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The Russia-Ukraine Conflict in Communication Studies: A Review and Bibliometric Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The Russia-Ukraine conflict stands out as the most influential military confrontation on the global stage in recent years. It has also become a major focus within communication studies. This paper presents a bibliometric analysis based on data from the Web of Science database. A total of 135 SSCI articles were chosen. They were published from 2015 to May 2025. The study shows how communication research on the Russia-Ukraine conflict changed in the past ten years. The number of articles peaked in 2024. During this year alone, scholars published 55 SSCI papers on the topic. Several scholars have played a central role in shaping this field. These include Nicoleta Corbu, Michael Hameleers, and Mervi Pantti. The University of Amsterdam has published the highest number of papers in this area. Three journals stand out due to their influence: International Communication Gazette, International Journal of Communication, and Journalism. Collaborative network analysis shows that Western countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands are very productive. Moreover, countries like China and Poland are rising. This shows that global research capabilities are becoming more diverse. Cluster analysis of keywords in the communication field tells us that research on the Russia-Ukraine conflict mainly centers on topics like social media, visual framing, public opinion, and information warfare. This paper aims to give future researchers a comprehensive framework. They can use it to look deeper into issues about the Russia-Ukraine conflict from a communication studies perspective.

Keywords: *Russia-Ukraine conflict, communication studies, bibliometric analysis, social media, information warfare.*

INTRODUCTION

The Russia-Ukraine conflict that started in 2014 has been called the world's "first live-streamed + short video war" by many scholars and media analysts (Hoskins & Shchelin, 2022). Past wars were mainly shown through state-led media or traditional TV reports. But this conflict has played out almost in real time on digital platforms like TikTok, YouTube, X (formerly Twitter), and Telegram. Through continuous live streaming, drone perspectives, and algorithm-driven short videos, this war has entered the public view in an unprecedented manner—instant, immersive, and emotional (Kuźmiński, 2022).

This shift signifies a major transformation in the landscape of war communication, moving beyond simplistic linear comparisons such as World War II as the “radio war” and the Vietnam War as the “television war.” The Russia-Ukraine conflict illustrates a more intricate media environment defined by decentralized, participatory, and visually driven

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platforms (Bareikytė & Makhortykh, 2024). Unlike earlier conflicts in Syria or Afghanistan, where information flows were often mediated through embedded journalists and constrained by traditional news networks or controlled social media use, the Russia-Ukraine war is characterized by real-time digital narration from a wide array of actors—soldiers, civilians, influencers, and official government accounts. These participants play an active role in shaping the narrative. They use viral videos, livestreams, memes, and short-form content to share their messages. Platforms like TikTok and Telegram are their primary tools. On these platforms, they compete for attention and control over the story. The media space they operate in is fragmented but constantly active (Oleinik, 2024).

The connection between war and digital media has gained wide attention in communication studies. Researchers have explored how propaganda and disinformation spread in digital spaces (Vanetik et al., 2023). Some scholars studied how people see war through digital platforms (Bareikytė & Makhortykh, 2024). Some looked at how emotions shape what people understand (Domínguez-García et al., 2024). Some focused on how algorithms control the way information spreads (Pierri et al., 2022). Scholars used old ideas like media framing, agenda-setting, and news flow across countries in the digital media world (Ptaszek et al., 2023).

Disinformation stories come in waves. They aim to change how people feel, what they believe, and how they see the war during important times (Krainikova & Prokopenko, 2023). Telegram is now a major platform. People use it for official messages and for sharing events from the ground (Ghasiya & Sasahara, 2023). State messages fight against each other there, and this happens at the same time as the events (Shultz, 2023).

Research on communication about the Russia-Ukraine conflict has increased rapidly in recent years. However, few systematic reviews or bibliometric analyses exist, making it difficult to identify key themes, trends, and contributors. This lack of comprehensive studies makes it hard to see key research trends, main themes, and key authors. As the number of publications keeps growing, it is important to do a bibliometric analysis soon. This kind of analysis can give a clear view of the research field. It can also show big gaps in knowledge and help guide future work in communication.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Russia-Ukraine conflict began in 2014. It has received a lot of attention in international communication studies. The conflict is not just about fighting. It also involves communication. These include news reporting, social media, spreading information, and telling stories for a purpose. These actions shape how people see the conflict. They also influence public opinion across countries.

News reporting plays a key role in shaping public understanding. Studies show that media in different countries use different reporting styles. For example, Roman et al. (2017) compared news outlets in Russia, Ukraine, and the United States. They found clear differences in source selection, how casualties were reported, and how each side was described. In another study, Guazina et al. (2024) looked at Brazilian TV news. They found that the reporting offered many angles and viewpoints. These findings show how framing in news reports can shape public perception.

Social media has become a major tool in the communication side of the conflict. It helps spread both true and false information. Zhao et al. (2024) studied Twitter and found that social bots played a large role in sharing misinformation. These bots had a clear effect on how people viewed the conflict. Soares et al. (2023) also looked at social media, focusing on how users reacted to Russian propaganda. They found that belief in false information was linked to political views. It was also linked to trust in one-sided media. It was further linked to how often people shared political posts. Social media can make political divisions worse. It can also spread false information.

Strategic storytelling serves as a key instrument through which states seek to shape public perception. Bradshaw et al. (2024) examined the narrative strategies employed by Russian state media, revealing how these outlets constructed compelling national discourses that portrayed Russia as a dominant global actor, framed Ukraine as a security threat, and depicted Western nations as untrustworthy. These narratives were instrumental in influencing both domestic and international audiences. Similarly, Liu and Zhang (2024) investigated Chinese media representations of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, finding that Chinese outlets emphasized the protection of national interests while also promoting narratives centred on shared values. Such messaging contributed to China's efforts to cultivate a favourable international image during the conflict.

Strategic storytelling is another way country try to influence opinions. Bradshaw et al. (2024) explored how Russian state media created strong national stories. These stories showed Russia as powerful, Ukraine as dangerous, and the West as dishonest. This helped shape views at home and abroad. Liu and Zhang (2024) studied how Chinese media talked about the conflict. They found that Chinese media focused on national interests. The outlets also highlighted shared values. These messages helped China build its image in the global arena during the conflict.

