POLITICAL COMMUNICATION AND POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVES ON THE UKRAINE CRISIS: A FRAMING AND DISCOURSE ANALYSIS (2013-2025)

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Abstract

This study examines the political communication and political psychology dimensions of the Ukraine crisis during 2013-2025 through the perspectives of framing theory and discourse analysis. The crisis demonstrates that in a period of reshaping global power balances, interstate conflicts are conducted not only through military means but also through the control of information flows and manipulation of public perception. The research aims to reveal how Russia, Ukraine, and Western actors construct their political communication strategies through specific frames and discursive practices. The methodology encompasses content analysis of digital and traditional media materials, critical discourse analysis of leadership speeches and policy documents, and psychopolitical emotion-frame mapping of public responses. The central hypothesis posits that actors' discourses are systematically structured around security, legitimacy, and victimhood-based frames, which shape public perceptions through media and social media dissemination. Findings reveal that Russia transitioned from historical rights claims to security concerns; Ukraine shifted from independence emphasis to democracy discourse; while Western actors moved from international law-centered narratives to humanitarian framing. The study emphasizes the decisive role of political communication in shaping societal threat perceptions, emotions, and identity constructions, demonstrating the strategic importance of information superiority in modern conflicts. Consequently, discursive competition in the Ukraine crisis is identified as a central arena reflecting the structural transformation of international relations.

Keywords

Political communication, political psychology, framing, discourse analysis, Ukraine crisis.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The protests that commenced in Ukraine in 2013 intensified with the annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the subsequent conflicts in the Donbas region, ultimately positioning themselves at the epicenter of the international system following Russia's large-scale military intervention in 2022. This process has demonstrated that in an era of reconfiguring global power equilibria, interstate conflicts are conducted not merely through military or diplomatic instruments, but simultaneously through communicative mechanisms such as the control of information flows, the manipulation of mass perception, and the mobilization of societal emotions (Castells, 2009; Bennett & Livingston, 2018). This process is assessed not solely as a military or diplomatic crisis, but concurrently as a matter of intensive political communication, perception management, and political psychology that shapes global public opinion. The crisis's destabilizing effects on international security architecture have revealed the fragility of norms and institutions considered established in the post-Cold War era (Legvold, 2016; Mearsheimer, 2014). Numerous scholars emphasize that the Ukraine crisis constitutes not merely a conflict between two nations, but rather a symbolic arena of contestation representing the structural transformation of the global order (Cox, 2023; Jakupec, 2024; Kotkin, 2014; Sakwa, 2015; Snyder, 2018). The protracted nature of the Ukraine crisis renders the scholarly examination of discourses and framing strategies employed across different periods imperative.

The crisis, characterized by its multi-actor structure encompassing Russia, Ukraine, the European Union, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the United States, has transformed into an information warfare arena where traditional media, digital platforms, and state-sponsored communication networks compete (Bergmanis-Korats & Haiduchyk, 2024; Vorotyntseva et al., 2024; Galeotti, 2019; Jamieson, 2020). This information warfare encompasses not only the production of propagandistic content, but also multi-layered strategies including the weakening of counter-narratives, the deepening of societal divisions, and the undermining of the discursive foundations of international alliances. The emergence of information superiority as equivalent in importance to military superiority in modern conflicts has rendered the concept of hybrid warfare a central analytical instrument (Galeotti, 2018; Monaghan, 2016). Hybrid warfare denotes new-generation conflict modalities that simultaneously employ conventional military force alongside cyber attacks, economic sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and media manipulation (Hoffman, 2007; Renz & Smith, 2016). Consequently, the crisis can be comprehended not merely through on-the-ground power balances, but through an understanding of how the cognitive frameworks of national and international publics are shaped. The political communication strategies employed throughout the crisis have generated billions of interactions, particularly on social media, thereby rendering the perceptual dimension of the crisis a global phenomenon. While the instantaneous interaction and extensive reach afforded by digital environments enable political actors to convey their messages directly to global audiences, they simultaneously create fertile ground for the rapid dissemination of misinformation and manipulative content (Tufekci, 2017; Marwick & Lewis, 2017). The algorithmic architecture of social media platforms facilitates the enhanced visibility of polarizing content and the reinforcement of

echo chambers (Sunstein, 2017). This situation transforms the quality of public deliberation and deepens societal polarization (Pariser, 2011; Haidt, 2012).

This study examines the trajectory of the Ukraine crisis during the 2013-2025 period through framing and discourse analysis, two robust methodological instruments of political communication scholarship. Framing theory elucidates the mechanisms through which media and political actors direct audiences' attention, interpretations, and emotional responses by presenting events from particular perspectives (Entman, 1993, 2004). The framing process fulfills the functions of simplifying complex reality, legitimizing specific interpretations, and excluding alternative explanations (Scheufele, 1999; de Vreese, 2005). Discourse analysis, conversely, proceeds from the assumption that language constitutes not merely a communicative instrument, but a structure that constructs reality, reinforces power relations, and shapes societal identities (Fairclough, 1989, 1995; van Dijk, 1993, 1998; Wodak, 2001). Thus, in analyzing the crisis, the study transcends the classical security paradigm to reveal the modalities through which actors produce legitimacy, attribute responsibility, and redefine threat perception through discursive strategies. This approach is consonant with constructivist theory, which posits that international relations are predicated not solely upon material power capacities, but also upon the social construction of meanings and identities (Wendt, 1992, 1999; Onuf, 1989). Actors' endeavors to establish discursive superiority during crisis periods engender novel forms of soft power deployment (Nye, 2004, 2011). Soft power, distinct from coercion, denotes the capacity to achieve desired outcomes through persuasion, attraction, and legitimacy (Nye, 1990, 2004).

The scope of this study encompasses Russia's official discourses, Ukrainian state discourse, the political communication outputs of Western actors, and the framing strategies of international media. This scope incorporates both the institutional pronouncements of states and the news texts of prominent media organizations. Institutional discourses constitute communication products consciously designed with the objective of legitimizing states' foreign policy preferences and influencing international public opinion (Snow & Taylor, 2009). The news production processes of media organizations are shaped by institutional routines, professional norms, and political-economic pressures; consequently, the impartiality of news represents an assumption requiring interrogation (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; McNair, 2017). The propaganda model contends that media organizations serve dominant interests through ownership structures, advertising revenue dependency, news sources, adverse reaction mechanisms, and ideological control filters (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, 2002). Furthermore, social media data have been incorporated into the analytical framework as they constitute frequently utilized communication channels during crisis periods. Social media platforms have generated a novel communication ecology operating relatively independently of traditional media's surveillance and control mechanisms, wherein users function simultaneously as information consumers and producers (Chadwick, 2013). The horizontal communication structure afforded by these platforms has enabled civil society organizations and individual activists to attain visibility on a global scale (Tufekci, 2017). However, social media has simultaneously become a domain susceptible to manipulation

through bots, trolls, and coordinated inauthentic behavior networks (Woolley & Howard, 2018; Bradshaw & Howard, 2019).

The 2013-2025 interval was specifically selected because this period encompasses both the transformation initiated with the Euromaidan demonstrations (the mass protest movements that commenced in November 2013 in Ukraine against the suspension of the rapprochement process with the European Union) and the accelerated information warfare following 2022; consequently, it affords the opportunity to observe discursive continuities and ruptures. This longitudinal perspective enables an understanding that crisis communication comprises not merely instantaneous reactions, but also strategic planning, discourse evolutions, and learning processes. The twelve-year temporal span permits the systematic monitoring of changes in actors' discursive repertoires, learning curves, and situational adaptation capacities. A long-term perspective is indispensable for comprehending the historical background of events, structural causes, and cumulative effects (Braudel, 1958; Wallerstein, 1974). This extended period provides the opportunity to examine how political communication strategies diversify not only during crisis moments but also during inter-crisis periods. The changes observed in actors' communication strategies across different phases of the crisis reveal discursive flexibility and situational adaptation capacities (Legvold, 2016; Plokhy, 2021). Moreover, this extended period renders visible the instrumental and substantive transformations of crisis communication alongside the evolution of digital communication technologies (Schwab, 2016). Technological change fundamentally transforms the velocity, reach, and interaction modalities of political communication (Castells, 2009, 2012).

The fundamental objective of the research is to explicate how actors in the Ukraine crisis reframe reality in accordance with their political objectives and which discursive strategies they employ to exert influence upon national and international public opinion. This objective necessitates a holistic approach that integrates the instrumental dimension of political communication with the emotional, cognitive, and identity processes of political psychology (Huddy et al., 2023; McDermott, 2004). In addition to the cognitive effects of framing, there exist emotional and motivational consequences; these outcomes directly affect individuals' political preferences, attitude changes, and collective action propensities (Kahneman, 2011; Westen, 2007). Political psychology constitutes an interdisciplinary field that centers psychological processes, motivations, and constraints in understanding the political behaviors of individuals and groups (Huddy et al., 2023; Iyengar & McGrady, 2007). In accordance with this objective, the evaluation of discourses not only in terms of their content but also their psychological effects is targeted. The psychological effects of discourses emerge through fundamental mechanisms that shape individuals' threat perceptions, group affiliations, emotional responses, and political preferences (Bar-Tal, 2013; Petersen, 2015). Particularly in protracted conflicts, discourses possess the capacity to shape traumatic memory and influence future generations' historical perceptions (Snyder, 2010). Collective memory and historical narratives play a central role in the construction of societal identities and the perpetuation of conflicts (Wertsch, 2002; Zerubavel, 2003).

The fundamental research question of this study is as follows: Through which frames and discursive practices did Russia, Ukraine, and Western actors construct their political

communication strategies in the 2013-2025 Ukraine crisis, and how did these practices shape international public opinion's perception of the crisis? This question necessitates a multidimensional inquiry encompassing not only the content of discourses, but also the conditions of their production, channels of circulation, and modes of reception. The question unifies both agent-centered and structure-centered explanatory levels while accounting for the limits of actors' discursive autonomy and structural constraints. Transcending the agent-structure duality constitutes one of the fundamental problems of social sciences and requires comprehending the dialectical interaction of both levels (Giddens, 1984; Bourdieu, 1977). The principal hypothesis of the research is as follows: In the Ukraine crisis, actors' discourses have been systematically structured around security, legitimacy, and victimhood-based frames; the dissemination of these frames through media and social media has resulted in discernible and measurable orientations in international public opinion perception. This hypothesis is consonant with the fundamental assumptions of framing theory and posits that actors' discursive choices are not aleatory but strategic and goal-oriented (Entman, 2004; Lakoff, 2004). The hypothesis further acknowledges that media effects are not direct and unidirectional, but rather are shaped by mediating variables and contextual factors (Gilboa, 2008). The media effects literature has developed various theoretical approaches regarding whether mass communication instruments exert powerful, limited, or conditional effects upon audiences (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Iyengar & Kinder, 1987).

Two concepts hold critical importance in political communication scholarship for testing this hypothesis: framing and discourse. Framing explicates how individuals develop different perceptions and emotional responses depending upon the angle and manner in which events are presented (Entman, 1993). Framing processes encompass the operations of selecting, emphasizing, and contextualizing particular aspects of reality; thus, the same event can acquire entirely different meanings when presented through different frames. The pioneering studies of Kahneman and Tversky demonstrated that framing effects operate not only in the political domain but across the entirety of risk perception and decision-making processes (Tversky & Kahneman, 1982; Kahneman, 2011). Framing research has identified different types including gain and loss frames, episodic and thematic frames, and strategic and issue frames (Iyengar, 1991; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997). Discourse, conversely, denotes the manner in which actors employ language to construct reality. In the discourse analysis tradition, language is conceptualized not as merely reflecting an existing reality, but as a structure that constitutes and reproduces that reality. Discourses play a central role in the establishment, legitimization, and transformation of social relations; consequently, discourse analysis constitutes an indispensable instrument for understanding power relations (Foucault, 1972, 1980; Fairclough, 1989, 2003). Critical discourse analysis aims to reveal the complex relationships between discourse and ideology, hegemony, and power (van Dijk, 1998; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The Ukraine crisis presents a multi-layered exemplar wherein these two concepts strikingly interpenetrate.

Framing signifies the manner in which media or political actors direct attention, meaning, and evaluation processes by presenting an event from a particular perspective. For instance, Russia's "special military operation" frame presents an occupation action as legitimate

intervention, while Ukraine's "occupation and resistance" frame foregrounds victimhood and legitimacy. This terminological divergence constitutes not merely a linguistic preference, but also encompasses fundamental assumptions regarding the legal, moral, and political nature of the action (Mearsheimer, 2014; Snyder, 2018). The political significance of terminology derives from the fact that words possess not only definitional but also performative consequences; whether an event is designated as "war" or "operation" directly affects the applicability of international law. The definition of war and peace concepts engenders normative and legal consequences; consequently, actors contend for terminological hegemony (Der Derian, 2009; Campbell, 1998). The European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, in turn, employed the "threat to European security" frame. This frame established normative ground for collective action by reconstituting the crisis from a regional matter into a continent-wide security issue. Securitization theory demonstrates that the framing of particular issues as "existential threats" provides legitimacy for extraordinary measures (Buzan, 1991; Buzan & Wæver, 2003). The securitization process involves the presentation of an issue as an existential threat requiring immediate intervention, thereby removing it from the realm of normal politics (Balzacq, 2011; McDonald, 2008).

Framing strategies are closely associated with concepts in political psychology such as perception management, threat assessment, enemy image, and victim identity (Jervis, 1976; Tajfel, 1981). Threat perception constitutes one of the fundamental psychological processes shaping individuals' and societies' security concerns, risk assessments, and defensive behaviors. Perception and misperception processes play a determinative role in the escalation or resolution of international crises; actors may systematically misinterpret the intentions of opposing parties (Jervis, 1976). The fundamental attribution error denotes the tendency of actors to attribute their own actions to situational factors while attributing the actions of opposing parties to character (Ross, 1977; Heider, 1958). Throughout the crisis, the discourses of different actors have served psychological functions targeted at mobilizing the emotional responses of masses. Emotions such as fear, anger, hope, and pride have been consciously evoked in political discourses in endeavors to achieve collective mobilization (Westen, 2007; Brewer, 1999). Emotional framing intensifies its effect particularly in conditions of uncertainty and threat, as under such circumstances individuals rely more heavily upon cognitive shortcuts and heuristic evaluations (Kahneman, 2011; Haidt, 2012). Emotions constitute not merely byproducts of cognitive processes, but integral components of political judgment and decision-making (Marcus, Neuman & MacKuen, 2000; Brader, 2006). For this reason, discourse analysis must be conducted along the axis of political psychology.

Discourse analysis does not focus solely upon word choice; it evaluates how discourses generate meaning within social, political, and cultural contexts. The critical discourse analysis tradition posits that discourses both reflect and reproduce power relations. Discourses delineate the boundaries of what is considered normal, legitimate, and true; positions falling outside these boundaries are coded as abnormal, illegitimate, and false. Foucault's power-knowledge analysis demonstrates that discourses establish regimes of truth and that these regimes shape the existence of the subject (Foucault, 1972, 1980). In the Ukraine crisis, Russia's development of multiple narratives and Ukraine's emphasis on

legitimacy grounded in international law reveal the significance of discourse structures. Russia's "North Atlantic Treaty Organization expansion threat" and "protection of Russian minorities" narratives reflect a complex discursive strategy integrating historical memory, identity anxieties, and security concerns (Hill & Gaddy, 2013; Sakwa, 2015). These narratives serve not merely the function of explaining the causes of the crisis; they simultaneously aim to justify Russia's actions and present an alternative international order vision (Kotkin, 2014, 2017). Russia's historical narrative is predicated upon a multi-layered identity construction that integrates post-Soviet victimhood, Western betrayals, and geopolitical security concerns (Tsygankov, 2016; Sakwa, 2017).

One of the most significant consequences that the Ukraine crisis has engendered on a global scale has been states' increasing construction of their foreign policy discourses within digital environments. Digital diplomacy has provided the possibility of direct communication with mass publics beyond traditional diplomatic channels and has raised claims regarding the democratization of foreign policy communication (Bjola & Holmes, 2015; Manor, 2019). However, the democratization potential of digital environments must be evaluated in conjunction with the risks of manipulation, disinformation, and polarization (Jamieson, 2020; Bennett & Livingston, 2018). Digital environments offer new instruments for both democratic participation and authoritarian control; this dual potential necessitates a sociotechnical approach rather than technological determinism (Morozov, 2011; Diamond, 2010). This digitalization process has created a perceptual warfare environment wherein the same event is presented simultaneously by different actors with antithetical meanings. Perceptual warfare denotes the struggle for dominance in the processes of interpreting, signifying, and presenting reality to public opinion. The emergence of the phenomenon of parallel realities seriously attenuates the possibilities for negotiation and compromise on a common reality foundation (Applebaum, 2020). Post-truth politics is generating a new public sphere wherein objective facts are less influential than emotions and personal beliefs (d'Ancona, 2017; McIntyre, 2018). For instance, in the first seventy-two hours of the large-scale intervention that commenced in February 2022, the "North Atlantic Treaty Organization provocation" frame predominated in Russia-sourced content on social media, while "sovereignty and territorial integrity" emphasis came to the fore in Ukraine-sourced posts.

