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News Framing on Social Media: A Case Study of Russia-Ukraine War Narration on Facebook in Vietnam

MAI Thi Dang Thu*

Abstract

This paper investigates the dynamics of news framing around the Russia-Ukraine war on Facebook in Vietnam by studying four Facebook pages and 255 posts selected between February 24th, 2022, and February 24th, 2023. The study, conducted both qualitatively and quantitatively, revealed eight key frames surrounding the war and looked into changes in frames observed over the study period, reflecting national sentiments, geopolitical factors, and subtle reactions to shifts in diplomacy and public discussions. The strong presence and subsequent decrease of Shaping Vietnam's Image, one of the key frames, suggested a sophisticated management of narratives, balancing anti-Western sentiments and pro-Russia tendencies. This study highlights the critical role of social media in worldwide political discussions, revealing the intricate relationship between diplomacy, public opinion, and online platforms. These insights offer an understanding of the current geopolitical narratives in Vietnam and showcase the broader role of social media as a potentially effective tool in global geopolitical discourse.

Keywords: Russia-Ukraine war, news framing, Vietnam social media

Introduction

On February 24th, 2022, Russia shook the world with its “special military operation” against Ukraine. In light of this conflict, Vietnam has been in a complex political and diplomatic situation as the government must balance supporting Ukraine while avoiding condemning Russia.

During the Cold War, Moscow backed Vietnamese anti-colonialists in their

* PhD Student, Graduate School of International Studies, Hiroshima City University, Hiroshima, Japan

* Lecturer at Department of International Studies, Hue University of Foreign Languages and International Studies, Hue, Vietnam

campaign to depose France, and later aided Vietnamese communists to reunify the country in the Vietnam War. The two countries subsequently signed a “friendly relationship” agreement in 1994, followed by a strategic partnership agreement in 2001 and a comprehensive strategic partnership, Vietnam’s highest degree of cooperation with a foreign government, in 2012 (Grossman, 2022). Given the two countries’ long history of alliance and partnership, the continuing conflict between Russia and Ukraine has sparked heated public discussions on Vietnam’s social media platforms.

Social media in Vietnam have emerged as another essential source of information besides traditional media since the 2010s (Nguyen, 2014). Facebook has quickly become the most influential social media network in Vietnam, with 66.20 million members as of early 2023 (Kemp, 2023). Facebook has played a huge socio-cultural role in Vietnam, especially with its profound impacts on public discourse and social attitudes. It has become an essential space for its users to discuss social and political issues, especially those neglected by traditional media outlets such as corruption, environmental pollution, governance failures, or foreign affairs issues (Nguyen-Thu, 2018). Thanks to its open and interactive nature, Facebook encourages idea sharing and the mobilization of grassroots movements. It allows people to challenge governmental narratives and stimulate a culture of activism and accountability. For example, one of the most talked-about events was the online campaign to prevent thousands of trees from being chopped down in Hanoi, Vietnam, in early 2015. In another case, Vietnam witnessed the widespread use of Facebook during the protests in response to the 2016 Formosa environmental crisis caused by a Taiwanese steel company based in Ha Tinh, Vietnam. Facebook was used to spread awareness, organize demonstrations, and rally public support, effectively providing a platform for collective resistance against authority’s policies (Bui, 2016).

With the rise of Facebook in Vietnam, the Vietnamese government has been making concerted efforts to continue closely monitoring the topics discussed on this platform (Abuza, 2015). According to the Cybersecurity Bill passed by the Vietnamese National Assembly on June 12, 2019, all online virtual spaces have come under police surveillance in the interest of “national security” (Nguyen-Pochan, 2021). Le & Hutchinson (2022) mentioned that government officials can ask social media platforms to remove content that is flagged as “problematic.” This measure allows the government to steer conversations on social issues and silence critics. Another measure is the establishment of the “Force 47”, which is officially supported by the Ministry of National Defense and primarily made up of “professional defense officers” who have been trained in propaganda and are ready to refute “wrongful opinions” or “toxic information” about the regime (Nguyen, 2018). Additionally, since September 2022, the Vietnamese government has been preparing to create a legal framework for regulating news dissemination on

platforms like Facebook (Potkin & Nguyen, 2022). In the 2023 World Press Index ranking published by Reporters Without Borders, an international non-profit, non-governmental organization, Vietnam is ranked 178th out of 180 countries regarding press freedom. These arguments illustrate the critical role that Facebook plays in Vietnam, and how the Vietnamese government continues to monitor Facebook due to its significant impact.

Given the long history of Vietnam and Russia partnership and the social-cultural position of Facebook in Vietnam, it is intriguing to study how the Russia-Ukraine war is framed on this platform under the Vietnamese government's surveillance. This study firstly identifies and analyzes the predominant frames around the Russia-Ukraine war on Facebook in Vietnam. Secondly, the research seeks to determine any discernible changes in the identified frames over four periods in one year. Thirdly, the study focuses on the framing of Vietnam's self-image amidst this global crisis. The findings would contribute to a more comprehensive knowledge of the framing of an event on social media platforms, paving the way for additional studies on social media in nations around Asia, especially Vietnam.

Literature Review

Prior research on the topic of media and the Russia-Ukraine war has included both news media and social media. Regarding news media, Nordenstreng et al. (2023) have conducted content analysis on how this war was covered in main television news programs in nine countries, including Russia, China, Finland, the UK, Italy, the USA, Brazil, India, and South Africa. This study has identified and analyzed the main topics (Battlefield, Sanctions, Civilians, Refugees, Peace, US Politics, Security, etc.), angles (Russia, Ukraine, Home country, etc.), and key narratives (negative, positive, or neutral tone) of the war coverage in each country, and comparisons of results among these countries. The strength of this study lies in its wide geographic scope, facilitating an extensive understanding of international media framing. Nevertheless, dependence on television as the primary medium for obtaining news may limit the research, as the number of people employing online platforms for news consumption is increasing. Also focusing on news media, Pavlik (2022) discusses 10 sets of major implications of the Russia-Ukraine war for news media, such as freedom of speech and press, fighting disinformation, independent journalism, public engagement, etc. The paper highlights the obstacles journalists encounter in reporting reliable information amidst misinformation and emotional responses. However, its primary drawback is that it covers mainly Western perspectives, potentially under-presenting non-Western viewpoints. Regarding social media, research by Agarwal. et al. (2022), which uses the Russia-Ukraine war Tweets dataset to explore public opinion dynamics on the verge of World War III, has found that there was a significant spike in tweets on the war from the time of

building tension to the invasion and the initial 65 days of the war. Its strengths lie in its use of large-scale social media data, allowing for the examination of diverse, real-time reactions. However, the research would have been more convincing with a nuanced discussion of the geopolitical context and how public sentiment might interact with governments' policies concerning the Russia-Ukraine war. Also examining public sentiment on social media toward this war, Ngo et al. (2022) have analyzed nearly one million Facebook posts from 109 countries and discovered the most common narratives such as military operations, key political leaders, economic sanctions, etc. This study has constructed a novel index of public sentiment that could assist in predicting governments' votes in the United Nations. This study stands out as it utilizes advanced econometric methods to analyze sentiment data, which provides a strong empirical basis for its conclusions. In another study, Salah (2022) has found that although many Arabs have empathy for the Ukrainian people, a significant portion of social media discourse supports Putin. These narratives portray Ukraine as a Western weapon instigating tensions and endangering Russia. Thus, various media platforms have espoused anti-Western and anti-Ukrainian positions to multiple degrees. The above studies have touched on diverse aspects surrounding the news framing of the Russia-Ukraine war on both traditional and social media. However, these works mostly focus on the viewpoints from the Western world, leaving other regions unexplored, especially countries having closer ties with Russia.

