The Image of Vladimir Putin in CNN Online News reports Before and After Ukraine Invasion: A Critical Discourse Analysis

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Abstract

The present study is a CDA of Vladimir Putin's image in CNN online news reports before and after the Ukraine invasion. The study adopts van Dijk's (1998) discursive expression and reproduction to uncover the hidden ideology in the CNN discourse used to depict the image of Vladimir Putin. For this purpose, 20 articles were taken from the CNN website, ten before the Ukraine invasion and the other ten after the invasion. This study attempts to answer the following questions: 1. What discursive strategies were employed in the representation of Putin's image before and after the invasion? 2: How is the construction of the concept of the self and the other observed in CNN reports before and after the invasion?

The researcher utilized Van Dijk ideological square theory to uncover the self and other concept in the CNN reports. The results show that the Russian president is depicted differently in the two periods. He is portrayed more negatively in the post war period.

Keywords: CDA, Ideological square, Representation of Self and the Other.

المستخلص

الدراسة الحالية عبارة عن تحليل نقدي لصورة فلاديمير بوتين في تقارير CNN الإخبارية عبر الإنترنت قبل وبعد غزو أوكرانيا. تتبنى الدراسة أسلوب فان ديك (1998) الخطابي لكشف الأيديولوجية الخفية في خطاب سي إن إن المستخدم لكشف صورة فلاديمير بوتين. ولهذا الغرض، تم أخذ 20 مقالاً من موقع CNN، عشرة منها قبل غزو أوكرانيا والعشر الأخرى بعد الغزو. تحاول هذه الدراسة الإجابة على الأسئلة التالية: 1ـ ما هي الاستراتيجيات الخطابية التي تم توظيفها في تمثيل صورة بوتين قبل الغزو وبعده؟ 2: كيف يتم ملاحظة بناء مفهوم الذات والآخر في تقارير CNN؟ استخدم الباحث نظرية المربع الأيديولوجي لفان دايك للكشف

عن مفهوم الذات والآخر في تقارير شبكة سي إن إن. وتظهر النتائج أن الرئيس الروسي تم تصويره بشكل مختلف في الفترتين. تم تصويره بشكل أكثر سلبية في فترة ما بعد الحرب.

1.1. Introduction

The media plays a crucial role in the dissemination and exchange of knowledge on various significant subjects that impact human existence (Saad, 2022, p.49). Furthermore, there exists a strong correlation between this phenomenon and the notion of "soft power" within the field of international relations. According to Nye (2004), the author posits that the possession of knowledge equates to power, and the triumph of a narrative is contingent upon more than just military victories (p. 105). According to Van Dijk (1993, p. 255), the media plays a crucial role in influencing public opinion and can perpetuate social power dynamics and dominance through its "privileged access to discourse." Furthermore, Fairclough (1992, p. 3) affirms that news discourses not only serve as a reflection or representation of social entities and interactions, but also actively participate in their construction and constitution.

On February 24, 2022, the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, authorized a special military operation to initiate an incursion into Ukraine (Mankoff, 2022). The aforementioned invasion has engendered the most perilous circumstances since the conclusion of World War II. Consequently, the aforementioned event instigated a worldwide scarcity of food resources (Strubenhoff, 2022), leading to the unprecedented emergence of the most substantial refugee crisis to date, including a population exceeding 6.3 million Ukrainian refugees (Daniel & Elly, 2022).

Consequently, the invasion has garnered extensive global disapproval (Rebecca et al., 2022), and demonstrations have transpired on a global scale (Briar et al., 2022). According to Mankoff (2022), Putin asserts that Russia was compelled to engage in military intervention in Ukraine, citing many grievances as a rationale, such as the enlargement of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Putin's ideological framework revolved around the prioritization of fostering a sense of unity among the Eastern Slavic nations, namely Russians, Ukrainians, and Belarusians. He advocated for the notion that these contemporary governments should collectively shape their political trajectory, both presently and in the forthcoming years. The implication of this perspective is that the Western powers seek to utilize Ukraine as a component of an overarching "anti-Russia project" (ibid).

Extensive research has been conducted to examine the portrayal of Vladimir Putin in the media. Several studies employed critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how the media portrays Vladimir Putin in relation to specific events or situations. However, none of these studies

conducted a chronological analysis of media discourse to depict the representation of Vladimir Putin both prior to and following the Ukraine invasion. Therefore, the primary objective of this study is to analyze the chronological representation of Vladimir Putin in media discourse, specifically focusing on CNN, both prior to and subsequent to the invasion of Ukraine. Through this endeavor, our objective is to make a valuable contribution to the ongoing scientific discourse.