In the context of political communication, while Russia's discourses exhibited high coordination through state-controlled media networks, Ukraine developed discourses that were more network-based, encouraged civic participation, and issued calls for international solidarity. This difference reflects the structural divergences between the two countries' media systems, political regimes, and communication cultures (Roozenbeek, 2024; Zasanska & Ivanenko, 2025; Szostek, 2022). In authoritarian regimes, media control displays a centralized and hierarchical structure, whereas in democratic regimes, the media environment is more pluralistic and fragmented (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Voltmer, 2013). Comparative media systems research demonstrates that state-media relations are closely connected to the structure of the political system (Siebert, Peterson & Schramm, 1956; McQuail, 2005). This difference has engendered significant consequences in the psychological and communicative dimensions of the crisis. Centralized communication strategies provide advantages of

consistency and coordination, while pluralistic communication strategies may strengthen perceptions of authenticity and credibility. The Ukrainian leadership's effective utilization of social media and its capacity to address global public opinion directly signals the transformation of traditional diplomacy (Akıllı et al., 2024; Miller, 2021). President Zelenskiy's video messages and social media posts have revealed the importance of leadership performance in crisis communication (Mortensen & Pantti, 2024; Weiss & Hassan, 2016).

In summary, this study aims to demonstrate that the Ukraine crisis constitutes not merely a geopolitical matter, but a multidimensional communication event shaped by the complex interaction of framing, discourse construction, perception management, and emotional mobilization processes. The fundamental question and hypothesis of the research are positioned at the intersection of political communication and political psychology literatures, thereby offering an interdisciplinary perspective. This interdisciplinary approach acknowledges that a single theoretical lens is insufficient for understanding the crisis and aims to integrate complementary explanatory levels. Theoretical pluralism enhances the explanatory power of the research while simultaneously necessitating the articulation of mechanisms across different levels (Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010; Little, 2012). The expected contributions of this study are concentrated in three principal areas: First, to complement the predominantly geopolitical and security-focused approaches in the existing literature on the Ukraine crisis with a perspective that centers communicative and psychological processes. This contribution will render the Ukraine crisis one of the comprehensively examined cases of the post-Cold War era, thereby establishing a rich empirical foundation for future research. Case studies contribute to the development of theoretical knowledge by focusing on in-depth understanding and mechanism discovery rather than generalizability (George & Bennett, 2005; Gerring, 2007). Second, to demonstrate the explanatory power of framing and discourse analysis methods by applying them practically to a long-term crisis case. Methodological pluralism will enhance the reliability and validity of findings by enabling the joint evaluation of qualitative and quantitative data. Mixed methods research ensures the complementation and verification of different data types (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). Third, to reveal the increasing importance of information warfare and digital communication in contemporary international conflicts through empirical findings, thereby offering implications for policymakers and researchers. The policy recommendations of the study will contain practical information applicable to the design of crisis communication, digital security, and international reconciliation processes (Westad, 2017; Ikenberry, 2011). The translation of academic research into policy applications strengthens the connection between knowledge production and societal benefit (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Cairney, 2016).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic scholarship on the Ukraine crisis has constituted a rich repository of knowledge at the intersection of numerous disciplines throughout the period extending from the Euromaidan protests of 2013 to 2025. This literature has been shaped by contributions from diverse fields including international relations theories, political communication approaches,

political psychology research, security studies, and media studies; it has focused not only upon the military and diplomatic dimensions of the crisis, but also upon its perceptual, discursive, and psychological strata (Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Galeotti, 2019). The crisis has been evaluated in scholarly works as a phenomenon foregrounding the information warfare, discourse construction, and societal perception management dimensions of modern conflicts (Jamieson, 2020; Tufekci, 2017). The evolution of the literature has also occasioned the reassessment of fundamental theoretical approaches in the international relations discipline—such as realism, liberalism, and constructivism—within the context of the Ukraine crisis (Mearsheimer, 2014; Ikenberry, 2011; Wendt, 1999). While the realist perspective explicates the crisis within the context of the security dilemma and geopolitical competition among great powers (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2001), the constructivist approach has emphasized the constitutive role of identities, norms, and discourses in shaping the crisis. Early-period research concentrated upon the social media-based mobilization dynamics and collective identity construction of the Euromaidan movement. These studies demonstrated that platforms such as Twitter and Facebook constitute not merely information transmission instruments, but also public spheres wherein political subjectivities emerge and collective action is organized (Castells, 2009; Tufekci, 2017). Digital environments have enabled a novel political participation model wherein network-based horizontal structures supersede traditional hierarchical organizational forms. Chadwick's (2013) hybrid media system concept has provided an important theoretical framework for comprehending the complex dynamics of the interaction between traditional media and new media. The decentralized structure of information flow during the protest period facilitated the rapid dissemination of the uprising and the garnering of international support.

Following 2014, the literature commenced addressing the annexation of Crimea and the armed conflicts in the Donbas region within the context of Russia's hybrid warfare strategies. The concept of hybrid warfare denotes a new-generation conflict model wherein classical military methods are combined with cyber attacks, economic pressures, diplomatic maneuvers, and media manipulation (Galeotti, 2018; Monaghan, 2016). Research conducted during this period on the systematic framing strategies of Russian state media demonstrated that the themes of "legitimacy," "historical unity," "protection of minorities," and "Western threat" were centralized (Hill & Gaddy, 2013; Sakwa, 2015). Framing processes functioned as a potent discursive instrument determining not only the manner of event presentation, but also which information was foregrounded and which interpretations were excluded (Entman, 1993, 2004). Entman's (2004) cascading activation theory emphasized the central role of framing in the processes through which political actors legitimize foreign policy decisions to public opinion. Lippmann's (1922) classical study provided fundamental insights regarding how public opinion is shaped on the basis of mental images and the media's determinative influence upon these images. Western media's approach to the crisis was characterized by the frames of "democracy-authoritarianism tension," "sovereignty violation," and "revisionist power threat." Comparative content analyses revealed that Russia's security justifications were represented with low legitimacy in the United States and European Union press, while Ukraine's victimhood discourse was conveyed with high sympathy (McNair, 2017; Szostek, 2022). This asymmetric mode of representation contributed to the deepening of opposing

narratives in global public opinion and the narrowing of possibilities for reconciliation. Herman and Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model posited that media content is produced through economic and political filters in a manner serving dominant interests, and provided conceptual instruments for the critical analysis of media representations within the scope of the Ukraine crisis.

The political psychology literature has addressed the perceptual dimensions and emotional triggers of the crisis in elaborate detail. It has been established that psychological variables such as threat perception, group affiliation, collective memory, and leadership image are determinative in shaping societies' foreign policy preferences and security concerns (Jervis, 1976; Tajfel, 1981; Huddy et al., 2023). Particularly, the elevation of threat perception at the societal level has led to the strengthening of ingroup solidarity and the intensification of negative attitudes toward outgroups (Brewer, 1999). Tajfel's (1981) social identity theory elucidated how group affiliation shapes individuals' attitudes and behaviors and provided a fundamental framework for understanding identity-based mobilization in the Ukraine crisis. Fromm's (1941) escape from freedom study explicated the psychological roots of societal support for authoritarian leaders and provided conceptual instruments for understanding the increased demand for strong leadership during crisis periods. Adorno's (1950) authoritarian personality research revealed the psychological foundations of ideological rigidity and hostility toward outgroups. Studies grounded in prospect theory posited that decision-making processes between Russia and Ukraine can be explained through "loss aversion" psychology. According to this approach, because Russia framed NATO expansion as a strategic loss, it oriented toward high-risk foreign policy behaviors (Kahneman, 2011; Tversky & Kahneman, 1982). Psychological research has supported the finding that actors operating within a loss frame tend to exhibit riskier behaviors compared to those within a gain frame. McDermott's (2004) political psychology studies demonstrated that decision-making processes in international relations cannot be adequately explained by the rational actor model and emphasized the importance of cognitive biases, emotions, and psychological factors. Public opinion research within Ukraine has revealed the determinative influence of information sources upon political attitudes. It was established that with the increase in pro-Kremlin media consumption in Russian-speaking regions, the "civil war" and "legitimate intervention" frames strengthened, while in pro-Western regions, the "aggression" and "occupation" narratives became dominant (Kuzio, 2015). These findings demonstrated that information environments constitute not merely passive transmission channels, but rather active domains wherein social reality is constructed. Sunstein's (2017) echo chambers and polarization research revealed how the congregation of like-minded individuals in digital environments deepens societal divisions.

Experimental and observational research conducted on social media manipulation revealed that digital platforms played a central role in shaping crisis discourses during the 2016-2021 period. It was established that information operations conducted through bot networks, fake accounts, and coordinated sharing campaigns were systematically employed for the purpose of amplifying particular narratives and attenuating opposing viewpoints (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). Data mining studies conducted on Twitter demonstrated that hashtags such as

#Donbas, #CrimeaIsOurs, and #StandWithUkraine were subjected to intensive manipulative interventions. These manipulation processes led to the deceptive inflation of organic user interactions and the masking of public opinion's genuine tendencies. Bernays's (1928) classical propaganda study laid the early theoretical foundations for mass communication's techniques of shaping public opinion and provided historical perspective for understanding modern digital manipulation strategies. Lasswell's (1927) pioneering study on propaganda techniques emphasized the importance of the systematic use of communication instruments during wartime periods and provided conceptual instruments for understanding the historical roots of information warfare in the Ukraine crisis. Cialdini's (2007) persuasion psychology studies contributed to understanding the psychological foundations of digital propaganda strategies by elucidating the mechanisms through which individuals are influenced.

Psychological research on disinformation and misinformation has confirmed that repetition frequency exerts a powerful effect upon perceived veracity. This process, termed the fluency heuristic effect, has demonstrated that individuals tend to evaluate frequently encountered information as true (Kahneman, 2011). These findings are significant in terms of explicating the psychological foundations of propaganda and perception management strategies. Bargh's (2017) research on unconscious influence processes demonstrated how individuals are influenced without awareness and provided a conceptual framework for understanding the automatic-level effects of manipulative communication strategies. Haidt's (2012) moral foundations theory explicated the emotional and intuitive foundations of political attitudes and provided instruments for understanding how the moral frameworks of different societies were shaped in the Ukraine crisis. Discourse analyses conducted on the communication policies of North Atlantic Treaty Organization and European Union institutions demonstrated that institutional messages were structured around the themes of "collective defense," "humanitarian aid," "solidarity," and "energy security" following 2022. Institutional discourses fulfilled the functions of both legitimacy construction directed toward domestic public opinion and the reinforcement of international pressure directed toward Russia (Snow & Taylor, 2009). Nye's (2004, 2011) soft power conceptualization emphasized the importance of achieving foreign policy objectives through persuasion, attraction, and cultural influence—distinct from military coercion—and provided a conceptual framework for understanding the role of discursive strategies in the Ukraine crisis. Gilboa's (2008) global communication and foreign policy research revealed the increasing importance of media diplomacy in international relations.

The large-scale military intervention that commenced in 2022 constituted a significant turning point in the literature. From this period onward, research oriented toward examining the crisis within the context of the competing narrative production processes of the global media ecosystem. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Telegram became primary information sources alongside traditional news organizations; frontline footage, civilian casualties, and leader messages began to be conveyed directly to mass audiences (Miller, 2021). Applebaum's (2020) twilight of democracy study provided perspective for understanding the broader political context of the Ukraine crisis by explicating the dynamics of authoritarian discourse strengthening in a period when liberal values were receding at the

global level. Visual framing research revealed that the processes of image selection, arrangement, and circulation directly affect public opinion attitudes. The emotionally laden presentation of drone footage, destruction scenes, and victimhood narratives activated the empathic responses of audiences and shaped their political preferences (Westen, 2007). Westen's (2007) political brain research demonstrated that political decision-making is predicated upon emotional processes rather than rational calculation and emphasized the importance of emotional mobilization in crisis communication. Greenberg and colleagues' (2015) terror management theory provided conceptual instruments for understanding the effects of mortality salience upon political behaviors during crisis periods by explicating how existential threat perception shapes societal attitudes. Studies conducted on Zelenskiy's communication strategy emphasized that the leader successfully employed video-based emotional mobilization methods, empathy appeals directed toward the international community, and national unity messages. This approach was conceptualized as a digital leadership model and demonstrated the importance of leadership performance in crisis communication (Weiss & Hassan, 2016; Miller, 2021). Janis's (1982) groupthink research contributed to understanding leadership dynamics by explicating the psychological pitfalls in decision-making processes during crisis periods.

Russia's post-2022 discourse strategy centralized the themes of "protecting minorities," "security guarantees," and "Western threat." This discursive structure was designed both to produce the consent of domestic public opinion and to construct an alternative narrative against the Western-centered order in the international arena (Sakwa, 2015; Tsygankov, 2016). The multi-layered structure of the discourse created a complex legitimization framework by integrating elements of historical victimhood, identity anxiety, and security concern (Kotkin, 2014, 2017). The domain wherein media polarization was most pronounced was terminological preferences regarding the legal nature of the conflict. Western media's use of the concept of "occupation" versus Russian-controlled media's preference for the expression "special military operation" engendered fundamental divergences in public opinion perceptions. This struggle for terminological hegemony encompassed not merely a linguistic preference, but also fundamental assumptions regarding the legal, moral, and political nature of the action (Mearsheimer, 2014; Snyder, 2018). Lakoff's (2004) framing and cognitive linguistics study demonstrated how the metaphors and conceptual frames employed in political discourses shape thought and provided conceptual instruments for understanding the profound psychological effects of terminological preferences. Snyder's (2010, 2018) historical studies provided perspective for understanding the deeper historical context of the Ukraine crisis by explicating the historical roots of conflicts in Eastern Europe and the persistence of collective traumas in societal memory. Plokhy's (2021) comprehensive study on Ukrainian history revealed the geopolitical significance of the region and the historical dimension of identity conflicts.

Research on psychological warfare techniques also increased during the crisis process. Cyber attacks, psychological operations, and strategic information manipulation have become fundamental analytical domains in the hybrid warfare literature (Galeotti, 2018). Galeotti's (2019) studies on Putin and Russian politics provided important conceptual instruments for

understanding the Kremlin's domestic and foreign policy strategies. Blackwill and Harris's (2016) analysis of warfare conducted through economic instruments explicated the strategic dimensions of the use of sanctions and economic pressures as foreign policy instruments. O'Shaughnessy's (2013) propaganda and marketing study contributed to understanding modern propaganda techniques by examining historical examples of autocratic regimes' communication strategies. Survey studies measuring international public opinion attitudes demonstrated that negative sentiments toward Russia rose sharply in European Union societies following 2022. The elevation of threat perception above historical averages facilitated the societal reception of securitization discourses (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Buzan's (1991) foundational work on security studies provided a conceptual framework for understanding the multidimensional nature of the security concept and securitization processes. Tetlock's (2005) expert political judgment study made methodological contributions to the crisis analysis literature by explicating the difficulties of forecasting and the effects of cognitive biases upon political assessments. Political psychology research on energy security and economic sanctions revealed that economic pressures trigger psychological responses such as uncertainty anxiety and identity protection tendencies in societies. These responses directly affected support for governments' policy discourses and shaped the political consequences of economic crises. Petersen's (2015) politics of anger research provided conceptual instruments for understanding the political consequences of emotional responses during crisis periods by explicating how economic hardships and perceptions of injustice transform into political anger.

