DISCURSIVE DIPLOMACY: CONSTRUCTING RUSSIA AND UKRAINE IN THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESS OF EAST ASIAN DEMOCRATIC NATIONS

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Abstract

This article examines how the public diplomatic, English-language press in East Asian democracies – Japan, South Korea and Taiwan – constructed Russia and Ukraine in the first year of the war. Drawing on a 2.06-million word corpus of news coverage from *The Japan News*, *The Korea Herald*, *The Korea Times,* and *Taiwan News*, we undertake a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of the most frequent collocate variations of identity construction terms for both national actors in the data, focusing specifically on referential and predication strategies, as well as the discursive construction of transitivity. Our findings suggest that these outlets' public-diplomacy patterning aligned with a U.S.-led bloc: Russia is cast as economically central yet norm-violating and is positioned as a legitimate target of condemnation and sanctions, often alongside China. By contrast, Ukraine is cast as a sovereign state and productive economy and represented transitively as the object of Russian attack and the beneficiary/agent of allied support and rebuilding. We discuss the implications of these findings for understanding how public diplomatic press outlets function toward geopolitical bloc identity-building and polarisation during times of international conflict.

Keywords

corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis, media and war, East Asian democracies, Ukraine

1 Introduction

Geopolitics organises global imaginations into hierarchical orders of nation-states, regions, and blocs (Dalby, 2008). Contemporary geopolitics is increasingly characterised by states converging into international and regional blocs based on proximity, economic interests, and ideological values (Kipgen & Chakrabarti, 2022). This ensures that international relations are largely understood as a "global game in which clashes over [mutual] interests are played out" (Ojala & Pantti, 2017, p. 3). This geopolitical contestation and bloc formation realises the fundamental processes of categorisation and competition for resources that condition social identity formation, writ large to a global scale (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). This type of categorisation is among the most fundamental cognitive abilities of human beings (Wang et al., 2024, p. 1), manifesting in everyday language use through the construction of in- and out-groups based on

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positive-self/negative-Other evaluation and (dis)empowerment (van Dijk, 1998). National news media shape geopolitical bloc identities by constructing divisions between in-groups and out-groups: a boundary-making process that normalises affinitive assimilation within the in-group bloc and divisions with adversarial blocs (Tuathail, 1999). Such divisions are particularly evident in East Asia, where proximate nations have historically held conflicting geopolitical loyalties. Whilst China has fostered a strategic relationship with Russia since the Cold War (Alexeeva & Lasserre, 2018), democratic nations such as Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea have tended to operate within the USA's sphere of influence (Qin et al., 2019).

International conflicts stress-test geopolitical allegiances, raising questions about loyalty and compatibility of interests. During such conflicts, news media condition public opinion and can play a decisive role in conflict resolution or fostering tension (Joseph, 2014). Internally oriented news media represent conflicts in ways that appeal to their national biases and influence the national public's perception of other national actors (Wanta et al., 2004). Externally oriented news media outlets aim to do the same, but adopt a public diplomacy function by targeting audiences from other nations. During conflicts, then, news media serve as key shapers of discourses – or "structured forms of knowledge" (Wodak & Meyer, 2015, p. 6) – that explain conflicts and delegitimize power dynamics between and within geopolitical blocs. The ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine serves as a prime illustration of these points. Analysts argue that the conflict has revived old Cold War divisions between East and West, providing a proxy for Western-aligned nations to undermine Russia's interests (Smeltz, 2022).

Against this backdrop, this article undertakes a corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis of how English-language newspapers in the East Asian democratic nations of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan represented Russia and Ukraine during the first year of the conflict. In doing so, our aim is not to adjudicate *whether* these nations were biased toward Ukraine in their representation – rather, we take it as a working assumption that they were – but rather to examine *how* they employed discursive means to construct this biased representation. This responds to a relative dearth of literature examining exactly *how* such English-language news outlets in East Asian democratic nations discursively perform their public diplomatic functions. In what follows, we aim to fill this gap by discursively analysing the discursive construction of both combatant national actors, addressing the following research question: How did the English-language press of East Asian democratic nations discursively construct Russia and Ukraine and their actions in the first year of the Russo-Ukrainian war?

2 The Russia-Ukraine conflict and its geopolitical implications for East Asian democracies

The growing focus and discussion on the significance of China's role in international geopolitical frictions and conflicts has rendered the current media discourse on the East Asian region Sino-centric. This is detrimental to broader understandings of other East Asian countries' engagement in the region, especially given the region's inimitable geopolitical roots in colonial history, with formative events such as the Japanese occupation of the Korean peninsula and parts of China, shaping the contours of geopolitical bloc allegiances throughout history. Therefore, this section provides a geopolitical contextualisation of the East Asian democratic nations of Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, with special focus afforded to how each nation conceives of the current Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Pitted against the geopolitical Sino-Russian alliance are East Asian democratic nations that operate in the USA's sphere of influence – chief among these are Japan and South Korea. This alliance with the US is evidenced by their attendance at the 2022 NATO summit for the first time due to the Biden administration's strategic aim of tightening its connections with its East Asian allies. Japan, a G7 member, and China have an acrimonious history, and despite pledges to improve working trade relations, a rivalry between the two persists. This was reified regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict when President Xi and Prime Minister Kishida paid simultaneous visits to Moscow and Kyiv in early 2023, underlining the global significance of the war from their respective geopolitical perspectives. More broadly, Japan recently updated its security strategy, signalling a willingness to engage in geopolitical issues where necessary. For instance, Tokyo announced its intention to increase its defence expenditure by almost 60 % over the next five years (Hornung, 2023) and has committed to acquiring missiles that can reach targets inside Chinese territories (Brown, 2023). Interestingly, the Ukrainian conflict prompted Japan to impose sanctions on Russia comparable to those imposed by the US, Canada, and some EU countries. Geopolitical divisions were further notable in Prime Minister Kishida's May 2023 statement in which he expressed serious concerns over Russia's attack on Ukraine, intimating that it "might be East Asia tomorrow" (Rachman, 2023). Critics viewed this statement as part of the effort to prevent Moscow from winning the war, to assure national security for Japan and warn Beijing about the resultant punishments in the case of any aggression against Taiwan (Tsuruoka, 2022).

Ever since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, comparisons have been made to the Korean War of the 1950s, which played a significant role in intensifying the Cold War on a global scale, ushering in a new global order. In a similar

vein, the current Sino-U.S. rivalry implies a symbolic bipolar geopolitical power structure, in which the Russia-Ukraine conflict is solidifying the geopolitical divide between the Sino-Russian alliance on one side and the U.S. with its European and Asian allies on the other. A strong ally of the US, and a nation that holds deep-rooted security-ties with Australia and the UK, South Korea used to be Russia's second-largest trading partner in Asia, with efforts being made by Seoul to expand its energy supply from the Middle East (Pardo & Kim, 2023). However, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has pushed South Korea further toward geopolitical alliances with the US and its Asian allies such as Japan. This shift in geopolitical loyalty is evidenced in the fact that the then South Korean president, Yoon Suk Yeol, opened the 2023 Asian Leadership Conference by stating that the international community must "never allow the illegal invasion of Ukraine […] to become a successful precedent" (Brands, 2023). Moreover, its growing security links to Western-aligned blocs solidify its desire to prevent North Korea from planning a similar and unwelcome course of action in the Korean Peninsula.

The Russia-Ukraine conflict has also been discussed in relation to the status of Taiwan under China's continual threats of invasion. Some theorists posit that the US has capitalised on the statuses of Taiwan and Ukraine, deploying obstructive foreign policies targeted at China and Russia, as two emerging geopolitical threats to its hegemonic status in the West (Simons, 2022). However, it can also be reasoned that a Russian victory would indirectly strengthen the position of China, increasing the risk of any imminent attempt to invade Taiwan, and destabilizing the security of the Asia-Pacific region. The strategic importance of Taiwan can be noted in the fact that the Biden administration committed to providing Taiwan with further military protection on the 23rd of May 2022 (Lu, 2022). From a Chinese perspective, Taiwan and Ukraine are incomparable as "Taiwan has always been an inalienable part of China's territory", which is "an indisputable historical and legal fact"; and the US is seen as the "culprit of current tensions surrounding Ukraine" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China, 2022) by supporting Taiwan as an independent country (Guo et al., 2015). In contrast, Taiwan's president Tsai Ing-wen stated that "determination will rally fellow democracies" and "Taiwan will not bend under pressure" (Blanchard, 2022). Thus, while all three nations are implicated in a nuanced way by the conflict, they have thus far been affinitive in their declarations of support for Ukraine.