1.2 Problem Statement

On the morning of Thursday, February 24, 2022, the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, delivered a national address wherein he declared the initiation of a "special military operation" targeting Ukraine. According to Putin, the invasion of Ukraine by Russia was a defensive measure aimed at thwarting the perceived encroachment of NATO and the Western powers, who were allegedly utilizing Ukraine as a component of an overarching "anti-Russia project". According to Mankoff (2022), the aforementioned invasion poses a significant risk to the peace and security of Europe, surpassing any other threat since the conclusion of the Cold War in 1991.

As a result, numerous newspapers, writers, journalists, politicians, and researchers have examined this invasion from various angles, which are evident through their selection of certain linguistic expressions and syntactic choices. The significance of studying the historical portrayal of Vladimir Putin in CNN news, particularly in relation to prominent political people and events like the Ukraine invasion in February 2022, is believed to be of great importance within the field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), according to the researcher. Therefore, the objective of this research is to make a novel contribution and address the existing research gap that has not been explored in other studies.

1.3 Research Questions

In this study, the investigator endeavors to ascertain solutions to the subsequent inquiries:

1- What discursive strategies were employed in the representation of Putin's image before and after the invasion?

2- How is the construction of the concept of the self and the other observed in CNN reports before and after the invasion?

1.4 Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to

1. This inquiry aims to discern the discursive methods employed in the portrayal of Putin before and after the invasion.

2 Examine the utilization of the self and the other construction in CNN reporting before and after the invasion.

2. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a theoretical framework that examines the relationship between language, power, and ideology. It aims to uncover the underlying social, political, and cultural structures that shape and are shaped by discourse. CDA

The objective of this particular section is to provide a comprehensive elucidation of several facets pertaining to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). These facets encompass the historical context, definitions and essence, objectives, principles, methodologies, as well as pertinent terminology associated with the area of CDA.

2.1 The Historical Context of Critical Discourse Analysis

The theoretical framework known as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) emerged in the early 1990s in Amsterdam, pioneered by a cohort of distinguished researchers including Theo van Leeuwen, Gunther Kress, Teun van Dijk, Ruth Wodak, and Norman Fairclough (Wodak & Meyer, 2001). These academics have formulated distinct methodologies for doing critical discourse analysis, tailored to their respective fields of inquiry or areas of specialization. It may be inferred from this statement that Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is an interdisciplinary methodology that, as asserted by Bloor and Bloor (2007), can be employed by academics from many fields, including historians, politicians, and others, to examine societal issues pertaining to their respective domains.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is derived from the theoretical framework of critical linguistics (CL), which aims to identify the expressions of ideology within the grammatical and semantic structures of written discourse. It investigates how these discourse forms generate meaning and classify items, social actors, and events (Simpson & Mayr, 2009). The inception of critical linguistics can be traced back to its emergence as a scholarly movement at the University of East Anglia during the mid-1970s. The East Anglia School suggested that Halliday's systemic functional grammar be used as the foundation for examining news texts (Hodge and Kress, 1993). Halliday

(1985, p. 101) asserts that grammar extends beyond mere adherence to formal standards of correctness.

The representation of patterns of experience is a method employed. It facilitates the capacity of individuals to construct a cognitive representation of the external world. According to van Leeuwen (2006), critical linguistics encompasses two essential stages in the process of text analysis. According to Halliday (1985), the initial aspect to consider is the pattern of experience, which he asserts is not inherently neutral. The construction of these entities is tailored to align with the preferences and requirements of the user. In cases when the user's preferences encompass a desire for control or influence, the resulting entities might be considered ideological in nature. The second stage is predicated on the premise that diverse languages have the capacity to represent distinct patterns of experience and ideas. Similarly, it posits that various applications of a single language can also exhibit this capability (van Leeuwen, 2006)

According to Halliday's (1978) perspective, critical linguistics posits that language serves three distinct tasks. There are three primary functions of language that contribute to its overall effectiveness in communication. The first function, known as the ideational function, involves the construction of a representation of the world. The second function, referred to as the interpersonal function, focuses on expressing the interaction between individuals involved in the act of communication. Lastly, the textual function pertains to the creation of a coherent and cohesive text, ensuring its overall coherence and cohesion (Wodak and Meyer, 2001; Van Leeuwen, 2006). The different functions of language are interconnected with the various elements of the text. The ideational function is illustrated through the use of transitivity structures, while the interpersonal function is conveyed through mood and modality. The textual function, on the other hand, is expressed through the implementation of theme (Halliday, 1994).

2.2 Van Dijk (1998) Ideological Square Theory.

According to van Dijk (1998a, p.167), the sociocognitive approach incorporates a significant component known as the "Ideological Square." This pertains to the manner in which different social collectives depict alternative collectives while concurrently advancing their own interests in a positive light. According to Van Dijk (2000, p. 72), there are four criteria that facilitate a comprehensive investigation of ideologies, allowing for the consideration of diverse perspectives. There are four fundamental principles that serve as guiding ideas:

• Mitigate the prominence of the adverse facets of the United States.