The literature pertaining to the 2023-2025 period emphasizes that the war has transformed into a protracted information struggle and that information warfare has acquired continuity in predictive models regarding the future of the conflict. Current studies demonstrate that the potential of artificial intelligence-supported disinformation (deepfake videos, automated content generation) to transform public opinion perceptions within the crisis context has increased. This development has brought information security to the agenda as a new research domain and has centralized the question of how technological developments are transforming political communication processes. When a general assessment of the literature is conducted, it is observed that the Ukraine crisis has been addressed as a multi-layered phenomenon at the intersection of political communication and political psychology. Framing processes, discourse competition, emotional triggering mechanisms, leadership strategies, and the role of digital platforms have become fundamental analytical axes in understanding the crisis (Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Jamieson, 2020; Tufekci, 2017). Schwab's (2016) fourth industrial revolution study provided broad perspective for understanding the technological dimensions of information warfare in the digital age by explicating the profound effects of technological transformations upon social and political structures. Ferguson's (2017) networks and hierarchies study provided conceptual instruments for understanding the structural context of crisis communication by explicating the restructuring of power relations in the digital age and the political consequences of network society. Kunda's (1999) social cognition research contributed to understanding the cognitive foundations of propaganda and manipulation by explicating how individuals process information and form social judgments.

However, certain significant lacunae exist in the extant literature. Foremost, systematic comparative analysis of long-term framing changes has remained limited. The evolution in different actors' framing strategies throughout the period extending from 2013 to 2025 has generally been addressed cross-sectionally through specific events; a holistic historical perspective has not been presented. Second, the in-depth examination of the interaction between political communication and political psychology emerges as a domain requiring further investigation. The psychological impact mechanisms of discourse strategies have generally been addressed as subjects of separate disciplines; an integrated analytical framework has not been developed. Third, comparative discourse analyses conducted from a multi-actor perspective are not at an adequate level. Studies wherein the discourses of Russia, Ukraine, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the European Union, and the United States are addressed simultaneously are limited. This study is positioned as an endeavor aiming to close the aforementioned lacunae. Kissinger's (2014) world order study provided perspective for understanding the broader geopolitical context of the Ukraine crisis by explicating the historical evolution of the global system and different civilizations' conceptions of order. Legvold's (2016) return to Cold War analysis contributed to understanding the origins of the crisis by explicating the historical and structural causes of tension in Russia-West relations. Menon and Rumer's (2015) Ukraine conflict study filled a significant gap in the literature by comprehensively addressing the different dimensions of the crisis. Bar-Tal's (2013) intractable conflicts research provided a conceptual framework for understanding the protracted nature of the Ukraine crisis by explicating the psychological and social dynamics of long-term conflicts. Rieber's (2006) psychology of war study contributed to understanding societal responses during crisis periods by explicating the psychological mechanisms underlying human behavior in conflict situations.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A multi-layered theoretical structure is requisite for analyzing the political communication and political psychology dimensions of the Ukraine crisis. The theoretical framework of this research is predicated upon an analytical architecture integrating framing theory, securitization theory, social identity theory, critical discourse analysis, and political psychology approaches. This theoretical integration renders possible the treatment of both the discursive construction and the psychological effects of the crisis within the same analytical framework. Inter-theoretical dialogue transcends the limited explanatory capacity offered by monodisciplinary approaches, enabling the comprehension of the complex and multidimensional nature of the crisis. Discourse, in this study, is conceptualized not merely as language use, but as a central domain wherein reality is socially constructed and power relations are reproduced (Foucault, 1972, 1980; Fairclough, 1989, 2003). Discourses delineate the boundaries of what is considered true, normal, and legitimate; positions falling outside these boundaries are coded as abnormal and illegitimate. Consequently, the examination of discursive strategies employed in the Ukraine crisis reveals not only linguistic preferences, but also how power structures and social realities are constructed. Discourse analysis provides an indispensable instrument for understanding the microphysical operations of power and demonstrates how state actors produce consent during crisis periods.

Framing theory constitutes the primary approach forming the theoretical foundation of this research. Proceeding along the path opened by Goffman, framing theory posits that social reality is constructed through the meaning frames of individuals and institutions (Goffman, 1974). Framing is a cognitive and discursive process occurring through the selection and emphasis of particular aspects of a topic while obscuring others (Entman, 1993). Framing processes encompass mechanisms of information filtering and the establishment of importance hierarchies; thus, the same reality can acquire entirely different meanings when presented from different perspectives (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). In the context of political communication, framing encompasses the modalities through which actors define events, explicate their causes, make moral evaluations, and present solution proposals (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). Framing strategies in the Ukraine crisis have served three fundamental functions: the definition of the problem through diagnostic framing, the determination of solution paths through prognostic framing, and the legitimization of calls to action through motivational framing. This tripartite functionality provides an indispensable analytical instrument for understanding how the crisis has been transformed into different realities by different actors. The fundamental assumption of framing theory is that individuals are not passive receivers when interpreting events, but active meaning creators; however, these meaning-creation processes are not independent of the ready-made frames offered by political and media discourses (Entman, 2004). The language, metaphors, and terminological preferences employed in framing processes directly affect the social perception of reality; for instance, the difference between Russia's use of the expression "special military operation" when referring to the crisis and Ukraine and the West's use of the concepts "occupation" and "attack" constitutes not merely a linguistic preference, but also an indicator of legal, moral, and political positionings (Mearsheimer, 2014; Snyder, 2018). The struggle for terminological hegemony plays a central role in modern crisis communication, as how an action is designated directly determines the applicability of international law and social legitimacy (Der Derian, 2009; Campbell, 1998). Language is not merely a mirror reflecting reality, but an instrument constructing it; consequently, the power relations and strategic calculations underlying terminological preferences must be analyzed.

Framing theory simultaneously explicates how media and political actors influence the cognitive schemata of target audiences. Cognitive schemata are mental structures that individuals employ to interpret new information (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). During crisis periods, the frames employed by actors are more effective when consonant with target audiences' existing schemata, and discursive mobilization occurs more readily. In the Ukraine crisis, both sides' use of frames predicated upon historical memory, identity anxieties, and security concerns is indicative of this strategic alignment pursuit. The activation of cognitive schemata constitutes the fundamental condition for framing success, as new information is more readily accepted and becomes enduring when consonant with existing cognitive structures. However, framing alone is insufficient, as the questions of how frames are accepted, which discourses become hegemonic in the social context, and how power relations are reproduced must be addressed in conjunction with critical discourse analysis.

Critical discourse analysis is a theoretical approach positing that discourses both reflect and reproduce social power relations (van Dijk, 1998; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). This approach aims to reveal the complex relationships that discourses establish with ideology, hegemony, and power. Discourse analysis incorporates into its domain of examination social practices, institutional arrangements, and social structures beyond texts (Fairclough, 2003). Fairclough's three-dimensional model proposes conducting discourse analysis at the levels of text, discursive practices, and social practices (Fairclough, 2003). This model enables the examination not only of the linguistic structures of discourses in the Ukraine crisis, but also within which institutional and social processes these discourses are produced and which power structures they legitimize. The conditions of discourse production, channels of circulation, and modes of reception constitute the three fundamental dimensions upon which discourse analysis focuses; each of these dimensions is necessary for understanding the social impact of discourse. Proceeding from Foucault's power-knowledge analysis, it can be argued that discourses establish regimes of truth and that these regimes shape the existence of subjects (Foucault, 1980). In the Ukraine crisis, Russia's discourses of "North Atlantic Treaty Organization expansion threat" and "protection of Russian minorities" reflect a multi-layered discursive strategy integrating historical memory, identity anxieties, and security concerns (Hill & Gaddy, 2013; Sakwa, 2015; Tsygankov, 2016). These discourses serve not merely the function of explaining the causes of the crisis; they simultaneously aim to justify Russia's actions and present an alternative international order vision (Kotkin, 2014, 2017). Critical discourse analysis demonstrates how hegemonic discourses are naturalized and how alternative discourses are marginalized; it is therefore a central instrument of power critique.

Securitization theory constitutes the third fundamental pillar of this research's theoretical framework. This theory, pioneered by the Copenhagen School, posits that security is a discursive construction process rather than an objective condition (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998). Securitization is the process of legitimizing extraordinary measures through the framing of particular issues as "existential threats" (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Securitization is the practice of addressing an issue through the logic of urgency and exception by moving beyond normal politics; this process paves the way for rapid and radical decisions by suspending democratic deliberation mechanisms. This process encompasses three fundamental components: the securitizing actor, existential threat discourse, and target audience (Balzacq, 2011). The Ukraine crisis is one of the rare exemplars wherein securitization theory is realized in a multifaceted manner. Both Russia, Ukraine, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization have legitimized extraordinary measures by defining their respective security concerns at the level of existential threat. The success of the securitization process is contingent upon the target audience's acceptance of the threat; not merely the utterance of the discourse, but its endorsement by listeners is critical (Balzacq, 2011). Securitization has occurred not only in the military domain, but also in domains such as energy security, economic security, and identity security (McDonald, 2008). The security of energy pipelines has frequently been employed as a geoeconomic threat frame particularly in the discourses of European countries, demonstrating that the crisis encompasses multidimensional securitization processes. Securitization operates not only at the state level,

but also at the societal level; media and public opinion play an active role in the construction of security threats.

Securitization theory considers certain conditions necessary for discursive action to be successful. First, the securitizing actor must be legitimate and credible. Second, the threat discourse must be consonant with the cognitive and emotional schemata of the target audience. Third, the discourse must be presented in an appropriate context and timing (Balzacq, 2011). In the Ukraine crisis, the degree to which these conditions were met has affected the securitization success of different actors. For instance, the credibility that the Ukrainian leadership created in international public opinion facilitated the acceptance of securitization discourses. The temporal factor is also significant in the securitization process; securitization discourses are more effective when societies are under uncertainty and fear during crisis moments. Securitization theory also renders visible the tension between security and liberty; extraordinary measures may require the compromise of democratic rights (Buzan & Wæver, 2003).

Social identity theory has been incorporated into the theoretical framework to explicate how group affiliation and identity are strengthened during crisis periods. This theory, developed by Tajfel and Turner, posits that individuals define themselves through the groups to which they belong and tend to develop positive attitudes toward ingroup members and negative attitudes toward outgroup members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tajfel, 1981). The strengthening of ingroup solidarity and the heightened salience of outgroup threats during crisis periods is a direct consequence of social identity dynamics (Brewer, 1999). Social identity theory explicates the psychological foundations of "us and them" categorization and demonstrates how group conflicts deepen. In the Ukraine crisis, processes of redefining and strengthening national identity have been observed in both Russian and Ukrainian societies. Russia's "Russian world" discourse and Ukraine's "return to the European family" discourse reflect both societies' efforts to redraw their identity boundaries. The redrawing of identity boundaries also brings "othering" processes; when the opposing party is perceived as a threat, ingroup loyalty increases. Social identity theory simultaneously explicates the psychological foundations of group conflicts and demonstrates how the "us and them" distinction hardens. The hardening of this distinction narrows the possibilities for dialogue and renders the resolution of the crisis more difficult. The strengthening of group identity facilitates collective action while simultaneously diminishing flexibility and reducing the probability of compromise.

Political psychology approaches have been employed in this research to understand actors' decision-making processes, threat perceptions, and emotional responses. Political psychology examines the cognitive, emotional, and motivational foundations of political behavior (Jervis, 1976; Huddy et al., 2023). Threat perception is one of the fundamental psychological processes shaping individuals' and societies' security concerns, risk assessments, and defensive behaviors. Political psychology reveals the inadequacies of the rational actor model by analyzing decision-makers' cognitive biases, emotional responses, and psychological defense mechanisms (McDermott, 2004). Jervis's perception and misperception studies demonstrated that actors in international crises can systematically misinterpret the intentions

of opposing parties (Jervis, 1976). The fundamental attribution error denotes the tendency of actors to attribute their own actions to situational factors while attributing the actions of opposing parties to character (Ross, 1977; Heider, 1958). It is observed that both sides in the Ukraine crisis have committed this error and that mutual distrust has deepened. Attribution error leads to the malign perception of the opposing party's intentions and the interpretation of even well-intentioned actions as threats. Prospect theory explicates the phenomenon of Russia framing NATO expansion as a strategic loss and consequently orienting toward risky foreign policy behaviors (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979; Kahneman, 2011). Actors operating within a loss frame tend to exhibit riskier behaviors compared to those within a gain frame (McDermott, 2004). Prospect theory demonstrates that actors' risk-taking behaviors vary depending on how the situation is framed; the fear of experiencing loss is a stronger motivation than the desire to obtain gain.

Emotions play a central role in political psychology theory. Westen's studies demonstrated that political discourses consciously mobilize emotional responses (Westen, 2007). Emotions such as fear, anger, hope, and pride are strategically employed to achieve collective mobilization during crisis periods (Brader, 2006; Marcus, Neuman & MacKuen, 2000). In the Ukraine crisis, fear discourses strengthened securitization processes, while pride discourses reinforced national solidarity. Emotional responses can supersede rational calculations and determinatively affect political preferences (Haidt, 2012). Emotional framing intensifies its effect particularly in conditions of uncertainty and threat, as under these circumstances individuals rely more heavily upon cognitive shortcuts and heuristic evaluations (Kahneman, 2011; Haidt, 2012). For this reason, conducting discourse analysis along the axis of political psychology enables understanding not only the cognitive but also the emotional effects of discourses. Emotional mobilization is one of the most effective communication instruments employed by political actors; emotions can be more powerful than logical arguments in terms of galvanizing individuals and garnering societal support.

Digital political communication theories constitute the final stratum completing this research's theoretical framework. The Ukraine crisis is one of the first large-scale international conflicts wherein digital platforms play a central role in crisis communication (Weiss & Hassan, 2016; Miller, 2021). Social media platforms constitute not merely information transmission channels, but also strategic arenas wherein discursive struggles occur. Bot accounts, troll armies, and disinformation operations have been extensively employed to manipulate public opinion perceptions on digital platforms. Digital environments have dramatically increased the velocity of information dissemination and the scale of reach; however, they have simultaneously enabled the rapid spread of disinformation and manipulation (Bennett & Livingston, 2018). Network theory explicates how information spreads in digital environments and how echo chambers form (Sunstein, 2017). Echo chambers are digital spaces wherein like-minded individuals congregate to reinforce each other's views and become closed to opposing viewpoints. Echo chambers are mechanisms that deepen societal polarization and fragment the shared perception of reality (Sunstein, 2017). In the Ukraine crisis, the formation of echo chambers has led to the deepening of societal polarization and the narrowing of possibilities for dialogue. The platform ecologies

approach posits that different digital platforms possess different discursive dynamics and that content production modalities are shaped by the technical and institutional structures of platforms (Gillespie, 2010). Consequently, to understand the digital dimension of the Ukraine crisis, both content analysis and platform analysis must be conducted. Platform algorithms determine which content becomes visible, constituting a new dimension of the struggle for discursive hegemony.

The concept of perception management encompasses states' strategies for directing the behaviors of national and international public opinion by manipulating information flows. Perception management is a multi-layered process encompassing not only propaganda, but also strategic communication, information operations, and psychosocial operations (O'Shaughnessy, 2013; Galeotti, 2018). In the Ukraine crisis, perception management has been conducted through both traditional media and digital platforms, with both sides endeavoring to turn international public opinion perception in their favor. This process has also been associated with the concept of hybrid warfare, as information operations have become as determinative as military operations in modern conflicts (Galeotti, 2019). Perception management concerns not only providing information, but also concealing, distorting, and directing information; consequently, it harbors ethical problems. In the hybrid warfare approach, military force and soft power instruments are employed conjointly; information operations have become instruments supporting and sometimes supplanting military operations (Galeotti, 2018).

The theoretical framework of this research presents an analytical structure integrating all the theoretical approaches explicated above. Framing theory explicates how discourses are constructed; critical discourse analysis explicates how discourses reproduce power relations; securitization theory explicates how security discourses are legitimized; social identity theory explicates how group dynamics operate; political psychology explicates how actors' cognitive and emotional processes are influenced; and digital communication theories explicate how crisis discourses spread on digital platforms. While each theoretical approach illuminates a different dimension of the crisis, their integrated use creates the possibility for multi-layered and holistic analysis. This multi-layered theoretical structure provides the analytical instruments necessary for understanding the complex nature of the Ukraine crisis. The design of the theoretical framework in this manner enables the examination of the crisis at both the macro level (states and international organizations) and the micro level (individual actors and communities). This analytical dialogue between theories constitutes one of the original contributions of the study, as the integration of different theoretical traditions creates the possibility for richer and more multidimensional analysis than a single theory could provide. Theoretical pluralism enables capturing the nuances that monolithic explanations miss and understanding how the crisis is experienced by different actors. The theoretical architecture of this study is of a quality that can also serve as a model for future crisis research, as it strengthens interdisciplinary dialogue and demonstrates the analytical power of theoretical integration.

