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## FRAMING THE RUSSIAN–UKRAINIAN WAR: NARRATIVES IN THE DIGITAL EDITIONS OF POLISH NEWSPAPERS<sup>1</sup>

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Kitsa M. O., Majchrowska J.

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### INTRODUCTION

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered one of the largest refugee crises in Europe since World War II. Millions of Ukrainians, predominantly women and children, crossed into neighboring countries, with Poland becoming a primary destination and transit point. In parallel with the humanitarian response, media outlets in Poland began to construct narratives about the war and its victims, significantly influencing public perception and political discourse.

The emergence of this situation highlighted the critical role of the media not only in reporting facts, but also in shaping collective attitudes toward the displaced population. Within this context, the portrayal of Ukrainian female refugees became a focal point in Polish journalism. The ways in which these women were represented—either as passive victims of war or as active agents of survival and adaptation—raised important questions about gender, agency, and the ethics of wartime reporting<sup>2</sup>.

The online editions of *Gazeta Wyborcza*<sup>3</sup> and *Rzeczpospolita*<sup>4</sup>, as two of Poland's most influential national newspapers, offer a valuable lens through which to analyze how media narratives evolve over time and reflect broader political and social undercurrents.

The problem addressed in this chapter is the lack of systematic understanding of how Ukrainian women are represented in Polish digital

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<sup>2</sup> Wilkosz, A. Refugees or illegal migrants? A comparative study of Polish media discourse on Ukrainian war refugees and the Polish-Belarusian border crisis. *Studia Linguistica Universitatis Iagellonicae Cracoviensis*. 2025(1), 29–55.

<sup>3</sup> *Gazeta Wyborcza* (2022–2024). Ogólnopolski dziennik. [Electronic source]. Access mode: <https://wyborcza.pl/0,0.html>

<sup>4</sup> *Rzeczpospolita* (2022–2024). Ogólnopolski dziennik. [Electronic source]. Access mode: <https://www.rp.pl/>

journalism over the course of the war, and what implications these representations have for public opinion and the perception of refugees in host societies. This problem is not only journalistic or media-related; it is deeply embedded in discussions on migration policy, solidarity, and the role of media in crisis communication.

### 1. The problem's prerequisites emergence and the problem's formulation

Since the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, the humanitarian consequences have profoundly reshaped the political, social, and media landscapes across Europe. With over ten million Ukrainians displaced within months of the conflict's escalation, Poland emerged not only as a frontline state in terms of refugee reception but also as a key actor in narrating the war to both domestic and international audiences. This chapter explores how the Russia–Ukraine war is framed in the digital editions of leading Polish newspapers, focusing on the narrative strategies and representational choices employed by *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*. Through comparative analysis, the study reveals how each outlet constructs its interpretation of the conflict and conveys it to online audiences.

Among those fleeing the violence, women and children made up the vast majority. This gendered nature of displacement brought to the surface numerous questions about how women, especially Ukrainian women, are portrayed in public discourse. Are they depicted solely as vulnerable victims, or are they also framed as resilient individuals navigating the complexities of forced migration?

In this chapter, particular attention is paid to the role of digital journalism in shaping these perceptions. By examining the online editions of *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita* – two of Poland's most prominent newspapers – the study investigates how narratives about Ukrainian female refugees are constructed, how they evolve over time, and what ideological or emotional frames they rely upon<sup>5</sup>.

This research is situated at the intersection of media studies, gender studies, and conflict communication. It not only addresses the journalistic treatment of war and displacement, but also reflects on the broader implications of mediated representations for intercultural understanding, solidarity, and refugee integration in host societies.

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<sup>5</sup> Dobek-Ostrowska, B. Polish media system in a comparative perspective: Media in politics, politics in media. Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2019.

## 2. The analysis of existing methods for solving the problem and formulating a task for media research

According to the IMM ranking of the most frequently quoted press titles in Poland in 2023, *Rzeczpospolita* ranked first (with over 33,000 cross-media references), followed by *Gazeta Wyborcza*<sup>6</sup>. This confirms that these newspapers are among the most influential in Poland. For this reason, they were selected for this research. The study of the image of Ukrainian refugees in Polish media is conducted using an interdisciplinary approach that combines gender studies, critical discourse analysis, sociological theories, geneological analysis of the text and migration studies. This comprehensive methodological approach allowed for an in-depth study of the mechanisms of formation and representation of images of Ukrainian women in the Polish media space, taking into account the geneological determinants, including the structural, cognitive, pragmatic and stylistic aspects, which show the analysed exemplification material<sup>7</sup>.

The focus is placed on the representation of Ukrainian female refugees, with particular attention to how narrative strategies, visual elements, and thematic framing contribute to constructing public perceptions of Ukrainian women amid war and forced migration.