3 East Asian democratic media representations of international war and conflict

Research has demonstrated that media outlets from liberal democracies tend to operate in line with their respective states' geopolitical interests when it comes to reporting on conflicts (Liu, 2023). In states like Japan and South Korea, this can be attributed to certain ethnocentric aspects of their societies. For example, anti-Japanese sentiment is regarded as a commonplace feature of South Korean news reportage; conversely, Japanese media perpetuate negative stereotypes about South Korea (Yoon & Gwangho, 2002). However, representations of international conflicts in the two countries reproduce some of these latent values, often due to an over-reliance on elite sources, which are automatically deemed to be 'credible' during wartime and tend to foreground national interests in their commentary. For instance, in a research study on the conflict between North Korea and South Korea, Yoon (1989) found that the South Korean press framed the conflict predominantly through an 'anti-communist' lens. However, a dearth of scholarly literature focuses on how both nations represent international conflicts in which they hold similar geopolitical stakes, such as the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Similarly, political parties' ideologies in Taiwan remain prevalent in the state's major dailies, and many journalists tend to exercise self-censorship (Lo et al., 2005). Indeed, as noted by Rawnsley and Gong (2011), high levels of suspicion in the perceptions between the public, journalists and politicians, in tandem with growing commercialisation, has led to a tabloid-style of political journalism emerging in the nation. However, empirical studies of Taiwan's reportage on internationally contentious issues have suggested that Taiwan's political agenda is largely concomitant with its news agenda (Lin, 2022). For instance, despite sharing some cultural affinity with China, research on the news coverage of the 2003 Iraq War (Guo et al., 2015) found that Taiwan's news agenda was largely in line with that of the US as a result of their shared ideological and geopolitical interests (Tan, 2023). Nonetheless, no studies have specifically examined the common discursive features employed by the public diplomatic press of these East Asian nations which operate within the U.S.'s sphere of influence.

4 Geopolitical identity and international conflict in news discourse: A perspective from CDS

Internationally oriented newspapers of different nations aim to condition opinion and represent international conflicts in ways that align with their ulterior geopolitical aims. Such outlets have the power to influence public deliberation at an

international level and, more pressingly, to condition foreign publics' perceptions of other national actors through their construction and ascription of qualities and attributes (Wanta et al., 2004). Thus, the ways in which actors are represented in news discourse and portrayed through mediation shape (and are shaped by) such ideological influences, constituting 'discourses', or 'structured forms of knowledge' (Wodak & Meyer, 2015, p. 6) that manifest in everyday language use and media texts. This study broaches its chosen discursive foci through the lens of Critical Discourse Studies (CDS), which aims to unveil the role of discourses in reproducing socio-political power dynamics by conceptualising discourses as being imbricated with ideologies which shape social cognition, perceptions of social reality, and identity categorizations (Wodak & Meyer, 2015).

From the perspective of geopolitics and the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the representation of national actors can be theorised to be imbued with ideological evaluations coloured by geopolitical bloc alliances. Indeed, a growing body of research supports this position. For instance, in their comparative study of the discursive construction of developed and developing nations Wang et al. (2024) found that categorisations of other nations in the news served "not only to regulate and organise the actions of group members… but also to justify or challenge the social position of one group in relation to others" (van Dijk, 1998, p. 258). This point can be extended to the study of international communication on the Russia-Ukraine conflict: for example, a critical discursive analysis of Joe Biden's first public comment on the conflict found that "the 'us – them' binary was the main feature that characterised his speech" (Mahfoud & Khaldaoui, 2023, p. 139). Moreover, the representation of the actions of combatant nation-states can be positively or negatively evaluated, depending on bloc-identity and ideological allegiances. For instance, Alyahya (2023) found that *The Moscow Times* and *The Washington Post* employed different strategies to represent the invasion of Ukraine, and that both newspapers used language to "persuade its readers to accept its narrative of the events" (p. 1). Similarly, a study of Finnish and Estonian newspaper editorials that commented on the conflict in Ukraine found that both nations' media "focused overwhelmingly on the aggression of the Kremlin in Ukraine" (Ojala & Kaasik-Krogerus, 2019, p. 11). Breeze and Novoa-Jaso's (2024) corpus-assisted study of *CGTN*, a public diplomatic media outlet in China, elucidated how it discursively negotiated its status as a neutral nation. Yet, these studies illustrate a notable gap in existing research: an examination of the discursive means through which Ukraine-aligned public diplomatic news outlets in East Asia construct a biased representation of the conflict.

5 Case, data and methods

5.1 Case study rationale

Before outlining our methods of data collection and analysis we offer a justificatory basis for the inclusion of each constituent nation of the East Asian Democratic geopolitical bloc that we isolate for analysis here, and for analysing data collectively rather than comparatively. While Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan each exhibit distinct domestic political dynamics, their grouping in this study is justified by shared institutional and geopolitical characteristics, particularly as these relate to their positioning in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian war. In addition to sharing a common cultural heritage and economic similarities, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan are widely regarded as the most "consolidated or maturing democracies" within East Asia (Lee & Han, 2017, p. 193). They exhibit comparable democratic values and institutional characteristics, including majoritarian electoral systems and two-party dominance (Lee & Han, 2017, p. 195). This institutional and normative alignment becomes particularly significant in the context of the region's geopolitical power dynamics, which are shaped by tensions between authoritarian superpowers – notably China and Russia – on the one hand, and the democratic hegemon, the United States, on the other. All three states, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, have long been considered U.S. allies within what Okuyama (2005) characterises as a tripolar balance of power in East Asia, and they collectively occupy a strategic front in what Loke (2021, p. 2) terms the "politics of hegemonic ordering" – a regional contest in which U.S.-China rivalry is most acutely expressed. In addition to supporting the continuation of a U.S.-led regional order amid the rise of Sino-Russian authoritarianism (Loke, 2021), and as outlined above, each of these nations has also demonstrated a tendency to adopt official policy positions on the Russo-Ukrainian war that align closely with those of the United States. As such, they provide a suitably affinitive cross-national context to examine the discursive strategies employed in the public diplomacy of East Asian democratic nations in the representation of the Russia-Ukraine war.

While the internal media cultures of Japan, South Korean and Taiwan differ, these nations' English-language news media are often more oriented toward international audiences and function as instruments of public diplomacy (cf. Cull, 2009), articulating narratives that reflect their states' geopolitical alignments and values. As such, we posit that the type of public diplomatic media outlet this study examines can be expected to adopt comparable representations of geopolitically significant events, like the Russo-Ukrainian war when they share geopolitical and politico-normative orientations, thus providing a suitable rationale for analysing their reportage collectively, rather than comparatively.

5.2 Data collection

The integration of corpus linguistic (CL) methods into CDS has gained popularity due to its ability to provide critical discourse analysts with a more systematic approach, capable of handling larger bodies of texts (or corpora) that permit more representative discourse samples. Furthermore, CL enables analysts to reduce bias, mitigate against 'cherry-picking' of data, and ensure more valid and generalisable results (Mautner, 2016). Corpus approaches to CDS exploit the quantitative insights provided by CL tools to explore the frequencies and semantic profiling of lexical items before employing the qualitative tools of CDS to reflect on the ideological significance of these patterns. For this research, a corpus was compiled using the advanced search function of the LexisNexis database, searching full-text newspaper articles for the terms: 'Ukraine' OR 'Russia', setting a 1-year cut-off point for data, beginning from the date of the invasion of Ukraine (24/02/22). While national actors are often signified through a variety of metonymic and synecdochic terms – for instance, the Kremlin, Putin, Zelenskyy, Kyiv – we limited our search to these two terms to allow for a general exposition of how the basic discursive construction and qualification of both national actors and their actions influenced their representation. In line with our above rationalisation, we drew data from English-language newspapers from the three previously mentioned East Asian democratic (EAD) nations, which permitted an examination of how these newspapers constructed their nationalist and geopolitical identities in externally oriented reportage likely to be registered in the global public sphere.

