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ДОСЛІДНИЦЬКІ СТАТТІ

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## Framing Ukrainian Resistance: Identity, Democracy, and Civic Duty in Media Narratives of the Russo-Ukrainian War

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This study presents a corpus-based analysis of Ukrainian media discourse on Ukrainian resistance during the full-scale phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war, which began in February 2022. Using computational methods, it investigates the correlations between resistance-related lexemes and key semantic clusters. The study proposes two hypotheses: first, that representations of Ukrainian resistance are closely associated with the concepts of national identity, freedom, democratic values, and responsibility; and second, that the motivations for resistance may have evolved over the three years of the war. **Method.** A quantitative computer-assisted content analysis of lexical co-occurrences was conducted on long-form textual content from the English-language versions of two Ukrainian media outlets: The Kyiv Independent (specifically the “Human Stories” section) and Dzerkalo Tyzhnia (Mirror of the Week). Python libraries and modules were utilised for data processing. To extract content from the web archives of both media outlets, Python-based parsers were used to filter articles containing at least one predefined word from each of the following semantic clusters: “resistance” (6 words), “values” (5 words), “identity” (6 words), and “responsibility” (6 words). As a result, 8 separate datasets were formed. The total number of articles in the “Dzerkalo Tyzhnia” corpus is  $n = 1614$ , and in The Kyiv Independent –  $n = 342$ . Statistical correlations of co-occurrences were calculated between resistance-related lexemes in each corpus and three predefined semantic clusters: Identity, Values, and Responsibilities. A comparative longitudinal analysis was performed to examine changes in these associations from 2022 to 2025. **Results.** The results demonstrate strong (up to  $\sim 1.0$ ) and statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) positive correlations between the lexical group related to resistance and the three semantic clusters across both media outlets. High correlations with emotive and symbolic terms such as “spirit” and “nation” indicate that they were prominently used to represent resistance in the first stage of the war. Many correlations remained moderate (0.4–0.8) yet statistically significant over time, suggesting relative stability in the association between resistance and these core themes. However, law-related associations (e.g., law, duty, and responsibility) strengthened or became more consistently present in 2024 and 2025. **Conclusions.** The findings support both hypotheses put forward in this study. Firstly, Ukrainian resistance in media discourse is consistently associated with the semantic clusters of national identity, freedom, democratic values, and justice, as shown by strong and statistically significant correlations across both corpora. Secondly, although certain shifts in the motivational framing of resistance can be observed over the three years, particularly the increasing prominence of duty- and responsibility-related associations in 2024 and 2025, the overall discursive construction of resistance remains stable. These results suggest that the core semantic foundations of Ukrainian resistance persist over time, despite evolving contextual emphases.

*Keywords:* media discourse, war narratives, Ukrainian resistance, computational text analysis, national identity, democratic values, Russo-Ukrainian war

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## Фреймування українського опору: ідентичність, демократія та громадянський обов'язок у медійних нарративах про російсько-українську війну

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У цьому дослідженні представлено корпусний аналіз дискурсу українських ЗМІ щодо українського опору під час етапу повномасштабної війни між Росією та Україною (з лютого 2022 року). За допомогою комп'ютеризований аналізу у ньому досліджуються статистичні взаємозв'язки між лексемами, пов'язаними з опором, та ключовими семантичними доменами. У дослідженні висунуто дві гіпотези: по-перше, що репрезентації українського опору тісно пов'язані з поняттями національної ідентичності, свободи, демократичних цінностей, соціальної справедливості та відповідальності; по-друге, що мотивації опору могли еволюціонувати протягом трирічного періоду війни. **Метод.** Було проведено кількісний комп'ютерний контент-аналіз лексичних співживань на основі розгорнутого текстового контенту з англomовних версій двох українських ЗМІ: The Kyiv Independent (розділ «Human Stories») та «Дзеркало тижня» (Dzerkalo Tyzhnia). Для обробки даних використовувалися бібліотеки та модулі Python. Для видалення контенту з веб-архівів обох ЗМІ було використано парсери на основі Python для фільтрації статей, що містять принаймні одне попередньо визначене слово з кожного з наступних семантичних кластерів: «опір» (6 слів), «цінності» (5 слів), «ідентичність» (6 слів) та «відповідальність» (6 слів). В результаті було сформовано 8 окремих наборів даних. Загальна кількість статей у корпусі «Дзеркало тижня» становить  $n = 1614$ , а в The Kyiv Independent –  $n = 342$ . Було розраховано статистичні кореляції співживань між лексемами, пов'язаними з опором, у кожному корпусі та трьома заздалегідь визначеними семантичними кластерами: Ідентичність, Цінності та Відповідальність. Було проведено порівняльний лонгітюдний аналіз для вивчення змін у цих асоціаціях у період з 2022 по 2025. **Висновки.** Отримані результати підтверджують дві гіпотези, висунуті в цьому дослідженні. По-перше, український опір у дискурсі українських ЗМІ послідовно асоціюється із семантичними сферами національної ідентичності, свободи, демократичних цінностей та справедливості. Це підтверджується сильними та статистично значущими кореляціями в обох корпусах. По-друге, хоча протягом трирічного періоду можна спостерігати певні зміни в мотиваційному фреймінгу опору, зокрема зростання значущості асоціацій, пов'язаних із обов'язком та відповідальністю, у 2024-2025 роках, загальна дискурсивна конструкція опору залишається стабільною. Ці результати свідчать про те, що основні семантичні засади українського опору зберігаються з часом, незважаючи на зміну контекстуальних акцентів.