• Highlight the adverse elements of Them

• Highlight the advantageous qualities of the United States

• Downplay the favorable attributes of Them

These activities are integral elements of a broader contextual strategy aimed at undermining the presentation of others and one's own self-presentation. The act of self-presentation, particularly when articulating diverse ideological convictions, serves as an indicator of an individual's behavior within a collective context. According to van Dijk (2000, p.84), individuals tend to highlight the positive actions of their own group (referred to as "Us") while simultaneously expressing negative views towards other groups (referred to as "Them"). Based on the ideological square hypothesis, it is posited that specific political figures have the potential to reveal a covert ideological structure characterized by a tendency to display oneself in a positive light while simultaneously engaging in negative portrayals of others.

2.3 van Dijk's (1998) Discursive Expression and Reproduction

This study will employ four distinct methodologies that the researcher considers highly pertinent to this research endeavor. These tactics aim to uncover the concealed ideology present in the language of CNN online reports, specifically focusing on the interplay between positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. There are four distinct techniques that can be identified.

2.3.1 Attribution

In order to assign negative actions to our adversaries, it is necessary to depict them as "accountable actors who possess conscious, deliberate, and cynically informed awareness of their actions" (van Dijk, 1998b, p. 58) and the consequences that arise from their behavior, regardless of whether such conduct is characterized as irrational or even deranged. Conversely, individuals who exhibit excessive amiability towards their adversaries may be encouraged to rectify their behavior.

2.3.2 Descriptions

The distinguishing attributes of groups or institutions linked to the concepts of 'Us' and 'Them' also align with the principle of ideological polarization (van Dijk, 1998b, p. 58). As a result, the discourse found in CNN's web reports consistently placed emphasis on the portrayal of Vladimir Putin as the one accountable for the invasion of Ukraine. According to Mankoff (2022), the

aforementioned incursion was characterized as the most perilous circumstance since the conclusion of World War II and garnered extensive global censure.

2.3.3 Expression

A wide range of stylistic and rhetorical methods can be employed to augment the articulation of ideas. The utilization of mental health terminology can be employed to characterize negative behaviors, whereas individuals who oppose can be categorized as exhibiting crazy, mad, or megalomaniacal tendencies (van Dijk, 1998b, p. 59). Another tactic employed in the intervention of CNN online reporting was the opposition of negative connotations with "Them" and the promotion of good associations with "Us." This approach aimed to portray America as the advocate for peace, whereas Vladimir Putin was depicted as lacking such intentions.

2.3.4 Using History

Ideological perspectives strategically utilize and conceal historical narratives. In relation to the portrayal of the "Self" in a positive light, the media endeavors to evoke historical occurrences that showcase the celebration of the "Self," while simultaneously obscuring any bad instances. In contrast, the media endeavors to obscure favorable attributes and accentuate negative features when portraying the "Other" in a detrimental manner. According to van Dijk (1998b), it can be observed that... In the analysis of CNN's web reporting, it was deemed imperative to trace the origins of the current situation by referring to the events of the late 1970s, specifically the Soviet Union's decision to invade Afghanistan. This approach aimed to refresh the memory of the American public and the global community (McCann, 2021). Vladimir Putin, who is widely attributed with orchestrating the incursion into Ukraine in 2022, continues to be portrayed as an adversary of Western nations.

3. Analytical Framework

The researcher employs van Dijk's (1998) ideological square model as a conceptual framework for the examination of the data: The ideological square paradigm proposed by van Dijk (1998). In order to conduct an analysis of news discourse, scholars employ van Dijk's discursive methods. These tactics involve the identification of textual signifiers, the examination of juxtapositions and event sequencing, and the contextualization of the text within a socio-historical and socio-cultural framework.

The findings will present the depiction of Putin in CNN news reports, employing van Dijk's (1998) discursive analysis framework to examine the discursive tactics employed in CNN's online news reports to describe the Russian President in their discourse.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.0 Introduction

In this part, an analysis will be conducted on 20 items sourced from CNN's online news reports. The analysis will employ the discursive methods outlined by van Dijk (1998), specifically focusing on discursive expression and reproduction.

This study aims to conduct a linguistic analysis of van Dijk's (1998) discursive expression and replication in order to address the first research issue. The researcher will address the second inquiry by examining the portrayal of the Russian president prior to and subsequent to the Ukraine invasion in 2022.