Through a comparative content analysis spanning a three-year period, the chapter examines the ways in which these media outlets portray Ukrainian women not only as victims, but also as active participants and symbols of resilience. Furthermore, it discusses the potential implications of such portrayals for shaping social attitudes in Poland and across Europe, highlighting the broader role of journalism in influencing public empathy, solidarity, and political discourse in times of humanitarian crisis.

## 3. Coverage of the war in Ukraine in the online version of newspaper "Rzeczpospolita"

Immediately after February 24 2022, a separate section titled "Russian Invasion of Ukraine" appeared on the main page of the "Rzeczpospolita" website. It was later changed to "Russia's War with Ukraine. Day #." Every day, current notes on this topic are posted there. Additionally, the sentence following the section title changes from time to time. Usually, it reflects the most important events of that day. For example:

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<sup>6</sup> Instytut Monitorowania Mediów. *Rzeczpospolita najbardziej opiniotwórczym tytułem mediowym 2023 roku*. IMM – Instytut Monitorowania Mediów? 2024. 31 Jan. URL: <https://www.imm.com.pl/rzeczpospolita-najbardziej-opiniotworczym-tytułem-mediowym-2023-roku/>

<sup>7</sup> Wojtak M. *Geneologiczna analiza tekstu*. *Prace Językoznawcze*, 2014. 16/3. S. 63–71.

"On February 24, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelensky claims that the sooner Ukraine wins, the less evil Russia will cause, particularly in the Middle East, where it cooperates with Iran" ("24 lutego Rosja rozpoczęła pełnowymiarową inwazję na Ukrainę. Wołodomyr Zełenski przekonuje, że im szybciej Ukraina zwycięży, tym mniej zła wyrządzi Rosja m.in. na Bliskim Wschodzie, gdzie współpracuje z Iranem"),

"On February 24, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelensky reports on other liberated villages in the Kherson region" ("24 lutego Rosja rozpoczęła pełnowymiarową inwazję na Ukrainę. Wołodomyr Zełenski informuje o kolejnych miejscowościach wyzwolonych w obwodzie chersońskim"), "On February 24, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. Volodymyr Zelensky announced the number of villages liberated in the Kharkiv region in September. According to unofficial data, there is an agreement among EU countries on the eighth package of sanctions against Russia" ("24 lutego Rosja rozpoczęła pełnowymiarową inwazję na Ukrainę. Wołodomyr Zełenski podał liczbę miejscowości wyzwolonych we wrześniu w obwodzie charkowskim. Według nieoficjalnych doniesień, jest porozumienie państw UE w sprawie ósmego pakietu sankcji na Rosję")<sup>8</sup>.

However, not all entries presented in this section are available in their entirety on the website. Typically, these consist of brief informational notes including a headline, a short paragraph, and occasionally a screenshot of posts from politicians, heads of military administrations, or various government institutions reporting on the current situation. Nevertheless, concerns arise regarding the accuracy and reliability of such information. For instance, one news item titled "W wyniku ostrzału Dnipro zginęły dwie osoby, w tym ciężarna kobieta" ("Two people, including a pregnant woman, died as a result of shelling in Dnipro") referenced a Twitter post from the well-known Telegram channel Truha, which is recognized for publishing precise missile strike locations prior to official reports.

These concise updates constitute nearly seventy percent of the content related to events occurring in Ukraine and primarily provide information about developments on the front lines. Conversely, articles available in full on the website typically concern statements from international political leaders, military assistance, and other significant news pertaining to Ukraine. This distinction highlights the differing nature of content between brief frontline updates and more detailed political and strategic coverage.

Regarding the frequency of publications, we were unable to conduct a full analysis of this aspect on the "Rzeczpospolita" website due to the

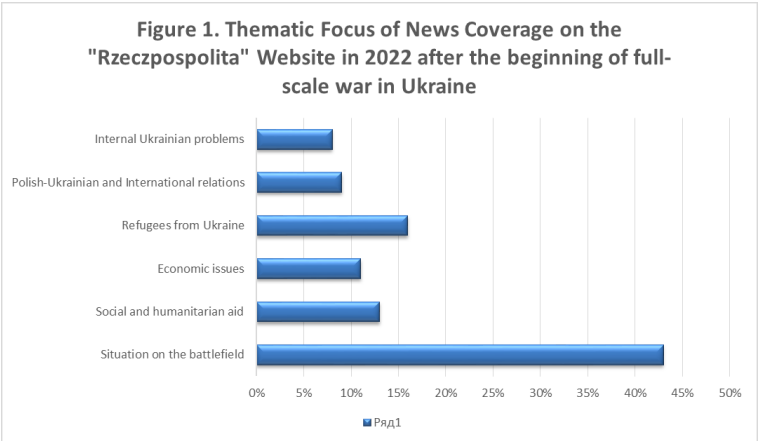
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<sup>8</sup> Rzeczpospolita. Ogólnopolski dziennik. 2022. 25 Feb. [Electronic source]. Access mode: <https://www.rp.pl/>

incomplete archive of materials available online. Therefore, we can only estimate the approximate number of news items, which amounts to nearly 40 publications per day, with an average frequency of about two articles per hour. The news feed typically starts updating around 2–3 a.m. and continues until midnight.

