Russia is a strong economic and military power that has the role of maintaining regional stability in Eurasia, protecting the region from Western Imperialism since it is the gateway or bridge to the rest of the continent. It is also a leader -along with China- in the configuration of a more just and multipolar world that is in the process of challenging an unjust and conflict driven US-led unipolar world. In regards specifically to the war, Russia's actions are portrayed as measure that had to be undertaken since NATO expanded to their very borders in threatening move of imperialistic nature towards the east. It is often highlighted as an actor who seeks peace as well as their efforts in proposing peace treaties. This is contrasted with the obstruction of the US as framed by RT. Finally, it is displayed as a resilient country who in the face of economic sanctions and military challenges has been able to adapt and overcome.

These narratives have a significant strategic relevance taking into account Russia's intention to have a more significant influence in Latin America in order to counterbalance Western hegemony . Latin America holds important economic, political, and ideological aspects for Russia; therefore representing it represents a core target for RT's discourses. With a bigger influence it would be possible to weaken western influence, gain diplomatic support in international organizations, and promote the multipolarity model by cultivating a favorable image in the region. In fact, it is a region with fertile ground for Russian propaganda on the one hand due to the historical sentiments of anti-imperialism and left-wing governments that to certain degree sympathize or align with Russian interests. On the other hand, the weak regulatory environment in the region provides room for the dissemination of propaganda narratives.

After performing this study, it is relevant to mention that while this study provides significant insights into RT's geopolitical narratives, as with every study, there are limitations that must be acknowledged. The analysis covers only a 3-month period due to RT's search engine limitations which does not permit a more comprehensive long-term examination of trends or shifts in narrative strategies. Additionally, cultural nuances and audience reception in Latin America might also influence the interpretation of these narratives. Finally, apart from reliance on publicly available

articles limits that reduces the temporal scope, as previously mentioned, access to other useful sources like internal editorial guidelines or interviews with RT journalists are not available to this author which could have provided a deeper understanding of the narrative construction process.

All in all, this thesis aims to contribute to critical geopolitics by using a linguistic approach which is something that is close to my heart given my background in linguistics. It highlights how RT uses narratives with the intention to shape geopolitical imaginations of the Latin American audience. They mean to manipulate the media landscape through their writings of the geographical areas of Russia and Ukraine. The findings underscore the power of media in constructing geopolitical realities and the importance of critically engaging these narratives to understand their impact on global perceptions and policymaking. There is also room for future research that considers expanding the temporal scope, comparing these findings with RT's content in other languages and that incorporates the important element of audience interpretations to these narratives. There is also room for exploration into the possibility of analyzing the internal dynamics at RT providing a more complete picture in the ongoing geopolitical struggles and the construction of international public opinion globally.

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