Public opinion is shaped not just by media content, but also by how people think and what they already believe. Gebauer et al. (2017) found that frightening news made German viewers more likely to support military action. Zecchinon and Standaert (2025) looked at fact-checking in France. They found that fact-checkers mostly corrected misleading captions, not deepfake images. These studies show how media content, personal beliefs, and emotion all shape how people view conflict.

RQ1: What is the annual distribution of the number of publications on the Russia-Ukraine conflict in communication studies from 2015 to 2025?

RQ2: Which countries, institutions, and authors have made the main contributions to the research on the Russia-Ukraine conflict in the field of communication studies?

RQ3: How does the cooperation network among countries, institutions, and authors develop in the field of communication regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict?

RQ4: Who are the most influential scholars and what are the main research hotspots in communication studies on the Russia-Ukraine conflict?

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a bibliometric method with two parts. One part is performance analysis. The other part is co-occurrence network analysis. Performance analysis gives a general view of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in communication studies. It shows simple numbers about research output. It shows how many papers are written by authors, institutions, and countries. It also shows how people work together. This helps researchers see who is active in the field. It also shows how they work as a group (Ramos-Rodríguez & Ruíz-Navarro, 2004; Yan et al., 2015; Liu et al., 2020). Co-occurrence analysis finds research topics and new trends. It checks how often some keywords appear. It also shows how these keywords are connected (Rejeb et al., 2020; Goswami & Labib, 2022). Many academic and policy groups uses bibliometric analysis. They use it because it works well for large sets of data. It is also fair and not expensive (Haustein & Larivière, 2015). It helps researchers get numbers from large data. It also helps them find groups of ideas and find gaps in research (Du et al., 2017; Jeong et al., 2014; Ye et al., 2021).

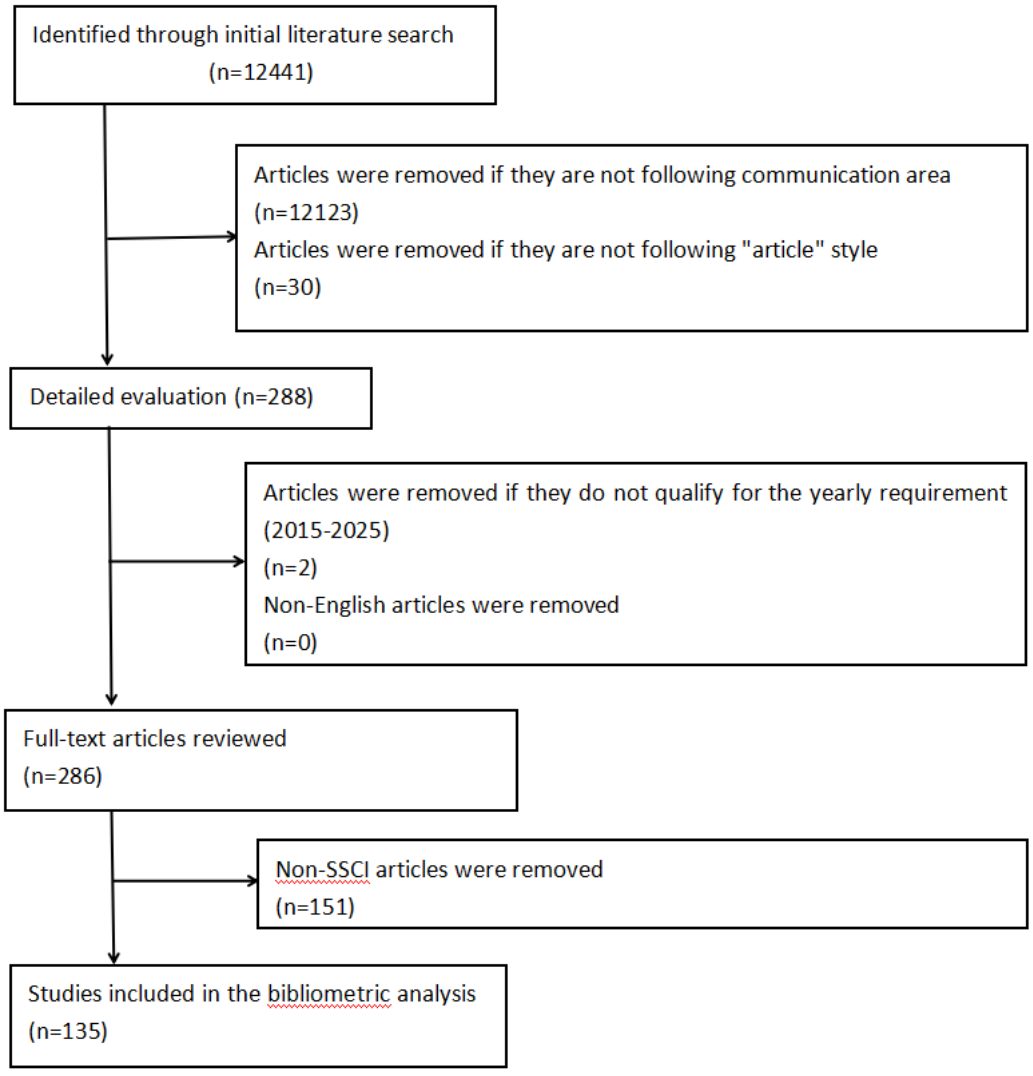


Figure 1: Diagram of the data screening process

This study used the Web of Science database to collect relevant literature. The search included the following keywords: *"Ukraine Conflict," "Ukraine War," "Russia-Ukraine War," "Russia-Ukraine Conflict,"* and *"Russian-Ukrainian Conflict."* The search was limited to the Topic field. This initial search yielded 12,441 records. To ensure relevance to the field of communication studies, articles that did not fall within this discipline were excluded (n = 12,123), leaving 318 articles. Furthermore, only journal articles were included in the analysis; other types such as early access publications, conference proceedings, and reviews were excluded. To keep the data clear and useful, only articles listed in the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) were kept. The articles had to be published from 2015 to 2025. After checking all the rules, 135 articles were picked. Figure 1 shows how the data was checked.

This study has some limits. The data collection stopped in May 2025. So, it does not show all the research from that year. The sample size is 135 articles. The small sample size may affect the study. The study only used SSCI papers written in English. This causes a language problem. Some papers in other languages are not included.

DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

1. Descriptive Statistics

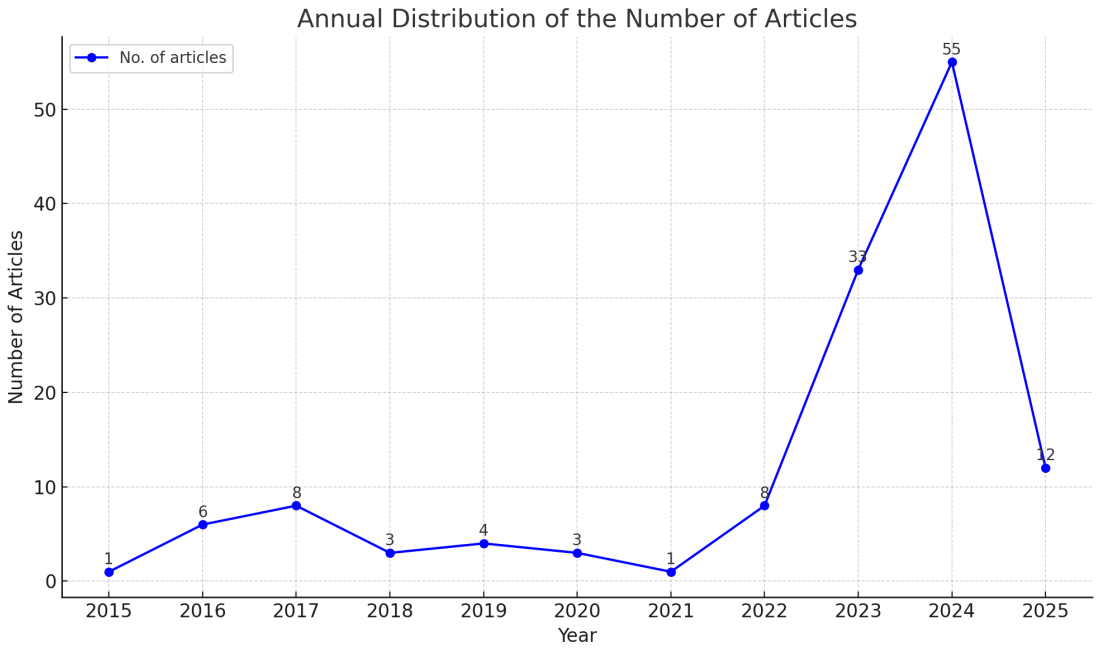


Figure 2: Annual distribution of the number of articles

To answer the first research question, we conducted a retrospective analysis of how academic research on the Ukraine conflict has developed within communication studies. The number of publications over time reflects the research activity in this field to some extent. We systematically identified 135 research articles that met the inclusion criteria and plotted their yearly distribution. Figure 2 shows the following findings: The research data indicate that from 2015 to May 2025, the publication of related literature exhibited distinct phase characteristics. From 2015 to 2021, the number of published articles was low. Most years

had fewer than 10 articles. The highest number was in 2017, with 8 articles. In 2022, the number of papers went up quickly. This happened exactly with a new round of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The event brought more attention to the topic in communication studies. Specifically, the highest number of publications (55 papers) reached in 2024, followed by 2023. As the data for 2025 was only collected up to May 23 (the time when the author created the chart), there is little chance to make a scientific judgment on the overall publication situation for 2025.

a) Statistics of the Contributing Authors, Institutions, Countries, and Publications

Table 1: The 14 most prolific authors contributing to the Russia-Ukraine conflict research

Authors	**Citation Name**	**Number of Publications**	**% of 135**
Nicoleta Corbu	Corbu, N.	4	2.96 %
Mervi Pantti	Pantti, M.	4	2.96 %
Michael Hameleers	Hameleers, M.	4	2.96 %
Frank Esser	Esser, F.	3	2.22%
Ludovic Terren	Terren, L.	3	2.22%
Yannis Theocharis	Theocharis, Y.	3	2.22%
Claes de vreese	de Vreese, C. H.	3	2.22%
Marina Tulin	Tulin, M.	3	2.22%
Karolina Koc-michalska	Koc-Michalska, K.	3	2.22%
Denis Halagiera	Halagiera, D.	3	2.22%
Toril Aalberg	Aalberg, T.	3	2.22%
Luisa Gehle	Gehle, L.	3	2.22%
Jesper Stromback	Strömbäck, J.	3	2.22%
Vaclav Stetka	Štětka, V.	3	2.22%

Table 1 lists the 14 most prolific scholars in Russia-Ukraine conflict research, as indexed in the Web of Science (WoS), ranked by the number of publications. Among the 135 data entries included in this study, 14 authors have published more than three articles. Notably, Nicoleta Corbu, Mervi Pantti, and Michael Hameleers each have four publications, establishing them as the most frequent and significant contributors to the field of communication studies regarding the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict, which constitutes 8.88% of the total data volume. The first-authored article by Corbu, N. primarily investigates the Romanian public's ability to discern accurate information from misinformation during the initial phase of the Russia-Ukraine war, along with the influencing factors. The sole-authored work by Michael Hameleers focuses on how visual misinformation is employed on social media to construct partisan truth claims during both the Ukraine war and the Israel-Palestine conflict, and how it reinforces divisions between opposing camps through false or decontextualized visual content. Corbu, N. and Michael Hameleers wrote three articles together. They concern about different people’s perceptions about the Russia-Ukraine war and how they check false information about the Russia-Ukraine war. They also study why people think this way and how this change from one country to another. Mervi Pantti from the University of Helsinki studies how media habits, visual messages, and

public views have changed during the Russia-Ukraine conflict. She uses a clear and simple way to study how news about war is shared across countries. Other authors who have published three papers are Frank Esser, Ludovic Terren, Yannis Theocharis, Claes de Vreese, Marina Tulin, Karolina Koc-Michalska, Denis Halagiera, Toril Aalberg, Luisa Gehle, Jesper Stromback, and Vaclav Stetka. They have also made important contributions.

The low number of publications per author—only four at most—shows that communication research on the Russia–Ukraine conflict is still new. In older fields, top scholars often write many papers. In this case, the work is spread across many people. This shows that the field is wide but also a bit broken up. This early stage brings both problems and chances to grow knowledge. One big problem is that there is no shared theory or main idea. Researchers use different ways to study the topic. They do not follow the same path. There are also not many long-term or cross-country studies. But the field also gives many chances. There is space to build new ideas and test new ways. Scholars can work with others in areas like politics, media, world studies, and human behavior. New people in the field can bring in fresh work. The ongoing Russia–Ukraine conflict still matters to the world. This may bring more interest and support to this area of research.