The literature review on the Russia-Ukraine war content on Vietnam social media found very few studies. Dror (2022) examines *Mắt Thần* (*Divine Eye*), a popular Facebook page in Vietnam, and concludes that *Divine Eye*'s attempt to "weaponize" Ho Chi Minh to rally support for Vietnam's position on the Ukrainian war had shown how Vietnam's propagandists still employed his emotive appeal. The author could have enhanced the study's robustness by incorporating quantitative data from a survey to show the historical symbol's influence in shaping public opinion. In another study, Nguyen and Rosli (2022) have researched the Vietnamese netizens' reactions to the Vietnamese government's stance on the Russia-Ukraine war. This study suggests that Vietnamese internet users are typically skeptical of their government's position on this conflict. This study, however, seems to lack an in-depth analysis of the state response to the public skepticism towards its policies. In a country where the government seeks to monitor the online discourse and to manage dissents like in Vietnam, analyzing the ways the government perceives and may respond to the public sentiment on social media could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the social media landscape in Vietnam. Highlighting the unique position of Vietnam in its relations with Russia, research by Hoang and Nguyen (2022) has unpacked online pro-Russia narratives in Vietnam. Using discourse analysis on pro-Russia posts and comments on 28 selected Facebook pages between February 24 and April 10, 2022, they have identified the main themes which include

justification of the war, anti-America and anti-imperialist worldviews, Vietnam government position, etc. They explain the underlying influencing factors such as pro-Russia sentiments in the country given the two countries' long history of alliance and deep-rooted ideological and political undercurrents. However, only focusing on online pro-Russia narratives could not reflect the full social media discourse which encompasses the diverse and complex perspectives regarding the Russia-Ukraine war.

The literature review on media content around the Russia-Ukraine war reveals that while significant progress has been made in understanding how news media and social media depict this war across many countries, including Vietnam, the studies on Vietnam are limited in number and only restricted to certain aspects or themes of the online narratives. None of the studies focusing on Vietnam provided a comprehensive understanding of all the frames existing in social media narratives around this war. Given these gaps in the existing literature, it is essential to carry out a more comprehensive analysis of social media narratives surrounding the Russia-Ukraine war as they have emerged in the Vietnamese online landscape.

This study seeks to conduct a thorough analysis of Facebook narratives related to the Russia-Ukraine war in Vietnam, offering a clearer understanding of how these narratives evolve over time and how they contribute to shaping Vietnam's image amid the crisis. To achieve this, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the primary narratives or frames detected in Vietnamese Facebook news coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war?
2. How have those frames changed through time on Facebook in Vietnam?
3. How does Facebook news coverage in Vietnam portray the country's image in relation to the Russia-Ukraine war?

Theoretical Framework

This research is based on the framing and news framing theories. Gamson and Lasch (1983) have suggested the concept of "media packages," which is "a set of interpretive packages that give meaning to an issue," with frames being the media packages' central organizing ideas. Entman (1993) has stated that selection and salience are fundamental to framing. To frame is to highlight some characteristics of a seen reality in a communicative text to support a specific issue definition, causal interpretation, moral judgment, and/or therapeutic proposal for the item presented. A wide range of textual devices can be used to carry out these tasks. They include employing specific words or phrases, establishing contextual references, selecting specific images or films, providing typical instances, referring to specific sources, etc. Another definition by Chong and Druckman (2007) states that framing is a technique for providing a broad interpretation of discrete facts. A title, a certain

camera position, or the use of a particular hashtag on social media are not the only things that make up a frame. Frames are consistent conceptions of a problem created by exclusion, elaboration, exaggeration, salience, or emphasis. To assist viewers in understanding the news, frames are valuable tools for journalists to place (confirmed) information in a meaningful perspective. At the same time, frames can privilege some perspectives and exclude others from the news (McQuail & Deuze, 2020).

There are different approaches regarding the identification of news frames. One method to identify news frames is the inductive method, which avoids using predetermined news frames when assessing news stories (Gamson, 1992). During the analytical process, frames are revealed in the data. On the other hand, with the deductive method, a set of predicted frames is derived from re-occurring themes identified by prior research, and their presence is then measured in the data collected for the new study (Jungblut, 2021). Gamson and Lasch (1983) suggest five types of framing devices: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual imagery. According to Entman (1993), news frames can be evaluated and recognized by “the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments.” The phrase “choices about language, quotations, and relevant information” was used by Shah et al. (2002) to suggest how to identify frames. Tankard (2001) has proposed a list of 11 framing mechanisms or focal points for detecting and quantifying news frames: headlines, subheads, photos, photo captions, leads, source selection, quotes selection, pull quotes, logos, statistics and charts, and concluding statements and paragraphs.

The framing theory has laid the foundation for multiple studies on war and conflicts. Kang et al. (2024) have applied the framing theory to explore news framing of the Russia-Ukraine war in global news media, relying on the Latent Dirichlet Allocation, a machine learning technique, and an abductive approach to discover possible narrative themes. Using predicted framing themes, this research has found five news frames, namely humanism, politics, peace, war, and the economy, with the humanism frame and the peace frame being related to Ukraine while the war frame being linked to Russia. In another study the news framing of the Russia-Ukraine war and Russian President Vladimir Putin’s image in New York Times Online Commentary Articles, Hoon (2023) based her methodology on Entman’s thematic frames and concluded that Russia was framed as an “unprovoked invader” and that Vladimir Putin was portrayed as “conspiratorial and seclusive.” Liu (2023), in his examination of the frames adopted by UK and Russian digital media, specifically the BBC and RT, when reporting the 2014–15 Ukraine conflict, has chosen Godefroidt et al.’s (2016) approach and examined groups of generic, diagnostic and prognostic frames. His study has found that RT relied on humanitarianism frames while the BBC focused less on human rights frames but

more on the responsibility frame which depicts Russia as the responsible party for the conflict.