The thematic focus of the materials on the website has remained largely unchanged since the beginning of the full-scale invasion. However, journalists now emphasize developments on the front lines, as well as statements and reactions from world leaders. Several main topics can be identified. These include declarations from global politicians, updates on the military situation at the front, and news related to Russia (Figure 1).

It is also noteworthy that the "Rzeczpospolita" website devotes considerable attention to Putin, his associates, and events in Russia, more so than to other European leaders, Ukrainian officials, or even Polish politicians<sup>9</sup>. This focus has been highlighted as a separate thematic area. Generally, journalists express a negative attitude toward the Russian president, although it is difficult to quantify this frequency of mention precisely.



**Fig. 1. Thematic Focus of News Coverage on the "Rzeczpospolita" Website in 2022 after the beginning of full-scale war in Ukraine**

*Source: own processings*

In the newspaper Rzeczpospolita the first material that concerned Ukrainian female refugees was published on February 28, 2022 under the title "Arriving running away ". Publication was written in the genre of

<sup>9</sup>Kitsa M. Reflection of the war in Ukraine in Polish media: general overview. *Communications and Communicative Technologies*. 2024. № 24. P. 146–152.

production articles and contained data from the Polish government about the number of persons from Ukraine who intersect Polish-Ukrainian border. Connotation of the material was neutral-positive and shaped the image of Ukrainians refugee-mothers. Just like *Gazeta Wyborcza*, in *Rzeczpospolita* there were published over 70 materials that concerned Ukrainian female refugees. A typical image is refugee-victim and refugee-mother. In 2023 the number of materials about Ukrainian refugee women in the analyzed media significantly decreased. In particular, in the *Rzeczpospolita* there were more than 20 materials, and in *Gazeta Wyborcza* – over 30. In publications new images of Ukrainian female refugees appeared. It is refugee with a higher education educate, a refugee, who adapt hard, a refugee with psychological trauma. At the same time, in 2024 number publications on a given topic has decreased yet more. In *Rzeczpospolita* there were only 10 publications in which were mentioned Ukrainian female refugees, and in *Gazeta Wyborcza* there were 18 such materials. In the mentioned newspapers in 2024 appeared new positive images of Ukrainian female refugee. These are refugees who has adapted and refugees who has found a job. The preferred majority publications that concerned Ukrainian female refugees were illustrated by photos of Ukrainian women with national symbolism or without it.

Nevertheless, the most prominent topic featured on the website proved to be the situation on the frontlines. Consequently, journalists provide daily updates on Russian military losses, the deployment of new weaponry, insights from former military experts, and much more.

Overall, both before and after the beginning of the war, the primary genre most commonly found on the "*Rzeczpospolita*" website remains brief news notes. For example: "Ukraine responds to Iranian drone attack. Ambassador without accreditation," "Exhumation in the forest near Iziom nearly complete, but three more mass graves discovered," and "Europe opens its doors. Three scenarios for the development of the frontline situation," among others.

Regarding analytical genres, commentaries are the most frequently published on the site. Examples include: "Bogusław Chrabota: Why Israel will not provide military support to Ukraine," "Piotr Arak: Ukraine has a chance for economic success after the war," and "Andrzej Szeptycki: Ukraine will win the war if it regains Crimea."

Additionally, a few materials can be classified as analytical articles, though these are rare on the site. Examples include: "Kherson: Russian retreat or trap for Ukrainians?", "Putin's bloody conquest," and "Europe must be more united in the face of war"<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> *Rzeczpospolita* (2022–2024). *Ogólnopolski dziennik*. [Electronic source]. Access mode: <https://www.rp.pl/>

Thus, it can be asserted that the range of genres presented on the "Rzeczpospolita" website has remained largely unchanged since the onset of the full-scale war. Correspondents primarily focus on informing their readers or providing expert opinions from political scientists, analysts, and fellow journalists. Occasionally, one can find examples of more analytical genres; however, these are quite rare on this platform.

Currently, it is increasingly common for sources to be cited already in the first paragraph of a publication. For instance, in the article titled "US Think Tank: Russian Withdrawal from Kherson Is Not a Trap," the report states: "The withdrawal of Russian forces from the western bank of the Dnipro is unlikely to be a trap intended to lure Ukrainian troops into costly battles in Kherson, as some sources in Ukraine and the West suggest," according to the Institute for the Study of War (ISW) in its latest report on the situation in the Kherson region and Ukrainian fronts.

However, this practice of clearly citing sources is not consistent across all publications. For example, in the article "Kyiv Residents Do Not Want a Christmas Tree. Money for the Army," there is no mention or reference to the source of information.