On the basis of availability and convenience, we drew data from the following publications: *The Japan News,* one of Japan's largest English-language newspapers with a moderate-Conservative political alignment; *The Korea Times,* a centrist paper that is Korea's oldest English-language newspaper; *The Korean Herald*, another leading English-language daily newspaper in Korea, and *The Taiwan News,* a longstanding English-language news outlet which espouses anti-autocratic news values. The results of this process are visualised in the below table:

Newspaper	No. of Articles	No. of Words
The Japan News	1,041	553,502
The Korea Herald	1,071	811,261
The Korea Times	676	468,395
The Taiwan News	594	226,957
Combined Totals	3,382	2,060,115

Table 1: East Asian democratic corpus

As shown in Table 1, the majority of our corpus is drawn from two South Korean outlets. This imbalance reflects the practical realities of corpus construction, which, as noted by Baker (2023, p. 57) is often characterised by "a degree of opportunism or compromise in terms of what the builder would like to include and what is available". During the construction of our corpus, the volume of available English-language news coverage varied across the three countries, with South Korea's English-language press offering more accessible material during the sampling period. This asymmetry was not considered detrimental to the study's overarching aims, however. As Baker (2023, p. 57) further notes, in corpus construction, it is vital "to bear in mind the type of research questions that [the analysts what] to ask". Our objective was not to conduct a comparative analysis of national differences or dissimilarities, but rather to provide a general characterisation of the discursive strategies employed by the public diplomatic media of East Asian democracies in their construction of the Russia–Ukraine conflict. Thus, given that all four media outlets can be classified as belonging to the same genre of public diplomacy media, are "representative of [their] language variety or genre" (Baker, 2023, p. 57), and they originate from nations within the EAD geopolitical bloc, we considered the corpus both a convenient and analytically appropriate sample for the purposes of our study.

5.3 Data analysis

Our analytical aim was to elucidate the categorisation and attribution of both national actors, and the transitivity of their processes (see below). Toward this end, we employed an abductive Corpus-*Assisted* Critical Discourse Analysis (CACDA), which departed with particular discursive and linguistic foci in mind, based on a consideration of the literature. Corpus-*assisted* approaches, which draw on preconceived foci, differ from corpus-*driven* approaches, which rely on frequencies within corpora to guide the researcher's focus in a ground-up manner. Our analysis relied on the use of the online corpus management software, Sketch Engine (Kilgarriff et al., 2004), which provided us with CL tools to analyse data from a CDS perspective.

Drawing from the analytical framework of the Discourse-Historical Approach (Reisigl & Wodak, 2015), we analysed the frequent referential and predication strategies used in the corpus to understand how categorisation and attribution manifested discursively in the construction of geopolitical in-groups and out-groups. Referential strategies denote the linguistic "ways in which social actors can be represented in … discourse" (van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 32, as cited in Hart, 2010, p. 34). Our analysis of referential strategies entailed identifying the linguistic resources used in labelling or referring to both combatants as well

as their actions and objects, as these lexical choices ultimately functioned to categorise actors into geopolitical in-/out-groups. Predication strategies signify the processes of linguistically ascribing qualities and/or attributes to actors, actions and things to "frame people, objects, events, processes and states of affairs in terms of quality, quantity, space, time and so on" (Hart, 2010, p. 65). Thus, by analysing the "characteristics, qualities and features" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2015, p. 43) that were routinely attributed to national actors in the corpus, our analysis aimed to illuminate how (if at all) predication strategies were utilised by national newspapers to construct a positive representation of their geopolitical-bloc in-group, and, conversely, a negative presentation of adversarial geopolitical actors. Finally, we also paid special attention to how transitivity was realised in the data – that is, how subject and object positions were ascribed to actors, and the discursive-ideological implications of these clausal arrangements – to understand how the actions of both combatants were positively/ negatively classified. More simply, by analysing "who does what to whom, and how" in the corpus (Machin & Mayr, 2015, p. 104), we explored how the representation of international combative actions was imbricated in the processes of geopolitical bloc identity politics.

Our utilisation of CACDA was abductive insofar as we preidentified discursive and linguistic foci that we hypothesised would be frequently utilised in the discursive realisation of our three chosen discursive processes of categorisation, attribution and transitivity; however, our analysis was, at some points, guided by the frequencies (or lack thereof) of certain words, or 'lexical items', too. The analysis was conducted in three phases, each respectively undertaken to probe into the discursive manifestation of categorisation, attribution and transitivity in regard to both national actors. Sketch Engine's Word Sketch functionality provided us with overviews of a lexical item's 'grammatical and collocational behaviour', that is, how a lexical item typically manifested in the data and how other words which frequently interacted with it, or 'collocates', influenced how it was used to construct meaning. By inputting the keywords 'Russia' and 'Ukraine' into Word Sketch, we were furnished with automated lists of recurrent 'grammatical relations', which sketched how these lexical items were frequently utilised. We were then able to map these grammatical relations onto the preidentified linguistic foci employed in the discursive processes of categorisation, attribution and transitivity. This process of operationalisation is visualised below in Figure 1.

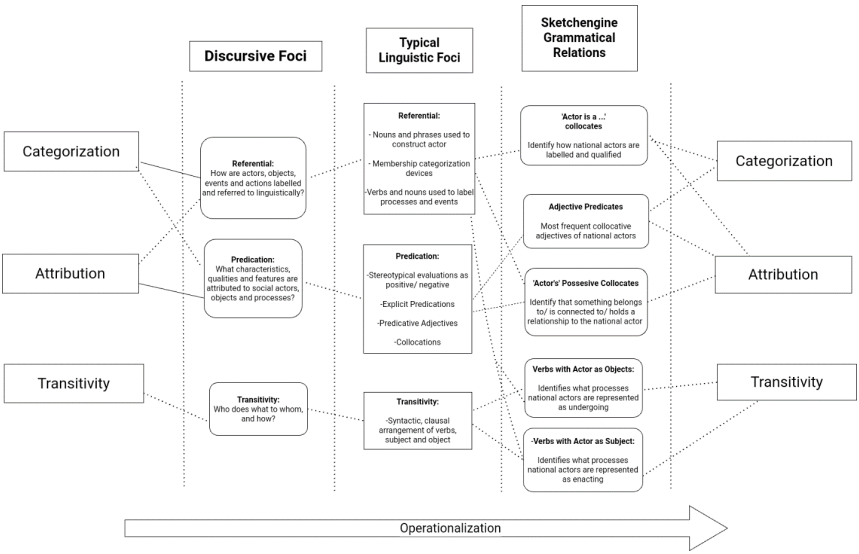


Figure 1: Operationalisation of Sketch Engine's grammatical relations

For discursive categorisation, we primarily relied on the right-hand collocates of the grammatical relation 'Ukraine/Russia is a …', to identify the referential strategies used to denote the recurrent roles and categories that were ascribed to both actors in the data. For the discursive attribution, we examined the collocative adjective predicates of both keywords, examining how these were deployed to modify the perception of national actors and ascribe qualities and features to them. Whilst treated as a separate analytical phase, it must be noted that this phase of analysis shared some overlap with the previous step insofar as the strategic ascription of qualities also served to discursively categorise actors into in-/out-groups, too. Furthermore, regarding attribution, we examined the linguistic ascription of possessives by analysing the right-hand collocates of the grammatical relations 'Russia's' and 'Ukraine's'. Beyond identifying what objects, actions, entities and concepts were discursively represented as being in the possession of both national actors, the analysis of this grammatical relation further enabled us to consider how discursive concepts, values, and attributes were represented as being associated with/holding a connection to/having a relationship with these actors. Finally, regarding transitivity, we considered both construction patterns where the national actor was the object of the verb – to understand the actions that they had been subjected to or underwent, and also

construction patterns where the national actor was the subject – to understand how these agentive processes were positively/negatively characterised through linguistic representation.

The grammatical relation categories produced by Sketch Engine list collocates in terms of frequency (denoted hereafter as n = x). Whilst frequencies are useful in determining the salience of a given word in a corpus, how many times a lexical item appears in a corpus is not necessarily indicative of it being linguistically significant as a collocate of the signifiers of national actors. Indeed, relying on raw frequencies alone is problematic, due to the fact they may hold a concentration in one part of the corpus, and not be diffused throughout or denote a strong collocational preference for a given word. Thus, we utilised the statistical measure logDice (lD), which measures the typicality of collocative cooccurrence, that is, how typical it is for two words to appear together, and the statistical strength of this collocation. After preliminary searches were conducted on the corpus, it was determined that a minimum inclusion threshold lD score of 7.0 would be imposed for lexical items, in addition to having a raw frequency (n) score of at least n = 3. Moreover, the lists presented hereafter are selective, as we pretermit certain function words and lexical items (e.g., the verbs *to be, to have,* and *to do)* which, along with articles and determiners, can be seen as being "devoid of separate meanings as they are" (Mautner, 2016, p. 159). Thus, by exploiting inclusion criteria of raw frequencies and lD scores, in tandem with critically eliding inconsequential lexical items, the researchers were able to identify statistically significant collocation patterns used in the construction and qualification of national actors and their actions.