4. RESEARCH METHOD

This research aims to examine political communication practices and political psychology-based discursive construction processes concerning the Ukraine crisis during the 2013-2025 period through a multiple methods approach. Given that the multi-layered nature of the crisis cannot be explained through a single method, a mixed methods design incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data has been employed. The research design has been determined as an explanatory sequential mixed method; quantitative data were first collected to identify general trends, followed by in-depth analysis with qualitative data. Mixed methods enables the production of multifaceted answers to research questions by establishing a balance between quantitative generalizability and qualitative depth (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010). This design permits the comprehensive analysis of political actors' framing strategies, discourse repertoires, and psychopolitical response evocations during the crisis period. The fundamental rationale for preferring the mixed methods approach is the capacity to simultaneously apprehend both the measurable structures and meaning production processes of political communication. This approach can be evaluated as a pragmatist synthesis of positivist and interpretivist paradigms (Morgan, 2007).

The methodology of the research encompasses three principal components: first, content analysis conducted on a large dataset comprising digital media and traditional media content; second, critical discourse analysis of leader discourses, institutional statements, and policy documents; third, psychopolitical emotion-frame mapping conducted on strategically selected samples to reveal public response and perceptual orientations. These three components have been designed to complement and validate one another in accordance with the principle of methodological triangulation. Triangulation is a fundamental strategy that enhances the reliability of research findings through the integration of different data sources and analytical methods (Flick, 2018). This multi-layered design aims to simultaneously capture both the production and social acceptance dynamics of policy discourse. Methodological integration enhances the validity of the research through the comparison and validation of findings obtained from different data sources (Patton, 2015). Furthermore, this integrated approach enables the simultaneous examination of macro and micro levels of political communication processes (van Dijk, 1998).

Three fundamental sources were utilized in the processes of data collection, information acquisition, and arriving at clear conclusions: national government statements (Turkey, Ukraine, Russia, United States of America, United Kingdom), international organization reports (North Atlantic Treaty Organization, European Union, United Nations), and digital media networks (official diplomat accounts and institutional social media communications). In the selection of data sources, high-level discourse actors recognized as production centers of political communication were prioritized. This prioritization is predicated upon elite discourse theory, as discourses produced by elites determine the principal frames of social discourse (van Dijk, 1993). Nineteen critical historical junctures representing the breaking points of the Ukraine crisis during the 2013-2025 period were identified, and the entire dataset was categorized according to these junctures. Critical junctures are temporal points at which events intensify, discourses sharpen, and public attention reaches its zenith (Seawright

& Gerring, 2008). In the identification of these junctures, historical literature, media archives, and expert opinions were utilized. Juncture selection is consonant with the event-based sampling approach and aims to capture the transformational moments of the crisis.

The universe of the research comprises all official discourses, media content, and public opinion data produced concerning the Ukraine crisis between the years 2013-2025. However, as access to the entirety of this universe was not feasible, the study was conducted on a representative sample selected through purposive sampling method. Purposive sampling is a qualitative research strategy enabling the in-depth examination of information-rich cases (Patton, 2015). Three fundamental criteria were considered in sample selection: the impact power of the discourse, the actor's position in the international system, and the representability of discursive diversity. It has been assessed that the texts selected in accordance with these criteria reflect the political communication dimension of the crisis in a holistic manner. The criterion sampling approach involves the selection of cases possessing particular qualities serving the research purpose (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This approach constitutes a robust methodological choice, particularly in the analysis of complex social phenomena (Yin, 2018).

For quantitative content analysis, statements of political leaders, official press releases of Foreign Ministries, and texts of international organizations pertaining to the crisis period were surveyed. A corpus comprising a total of 1,462 texts was constructed. In the construction of the corpus, the principles of officiality, accessibility, and verifiability were adopted as document selection criteria. The analysis of large datasets enables the systematic identification of linguistic patterns (Baker, 2006). In the data cleaning phase, duplicate content was removed, automated bot-written messages were filtered, and contextual exclusion criteria were applied. The data cleaning process is a necessary preparatory phase for enhancing the validity of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018). The elimination of noisy data at this phase directly affects the quality of the analysis (Neuendorf, 2017).

Social media data were supplemented with 30,000 posts collected from official institutional accounts and classified according to keywords such as "crisis framing," "security dilemma," "territorial integrity," "occupation," and "alliance expansion." Social media data render visible the instantaneous communication dynamics and interaction patterns that traditional media cannot provide (Bruns & Burgess, 2011). Digital environments have fundamentally transformed the velocity, reach, and interaction dimensions of political communication (Castells, 2009). The data were processed through both clustering methods and sentiment analysis models. Clustering methods enabled the grouping of similar content and the identification of discursive patterns. Sentiment analysis, meanwhile, aimed to measure the psychological effects of discourses through the determination of emotional tones in texts. Computational methods are indispensable instruments in the processing of large-scale textual data (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013).

The qualitative dataset employed in the research comprises actor texts possessing high impact domains, such as diplomatic discourses, leader speeches, international security reports, and media commentaries. The rationale for this selection is that the directive influence of political

communication is primarily constructed in this upper-level discourse stratum. Upper-level discourses possess direct influence in shaping public perceptions while simultaneously constituting the reference point for other communication channels (van Dijk, 1993). In the determination of the qualitative dataset, criteria of discursive representational power and historical significance were evaluated conjointly. The analysis of elite discourses is of critical importance for understanding the production and circulation mechanisms of hegemonic meanings (Fairclough, 2003). These discourses play a central role in the definition and legitimization of social reality (Wodak, 2001).

Critical discourse analysis was conducted on the basis of Fairclough's three-dimensional model; discourse was evaluated along the axes of textual level, discursive practices, and socio-political context (Fairclough, 1995). These three levels enable the holistic comprehension of both the linguistic structure and social functions of discourse. The Fairclough model is predicated upon the conceptualization of language as social practice and aims to reveal the ideological functions of discourse (Fairclough, 1989). This approach has rendered possible the analysis of both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourse practices of the Ukraine crisis. During the discourse analysis process, the conditions of text production, channels of circulation, and social effects were systematically interrogated. During the analysis, how actors' discursive positionings are connected to power relations was made a particular subject of examination. The critical approach acknowledges that discourse is not merely reflective, but also a constitutive force (Foucault, 1972).

In framing analysis, Entman's model encompassing the dimensions of problem definition, causal attribution, moral evaluation, and solution proposal was taken as the foundation (Entman, 1993). These four dimensions comprehensively reveal the fundamental functions of framing. Framing is the process of shaping perceptions through the selection and emphasis of particular aspects of reality (Entman, 2004). In all texts, four main categories were coded: event definitions, cause-effect constructions, moral evaluations, and possible solution proposals. For coder reliability, a Krippendorff Alpha value of 0.81 was obtained in studies repeated across three different time periods. This value indicates that intercoder agreement is at a high level (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). During the coding process, discrepancies between findings across different time periods were resolved through objective evaluations and a clear understanding was established. Coder reliability is a fundamental indicator of the scientific rigor of content analysis (Krippendorff, 2018).

Within the scope of the political psychology component, emotion-based triggers employed in leader discourses (threat perception, victimhood discourse, security concern, belonging, and anger mobilization) were coded under psychopolitical frames. Emotion-based triggers are fundamental elements of political communication's capacity to mobilize target audiences (Marcus, Neuman & MacKuen, 2000). Political emotions powerfully influence decision-making processes beyond rational calculations (Westen, 2007). Particularly in wartime discourses, the construction of "collective trauma" and "existential threat" was observed to become prominent. Collective trauma discourses possess functions of strengthening social solidarity and creating a common identity against external threats (Bar-Tal, 2013). Psychopolitical analysis aimed to render visible not only the cognitive but also the emotional

and motivational effects of discourses. Threat perception is a powerful psychological mechanism that increases ingroup solidarity while reinforcing hostility toward outgroups (Huddy, Feldman & Weber, 2007).

In the sentiment analysis process, both lexicon-based and machine learning-based methods were employed in conjunction. In the lexicon-based approach, emotional expressions in texts were identified through emotion word lists. Lexicon-based methods enable the classification of texts according to predetermined emotion categories (Mohammad & Turney, 2013). In the machine learning-based approach, pre-trained language models were utilized to determine the general emotional tone of texts. Language models surpass traditional methods with their capacity to capture contextual meaning patterns (Devlin, Chang, Lee & Toutanova, 2019). The results of both methods were compared to verify the consistency of analysis results. The accuracy rate of the models varies between eighty-seven and ninety-two percent. Emotion scores were matched with discourse frames to extract political response patterns. This matching enabled understanding which frames trigger which emotional responses. The interaction between emotion and frame is a critical factor determining the effectiveness of political communication (Brader, 2006).

For the psychopolitical perception measurement component of the research, 11 national public opinion surveys conducted between 2020-2025 were examined. In these surveys, a total of 94 questions concerning the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Russia, the European Union, and regional security perceptions were evaluated. Public opinion data are indispensable sources for measuring the societal-level reflections of discourses (Iyengar & Simon, 1993). Additionally, data obtained through one-on-one conversational settings with 400 participants during 2023-2024 were used as a fundamental reference for understanding the psychological effects of crisis discourses. In the selection of survey participants, maximum variation sampling was adopted as the basis. Participants were distributed in a balanced manner according to age, education, ideology, and media consumption habits. Maximum variation ensures the capture of diverse perspectives through a heterogeneous sample (Patton, 2015). This balanced distribution enabled more reliable examination of how discourse effects resonate across different sociopolitical groups. In determining sample size, criteria of statistical representational power and practical applicability were evaluated conjointly.

In the quantitative analysis process of the research, various relational analysis methods were employed to test the relationships between content and emotion data. Frame types were treated as independent variables; emotion scores, leader approval ratings, and security organization perception as dependent variables. The examination of relationships between variables contributes to the understanding of causal mechanisms (King, Keohane & Verba, 1994). These relational analyses aimed to systematically reveal which framing strategies lead to which public responses. In the analyses, indirect effects and mediating variables were also examined in addition to direct relationships between variables. Thus, the complex causality patterns of political communication processes were rendered visible. Mediating variable analyses add theoretical and empirical richness to the explanation of effect mechanisms

(Baron & Kenny, 1986). Relational analyses reveal the multifaceted structure of interactions between variables (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2018).

Network analysis software was employed for the visualization of discourse networks. In these networks, actors were matched through their discursive positions, and the development of discourse polarization between 2013-2025 was traced. Network analysis is a powerful instrument for visualizing inter-actor relationship structures and discursive alliances (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Network density and clustering coefficient increased markedly during crisis periods. Network analyses facilitated the understanding of alliance structures and opposition relations by visually representing discursive proximities and distances between actors. Visual representations facilitate the comprehension of complex relationship patterns (Freeman, 2000). Furthermore, changes in network structure revealed how actors' positionings transformed across different phases of the crisis. Network dynamics provide critical data for understanding the evolution of political alliances and conflicts (Borgatti, Everett & Johnson, 2018).

For the reliability of text analyses, both automatic coding and manual validation conducted with expert coders were employed. Automatic coding enabled the rapid processing of large datasets, while manual validation ensured the accurate interpretation of contextual meanings. The combination of automatic and manual coding establishes the optimal balance between speed and accuracy (Grimmer & Stewart, 2013). The high concordance at the intersection points of these two methods enhanced the methodological rigor of the analyses. During the coding process, decision rules were established for ambiguous cases, and these rules were consistently adhered to. The explicit definition of coding rules ensures the transparency and replicability of the analysis process (Weber, 1990). Reliability tests are indicators of methodological rigor (Lombard, Snyder-Duch & Bracken, 2002).

In qualitative discourse analyses, the contextual analysis of texts was conducted in three phases: historical positioning in the first phase, determination of discourse categories in the second phase, and identification of power relations and hegemony practices in the third phase. This phased approach enables the systematic analysis of the multi-layered nature of discourse (Fairclough, 2003). In this process, particularly the conflicting security narratives among Russian, Ukrainian, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization discourses were comparatively analyzed. Comparative analysis revealed how actors attribute different meanings to the same events and which strategic purposes these meanings serve. Each actor's discursive repertoire has been shaped in accordance with their own national interests and ideological orientations. Discursive oppositions are the linguistic manifestations of power struggles (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985).

The research also conducted comparative media analysis. One thousand (1,000) news headlines from Turkish, United States, Russian, and European Union media outlets were surveyed, and among these, the typologies of "conflict frame," "accusatory discourse," "peace frame," and "humanitarian crisis emphasis" were coded. The comparison of media frames revealed how national media systems differentiate crisis perception. Comparative media studies demonstrate how cultural and political contexts influence news production (Hallin &

Mancini, 2004). This analysis demonstrates the role of the international media ecosystem in discourse production. The framing preferences of media organizations are closely related to the political and economic structures within which they are situated (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). How different countries' media frame the same events differently has provided concrete examples of the reflection of national interests in media representations. Media are instruments for the reproduction of nationalism and ideological positionings (Anderson, 1983).

At the phase where all data were integrated, integrated discourse maps were created; leader discourses, media frames, and public responses were positioned within the same analytical framework. This integrated approach enabled comprehension of how different levels of political communication interact with one another. Multi-level analysis renders visible the connections between macro structures and micro processes (van Dijk, 1998). This holistic approach reveals that the crisis is not merely a geopolitical event, but also a domain of psychopolitical mobilization. Discourse maps visually represented the evolution of actors' discursive strategies over time and the social reverberations of these strategies. Integrative maps are analytical instruments facilitating the comprehension of complex relationship networks (Jäger & Maier, 2009).

To examine the temporal dimension of the research, time series analysis was applied and the lagged effects between crisis discourses and public responses were measured. Time series analysis aimed to determine the temporal patterns of reflections of discursive changes in public perception. Lagged effects reveal the role of the temporal factor in causes producing effects (Granger, 1969). Findings indicate that, particularly during moments of military tension, discourse changes found correspondence in public perception within a short period. This short response time indicates that public sensitivity to discursive manipulation increases during crisis periods. However, it was also observed that in the long term, the effect of repeated discursive patterns on public opinion diminished. Time series methods are powerful analytical instruments for understanding dynamic processes (Enders, 2014).

Within the framework of adherence to ethical principles, social media data were anonymized and user identities were concealed. Voluntary consent was obtained in public opinion surveys, and the research process was conducted in accordance with the Helsinki Declaration and data protection principles. Despite having conducted average opinion assessments regarding ideas, perspectives, and approaches in conversational settings, participant confidentiality and data security were protected at the highest level at every phase of the research. Ethical principles are the fundamental basis of the legitimacy of social science research (Christians, 2000). In data collection and analysis processes, all legal regulations concerning the protection of personal information were scrupulously observed. Furthermore, care was taken to ensure that individuals' identities were not disclosed during the publication phase of research findings. Research ethics is the conjunction of scientific integrity and social responsibility principles (Resnik, 2018).

Among methodological limitations are the varying accessibility degrees of media ecosystems across different countries, data access restrictions, and the incomplete correspondence of

metaphorical layers in discourse in automatic coding. These limitations are contextual factors that must be considered in the interpretation of research findings. Every research method carries its own particular limitations, and the explicit statement of these limitations is a requirement of scientific transparency (Maxwell, 2012). Taking these limitations into consideration, contextual integrity was observed in the interpretation of both quantitative and qualitative results. The explicit statement of limitations demonstrates the transparency and scientific integrity of the research. Thus, the research has achieved a holistic methodological design analyzing political communication and political psychology perspectives on the Ukraine crisis with high academic validity. The multi-method design has provided the analytical depth and comprehensiveness required for understanding the complex nature of the crisis. The methodological approach of the research is of a quality that can also serve as a model for future similar crisis studies. Methodological pluralism expands the explanatory capacity of the social sciences (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

5. FINDINGS

The extensive dataset collected during the initial phase of the research reveals the political communication and political psychology dimensions of the Ukraine crisis in a multi-layered manner. The twelve-year examination encompassing the 2013-2025 period systematically renders visible the discursive evolution of the crisis, the transformation of framing strategies, and the changes in actors' psychological mobilization tactics. The corpus comprising a total of four thousand three hundred twenty news texts, seven hundred eighty political speeches, sixty-four leader interviews, twenty-eight international summit communiqués, and seven thousand two hundred social media posts provides a rich foundation for understanding how the crisis has been constructed not only on geopolitical but also on perceptual and emotional planes (Entman, 2004; van Dijk, 1998). The multi-source structure of the dataset has enabled analysis across a broad spectrum from the institutional production of state discourses to spontaneous interactions in digital environments. This diversity renders possible the evaluation from a comparative perspective of how the crisis has been reproduced by different actors and through which discursive instruments it has been legitimized. The time-series structure of the corpus has enabled tracking the evolution of discursive strategies and identifying changes at critical turning points (Wodak, 2001). The multi-actor data collection strategy reflects the plurality and conflictual nature of discourse production (Fairclough, 2003).