With the widespread use of social media in news reporting and public discourse, numerous studies have applied framing theory to examine narratives on these platforms. However, social media's unique characteristics, such as its interactive nature and multimodal content, require adaptations of traditional framing theory to fit this context better. Researchers have integrated networked framing, computational methods for analyzing large datasets, manual coding to address dynamic and multimedia content, and comparative analyses of framing across mainstream and social media. Meraz and Papacharissi (2013) have defined networked framing as a collaborative and distributed process where multiple actors contribute to framing events or issues by adding their perspectives before circulating the information. Kermani (2023) explores networked framing and applied Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA), a topic modeling algorithm, to analyze large-scale social media datasets. By utilizing computational tools to identify word co-occurrences that form meanings or topics, Kermani has examined the framing of the Covid-19 pandemic on Persian Twitter and has found that the political lens was predominantly used by Iranians to challenge the country's political system. Another approach to exploring frames on social media is Entman's cascading activation framing model, which was initially developed in 2003 and later updated to account for the rise of digital media (Entman and Usher, 2018). Zhang et al. (2024) apply this model (Entman, 2003, 2004, 2008) to identify the frames surrounding NATO in China during the 2022 Ukraine war, analyzing both traditional and social media. They have employed a mixed-methods strategy, combining deductive and inductive frameworks with manual coding to capture the dynamic content on social media. The findings reveal that the Chinese government primarily used a morality frame, while both traditional media and netizens focused on a conflict frame. Furthermore, research on framing in social media has shown that these platforms are effective in reframing narratives originally established by mainstream media. Qin (2015) has studied the framing of the Edward Snowden incident and demonstrated how framing theory can be adapted to account for the interaction between mainstream media and user-generated content. The study concludes that, on social media, Snowden was portrayed as a "hero," aligned with other whistle-blowers and personal privacy issues, while mainstream media framed him as a traitor. Building on these insights, the present study adapts framing theory to examine the online narratives of the Russia-Ukraine war on Facebook in Vietnam.

This research applied the inductive approach, which tends to be applied to a specific case of conflict (Jungblut, 2021). The author aimed to explore frames associated with the Russia-Ukraine war in particular, rather than generic war and conflict frames, and therefore the inductive approach is more suitable. In terms of framing devices, the author utilized the framework proposed by Gamson and Lasch

(1983) as they suit the nature of the Facebook posts collected in this study. This framework offers the flexibility in deriving framing themes from the collected data instead of having to confine to certain types of frames such as frames that “define problems,” “diagnose causes,” “make moral judgements,” and “suggest remedies,” as suggested by Entman (1993). Additionally, Gamson and Lasch’s framing devices suit the intricate nature of the Vietnamese language. In particular, metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, and depictions were observed in the collected posts and hence used to interpret the posts’ core meanings or frames. Visual images were excluded as a framing device as photos were not part of the collected data for reasons that will be explained in the next section on methods. Gamson and Lasch (1983) categorize metaphors into two kinds: dynamic metaphors with “two or more entities in the associated object” and single-valued metaphors with a single associated subject. Exemplars are real past or present events referred to as a means to give meaning to the event at issue. Catchphrases refer to “a single theme statement, tagline, title, or slogan.” Depictions are the principal subjects conveyed by the package.

Methods

Facebook Page Selection

The researcher selected the most popular Facebook pages established in Vietnam based on the main criteria that (1) they must have a significant number of followers and “likes” and that (2) they continually updated news about the Russia-Ukraine war during the chosen study period of one year from the date the war broke out, specifically from February 24th, 2022, to February 24th, 2023. The pages’ popularity was assessed using the number of followers and “likes.” According to Fowler (2022), a “like” on a Facebook page functions as a visible endorsement or manifestation of support for a company or group that the public can see while the total number of followers provides a more reliable measure of the audience interested in receiving the content in their newsfeeds. The number of followers is a priority since it reflects the pages’ popularity and prestige among online platform users.

The four selected Facebook pages are “*TIFOSI*,” “*Battlecry*” “*Học viện phòng chống phản động*” (*Anti-Reactionary Academy*), “*Đường chúng ta đi*” (*The Path We Take*). Two Facebook pages, namely “*Tri ân Liên bang Xô Viết*” (*Tribute to the Soviet Union*) and “*Nước Nga Một Thời Tuổi Trẻ*” (*Russia in my Youth*), met the criteria but were excluded for the reason of avoiding the apparent pro-Russia connotation. Each selected page presents varied perspectives on social and political themes. *TIFOSI*, as reflected in their administrative note of “*Nói về mọi thứ*” (*Discussing everything*), alongside “*Battlecry*” which introduces itself as “*Nơi có những thông tin thú vị nhất*” (*A place for the most exciting news*), emphasizes on the

diversity of the subjects addressed within these platforms. *Anti-Reactionary Academy* and *The Path We Take* share several characteristics with the other two pages, particularly in how their content is produced, primarily overseen by the page administrators. *Anti-Reactionary Academy* introduces itself with the phrase “Trang fanpage cung cấp thông tin chính thống & phản biện xã hội,” (A fan page that provides official news and social counterarguments). This introduction not only portrays the page as a reliable source of information but also as a critical voice in the discourse surrounding social issues. *The Path We Take* adopts a more assertive and revolutionary tone with its slogan: “Đường chúng ta đi, con đường cách mạng, con đường thống nhất hôm nay” (The path we take, the revolutionary path, the united path of today). *The Path We Take* also appears to emphasize refuting any criticism targeted at governmental policies. Word choices associated with a sense of ideological commitment are essential for these pages to disseminate information under the government-regulated social media landscape.

Post Selection

As the four selected Facebook page post materials were on a wide range of topics, the researcher worked on manually selecting posts that discussed the Russia-Ukraine war. Search terms include “*Nga-Ukraine*” (Russia-Ukraine), “*Nga*” (Russia), “*Ukraine*”, and “*chiến sự Nga-Ukraine*” (Russia-Ukraine warfare/battlefield). The selected posts include text and/or photos only (posts with videos and/or hyperlinks were excluded); the main reason being including materials from videos and hyperlinks requires significantly more resources and goes beyond the scope of this study. Identified posts were then cataloged into Excel workbooks under respective pages for further content analysis. In extracting data from the posts into Excel, the researcher chose to exclude any accompanying photographs due to the unidentified origins of these photographs, with some of them having been altered by the individuals who disseminated them, including the addition of logos or annotations. Including these photographs may undermine the accuracy of the findings drawn from analyzing the narratives conveyed in these posts. The content analysis was then performed based on the text extracted from the posts. Table 1 summarizes the statistics of the four Facebook pages and the number of posts collected from each page.

Table 1. Selected Facebook Pages by Number of Followers, Likes, and Posts Collected

Facebook Page and Date of Establishment (DoE)	URL	Number of Followers	Number of Likes	Number of Posts Collected
TIFOSI (DoE: September 17, 2019)	https://www.facebook.com/tifosi.hpo	265,000	244,000	19
Battlecry (DoE: January 26, 2021)	https://www.facebook.com/battlecry.nguoikesu	189,000	103,000	102
Anti-Reactionary Academy (DoE: October 24, 2017)	https://www.facebook.com/aravietnam2017	311,000	256,000	59
The Path We Take (DoE: April 15, 2019)	https://www.facebook.com/transanglap.vn	122,000	102,000	75

Frames Coding Process

The process of identifying the frames carried by the selected Facebook posts was built upon the theoretical framework developed by Gamson and Lasch (1983). The researcher meticulously examined each selected post to discern the underlying connotations and subsequently organized them into frames. Framing devices, as explained in the section on theoretical framework, including metaphors, catchphrases, exemplars, and depictions, were carefully considered to decide on the frames. Excel, SPSS, and MedCalc were used to perform quantitative analysis.