While frequency lists provide a useful point of departure for analysis, they remove their lexical items from their sentential and broader textual contexts. Consequently, we incrementally trajected our analysis from frequency lists of individual lexical items to larger segments of data. For instance, wherever it proved expedient to our analysis, we considered frequent n-grams, which are statistically significant collocative sequences of 2 or more words, and were statistically measured in terms of their Frequency Per Million (FPM) words. We also routinely examined concordance lines of statistically noteworthy collocates, which provided a broader illustration of a given lexical item's uses in its textual contexts. As noted by Kim (2017, p. 40), "examinations of the concordance lines are crucial and useful because they reveal recurrent patterns and interesting uses of particular search terms". Thus, in addition to visualising frequency tables, samples of concordance lines with the keyword in context (KWIC) are provided and subjected to close analysis in the following analytical section to aid our discussion. The left-hand column of each KWIC figure indicates the media outlet

from which each concordance line is drawn. While our analysis does not seek to compare or contrast differences between individual outlets, this information is included to illustrate the even distribution of analytical findings across all constituent sources within the corpus.

6 Analysis

6.1 Russia's construction in EAD corpus

6.1.1 Categorisation

a. 'Russia is a…'

EAD newspapers demonstrated a patterning of categorizing Russia in terms of its centrality in international trade, as demonstrated by the statistically significant collocates of the grammatical relation 'Russia is a…' visualised below in Table 2.

Lexical Item	logDice	Frequency
Producer	11.4	6
Supplier	11.4	5
Exporter	10.0	3

Table 2: Collocates of 'Russia is a…'

Further analysis of concordance lines unveiled the frequent use of augmentative predication strategies—'top', 'major', 'the largest', 'important', etc. – that stressed Russia's economic centrality as a supporter and supplier of raw materials, as illustrated in Figure 2. Indeed, interestingly, in our data EAD newspapers predominantly categorised Russia as an economic powerhouse, eliding any outright negative categorisation.

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	Japan News.txt	oaring palladium prices due to Russia's invasion of Ukraine.</s><s>	**Russia**	is a major **producer** of palladium, and economic sanctions against th
2	Japan News.txt	e prices of gasoline, electricity and more along with them.</s><s>As	**Russia**	is one of the world's largest **producers** of crude oil and natural gas,
3	Japan News.txt	at the two countries would develop bilateral relations further.</s><s>	**Russia**	is an important arms **supplier** for Myanmar's military.</s><s>Accord
4	Japan News.txt	in Japan is imported, the weak yen also is driving up prices.</s><s>	**Russia**	is one of the leading lumber **exporters** .</s><s>In 2020, it exported
5	Korean Hearld.t...	ains its position on the RussiaUkraine war.</s><s>Most importantly,	**Russia**	is the largest foreign **supplier** of defense equipment for the Indian a
6	Korean Hearld.t...	on Russia could cause a permanent shortage of crude oil supply as	**Russia**	is the third biggest crude oil **producer** and the second biggest expor
7	Korean Times.tx...	of natural resources such as petroleum, gold and palladium.</s><s>	**Russia**	was a top **exporter** of rough diamonds, beating four other countries
8	Korean Times.tx...	<s>The soaring prices of fertilizers are also attributed to the war, as	**Russia**	is a major **exporter** .</s><s>With international sanctions on Russia,
9	Korean Times.tx...	s of oil, natural gas and staple foods.</s><s>The analyst referred to	**Russia**	being a rich **supplier** of energy resources and Ukraine being abunda
10	Taiwan News.txt	istry is likely to face supply chain problems this year, partly because	**Russia**	is a major **supplier** of certain types of raw materials used in the mar

Figure 2: Concordance lines of 'Russia is a …'

6.1.2 Attribution

b. Adjective predicates of 'Russia'

The statistically typical adjective predicates of 'Russia' (n = 6,640) are listed below. The most prevalent adjective predicate in terms of raw frequency, 'Permanent' (n = 30/ lD = 7.0), mostly functioned to foreground Russia's permanency in geopolitical structures and regularly featured as part of the n-gram 'permanent member' (FPM = 13.25), which was largely utilised to construct Russia as having a permanent seat at the UN Security Council – one which was abusing its power of veto.

Lexical Item	logDice	Frequency
Accountable	11.4	8
Isolated	8.4	6
Responsible	9.8	4
Permanent	7.0	30
Suspended	7.0	18

Table 3: Adjective predicates of 'Russia'

Furthermore, in this pattern of representation, Russia was often grouped together with China, as illustrated in lines 7 and 10 of Figure 3 below. In the corpus, then, we discerned a pattern in which Russia was identified as central to the geopolitical framework. It was also regularly associated with China as a geopolitical power bloc misusing its power. This negative predication was further exposed by a consideration of the most statistically typical adjective predicate, 'Accountable' (lD = 11.4), which was noteworthy insofar as its uses were frequently underpinned by a deontic modality, that is, in representations which convey a sense of how things should be or ought to be, in regard to a wilful, desirable future (Clancy et al., 1997), in contrast to their current existential state. In the lines of 1, 4, 8 and 11 of Figure 3, modal verbs, like 'will', 'should' and 'must', were utilised to convey the imperative idea that Russia must be held accountable, often through quotations attributed to (representatives of) Western powers (such as, Psaki, Biden, White House). Furthermore, as exhibited in the concordance lines 5 and 11 below, Russia was discursively predicated as being deservedly and increasingly 'Isolated' (lD = 8.4) or as having its geopolitical functionalities inhibited as a result of its own actions.

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	Japan News.txt	anctions needed U.S. President Joe Biden said, "The world will hold	**Russia**	**accountable** ."</s><s>He also said his country and its allies "will re
2	Japan News.txt	ies cast votes against, including Russia and North Korea.</s><s>As	**Russia**	-- a **permanent** Security Council member that is supposed to bear th
3	Japan News.txt	the White House, continued support for Ukraine and efforts "to hold	**Russia**	**accountable** " were the main focus of the meeting hosted by the Un
4	Japan News.txt	is "a war crime that is absolutely unforgivable.</s><s>We must hold	**Russia**	**accountable** for its outrageous acts."</s><s>In the eastern Ukrainia
5	Japan News.txt	calling for enhancing the transparency of nuclear forces.</s><s>As	**Russia**	has become increasingly **isolated** due to its invasion of Ukraine, it w
6	Korean Hearld.t...	timated costs of Ukraineï¿½ï¿½s postwar reconstruction.</s><s>	**Russia**	is solely **responsible** for the damages inflicted on Ukraine, but any c
7	Korean Hearld.t...	ced to confront threats or attacks alone.</s><s>Third, because both	**Russia**	and China are **permanent** , veto-wielding members of the United Na
8	Korean Hearld.t...	pulations.ï¿½ï¿½He added: ï¿½ï¿½G-20 countries should hold	**Russia**	**accountable** and insist that it support ongoing UN efforts to reopen
9	Korean Hearld.t...	ies, as well as joint efforts to support the people of Ukraine and hold	**Russia**	**accountable** , Psaki said.</s><s>But during Bidenï¿½ï¿½s trip to
10	Korean Times.tx...	in which it is very difficult [to achieve].'</s><s>With possible help of	**Russia**	and China, another **permanent** member of the UNSC, it will be far m
11	Korean Times.tx...	ı to prison and faces isolation from society.</s><s>And just like that,	**Russia**	should be **isolated** from the world in all sectors, such as energy, the
12	Taiwan News.txt	currency, according to a company spokesman.</s><s>During 2021,	**Russia**	was **responsible** for 10% of Taiwan's natural gas supply, but as the

Figure 3: Concordance lines of adjective predicates of Russia

b. Possessives of 'Russia'

In the data, Russia was frequently portrayed as the possessor of events and activities that overwhelmingly held negative connotations. By far, the most statistically salient collocate in this regard was 'Invasion' (lD = 13.6), which, as a referential strategy, legitimised the view that Russia's entry into Ukraine was coercive and illegitimate.

Lexical Item	logDice	Frequency
Invasion	13.6	881
Aggression	10.8	88
War	9.6	36
Attack	8.8	21

Table 4: Possessives of Russia

This strategy of employing nominations that connote coercivity and negativity was further borne out by the statistically significant frequencies of 'War' (lD = 9.6) and 'Attack' (lD = 8.8) as actions instigated by or associated with Russia. Moreover, the frequent ascription of 'Aggression' (lD = 10.8) to Russia implied that its actions were in discordance with geopolitical expectations of peace and propriety. Perhaps unsurprisingly, analysis of concordance lines suggested that this aggression and Russia's war/invasion/attack were chiefly targeted at Ukraine.