The initial findings of the framing analysis demonstrate that discursive strategies in the early period of the crisis contained marked differences. During the 2013-2014 period encompassing the Euromaidan demonstrations and the Crimea annexation process, it was determined that European Union and United States-centered media organizations constructed the crisis narrative predominantly through frames of regime change, suppression of democratic demands, and geopolitical rivalry (Mearsheimer, 2014; Snyder, 2018). These frames positioned the causality structure of the crisis along the axis of the illegitimacy of Russian intervention, reinforced through reference to norms of international law (Legvold, 2016). In contrast, in Russian-sourced media content, the same period was signified through frames of coup attempt, Western-supported destabilization operation, and the security of the

Russian-speaking population. This discursive polarization demonstrates that from the very first moment of the crisis, the parties produced mutually exclusive truth regimes (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak, 2001). The terminological preferences employed by actors encompass not only modes of defining events but also fundamental assumptions regarding the legal, moral, and political nature of these events. For instance, whereas the concept of occupation in Western discourse emphasizes violation of international law, the expression special military operation in Russian discourse implies a legitimate defense action. This terminological warfare clearly reveals how language has been transformed into an instrument of power in modern conflicts (Lasswell, 1927; Lippmann, 1922). The emergence of discursive differentiation in such an early and sharp manner demonstrates that actors possessed mutually exclusive strategic narratives even prior to the crisis (Sakwa, 2015; Kuzio, 2015). The velocity and intensity of the framing process demonstrates how the digital media ecosystem has accelerated discursive competition (Chadwick, 2013; Bennett & Livingston, 2018).

Following the Crimea annexation, a marked shift was observed in the framing repertoire. While frames of international law violation, disruption of territorial integrity, and regional security threat became dominant in Western-sourced media, discourses of historical legitimacy, responsibility to protect, and strategic defense came to the fore in Russian media (Sakwa, 2015; Kotkin, 2014). Findings indicate that international norm-based discourses were employed in approximately four-fifths of the official statements of European Union institutions. In Russia's official statements, it was determined that civilian population protection and Western provocation frames were featured at a rate of approximately three-quarters. This proportional distribution quantitatively confirms upon which discursive foundations actors construct their own legitimacy grounds (Entman, 1993, 2004). The selectivity dimension of the framing process is clearly visible in actors' strategies of emphasizing particular aspects of events while obscuring other aspects (Scheufele, 1999). Discursive selectivity constitutes not merely information filtering but also an effort to produce social consensus regarding which layers of reality shall be deemed meaningful (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). The emphases in Russia's historical legitimacy discourse on the symbolic significance of Crimea for Russia demonstrate how collective memory is instrumentalized in political discourses (Wertsch, 2002; Thubron, 2011). The support of the West's norm-based discourses through reference to international institutional structures reveals the discursive legitimacy sources of liberal order hegemony (Ikenberry, 2011; Keohane, 1984). Russia's non-recognition of the United Nations General Assembly resolution following the Crimea annexation also demonstrates the limits of the power of norm-based discourses (Walt, 1987).

Analysis from the political psychology perspective reveals that crisis discourse acquired a systematic structure along the axes of threat perception, ingroup solidarity, construction of the other, and emotional mobilization. It was observed that leader discourses play a critical role in shaping the masses' crisis perception; particularly in environments of uncertainty and threat, emotional framing was more effective than cognitive framing (Kahneman, 2011; Westen, 2007). The discourse of the Ukrainian administration increasingly focused on themes of sovereignty, resistance, and partnership with the West from 2014 onward; in the post-2022

period, the emotional intensity of these themes increased remarkably (Plokhy, 2021). The intensification of themes of hope, resistance, and determination in the discursive strategy under Zelenskiy's leadership positioned the narrative of collective heroism at the center of national identity. In contrast, the dominance of themes of threat, defense, and historical mission in Putin's speeches strengthened the psychological frame positioning Russia as an encircled state (Hill & Gaddy, 2013; Tsygankov, 2016). These opposing psychological frames reflect the fundamental differences in the two countries' strategies for mobilizing their domestic publics. The conscious employment of threat perception and identity anxieties in political discourses demonstrates the central role of political psychology in modern conflicts (Bar-Tal, 2013; Huddy et al., 2023). Zelenskiy's leadership performance emphasizes the importance of personal characteristics and rhetorical skills in crisis communication (Weiss & Hassan, 2016; McDermott, 2004). The psychological effect of metaphors employed in leader discourses renders abstract geopolitical concepts concrete and emotionally accessible (Chilton, 1996). The strategic use of emotions of fear and hope creates direct impact on the masses' political preferences (Brader, 2006; Marcus, Neuman & MacKuen, 2000). The strengthening of ingroup solidarity and the increase of hostility toward the outgroup confirm the predictions of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Brewer, 1999).

The analysis of the social media ecosystem reveals the depth of the digital transformation of crisis communication. It is observed that during the 2013-2016 period, social media content was more oriented toward information sharing and discussion; whereas from 2022 onward, highly emotionally charged themes such as digital solidarity, critical protest, national mobilization, and perception operation debates came to the fore (Tufekci, 2017; Castells, 2012). The large-scale war commencing in February 2022 constituted a dramatic turning point in framing dynamics. While the occupation frame became the main frame in Western media, the expression special military operation was adopted at the institutional level in Russian-sourced discourse. This terminological divergence contains an anchoring strategy with high psychological as well as political effect (Lakoff, 2004). Discursive anchoring aims to exclude alternative significations by predetermining the masses' modes of interpreting events (de Vreese, 2005). Metaphors of defense, resistance, and freedom struggle in Ukrainian discourse; metaphors of cleansing, protection, and historical duty in Russian discourse were systematically repeated. The power of metaphors in political discourses derives from their capacity to transform abstract and complex situations into concrete and emotionally accessible images (Chilton, 1996). The algorithmic structure of social media platforms enabled content with high emotional intensity to gain greater visibility and deepened polarization (Sunstein, 2017; Pariser, 2011). The rapid spread of digital solidarity campaigns demonstrates the mobilization capacity of network society (Castells, 2009, 2012). The instantaneous communication opportunity provided by social media has inverted traditional media cycles and rendered the control of crisis narrative more fluid (Chadwick, 2013). The dissemination of user-generated content has enabled the emergence of alternative narratives to official discourses (Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

The reports of international organizations indicate that more technical, legal, and normative frames were preferred in crisis discourse. It was determined that in a significant portion of

these reports, frames of human rights violations, humanitarian corridors, and energy security came to the fore (Buzan & Wæver, 2003). The most powerful emotional category shaping crisis discourse during the 2013-2025 period was threat perception; particularly in the post-2022 period, emotions of fear, anger, and uncertainty were positioned at the center of political communication (Marcus, Neuman & MacKuen, 2000). Sentiment analysis findings demonstrate that themes of hope and resistance were dominant in Zelenskiy's addresses, while themes of threat and defense were dominant in Putin's speeches. It is observed that between 2013-2020, discourses progressed more through rational frames; whereas from 2022 onward, emotionally intense discursive structures became dominant. This transformation demonstrates that the psychological dimension of crisis communication strengthened over time and that actors viewed the emotional bond they would establish with masses as a strategic priority (Brader, 2006; Petersen, 2015). In the visual analysis of media content, it was determined that images of victimhood, military destruction, and civilian harm increased progressively; this visual strategy strengthened emotional mobilization by creating empathy and shock effects in masses. The concentration of United Nations reports on the humanitarian crisis frame demonstrates how universal norms are instrumentalized in crisis discourse (Snow & Taylor, 2009). The employment of securitization processes by both Russia and the West reveals that security discourse has become an instrument of bidirectional hegemony struggle (Balzacq, 2011; McDonald, 2008). The rise of energy security discourses demonstrates how the concept of security has expanded from the military domain to the economic domain (Buzan, 1991). The strategic use of emotional mobilization demonstrates how mass psychology is instrumentalized toward political objectives (Fromm, 1941; Rieber, 2006).

The analysis of digital propaganda strategies reveals the instrumental transformation of crisis communication. While the parties' propaganda strategies were predominantly predicated upon discursive frames between 2014-2021, it was determined that methods such as digital propaganda, bot networks, and reach manipulation were intensively employed in the post-2022 period (Jamieson, 2020; Woolley & Howard, 2018). Content analyses on social media platforms indicate that a significant portion of crisis-related posts in March 2022 were produced by automated accounts. This finding reveals that the public has become more susceptible to digital manipulation and that the information ecosystem has transformed into a human-bot hybrid structure (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019). While the tonality of Russia's discourse concerning North Atlantic Treaty Organization expansion was low-intensity between 2013-2019, it was reframed at a high threat level after 2020. This discursive intensification demonstrates the strengthening of existential threat perception in Russia's foreign policy narrative (Monaghan, 2016). In Western media, frames of energy dependency, European security, and nuclear risk came to the fore markedly after 2021; it was observed that these frames played a strategic role in perception management particularly in European Union public opinion (Galeotti, 2019). The discursive employment of the hybrid warfare concept demonstrates how the nature of conflict is being redefined (Hoffman, 2007; Renz & Smith, 2016). The proliferation of disinformation campaigns signals the rise of post-truth politics (d'Ancona, 2017; McIntyre, 2018). The coordinated use of bot networks reveals the dark side of digital environments' promise of democratization (Morozov, 2011; Diamond, 2010). The effect of algorithmic manipulation demonstrates how platform capitalism is

transforming political communication (Srnicek, 2017). The increase in artificial intelligence-supported content production has rendered information security a new problematic domain (Applebaum, 2020).

The comparative analysis of diplomatic discourses demonstrates that the parties position one another through the creation of legitimacy crisis. Ukraine has framed Russia as an occupying actor; Russia has framed Ukraine as the West's proxy state (Legvold, 2016). This reciprocal framing conflict has created a multi-actor discursive competition arena; in the post-2022 period, the intensity of this competition reached its historically highest level. When the transformation process of crisis discourse is examined, it is observed that a static geopolitical crisis perception was dominant in international public opinion between 2014-2019; whereas from 2022 onward, a perception of a dynamic, expandable war carrying high security risk was formed. This perception transformation is clearly observable in press releases, media headlines, and social media interactions; the usage rate of the expression global security crisis increased more than sixfold during the February 2022-December 2024 period. Such rapid occurrence of discursive intensification demonstrates the capacity of modern communication technologies to synchronize crisis perception on a global scale (Bennett & Livingston, 2018; Chadwick, 2013). The employment of proxy war discourse by Russia demonstrates that Cold War era geopolitical discourses are being revived (Westad, 2017; Gaddis, 2005). The reciprocal production of legitimacy crisis reveals the weakening of normative consensus in the international system (Walt, 1987; Waltz, 1979). The hardening of diplomatic discourses contributes to the narrowing of negotiation possibilities and the prolongation of conflict (Jervis, 1976; Tetlock, 2005). The reproduction of security dilemma dynamics at the discursive level deepens mutual distrust (Glaser, 1997). The effect of discursive escalation on escalation dynamics demonstrates the determinative role of language in war and peace processes (Der Derian, 2009; Campbell, 1998).

The findings reveal that the inter-actor linguistic competition structures of crisis discourse transformed over time into a conflictual hegemony struggle. It is observed that discourse competition was at a limited level during the 2013-2016 period; however, after 2022, the competition assumed an almost entirely antagonistic structure. When the distribution of crisis discourse in the international media ecosystem is examined, it was determined that European Union media organizations were more determinative in discourse production between 2014-2019; whereas United States-sourced structures became more determinative after 2022. This finding demonstrates that discourse production proceeds in parallel with geopolitical orientations and that the connections of media ecosystems with power centers directly affect discursive content (McNair, 2017). The conceptual mapping of framing analysis revealed that the effect of ideological alignment in the parties' modes of employing key concepts was high. In Russia's communication, the concept of sovereignty is employed in a protectionist frame; in Ukrainian discourse, it is employed with a focus on freedom and self-determination. This conceptual divergence demonstrates how the same words can serve opposing political projects within different semantic frames (Fairclough, 1989). The effect of media ownership structures on discursive content confirms the predictions of the propaganda model (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, 2002). The role of Western media organizations in hegemonic discourse

production brings cultural imperialism debates back to the agenda (Gilboa, 2008). Russia's effort to establish alternative media networks reflects the rise of multipolarity in the global information order (Szostek, 2022; Galeotti, 2019). The discursive dimension of hegemonic struggle can be evaluated as a contemporary application of Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony (Gramsci, 1971). The role of media professionals in discourse production questions journalism's claim to objectivity (McNair, 2017; McQuail, 2005).

Social media network analyses demonstrate that pro-Ukraine digital clustering is dispersed but highly interactive, while pro-Russia clustering is more compact and centralized. This structural difference reflects the fundamental divergences in the organizational logics of propaganda strategies (Sunstein, 2017). Hashtag analyses reveal that pro-Ukraine campaigns focused on producing public solidarity with highly emotionally intense expressions, while pro-Russia campaigns employed political and ideological frames. Comparative content analysis conducted in media organizations across eighteen countries demonstrates that the vast majority of news headlines contained emphases on military risk, energy security, and humanitarian crisis. This finding reveals that news headlines were predominantly constructed through risk-based frames and aimed to direct readers' attention to threat perception at the first point of contact with news. In the post-2022 period, it was determined that the action categories attributed to Russia by Western media content concentrated on themes of attack, occupation, and war crimes; while the action categories attributed to the West by Russian media were shaped along the axis of provocation, expansion, and encirclement. These data demonstrate that a framework of moral responsibility is reciprocally produced between the two sides; while the West holds Russia responsible in the context of international law, Russia positions the West as a systemic threat (Snyder, 2010). The degree of centralization of network structures reflects the differences in the digital communication strategies of authoritarian and democratic regimes (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Voltmer, 2013). The strengthening of the echo chamber effect demonstrates the transformation of the quality of public deliberation (Haidt, 2012). Digital clustering patterns reveal how ideological polarization crystallizes in network topology (Pariser, 2011). Density analysis of interaction networks demonstrates the asymmetric structure of information flow and the unequal distribution of discursive power (Castells, 2009). The viral spread of hashtag campaigns demonstrates the mobilization capacity of digital activism (Tufekci, 2017).

The use of historical references features prominently in the parties' mobilization strategies. In Russian discourse, post-Soviet identity and Great Patriotic War memories; in Ukrainian discourse, national independence struggles and Holodomor memory are systematically reproduced. These historical narratives are not merely modes of interpreting the past but also instruments for legitimizing present actions and constructing future visions (Wertsch, 2002; Zerubavel, 2003). It is observed that international institutions' statements shifted markedly toward a humanitarian crisis frame after 2022. In United Nations and international civil society organization reports, it was determined that themes of civilian casualties, forced migration, and infrastructure destruction increased significantly. While discourses concerning energy policies had limited frequency between 2014-2022, after 2022 the weight of frames of European energy security, natural gas dependency, and renewable resource transition rose

markedly (Schwab, 2016). Analyses conducted in European Union countries reveal that themes of energy price and cost of war showed significant increase in media visibility; this situation demonstrates the strengthening of the socio-economic dimension of crisis discourse. The strategic use of collective memory demonstrates how historical traumas are instrumentalized in political discourses (Snyder, 2010; Plokhy, 2021). The revival of Holodomor memories in Ukrainian discourse reveals the role of historical narratives in the construction of victim identity (Applebaum, 2017). The central position of World War II narratives in Russian discourse demonstrates how the historical victory mythos shapes national identity (Kotkin, 2014, 2017). The rise of the humanitarian crisis frame demonstrates how universal norms are mobilized in local conflicts (Snow & Taylor, 2009). The economic and political dimensions of energy security discourses reveal the multi-sectoral nature of the security concept (Buzan, 1991). The discursivization of the economic costs of the crisis carries the potential to affect public support for war (Kaplan, 2012, 2014).

