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REPRESENTATION OF CIVILIAN EXPERIENCE IN THE MEDIATION OF THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN WAR: A BIBLIOMETRIC LOCALISATION OF THE UKRAINIAN CASE (2015–2026)

ABSTRACT. *The aim of the article is to localise the Ukraine-focused subset of publications within the global research field of war mediation and the representation of civilian experience by means of bibliometric analysis. **Methods:** a two-step search in the Scopus and Web of Science Core Collection databases for 2015–2026 (mapping the entire field and delineating the Ukraine-focused block), combining co-word analysis, co-citation analysis, bibliographic coupling and temporal overlay analysis following the PRISMA 2020 procedure. **Results:** the final corpus comprises 1,149 documents, with the Ukraine-focused subset accounting for 74 documents (6.4%); temporal dynamics reveal a turning point in 2022–2023 with a peak in 2025, and the mediation of the Russo-Ukrainian war emerges as a distinct research front. **Conclusions:** despite the scale of the conflict, the Ukrainian case is represented asymmetrically, and its position is twofold — an integration into Western representational regimes and, at the same time, an object of global spectatorship.*

KEYWORDS: war mediation; representation; civilian experience; Russo-Ukrainian war; bibliometric analysis.

INTRODUCTION. For most audiences around the world, war exists as a mediated experience: it becomes accessible primarily through the media — in the form of images, reports, photographs, testimonies and digital information flows. The mediation of war encompasses the processes of selection, framing and representation through which notions of violence, the victim and the humanitarian crisis are constructed, and thus determines whose experiences acquire global visibility and which remain marginalised. Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 became the largest armed conflict on the European continent since the Second World War and triggered unprecedented global media attention, which foregrounds the question of the place of the Ukrainian experience in the international research field.

The theoretical core of the field is formed by works that problematise the public visibility of suffering: S. Sontag on the ethical limits of the photographic representation of war (Sontag, 2003), L. Boltanski on distant suffering (Boltanski, 1999), J. Butler on grievability (Butler, 2009), S. Moeller on compassion fatigue (Moeller, 1999), B. Höijer on the discourse of global compassion (Höijer, 2004) and L. Chouliaraki on media ethics and the platformization of pain (Chouliaraki, 2006; Chouliaraki, 2024).

Empirical studies of the Ukrainian case are multiplying rapidly: refugee narratives on TikTok (Marino, 2024), the visual humanisation of displaced persons (Martikainen & Sakki, 2024), empathic reactions to press photographs (Müller & Christ, 2023), regimes of visual representation (Nagy-Béni, 2025), multidimensional framing analysis (Ibrahim et al., 2025), comparative visual framing (Young & Omosun, 2025) and discourse analysis of the portrayal of civilians (Zabielska & Kishchenko, 2023). At the same time, the 'geopolitics of human suffering' produces an uneven distribution of international media attention (Bachman & Brito Ruiz, 2024), while bibliometric studies of adjacent topics record the dominance of the United States and the United Kingdom (Yaqoub et al., 2025).

The unresolved part of the problem is that, despite the growing volume of publications, the Ukrainian case still lacks a systematic bibliometric localisation within the global field: its quantitative share, its temporal dynamics relative to the whole field, and its structural positioning remain unknown. **The aim of the article**

is to reconstruct the place of the Ukraine-focused subset of publications within the research field of war mediation and the representation of civilian experience by means of bibliometric analysis, with particular attention to the temporal evolution of thematic clusters.

METHODS. The principal data sources are the Scopus (Elsevier) and Web of Science Core Collection — WoS (Clarivate) databases, as those with the most complete citation metadata. The search was conducted across the title–abstract–keywords fields (TITLE-ABS-KEY) in two steps. **Step 1** — mapping the entire field: the mediation concept AND civilian experience AND conflict context. **Step 2** — delineating the Ukraine-focused subset by adding the relevant block ('Ukraine', 'Russo-Ukrainian', etc.), which preserves the correct field/Ukrainian-part ratio. The coverage period is 2015–01.06.2026; document types are articles, reviews and book chapters; languages are English and Ukrainian. The inclusion and exclusion criteria are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Parameter	Inclusion	Exclusion
Document type	Articles, reviews, book chapters	Editorial notes, reviews, errata
Language	English, Ukrainian	Other languages
Period	2015 – 01.06.2026	Outside the specified period
Thematic relevance	Relevance to the focus (mediation of suffering / civilian experience)	Adjacent fields unrelated to the topic

Source: compiled by the author.