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	Japan News.txt	› the health minister, in response to soaring palladium prices due to	**Russia's invasion**	of Ukraine.</s><s>Russia is a major producer of palladiur
2	Japan News.txt	s including a series of ballistic missile launches by North Korea and	**Russia's aggression**	against Ukraine."</s><s>They also exchanged their vie
3	Japan News.txt	ls" if they failed to respond.</s><s>The statement also condemned	**Russia's attacks**	on Ukrainian civilians and critical infrastructure and stresse
4	Japan News.txt	equer Rishi Sunak tweeted, "We are united in our condemnation of	**Russia's war**	against Ukraine."</s><s>Western media reported that the Ukra
5	Korean Hearld.t...	e had fallen onto the territory of Belarus on Thursday during one of	**Russia's**	largest missile **attacks** against Ukraine since the start of the war.</s
6	Korean Hearld.t...	the North starts denuclearization.</s><s>Yoon additionally defined	**Russia's invasion**	of Ukraine as a violation of international law, adding, 'Ukra
7	Korean Hearld.t...	omotive semiconductors.</s><s>With energy prices soaring due to	**Russia's**	ongoing **war** in Ukraine, a 15 percent cut on the tax for power gene
8	Korean Times.tx...	dent or traveler visas.</s><s>Will North Korea increase support for	**Russia's war**	as many workers fear?</s><s>Chung thinks the possibility is n
9	Korean Times.tx...	eeply recently amid continuing geopolitical uncertainty surrounding	**Russia's invasion**	of Ukraine.</s><s>Lesser known in Korea is that Russia i
10	Korean Times.tx...	Moscow's attacks on Ukraine.</s><s>While expressing regret over	**Russia's**	military **aggression** , the President added that any use of force cau
11	Korean Times.tx...	ng salvos over each other's stance on foreign policy issues such as	**Russia's attack**	on Ukraine and Japan's Self-Defense Forces about its possi
12	Taiwan News.txt	an allies of the U.S. have expressed concerns that China could use	**Russia's invasion**	of Ukraine as a blueprint for dealing with Taiwan.</s><s>I
13	Taiwan News.txt	the fact that this has never been the case.</s><s>Understandably,	**Russia's**	brutal **war** against Ukraine has given rise to intense speculation by
14	Taiwan News.txt	nk tank, expressed a similar view.</s><s>He said that the failure of	**Russia's attack**	on Ukraine and the Western economic sanctions have worri
15	Taiwan News.txt	er of the UN Security Council, to take concrete actions to condemn	**Russia's aggression**	against Ukraine and cooperate with the international co

Figure 4: Concordance lines of Russia's possessives

As evidenced above, Russia was frequently predicated with negative qualities and actions – 'aggression', 'war', 'invasion', 'attacks' – which were transitively directed towards Ukraine through the use of prepositions – 'on', 'against', 'with', 'of', etc. Thus, concordance line analysis disinterred a statistically salient pattern of attribution, in which negative qualities and activities that were ascribed to Russia gain meaning from their transitive association with Ukraine as the object or butt of these traits and actions. This patterning was further elucidated in the ensuing phase of analysis where transitivity was examined.

6.1.3 Transitivity

a. Verbs with Russia as object

In the corpus, Russia was typically constructed in clausal arrangements where it was the object of processes which discursively disempowered it. It was represented as being the target of 'Condemnation' (lD = 10.8), 'Criticism' (lD = 9.7) and 'Pressure' (lD = 9.0), which emanated largely from Western-bloc powers (see Figure 5). To a lesser degree, Russia was represented as being the target of 'Exclusion' (lD = 8.9) and 'Sanctions' (lD = 8.6).

Lexical Item	logDice	Frequency
Condemn	10.8	88
Criticise	9.7	18
Pressure	9.0	10
Exclude	8.9	9
Sanction	8.6	7

Table 5: Verbs with Russia as object

The nomination of processes levelled at Russia were predicated on a moral evaluation that it had transgressed ethical norms and standards of the international community. Yet, in-depth analysis of sentential contexts suggests that, in the corpus, Russia is not victimised but rather constructed as the legitimate target of these actions.

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	Japan News.txt	of Ukraine, some countries voted against a resolution **condemning**	**Russia**	while others abstained, because countries traditionally close to Rus
2	Japan News.txt	ternational community, which strives to act collectively to **pressure**	**Russia**	.</s><s>Kishida felt strongly that the meeting would be a failure if th
3	Japan News.txt	ues.</s><s>However, many developing nations are now **criticizing**	**Russia**	.</s><s>If China continues to paralyze the U.N. Security Council alo
4	Korean Hearld.t...	national community, including measures such as **sanctions** against	**Russia**	, following Russian attack on Ukraine.</s><s>Tensions between Mo
5	Korean Hearld.t...	blish a new order on an absolute position that **excludes** China and	**Russia**	.</s><s>It is now clear that China is the next target after it addresse
6	Korean Hearld.t...	d in favor of the resolution.</s><s>The countries in favor **criticized**	**Russia**	and demanded an immediate cessation of the invasion, and the res
7	Korean Hearld.t...	/s><s>As a result, Myanmar was on the record voting to **condemn**	**Russia**	at the UN even as the SAC openly supported the Kremlin.</s><s>H
8	Korean Times.tx...	rities have taken the opportunity to use their platforms to **condemn**	**Russia's**	attack on Ukraine.</s><s>Actor Song Seung-heon took to Instagrar
9	Korean Times.tx...	l said the U.S. has been consulting with its allies over **sanctioning**	**Russia**	, but did not specify whether the South Korean government has rec
10	Korean Times.tx...	ictions with the United States and the European Union to **pressure**	**Russia**	.</s><s>'For the time being, we understand that the sanctions are t
11	Korean Times.tx...	other energy-rich countries to increase energy supply to **pressure**	**Russia**	.</s><s>'Responsible states like the state of Qatar are reliable and
12	Korean Times.tx...	lliance of Korea and the U.S. in the EV battery industry, **criticizing**	**Russia**	and China for threatening the global economy.</s><s>'Working with
13	Taiwan News.txt	an 0.4 nanoseconds.</s><s>These conditions essentially **exclude**	**Russia**	and Belarus from modern technology made in Taiwan.</s><s>Tom's
14	Taiwan News.txt	d sovereignty should immediately strengthen alliances to **sanction**	**Russia**	and support Ukraine, CNA reported.</s><s>He said that both Russi
15	Taiwan News.txt	r Russia invaded Ukraine, Taiwan supported Ukraine, **condemned**	**Russia**	, imposed sanctions on Russia, and donated supplies to Ukrainian c

Figure 5: Concordance lines of verbs with Russia as object

As demonstrated in the above sample, particularly in lines 1, 7, 8, and 15, a broad base of condemnation for Russia stems from nation-states with a UN vote, US-/Ukraine-aligned nations in Asia, and even celebrities. Moreover, as evidenced in lines 3, 4, 6, 12, and 14, (support for) sanctioning and criticisms of Russia emanated from a similarly broad array of (inter)national actors, like 'developing countries', the 'U.S and its allies', 'developing nations', and Asian democratic nations. Finally, other actors are depicted as justifiably excluding or pressuring Russia, as in lines 5, 10, 11, and 13.

b. Verbs with Russia as subject

As an agent in the corpus, Russia was mostly constructed through actions which held negative connotations, and which reflected geopolitical discourse. As shown in Table 6, Russia's action in Ukraine was nominated as an 'Invasion' (lD = 10.9) which it 'Launched' (lD = 9.4), again echoing the delegitimizing effects such a referential strategy has on Russia as an agent, by foregrounding its coercive and illegitimate nature, and eliding any justificatory basis.

Lexical Item	logDice	Frequency
Invade	10.9	110
Launch	9.4	41
Annex	9.1	29
Occupy	8.5	19
Veto	8.0	13

Table 6: Verbs with Russia as subject

This sentiment was furthered by the notable frequencies of 'Occupy' (lD = 8.5), which deeper concordance analysis showed were primarily used to represent Russia's presence in Ukraine since 2014 as illegitimate or as being motivated by a grasping territorial desire. Similarly, the frequent appearances of 'Annex' (lD = 9.1) typically functioned as a referential strategy for denoting Russia's actions in 2014, when it seized control of the Crimean Peninsula.