*Ключові слова:* медійний дискурс, воєнні наративи, український опір, комп'ютерний аналіз текстів, національна ідентичність, демократичні цінності, російсько-українська війна

The courage and everyday heroism demonstrated by Ukrainians since the outset of Russia's invasion in February 2022 have captured global attention, prompting media and analysts alike to seek symbols that embody Ukrainian resistance and resilience – most prominently, in President Volodymyr Zelensky (Onuch & Hale, 2022; Spector, 2022; Zachara-Szymańska, 2023). While Zelensky's leadership has become emblematic during the first critical period, he has also faced criticism for initially downplaying the threat of a full-scale invasion (Seitz, 2023).

Although considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to Zelensky's role in the conflict, this article shifts the focus to the motivations of ordinary Ukrainians who united to defend their right to live in a free and independent country.

The resistance of the Ukrainian people in the face of Russian military aggression that has come as a surprise to many Western observers (e.g. Benedetti, 2022), can be attributed to several factors, including a fight against Russia's long-standing hegemony, an unequivocal rejection of an autocratic style of governance, and a commitment to a democratic path of development that mirrors

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examples set by European countries (Kuzio, 2022). Despite the ongoing conflict, Ukrainians continue to embrace European ideals and view Europe as a “normative power” (Zarembo & Martin, 2024). Concurrently, an international “battle of narratives” is underway (Chaban & Zhabotynska, 2024), where Ukrainian self-narratives are frequently inadequately represented, and the realist perspectives on Russo-Ukrainian relations (Motyl, 2015) are still prioritised by some European and Western countries over the reasons for Ukrainian resistance against Russian military aggression.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to a better understanding of media narratives of Ukrainian resistance.

This article aims to examine how the discourse of Ukrainian resistance is constructed in Ukrainian media outlets and investigate the evolving associations between resistance-related lexemes and key democratic values, national identity, and collective responsibility during the Russo-Ukrainian war, with a time frame from February 24, 2022, to July 1, 2025.

The discussion outline of this article includes characteristics of the data, a theoretical framework for analysis, the findings, and a concluding discussion where these findings are compared diachronically and synchronically.

The material comprises articles from two Ukrainian English-language media outlets: *The Kyiv Independent*, the main English-language media outlet, and the English-language version of media outlet *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* (*Mirror of the Week*).

The study focuses on the English-language discourse of these Ukrainian media outlets. This choice may limit the quantitative scope of the dataset, but it does not diminish the qualitative relevance of the analysis. English-language journalism serves as an important channel through which Ukrainians communicate narratives of the war and societal resistance to international audiences, allowing these perspectives to be articulated without mediation from foreign media institutions. To minimise potential bias related to editorial positioning or audience-oriented framing, the study analyses two independent Ukrainian media outlets known for their professional standards and editorial autonomy. Both outlets have established reputations for being independent and maintaining a commitment to critical reporting in Ukraine, even during periods of significant political pressure and wartime conditions.

*Dzerkalo Tyzhnya* is a Ukrainian analytical weekly newspaper founded in 1994 and is one of the most influential Ukrainian media outlets. Since 2019, it has stopped its print version and operates only as an online website in three languages (Ukrainian, Russian, and English). For our study, only the English-language version was analysed. Its English-language articles are accurate translations of the original Ukrainian articles, rather than being written separately for a foreign audience.