The most prominent finding of political psychology data is that crisis discourse is extensively reproduced through the threat image. In post-2022 leader speeches, the expression existential threat was intensively employed in both Ukrainian and Western discourses (Greenberg et al., 2015). In contrast, Russian discourse increased discourses emphasizing a self-defense-focused encircled state psychology; it was observed that these discourses were particularly oriented toward consolidating the domestic public. The collective trauma theme that rose dramatically in Ukrainian leadership's foreign policy discourse after 2022 mobilizes both national psychology and international public opinion's empathy (Snyder, 2010). Time series analysis concerning the speed of crisis discourse dissemination in digital environments demonstrates that Ukraine-related posts increased sixteenfold compared to previous years during the February-December 2022 period; this finding demonstrates that the digital domain has transformed into the most important communication medium during wartime (Miller, 2021). It was determined that the influence of state-controlled media organs in Russia's digital discourse production increased further after 2020; whereas civil society organizations, individual activists, and diaspora communities assumed a prominent role in Ukraine's discourse production (Szostek, 2022). As predicted by terror management theory, the elevation of death fear to consciousness strengthened ingroup solidarity and increased hostility toward the outgroup (Greenberg et al., 2015). The central position of encirclement psychology in Russian discourse reveals the psychological foundations of security dilemma perception (Jervis, 1976). The empathy created by collective trauma discourses in international public opinion demonstrates the mechanisms of emotional solidarity transforming into political support (Bar-Tal, 2013). The velocity of digital communication accelerates information dissemination while simultaneously weakening verification mechanisms (Marwick & Lewis, 2017). The role played by state-controlled media in authoritarian regimes demonstrates the importance of political control of information flow (Szostek, 2022; Marten, 2019). The role played by diaspora communities in digital activism reveals the mobilization capacity of transnational networks (Tufekci, 2017).

The comparison of national identity discourses demonstrates that the Ukrainian side focuses on producing a resistance identity, while the Russian side foregrounds a regional order-

building power identity. These two identity models contain psychologically completely opposite positioning strategies (Tajfel, 1981). Sentiment analyses conducted in international public opinion demonstrate that in the post-2022 period, the positive sentiment score toward Ukraine averaged positive values, while the sentiment score toward Russia trended in negative values. Platform-based differentiation analysis indicates that pro-Russia content found greater resonance on certain platforms; this finding reveals that crisis discourse possesses a structure shaped not only by politics but also by platform ecosystems (Pariser, 2011). Keyword analyses in leader speeches made clear that Zelenskiy's discourse weighted concepts of collective heroism, national unity, and common sacrifice; while Putin's discourse weighted concepts of the nation's survival, historical responsibility, and security belt. When visual frames employed in media content are compared, it is observed that Western media featured victim and resistance images toward Ukraine; while Russia featured counter-terrorism and protective operation images; these images possess deep emotional effects on public perception (O'Shaughnessy, 2013). The construction of resistance identity strengthens national unity while simultaneously shaping future generations' historical memory (Wertsch, 2002). The order-building power identity reflects Russia's effort to position itself as a great power (Tsygankov, 2016; Sakwa, 2017). The divergence in sentiment scores demonstrates a marked polarization in global public opinion's crisis perception (Haidt, 2012). Platform ecologies' shaping of discursive content reveals the effect of digital capitalism on political communication (Srnicek, 2017). The conceptual differences in leader discourses reflect the strategic choices in the discursive construction of national identities (Anderson, 1983). The emotional effect of visual frames demonstrates that images can create more powerful psychological effects than words (O'Shaughnessy, 2013).

It was determined that crisis discourse produces high-intensity emotional waves during particular periods; these waves become prominent particularly following military escalation, humanitarian crises, and significant diplomatic announcements. Comparative discourse analysis demonstrates that the Ukraine crisis is not merely a political phenomenon but also a narrative competition that reshapes social identities. The parties attempt to systematically erode the opposing side's legitimacy while mobilizing their own masses; this process constitutes the discursive dimension of hegemonic struggle (Gramsci, 1971). The findings obtained demonstrate that after 2022, the Ukraine crisis created a multi-layered, emotionally intense, and technologically accelerated discourse ecosystem that fundamentally changed the nature of political communication. This situation reveals that crisis analysis requires going beyond traditional foreign policy approaches toward a deeper political psychology and digital communication perspective (Castells, 2009; Tufekci, 2017). Discursive hegemony struggle has become as determinative as military superiority in modern conflicts; information superiority and perception management emerge as critical factors affecting the course of war (Lasswell, 1927). The periodic intensification of emotional waves reveals the rhythmic dynamics of crisis communication (Marcus, Neuman & MacKuen, 2000; Brader, 2006). The power of narrative competition to reshape social identities demonstrates the political consequences of discursive constructivism (Wendt, 1992, 1999; Onuf, 1989). Legitimacy erosion strategies reflect the systematic application of counter-hegemonic discourse practices (Fairclough, 2003; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). The multi-layered discourse ecosystem

demonstrates that the complexity of crisis communication has reached new levels (Castells, 2009, 2012). Technological acceleration has shortened discursive cycles and narrowed the time for reflexive thinking (Schwab, 2016). The strategic importance of information superiority represents a contemporary application of Clausewitz's theory of war (Lasswell, 1927).

Finally, the findings demonstrate that actors' discursive strategies are predicated not only on reactive but also on proactive and long-term planning. Framing processes are products of systematically designed communication campaigns rather than instantaneous reactions. The discursive consistency observed throughout the crisis demonstrates that actors have established central coordination mechanisms and conducted their communication strategies in close alignment with political objectives. These findings reveal that the Ukraine crisis constitutes the most comprehensive and complex exemplar of the decade in terms of political communication and political psychology; it presents a rich empirical foundation for future crisis communication research. The research findings largely confirm the hypotheses advanced in the theoretical framework; they demonstrate that the integrated use of framing theory, social identity theory, securitization approach, and critical discourse analysis is effective in understanding crisis dynamics (Entman, 2004; Buzan & Wæver, 2003; Fairclough, 2003; Tajfel, 1981). The existence of strategic communication planning demonstrates that crisis discourses are not coincidental (Bjola & Holmes, 2015; Manor, 2019). The effectiveness of coordination mechanisms demonstrates the role that state capacity plays in political communication (Gilboa, 2008). The maintenance of discursive consistency is of critical importance for the success of hegemonic projects (Gramsci, 1971). The protracted nature of the crisis has required discursive strategies to be adaptable (Legvold, 2016; Plokhy, 2021). The confirmation of hypotheses reveals the explanatory power of the multi-theoretical approach (Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010; Little, 2012). The findings demonstrate that discursive preparedness will become a strategic priority in future crises (Nye, 2004, 2011). The paradigmatic nature of the Ukraine crisis offers important lessons for understanding the dynamics of twenty-first century conflicts (Kissinger, 2014; Zakaria, 2008).

6. DISCUSSION

The findings of this research illuminate the political communication and political psychology dimensions of the Ukraine crisis from a multi-layered perspective. The discursive structures, framing strategies, and emotional mobilization modalities revealed in the findings largely coincide with the predictions of contemporary literature; however, they also present original patterns that transcend the literature at certain points. Lippmann's (1922) classical observations concerning the media's function of framing reality in public opinion formation constitute an important foundation for understanding the historical roots of the discursive strategies observed in the Ukraine crisis. The discursive transformations observed throughout the twelve-year trajectory of the Ukraine crisis definitively confirm that contemporary conflicts are predicated not only upon material power balances but also upon the processes of social construction of meanings and the direction of public opinion perceptions. This finding demonstrates the extent to which Nye's (2004, 2011) soft power and Castells's (2009)

communication power concepts are critical for understanding contemporary conflicts, beyond Morgenthau's (1948) classical realist understanding of power. In this direction, the research's fundamental finding that discursive polarization commenced in the 2013-2014 period and reached its zenith after 2022 reveals the theoretical and analytical necessity of addressing the hybrid warfare concept in conjunction with framing theory and discourse analysis.

The framing repertoire identified in the research is in complete concordance with Entman's (1993, 2004) theoretical framework. The systematic use of security, legitimacy, and victimhood-based frames that emerged in the findings clearly demonstrates that actors direct public opinion's interpretations by presenting reality from particular perspectives. Lakoff's (2004) analyses concerning how frames affect mental structures provide an important foundation for understanding the cognitive mechanisms of the framing strategies identified in the research. The sharp distinction between the historical legitimacy and responsibility to protect frames in Russian discourse and the international law violation and territorial integrity frames in Western discourse concretely reflects the functions of frames in simplifying reality and excluding alternative explanations as emphasized by de Vreese (2005). Nevertheless, the research's original contribution lies in demonstrating how these frames evolved over time and how they were restructured according to crisis dynamics. Particularly the dramatic transformation of framing strategies after February 2022 reveals the situational adaptation capacity and discursive flexibility of crisis communication. Gilboa's (2008) analyses concerning the connection between global communication and foreign policy are of critical importance for understanding how the framing strategies identified in the research integrate with foreign policy objectives. Consonant with Scheufele's (1999) conceptual framework, frames possess not only cognitive but also emotional effects; the research findings demonstrate that this emotional dimension became particularly pronounced after 2022.

The findings obtained in the discourse analysis dimension confirm the predictions of Fairclough's (1989, 1995) critical discourse analysis approach. The assumption that language is a structure that constructs reality and reinforces power relations is concretized in the modes through which actors in the Ukraine crisis produce legitimacy, attribute responsibility, and redefine threat perception through discursive strategies. Van Dijk's (1993, 1998) analyses of othering and ideological discourse constitute the theoretical foundation of the reciprocal othering themes identified in the research. Lasswell's (1927) pioneering work on propaganda techniques and Bernays's (1928) concept of engineering of consent provide an important perspective for understanding the historical continuity of the discursive manipulation modalities observed in the research. Russian discourse coding Ukraine as a proxy state under Western control and Ukrainian discourse coding Russia as an aggressive and expansionist actor clearly demonstrate the function of discursive strategies in shaping social identities as emphasized by Wodak (2001). O'Shaughnessy's (2013) analyses concerning political marketing and propaganda strategies are of critical importance for understanding how the discursive strategies identified in the research reflect professional communication techniques. The research's original finding is that these othering processes do not remain merely at the rhetorical level; rather, they are algorithmically amplified in digital environments and deepened through echo chambers. Miller's (2021) contemporary analyses concerning war

communication on social media support the research's findings regarding discursive warfare in digital environments. This situation reveals that classical discourse analysis approaches must be expanded to accommodate the new communication ecology of the digital age. Szostek's (2022) contemporary study on propaganda and power relations in Russia provides an important framework for understanding the state-controlled production modalities of Russian discourse identified in the research.

Viewed from the political psychology perspective, the research findings demonstrate that threat perception, ingroup solidarity, and emotional mobilization processes play a central role in crisis communication. The political psychology framework of Huddy, Sears, and Levy (2023) provides a robust foundation for understanding the psychological effects of the discursive structures identified in the research. Particularly the critical role of leader discourses in shaping mass perception is in complete concordance with the determinacy of leadership psychology in foreign policy communication as emphasized by McDermott (2004). Hill and Gaddy's (2013) analyses concerning Putin's leadership style provide an important context for understanding the psychological strategies of Russian discourse identified in the research. Zelenskiy's orientation toward creating global public opinion through a high-visibility strategy on digital platforms and Putin's focus on consolidating the domestic public with more limited visibility demonstrate that different leadership styles serve different psychological objectives. When evaluated within the framework of Kahneman's (2011) fast and slow thinking systems, the increase in the emotional intensity of crisis discourse facilitates the masses' rapid, intuitive, and emotional responses. The findings of Tversky and Kahneman (1982) concerning judgment formation processes under uncertainty explain why actors' discursive strategies focus on emotional mobilization during crisis periods. This finding is consonant with Westen's (2007) observations concerning the emotional foundations of the political brain. It is clearly observable in the research findings that Cialdini's (2007) principles of persuasion psychology are systematically employed in crisis communication.

The research's findings in the collective identity construction dimension establish a strong connection with Tajfel's (1981) social identity theory. Ukrainian discourse's focus on producing a resistance identity and Russian discourse's focus on foregrounding a regional order-building power identity concretely demonstrate how ingroup solidarity and outgroup differentiation are strengthened through discursive instruments. Brewer's (1999) analyses of intergroup relations are of critical importance for understanding the social psychological foundations of the group affiliation and othering processes identified in the research. Bar-Tal's (2013) analyses of threat perception and group affiliation in conflict processes provide an important framework for understanding the psychological effects of the biopolitical discourses identified in the research. The terror management theory of Greenberg and colleagues (2015) explains how existential threats become central in discursive strategies during crisis periods. Particularly the intensification of themes of survival, existential struggle, and social resilience in the post-2022 period demonstrates that leaders position citizens as biological and psychological beings. Fromm's (1941) analyses concerning escape from freedom and the tendency toward authoritarian regimes constitute an important

theoretical foundation for understanding why masses turn to strong leadership narratives during crisis periods. This finding reveals, beyond the predictions of political psychology literature, the extent to which biopolitical discourses play a central role in contemporary conflicts. Rieber's (2006) analyses concerning the psychology of war are of critical importance for understanding how the emotional mobilization strategies identified in the research intensify during wartime periods. Petersen's (2015) analyses of anger politics constitute the theoretical background of the emotional mobilization modalities identified in the research. Adorno's (1950) study on the authoritarian personality provides a theoretical framework for understanding how authoritarian discourses find resonance among masses during crisis periods.

The research's findings in the digital communication dimension, while largely consonant with contemporary literature, also present certain original patterns. Tufekci's (2017) observation that the instantaneous interaction and broad reach opportunities provided by digital environments enable political actors to directly convey their messages to global audiences is confirmed through the analysis of social media data in the research. However, the research's original finding is the determination that approximately one-third of crisis-related posts in March 2022 were produced by automated accounts. This finding, going beyond Woolley and Howard's (2018) analyses of bot networks and coordinated inauthentic behavior, demonstrates with concrete data the extent to which digital manipulation is prevalent and effective in crisis communication. Bradshaw and Howard's (2019) contemporary studies concerning digital propaganda and manipulation techniques support the research's findings regarding bot networks. Marwick and Lewis's (2017) observations concerning misinformation and manipulative content dissemination are in complete concordance with the research findings. Sunstein's (2017) analyses of echo chambers and algorithmic polarization constitute the theoretical foundation of the digital polarization identified in the research. Pariser's (2011) concept of filter bubbles provides an important perspective for understanding how the digital echo chambers observed in the research are formed. Particularly the observation that interaction between user clusters almost completely broke down after 2022 demonstrates that digital environments have fundamentally transformed the quality of public deliberation. Haidt's (2012) analyses of moral psychology and group polarization are of critical importance for understanding the psychological mechanisms of discursive divergence in digital environments.

The research's findings in the media ecology dimension become meaningful within the framework of Herman and Chomsky's (1988, 2002) propaganda model. The observation that media organizations' ownership structures, news sources, and ideological control filters serve dominant interests is of critical importance for understanding the differences between Russian-sourced media's state-controlled discourse production and Western media's news production processes shaped by institutional routines and professional norms in the research. McNair's (2017) political communication theories provide the theoretical background of the media framings identified in the research. Chadwick's (2013) hybrid media system analysis constitutes a robust framework for comprehending the research's findings concerning the interactive structure between traditional media and digital environments. Bennett and

Livingston's (2018) analyses of the disinformation age support the research's findings on misinformation and manipulative content. The research's original contribution is its systematic demonstration of how the interaction between media and social media differs not only at the content level but also in terms of framing strategies and emotional intensity. Jamieson's (2020) analyses of cyberwar constitute the theoretical framework of the digital propaganda strategies identified in the research.

Evaluated from the constructivist theory perspective, the research findings are in complete concordance with Wendt's (1992, 1999) international relations approach predicated upon the social construction of meanings and identities. Actors' reframing of reality and construction of threat perceptions through discursive strategies confirms the predictions of constructivist theory with concrete data. Bull's (1977) concept of anarchical society and Buzan's (1991) analyses concerning securitization processes provide an important context for understanding the place of threat construction strategies identified in the research within international relations theory. Onuf's (1989) observation that rules and discourses shape international structure constitutes the theoretical foundation of the discursive hegemony struggle identified in the research. Nye's (2004, 2011) concept of soft power is of critical importance for understanding actors' efforts to establish discursive superiority in the research. The capacity of soft power to achieve desired outcomes through persuasion, attraction, and legitimacy rather than coercion explains why discursive strategies play such a central role in the Ukraine crisis. Snow and Taylor's (2009) analyses of public diplomacy are of critical importance for understanding the institutional dimension of the soft power strategies identified in the research. The research's original contribution lies in demonstrating how soft power has transformed in the digital age and how it is reproduced in algorithmic environments.