Frames coding process was independently conducted by two coders, the researcher and a Communication and Media Studies master's degree holder, who individually examined each of the collected Facebook posts. Any coding discrepancies were resolved through discussions between the coders. Specifically, the two coders first identified differences by comparing their coded results and providing the rationale for their frame categorization. Discussions focused on metaphors, catchphrases, exemplars, and depictions used in the posts to determine the dominant frame as mentioned in the theoretical framework. This procedure was repeated to obtain overall consensus. Inter-coder reliability was measured using Cohen's Kappa value (Landis & Koch, 1977), with most categories showing a substantial agreement level of 0.636, and one displaying a fair agreement level of 0.385. An explanation for the fair agreement in one of the eight frames will be explored in the results section where all the eight frames are presented.

During the coding process, the Vietnamese language's intricacy was distinguished by the extensive use of metaphors, sarcasm, and irony, delicately integrated into the underlying meanings of words, phrases, and paragraphs. Thus, the analysis approach entails a thorough examination of the texts to recognize metaphorical structures and subtle details. This analytical method is crucial for

identifying the underlying narratives in the posts.

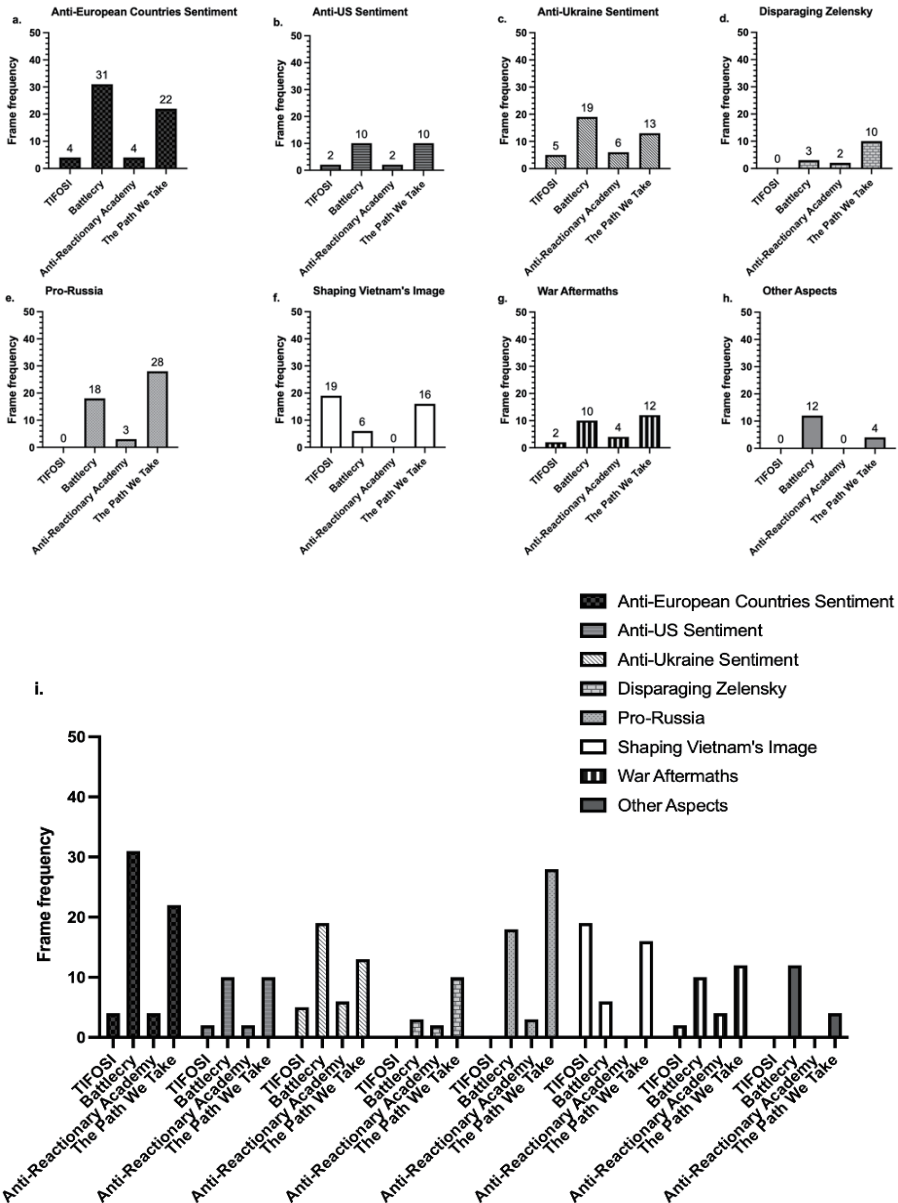
Results

Eight Identified Frames

The content analysis of the 255 Facebook posts revealed eight frames. While being a relatively small sample size, this number reflects the huge amount of topics these pages cover and their diversity. Besides, it could be linked to the nature of social media, which typically reports events in a “short-lived” manner and heavily depends on how long the public still pays attention to the event of focus. As an unintended benefit, having a relatively small sample size allowed the researcher to identify nuanced themes or patterns, which may be overlooked in a greater data set.

The eight frames include Anti-European Countries Sentiment, Anti-US Sentiment, Anti-Ukraine Sentiment, Disparaging Zelensky, Pro-Russia, Shaping Vietnam’s Image, War Aftermaths, and Other Aspects. Anti-European Countries Sentiment was found in the themes that highlight the West’s double standards in the context of the Russia-Ukraine war or those that criticize the European countries’ foreign policies regarding the war. One of the posts that depict this frame states: “People (in Western countries) asked for equality between “people and people”, between those who have been devastated by wars... However, it appears that all are just slogans, as the people who proclaim (these values) most vociferously are the very ones who exacerbate that inequity.” Anti-US Sentiment includes subjects such as the US’s double standard or criticizing America for enticing Ukraine into this conflict through the promise of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) membership. One post calls the actions taken by the US “very unethical” when they initially prepared Ukraine to confront Russia and subsequently stated that they would not intervene in the war and would impose sanctions. Anti-Ukraine Sentiment focuses on the suffering of the Ukrainians due to Ukraine’s policy and condemns the country’s leadership for having “deluded itself into seeking foreign support to confront Russia, transforming from a beautiful country into ruins.” The frame of Disparaging Zelensky was depicted by referencing President Zelensky as a “hilarious leader” or “clown” in the global political sphere and the inference that the Russian attack on Ukraine was a direct result of his inadequate leadership. Pro-Russia sentiment was conveyed through numerous justifications for Russia’s involvement in the war with ideas such as “The Soviet Union 2.0 will dismantle fascism” or reference to Russia as “the Red Army (that) planted the hammer and sickle flag on top of the German parliament building in 1945.” The frame of Shaping Vietnam’s Image covers four supporting narratives, which are Shaping Vietnam’s Image, namely Justifying Vietnam’s Stance, Responding to Criticism Towards Vietnam, Praising Vietnam’s Foreign Policies, and Instilling the Sense of Patriotism. The frames of War Aftermaths and Other Aspects focus on the issues of people’s

Figure 1. News Frames in Posts' Content found on 4 pages *TIFOSI*, *Battlecry*, *Anti-Reactionary Academy* and *The Path We Take*.