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	Japan News.txt	ſministrative processing of displaced Ukrainians who came because	**Russia**	**invaded** their country.</s><s>Kotobal offers its machine translation
2	Japan News.txt	ѕame kind of "yes-is-your-only-choice" election that took place when	**Russia**	**annexed** Crimea in southern Ukraine in 2014.</s><s>If such actions
3	Japan News.txt	ɜ agenda for Kishida's visit to India was already partly in place when	**Russia**	**invaded** its smaller neighbor, but events in Ukraine became a major
4	Japan News.txt	ıse the number of countries that support reform.</s><s>In February,	**Russia**	**vetoed** a Security Council resolution condemning its invasion of Ukr
5	Korean Hearld.t...	ıat they want,ï¿½ï¿½ Feulner said.</s><s>Last month, China and	**Russia**	**vetoed** the US-drafted resolution to strengthen sanctions in respons
6	Korean Hearld.t...	ıth a critical amount of supply expected to fall.</s><s>In 2014, when	**Russia**	**invaded** and Korea's supply chain risks resurface over Ukraine crisi
7	Korean Hearld.t...	uaranteed the security of Ukraine was almost nullified in 2014 when	**Russia**	**annexed** Crimea.</s><s>The neutrality solution requires strong com
8	Korean Hearld.t...	ıld Olha Rumiantseva in the early morning of February 24th, the day	**Russia**	**launched** its first attack on Ukraine.ï¿½ï¿½I will never forget this d
9	Korean Times.tx...	s fell sharply to 173,000 won from 180,500 won last Thursday when	**Russia**	**launched** its invasion of Ukraine.</s><s>On Monday, the shares inc
10	Korean Times.tx...	ɜ international community on sanctions against Russia.</s><s>After	**Russia**	**invaded** Ukraine last month, global companies such as Starbucks, C
11	Korean Times.tx...	ıissiles have been used to hit Russian targets, such as bridges that	**Russia**	**occupied** during the war, and command posts.</s><s>Poland's rulir
12	Taiwan News.txt	ΓDF) The invasion has not come out of the blue for Ukraine.</s><s>	**Russia**	**annexed** the Crimean region of Ukraine in 2014 and has been stirrir
13	Taiwan News.txt	ıe outbreak of the Russian-Ukrainian war in February was that when	**Russia**	**occupied** Crimea in 2014, the international community failed to take
14	Taiwan News.txt	ıan 50 of its teachers had offered research spots to Ukrainians after	**Russia**	**invaded** their country in late February.</s><s>The new scholarships
15	Taiwan News.txt	n Ukraine, Mayor Ko Wen-je said Thursday (March 3).</s><s>Since	**Russia**	**launched** its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, an estimated 500,000

Figure 6: Concordance lines of verbs with Russia as subject

The above concordance sample allowed for a closer, qualitative consideration of how this delegitimisation manifested through linguistic resources. For instance, in line 3, Russia's action was not only labelled as an invasion – which holds delegitimizing connotations in and of itself – but the object of the action, Ukraine, was nominated through the diminutive phrase 'smaller neighbour', evoking moralistic values associated with the international community, and representing Russia as an aggressive bully picking on a less powerful, more vulnerable nation-state. Moreover, the identity boundary between Russia and Ukraine was further constructed through the use of possessive pronouns. For instance, in line 1, displaced Ukrainians are victimised as a result of Russia invading 'their' country, whereas Russia was ascribed agency and ownership of its 'invasion' and 'attack' in lines 8, 9, and 15 demonstrating the proclivity in the corpus for Russian actions to be nominated through condemnatory labels. As such, the newspapers in the corpus deployed referential strategies which represent Russia as having a longstanding, illegitimate presence in Ukraine, and represented its most recent action as an invasion of a smaller, weaker nation, that was devoid of any justification.

6.2 Ukraine's construction in the EAD corpus

6.2.1 Categorisation

a. 'Ukraine is a…'

Frequential analysis of the grammatical relation 'Ukraine is a …' in the corpus apparently revealed categorisations of Ukraine that map onto archetypal geopolitical discourses which focus on economic 'Production' (lD = 10.2), international relations between 'States' (lD = 10.2), and 'Membership' (lD = 9.8) of certain geopolitical organisations, whereas 'War' (lD = 9.2) bore strong associations with international conflict.

Lexical Item	logDice	Frequency
Producer	10.2	4
State	10.2	4
Member	9.8	4
War	9.2	3

Table 7: 'Ukraine is a…'

When evaluating these collocates' concordance lines, we discerned a broadly positive categorisation of Ukraine in the corpus insofar as it was assorted into

classifications that were, on the whole, empowering of Ukraine as a state or sympathetic to its status in the ongoing conflict. These processes of categorisation were overviewed in more depth in the below sample of concordance lines in Figure 7 below.

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	Japan News.txt	hy we're already talking to countries about security guarantees, as	**Ukraine is**	still not a **member** of NATO.</s><s>The best security guarantee fo
2	Japan News.txt	rly truce nor the withdrawal of Russian troops is expected.</s><s>	**Ukraine is**	not a **member** of Western alliance NATO and is not subject to the
3	Japan News.txt	ın the two countries.</s><s>Both must have forgotten the fact that	**Ukraine is**	in a **war** for its very survival.</s><s>Although these opinions do no
4	Korean Hearld.t...	pected to suffer collateral damage from the Ukraine crisis.</s><s>	**Ukraine is**	a major **producer** of rare gases essential for chips such as neon, a
5	Korean Hearld.t...	utinely tested missiles that often land in the Sea of Japan.</s><s>	**Ukraine is**	not a NATO **member** , and, since 1994, it has lacked a nuclear det
6	Korean Hearld.t...	ɔver time and tilt the balance of power in its favor.</s><s>Now that	**Ukraine is**	engulfed in **war** , we will see whether China can avoid becoming c
7	Korean Hearld.t...	njured cows, because Russians were occupying the area.</s><s>	**Ukraine is**	a major European egg **producer** , too, and workers have been cut
8	Korean Hearld.t...	recognition in the city category of the awards.'</s><s>The war on	**Ukraine is**	a **war** on our common values of democracy and shared prosperity.
9	Korean Times.tx...	ıased the price of soybean oil to a record high since 2008.</s><s>	**Ukraine is**	the world's No.1 **producer** of sunflower seeds and the world's seve
10	Taiwan News.txt	ɔompletely different things,' Politico quoted him as saying.</s><s>'	**Ukraine is**	an independent **state** , and Taiwan is part of China,' he said, 'So th

Figure 7. Concordance Lines of 'Ukraine is a …'

As evidenced above, Ukraine was economically empowered through categorisations which labelled it as a 'major European egg producer', 'a major producer of rare gases', and the 'world's No. 1 producer of sunflower seeds'. Sympathetic categorisations of Ukraine's status in the ongoing conflict were realised, for instance, through labelling the conflict as 'a war on our common values of democracy', and by highlighting Ukraine's non-membership of NATO.

6.2.2 Attribution

a. Adjective predicates of 'Ukraine'

In the corpus, Ukraine was typically subjected to predication through lexical items which represented it as an 'Important' (lD = 9.3) international actor that was 'Keen' (lD = 8.4), 'Likely' (ID = 8.5) and 'Ready' (lD = 7.3) to continue the conflict, or to find ways to overcome trade issues caused by it.

Lexical Item	logDice	Frequency
Important	9.3	4
Likely	8.5	5
Keen	8.4	3
Ready	7.3	3

Table 8: Adjective predicates of Ukraine

As evidenced in Figure 8 below, specifically in lines 1, 3 and 5, this statistically typical qualification as important stemmed from the perceived importance of providing financial support for Ukraine as it continued its conflict, thus revealing the ideological sympathies engendered by the newspapers whose reportage comprised the corpus. Closer inspection of concordance lines of the other key collocates showed how this pattern of positive qualification and predication played out at the sentential level, where Ukraine was predicated as a 'willing' and 'keen' participant in international affairs. Finally, as evidenced by lines 9 and 10, we noted a pattern where Ukraine was predicated as being an important cautionary tale for other nations who might be invaded by a neighbouring nation. This was most notable in the *Taiwan News* sub-corpus but was also evidenced by the other news outlets in the dataset.