According to van Dijk (1998b), discursive expressions and reproductions refer to the manners in which ideologies are articulated and perpetuated through the structures of text and speech that are positioned within social contexts. Alternatively, this inquiry pertains to the manner in which these ideals are manifested and perpetuated through societal customs and behaviors at large. The present analysis examines the essential characteristics that elucidate the portrayal of Vladimir Putin inside the discourse of online news published by CNN. This study will employ a limited number of techniques, specifically those outlined in chapter two. The aforementioned tactics encompass attribution, descriptions, expression, and the utilization of historical context.

4.1. **Attribution**

The concept of attribution pertains to the idea that bad behaviors are ascribed to our adversaries, who are regarded as individuals who knowingly and intentionally engage in these actions with full awareness of their consequences (van Dijk, 1998b). The concept in question is consistently depicted in the discourse of CNN's web reporting concerning Vladimir Putin and his illicit activities. The subsequent instances illustrate the adverse behaviors ascribed to Vladimir Putin inside the discourse of CNN's web stories.

1. A significant number of individuals who opposed the prevailing regime were apprehended and taken into custody. The individuals in question express their disapproval of the manner in which

Vladimir Putin emerged victorious in the presidential election of Russia, as reported by CNN on March 5, 2012.

2. CNN (2015, October 9) reported that the opposition has levied accusations against Putin, alleging that he has incarcerated dissidents and been involved in the assassination of important opposition figures.

3. A report by CNN on March 2, 2018, Russian President Vladimir Putin has been found to be in blatant contravention of his country's treaty obligations by developing advanced strategic weaponry that has the potential to render the defense systems of NATO ineffective.

4. According to a report by CNN on December 23, 2021, the Western nations have levied accusations against President Putin, asserting that he is responsible for the escalation in gas and food prices. These allegations suggest that Putin has deliberately restricted the supply of these commodities to Europe and other global regions.

5. A report by CNN on March 7, 2022, the actions of President Putin, namely his decision to engage in military bombardment in Ukraine, have resulted in a significant displacement of over one million individuals seeking safety. Furthermore, this military aggression has tragically led to the loss of numerous innocent human lives.

6. On August 24, 2022, CNN reported that the military intervention headed by President Putin in Ukraine has resulted in a significant loss of human life for Russia, with estimates ranging between 70,000 and 80,000 troops killed and wounded.

7. A recent report from CNN (2022, September 21), President Putin has been employing a range of destructive capabilities, such as nuclear and chemical weapons, as a potential means of escalating tensions with Western nations.
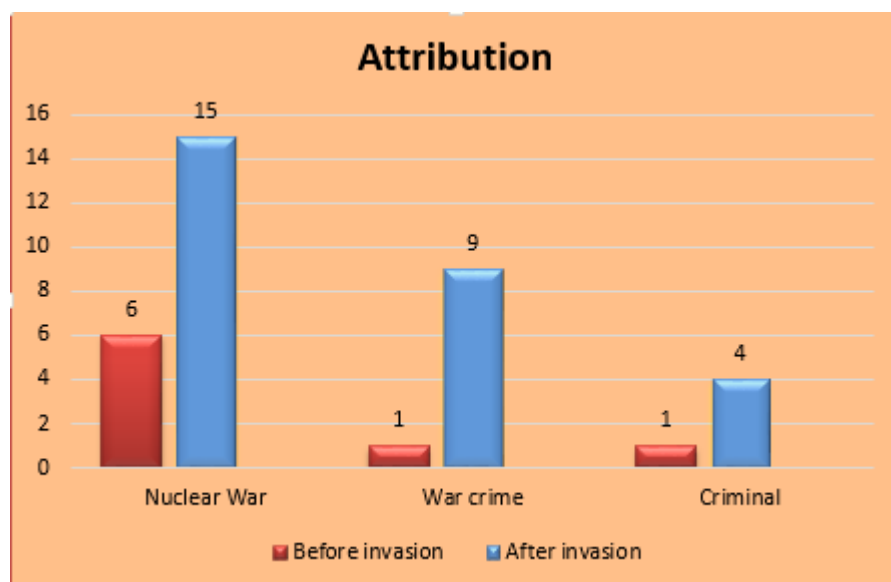
8. According to a report by CNN on September 21, 2022, President Putin made efforts to include certain regions of Ukraine through the orchestration of fraudulent referenda.

9. A report by CNN on March 26, 2023, President Putin has heightened the global threat level by perhaps considering the utilization of nuclear warfare.

10. On March 26, 2023, CNN stated that President Putin intends to employ tactical nuclear weapons, the utilization of which has the potential to result in the termination of life on our planet.