The selection procedure was documented following the PRISMA 2020 logic (Page et al., 2021): identified → duplicates removed → screened against the criteria → included in the final corpus. The analytical strategy combines: co-word analysis of keyword co-occurrence (reconstruction of the conceptual structure and the field's nodal points); co-citation analysis (intellectual roots and research schools); bibliographic coupling (research fronts); and temporal overlay analysis (the evolution of themes). The Claude Sonnet 4.6 model (Anthropic) was used to process and pre-analyse the raw bibliographic data, with subsequent verification of the results by the author. A methodological limitation is that a full co-citation analysis requires the complete WoS record with the cited-references field; the estimates provided are proxy indicators.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION. The two-step search yielded three comparable figures (Table 2). The final corpus comprised 1,149 documents for 2015–01.06.2026, published in 648 venues; the mean citation rate is 5.2 citations per document. The Ukraine-focused subset accounts for 74 documents, that is, only 6.4% of the field.

Table 2. General corpus and Ukraine-focused subset

Indicator	Scopus	WoS	Total
General corpus (entire field)	717	432	1,149
Ukraine-focused subset	20	54	74
Share of Ukraine-related topics in the field, %	2.8	12.5	6.4

Source: calculated by the author from Scopus and WoS data (retrieved 01.06.2026).

The temporal dynamics display two regimes: a moderate one (2015–2021, 57–80 publications/year) and an accelerated one (2022–2025) with a turning point that correlates with the full-scale invasion. Tellingly, 2022 produced a relative decline (63 publications) alongside a sharp rise in 2023–2025, peaking in 2025 (132 publications) — a 'lag' between the event and the production of knowledge about it. The Ukraine-

focused subset is virtually absent before 2022, whereas 2022–2024 yielded 29 records — seven times more than the entire 2015–2021 period.

On the basis of more than two thousand unique keywords, six stable thematic clusters were identified (Table 3). Three concepts function as the field's nodal points — distant suffering, compassion fatigue and witnessing. The largest by aggregate frequency is the framing cluster (its methodological core being critical discourse analysis, CDA, and news-values theory; Galtung & Ruge, 1965), whereas the visual cluster dominates by a single term (photojournalism).

Table 3. Conceptual clusters of the corpus (keyword co-occurrence analysis)

Cl.	Cluster name	Core terms and theoretical basis
A	Ethics and visibility of suffering	distant suffering, witnessing, empathy, compassion, ethics. The field's nodal core; the media's moral responsibility and the spectator's position (Sontag, Butler, Boltanski, Chouliaraki)
B	Humanitarian communication	humanitarianism, refugees, migration. Media representation of forcibly displaced persons; donor and NGO communication
C	Framing and discourse	framing, media representation, CDA, war reporting, peace journalism, propaganda. The largest cluster; methodological core — van Dijk, Fairclough, Entman
D	Visuality and photojournalism	photojournalism, photography, war photography, visual culture, visual framing. Photojournalism as practice and object (the Zelizer, Möller tradition)
E	Digital mediation	social media, citizen journalism, UGC, TikTok, Telegram. Platform mediation of conflict; rapidly growing after 2022
F	Trauma, memory and mental health	trauma, PTSD, mental health, resilience, memory. Psychological consequences of media exposure; clinical and cultural-memorial dimensions

Note: CDA — Critical Discourse Analysis. Source: compiled by the author from Scopus and WoS data.

The temporal overlay analysis reveals six emerging research fronts that define the 2025–2028 agenda: the mediation of the Russo-Ukrainian war; platform mediation (TikTok, Telegram); mental health and embodiment; the decolonial critique of visibility hierarchies; the mediation of the Gaza/Palestine conflict; and computational and AI methods. The Ukraine-focused front is entirely new: the term ‘ukraine’ appears as a keyword only from 2021, and 8 of the 12 relevant publications fall within 2023–2026.

In more detail, the front of the mediation of the Russo-Ukrainian war (mean year around 2023.5) is organised around the ‘hierarchy of victims’ discourse and the most-cited articles of 2022–2024; the platform front captures the shift from the general notion of ‘social media’ to platform-specific studies of TikTok and Telegram; the mental-health front combines a theoretical flank (embodiment, affect) with a clinically oriented one (mental health, PTSD, resilience); the decolonial critique (decolonisation, settler colonialism, global south) is actualised through the juxtaposition of coverage of the Ukrainian and Palestinian cases; and the computational front relies on text mining and artificial-intelligence tools in the production and verification of war media. Common to all fronts is that they are formed predominantly outside the directly affected communities.

The analysis of productivity and geography confirms the structural Anglocentrism of the field. The leading authors are Lilie Chouliaraki and Stuart Allan (seven publications each), representing British universities; three of the five leading authors are affiliated with the United Kingdom (Cardiff, LSE, Glasgow), with a substantial share from the United States. The field's core venue is the journal *Media, War & Conflict* (about 40 publications in the combined corpus); the leading journals also include the *International Journal of Communication*, *Journalism Studies*, the *Journal of War & Culture Studies* and *Digital Journalism*. In the Ukraine-focused subset, *Media, War & Conflict* likewise ranks first, yet the overall number of Ukrainian affiliations remains insignificant, which correlates with the identified quantitative asymmetry.