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	Japan News.txt	ɔdiate support.</s><s>Aggregating the financial support needed for	**Ukraine**	is very **important** .</s><s>The president [Volodymyr Zelenskyy] has
2	Japan News.txt	›<s>Despite Japan's resolve, the problem is that neither Russia nor	**Ukraine**	is **likely** to agree to a ceasefire.</s><s>Given the ongoing fierce bat
3	Japan News.txt	to Russia's invasion of their country.</s><s>Kobayashi: Support for	**Ukraine**	is certainly **important** , but we must remember there are many othe
4	Korean Hearld.t...	as a very powerful military to protect its own independence.</s><s>	**Ukraine**	is **likely** to emerge from this conflict as one of the foremost military p
5	Korean Hearld.t...	shington and other countries were to take that approach.</s><s>So	**Ukraine**	will **likely** remain an economic ward of the West, with Washington a
6	Korean Times.tx...	f the 30th anniversary of diplomatic ties.</s><s>"The government of	**Ukraine**	is **keen** to discuss and negotiate a free trade agreement with Korea,
7	Korean Times.tx...	/'s response.</s><s>UKRAINE President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said	**Ukraine**	was **ready** to send support.</s><s>'We are in this moment close to
8	Korean Times.tx...	ıa's rise.</s><s>Today, competition with China and Russia's war on	**Ukraine**	are more **important** than North Korea for the Biden administration,'
9	Taiwan News.txt	ɐa.</s><s>Responding to the Nikkei report, Chiu said the events in	**Ukraine**	held **important** lessons for Taiwan, but for the enemy too, CNA repo
10	Taiwan News.txt	s All Rights Reserved Length: 290 words Body Russia's invasion of	**Ukraine**	is an **important** lesson for the U.S. on how to respond to a possible

Figure 8: Concordance lines of adjective predicates of Ukraine

b. Possessives of 'Ukraine'

In the corpus, Ukraine was ascribed overtly militaristic possessives, which constructed it as a resistive and functioning militaristic actor. For instance, its foreign 'Legion' (lD = 10.4) of volunteers was regularly cited, as was its 'Military' (lD = 9.7). Importantly, its 'Sovereignty' (lD = 11.0) and 'Resistance' (lD = 9.8) to Russia's measures to undermine this sovereignty, were regularly foregrounded through high frequencies.

Lexical Items	logDice	Frequency
Sovereignty	11.0	17
Legion	10.4	9
Resistance	9.8	7
Military	9.7	6

Table 9: Possessives of Ukraine

Indeed, closer analysis, visualised in Figure 9 below, showed that these uses were habitually used to construct Ukraine in a positive light, and as acting in resistance to a provocative event from Russia, thus legitimizing its militaristic reactivity.

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	Japan News.txt	n of winning the war in a short period of time has been thwarted by	**Ukraine's**	all-out **resistance** and support from the international community, le
2	Japan News.txt	ı locals.</s><s>It is a violation of international law that infringes on	**Ukraine's**	**sovereignty** .</s><s>There is also concern that residents mobilize
3	Japan News.txt	e attempting to capture and control the Donbas region.</s><s>For	**Ukraine's**	**military** , every second counts as it prepares for an all-out ground
4	Japan News.txt	ublic concerns are growing over the security environment.</s><s>	**Ukraine's**	**resistance** , which has continued for nearly six months, vividly illus
5	Korean Hearld.t...	ia's invasion of Ukraine as a violation of international law, adding, '	**Ukraine's**	**sovereignty** , territorial integrity and political independence must b
6	Korean Times.tx...	nal community's repeated warnings and diplomatic efforts.</s><s>	**Ukraine's**	**sovereignty** , territorial integrity and independence must be guaran
7	Korean Times.tx...	ght.'</s><s>In the statement, they also expressed their 'support for	**Ukraine's**	independence, **sovereignty** , and territorial integrity' and condemn
8	Taiwan News.txt	pression by precision-guided weapons.</s><s>He also noted that	**Ukraine's**	stubborn **resistance** was completely unexpected and predicted thi
9	Taiwan News.txt	gether."</s><s>An estimated 10 Taiwanese soldiers are fighting for	**Ukraine's**	foreign **legion** , according to a Taiwanese volunteer serving in the
10	Taiwan News.txt	n city.</s><s>There are a number of factors behind the success of	**Ukraine's**	**resistance** .</s><s>The spirit and zeal of the Ukrainian people has

Figure 9: Concordance lines of possessives of Ukraine

This legitimacy is shown, for instance, in line 9 which constructs a sense of international and geopolitical solidarity by citing 10 Taiwanese soldiers who were fighting in Ukraine's foreign legion. Moreover, the above demonstrated how a moral obligation to responded was elicited by the violation of Ukraine's 'sovereignty', 'territorial integrity' and 'independence' (lines 5, 6 and 7) or by Russia's violation of international law (lines 2 and 5).

6.2.3 Transitivity

a. Verbs with Ukraine as object

The verb processes that Ukraine was represented as undergoing in the data could be delineated into two broad groupings: firstly, those from supportive national actors, and secondly, those from Russia. The former group consists

of Western-aligned nations who were seeking to 'Support' (lD = 11.0) or 'Provide' (lD = 9.1) Ukraine with necessary munitions or supplies. Secondly, Russia's actions were overwhelmingly nominated as an 'Invade' (lD = 12.3) and an 'Attack' (lD = 8.3), both of which connote negatively and delegitimise their perpetrator.

Lexical Item	logDice	Frequency
Invade	12.3	160
Support	11.0	89
Provide	9.1	29
Attack	8.3	13

Table 10: Verbs with Ukraine as object

As demonstrated below in Figure 10, Ukraine was predicationally constructed as undergoing processes of support and provision from Western or Asian (supra) national actors that were aligned to Ukraine's cause as a result of geopolitical loyalties, such as Britain and Germany (line 1), Japan (in line 2), Europe (in line 13) and the West (line 14). Such a pattern of positively qualifying Ukraine as a legitimate beneficiary of this support effectively created a moralised discourse which represented the war in Ukraine as a battle between good and evil. The moralised construction of the conflict was furthered by the habitual construction of Russia as the subject of negative processes inflicted on Ukraine, as a malevolent national actor that flouts international law by 'invading' (lines 4, 7, 10, and 12) or 'attacking' (5, 9, and 15) the supposedly less powerful nation.

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	Japan News.txt	g the United States, Britain and Germany have decided to **provide**	**Ukraine**	with main battle tanks to reinforce its military capability, though Kyiv
2	Japan News.txt	ıole world is supporting Ukraine.</s><s>In March, Tokyo **provided**	**Ukraine**	with bulletproof vests and other SDF equipment at the request of K
3	Japan News.txt	rnational attention shifted to condemning that war and **supporting**	**Ukraine**	, many in Myanmar who oppose the military junta felt isolated and f
4	Japan News.txt	d he was in Kyiv on Feb. 24 when Russian troops began **invading**	**Ukraine**	.</s><s>"I heard how the bombs started falling," Bubka wrote.</s><
5	Japan News.txt	sia has been getting Iran to provide it with suicide drones to **attack**	**Ukraine**	in its desperate attempt to turn the tide in its favor.</s><s>The com
6	Korean Hearld.t...	to recent US media outlets, South Korea has indirectly **supported**	**Ukraine**	via the US.</s><s>The Wall Street Journal reported that under a co
7	Korean Hearld.t...	led or wounded, according to the Pentagon, since Russia **invaded**	**Ukraine**	in February.'</s><s>We will stay with you for as long as it takes,' P
8	Korean Hearld.t...	)roceed with caution in deciding what level of weaponry to **provide**	**Ukraine**	in the coming year, when it will probably face intense pressure - bo
9	Korean Times.tx...	a Ukraine crisis.</s><s>Since the concerns over Russia **attacking**	**Ukraine**	have materialized in the market, oil prices are expected to soar eve
10	Korean Times.tx...	ın Monday voicing their unified stance against Russia for **invading**	**Ukraine**	.</s><s>The statement came an hour before the Russian Embassy
11	Korean Times.tx...	amsung but other Korean companies are also actively **supporting**	**Ukraine**	despite the worsening conditions.</s><s>LG Electronics is support
12	Taiwan News.txt	ade technology.</s><s>It has been a month since Russia **invaded**	**Ukraine**	, and after its original planned blitzkrieg failed, the Russian army fel
13	Taiwan News.txt	ny in resisting the aggressors and hopes that Europe can **support**	**Ukraine**	, because "Putin will not stop."</s><s>He warned that if NATO and
14	Taiwan News.txt	:/s><s>And of course, western allies have rallied round, **providing**	**Ukraine**	with military hardware, medical supplies, and financial support.</s>
15	Taiwan News.txt	rson to purchase generators after Russian forces began **attacking**	**Ukraine's**	power and other infrastructures.</s><s>This was done in the hope

Figure 10: Concordance lines of verbs with Ukraine as object

As shown elsewhere in our analysis, Russia's actions were represented as justifiably eliciting criticism from the international community and East Asian countries, as shameful and devoid of legitimate reasoning. Thus, the nomination and overall discursive qualification of these actions firmly situated Russia in the outgroup of these media newspapers and their audiences.

b. Verbs with Ukraine as subject

In the corpus, East Asian newspapers demonstrated a strong tendency to use positive referentials to denote the actions of Ukraine. For instance, it is frequently associated with winning (lD = 7.5), continuing (lD = 8.0) fighting (lD = 7.7), and showing (lD = 7.9) strong moral fabric and bravery.