*The Kyiv Independent* is an exclusively English-language Ukrainian online newspaper founded in November 2021 by former staff members of *The Kyiv Post*, Ukraine’s first and most prominent English-language newspaper, established in 1995. Founded just three months before Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, *The Kyiv Independent* quickly gained international recognition for its coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian war conflict and has become one of the most frequently cited Ukrainian news outlets in international media.

The role of the media during the war is not limited to merely reflecting public discourse. We proceed from the position that, as members of Ukrainian society in a state of war, journalists from both media outlets are directly involved, and their professional work during the war is therefore an expression of their personal experiences of resistance against armed aggression. From this perspective, the study gains additional value for the deontology of journalism.



## Theoretical framework

### Russo-Ukrainian war as an identity conflict

The underlying causes of the war started by Russia in 2014 with the annexation of Crimea are subject to divergent interpretations, not only among the parties involved in the conflict but also by observers, journalists, politicians, and academics.

The conflict is termed an "identity conflict" if at least one of the sides denies the adversary's narrative regarding their national identity and their right to national sovereignty over the territory claimed by the two protagonists as their exclusive property (Auerbach, 2005). Each side feels that legitimate rights have been usurped by the other, which include claims for national self-expression and ultimately the establishment of a sovereign nation-state (Auerbach, 2005).

While the origins of Russian military aggression in denying Ukrainians their national identity and sovereignty are clear (Polishcuk, 2024; Schwirtz, 2022), only a few researchers have defined the Russo-Ukrainian war as an identity conflict thus far (Riccioli, 2024; Shekhovtsov, 2025).

Identity conflict, as opposed to a material conflict, "concerns existential issues for the rivaling parties, involves violence, extensively preoccupies members of the implicated societies and is perceived as a zero-sum nature and irreconcilable" (Bar-Tal & Bennik, 2004, as cited in Auerbach, 2005, p.43). While identity conflicts may also have a material dimension, the core issue in these conflicts is identity. This focus gives rise to and perpetuates a 'victim-victimiser' narrative.

The complete negation of the legitimacy of the other party as a national entity, and the subsequent active efforts to dismiss their demands, is perceived by the disadvantaged party as an injustice, leading to a sense of victimisation. Identity conflicts tend to be passionate and intense since "historic wounds are felt as assaults on the self-concept and therefore ultimate safety and security of the victim group" (Monville 2002, as cited in Auerbach, 2005, p.44).

### Resistance to foreign intervention

In political science, resistance to foreign occupation is often understood as a manifestation of nationalism or hostility. However, this resistance is also driven by a multifaceted set of incentives, grievances, and the behaviour of occupying authorities, as some scholars argue (Collard-Wexler, 2003).

The discourse of civic resistance to occupation typically features narratives of heroism, victimhood, identity, and collective memory, aligning with findings in the literature on social movements and conflict analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Knox, 2015).

The media plays a crucial role in shaping these discourses, as it mediates ideological narratives that can either reproduce or resist dominant power relations (Fairclough, N., & Fairclough, I., 2015).

Studies on the resilience of Ukrainians in times of war have shown that freedom, traditions of grassroots self-organisation, and aspirations for joining the Euro-Atlantic community are the main sources (Kudlenko, 2023). A 2022 poll revealed that 71% of Ukrainians viewed freedom as more important than equality, while only 23% supported restricting certain rights and freedoms, such as freedom of speech, even in the context of foreign aggression (Rating Group, 2023).

Research on the concept of freedom for Ukrainians emphasises its practical significance. Here, the concept of freedom encompasses not only personal liberties but also responsibilities, defining individual and social agency, and having deep historical roots (Wynnyckyj, 2022).

Resilience is also associated with the desire for a good life and a better future, which, as most of the national polls show, is intrinsically linked to Euro-Atlantic integration. In the European family, Ukrainians prioritise shared values above everything else: democracy and human rights, for example, which they have always lacked in their union with Russia. From this point of view, NATO as a military alliance is appealing to Ukrainians primarily because it offers protection from aggression and the threat to their identity posed by the Russian Federation. The war has intensified



their aspirations: in January 2023, 92% of Ukrainians wanted membership in the EU by 2030, and 86% sought NATO membership (NDI, 2023).