Table 2: The 9 most prolific institutions contributing to the Russia-Ukraine conflict research

Institutions	Number of Publications	% of 135
University of Amsterdam	6	4.44%
National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy	5	3.70%
Ministry of Education & Science of Ukraine	4	2.96%
University of Helsinki	4	2.96%
University of Gothenburg	4	2.96%
University of Vienna	4	2.96%
University of Zurich	4	2.96%
Hebrew University of Jerusalem	4	2.96%
Loughborough University	4	2.96%

This table analyses institutions participating in communication studies related to the Ukraine conflict, aiming to identify the most active research units in this field. The statistical analysis focuses on the top nine institutions based on the number of publications in a final selection of 135 SSCI articles. The University of Amsterdam is first with six articles. National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy, a well-known university in Ukraine, has five articles. Seven other schools each have four articles. These schools are in different countries. The countries include the Netherlands, Ukraine, Finland, Sweden, Austria, Switzerland, Israel, and the United Kingdom. The data indicates that the conflict in Ukraine has sparked widespread interest within the international academic community in the field of communication studies. Institutions from Western Europe, Northern Europe, and Ukraine itself have all made significant contributions, demonstrating the diversity and geographic distribution of the research network.

Table 3: The 12 most prolific countries producing the Russia-Ukraine conflict research

Countries	**Number of Publications**	**% of 135**
USA	30	22.22%
United Kingdom	18	13.33%
Germany	17	12.59%
Netherlands	14	10.37%
China	13	9.63%
Poland	12	8.89%
Norway	9	6.67%
Israel	8	5.93%
Sweden	8	5.93%
Finland	8	5.93%
Russia	8	5.93%
Ukraine	7	5.19%

Table 3 presents the scientific output published by country. Notably, the USA leads with 22.22% (30 papers), underscoring its strong dominance in global academic research concerning the dissemination of the Ukraine conflict. United Kingdom and Germany also made substantial contributions, with 13.33% and 12.59%, respectively. European countries collectively demonstrate high activity, as the majority of the top 12 positions are occupied by European nations, including the Netherlands, Poland, Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Ukraine. This indicates that the issue has garnered significant academic attention in Europe, particularly in nations with closer geopolitical ties. China is the top non-Western country with 13 articles. This makes up 9.63% of the total. Chinese scholars have shown more interest in international communication and the Ukraine issue in recent years.

Ukraine and Russia are the two countries directly involved in the war. But they have published only a small number of studies. Ukraine has 7 papers (5.19%). Russia has 8 papers (5.93%). This low number results from challenges faced by scholars in these countries. In Ukraine, the war may have damaged universities, cut funding, or forced researchers to leave. In Russia, sanctions and isolation have made it harder to access journals or work with others. Consequently, the voices of local scholars are not paid much attention in global research.

These studies mainly come from Western countries. These include the United States, the United Kingdom, and many countries in Europe. This strong Western presence affects how the conflict is studied. Western researchers often use different ideas, systems, and values than those in Ukraine or Russia. So, the global view of the war often shows a Western way of thinking. These studies are useful. But without more views from other places, the full story may be missing.

Meanwhile, the majority of the research comes from Western countries, including the USA, the UK, and much of Europe. This Western dominance shapes how the conflict is studied and understood. Research from these countries use different values, theories, or media systems than those in Ukraine or Russia. As a result, the global picture of the war reflects a Western lens. While these studies offer valuable insights, viewpoints with great similarity can limit a full understanding of the conflict.

In short, the data shows strong global interest, especially from the West. But the limited studies from Ukraine and Russia points to a gap. Future research should aim to include more voices from the countries most affected.

Table 4: The 11 most prolific publications producing the Russia-Ukraine conflict research

Publications Title	Number of Publications	% of 135
International Communication Gazette	10	7.41%
International Journal of Communication	10	7.41%
Journalism	10	7.41%
Digital Journalism	8	5.93%
Media and Communication	7	5.19%
Social Media + Society	7	5.19%
Critical Discourse Studies	6	4.44%
Journalism Practice	6	4.44%
Journalism Studies	6	4.44%
Journal of Information Technology & Politics	5	3.70%
Media Culture & Society	5	3.70%

Table 4 shows the main trends in the distribution of publications related to the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and shows concentrated and interdisciplinary participation in the field. Data show that journal concentration is high. The top 11 journals published a total of 80 projects (59.26% of the total amount), indicating that the study was spread primarily through selected core media and communication channels. Three journals — *International Communication Gazette, International Journal of Communication, and Journalism* — each 10 publications, 7.41% of the total. This shows they are important places for research on war communication, media stories, and conflict news.

Journals on digital and social media, such as *Digital Journalism* (8 papers) and *Social Media + Society* (7 papers), also rank high. Many scholars focus on how online platforms spread information about war. Journals such as *Critical Discourse Studies* and *Journal of Information Technology & Politics* show that this research comes from various fields. It brings together ideas from political communication, discourse analysis, and technology studies. Journals like *Media, Culture & Society* highlight cultural and language analysis. These studies help us understand how media frames and discusses conflicts.

2. Cooperation Network Analysis and Results

The cooperative network shows the relationship between the settlement and effectively describes cooperation among key organizations (Liu et al., 2020). This study uses Citespace software to visualize collaborations in the field of misinformation research in the communications sector, thereby selecting the links (e.g., countries, institutions, and authors). This approach helps create collaborative network cards for countries, institutions and authors.

a) Countries



Figure 3: Knowledge mapping of countries cooperation network

Figure 3 shows a map of country cooperation in research on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It was made using CiteSpace. In the graph, each node represents a country. The size of the node shows the number of publications from that country in this research field. Links between nodes show collaborative relationships. Thicker lines mean more frequent cooperation. The colours of the nodes and links go from blue to yellow. Blue means earlier years and yellow means more recent years.

The map shows that the United States is the most prominent contributor in this field. Its node is the largest and has a purple outer ring. This ring shows a very high level of centrality, which means the U.S. is not only the most productive country but also a key "bridge" in the global research network. The United Kingdom and the Netherlands have high centrality. They cooperate often. They play core roles in the European academic network. They form a collaboration hub around Western and English-speaking countries.