At the same time, it is quite evident that journalists frequently reference statements made by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy. Additionally, quotes from key figures such as Mykhailo Podolyak, Oleksiy Danilov, Oleksiy Arestovych, heads of regional military administrations, and spokespeople or leaders of various institutions (General Staff of the Armed Forces, Ministry of Defense, Main Intelligence Directorate, etc.) appear regularly.

Interestingly, however, the majority of citations in "Rzeczpospolita" are attributed to Russian politicians such as Putin, Medvedev, Peskov, Shoigu, and others. It can be argued that over 40% of the articles are primarily based on statements from these figures or concern topics directly related to them.

The "Rzeczpospolita" website indicates that the media outlet maintains a presence on social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Nevertheless, additional accounts were found on Instagram and YouTube. Beginning with YouTube, the channel boasts over 43,000 subscribers, with videos typically garnering 200 to 300 views. The content mainly consists of short interviews with journalists and various experts, politicians, or other correspondents. Videos specifically related to events in Ukraine are relatively scarce. The first such video appeared on February 24 and focused on Poland's economic situation and how the war might affect the country. Later in February, videos covered topics like Russian military equipment and its assessment, the claim that Ukrainians are defending themselves solely with Polish weapons, and the challenge of integrating refugees into the workforce within Polish voivodeships. These videos did not receive

comments. However, by the end of March, any video content concerning Ukraine ceased entirely.

In contrast, the media outlet's Instagram account has only 17,000 followers. The content there mainly consists of various charts, tables, and diagrams on different topics. However, on February 24, seven posts about the situation in Ukraine were published. These included photos of Ukrainian soldiers, cities, and refugees, accompanied by brief captions of three to five sentences describing the events. Vladimir Zelenskyy often appeared there, along with his photos and concise summaries of his daily addresses.

By the end of March, however, the publication returned to its usual format and began covering the war less frequently. For example, they posted the results of polls about whether Ukraine could join NATO, how many people helped refugees, the possibility of the war affecting Poland, plans of Ukrainians to return home, and other topics. There were very few comments, but among those found, people generally opposed Ukraine's membership in NATO and the EU, while expressing strong negative sentiments toward Putin and Russians. Currently, the page posts about the situation in Ukraine roughly once every few weeks.

As of November that year, Ukraine-related topics remain among the main focuses on the "Rzeczpospolita" Twitter account. Over 10 news items related to the war are posted daily on this platform. Journalists provide links to articles or sections dedicated to the topic and include several hashtags. Despite having more than 320,000 followers, the number of likes, shares, and comments is relatively low.

Regarding comments, it is worth noting that posts quoting or reporting statements by Volodymyr Zelenskyy often receive consistently negative reactions. Additionally, many Polish users frequently refer to historical events related to the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) in the context of current events, often comparing them and labeling Ukrainians as "Banderites" – implying they lack history, culture, and roots. Supportive comments for Ukraine were very rare and mostly appeared only in late February and March. On the social network Facebook, a similar trend can be observed where the publication continues to inform its readers about the latest events. Consequently, 5 to 10 posts related to the war in Ukraine appear there daily. It is clear that at the beginning of the full-scale invasion, the media outlet reported on the situation more frequently. At that time, expressions of support for the Ukrainian people were also visible. However, over time, more negativity began to emerge. In particular, Polish users complained that the influx of refugees and the related payments would worsen the country's economic situation and that they would have to cover these costs out of their own pockets. There were also calls for Ukrainians to be employed as soon as possible. Additionally, criticism of the Ukrainian



government, especially President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and references to historical issues were frequently seen.

Summarizing the above, it can be stated that the editorial policy of "Rzeczpospolita" has not undergone a radical change. On their news feed, mentions of Putin and his associates appear more often than those about the Ukrainian authorities. Although journalists criticize the actions of the Russian leadership, it is still possible to assess the editorial direction.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that at the start of the war, the website featured content suggesting that journalists doubted Ukraine's military capability. For example, an article titled "Kwaśniewski: Ukrainians cannot defeat the Russian army," published on February 24, stated: "The Ukrainian military must resist, and as far as I know, they are resisting, but they will not be able to defeat the Russian army even if we provide them with more weapons"<sup>11</sup>.

At the same time, news about aid and support for Ukrainians was extremely scarce and mostly limited to the early days of the war. It is evident that journalists continue to report on the course of events, but they tend to view these developments through the lens of how they might affect themselves and Poland. This, in turn, is reflected in a lack of engagement with the events and a rather dry thematic and genre range.

#### 4. Coverage of the war in Ukraine in the online version of newspaper "Gazeta Wyborcza"

After the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the website of Gazeta Wyborcza also introduced a separate section titled "Wojna w Ukrainie" ("War in Ukraine"). In addition, a blue and yellow ribbon symbolizing the Ukrainian flag appeared next to the site's logo, along with the inscription "Nie ma wolności bez solidarności" ("There is no freedom without solidarity"). Every day, the website's homepage features current news related to events in Ukraine.