Studies on civil resistance demonstrate that its effectiveness changes over the course of a prolonged war. While resistance by the civilian population is crucial in the early stages, it cannot be the sole factor. In the middle and later stages of a conflict, the willingness of civil society to fight is vital for maintaining military potential and societal functioning over the long term (Rakov & Fainberg, 2025).

In this study, we integrate the theory of discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Wodak, 2008) with content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) and employ a method of computer-assisted content analysis (Steblyna & Rodyhin, 2025). In Fairclough's framework, discourse practice conceptualisation as a mediating process between the text and socio-cultural practice helps to perceive the issue in a comprehensive manner and thus provides a useful analytical tool (Fairclough, 1995).

## Method

Our study focused on two research questions:

**RQ 1:** How is the discourse of Ukrainian social and military resistance constructed within media narratives, and to what extent is it linked to core democratic values, national identity, and collective agency during the ongoing conflict?

**RQ 2:** How have the discursive patterns and associations of resistance-related keywords evolved over the three years of the Russo-Ukrainian war (2022–2025), reflecting changes in media framing and social attitudes?

These research questions address the key issue of understanding *what unites Ukrainian society in the face of aggression*. We focus on the role of freedom, dignity, justice, memory, and responsibility, specifically examining how resistance-related terms co-occur with these values in media texts. This research is rooted in a theoretical framework grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis, which links language usage with power, identity, and social agency during conflict.

The first research question explores the role of media discourse in shaping national resilience and collective identity in wartime, while being grounded in empirically observed correlations between resistance lexemes and fundamental societal values.

The second research question allows for an investigation of temporal dynamics, capturing shifts in resilience and identity discourse as the conflict unfolds. This approach aligns with recent research that analyses evolving media discourse over multiple years within a wartime context.

## Methodological Approach

The research design consisted of three steps: (1) data mining, (2) linear correlation analysis, and (3) comparing correlation results from two media sources.

In the preliminary step, we identified groups of words for text analysis. We defined the cluster "Resistance", which includes words such as "*resist*", "*fight*", "*struggle*", "*defend*", and "*resilience*" as basic.

For linear correlation analysis, it was necessary to collect two or more datasets for comparison. We identified three other clusters: the "Identity" cluster with words "*symbol*", "*spirit*", "*history*", "*nation*", "*identity*", and "*memory*", the "Values" cluster with words "*freedom*", "*justice*", "*right*", "*dignity*", and "*solidarity*" and the "Responsibilities" cluster consisting of words "*law*", "*responsible*", "*duty*", "*responsibility*", and "*punish*".

In Step 1, we collected eight datasets (four from each media) of full-text articles using HTML-scraping and parsing in Python, covering the period from February 24, 2022, to July 1, 2025. Python programmes were coded by ChatGPT5o and were then used for data mining, utilising the Selenium module for scraping and BeautifulSoup for parsing. The dataset from the *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* website comprised 445 full-text analytical articles in which at least one word from the "Resistance" cluster was used. Subsequently, we conducted a similar scraping for three semantic



clusters: 422 articles were found for the “identity” group, 372 for the “values” group, and 375 for the “responsibility” group. The total number of articles was 1614. Similar data collection procedures were applied to The Kyiv Independent, with the analysis limited to articles categorized by the tag “human history,” yielding 114 full-text articles for the “resistance” group, 112 for the “identity” group, 94 for the “values” group, and 67 for the “responsibility” group. The total number of articles was 387.

In Step 2, we conducted a linear correlation analysis of lexical co-occurrence in each dataset for each media source separately. The Python statistical modules (module pandas) were employed for this purpose.

In Step 3, we analysed the correlations and compared the results from the two media sources, using Python's modules seaborn and matplotlib for visualisation of heatmaps and plotting graphs. Additionally, ChatGPT was employed to interpret the results of the statistical correlation analyses, specifically for selecting significant correlations based on p-values.