China's node is smaller and coloured yellow. This means its research activity has increased mainly in recent years (2023–2025). China has more international collaborations, especially with the U.S. and the U.K. The lack of a purple ring means its role as an intermediary in the network is still limited. China has not yet fully integrated into the core collaboration network.

Other countries like Germany and Norway have moderate publication volumes. They have lower centrality. They act more as participants. They do not connect much in cross-national collaborations. Countries such as Poland, Russia, and Israel are on the edges. They have limited research involvement. Their collaboration is narrow. Poland's connections have grown in recent years. This shows more interest from Central and Eastern Europe.

b) Institutions

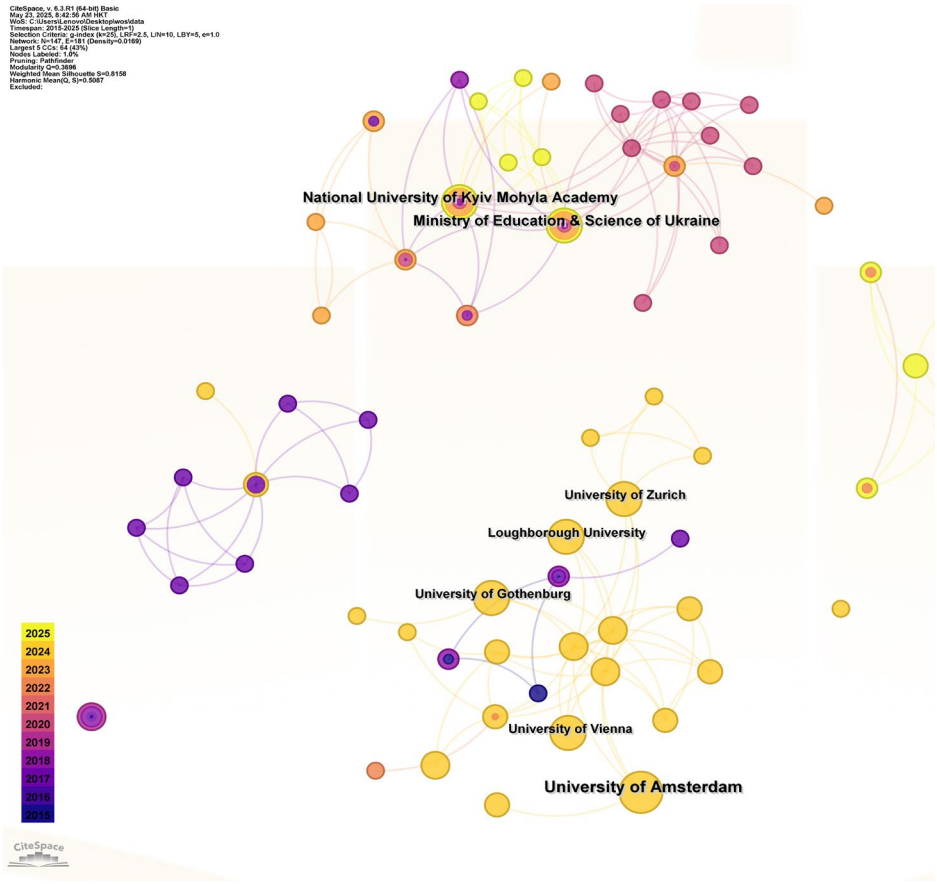


Figure 4: Knowledge mapping of institutions cooperation network

Figure 4 shows the institutional collaboration network made with CiteSpace for the years 2015 to 2025. Each node is a research institution. Bigger nodes mean the institution has done more research or worked with others more often. The colour goes from purple in 2015 to yellow in 2025. This shows when each institution was most active. Thicker lines between nodes mean stronger cooperation. Some nodes have a purple outer ring, like Loughborough University. These are key institutions that connect different groups.

The University of Amsterdam is the biggest and most central node. This means it plays a leading role in research on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. It also works with many other institutions. This shows that institutions with long experience in communication research are still important in this field. The shape of the network also reflects political events. When the Russia-Ukraine war started, the pattern of cooperation changed. A group of institutions in Western Europe—such as the University of Vienna, University of Gothenburg, and University of Zurich—work closely together. These institutions have a strong regional connection. They also built a solid base for early research on the conflict.

During the same time, some Ukrainian institutions showed more activity. These are the National University of Kyiv Mohyla Academy and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. Their nodes are orange-yellow. This means they were more active from 2022 to 2025. The war likely caused this rise. The conflict may have pushed these institutions to do

more research. This work may be part of a larger effort to shape how others see the war. These institutions have fewer links to the global research network. They are not well connected with other countries. There are some possible reasons. One reason is damaged infrastructure. Another reason is language problems. A third reason is limits on academic exchange.

Loughborough University and the University of Zurich have a different role. Their nodes have purple outer rings. This shows they connect parts of the network that are not linked. They act like bridges. They help move knowledge between regions. They link older Western institutions with new ones in Eastern Europe. There is also a shift in research focus. In earlier years (2015 to 2019), Nordic institutions formed a cluster on the left. In later years (2023 to 2025), Ukrainian institutions formed a new cluster on the right. The colours changed from purple to yellow. This shows that research moved from Western and Northern Europe to Eastern Europe. This change happened after the war started. It shows how political events can move research to new places and topics.

In conclusion, the network shows that geopolitical conflict can act as a catalyst for scholarly engagement, drawing new institutions into the field. Going forward, strengthening direct East-West European cooperation—especially by leveraging high-centrality nodes like the University of Zurich—will be essential for building a more cohesive global research community. In addition, peripheral institutions can enhance their global impact by joining international co-authorship efforts, thereby contributing more effectively to the evolving discourse on conflict, media, and public communication.