The aforementioned attributes are essential elements that are employed in the discourse of CNN stories, thereby depicting an insane and murderous ruler who employs several methods of destruction to invade Ukraine. Vladimir Putin has been accused of engaging in illegal activities and has been associated with the potential utilization of diverse methods of devastation, including the prospect of nuclear warfare. The utilization of these methods of devastation is widely seen as constituting a violation of international humanitarian law. These three linguistic terms are employed within the context of CNN web reporting to denote this particular concept. Figure 4.1 depicts the frequency with which the terms 'Nuclear War', 'War Crime', and 'Criminal' were utilized in the discourse of CNN coverage, both prior to and subsequent to the invasion of Ukraine.

Figure (4.1): The usage of Nuclear War, War Crime and Criminal in CNN reports' discourse

The linguistic discourse employed in CNN's online broadcasts establishes a distinct dichotomy between the concept of the "Self" and the notion of the "Other." The studies illustrate the Western perspective, which is marked by a commitment to advancing world peace, with a specific emphasis on the circumstances in Ukraine. The Western nations extended aid to the Ukrainian opposition as a reaction to Putin's military intervention, while expressing vehement disapproval of his intentions to utilize chemical or tactical nuclear weapons against Ukraine and Europe. The web stories generated by CNN displayed a clear dichotomy, depicting Western nations as models of free democracies while portraying the Putin regime as a kind of despotic rule. Moreover, the examination of the semantic and syntactic levels of analysis offers examples of favorable ascriptions to the concept of "self".

4.2 Description.

This technique pertains to the manner in which the in-group and out-group are delineated. The categorization of these groups as 'Us' and 'Them' aligns with the concept of ideological polarization (van Dijk, 1998b). The aforementioned concept is prominently underscored through the vivid portrayal of Russian adversaries being apprehended or deceased, including the assassination of notable figures within the opposition movement. Russia is known for its culture of secrecy and confidentiality. The subsequent illustrations depict several occurrences wherein the portrayal of Russians during Vladimir Putin's tenure is presented in the discourse of CNN's web reporting.

1. According to a report by CNN in 2012, a significant number of individuals were apprehended on the grounds of their refusal to acknowledge the legitimacy of Vladimir Putin's victory in the Russian presidential election.

2. In Russia, there exists a pervasive culture of secrecy, wherein the dissemination of truth is actively discouraged. According to a report by CNN in 2015, individuals who express a desire to disclose the truth are at risk of facing fatal consequences.

3. The degree of Russia's isolation during Putin's reign has increased due to stringent limitations on the freedom of expression, the persecution and incarceration of dissidents, the suppression of media liberties, and the manipulation of electoral processes (CNN, 2015).

4. Russian population are facing significant challenges due to the deteriorating economy, which has been exacerbated by extensive sanctions imposed by Western nations in response to President Putin's military intervention. According to a source from CNN in the year 2022.

5. The media in Russia is increasingly subjected to tighter control by President Putin, with the aim of influencing the information and perceptions of the Russian population. According to a report by CNN in 2022, severe penalties, such as substantial monetary fines or imprisonment for a duration of 15 years, are imposed on any journalistic content that characterizes the military operation in Ukraine as a"attack or invasion."

6. The military intervention led by President Putin in Ukraine demonstrated a significant decline in moral values. The aforementioned report from CNN in 2022 highlights a notable lack of concern for the well-being of non-combatant individuals, as seen by the near-total destruction of urban centers and the subsequent displacement of millions of Ukrainian citizens.

7. According to a report by CNN in 2022, those who have engaged in anti-war protests have been apprehended and subsequently compelled to serve in the armed forces under the directive of Vladimir Putin. It has been further noted that those who decline this conscription face a potential prison term of 15 years.

8. Despite the unsuccessful attempt by President Putin to initiate a military invasion of Ukraine, resulting in a significant loss of 80,000 Russian servicemen in terms of casualties and injuries, it is noteworthy that a substantial number of 300,000 Russian civilians have been summoned for military duty. Consequently, there has been a notable emigration of Russian citizens from their homeland (CNN, 2022).

The United States, as a prominent figure in the Western world, is commonly linked with exemplary instances that align exclusively with its own standing. The concept of America being a global leader, a force for hope, and a superpower is frequently conveyed in the discourse of CNN's web reporting. In addition, providing assistance to the Ukrainian resistance movement in response to Putin's military intervention. The United States, as a prominent global power, serves as a compelling illustration of the contrasting dynamics between Western democracies and autocratic regimes, exemplified by the values espoused by President Putin. The United States of America serves as a favorable exemplification of Western civilisation. Vladimir Putin serves as a prominent figure associated with unfavorable actions that have compelled an increasing number of Russians to participate in the war. Additionally, it is noteworthy that Ukrainian morale did not see a decline. The Ukrainian military, armed with contemporary weaponry provided by the United States and its allies, engaged in conflict against an oppressive autocrat with the support of the United States, representing the forces of righteousness. As a result, nearly every facet of Vladimir Putin subsequent to the invasion is characterized in a bad light, serving as an indication of the autocratic nature of his administration.