Lexical Item	logDice	Frequency
Continue	8.0	17
Show	7.9	17
Fight	7.7	10
Rebuild	7.6	10
Win	7.5	9

Table 11: Ukraine as subject

Surveying concordance lines, sampled below in Figure 11 below, which featured Ukraine as the subject of verb processes, further demonstrated how this positive evaluation of their (re)actions was constructed through referential strategies utilised by these East Asian newspapers.

	Details	Left context	KWIC	Right context
1	Japan News.txt	With this sense of crisis in the background, Biden has reiterated that	**Ukraine**	is **fighting** to defend democracy.</s><s>During a Monday discussic
2	Japan News.txt	the railroad station, some restaurants are back in business.</s><s>	**Ukraine**	**rebuilds** amid war; Preserving the ravages of war in 3D images Bor
3	Japan News.txt	"</s><s>His leg brace will be removed in early November.</s><s>"	**Ukraine**	will **win** for the world, too," he said.</s><s>"I hope that the internatic
4	Japan News.txt	ıe form of arms and ammunition will become indispensable.</s><s>	**Ukraine**	**continues** to resist Russia's aggression thanks to support mainly fr
5	Korean Hearld.t...	:raine loses?</s><s>A: I just exclude this scenario.</s><s>I believe	**Ukraine**	will **win** this war.</s><s>Of course, this is very important to us (Lithu
6	Korean Times.tx...	›emptive strikes and have the intent to do so ... I believe the case of	**Ukraine**	**shows** that you cannot protect national security and peace with pap
7	Korean Times.tx...	a big motivation for people staying strong, making them believe that	**Ukraine**	will eventually **win** this war.</s><s>'Our president is a hero.</s><s>
8	Korean Times.tx...	ountry's independence.</s><s>'Watching the leaders and people of	**Ukraine**	**continue** to fight back, I express the deepest respect for those who
9	Taiwan News.txt	nese volunteers and Korean volunteers are all our model."</s><s>"	**Ukraine**	**winning** this war is the best possible way to protect Taiwan from a C
10	Taiwan News.txt	at the Russo-Ukrainian War has lasted for more than 300 days, and	**Ukraine**	is still **fighting** .</s><s>The president said that Ukraine's firm will to

Figure 11: Concordance lines of verbs with Ukraine as subject

For instance, many of the assertions that Ukraine was fighting a positively evaluated fight were attributed to quotations from Western(-aligned) leaders, such as former presidents Biden (U.S.A, line 1) and Yoon (South Korea, line 8) and President Nauseda of Lithuania in line 5. Moreover, concordance line analysis revealed that these newspapers frequently represented Ukraine as striving to win with the help of these Western powers, for the good of democracy and the wider world.

7 Discussion and conclusions

Our analysis revealed that Russia and Ukraine, as conflicting national actors, were constructed in a conspicuous manner, which provides several thought-provoking insights for understanding the East Asian Democratic press' public diplomatic role and discursive patterning during the conflict.

In the corpus, Ukraine is predominantly represented in a positive light, particularly in relation to its international support and ongoing resistance. Furthermore, these media outlets also leverage the conflict to convey a glorified image of the West as a liberator. This stands in sharp contrast to the construction of Russia as a permanent member of UN Security Council which abuses its power, thus adding a veneer to justification for Russian isolation. Indeed, it was shown that the corpus also features notably high construction patterns which condemn Russia and China in terms of their affinitive geopolitical outlook.

Analysis of the data also revealed high frequencies of discursive strategies like demoralisation and delegitimation to represent Russian actions as unethical and illegitimate. Interestingly, Ukraine is unvaryingly categorised as a sovereign state. Yet we can differentiate in terms of how this value of sovereignty was utilised toward opposing political ends. For instance, frequent comparisons were made between China's treatment of Taiwan's sovereignty and Russia's violation of Ukraine's sovereignty. Sovereignty, thus, is associated with two types of power-seeking discursive practices: firstly, seeking to legitimise certain policies targeted at Ukraine via routinised constructions of Otherness (Zhekova, 2023), and secondly, posing questions about geopolitical spaces and communities (Weber, 1994), particularly in relation to the classical discourse on security aimed at legitimising the idea of responsibility through the articulation of threats (Hansen, 2013). The second is identified in the corpus' constructions of the Western alliances' responsibility to assist with Ukraine's resistance.

Our analysis, unsurprisingly, affirms an ideological alignment between the collective geopolitical views of the Russia-Ukraine conflict from Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan; but more importantly, it elucidated these outlets' discursive utilisation of heavily moralised judgements that represent the Other–Russia (often together with China) as a threat (Tan, 2023). This was despite the fact that our analysis of categorisation *per se* did not reveal any outright negative categorisations of Russia as a national actor. As such, we can infer that this negative evaluation manifests through the qualities and attributes Russia were discursively ascribed, and the discursive construction of its transitive actions. This negative representation reflects Russia's designation by NATO who, in response to the rising power of China – with its second-largest military budget in the world (Sparks, 2015) – and its increasing ties with Russia, has positioned China as a strategic concept that will guide their future strategy, whilst strengthening its alliances with the Indo-Pacific region.

In this context, our analysis reveals how the media outlets in our dataset constructed a looming threat of Otherness, that is required to create an 'enemy-other' (Tan, 2023, p. 10) of China, highlighting spatial and geopolitical lenses through which the Russia-Ukraine conflict is understood. Perhaps most notably, our findings complement, yet also diverge from, the conclusions drawn by Breeze and Novoa-Jaso (2024), whose comparative CADS study of how *CGTN* – a Chinese state-aligned international broadcaster that fulfils a similar public diplomatic function to the outlets in our corpus – negotiated a discursive tightrope in covering the war by initially echoing Russian framings of the conflict as a 'special military operation', but gradually shifting to signal neutrality through distancing strategies and quotation markers. While their analysis

showed that *CGTN* downplayed Russia's responsibility and often represented the national actor as a victim of the West, our EAD corpus aligned more with news outlets like *Euronews* and *Al-Jazeera,* who accentuated the destruction and violence of Russia's actions. Similarly, while their analysis of *CGTN* showed how it initially represented Ukrainians as "demotivated and unlikely to fight" (Breeze & Novoa-Jaso, 2024, p. 41), our analysis illustrated how EAD outlets represented Ukraine as a victim of Russian aggression that was continuing to engage in morally righteous resistance efforts. Taken together, our findings elucidate how public diplomacy media outlets in East Asia (in both democratic and authoritarian contexts) adopt and negotiate polarizing representations to align with their respective geopolitical bloc's interests and values.

The representations of the Russia-Ukraine war analysed above were shown to construct a clear dichotomy in terms of geopolitical bloc identity. Thus, this research's findings pose questions about the divisive and polarising effects such representations exert on both national and global audiences, and the deleterious impact such representations may have on reaching some form of future rapprochement between conflicted geopolitical blocs. In particular, given the broader geopolitical context of continuously rising tensions, it becomes even more imperative to consider how the media can serve as a global public sphere, assisting in bridging cleavages and problem-solving.

This research has demonstrated the significance of the role of media discourse in establishing and endorsing particular representations of the identities of international combatants and the geopolitical ideologies underlying these representations. These representations serve as a key battleground where "the historically normative disagreements and conflicts of interests between Ukraine, Russia, and the West" (Liu, 2023, p. 296) manifest. It contributes theoretically and empirically by elucidating *how* English-language news outlets in East Asian democratic nations constructed a biased representation of the conflict. Yet, it is also worth noting that the Russia-Ukraine conflict deserves a more vigilant analysis of other influential media types which were not included in this research – such as mainstream media internal to these nations. Furthermore, future research may benefit from adopting a comparative approach to isolate the intra-national differences in representation between Japan, Taiwan and South Korea, as this was one limitation of the present research's approach.

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