c) Authors

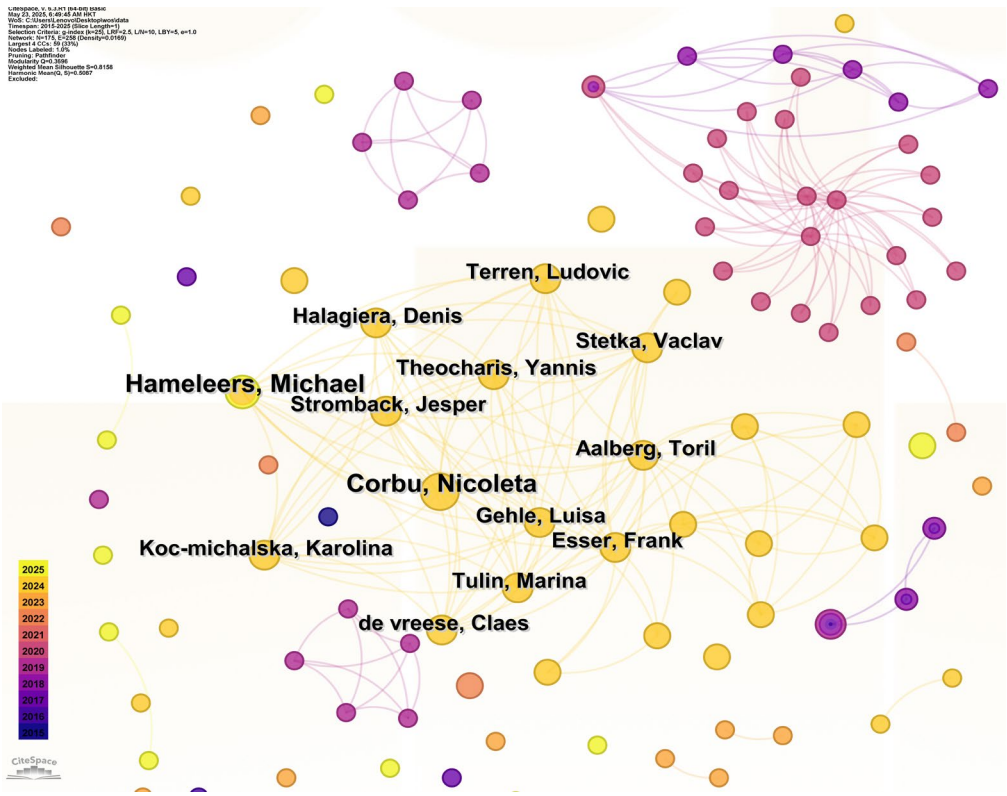


Figure 5: Knowledge mapping of authors cooperation network

Figure 5 presents the author collaboration network generated using CiteSpace, illustrating patterns of scholarly cooperation from 2015 to 2025 in the context of the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Through co-authorship analysis, the network highlights how academic partnerships have formed and how the thematic and temporal focus of research has evolved. Each node in the graph represents an author. Larger nodes indicate authors who have published more papers or collaborated with more people. The focus is on communication research related to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Lines between nodes show co-authorship. The number and distribution of these lines reflect how often authors work together. The colours of the nodes show the time of research. Purple and blue show early work around 2015. Red and orange come later. Yellow shows research from 2023 to 2025. The change from cool to warm colours means more scholars started studying the conflict after 2022. Many yellow nodes after 2023 show a fast rise in new research and new teams, which is likely to result from the war.

The network has some tight clusters. These groups show strong and ongoing partnerships. They focus on topics like media framing, propaganda, fake news, and political messages during war. These clusters mean the field has grown. It changed from solo work to team efforts. Michael Hameleers and Nicoleta Corbu have the biggest nodes and are in the middle of the graph. This means they are important. They write many papers and work with many people. Their research looks at war messages, how media shows the conflict, and how people understand it. Other scholars like Claes de Vreese, Jesper Strömbäck, Václav Štětka, and Toril Aalberg are also important. They form a group in Europe. They study political messages, trust in media, and how war information spreads. These topics are closely tied to how people see the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Their teamwork shows a strong international group that has studied these ideas for a long time. Some authors in the top left and top right areas of the graph have few connections. They work alone or in small teams. They use different methods to study the topic. They focus on local cases outside the main European or U.S. research. They are not central. Their work offers valuable or fresh insights.

The author network changed over ten years. At first, researchers worked alone. The war caused more collaboration. Now, there are more connections and topic groups.

3. Citation & Co-Citation Analysis and Results

a) Citation Analysis and Results

Analyzing citations serves as a technique for monitoring publication trends, operating under the premise that a work, whether authored by an individual or presented in a paper or book, which receives substantial citations is deemed significant by many researchers within a field (Kim & McMillan, 2008). The citation index acts as a crucial metric representing the influence of a particular scholar or publication. In general, an increase in the number of citations associated with a scholar or their work indicates greater impact and importance (Guo et al., 2019).

Table 5: Top 11 most cited articles in the Russian-Ukraine conflict research

Title	Year	First Author	Citations
JOURNALISM IN THE CROSSFIRE: Media coverage of the war in Ukraine in 2014	2018	Nygren, G	49
Information wars: Eastern Ukraine military conflict coverage in the Russian, Ukrainian and US newscasts	2017	Roman, N	38
Crimea River: Directionality in Memes from the Russia-Ukraine Conflict	2016	Wiggins, BE	34
Whose War, Whose Fault? Visual Framing of the Ukraine Conflict in Western European Newspapers	2017	Ojala, M	27
The Ukraine conflict and the European media: A comparative study of newspapers in 13 European countries	2020	Fengler, S	22
THE PERSONALISATION OF CONFLICT REPORTING Visual coverage of the Ukraine crisis on Twitter	2019	Pantti, M	20
Professional role enactment amid information warfare: War correspondents tweeting on the Ukraine conflict	2018	Ojala, M	18
Better Ask Your Neighbor: Renegotiating Media Trust During the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict	2022	Pasitselska, O	13
Falling for Russian Propaganda: Understanding the Factors that Contribute to Belief in Pro-Kremlin Disinformation on Social Media	2023	Soares, FB	12
Manufacturing conflict or advocating peace? a study of social bots agenda building in the twitter discussion of the Russia-Ukraine war	2024	Zhao, B	7
Accessing to a 'Truer Truth': Conspiracy and Figurative Reasoning From Covid-19 to the Russia-Ukraine War	2023	Terracciano, B	7

Table 5 lists the 11 most-cited articles in communication studies about the Russia-Ukraine conflict. The most-cited article, "Journalism in the Crossfire: Media coverage of the war in Ukraine in 2014" (Nygren, 2018), has 49 citations in the Web of Science (WoS) database.

This low citation number, even for the top article, shows that research on the Russia-Ukraine conflict in communication studies is still new. The field is young because the war was small at first. Global scholarly attention started only after 2022. Changes in media and delays between publishing and citing affect this. The small number of citations shows that academic attention to this conflict grew only after the full invasion in 2022.

