

## **Russia's War in Ukraine and Media Solidarity (Case of Georgia)**

*By Mariam Gersamia<sup>\*</sup>, Ekatherine Gigauri<sup>‡</sup>, Salome Mamasakhlisi<sup>°</sup>,  
Mikheil Bodokia<sup>•</sup> & Mariam Nakoevi<sup>♦</sup>*

This paper delves deeply into the pivotal role that solidarity journalism plays in shaping media discourse, particularly during times of wartime and crisis, with a central focus on its profound impact during the course of Russia's war on Ukraine. By conducting a thorough investigation into the multi-dimensional aspects of solidarity journalism, this study delves into the intricate strategies media outlets employ to utilize various indicators of solidarity. These strategies are deployed not only to foster collective stress resistance, but also to provide essential psychological support to audiences during periods of upheaval. The paper emphasizes the importance of media's portrayal of prosocial behaviors and positive micro-moments, which collectively contribute to the reinforcement of resilience within communities when they are facing challenging circumstances. To contextualize its findings, the paper offers a detailed analysis of the specific case of Russia's war on Ukraine. In doing so, it underscores the instrumental role that media solidarity plays in empowering the communities directly affected by such conflicts. By leveraging solidarity journalism's inherent capacity to foster unity and resilience, media outlets can significantly contribute to mitigating the often-negative effects of fear-laden narratives during times of wartime.

*Keywords:* Ukraine, Georgia, solidarity journalism, wartime media discourse, media solidarity indicators

### **Introduction**

In February 2022, the global community bore witness to a full-scale war initiated by Russia against Ukraine, resulting in catastrophic attacks on both the nation and its civilian populace. With the progression of digital technologies, accessing real-time updates about the war became increasingly convenient. Traditional and social media platforms played a pivotal role in disseminating timely information to the public regarding the ongoing situation. The proliferation of digital technologies has fundamentally transformed news consumption during wartimes. A multitude of groups, pages, and applications on traditional and social media platforms have emerged, dedicated to promptly delivering up-to-the-minute information to a worldwide user base. This unprecedented accessibility has

---

<sup>\*</sup>Professor, Ivane Javakishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia.

<sup>‡</sup>Fellow, Media and Communication Educational-Research Center "Media Voice", Georgia.

<sup>°</sup>Fellow, Media and Communication Educational-Research Center "Media Voice", Georgia.

<sup>•</sup>Fellow, Media and Communication Educational-Research Center "Media Voice", Georgia.

<sup>♦</sup>Fellow, Media and Communication Educational-Research Center "Media Voice", Georgia.

empowered individuals to remain well-informed about the ongoing war in a more efficient manner than ever before.

As the transition to the active phase of Russia's war in Ukraine unfolded, there emerged an unprecedented **global media solidarity with Ukraine**. This solidarity extended to Georgian media, which launched an extensive campaign in February 2022 to demonstrate support. This campaign underscored the industry's dedication to informing its audience about unfolding events and the war's impact on civilians. Displays of solidarity and support from media outlets hold substantial significance during periods of conflict and war. Importantly, the extensive reach of Georgian media facilitated the dissemination of crucial information to a wide spectrum of the population, thereby fostering awareness, empathy, and understanding. Indeed, as Kitty (2005) posited, "war is an audience prey, regardless of whether or not war is a direct threat to viewers and readers" (p. 140). This paper underscores the indispensable role of media solidarity in cultivating an informed and compassionate global audience during times of crisis.

This paper presents a media analysis of Georgian media's solidarity with Ukraine, shedding light on the pro-social media mechanisms activated during war coverage and tragic events. It also explores potential avenues for media to demonstrate solidarity and support while accurately reporting on human rights and identifying areas for improvement, particularly when addressing vulnerable groups and events.

The research addresses the following inquiries:

1. What are the primary characteristics and frequency of solidarity demonstrations employed by the media?
2. What are the common and divergent approaches adopted by broadcasting companies when demonstrating solidarity in a polarized context?
3. Which sources and statements do media outlets rely on when expressing solidarity?

The study delves into the pro-social mechanisms activated by the media during wartime, spotlighting the evolving media agenda and the dynamics of solidarity demonstration within Georgian media. Given the limited number of studies on solidarity during wartime, there is currently no comprehensive overview of wartime coverage analysis from a solidarity journalism perspective, which according to Varma (2023) means prioritizing marginalized people's definitions, shared conditions, and ongoing struggles

## Literature Review

In the midst of conflicts, particularly during wartime, the media and an informed society wield considerable influence in the pursuit of peacebuilding endeavors. This paper delves into the convergence of goals between solidarity and peace journalism, emphasizing the pivotal role of audience inclusion. Joseph (2014) explores the role of global mass media in contemporary international

conflicts and advocates for the adoption of "peace journalism" as an alternative framework for conflict coverage. This perspective calls for a fresh strategy that fully harnesses the media's potential in conflict resolution. According to the author, the media grapples with diverse limitations when covering international conflicts, encompassing individual, state, organizational, or ideological constraints. In this context, it is imperative to view the media as a "social institution." To ensure psychological well-being for media users, systematic media monitoring and the promotion of solidarity journalism during wartime become indispensable.