(a). Frame Anti-European Countries Sentiment, (b) Frame Anti-US sentiment, (c) Frame Anti-Ukraine Sentiment, (d) Frame Disparaging Zelensky, (e) Frame Pro-Russia, (f) Frame Shaping Vietnam's image, (g) Frame War Aftermaths, (h) Other Aspects, (i) Summary figure.

suffering, economic crisis, energy crisis, refugees, media propaganda, etc. A table detailing the frames, their explanations and examples of extracts from Facebook posts can be found in Appendix 1. The frequency of appearance of the eight frames across the four Facebook pages is displayed in the following graphs.

The frames are illustrated by eight groups of bars in the above figures, with Figures 1a.-1h. illustrating the distribution of each frame across the four Facebook pages and Figure 1i. showing all eight frames in one chart. The data on Anti-European Countries Sentiment exhibits significant variability across the Facebook pages (Figure 1a.). With 31 occurrences, *Battlecry* has the highest coverage, indicating that this sentiment is highly valued. *The Path We Take* has 22 instances, demonstrating a significant emphasis. *TIFOSI* and *Anti-Reactionary Academy* demonstrate a more controlled approach, with four occurrences each. Regarding Anti-US Sentiment, *Battlecry* and *The Path We Take* both continue to cover the same ground 10 times each, while *TIFOSI* and *Anti-Reactionary Academy* have the least coverage with each having only two instances (Figure 1b.). In terms of Anti-Ukraine Sentiment, the statistics show a moderate focus on this frame throughout the four pages. *Battlecry* mentioned this frame 19 times, *The Path We Take* 13 times, *Anti-Reactionary Academy* 6 times, and *TIFOSI* 5 times (Figure 1c.). The frame Disparaging Zelensky is most prominent on *The Path We Take* with 10 times (Figure 1d.). The manifestation of Pro-Russia sentiment exhibits a significant divergence. The frame is emphasized in *The Path We Take* and *Battlecry* with 28 and 18 occasions, respectively. *Anti-Reactionary Academy* employs a more restrained approach with three posts along this narrative while *TIFOSI* does not address this aspect (Figure 1e.). War Aftermaths is covered the most on *The Path We Take* and *Battlecry*, with 12 and 10 times, respectively (Figure 1g.). Regarding Other Aspects, *Battlecry* is the most prominent, with 12 occurrences. *TIFOSI* and *Anti-Reactionary Academy* lack content about other aspects, such as Praising Putin or Inferring to Vietnam-China Relationship, etc. (Figure 1h.). The results on Shaping Vietnam's Image together with its additional sub-frames is presented in another section below.

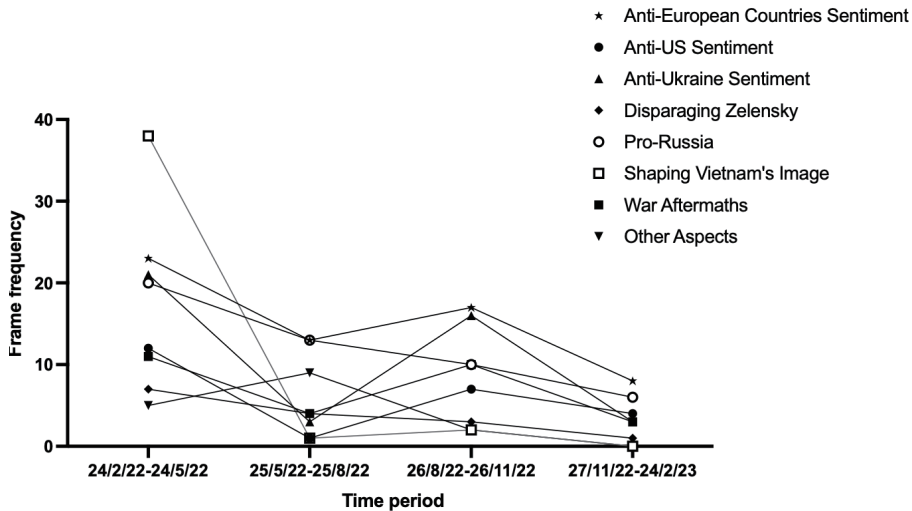
In the inter-coder reliability test, seven of the eight frames demonstrated a substantial agreement level of 0.636 or above, while the frame "Other Aspects" showed only a fair agreement level of 0.385. One possible cause for this lower agreement is the inherent complexity of the Facebook posts analyzed in this study. These posts often contain multi-layered meanings, incorporating multiple narrative lines, which makes it challenging to identify a single dominant frame. This complexity required careful judgment in categorizing the posts, which may have contributed to the lower consistency in coding for this particular frame.

Changes in Frames through Time

The following line graph illustrates variations in the coverage of eight different frames detected over four distinct periods: 24/2/22-24/5/22, 25/5/22-25/8/22,

26/8/22-26/11/22, and 27/11/22-24/2/23.

Figure 2. Changes in 8 Frames over the Period from 24/2/22 to 24/2/23



A dramatic drop can be seen in Shaping Vietnam's Image. The number of instances begins with a high 38 (Supplemental Figure 1f.) in the first period but then sharply decreases to only one in the second period and continues consistently low in the following periods. There has been a consistent decrease in the sentiment of anti-European countries throughout the research time frame. The number of instances begins at 23 (Supplemental Figure 1a.) during the initial period and gradually declines to eight during the last period. Anti-US Sentiment experiences variations over different periods. The initial count is 12 (Supplemental Figure 1b.) before a significant decrease to only one occurrence in the subsequent period, then a marginal rise to seven occurrences in the third period, followed by a decline to four occurrences in the final period. The coverage of Anti-Ukraine Sentiment also experiences oscillations. The frequency begins at 21 and decreases to three throughout the second phase before rising to 16 in the third quarter and then declining to three in the final period (Supplemental Figure 1c.). The data show coverage of the frame Disparaging Zelensky without abrupt changes. The frequency begins at seven occurrences and progressively diminishes to one occurrence in the final period. The frame Pro-Russia varies over different periods. The initial count is 20 times, which decreases to 13 times in the subsequent period. The coverage subsequently lowers to 10 times in the third period, ultimately lowering to 6 times in the final one (Supplemental Figure 1e.). War Aftermaths, and Other Aspects saw downtrends and oscillations throughout the research periods. Using MedCalc, the study also discovered a notable correlation between the number of posts

expressing Anti-Ukraine Sentiment and those Pro-Russia frames ($p < 0.05$).

Shaping Vietnam's Image

An in-depth investigation is warranted to examine the frame Shaping Vietnam's Image. While examining posts for embedded frames, the researcher noticed that these posts, except for the Anti-Reactionary Academy, were making a concerted effort to create a positive image of Vietnam among their audience. Four distinguished frames, all related to the overarching theme of Shaping Vietnam's Image, were identified.