## Results and Discussion

### I. Key Findings from *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*

#### 1. Defence of Core Democratic Values as a Reason for Resistance

**Table 1.**

*Correlations between “resistance” and “Values” cluster ( $r \geq 0.3$ ), *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia**

year	group1_word	group2_word	correlation	p_value
2022	resist	freedom	0.4220487722931861	0.0031274333298297
2022	fight	freedom	0.4315308092755756	0.0024572099177724
2022	struggle	freedom	0.316900744406735	0.0299810411105777
2023	defend	right	0.3436401719222325	0.0002219714399448
2023	resist	dignity	0.4187367387737467	4.791425411671998e-06
2023	struggle	dignity	0.3485272627211645	0.0001777944340966
2024	resilience	solidarity	0.478859390044693	1.3857896953582977e-07
2025	defend	justice	0.3561396415639528	0.0033365899226371
2025	fight	dignity	0.304907308596908	0.012798180791109

We found nine positive correlations between the word group “Resistance” and the “Values” cluster in the corpora of *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* (Zn.ua/eng). The resistance-related words such as "resist", "fight", "struggle", "defend", and "resilience" consistently showed moderate positive correlations (ranging from ~0.3 to 0.48) with core democratic values, such as "freedom", "justice", "right", "dignity", and "solidarity" across all years studied. The most prominent correlations were



*resist–freedom* (2022: 0.42,  $p \approx 0.003$ ), *resist–dignity* (2023: 0.41,  $p \approx 0.0004$ ), *resilience–solidarity* (2024: 0.48,  $p \approx 0.00001.4e-07$ ), and *defend–justice* (2025: 0.36,  $p \approx 0.0033$ ).

This evidence suggests that democratic freedoms and values played an important part in mobilising the Ukrainian population to resist in 2022. During that year, Russian aggression was primarily perceived as a threat to freedom. In subsequent years, the increased emphasis on "fight" "dignity", and "solidarity" indicated a growing focus on social cohesion and consolidation of a value-based civic identity. This explains why resistance is perceived not only as territorial defence, but also as defence of a way of life.

## 2. Associations with National and Cultural Symbols

**Table 2.**

*Correlations between “resistance” and “Identity” cluster ( $r \geq 0.3$ ), Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*

year	group1_word	group2_word	correlation	p_value
2022	defend	symbol	0.407899673985384	0.0044265057090185
2022	defend	spirit	0.36460311485492	0.0117460106123629
2022	resist	symbol	0.6106101639049707	5.172493109457766e-06
2022	resist	history	0.3510989395861325	0.0155296389291726
2022	resist	spirit	0.6560810578179287	5.547083785048693e-07
2022	resist	nation	0.4837187866220054	0.0005719043196749
2022	fight	symbol	0.6249200015735648	2.6618282128812585e-06
2022	fight	history	0.4105712738614205	0.0041501235432051
2022	fight	spirit	0.6953377454400363	5.82806767959847e-08
2022	fight	nation	0.6357841154019979	1.5714362104806069e-06
2022	struggle	symbol	0.5007780282171276	0.0003370548306855
2022	struggle	spirit	0.4846496200145282	0.0005560320722052



2023	resist	identity	0.5106661197929403	1.862786210176891e-09
2023	resist	memory	0.3919184248902597	8.034900776450701e-06
2023	struggle	identity	0.3182856422678406	0.0003532280725768
2023	struggle	memory	0.3784909048260406	1.7190438630792823e-05
2024	defend	nation	0.371590438644831	1.344307994761135e-05
2025	defend	nation	0.3762243038059844	0.001328033291139
2025	struggle	memory	0.3453665882191218	0.0034093953049685

We also found 19 positive correlations between the word group “Resistance” and the “Identity” cluster in the corpora of *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, making this cluster the most representative among all clusters.

Terms such as "symbol" (4 occurrences), "spirit" (4 occurrences), "nation" (4 occurrences), and "memory" (3 occurrences) were the most frequently used within this cluster. The semantic group showed stronger correlations (up to ~0.65) with resistance-related words during 2022, the first year of the full-scale invasion. For example, we observed the following correlations: *fight–spirit* (2022: 0.70,  $p < 1e-07$ ), *resist–spirit* (2022: 0.66,  $p < 1e-06$ ), *fight–nation* (2022: 0.64,  $p < 2e-06$ ), *resist–identity* (2023: 0.51,  $p < 2e-09$ ), *struggle–memory* (2023–2025: correlations around 0.34–0.38,  $p < 0.01$ ). Of the total 19 correlations, 12 occurred in 2022; however, this number dropped dramatically to four correlations in 2023 and only 1 in 2024.

These findings point to a strong discursive framing of resistance as deeply connected with national identity and cultural heritage. The high correlations with “spirit” and “symbol” suggest a heavy use of emotive and symbolic language to represent the resistance in 2022.