As posited by Lotman (2007, p. 209) and cited by Ventsel et al. (2021), the efficacy of fear discourse hinges upon its ability to resonate with the audience's cultural memory. Anticipating impending threats serves as an amplifying factor for fear induction. Ventsel et al. (2021) expound that Russia frequently employs fear as a strategic communication tool, harnessing the discursive construction of fear through manipulation of enigmatic messages and numerical data. In this context, the cultivation of resilience and solidarity within diverse media audiences assumes significance as a countermeasure against the pervasion of fear-laden atmospheres and discourse prevalent during periods of conflict.

Solidarity journalism serves as both a psychological support tool and a means of bolstering stress resilience for the broader public, fostering positive micro-moments, and reinforcing solidarity toward vulnerable groups. The demonstration of solidarity within the media sphere is not a new concept. It is noteworthy that the Georgian media landscape has primarily been characterized by fragmentation, often arising in response to specific stories or events that last only a few days. However, the solidarity displayed toward Ukraine was not merely an editorial stance or a one-time display of support from select groups. Instead, expressing solidarity with Ukraine has become an ongoing facet of the media's agenda, intrinsically linked to Georgia's national interests and the preservation of its identity.

Solidarity not only plays a pivotal role in advancing journalism's quest for truth (Varma, 2023), but it also assumes an additional function: bolstering collective stress resistance by furnishing psychological sustenance during times of crises. This role is achieved by spotlighting prosocial actions and fostering positive micro-moments. In the context of armed conflict, solidarity journalism becomes instrumental in providing comprehensive support and accurate reportage for victims and refugees from multifaceted perspectives. An illustrative example lies in the coverage of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, where both global and Georgian media played a role in encouraging Ukrainians.

In crisis situations, the role of pro-social media in society is further enhanced through demonstrations of solidarity. This effect intensifies during war, as individuals seek behavioral models and positive emotions, such as hope, empathy, compassion, joy, love, humor, inspiration, and gratitude, within media content. The empathy, support, and solidarity depicted by and toward various individuals and groups in the media serve as emotional stimuli, even in stressful and apparently hopeless circumstances. This motivation compels media users toward prosocial actions, including participation in solidarity initiatives and engagement in charitable activities.

Media consumers express solidarity both on an individual and societal level. During crises and wartime, solidarity has the potential to spread virally. Makhortykh and Bastian (2022) assert that "news personalization can influence conflict reporting in non-Western media systems characterized by limited press freedom" (Makhortykh & Bastian, 2022). The authors explore the impact of technological innovations on news distribution, particularly by examining the use of algorithmic personalization systems.

The extensive solidarity media campaign in Georgia following Russia's invasion of Ukraine can be attributed to several factors:

1. **Common enemy:** Both countries share a history of Russia's aggressive policies and imperialist intentions, with Georgia having experienced territorial occupation by Russia. Prior to the 2022 conflict, Georgia had already been embroiled in several conflicts (war in 2008) with the Russian Federation.
2. **Geographical proximity:** The war's relative proximity to Georgia heightened interest in the conflict.
3. **National interests:** Demonstrating solidarity aligned with national interests plays a pivotal role in shaping a nation's external image. Additionally, shared national interests between Ukraine and Georgia regarding integration into Euro-Atlantic structures further contributed to the solidarity campaign.

Regarding the Georgian media landscape, in the press freedom index (RwB, 2023), Georgia ranks 77th out of 180 countries. The media environment is pluralistic yet significantly partisan (Freedom House, 2023), with the country designated as partly free and ranked 58th out of 100. As the conflict unfolded, the media agenda underwent dynamic evolution. Significantly, in 2022, Ukraine, Georgia, and Moldova pursued European Union membership, and progress toward this goal became a central focus of media coverage, sparking engaging discourse for analysis and discussion.

### **Research Methodology and Procedures**

A mixed-method approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative methods, was employed in this research. Content analysis was utilized for rigorous media monitoring, facilitating an in-depth investigation. To ensure methodological consistency and data accuracy, a comprehensive coding guideline was developed, encompassing primary categories pertinent to solidarity indicators. Throughout the monitoring process, the coding framework was enriched by the incorporation of secondary categories.