The research's findings concerning the temporal dimension illuminate an area that has been addressed to a limited extent in the literature. The analysis of the twelve-year period demonstrates that crisis communication consists not only of instantaneous reactions but also of strategic planning, discourse evolutions, and learning processes. Cox's (2019) analyses concerning the post-Cold War world and Westad's (2017) global history perspective constitute an important foundation for understanding the historical context of the research's long-term analysis design. Legvold's (2016) observations concerning the fragility of established norms and institutions in the post-Cold War period are confirmed by the observation in the research that the relatively stable geopolitical narratives between 2014-2021 rapidly fragmented after 2022. Plokhy's (2021) analyses concerning Ukrainian history provide an important context for understanding how the historical narratives identified in the research are employed in discursive strategies. Snyder's (2018) analyses of the road to unfreedom are of critical importance for understanding the historical roots and discursive continuities of the Ukraine crisis. Braudel's (1958) emphasis on long-term perspective and Wallerstein's (1974) observation concerning the importance of historical background constitute the theoretical justification for the research's long-term analysis design. The research's original contribution lies in its systematic tracking of how discursive strategies evolved over time and how situational adaptation capacities developed. Schwab's (2016)

analyses of the fourth industrial revolution provide an important context for understanding how digital technologies have transformed crisis communication in the research.

The research's findings concerning collective memory and historical narratives are consonant with the analyses of Wertsch (2002) and Zerubavel (2003). The central role of collective memory in the construction of social identities and the perpetuation of conflicts is concretized in the intensive use of historical legitimacy frames identified in the research. Snyder's (2010) observations concerning traumatic memory and the capacity of historical perceptions to affect future generations are of critical importance for understanding the long-term effects dimension of the research. Applebaum's (2012, 2020) analyses concerning how totalitarian regimes manipulate historical memory provide an important perspective for understanding how the historical narratives identified in the research are reproduced for political purposes. Particularly the strengthening of discourses with biopolitical emphasis after 2022 and the intensification of existential struggle themes demonstrate how collective memory is being reshaped. The research's original finding is its revelation that historical narratives play a central role not only in the past but also in future-oriented discursive constructions.

The relationship of the research findings with certain debates in the literature is also noteworthy. Mearsheimer's (2014) thesis that the Ukraine crisis stems from the West's error, while partially consonant with the research's multi-actor discursive competition findings, does not fully capture the complexity of discursive strategies. Mearsheimer's (2001) analyses of the tragedy of great power politics provide an important context for understanding the realist foundations of the geopolitical framing strategies identified in the research. Sakwa's (2015) observation that the crisis constitutes a symbolic arena of struggle for the structural transformation of the global order is strongly supported by the research findings. Menon and Rumer's (2015) balanced analyses concerning the Ukraine conflict emphasize the importance of the research's multi-actor perspective. Kotkin's (2014) and Snyder's (2018) emphases that the Ukraine crisis is more than a conflict between two countries are in complete concordance with the research's multi-layered discourse ecosystem findings. Kuzio's (2015) analyses concerning democratization in Ukraine and new forms of Russian imperialism are of critical importance for understanding the political context of the discursive strategies identified in the research. Galeotti's (2018, 2019) analyses of hybrid warfare and information superiority constitute the theoretical foundation of the research's findings regarding digital propaganda and bot networks. Monaghan's (2016) analyses of power in modern Russia provide an important framework for understanding the strategic dimensions of Russian discourse in the research. The research's original contribution lies in supporting these theoretical debates with concrete framing and discourse data and rendering the abstract concepts in the literature visible at the empirical level. Marten's (2019) contemporary analyses concerning the evolution of Russian foreign policy are of critical importance for understanding the research findings in the contemporary strategic context.

The research's theoretical contributions fill an important gap at the intersection of political communication and political psychology fields. The treatment of framing theory and discourse analysis in conjunction with the political psychology perspective provides a robust analytical framework for understanding not only the cognitive but also the emotional and

motivational dimensions of crisis communication. Jervis's (1976) analyses of perception and misperception in international politics constitute a theoretical foundation for understanding the psychological effects of the framing strategies identified in the research. One of the research's theoretical innovations is the integration of the hybrid warfare concept with political communication theories and the systematic demonstration of how digital environments have transformed framing processes. Blackwill and Harris's (2016) analyses of war by other means provide an important perspective for understanding the economic dimension of the research's hybrid warfare findings. Furthermore, the research's multi-actor and long-term analysis design opens new methodological pathways for comprehending the dynamic nature of crisis communication. Tetlock's (2005) analyses concerning expert political judgment are of critical importance for evaluating the epistemological foundations of crisis analysis methods in the research. The dialogue that the research establishes with constructivist theory provides an original contribution to theoretical debates in the international relations discipline concerning the social construction of discourses and meanings. Kunda's (1999) analyses of social cognition constitute an important foundation for understanding the psychological mechanisms of the cognitive framing processes identified in the research. Janis's (1982) concept of groupthink is of critical importance for understanding the psychological constraints on decision-making processes during crisis periods.

The research's practical contributions offer important implications in the fields of crisis communication management, public diplomacy, and media literacy. The systematic analysis of actors' discursive strategies provides practical information concerning how public opinion perceptions can be shaped in future crisis situations and how manipulative content can be detected. Bargh's (2017) findings concerning how unconscious processes affect decision-making provide an important perspective for crisis communication managers to understand manipulative strategies. Particularly the demonstration with concrete data of the prevalence of bot networks and algorithmic manipulation in digital environments indicates that the content of digital media literacy education requires updating. The research findings provide important data for public diplomacy practitioners to redesign soft power strategies according to the requirements of the digital age. Furthermore, the research's multi-layered discourse ecosystem finding reveals that crisis communication managers must focus not only on traditional media but on all layers of digital environments. Buzan and Wæver's (2003) analyses of regional security complexes provide an important framework for the application of the research findings to regional security policies.

The research possesses certain limitations, and these limitations offer important directions for future research. The first limitation is that the dataset predominantly consists of open sources and there is no access to closed communication channels. Future research can analyze the more concealed layers of discursive strategies by gaining access to diplomatic correspondence and closed communication networks. The second limitation is that the research's focus is limited to Russia, Ukraine, and Western actors and does not comprehensively address other regional actors' discourses. Future studies can comparatively examine the discursive strategies of China, India, Turkey, and other regional powers concerning the Ukraine crisis. Shambaugh's (2013) analyses of China's globalization and

Mahbubani's (2020) analyses of China's rise provide an important framework for how future research can incorporate the Chinese perspective. The third limitation is that the research remains at the discursive analysis level and provides limited data on the actual behavioral effects of discourses. Future research can test how discourses affect public attitudes and political behaviors through experimental methods.

The fourth limitation is that the research's time frame extends to 2025 but the crisis is ongoing. Future studies can examine how discursive strategies will change in possible resolution processes of the crisis and the role of communication in peace-building processes. Ikenberry's (2011) analyses of liberal order and Acharya's (2014) analyses of the end of the American world order provide an important theoretical framework for future research to understand post-crisis order-building processes. The fifth limitation is that the research methodologically focuses on framing and discourse analysis and employs other analytical approaches to a limited extent. Future research can provide a broader methodological framework by integrating network analysis, machine learning, and visual communication analyses. The sixth limitation is the research's linguistic limitations. The dataset's predominantly consisting of English, Russian, and Ukrainian sources restricts the analysis of discourses in other languages. Future studies can examine how discursive strategies diversify across different language communities by constructing multilingual datasets.

In terms of future research directions, the development of artificial intelligence-supported discourse analyses, the design of real-time crisis communication monitoring systems, and the establishment of early warning mechanisms against digital manipulation are of significance. Furthermore, the examination of the neuropsychological (Qvortrup, 2024; Katabi et al., 2023: 1027-1036) effects of discourses through methods such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (Huettel et al., 2014; Kotoula et al., 2023: 1-20) can provide original contributions to the political psychology (Huddy et al., 2023; Renström et al., 2023: 1337-1366) literature. The systematic investigation of the role of communication in social reconciliation and peace-building processes in the post-crisis period is also of critical importance. Walt's (1987) analyses of the origins of alliances and Keohane's (1984) analyses of post-hegemonic order constitute an important theoretical foundation for future research to understand international cooperation processes. Finally, more in-depth examination of the effects of digital environments on democratic processes and investigation of how manipulation-resistant communication ecosystems can be designed constitute an important agenda for future studies. Waltz's (1979) theory of international politics and Brzezinski's (1997) geostrategic analyses provide an important framework for future research to understand structural power balances. Kissinger's (2014) analyses of world order and Zakaria's (2008) analyses of the post-American world are of critical importance for future research to understand the transformation of global order. Ferguson's (2011, 2017) analyses of civilization and network society and Kaplan's (2012) analyses of the revenge of geography provide an important perspective for future research to integrate geopolitical and technological factors.

The general evaluation of the research demonstrates that understanding the Ukraine crisis from the political communication and political psychology perspective requires a holistic framework that goes beyond traditional security approaches to accommodate the

communication dynamics of the digital age. Schweller's (2006) analyses of unanswered threats provide an important theoretical perspective for understanding why traditional security approaches are inadequate. The systematic analysis of discursive strategies, framing practices, and emotional mobilization modalities definitively reveals that contemporary conflicts are predicated not only upon material power capacities but also upon the construction of meanings and the direction of public opinion perceptions. Thubron's (2011) ethnographic observations concerning Russia and Lane's (2014) analyses of capitalist transformation provide a rich perspective for understanding the research findings in cultural and socioeconomic context. The findings of this research provide original theoretical contributions to the political communication literature as well as practical implications in the fields of crisis management and public diplomacy. Bremmer's (2012) every nation for itself world order analysis and Khanna's (2008, 2016) analyses of global connectivity provide an important framework for evaluating the research findings in the context of a multipolar world order. It is expected that future research will build upon these foundations to more deeply understand the communication dynamics of the digital age and contribute to the design of communication ecosystems that will strengthen democratic processes.

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study, by examining how the Ukraine crisis was framed and discursively constructed along the axes of political communication and political psychology during the 2013-2025 period, has revealed that the crisis is not merely a geopolitical matter but also a multi-layered phenomenon in terms of perception management, mass psychology, and national identity construction. The theoretical contribution of the research lies in its capacity to simultaneously explain the psychological and discursive layers of crisis communication by integrating framing theory (Entman, 1993, 2004), social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981), and discourse analysis approaches (Fairclough, 1989; van Dijk, 1998). This integrative approach presents an original analytical framework by blending the accumulated knowledge of the political communication discipline since Lippmann's (1922) pioneering work on public opinion formation and Lasswell's (1927) work on propaganda techniques with the in-depth insights of political psychology. The findings have demonstrated that mediated representation modalities shape crisis dynamics and, in certain cases, produce effects that accelerate or decelerate the crisis process. This result confirms that international crises are managed not only through military and diplomatic instruments but also through the struggle for discursive superiority (Nye, 2004, 2011). The manifestation of the soft power concept (Nye, 2004) in the crisis context increases the strategic value of discursive and cultural instruments in situations where military capacities are limited.

The discourses produced by political actors throughout the crisis, together with the transformation of information ecosystems, have both disseminated more rapidly and become psychopolitical instruments that amplify polarizing effects. As constructivist international relations theory predicts, actors' identity and interest definitions have been shaped through discursive practices; this situation has created a sphere of influence beyond material power capacities (Wendt, 1992, 1999). As Onuf's (1989) structuration theory emphasizes, institutions and norms emerge not only from material reality but from discursive practices

and are continuously reproduced. This situation is confirmed by the increase in emotionally intense content observed on digital platforms particularly in the post-2022 period. The algorithmic structure of digital environments has led to the concentration of polarizing discourses within echo chambers and the systematic exclusion of opposing narratives (Sunstein, 2017; Pariser, 2011). Chadwick's (2013) hybrid media system concept explains how traditional and new media logics have intertwined to create a complex information ecology; the Ukraine crisis presents one of the most striking examples of this ecology. The findings have demonstrated that framing strategies play a determinative role in directing public perception and that security, victimhood, resistance, legitimacy, and national identity themes constitute the most frequently employed frames. These frames have served as fundamental instruments to which both local and global political actors have recourse in order to legitimize their policy preferences regarding the crisis. The framing process has fulfilled the functions of simplifying complex reality, foregrounding particular interpretations, and excluding alternative explanations (Scheufele, 1999; de Vreese, 2005). Lakoff's (2004) concept of frame wars explains the struggle of political actors to control the mental schemas of masses; in the Ukraine crisis, this struggle has been waged at the global level.

From the political psychology perspective, it has been observed that variables such as threat perception, uncertainty intolerance, and identity insecurity have markedly influenced voter behaviors. As terror management theory predicts, the perception of existential threat has caused individuals to cling tightly to cultural values and has increased hostility toward outgroups (Greenberg et al., 2015). As Fromm's (1941) escape from freedom thesis indicates, during periods of high uncertainty and anxiety, individuals turn toward strong authorities and simple explanations; this tendency has been observed on both sides in the Ukraine crisis. These variables reveal that mass emotional states cause sudden changes during the crisis. Furthermore, it has been determined that the masses' rational information processing capacities weaken during crisis periods and they turn toward intuitive-emotional decision mechanisms (Kahneman, 2011; Tversky & Kahneman, 1982). Jervis's (1976) theory of perception and misperception demonstrates that international actors' decisions are predicated upon their subjective perceptions rather than objective reality; in the Ukraine crisis, mutual misperceptions have deepened the security dilemma. When the discourse strategies adopted by Russia, Ukraine, the European Union, and the United States during the crisis process are comparatively evaluated, it has been observed that Russia focused more on the historical legitimacy argument and security threat frame, while Ukraine relied upon themes of resistance, international solidarity, and state sovereignty. The discourses of both sides have increased ingroup solidarity while intensifying othering and threat discourses toward the opposing party; this situation is consonant with the fundamental assumptions of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981; Brewer, 1999). As Adorno's (1950) authoritarian personality theory predicts, in contexts where threat perception is high, societies become more attached to strong leaders and rigid group norms.

The framing practices of international media have shaped the perceptions of broad masses by coding the crisis as a normative security problem. Particularly the "democracy-

authoritarianism dichotomy" employed by the Anglo-Saxon press has increased emotional mobilization in global public opinion. This dichotomy has created a strong empathic response in favor of Ukraine among Western publics while normalizing threat perception toward Russia (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; McNair, 2017). These discursive strategies, which constitute the modern manifestation of Bernays's (1928) propaganda techniques, have been highly effective in manufacturing the consent of public opinion. The analysis of social media data has demonstrated that emotional fluctuations related to the crisis generally rose several days before military developments. This situation indicates that user behaviors function as a kind of early warning mechanism. The collective behaviors of digital media users can be evaluated as a new data source in crisis management processes (Tufekci, 2017). Miller's (2021) digital warfare concept reveals that social media is not merely a communication instrument but also a strategic arena of conflict; the Ukraine crisis constitutes the most prominent example of this transformation. The data obtained in the study have demonstrated that disinformation has directly influenced the course of the crisis and that information warfare has become a complementary dimension of the conflict. Particularly the volume that bot networks have loaded onto emotional content has strengthened discursive direction. As the hybrid warfare concept predicts, information manipulation and cyber propaganda have become strategic instruments that complement traditional military operations (Galeotti, 2018; Monaghan, 2016). Szostek's (2022) study on propaganda and power relations in Russia demonstrates how state-supported information operations have acquired a systematic and sophisticated structure.

During the 2013-2025 period, political leader discourses have occupied the center of crisis management; the emotional communication styles of leaders have significantly influenced mass psychology. Particularly Zelenskiy's communication based on digital diplomacy has been effective in directing the response of international public opinion. Leader communication has fulfilled not only the function of information transmission but also the functions of collective identity construction and production of emotional solidarity (Westen, 2007). Among Cialdini's (2007) principles of persuasion psychology, particularly the mechanisms of obedience to authority and social proof explain the power of leader discourses in mobilizing masses. The findings demonstrate that framing strategies are not static but change rapidly depending on military or political developments. The threat frame became dominant during periods of intense conflict, while the peace and negotiation frame became dominant during diplomacy periods. This dynamic structure reveals that discursive flexibility is employed as a strategic instrument (Entman, 2004). O'Shaughnessy's (2013) analyses concerning political marketing and propaganda techniques demonstrate how discourses are adapted according to target audiences and how emotional connotations are manipulated; these techniques have been intensively employed in the Ukraine crisis. When examined from the political psychology perspective, it has emerged that perceptions regarding the crisis are not rational but largely emotionally based. Throughout the crisis, fear, anger, and hope have been identified as the most dominant emotional categories. This emotional intensity has played a stronger role than cognitive factors in shaping individuals' political attitudes (Petersen, 2015; Huddy et al., 2023). Kunda's (1999) social cognition studies demonstrate how individuals

selectively process information and prioritize evidence that confirms their biases; this tendency strengthens during crisis periods.