4. 3 Expression

Expression, as a discursive strategy, is linked to the amplification of negative attributes and acts of the out-group through various forms of communication. These aforementioned terms can be sourced from the domain of mental health, with adversaries being characterized as crazy, mad, and megalomaniacal. Another approach involves doing a comparative analysis of a specific adversary with other notable figures (van Dijk, 1998b), such as drawing parallels between Vladimir Putin and Hitler, as well as making broader comparisons to the concept of evil itself. The aforementioned expressions are prominently observed in the prenominal adjectives utilized to define the "other",

particularly in the manner in which Vladimir Putin was characterized by the discourse of CNN's web reporting as "criminal", "murderous", "isolated", "dictator", and similar terms. The subsequent assertions exemplify several occasions in which Vladimir Putin is characterized within the vocabulary of CNN's reports.

1. According to a CNN report from 2015, Putin has been characterized as a "gangster" who aims to undo the Soviet Union's fall and dismantle NATO.

2. In a report by CNN in 2015, it was noted that US Secretary Hilary Clinton drew a comparison between Vladimir Putin and Adolf Hitler.

3. In an effort to restore the reputation of Joseph Stalin, the former leader of the Communist Party, President Putin has undertaken a campaign. Dictators are known to engage in certain behaviors, as reported by CNN in 2022.

4. In according with a report from CNN in 2022, Vladimir Putin's actions bear resemblance to those of Germany under Hitler during the era of World War II.

5. According to a report from CNN in 2022, there are notable parallels between Russia's ongoing expansion efforts and Germany's invasion of Poland under Hitler's regime.

6. CNN reported in 2022 that President Joe Biden of the United States referred to Russian President Vladimir Putin as a "murderous" and "dictator."

The aforementioned assertions employ prenominal adjectives such as "gangster," "murderous," and "dictator" inside CNN's discourse to portray negative attributes associated with Vladimir Putin. An further approach is employed to draw a comparison between Putin and historical figures Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin, both of whom are characterized negatively. Putin's military intervention in a neighboring country was characterized by a high degree of aggression, as evidenced by deliberate attacks on non-combatants, resulting in significant humanitarian consequences. The acts described, as presented in CNN's stories, can be seen as attempts to manipulate the American public's perception of the significant threat posed by Vladimir Putin to Western security. Figure 4.2 depicts the frequency with which the terms "Dictator," "Hitler," and "Autocrat" were mentioned in the discourse of CNN coverage, both prior to and subsequent to the invasion of Ukraine.

Figure (4.2): The usage of Dictator, Hitler and Autocrat in CNN reports' discourse

The aforementioned diagram highlights the discursive tactic of representation, as it is observed that the term "Dictator" is the prevailing manner in which Vladimir Putin is denoted inside the discourse of CNN's web stories. Hence, it conveys a somber Russian milieu characterized by widespread affliction, desolation, and anguish. In contrast, the portrayal of America is characterized by the use of glorifying adjectives that accentuate positive depictions of the national identity, such as "proud," "committed," "strong," "blessed," "confident," "focused," and similar descriptors. The portrayal of the United States is often characterized as a formidable power that upholds global peace.

4.4 Using history

Ideological viewpoints strategically utilize and conceal historical narratives. Therefore, terrorism is portrayed as an enduring malevolence. The author van Dijk (1998b) asserts that there is a lack of historical context or elucidation on the violence perpetrated by the group referred to as "Their" against the group referred to as "Us" (p. 61). In relation to the affirmative portrayal of the concept of "Self," the media endeavors to evoke past occurrences that exemplify the exaltation of the individual identity. The utilization of this particular method is observed in two distinct manners across two temporal segments within the discourse of CNN online stories, serving as a representation of Vladimir Putin.

The temporal framework can be divided into two distinct periods: the pre-Ukraine invasion phase, which occurred prior to February 24, 2022, and the post-invasion phase, which followed this event. During the initial time, Vladimir Putin is shown as an individual characterized by decisive actions and authoritative leadership, asserting his commitment to refrain from engaging in acts of aggression towards neighboring nations or initiating any form of attack. Moreover, Putin has been characterized as an advocate of the United States and Western nations' endeavors in their

counterterrorism campaign. During the second period, CNN's online broadcasts depict Vladimir Putin as being accountable for the invasion, which has resulted in the emergence of a highly precarious situation, comparable to the circumstances saw during World War II. Consequently, Putin has garnered extensive international censure.