The structure of the articles remained unchanged; however, at the end of February and the beginning of March, due to the large volume of information, the overall length of texts slightly decreased. While previously informational news articles consisted of more than six paragraphs<sup>12</sup>, during that period, publications often contained only three to five paragraphs<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Kwaśniewski A. "Ukrainians Cannot Defeat the Russian Army." *Rzeczpospolita*, February 24, 2022. <https://www.rp.pl/konflikty-zbrojne/art35754641-kwasniewski-ukraincy-nie-sa-w-stanie-wygrac-z-armia-rosyjska>.

<sup>12</sup> Majchrowska J. Pragmalingwistyczna analiza portali internetowych, 2020, Rzeszów. 288 p.

<sup>13</sup> Wojtak M. Genologiczna analiza tekstu. *Prace Językoznawcze*. 2014. № 16/3. S. 63–71.

The first article about the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion appeared on February 24 at 5:41 AM, titled "War in Ukraine. Russia has launched an invasion of Donbas. The Polish-Belarusian border is currently quiet" ("Wojna na Ukrainie. Rosja rozpoczęła inwazję w Donbasie. Na granicy polsko-białoruskiej na tę chwilę jest spokojnie"). On that day alone, more than 300 articles related to events in Ukraine were published on Gazeta Wyborcza's website. Several articles were even released simultaneously throughout the day.

However, for the sake of objectivity, we analyzed additional months and dates from the start of the Russia-Ukraine war. For example, the website published over 110 news pieces on March 12, 61 on April 20, 23 on May 21, 34 on June 3, 8 on July 16, 7 on August 13, 12 on September 2, and 14 on October 5. This allows us to conclude that the publication gradually lost interest in the topic over time.

Gazeta Wyborcza had a thematically diverse editorial profile even before the full-scale war. After February 24, the range of topics only expanded. Among all the articles, we were able to identify several of the most commonly covered themes, including support and aid for Ukrainians, reports from the front lines, and updates on the military situation.

Thematic content also included sanctions, such as: *"No EU sanctions for violating EU sanctions," "Volodymyr Zelensky presented a five-point 'peace formula'. New sanctions against Russia will be introduced," and "Kremlin oligarchs complain in the Financial Times about sanctions: Europe is taking our wealth, Russia welcomes us with open arms."*

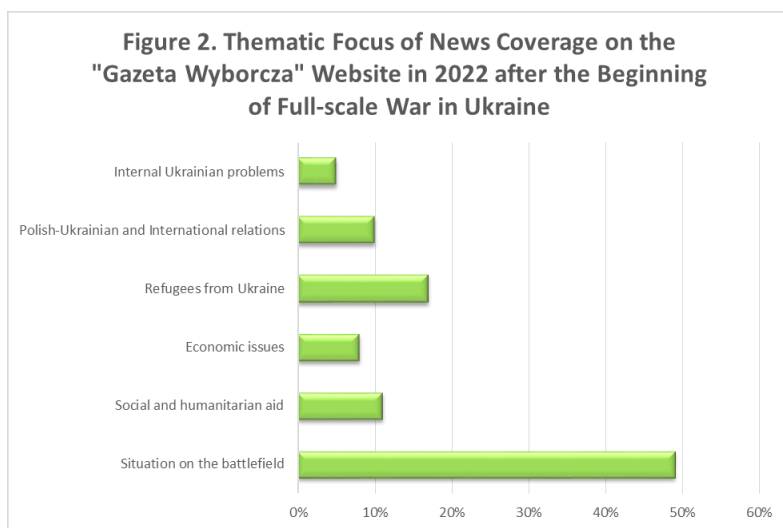
There were also statements from international politicians: *"President Andrzej Duda at UEK on Ukraine, Nord Stream, the possibility of a nuclear attack, and inflation," "France has announced it will more actively rearm Ukraine. However, companies from that country are still doing business in Russia," and "War in Ukraine. Johnson in his address: 'Putin's disgusting, barbaric venture must end in failure.'"*

On cultural topics, examples include: *"'She's a blonde, you can see her braid under the helmet.' A film tribute to the defenders of Azovstal," "Ukrainian Freedom Orchestra debuted in Warsaw. There were many emotions," and "The film about Mariupol showed the truth about the war. Cannes makes compromises, and Holland criticizes it."*

We also noted that at the beginning of the full-scale invasion, and afterward, Gazeta Wyborcza published various stories from Ukrainians who experienced the war either at home or abroad, sharing how people endured these events. For example: *"Dmytro crossed the border with his wife and baby: 'We're fleeing the war.' Lviv residents queue for gasoline and cash," "She arrived in Poland a day before the war. But she's returning. 'Some*

*defend with weapons, others with words. I will fight as long as I can," and "War in Ukraine. 'People didn't believe until the last moment that war would break out. The government promised that the whole world would help.'"*

Through this, the journalists conveyed real human stories to more accurately reflect what was happening at that time. In fact, the publication was not limited to the above-mentioned topics – we simply highlighted the most popular ones. On the Gazeta Wyborcza website, one can find news covering a wide range of subjects (Figure 2).