The moderate correlations with "memory" (specifically *struggle–memory*) indicate continuity in framing resistance as a defence of national identity and historical remembrance.

### 3. Responsibility and Law-Related Concepts

**Table 3.**  
*Correlations between “resistance” and “Responsibility” cluster ( $r \geq 0.3$ ), Dzzerkalo Tyzhnia*

year	group1_word	group2_word	Correlation (r )	p_value
2023	struggle	responsibility	0.3544701292494781	9.462974891715174e-05



2024	defence	responsibility	0.3200911301055756	0.000615337050798
2025	defend	law	0.4361354682571301	0.0004951147051985

We also found a total of three weakly positive significant correlations in this group with no significant correlations in 2022. Notable correlations between resistance words and concepts such as "responsibility" and "law", appear as moderate only in the next years following the full-scale invasion: *struggle–responsibility* (2023: 0.35,  $p < 0.0001$ ) and *defend–law* (2025: 0.44,  $p < 0.0005$ ).

This could reflect an evolution of the resistance discourse towards frameworks of legal legitimacy and collective accountability.

#### 4. Temporal Stability and Slight Intensification

Many of the correlations remained moderate but significant throughout the years, indicating relative stability in the way resistance is connected to these core themes.

In 2022, the “Identity” cluster was the strongest, with correlations between words like "spirit", "symbol", and "nation". However, this theme has shifted over time.

In contrast, some concepts from the “Responsibility” cluster, such as "responsibility" (in 2023 and 2024) and "law" (in 2025) have been emphasised more strongly in later years, suggesting evolving emphasis in the discourse as the conflict continued.

## II. Key Findings from *The Kyiv Independent*

### 1. Strong Positive Correlation with Core Democratic Values

**Table 4.**

*Correlation between “resistance” and “Values” cluster ( $r \geq 0.3$ ), *The Kyiv Independent**

year	group1_word	group2_word	correlation	p_value
2022	defend	freedom	0.6098489002225858	0.015781139455897
2022	fight	freedom	0.5959857524147721	0.0190435230620774
2022	fight	justice	0.66485049629604	0.0068460532705771
2022	resilience	dignity	1.0	0.0
2023	resist	right	0.4364465677176944	0.0258053018431171
2023	struggle	freedom	0.5811819141838528	0.0018480265905011
2023	struggle	dignity	0.7126065256612822	4.416580243286231e-05
2023	struggle	democracy	0.3934389543046799	0.0467549180944833
2024	defend	justice	0.6803360514166091	0.0002540953480218



2024	resist	freedom	0.4190990671703343	0.0415005152300359
2024	resist	dignity	0.505076272276105	0.0118228835618537
2024	resist	democracy	0.7533708035008838	2.142800410297969e-05
2024	fight	justice	0.5796951885499027	0.0029884262680499

Across all years analysed, there was a consistently high and statistically significant correlation ( $p < 0.05$ , often much lower) between words associated with resistance and terms such as freedom, justice, dignity, democracy, and rights: *resilience-dignity* (2022: 1.0,  $p = 0$ ), *struggle-dignity* (2023: 0.71,  $p \approx 0.00004$ ). In total, there were 13 significant correlations in this cluster.

This suggests that in media texts, Ukrainian resistance is persistently framed as a struggle not just for physical survival or military objectives but as fundamentally aimed at preserving and realising core values such as freedom, justice, and dignity. The high correlations with words like "democracy" and "identity" further indicate that national self-concept and democratic aspirations are central to resistance narratives.

## 2. Nationhood, History, and Memory as Pillars of Resistance

**Table 5.**

*Correlation between “resistance” and “Identity” cluster ( $r \geq 0.3$ ), The Kyiv Independent*

year	group1_word	group2_word	correlation	p_value
2022	defend	spirit	0.6951736466013723	0.0013617697469441
2022	defend	nation	0.4896030957170718	0.0391763118863161
2022	resist	history	0.5621224578405455	0.0151797747323638
2022	fight	nation	0.6062663733402069	0.0076484492984059
2022	resilience	memory	0.6616591390145992	0.0027829482520487
2022	resilience	history	0.6645570174272215	0.0026251114720987
2022	resilience	spirit	0.8892972917998874	7.971395371971689e-07
2023	defend	history	0.3731184801732717	0.0422731997998317
2023	struggle	identity	0.50208969296966	0.0046959189850835
2023	struggle	symbol	0.4576043153224295	0.0110025241450916
2023	struggle	history	0.5408801531417586	0.0020279850130697