The most-cited works cover many topics. Some studies (Fengler, 2020; Nygren, 2018; Ojala, 2017; Roman, 2017) use content analysis and visual framing to show large differences in how the conflict appears in national media. These differences show each country's politics and biases. For example, Russian media often support pro-separatist views. Western media focus on humanitarian issues and show Russia as the attacker.

Other research by Ojala (2018), Pantti (2019), and Wiggins (2016) points out the growing personalization of war coverage on social media like Twitter. These studies show journalists mixing professional and personal sides. They share emotional and personal

content. This change affects how war reporting works in digital spaces.

Recent studies (Soares, 2023; Zhao, 2024) look at how audiences handle information during wartime. They discuss ways like talking with peers, fact-checking, and filtering information. These help people judge media trustworthiness and deal with information warfare. Research by Terracciano (2023) studies how conspiracy theories spread with figurative language and symbols. These stories create "alternative truths," which confuse the public and increase division.

b) Co-citation Analysis and Results

Co-citation analysis started in 1973. Many scholars use this method to find active research areas and predict future trends in science. This analysis identifies how often two papers are cited together by a third source. When two works are often cited together, it shows a strong connection. They probably focus on the same research topic. Many co-citation links in one field can form a network. This network shows how the works are connected (Guo et al., 2019). Tables 6 and 7 list the five most influential authors and articles that are often co-cited in research about the Ukraine conflict. The two lists overlap, showing the important role of some people and works in this field.

i. Co-citation Analysis of Authors

Author co-citation analysis is a common citation method that reveals a field's intellectual framework. Shafique (2013) defines this framework as the core knowledge of a scientific field, including its disciplines, key topics, and their links. This method also maps academic networks (Jeong et al., 2014). By studying how often authors are cited together, it identifies important figures, key works, and connections. It shows how the research area develops and organizes over time.

Table 6: Top 5 most influential co-cited authors to the Russian-Ukraine conflict research

Authors	Citation Name	Centrality	Number of Co-citatons
Bennett, W. Lance	Bennett, W. L.	1.19	23
Entman, Robert M.	Entman, R. M.	0.08	22
Szostek, Joanna	Szostek, J.	0.03	15
Chouliaraki, Lilie	Chouliaraki, L.	0.08	13
Ojala, Maria	Ojala, M.	0.03	12

Table 6 shows the top five most co-cited scholars in Russia-Ukraine conflict research and their academic influence. The data reveal clear differences in their roles within the knowledge network. William Lance Bennett stands out with 23 co-citations and a high intermediation centrality of 1.19, far above others (all below 0.08). This shows his central role as a key founder who links different research paths. Robert M. Entman has nearly 22 co-citations but a much lower centrality of 0.08. Joanna Szostek (15), Lilie Chouliaraki (13), and Maria Ojala (12) have lower co-citation counts and centrality (all ≤ 0.08). They contribute actively but do not hold key positions in the network. Their work focuses on niche topics rather than broad, cross-disciplinary theories.

ii. Co-citation Analysis of Articles

Co-citation analysis represents a widely used approach within bibliometric studies. When an article references two documents simultaneously, this occurrence is termed a co-citation. If multiple articles or documents often cite the same pair, it suggests that those documents share thematic similarities (Leydesdorff, 1998).

Table 7: Top 5 most influential co-cited articles to the Russian-Ukraine conflict research

Title & Authors	Centrality	DOI	Co-citations
1. One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? Braun, V., & Clarke, V.	0.07	10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238	7
2. Disinformation as Political Communication Freelon, D., & Wells, C.	0.28	10.1080/10584609.2020.1723755	6
3. Is pro-Kremlin Disinformation Effective? Evidence from Ukraine Erlich, A., & Garner, C.	0.14	10.1177/19401612211045221	6
4. *Ukraine, Mainstream Media and Conflict Propaganda* Boyd-Barrett, O.	0.16	10.1080/1461670X.2015.1099461	5
5. Nothing is true? The credibility of news and conflicting narratives during 'information war' in Ukraine Szostek, J.	0.05	10.1177/1940161217743258	5

Table 7 presents the top five most influential co-cited articles in research on the Russia-Ukraine conflict. These articles show the main themes and new trends in the study of information warfare and media narratives.

One major theme in these papers is the use of disinformation as a political tool. Papers 1 and 2 explain that false or misleading information is a serious risk to democracy. It harms public and distorts facts. The disinformation is deliberately used as a weapon in the published papers, linking to bigger problems like media distrust, political division, and changes in digital communication.

Another trend is how people understand and react to disinformation. This is important in conflict zones. Paper 3 shows that identity factors like ethnicity, language, and political views affect how people judge false messages. These social and political factors shape how open people are to disinformation.

A third pattern is how the media frames the conflict. Paper 4 shows how Western mainstream media tells the story, with a conclusion that the coverage often uses a clear good-versus-evil message. This message matches the views of Western governments while other voices are ignored. This raises concerns about media bias and propaganda. It shows why people need more varied and balanced sources of information.

These articles show the spread of disinformation and the way of people get the information that is trustworthy to people. In addition, they show how different stories appear in the media during the conflict and how people talk about alternative media as more people now look for new sources of information.

iii. Co-occurrence Analysis & Cluster Analysis and Results

a) Keyword Co-occurrence Analysis and Results

Keyword co-occurrence analysis is now a common way to study co-words (Chen et al., 2016). This method helps create groups that give a clear view of different research topics in a scientific field (Börner et al., 2000). To do the network analysis, we first took all keywords from each paper. Two keywords are likely linked if appearing in the same papers. Studying the keyword co-occurrence network shows the main topics in the literature and gives the basic structure of the field (Rejeb et al., 2020).