**Fig. 2. Thematic Focus of News Coverage on the "Gazeta Wyborcza" Website after February, 24, 2022**

*Source: own processing*

Speaking about the image of Ukrainians and Ukrainian female refugees, in the Gazeta Wyborcza the first material that is selected concerned Ukrainian refugee women was published on February 25, 2022. Material under the heading "A humanitarian crisis awaits us" was written in the form of problematic articles about what's on the border there is a large influx of refugees, in particular women from Ukraine. Material had neutral connotation and was aimed at solving problems that can arise in Poland due to a large influx of refugees. Totally in 2022 in Gazeta Wyborcza there were published more than 70 publications, which concerned Ukrainian female refugees. The majority of these materials shaped the image of a refugee – a victim

and a refugee-mothers and were mostly aimed at the emotional perception and compassion.

On the newspaper's website, we also found a variety of journalistic genres. Primarily, this includes informational (briefs, interviews) and analytical formats (articles, correspondences, reviews, and commentaries). In general, even before the events of February 24, 2022, all of these genres could be found on the *Gazeta Wyborcza* website, as the publication was known not only for informing readers about significant events but also for comparing, analyzing, and attempting to predict future developments.

As for informational genres, briefs and interviews were predominant. Notably, the number of interviews increased after the start of the war. In addition to interviewing Ukrainians, journalists also spoke with cultural, sports, and political figures from our country about how they were experiencing these events and how they evaluated the situation. For instance: "Oksana Zabuzhko at the Book Fair in Warsaw: 'Literature proves that it can save a human life'," "Ukrainian strength sports star seeks a place in Poland: 'She is one of the strongest women in the world'," "Serhiy Zhadan: Soldiers can survive without sonnets, but not without clean socks," and others<sup>14</sup>.

Among analytical genres, articles were the most dominant on the *Gazeta Wyborcza* website. For example: "Questions and instructions in Ukrainian, answers in Polish. In the exam plans, absurdity follows absurdity," "Will the U.S. designate Russia as a state sponsor of terrorism?" "And what if Ukraine wins the war? More and more research centers say it's possible," and others.

Additionally, there were numerous examples of another analytical genre – correspondence pieces. For instance: "Who is evading sanctions? The creators of Russia's vision of a 'world without rules'," "Education or Polonization? Instead of helping Ukrainian students, we inflict secondary trauma," "I was a white radical, but I got over it. Who are the fighters of the Azov Regiment defending Mariupol?" and others<sup>15</sup>. Special attention should be given to the last publication. In the first chapter of this research, we already mentioned that Polish and international media often referred to the Azov Regiment as "Banderites" or "Nazis." However, in this piece, the journalist tried to present their story from a completely different angle, arguing that such portrayals are merely Russian propaganda and slander against the Azov fighters.

Therefore, the "Gazeta Wyborcza" web resource presents a wide variety of journalistic genres. This indicates that the publication is interested not only in informing its readers about the most popular topic in mass media this

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<sup>14</sup> Gazeta Wyborcza (2022–2024). Ogólnopolski dziennik. [Electronic source]. Access mode: <https://wyborcza.pl/0,0.html>

<sup>15</sup> Gazeta Wyborcza (2022–2024). Ogólnopolski dziennik. [Electronic source]. Access mode: <https://wyborcza.pl/0,0.html>

year, but also that its correspondents analyzed everything that was happening and sought solutions to these problems. This once again demonstrates the media's significant interest in the events unfolding in Ukraine.

As we noted in the second chapter, "Gazeta Wyborcza" very rarely cites primary sources within its text. Journalists do not include any links to websites or other mass media from which they sourced their information; they only mention the name of the media outlet. However, we identified a list of individuals most frequently quoted by journalists in their materials: Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Dmytro Kuleba, Andriy Yermak, Mykhailo Podolyak, as well as the heads of regional military (state) administrations, and the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine.

However, in the daily news digest, one can quite often find short notes that are not present on the website. These cover the most important events of the day, as well as the daily address of the President of Ukraine. They include links to politicians' social media posts and other mass media ("24 Kanal," "Ukrinform"), including foreign ones ("Reuters," "AFP News Agency"). However, in the daily event report for October 29, we found a link to Twitter, one of the Telegram channels we previously mentioned – "Truha," which raises questions about the reliability of such information.