The analysis of the intellectual structure (a proxy co-citation analysis based on the mentions of theorists in the corpus abstracts) points to a markedly classical foundation. The most frequently invoked author is S. Hall (encoding/decoding; representation), followed by the news-values model of Galtung and Ruge (Galtung & Ruge 1965); the critique of the representation of suffering is anchored by Sontag (Sontag, 2003), Moeller (Moeller, 1999) and Butler (Butler, 2009). This indicates that, although the empirical objects of the field are shifting rapidly towards digital and platform practices, its conceptual vocabulary continues to rest on a canon established well before 2015 — a tension between a dynamic empirical frontier and a comparatively stable theoretical core.

The structure of the field confirms its own theoretical thesis about the unequal distribution of visibility and compassion: the academic infrastructure itself — language, leading venues, the geography of research centres — reproduces the asymmetries that the field critically analyses. The dominance of English-language venues and British-American authors signals structural Anglocentrism; the paradox is that this asymmetry is repeatedly thematised theoretically (Bachman & Brito Ruiz, 2024), yet bibliometrics allows it to be seen as a quantitatively measurable fact. The 6.4% share of Ukraine-related topics contrasts with the scale of the conflict, while the mean year of the concept distant suffering (2018.8) substantially precedes the mean year of the term ‘ukraine’ (2023.5): the new fronts are built on an assimilated theoretical foundation. The place of the Ukrainian case is twofold — it is simultaneously integrated into Western representational regimes (the high visibility of new publications) and reveals the tension between lived experience and the status of an object of global spectatorship (the negligible presence of Ukrainian researchers among the leading authors).

Among the study's limitations are: coverage of only the Scopus and WoS databases, which systematically under-represent non-English-language and book publications; the absence of complete cited-reference and affiliation fields in the export, owing to which the co-citation analysis was performed by a proxy method; the sensitivity of the results to the formulation of the search query; and the static nature of the snapshot as of 01.06.2026 (data for 2026 are incomplete). Recommended corrections for further studies are: incorporating the OpenAlex and Index Copernicus databases to reduce the Anglocentric bias; re-exporting the full WoS records with the cited-references field to verify the six clusters in VOSviewer/CiteSpace; documenting all versions of the search query; and registering the study protocol.

CONCLUSIONS. The bibliometric localisation of the Ukrainian case within the field of war mediation (1,149 Scopus + WoS documents, 2015–2026) allows three conclusions to be drawn. First, the field is mature and structured, yet asymmetrically organised: a powerful theoretical tradition and a developed methodology coexist with the systematic under-representation of regional voices. Second, the Ukraine-focused subset is at once quantitatively small (6.4% given the scale of the conflict) and qualitatively specific: its position is twofold — integration into global representational regimes and, at the same time, the role of an observed object. Third, the mediation of the Russo-Ukrainian war emerges as a distinct but new research front that is thematised predominantly from the outside.

The identified research gap is twofold — quantitative and qualitative — and justifies the need for further inquiry: a comparative micro-analysis of media practices ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the event (in particular the Bucha and Mariupol cases); verification of the clusters in the VOSviewer/CiteSpace environments; the incorporation of the OpenAlex database to reduce the Anglocentric bias; and a separate mapping of the Ukrainian-language segment. In the field's own terms, this concerns the analysis of the gap between witnessing and being witnessed — the transition from someone else's testimony about suffering to the subjectivity of those whose experience is represented.

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РЕПРЕЗЕНТАЦІЯ ДОСВІДУ ЦИВІЛЬНИХ ОСІБ У МЕДІАЦІЇ РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ВІЙНИ: БІБЛІОМЕТРИЧНА ЛОКАЛІЗАЦІЯ УКРАЇНСЬКОГО КЕЙСУ (2015–2026)

АНОТАЦІЯ. *Мета* статті — локалізувати україноцентричну підмножину публікацій у глобальному дослідницькому полі медіації війни та репрезентації досвіду цивільних осіб засобами бібліометричного аналізу. *Методи:* двоетапний пошук у базах Scopus і Web of Science Core Collection за 2015–2026 рр. (картування всього поля та виокремлення україноцентричного блоку), що поєднує co-word аналіз, аналіз співцитуння, бібліографічне поєднання й темпоральний overlay-аналіз за процедурою PRISMA 2020. *Результати:* фінальний корпус становить 1 149 документів, україноцентрична підмножина — 74 документи (6,4 %); темпоральна динаміка виявляє перелом у 2022–2023 рр. з піком у 2025 р., а медіація російсько-української війни постає окремим дослідницьким фронтом. *Висновки:* попри масштаб конфлікту, український кейс представлений у полі асиметрично, а його позиція є подвійною — інтеграція в західні режими репрезентації та водночас перебування в статусі об'єкта глобального споглядання.

КЛЮЧОВІ СЛОВА: медіація війни; репрезентація; цивільний досвід; російсько-українська війна; бібліометричний аналіз.