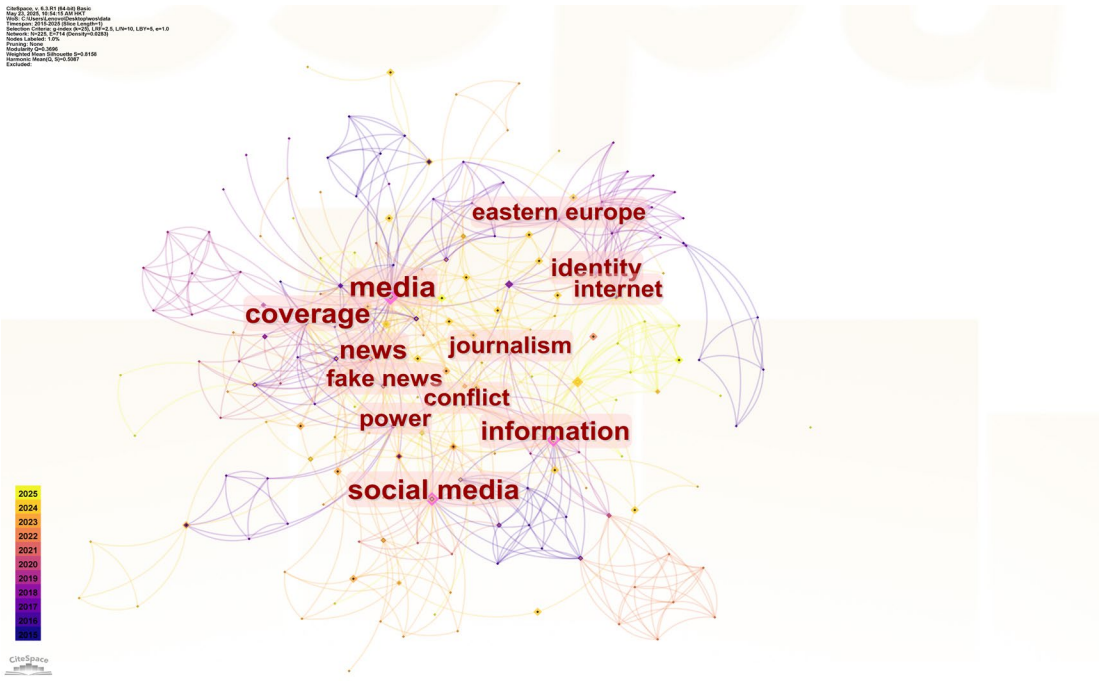


Figure 6: Keyword co-occurrence network

This figure shows a keyword co-occurrence network map made by CiteSpace. Each node is a keyword. Bigger nodes mean the keyword appears more often in the literature. The lines between nodes show when two keywords appear in the same articles. Thicker lines mean they appear together more often. The colours show the time period, Purple for earlier years (before 2016), Orange and yellow for recent years (2021–2025).

The map shows that keywords like “media,” “news,” “coverage,” “social media,” “fake news,” and “conflict” are in the centre. These keywords have big nodes and many connections. This means they appear often and are main topics in communication studies. The place of keywords on the map shows different groups. On the left, keywords like “media,” “news,” “coverage,” and “power” stay close together. This group talks about

traditional media and journalism. It shows that many studies identify media power, how media shapes stories, and how it reports events.

On the lower right, keywords like "social media," "information," and "conflict" form another group. This part focuses on how digital platforms spread information and how they may increase conflict in public discussions.

The top right group has keywords like "Eastern Europe," "identity," and "internet." This shows research on geopolitics, national identity, and digital communication. This is important to know more about the Russia-Ukraine war, aiming to help to understand issues about identity.

The colour changes show how research focus changed over time. Before 2016, studies mostly used keywords like "news," "journalism," and "coverage." From 2018 to 2020, keywords like "social media" and "information" became more common. This came with the growth of digital platforms. It also came with more worry about media control.

In 2021 and after, new keywords such as "fake news," "conflict," "identity," and "Eastern Europe" appeared more often. These keywords connect with real events like the Russia-Ukraine conflict in 2022 and 2023. These events brought more research on media framing, propaganda, and global information fights.

b) Cluster Analysis and Results



Figure 7: Cluster analysis knowledge mapping

Figure 7 shows a keyword cluster map made by CiteSpace. Each node is a keyword. The colour of the node shows when the keyword first appeared. Purple means early years like 2016. Yellow means later years like 2025. Each cluster has a number and a main keyword. These clusters show different research themes. The themes are based on how often keywords appear together.

In the centre of the map is Cluster #0 “social media.” It is the largest. It has the most links. This shows social media is a main topic in research about communication, politics, and digital influence. Close to it is Cluster #1 “visual framing.” This cluster looks at how images in media shape stories. It shows more research now looks at images and how they change meaning.

Cluster #3 “public opinion” is also near the center. It connects media use with group opinions. These clusters make up the main area of the field. They study how digital content, media platforms, and audience reactions come together.

Clusters farther from the centre show newer or more specific research areas. Cluster #4 “russo-ukrainian…” is about the Russia–Ukraine conflict. This topic became more common after 2022. It links with Cluster #5 “information war,” which looks at disinformation, propaganda, and how media is used during global crises.

Cluster #6 “trustworthiness” looks at how people decide if information is true. This is a new topic that comes from the rise of false news. Cluster #2 “metis” is more about theory. It may include ideas like intelligence, deception, or cultural knowledge in war or communication.

At the edge of the map is Cluster #7 “turkiye” and Cluster #8 “euroscepticism.” These clusters look at topics from certain places or political views, with little link to the center. These clusters are still new and may grow in the coming years.

The color of the nodes shows how the topics changed. In 2016 to 2020, studies mainly used keywords like “social media” and “visual framing.” In 2022 and later, new topics appeared. These include “russo-ukrainian,” “information war,” and “trustworthiness.”

CONCLUSION

This study gives a clear perspective at communication research on the Russia-Ukraine conflict from 2015 to 2025. With numbers, repeated keywords, citations, and group analysis, these tools show how the field has changed. In 2022, more scholars started to focus on this topic. The focus moved from traditional media framing to new topics. involving algorithmic influence, social media warfare, and real-time digital storytelling. Despite different methods used, the results show no difference in the main idea. Digital platforms change how war stories are told. They also shape how people around the world view the conflict. The patterns in the data show big changes in communication research. As a result, some main topics such as “social media,” “information war,” and “public opinion” stand out. These topics show that scholars are paying more attention to false information, shared media, and strong emotional images during war. Most of works comes from Western writers and schools. This may cause bias in the process of studying the conflict. Since both Ukraine and Russia get involved in the war, they are not productive in many studies and hence the war makes research cannot live up to expectations.

Future studies should focus on three main directions. First, research must grow by adding voices from the Global South and scholars in conflict zones. Second, working with fields like political science, digital sociology, and cultural studies should be supported to make theories stronger. Third, scholars’ studies should change over time and with specific platforms, especially TikTok and Telegram, to better understand audience behaviour and

propaganda. Also, building East-West academic partnerships and helping less represented institutions can create a stronger and more diverse global research network.

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