Thus, it can be argued that "Gazeta Wyborcza" can be classified as a high-quality mass media outlet in Poland. This can be attributed to its diversity of genres and rubrics, coverage of all important topics, news frequency, clear political stance, and the presence of regional offices. However, one of the key journalistic standards is reliability, which includes identifying the source and its trustworthiness. Yet, as we can see, the media we analyzed lacks this. Very often, the source of information is not indicated. Furthermore, confirmation (links, screenshots of social media posts, or textual references) is rarely added. This, in turn, forces us to question the quality of the content produced by journalists.

Regarding social media, the outlet has accounts on the following platforms: Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube. It's worth noting that the publication actively develops and fills all of them with content. For example, "Gazeta Wyborcza" has 890,000 followers on Twitter. The news feed is updated daily. However, their page is not particularly popular. Posts may receive up to 50 likes, 5-10 shares, and a few comments. Regarding news concerning Ukraine, it also appears on "Gazeta Wyborcza's" Twitter page, though in small quantities. For instance, on October 31st, a post appeared with a link to an article on their website titled: "Russia attacked Ukraine's civilian infrastructure. 350,000 Kyiv residents are without electricity" ("Rosja uderzyła w infrastrukturę cywilną Ukrainy. 350 tys. mieszkań w Kijowie nie ma prądu").

It only had 2 likes and 3 shares. In the comments, people expressed their negativity towards Russians and Putin, and also wrote that Western elites were also to blame, as they had not stopped the Kremlin's war crimes for several years.

In general, at the beginning of the war, the number of posts related to events in Ukraine was much higher. Almost every second news item in the feed was about what was happening in our country. As of today, this trend has changed. Regarding comments, the majority, approximately 80% of users, support our state and condemn Putin's actions. However, we encountered comments that were in support of Russia, expressing hatred towards Stepan Bandera and other Ukrainian political leaders of the past.

On Facebook, we noticed greater user activity. Posts consequently received more comments, likes, and shares. Similarly, as on Twitter, the number of news items concerning events in Ukraine was high from late February to late April, but by autumn, it decreased to 1-3 publications per day, and sometimes there might be none at all. For instance, on October 29, we managed to find only 2 posts related to events around Ukraine. These were links to the publication's materials, specifically: "Sikorski with aid on the way to Kyiv: Pickups are full of gifts" ("Sikorski z pomocą w drodze do Kijowa: Pikapy są pełne darów") and "Internal Security Agency and Ukrainian women thwarted Dugin's propaganda in Gdańsk. This is the second attempt to promote the Kremlin ideologue's book" ("ABW i Ukrainki udaremniły propagandę Dugina w Gdańsku. To już druga próba promocji książki ideologa Kremla").

In contrast, in late February, every post on Facebook concerned events in Ukraine: these were links to materials on the media's website, various banners with calls for help (including in Ukrainian), photos of people affected by missiles, those standing in lines to go abroad, and much more. Most comments were in support of our country, but again, approximately 15% were pro-Russian. We assume these were bots, as there were no photos, posts, or information about such users on their pages.

As of today, the publication's Instagram page has even fewer news items related to events in Ukraine. In general, the structure of a post on this social network looks like this: a photo with the author's mandatory attribution, a few sentences (2 to 5), and hashtags. From February 24 until the end of March, every post was dedicated to events happening in Ukraine. In addition to photos, there was a lot of video content; journalists communicated with our citizens and experts, and created various videos. In the comments, people wrote words of support, called for the provision of weapons, and those who tried to discredit our government in any way were called bots and addressed with expletives.

The last social network in our analysis where "Gazeta Wyborcza" is present is YouTube. It's worth noting that videos on this platform are not very popular, although they are released quite frequently. Typically, the number of views is 500–600, although some videos reached almost 6,000 views. As for the content, it's mostly podcasts called "Ósma Dziesięć" ("Eight Ten") on the most interesting topics.

For example, on March 1, a video titled "The myth of the great Russian army is crumbling. Correspondence from Kyiv" ("«Sypie się mit wielkiej rosyjskiej armii». Korespondencja z Kijowa") appeared on the channel. On March 2, a video titled "Pack your life into two suitcases. Interview with Ksenia Kharchenko" ("Spakować życie do dwóch walizek. Rozmowa z Ksenią Charchenko") was released, and on March 3 – "Will economic sanctions be enough to stop Putin?" ("Czy sankcje ekonomiczne wystarczą, by zatrzymać Putina?"). There were no comments under the videos. We also note that their cover featured the Ukrainian flag and the numbers 8 and 10, which are the name of the podcast section.

Videos still appear on the YouTube channel, but with less frequency. Podcasts discussing events related to Ukraine have a blue and yellow cover. Such videos can have anywhere from 300 to 2,000 views, but no comments. Typically, military experts, public activists, politicians, and media personalities who interact with "Gazeta Wyborcza" journalists are invited to this format.