The analyses have revealed that media organizations tend to produce discourse close to the agendas of particular actors during crisis periods. This situation renders visible the influence of ideological alignment in news production processes. The propaganda model argues that media organizations reproduce dominant discourses due to ownership structure, advertising revenue dependency, and political-economic pressures (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, 2002). Gilboa's (2008) study on the relationship between global communication and foreign policy demonstrates that the media does not merely reflect events but also directly influences foreign policy decisions. In the study, it has been understood that perception management has created strong effects particularly in the international financial and diplomatic dimensions of the war. The response of international public opinion has at times reshaped actors' strategic decisions. Perception management as a form of soft power use presents an effective strategy in areas where the use of force is limited (Nye, 2004, 2011). While Morgenthau's (1948) realist power politics approach focuses on military and economic capacities, Nye's soft power conceptualization has brought cultural and discursive capacity factors to the center of international relations. When the temporal change of news frames regarding the crisis is examined, it has been observed that discourses were intensively reconstructed at critical turning points such as the 2014 Crimea annexation, the 2015 Minsk process, the 2022 invasion attempt, and the 2023-2025 negotiations. Each critical turning point has enabled actors to expand their discursive repertoires and produce new legitimacy arguments (Snow & Taylor, 2009). Tetlock's (2005) study on expert political judgment demonstrates how deceptive predictions can be during crisis periods and how discourses can become detached from reality; this situation has also been observed in the Ukraine crisis.

These data demonstrate that political communication in crisis processes is not merely an information transmission mechanism but also an active intervention area that shapes political psychology. Consequently, political communication possesses the nature of being both the cause and result of the crisis. Communicative practices not only reflect existing reality but also construct new realities and expand or narrow the room for maneuver of political actors (Fairclough, 1989, 1995). Wodak's (2001) critical discourse analysis approach demonstrates how language reproduces and legitimizes power relations; in the Ukraine crisis, discourse has been the fundamental instrument of power struggle. The findings obtained in the study have demonstrated that public perception changes episodically rather than continuously. These episodic perception changes stem from crisis communication being largely event-focused. Event-focused framing carries the tendency to obscure the structural causes of the crisis and to render responsibility attribution ambiguous (Iyengar, 1991). Bargh's (2017) studies concerning the role of unconscious processes in decision-making demonstrate that automatic reactions can override conscious thinking during crisis periods. The research has revealed that the discourses of international actors regarding the crisis aim to secure public support, reinforce political legitimacy, and accelerate national identity construction. This situation is particularly pronounced on the Ukrainian side. National identity construction processes accelerate during crisis periods and strengthen social solidarity (Anderson, 1983). Plokhy's

(2021) study on Ukrainian history demonstrates how the historical construction of national identity is revived during crisis periods and how it is mobilized for political purposes. Framing analyses have demonstrated that the discursive effect of visual metaphors is stronger than that of written texts. Photographs, videos, and symbolic images have more directly triggered emotional responses. Visual rhetoric possesses the capacity to create direct emotional resonance beyond linguistic arguments (Messaris, 1997). Rieber's (2006) study on the psychology of war reveals how effective visual propaganda elements are in creating enemy images and in mass mobilization.

The political psychology perspective has confirmed that foreign policy behaviors are often determined by emotion and identity-based processes rather than rational actor assumptions. This finding demonstrates that classical international relations models require complementary explanations. As the constructivist approach proposes, states' interests and identities are not fixed but are constructed through discursive and social practices (Wendt, 1992, 1999; Onuf, 1989). While Waltz's (1979) structural realist theory focuses on systemic power balances, it disregards identity and perception factors; the Ukraine crisis has demonstrated how critical these factors are. The findings have demonstrated that a significant portion of content disseminated in digital media does not contain verifiable information, which has increased uncertainty and threat perception among masses. This situation reveals the fragility of the information ecosystem during crisis periods. The foregrounding of emotional resonance over truth in the post-truth era has fundamentally transformed public opinion formation processes (Harsin, 2015). Jamieson's (2020) cyberwar study demonstrates how disinformation has become a systematic weapon and how it threatens democratic processes. When the discourses of national media regarding the Ukraine crisis are compared, it has been observed that differences between actors are nourished not only by political positioning but also by cultural codes. For this reason, discourse carries a multiple structure containing both ideological and cultural components. Cultural memory and historical narratives play a determinative role in the shaping of crisis discourses (Assmann, 2011). Snyder's (2010, 2018) studies on Eastern European history and the road to unfreedom reveal how regional traumatic memories shape contemporary political discourses.

The psychological effects of the crisis have not remained limited to individuals living in conflict zones but have also created feelings of anxiety, moral fatigue, and uncertainty in international public opinion. This situation demonstrates the importance of global political psychology. Crisis fatigue can lead to diminishing public attention and declining support levels in protracted conflicts (Slovic, 2007). McDermott's (2004) study on political psychology in international relations demonstrates that crisis processes psychologically affect not only direct parties but also observer societies. The data obtained in the study have revealed that the influence of expert opinions in media markedly decreased during crisis periods, whereas the visibility of popular commentators increased. In this process, emotional impact has gained priority over informational depth. Media logic carries the tendency to foreground content with high spectacle value rather than analytical depth (Altheide & Snow, 1979). Janis's (1982) concept of groupthink demonstrates how the critical thinking capacity of homogeneous groups weakens; similar dynamics strengthen in media organizations during

crisis periods. The research has demonstrated that diplomatic discourses at times became detached from reality throughout the crisis and transformed into symbolic politics. This situation can be evaluated as a form of communication strategically maintained to meet the demands of national publics. Symbolic politics serves the function of satisfying public opinion without concrete policy changes (Edelman, 1985). Kissinger's (2011, 2014) studies on diplomacy and world order emphasize the strategic value of discourses in creating diplomatic room for maneuver.

As a general result of the first phase, it can be stated that the Ukraine crisis has created a discursive arena that operates simultaneously in the fields of political communication and political psychology, is strengthened by global information flows, and is nourished by emotional intensity. This discursive arena affects not only the representation of the crisis but also the material reality of the crisis; for discourses directly determine actors' strategic choices, the formation of international coalitions, and the course of peace processes. Castells's (2009) conceptualization of communication power explains how discursive capacities have become a central power source in the 21st century; the Ukraine crisis is a living example of this transformation. This finding reveals the necessity of a multidisciplinary approach in the development of recommendations. It has been observed that the communication strategies of non-state actors have played a determinative role in the deepening of the discursive dimension of the crisis. Particularly think tanks, civil society organizations, and international media networks have produced additional frames that shape the crisis narrative. The pluralistic discourse production of these actors contributes to the enrichment of public deliberation while simultaneously increasing discursive complexity (Habermas, 1989). Applebaum's (2012, 2020) studies on the twilight of democracy and the Iron Curtain analyze how the discourse production mechanisms of authoritarian regimes function and the role of civil society in these processes. Although the discourses of these actors often parallel state discourses, in some cases they have expanded the information arena by creating critical and alternative narratives. Counter-hegemonic discourses enable the questioning of dominant narratives and the deepening of democratic debate (Gramsci, 1971). Kuzio's (2015) study on democratization, corruption, and new Russian imperialism in Ukraine demonstrates how civil society actors can produce alternative narratives during crisis periods.

The analyzed discourses have demonstrated that opposing actors frame each other as "irrational," "aggressive," or "threatening" during crisis periods. Such frames are consonant with the "outgroup delegitimization" pattern in political psychology. Delegitimization processes prepare the ground for the dehumanization of the opposing party and the legitimization of violence (Bar-Tal, 2013; Kelman, 1973). Hill and Gaddy's (2013) study on Putin demonstrates how enemy images are systematically constructed in Russian leadership discourse. The research has revealed that threat perception toward Russia in Western public opinion rose dramatically in the post-2022 period, while discourse of empathy and solidarity toward Ukraine became pronounced. This situation clearly confirms the effect of framing strategies. Empathy mobilization plays a key role in the making of international aid and support decisions (Slovic, 2007). Legvold's (2016) return to Cold War study analyzes the

historical roots and contemporary manifestations of threat perception in West-Russia relations. It has been determined that the Ukrainian side has intensively recourse to digital diplomacy instruments to increase its visibility in the international arena. This strategy has particularly proceeded through short videos, symbolic visuals, and emotional storytelling. Digital diplomacy offers the opportunity to directly reach publics beyond traditional diplomatic channels (Bjola & Holmes, 2015). Marten's (2019) study on the evolution of Russia's foreign policy demonstrates that digital instruments constitute an important part of the strategic communication repertoire not only of Western actors but also of Russia.

Recommendations at the Policy and Practice Level

In line with the research findings, concrete recommendations have been developed for policymakers, media organizations, and international actors in the fields of crisis communication and political psychology. These recommendations aim to contribute both to the more ethical management of crisis processes and to long-term peace-building. In contrast to Mearsheimer's (2014) thesis that the Ukraine crisis stems from the West's error, this study adopts a multi-actor and multi-causal approach; accordingly, the recommendations are also holistic and balance-oriented. First, media organizations must strengthen verification mechanisms during crisis periods. The independent and transparent operation of these mechanisms plays a critical role in reducing information pollution. Verification platforms, supported by algorithmic systems, should be capable of detecting disinformation in real time (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017). Bennett and Livingston's (2018) disinformation age study demonstrates how the quality control functions of professional journalism should be strengthened in the digital age. Second, it is recommended that states adopt a balanced and transparent approach in crisis communication that is removed from emotional manipulation. Excessively dramatizing language damages social trust in the long run. Responsible communication practices contribute to preventing panic while protecting the public's right to information. Buzan's (1991) securitization theory demonstrates how threat discourses legitimize extraordinary policies; for this reason, the discursive responsibility of states is of critical importance. Third, social media platforms must strengthen their tools for combating disinformation during crisis periods and develop regulations that prevent algorithms from overproducing emotional content. Algorithmic transparency and accountability are fundamental components of digital platforms' democratic responsibilities. Marwick and Lewis's (2017) study on online media manipulation and disinformation reveals how platform architecture shapes the information ecosystem.

Fourth, it is recommended that international organizations produce more consistent and balancing discourse in crisis communication. Discourse based on international law facilitates communication between actors. The normative role of international organizations carries the potential to draw parties onto a common legal ground (Finnemore & Sikkink, 1998). Keohane's (1984) post-hegemony period study emphasizes the critical role of international institutions in facilitating global cooperation; this role gains even more importance during crisis periods. Fifth, policymakers must implement psychosocial support programs that will reduce social anxiety during crisis periods. The institutional incorporation of political psychology into crisis management processes is important. Community mental health

services should be systematically strengthened during crisis periods. Schweller's (2006) unanswered threats study demonstrates how societies respond to threat perception and under what conditions these responses are functional or dysfunctional. Sixth, the softening of language used in peace negotiations, the reduction of discourses that criminalize the opposing party, and the development of confidence-building communication strategies are recommended. The use of constructive language in negotiation processes enables the building of empathy bridges between parties (Fisher & Ury, 1981). Menon and Rumer's (2015) study on the conflict in Ukraine demonstrates that peace processes begin with the preparation of discursive ground. Seventh, communication policies toward crisis regions should be rebalanced to bring humanitarian effects as well as military developments onto the agenda. This approach strengthens international solidarity. Human-centered narratives increase the sense of responsibility in public opinion (Chouliaraki, 2006). Sakwa's (2015) frontline Ukraine study demonstrates how the humanitarian costs of the conflict are systematically obscured.

Eighth, security, ethical, and psychological support mechanisms must be provided for journalists to maintain quality analytical reporting during crisis periods. Journalist safety and professional autonomy are prerequisites for democratic information flow (UNESCO, 2018). Thubron's (2011) observations of travel among Russians remind us of the difficulties and dangers faced by journalists working in crisis regions. Ninth, the strengthening of the connection between political communication and political psychology in academic research, and particularly the encouragement of hybrid models in which sentiment analysis, content analysis, and discourse analysis are employed together, is recommended. Multi-method research designs enable a more holistic understanding of the complex structure of crisis communication (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The political psychology handbook of Huddy, Sears, and Levy (2023) emphasizes the value of interdisciplinary approaches in scientific knowledge production. Tenth, governments and international actors, while developing communication strategies that will protect their own masses during crisis periods, should simultaneously avoid excessively polarizing language that could damage peace-building. Balanced communication protects long-term interests in terms of both national security and international peace. Ikenberry's (2011) liberal Leviathan study demonstrates that the legitimacy of international order is predicated upon discursive foundations and that the protection of these foundations is critical for long-term stability.

Future Research Directions and Theoretical Contributions

The findings of this study present important directions for future research. First, the effects of artificial intelligence-supported disinformation production and detection systems on crisis communication require examination. Schwab's (2016) fourth industrial revolution study demonstrates how technological transformations have fundamentally changed social and political communication modalities; artificial intelligence represents the latest stage of this transformation. The modalities through which developing technologies transform political communication instruments will determine the future agenda of the discipline. Second, it is recommended that the long-term effects of protracted crises on social psychology be examined through longitudinal research. Åslund's (2018) study on Russia's crony capitalism

demonstrates the long-term effects of economic crises on political psychology; similar longitudinal approaches should be applied to the Ukraine crisis. Topics such as crisis fatigue, solidarity erosion, and trauma transmission deserve more in-depth study. Third, comparative analysis of crisis framing in different cultural contexts should be conducted. Acharya's (2014) end of American world order study emphasizes the importance of incorporating non-Western perspectives into international relations theory. Beyond Western-centric viewpoints, Global South perspectives must be incorporated into the crisis communication literature. Fourth, the contribution of digital activism and user-generated content to crisis discourses should be systematically investigated. Bremmer's (2012) every nation for itself study analyzes the new global order in which non-state actors gain power; digital activists occupy an important place among these new actors. The discursive power of civil society and ordinary citizens requires new theoretical frameworks that transcend traditional actor-focused approaches.

Fifth, experimental testing of the effects of visual and auditory rhetorical instruments in crisis communication is recommended. Ferguson's (2011, 2017) studies on civilization and network society emphasize the historical transformations of visual-auditory culture and its strategic importance in the present day. Neuroimaging and psychophysiological measurements can help us understand the brain-level correlates of discursive effects. Sixth, systematic comparison of the charismatic, emotional, and rational dimensions of leader communication during crisis periods should be conducted. Allison's (2013, 2017) studies on leadership and strategic decision-making demonstrate the role of leader characteristics in shaping historical outcomes; this approach should also be applied to the Ukraine crisis. The effect of leadership styles on crisis outcomes will contribute to the enrichment of political psychology literature. Seventh, discursive reconciliation mechanisms in peace-building processes need to be developed and tested. Bull's (1977) anarchical society and Buzan and Wæver's (2003) regions and powers studies demonstrate how the normative foundations of international society can be constructed; discursive reconciliation is a critical dimension of this construction. The reconstruction of post-conflict societies requires not only institutional but also discursive transformations. Brzezinski's (1997) grand chessboard study emphasizes the importance of the discursive dimensions of geopolitical strategies; however, the transformation of these strategies toward cooperation is required for peace-building. The theoretical contribution of the study lies in its explanation of the multi-layered nature of crisis communication by integrating framing theory, social identity theory, and critical discourse analysis. This integration, as anticipated in Khanna's (2008, 2016) conceptualizations of connectivity and the second world, demonstrates the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches for understanding complex processes in the age of global networks. This integration presents a robust conceptual foundation for future research.

In conclusion, the Ukraine crisis constitutes one of the most complex and multidimensional examples of the 21st century from the perspectives of political communication and political psychology. Crisis discourse provides important signals regarding the future orientations of international politics. The intertwined structure of the discursive, technological, and psychological layers of modern crises reveals the necessity of interdisciplinary approaches. Westad's (2012, 2017) studies on the Cold War and China's restless empire demonstrate the

value of historical perspective in understanding contemporary crises; lessons drawn from the past can improve the management of future crises. This study has revealed that not only the military and geopolitical but also the discursive, emotional, and cultural dimensions of crises are of fundamental importance in international relations analysis. Peace-building requires the integrated treatment not only of diplomacy but also of communication policies, psychological analyses, and cultural understanding. Kaplan's (2012, 2014) studies on the revenge of geography and Asia's cauldron emphasize that discursive and cultural factors must be taken into consideration alongside geopolitical factors. The experience of the Ukraine crisis offers important lessons for the management of future international crises and emphasizes the strategic importance of the fields of political communication and political psychology. For this reason, discursive and psychological dimensions must not be disregarded in crisis resolution and peace-building efforts; rather, they must be treated as a central priority. Walt's (1987) origins of alliances and Zakaria's (2008) post-American world studies demonstrate that power balances are shaped not only by material capacities but also by perceptions and discourses; the Ukraine crisis is a striking confirmation of these dynamics.

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