Table 2. Additional Frames Under the Frame Shaping Vietnam's Image

	<i>TIFOSI</i>	<i>Battlecry</i>	<i>Anti-Reactionary Academy</i>	<i>The Path We Take</i>
Justifying Vietnam's Stance	6	0	0	6
Responding to Criticism Towards Vietnam	1	3	0	6
Praising Vietnam's Foreign Policies	5	0	0	3
Instilling the Sense of Patriotism	7	3	0	1

The frame Justifying Vietnam's Stance entails justifications and rationales for Vietnam's stance on the Russia-Ukraine war. Both *TIFOSI* and *The Path We Take* demonstrate a significant emphasis on this subject, with six occurrences each, suggesting a considerable level of intensity. The frame Responding to Criticism Towards Vietnam pertains to how these posts address the so-called "reactionary arguments" both domestically and internationally. *The Path We Take* is the frontrunner in this topic. *Battlecry* comes next with three instances, showing significant but somewhat restricted coverage. *TIFOSI* offers a minimal presence with only one instance, while the *Anti-Reactionary Academy* lacks content about criticism responses. With the frame Praising Vietnam's Foreign Policies, *TIFOSI* exhibits a restricted yet apparent concentration with five occurrences, and *The Path We Take* demonstrates a lesser emphasis with three occurrences. Instilling a Sense of Patriotism refers to instilling national pride and love in citizens through lessons in history. *TIFOSI* places a notable focus on this topic, showcasing seven instances and indicating intense attention. *Battlecry* offers a moderate level of coverage with three instances. *The Path We Take* has a limited presence with only one instance, indicating a minimal emphasis.

Discussion

The examination of the gathered data from four notable pages, namely *TIFOSI*, *Battlecry*, *Anti-Reactionary Academy*, and *The Path We Take*, uncovers intriguing observations regarding the utilization of news framing to influence the narratives surrounding the war. The significant number of followers (887,000) and likes (705,000) on the four Facebook pages highlights their popularity among Vietnamese users. This implies that the information spread on these pages can reach a substantial segment of the populace, highlighting the need to comprehend the content published on these pages.

Eight Identified Frames

The two frames of Anti-European Countries Sentiment and Anti-US Sentiment put forward a critical viewpoint on Western geopolitics. So-called sentiments of distrust are not simply a present-day reaction to what has happened concerning the Russia-Ukraine war but may also be linked to the historical context characterized by imperialism and exploitation. As Vietnam had to suffer for long periods, from the West colonization to the Vietnam War, Vietnamese people might still be skeptical of European countries as well as the US policies. The emphasized “double standard” found in the analyzed texts suggested inconsistencies in the Western response to the Russia-Ukraine war. This may have been influenced by the perceptions among the Vietnamese population that these countries have always pursued their national interests at the expense of local sovereignty and suffering. Furthermore, when contrasted with Zelensky’s appeals, the mockery of Western countries for their purportedly insufficient military assistance to Ukraine could cast doubts on the portrayal of a cohesive and selfless Western alliance, which could be a deliberate attempt to diminish the high moral ground that is often claimed by Western media.

Regarding the Anti-US Sentiment frame on its own, the contention found highlights that the involvement of the United States in the conflict, including the enlargement of NATO, has directly impacted the escalation of the tension between Russia and Ukraine. The effort to expand NATO in the West, especially by the US, has always been considered a threat to Russia’s national security by this government. The narratives surrounding the US involvement in the war emphasize the idea that American geopolitical ambitions prioritize its own interests over the stability and sovereignty of other nations.

The narrative of Anti-Ukraine Sentiment is multifaceted, appearing to weave together historical memory with contemporary geopolitics. The posts effectively convey disapproval of Ukrainian policies, indirectly referencing themes of self-determination and sovereignty, which are significant in Vietnam’s historical context of resistance against foreign rule. The suffering of Ukrainian citizens is attributed to their government’s policies, emphasizing an ideological conflict that resonates with

Vietnamese Facebook users. These narratives do not merely overlook the vandalism of Lenin's memorials in Ukraine or the alleged defamation of President Ho Chi Minh by Ukrainian media outlets. Instead, they depict an ideological conflict, with symbols of communist unity contrasting against the setting of a struggle that many Vietnamese observers may interpret as driven by Western intervention. This framing could evoke powerful emotional reactions, especially considering Ho Chi Minh's revered position in Vietnam as an emblem of the nation's fight for freedom and unity. Related to Anti-Ukraine Sentiment, the frame of Disparaging Zelensky characterizes President Zelensky as a "clown" in the international political arena or simply as a comedian seeking recognition through his involvement in politics. By portraying Zelensky as lacking in ability, these posts indirectly question the competence of the Ukrainian leadership, suggesting that the crisis is not solely due to external aggression but also caused by internal failures.

Numerous justifications for Russia's involvement in the war, which were categorized into the frame of Pro-Russia, have been observed. The narrative of a "fascist" resurgence in Ukraine serves as the basis for Russia's military intervention, and it is not only a political critique but also a calculated use of World War II imagery that appeals to Vietnamese audiences. This perspective taps into the collective memory of anti-fascism, a compelling storyline in a country where past battles against external foes have significantly shaped the national identity. These Facebook pages engage in a geopolitical discourse that transcends national borders by portraying Russia's activities as a defensive response to NATO's expansion. This discourse situates Vietnam within a global context of power struggles, suggesting an awareness of and reaction to the actions of major global powers. It aligns with the Russian viewpoint, which sees NATO's approach as a direct threat to regional stability and national independence. The commendation of President Putin's leadership is significant as it indicates an admiration for his decisive and resolute leadership. There are similarities between the findings of this study and those made by Hoang & Nguyen (2022) when they tried to unpack the online pro-Russia narratives in Vietnam. Both studies have observed many justifications for Russia's actions in the narratives surrounding the Russia-Ukraine war. However, what made this study different is that the researcher could find the pro-Russia sentiment on the Facebook pages where their administrators consider their pages a venue for news, not having any strong attachment to either side of the war.

The discovered frames, spanning from anti-Western countries sentiments to the glorification of Russian policies, create a complex framework of narratives that deeply echo Vietnamese historical experiences and the current geopolitical stance. These narratives exhibit a nuanced understanding of Vietnam's intricate relationship with Western countries and Russia, showcasing their non-uniform nature.

Changes in Frame Distribution

The most noteworthy trend is the sharp decrease in the presence of Shaping Vietnam's Image. The significant decline from 38 occurrences in the initial period to just one in the second period, together with continuously low frequencies in subsequent periods, prompts inquiries regarding the intentional relegation of this narrative. This alteration may coincide with the initial time frame from February 24, 2022, to May 24, 2022, during which period, the Vietnamese government faced significant internal and international criticism for its initial three votes on UN General Assembly resolutions about the Russia-Ukraine war. Vietnam chose not to vote on a resolution condemning Russia's invasion of Ukraine on March 2, 2022 (White & Holtz, 2022). They also abstained from voting on a resolution demanding aid access and civilian protection in Ukraine. Furthermore, Vietnam voted against a US-sponsored resolution to suspend Russia from the UN Human Rights Council on April 7, 2022 (Haddad, 2023). These actions by the Vietnamese government led to criticism of the country's foreign policies and moral stance. In light of the criticism, the studied Facebook pages contributed to the justification of Vietnam's position on the conflict. Following this period, the frame Shaping Vietnam's Image gradually diminished, allowing space for the transmission of new frames to the Vietnamese Facebook users. Another possible explanation for this trend could be that when there are tangible connections between a war event and the users' country, they give the event more attention (Berlin & Lehne, 2024). This implies that as new issues arose, the administrators also shifted the focus of their posts to maintain public attention and involvement with their content.