Utilizing historical analysis, particularly in the context of the Ukrainian invasion, can present a paradoxical situation as it underscores the manipulative tactics employed by Vladimir Putin to deceive both the Western nations and the global community at large over his true intentions of invading Ukraine. The subsequent examples illustrate how CNN's internet reports employed the tactic of historical references to depict Vladimir Putin.

1. Following the takeover of Crimea, Hilary Clinton, the Secretary of State of the United States, drew a comparison between Vladimir Putin and Adolf Hitler, highlighting their shared expansionist ideologies. According to a report by CNN (2015, September 18), the Russian leader endeavors to counteract the disintegration of the Soviet Union by engaging in military interventions aimed at expanding his territorial dominion.

2. Putin's electoral victory in Russia can be attributed to his effective use of propaganda and the exploitation of nostalgic sentiments among the populace. He exhibits strong characteristics associated with the Soviet era. He belongs to this particular cultural group. According to Merriam-Webster.com, the term 'propaganda' refers to the intentional dissemination of ideas, facts, or claims with the explicit purpose of advancing a certain political perspective, often via deceptive tactics. On the other hand, 'nostalgia' is characterized as a sentiment that entails a need to mentally or physically revisit a bygone age. Putin strategically employs historical narratives and propaganda techniques, drawing upon his background as a former member of the KGB, in an effort to revive the erstwhile Soviet Union (CNN, 2015, October 9).

3. In his essay, Putin draws a comparison between himself and Stalin, while also juxtaposing the West with Hitler. The author discusses the historical ramifications of the war in Europe, specifically focusing on the dissolution of the Hitler-Stalin alliance in 1941, which resulted in the German invasion of Poland. According to a report by CNN (2020, June 18), Putin has strategically positioned himself as a historical liberator in order to solidify his hold on power until 2036.

4. Putin's tenure is the second longest in duration, surpassed only by Joseph Stalin, the former Communist leader whom Putin has endeavored to restore in public perception. A comparative analysis of the governments led by Vladimir Putin and Joseph Stalin as manifestations of authoritarianism in Russia. The presence of governmental regulations on various aspects of life and
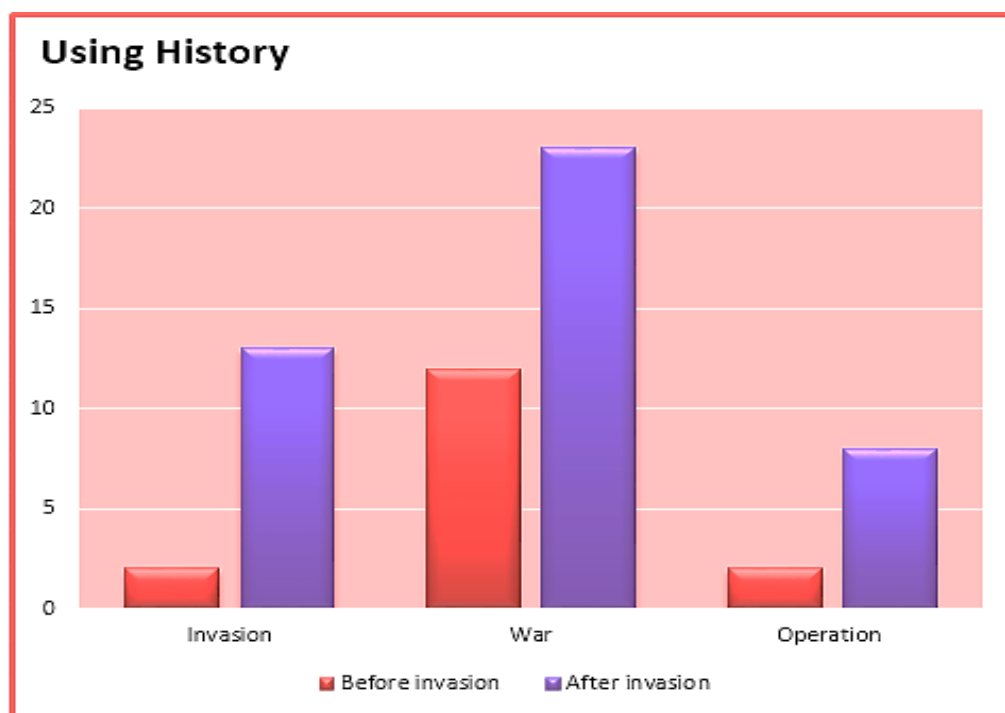
the dissemination of information is commonly associated with authoritarian leaders, as reported by CNN on March 8, 2022.