2024	defend	history	0.6822506801446152	1.2257120341988412e-05
2024	fight	history	0.6270536165075955	9.424271421990611e-05
2024	resilience	memory	0.3962766405926509	0.0224285380246865
2025	defend	memory	0.5330372837222158	0.0227397406521307
2025	defend	nation	0.5287334492157248	0.0240721877166235
2025	fight	nation	0.5604740427792777	0.0155461080271331

In our analysis, we found 17 significant correlations between resistance-related terms and the “Identity” cluster. Similar to *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, this cluster was the most representative among the other two groups. Terms such as "nation"(4 occurrences), "history" (6 occurrences) and "memory" (3 occurrences) were the most frequently used words with moderate to strong and highly significant correlations, e.g.: *resilience-history* (2022: 0.665,  $p \approx 0.0026$ ), *defend-history* (2024: 0.682,  $p \approx 0.00001$ ), *defend-memory* (2025: 0.533,  $p \approx 0.023$ ).

This pattern points to the discursive construction of resistance as a continuation of historical struggles, serving to protect or create collective memory and national identity. The war is thus presented as embedded within historical trajectories and national mythmaking.

### 3. Responsibility, Duty, and Agency

**Table 6.**

*Correlation between “resistance” and “Responsibility” cluster ( $r \geq 0.3$ ), The Kyiv Independent*

year	group1_word	group2_word	correlation	p_value
2022	defend	responsible	0.6499999999999998	0.0303859638438834
2023	fight	duty	0.4453889999158184	0.0430342676281817
2023	struggle	responsibility	0.535520365036663	0.0123533523935687
2025	defence	duty	0.7130240959073806	0.0310588499838167
2025	defend	responsible	0.8315841857951104	0.0054517932639068
2025	defend	duty	0.6799343576727904	0.0438944743697232
2025	fight	responsible	0.8621631183937565	0.0027901989220801



Within the “Responsibility” cluster, we identified 7 significant positive correlations. The moderate correlations between “resistance” and terms like “responsible”, “responsibility”, and “duty” have strengthened in recent years: *defend-responsible* (2025: 0.832,  $p \approx 0.0055$ ), *fight-responsible* (2025: 0.862,  $p \approx 0.0028$ ).

The increase in frequency and strength of these associations over time may reflect a shift in the narrative toward perceiving resistance as a collective and obligatory response.

### III. Comparative Results of Media Outlets

In 2022, the strongest correlations were found within the “Identity” cluster (*Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*: *spirit-fight* 0.7, *fight-nation* 0.64, *fight-symbol* 0.62 — a total of 12 significant correlations within the cluster; *The Kyiv Independent*: *resilience-spirit* 0.89, *defend-spirit* 0.7 — a total of seven significant correlations within the “Identity” cluster) and the “Values” cluster (*Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*: two significant correlations with the word “freedom”; *The Kyiv Independent*: *resilience-dignity* 1.0 — a total of four significant correlations within the “Values” cluster). However, from 2023 to 2024, the correlations within the identified groups weakened (*Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 2023: three correlations in each cluster; *The Kyiv Independent*, 2023: three correlations in each cluster; *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia*, 2024: one correlation in each cluster; in 2025, two correlations in the “Identity” cluster and none in the “Values” cluster; *The Kyiv Independent*: five correlations in the “Values” cluster and two in the “Identity” cluster with the word “memory”). By 2025, they had disappeared entirely: there were no correlations in the “Values” cluster in *The Kyiv Independent*, while three weak correlations remained in the “Identity” cluster.

The “Responsibility” cluster was manifested differently in both media outlets in 2022 and 2023: *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* showed no correlations, whereas *The Kyiv Independent* had one correlation in 2022 and two in 2023, with no correlations in 2024.

However, in 2025, the “Responsibility” cluster, which was largely absent in 2023 and 2024, became a prominent theme for both outlets. *Dzerkalo Tyzhnia* had two significant weak correlations: *defend-law* (0.44) and *defend-justice* (0.36). *The Kyiv Independent* reported four strong correlations with the words “responsible” and “duty”: *fight-responsible* (0.86), *defend-responsible* (0.83), and *defence-duty* (0.71). It is important to note that the research period was limited to July 1, just three weeks before nationwide protests against the liquidation of the anti-corruption bodies, NABU and SAP, began in Ukrainian cities. Therefore, the resulting correlations are not related to this political event but instead illustrate the shift in public sentiment in early 2022.