Other trends were also observed. The fluctuations in Anti-Ukraine Sentiment show a complicated interaction with narratives surrounding the Ukraine crisis. The initial high count implies strong public attention at the start, and successive fluctuations reflect a dynamic response to emerging circumstances. The several occurrences of Pro-Russia reflect a dynamic Russia-friendly narrative. In another observation, Anti-European Countries Sentiment and Anti-Ukraine Sentiment are the only 2 frames that remained of relatively significant focus until the third period of the 1-year study timeframe. These two frames' occurrences remained close to 20 in the third period while other frames' counts dropped to around or below 10 (Figure 2.). This suggests that these were the most dominant topics in the discussions by social media users as it is most probable that pages' administrators would sustain the themes that received the most numbers of likes and comments.

A significant association between the quantity of postings expressing Anti-Ukraine Sentiment and of those Pro-Russia within certain periods could indicate a narrative that aligns anti-Ukraine feelings with pro-Russia attitudes. This highlights the focus on the stark differences between two sides involved in the war, with one being portrayed as evil and the other as heroic, almost simultaneously. This finding also accords with an observation made by Hoang & Nguyen (2022), who suggested

one of the frames found among the online pro-Russia narratives was to praise Russia while condemning Ukraine. The presence of a correlation exclusively between the “Anti-Ukraine Sentiment” and “Pro-Russia” frames among the eight identified frames could be explained firstly by the ideological alignment. It is important to note that Vietnam and Russia have shared a long history being allies, united by ideologies rooted in the teachings of leaders such as Vladimir Lenin, Karl Marx, and Ho Chi Minh. Therefore, in the narratives fueled by anti-capitalism, Russia is cast as the protagonist and Ukraine is the antagonist. The second reason may be due to the appeal of polarizing narratives, which could evoke strong emotional responses of the Facebook users. As the examined Facebook pages’ administrators likely seek to boost user engagement, they would prioritize content that make users repeatedly interact with.

Shaping Vietnam’s Image

An extensive inquiry into the frame Shaping Vietnam’s Image is imperative, considering the Vietnamese government’s regulating measures over Facebook. The discovery of four supporting narratives under Shaping Vietnam’s Image, namely Justifying Vietnam’s Stance, Responding to Criticism Towards Vietnam, Praising Vietnam’s Foreign Policies, and Instilling the Sense of Patriotism, highly suggests a deliberate endeavor by these pages to conform to the official storyline established by the Vietnamese government.

The subcategory of Justifying Vietnam’s Stance focuses on clarifying Vietnam’s diplomatic decisions related to the Russia-Ukraine crisis. This implies a purposeful attempt to strengthen the credibility of the country’s foreign policy actions, possibly to bring public opinion together and bolster the government’s geopolitical justification. The narrative of Responding to Criticism towards Vietnam includes countering both foreign and domestic criticisms that could weaken the Vietnamese government’s position or challenge its moral compass in the global arena. Praising Vietnam’s Foreign Policies demonstrates a positive endorsement of the country’s diplomatic conduct. This suggests a consistent link between these Facebook pages and the state’s portrayal of its handling of global affairs. Instilling the Sense of Patriotism extends beyond providing policy support as it taps into the emotional realm by evoking national pride and fostering unity. This indicates a tendency to strengthen the loyalty of citizens to the nation and to project a unified image in response to foreign criticism.

In a nation where the government exercises substantial control over all media channels and mandates them to filter readers’ comments on social media platforms, it is highly improbable for any coverage of a significant matter such as the war in Ukraine to go unnoticed by the censors if it deviates from the official stance (Hoang & Nguyen, 2022). The significant focus on the supporting frames above suggests a deliberate effort to align with the government’s position. The elaborate design of

these frames and their apparent conformity to the government's narrative highlight the intricate position of social media in Vietnam.

Limitations of Research

A major limitation of this study lies in the limited resources, which restricted the analysis to only four of the most popular Facebook pages that met the selection criteria. For the same reason, posts containing videos or hyperlinks were excluded from the dataset, resulting in a relatively small sample size of 255 posts. As a result, the study may not provide a fully comprehensive perspective on the narratives surrounding the Russia-Ukraine war on Facebook in Vietnam. Secondly, as where the administrators of the examined Facebook pages are residing is unknown, it is hard to tell if they are under any pressure or instructions from the Vietnamese government when posting on their pages. As social media platforms like Facebook have made global access possible, different sociopolitical contexts could affect any narratives on Facebook. Consequently, the frames included in the studied posts might be bent before they have reached their audience. To address this limitation, further studies that include interviews with Facebook page administrators could investigate the role of sociopolitical contexts in shaping online political discourse should be carried out. Last but not least, while two coders were employed to improve the reliability of the analysis, manual coding inherently involves subjective judgments, and thus, potential biases may have affected the results. Further research with more automated or mixed-method approaches is needed to understand these narratives fully. Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools, including topic modeling and sentiment analysis, should be employed to extract dominant themes and emotional tones from extensive datasets, therefore uncovering prevailing narrative frameworks. Integrating these automatic techniques with qualitative approaches, such as manual content analysis and interviews with administrators of these Facebook sites, would yield more profound insights into the formulation and dissemination of these narratives.

Conclusion

This study offers a perspective on the narratives found on Vietnamese Facebook pages regarding the Russia-Ukraine war. The research, through the identification of eight key news frames, highlights the intentional and flexible communication adjustment following national sentiment and geopolitical strategy. The decline in the focus on Shaping Vietnam's Image, which aligns with Vietnam's crucial votes in the UN, signifies a nuanced response to diplomatic shifts and public discourse. The complex interaction between anti-Western sentiments and pro-Russia glorification further illustrates the pages' involvement in a sophisticated narrative orchestration

that reflects Vietnam's history and current geopolitical stance. This study unveils the potency of social media as a medium for disseminating narratives that are aligned with state policies, placing it in a position to possibly direct public opinion and discussions at a national level. The insights obtained from these narrative frames not only provide an understanding of the current geopolitical narratives prevalent in Vietnam but also demonstrate the broader functionality of social media as a potential impactful tool in global geopolitical discourse.