The concluding point of our analysis of the publication is the narratives that the media promotes. At the beginning of the full-scale war in Ukraine, the media expressed its support and assistance to our country<sup>16</sup>. This means there were hundreds of materials discussing how Poles could help our compatriots (money, food, medicine, housing), solidarity marches, how they were preparing to receive refugees, a true diversity of topics, attempts to solve problems, and much more.

However, over time, this interest faded. This is evidenced by the fact that the number of news items about Ukraine on the website and in social media has significantly decreased. There's no longer the same thematic and genre spectrum of publications; now it's reduced to a daily news digest.

During our analysis, we did not find any pro-Russian materials or those intended to discredit our political leadership, country, or citizens. Furthermore, it's clear that even in social media, Polish media outlets also defend Ukrainians from bots who post comments supporting the Kremlin

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<sup>16</sup> Dzierżyńska-Mielczarek J. Zmiany na rynku prasowym w Polsce pod wpływem nowych technologii i Internetu / Jolanta Dzierżyńska-Mielczarek // Rocznik historii prasy Polskiej / Jolanta Dzierżyńska-Mielczarek. Kielce : Instytut Dziennikarstwa i Informacji Uniwersytet Jana Kochanowskiego, 2017. P. 5–28.

and opposing us. Thus, the media continued the direction it had before the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine.

## CONCLUSIONS

The newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* places its main emphasis on what is happening at the frontlines. Additionally, statements from Kremlin officials and news from Russia appear quite frequently on their website. It is difficult for us to assess this editorial choice definitively. Furthermore, it is worth highlighting the publication's somewhat detached approach in reporting on events in Ukraine. While the topic remains present on their web platform, the focus tends to be on how the situation might impact Poland, rather than on Ukraine itself. Therefore, we can conclude that the media outlet did not significantly shift its editorial direction following the outbreak of the full-scale invasion.

In contrast, *Gazeta Wyborcza* demonstrated a broader thematic and stylistic range. Especially in the early stages of the war and for several months afterward, the outlet actively supported Ukrainians. It published information on how to provide aid, and its journalists conducted interviews with our compatriots, giving voice to their experiences. However, over time, interest in Ukraine-related developments began to fade, which is reflected in the reduced number of publications on the subject.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that we did not come across any pro-Russian materials in *Gazeta Wyborcza*, nor any content that sought to discredit Ukrainian politicians or spread misinformation about the war. This suggests a generally responsible and ethical editorial stance, despite the decreasing intensity of coverage.

To supplement this comparison, one might argue that *Rzeczpospolita* maintains a more analytical and geopolitically cautious tone, while *Gazeta Wyborcza* initially adopted a more emotionally engaged and humanitarian approach. Over time, however, both outlets appear to have shifted back toward their pre-war editorial focuses—*Rzeczpospolita* emphasizing national interest and policy impact, and *Gazeta Wyborcza* balancing between human-centered reporting and broader sociopolitical narratives.

From a linguistic aspect we can also observe some changes, especially in covering the topic of Ukrainian female refugees. For example, in early 2022 in publications about Ukrainian women they were called as guests. Also they were called girls and victims of war. At the same time, in 2023 Ukrainian women in Poland usually were called refugees. While, in next year, 2024, some publications appeared with identification Ukrainian women as migrants from Ukraine. From conducted analysis we can make conclusion that number of materials about Ukrainian female refugees in Polish press annually much decreased, though appeared new their images. From noun



series guest – refugee – migrant we can make conclusion that attitude towards Ukrainians female refugee sinced and became more cold, that reflects and general trend of deterioration attitude of Poles to Ukrainians refugees from 2022 to 2024.

## SUMMARY

The article compares the coverage of the war in Ukraine by two major Polish media outlets: *Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*. *Rzeczpospolita* focuses primarily on developments at the frontlines and Kremlin statements, often framing events in terms of their impact on Poland. It maintains a detached tone and has not significantly altered its editorial direction since the full-scale invasion began.

In contrast, *Gazeta Wyborcza* initially showed strong engagement with the Ukrainian cause, offering diverse genres of reporting – news, analysis, interviews – and extensive support for Ukrainians. Journalists covered personal stories, offered aid information, and gave a voice to Ukrainian citizens. Over time, however, coverage has diminished, reflecting a decline in media attention. Despite this, *Gazeta Wyborcza* has not published pro-Russian or discrediting content about Ukraine, maintaining a generally responsible editorial stance.

The analysis highlights the evolving media interest in the war and underscores the importance of consistent, credible journalism, particularly when covering ongoing international crises.

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**Information about the authors:**

**Kitsa Mariana Olehivna,**

Candidate of Science in Social Communications, Associate Professor  
Lviv Polytechnic National University  
5, Kn. Romana, str., Lviv, 79020, Ukraine

**Majchrowska Justyna,**

Doctor of Humanities,  
Assistant Professor in the research and teaching group  
University of Rzeszów  
16C, Al. Rejtana, Rzeszów, 35-959, Poland