The “Identity” cluster was the only cluster that demonstrated stable correlations with “resistance” across both media outlets over the 3.5 years of the war, with a sharp peak in 2022 and a gradual decline afterward.

The “Values” cluster exhibited consistent associations between 2022 and 2024, but these were missing in the first half of 2025. In contrast, the “Responsibility” cluster, which had been hardly present in the 2022–2024 period, unexpectedly gained prominence in both media outlets in 2025. This could be attributed to changes in public discourse related to the internal political landscape, the prolonged duration of the conflict, or external influences such as international debates about values and support.

### Concluding discussion

This study examined how Ukrainian media construct narratives of social and military resistance during the full-scale phase of the Russo-Ukrainian war, from February 2022 to July 2025. Drawing on a Critical Discourse Analysis framework and applying statistical correlation analysis of lexical co-occurrence, the study analysed how resistance-related lexemes are connected with democratic values, national identity, and civic responsibility in media discourse. Furthermore, it explored how these associations evolved during the first three and a half years of the full-scale invasion.



Firstly, the analysis revealed that narratives of Ukrainian resistance in both media outlets are consistently structured around the semantic cluster of national identity. This cluster shows the most stable and frequent correlations with resistance-related lexemes throughout the entire period of analysis, particularly strong in 2022, linking resistance to concepts such as spirit, nation, and national symbols. This indicates that Ukrainian media outlets predominantly frame resistance as a form of collective expression of self-identity and a defence of national subjectivity.

Secondly, the study highlights a temporal transformation in the value-based framing of resistance. In the early phase of the full-scale invasion, resistance discourse was strongly associated with normative concepts such as freedom, dignity, and democracy. However, these associations gradually weakened between 2023 and 2025, suggesting a decline in the intensity of explicitly value-oriented narratives in media representations of resistance.

Lastly, the results indicate the emergence of civic responsibility as a new thematic dimension of resistance discourse. While the responsibility cluster was largely absent in the early stages of the war, it became increasingly prominent in 2025, linking resistance to ideas of duty, responsibility, law, and justice. This shift indicates a gradual reframing of resistance in media discourse, transitioning from primarily identity- and value-based narratives to a stronger emphasis on civic accountability and social responsibility.

Beyond contributing empirically, the study offers theoretical contributions within the field of media studies. Its findings indicate that media function as a key platform for the discursive construction of collective identity during wartime, shaping shared understandings of resistance and national belonging. The observed temporal shifts in the framing of resistance also demonstrate how media narratives adapt to the changing phases of prolonged conflict, moving from identity-based mobilisation toward discourses emphasising both institutional and civic responsibility. This transformation suggests that media narratives not only reflect but also contribute to the symbolic legitimisation of collective action and societal resistance during periods of existential crisis.

These findings also provide theoretical insights for research on resistance to foreign occupation. The results contribute to the literature on the motivations behind societal resistance by demonstrating that media narratives consistently frame resistance not only in strategic or material terms but also through symbolic and identity-based dimensions. This suggests that, within Ukrainian media discourse, the war is primarily perceived as a struggle for the preservation of national identity and political subjectivity, rather than merely a conflict driven by external actors or domestic political leadership. In this context, the study empirically supports theoretical distinctions made in conflict studies between identity-based conflicts and material conflicts.

However, the findings should be interpreted within the context of several limitations. First, the analysis is based on a limited dataset and does not account for audience reception, which restricts conclusions about how these narratives are interpreted by wider audiences. Second, the study focuses on correlations among three selected semantic clusters that represent important, but not exhaustive, dimensions of Ukrainian resistance. Further potential motivational factors, such as hostility towards the occupier or reactions to war crimes, were not included in this study and may constitute promising directions for future research.

**Declaration of generative artificial intelligence and technologies using artificial intelligence in the writing process.** The author declare the use of artificial intelligence tools in the preparation of this article: programs in Python were made with the help of ChatGPT5o, were then used as authors' software for data mining and linear correlation analyses; ChatGPT5o was used also for the interpretation of statistical correlation analyses. Information about this is included in the 'Method' section of the article.

The authors of the article bear full responsibility for the correct use and citation of sources.



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