5. The present analysis draws a comparison between the contemporary expansionist endeavors of Russia during Putin's leadership and the expansionist policies pursued by Germany under Hitler's regime before to the outbreak of World War II. Since 2008, Vladimir Putin has been gradually expanding his territorial holdings, exerting influence over neighboring countries. Putin's objective in these endeavors is to reinstate the territorial dominion of the Russian empire, a parallel that can be drawn to Hitler's actions during that particular era (CNN, 2022, March 8).

In the aforementioned cases, the approach of employing historical references is employed in the discourse of CNN's reports. This is accomplished by drawing comparisons between Putin and Adolf Hitler or Joseph Stalin, thereby evoking memories of past historical events. Additionally, the utilization of terms such as 'propaganda' and 'nostalgia' serves to invoke history as a means of yearning for a return to a previous era, specifically the times of the former Soviet Union. All of these incidents portrayed a derogatory portrayal of Vladimir Putin as the "Other." Nevertheless, the portrayal of the invasion of Ukraine in the discourse of CNN shifted from Putin's assurances of non-aggression and lack of purpose to strike, as previously indicated, to attributing the responsibility for the violent incursion into Ukraine to Vladimir Putin. The responsibility attributed to Putin for the invasion and violation of his commitments is evident in the discourse of CNN reports, which employ frequent repetition and provide concrete evidence.

These reports highlight the brutal invasion of Ukraine, the justification of a "special military operation" to safeguard national security, the aspiration to restore Russia as an imperial power, and the assertion of being compelled to undertake the aforementioned "special operation." Figure 4.3 depicts the frequency with which the terms "Invasion," "War," and "Operation" are mentioned in the discourse of CNN coverage, both prior to and subsequent to the invasion of Ukraine.

Figure (4.3): The usage of Invasion, War and Operation in CNN reports' discourse

The aforementioned illustration highlights the discursive approach employed in CNN reporting, wherein historical references are strategically utilized through the terms invasion, battle, and operation. The frequency of these phrases has increased subsequent to the invasion of Ukraine compared to the period preceding it. The frequency of these terms being referenced in CNN's discourse prior to the invasion is as follows: 2, 12, 2. Subsequently, after the invasion, the frequency of these terms being mentioned in CNN's discourse is 13, 23, 8, in that order. Vladimir Putin is portrayed unfavorably and presented in a negative light within the discourse of CNN's web coverage, as evidenced by the increased frequency of terms such as invasion, war, and operation, particularly following the occurrence of the invasion.

5. Conclusion

Social activities reproduce ideologies through discursive manifestations and reproductions of van Dijk (1998b). Thus, they are essential for revealing CNN's web reports' ideological tactics for constructing the "self" and "other". The study included attribution, descriptions, expression, and history.

CNN reports exploited attribution to show Putin's devastation and ruthlessness. Attribution portrayed Putin as an insane, bloodthirsty dictator who invaded his neighbor through various tactics. Putin also appeared to be a criminal who would use tactical nuclear weapons to annihilate humanity. Instead, "the self" portrays a nation that only wants peace, especially in Ukraine. The West supported Ukrainian resistance to Putin's military operations and criticized his threats to use chemical or tactical nuclear weapons against Europe and Ukraine. Thus, CNN's online reporting distinguished the West as liberal democracies from the Putin rule as an autocracy.

The CNN online reports' visual description of Russia under Vladimir Putin emphasizes their descriptive technique. The phrases "struggling under the collapsing economy", "harsh restrictions on freedom of expression", "harassing and imprisoning dissidents", and "crushing media freedoms" define these graphic portrayals. According to CNN's internet publications, America is "A leader of the globe ", "a force for hope"," and so on. Besides supporting Ukrainian resistance to Putin's military operations, etc. Using the description technique, Lazar and Lazar (2004) emphasize the other's "depraved value system that has no reverence for human life" so "'they' are aligned with death and 'we' with life" (p. 232).

CNN online describes Vladimir Putin as "criminal", "murderous", "Isolated" or "dictator" or compares him to Hitler or Stalin, which are negative representations because Putin invaded his neighbor and targeted innocent civilians. However, admiring words like "proud", "committed", "strong", "blessed", "confident", "focused", and others show the "self" positively. The image of America as a global peacekeeper is overwhelming.

CNN internet reports used history to characterize Vladimir Putin throughout two periods. As a powerful leader, Vladimir Putin promised not to invade his neighbor or attack anyone before the Ukraine invasion (2022, February 24). Vladimir Putin caused the most hazardous situation since World War II after the invasion. Thus, Putin has drawn international criticism. History shows how Vladimir Putin deceived the West and the world about his desire to invade Ukraine.

Thus, CNN web publications use attribution, descriptions, emotions, and history to highlight America's "Self" and Vladimir Putin's "Other" flaws. CNN's internet reporting on Putin employed heavy emotion after the invasion to show how Putin deceived the West and the world.

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