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APPENDIX 1

Identified Frames with Explanations and Examples of Facebook Post Extracts

Frame	Explanation	Examples*
Anti-European Countries Sentiment	Criticizing European countries' double standard	You can easily find comments opposing “double standards” and those about attempts to integrate politics in newspapers and by organizations such as UEFA, FIFA, Goal, Bleacher Report Football, EPL or Bundesliga fan pages...People asked for equality between “people and people,” between those who have been devastated by wars... However, it appears that all are just slogans, as the people who proclaim (these values) most vociferously are the very ones who exacerbate that inequity. -TIFOSI
	Criticizing European countries' policies	Although the investigation has not yet begun and no final results have been released, the West hastily imposed new sanctions targeting Russia in economic, political, military, and social aspects. -TIFOSI
Anti-US Sentiment	Criticizing US' foreign policies through times	ALLIES RAISED TO BE SLAUGHTERED -Anti-Reactionary Academy (ARA)
		This constitutes a very unethical move by the United States and the entire Western bloc: they initially prepared Ukraine to confront Russia, which was followed by their declaration, “We will not intervene; we will impose sanctions.” They are now stating, “We will send Stingers and Javelins, however these are defensive armaments!” - <i>The Path We Take (TPW)</i>
		In discussing war reparations, it is conceivable that liquidating all of America's assets would be insufficient; how can one adequately compensate for human lives? -TPWT
Anti-Ukraine Sentiment	Attributing the suffering of their citizens from the war aftermath to Ukraine's policy	Now, looking at Ukraine, where the leadership has deluded itself into seeking foreign support to confront Russia, transforming from a beautiful country into ruins,.. -TPWT

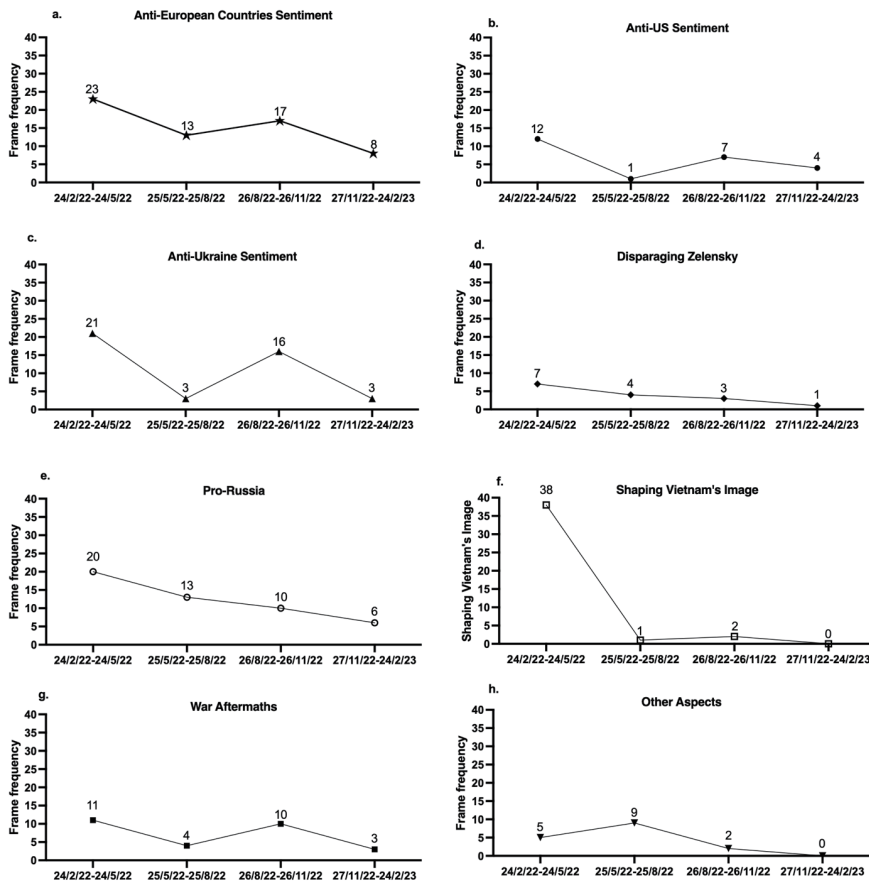
¹* These examples are extracts from the Facebook posts, which have been translated from Vietnamese to English by the author.

		The suffering of a country, alongside poverty and injustice, also stems from a weak government that must depend on another government thousands of kilometers away. -TPWT
Disparaging Zelensky	Referring to President Zelensky as a “hilarious leader” in the global political sphere or simply a comedian attempting to gain fame through politics.	The classic “comedic performances” of President Zelensky and the Ukrainian government - <i>Battlecry</i>
		SOMEONE HAS ALREADY TAKEN OVER ZELENSKY’S “CLOWN” THRONE. - <i>Battlecry</i>
		LIFE IS BASICALLY A PLAY, AND YOU ARE ALWAYS AN ACTOR IN THE ROLE OF PRESIDENT -TPWT
		“We must acknowledge that, aside from his sinister schemes, Zelensky also has a unique talent for BEGGING. At this point, not only neutral countries but even some Western allies and the U.S. are starting to grow weary of this clown.” -TPWT
Pro-Russia	Providing justifications for Russia’s involvement in the war have been made	The Soviet Union 2.0 will dismantle fascism. Russia is planting its flag in the territories it controls, just as the Red Army planted the hammer and sickle flag on top of the German parliament building in 1945. -TPWT
Shaping the image of Vietnam	Justifying Vietnam’s stance and praising Vietnam’s foreign policies	Voting against the removal of Russia from the UN Human Rights Council does not mean that Vietnam is siding with Russia. As stated, Vietnam chooses to follow what is right, not to choose sides. National interest is paramount. -TIFOSI
		From the lessons of Ukraine, people increasingly recognize that a peaceful, independent, and self-reliant foreign policy—being a reliable friend and partner to countries in the international community, not participating in military alliances, and not relying on one country to confront another—is the wise path Vietnam has chosen, with a long-term vision. -TPWT

War aftermaths	Providing information about the aftermaths of the war not only in Ukraine but other countries	When a country goes to war, the people have to suffer, territorial integrity is threatened, and then comes the economic crisis. <i>-TIFOSI</i>
		Yesterday (October 16), thousands of people in Paris took to the streets to protest rising prices in France. This situation occurred amid unresolved strikes by employees at French oil refineries, leading to the closure of many gas stations and causing shortages that frustrated the public. In a similar situation, thousands in Madrid, Spain, and hundreds in Rome, Italy, also protested over the high prices of gas and electricity over the weekend. <i>-ARA</i>
Other aspects	Analyzing the obstacles the European countries had to deal with due to the war aftermath	“The U.S., France, Italy, and Germany are currently seeking alternative sources of supply from Russia and are considering the aforementioned North African country as a viable option. As energy expert George Zakman notes, Algeria cannot provide additional green fuel, even though it has large reserves.” <i>-Battlecry</i>
	Carrying out propaganda for media literacy in VN	From these phenomena, we must be vigilant and cautious when receiving information; we should seek information from credible, verified sources and limit the sharing or spreading of information whose origin or nature is unclear. By doing so, we can help curb the spread of fake news and contribute to resolving conflicts through peaceful means and overall stability between Russia and Ukraine, as well as globally... <i>-TPWT</i>

APPENDIX 2

Supplemental Figure 1. Changes in Each Frame over the Period from 24/2/22 to 24/2/23.



(a). Frame Anti-European Countries Sentiment, (b) Frame Anti-US sentiment, (c) Frame Anti-Ukraine Sentiment, (d) Frame Disparaging Zelensky, (e) Frame Pro-Russia, (f) Frame Shaping Vietnam's image, (g) Frame War Aftermaths, (h) Other Aspects.