The investigation of solidarity manifestations within the media focused specifically on traditional broadcasters, with an emphasis on television channels that constituted the principal source of information for a substantial portion of the audience during the research timeframe. The selected channels encompassed the following: Broadcasting Company "Rustavi 2," Broadcasting Company "Main

Channel," Broadcasting Company "Formula," Broadcasting Company "TV First," Broadcasting Company "Imedi," and Georgian Public Broadcasting - First Channel.

Observations were conducted during the primary news broadcasts and special programs aired during primetime, the period between 20:00 and 23:00, which traditionally garners the highest viewership.

The research period was bifurcated into two distinct phases:

- I. February 25 - March 6, 2022: The initial phase marked the emergence of media solidarity, characterized by comprehensive coverage of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the initiation of hostilities.
- II. May 10, 2022: The second phase, occurring two months subsequent to the onset of the Ukraine war, aimed to gauge the continuity of solidarity patterns within the media.

The selection of specific calendar days were executed through probabilistic sampling, specifically employing the "Structured by Week" method. Over the research duration, approximately 250 hours of media content, encompassing 1554 television segments, underwent comprehensive analysis, leading to the identification and processing of 3,170 solidarity indicators.

The process of media monitoring culminated in the identification of both primary and additional characteristics of solidarity, along with their frequency of occurrence in the media. Furthermore, the study discerned the principal sources of solidarity expressions and explored disparities in how diverse channels conveyed solidarity, while also pinpointing shared attributes. The predominant and ancillary features identified were ranked based on their frequency. A comparative analysis was undertaken between outcomes obtained during the initial and subsequent phases of the research.

## **Results and Discussion**

The investigation's initial phase, spanning a 10-day period from February 25 to March 6, entailed the meticulous analysis of 854 prime-time segments originating from six broadcasting companies. The scrutinized content constituted an aggregate of approximately 120 hours, spanning diverse formats like news segments, narratives, live broadcasts, and talk shows.

Notably, during the war's early days, each broadcasting company deployed camera crews to Ukraine, facilitating firsthand coverage of unfolding events. Table 1 presents a comprehensive overview of material distribution, focusing on topics related to Ukraine, within the primary news outlets of the Georgian media.

Table 1. Distribution of Materials on Ukrainian Topics in Main News Outlets

Media content	Whithout context with Ukraine	In context with Ukraine	SUM
<b>Public Broadcaster</b>	48	132	180
<b>Rustavi 2</b>	31	75	106
<b>Imedi</b>	30	130	160
<b>Mtavari TV</b>	29	89	118
<b>TV Pirveli</b>	16	155	171
<b>Formula TV</b>	14	105	119
<b>SUM</b>	168	686	854

The table provides a clear depiction of the pronounced dedication, amounting to no less than 70%, of media outlets to coverage related to Ukraine. Notably, "Rustavi 2" exhibited the least content in the context of Ukraine, accounting for 71%, while "TV First" exhibited the highest dedication with 91%. Collectively, an appreciable 80% of the materials featured in news programs centered on the subject of Ukraine.

During the research period, the vigilance of media monitoring revealed a total of seven distinctive categories through which media solidarity with Ukraine was expressed. These categories, indicative of the diverse manners in which media outlets showcased solidarity, are delineated in Table 2.

Table 2. Categories of Media Solidarity

N	Solidarity categories
1.	Symbols, signs, indices supporting Ukraine
2.	Statements of solidarity
3.	Expressing gratitude for support
4.	Solidarity demonstrations
5.	Solidarity awareness raising information
6.	Sanctions as an expression of solidarity with Ukraine
7.	Dictionary of solidarity: media language and context

### Categories of Solidarity:

#### 1. Symbols, Signs, and Indicators of Support for Ukraine:

- Solidarity slogan "Слава Україні, Героям Слава" (Glory to Ukraine, Glory to the Heroes)
- Slogan expressing solidarity with a context of mockery: "Putin kh\*\*\*o"
- #hashtags expressing solidarity
- Symbolism of the state of Ukraine (flag, coat of arms, anthem)
- Graphic representation of the map of Ukraine
- Colors of the flag of Ukraine in studio decoration
- Colors of the flag of Ukraine in the dress code of presenters/media
- Colors of the flag of Ukraine on the channel's microphone
- Colors of the flag on the channel's logo
- Solidarity graffiti on the streets
- Prosocial shots/episodes

- Anthem of Georgia (in the context of solidarity with Ukraine)
2. **Statements of Solidarity:**
    - 2.1. **Organizations on whose behalf the announcements were made:**
      - Broadcasting companies
      - Patriarchate of Georgia
      - International organizations
      - "Anonymous" hacker organization
    - 2.2. **Organizations and groups whose representatives issued the statements:**
      - Opposition representatives
      - Government representatives
      - Representative of the Embassy of Ukraine in Georgia
      - Foreign politicians
      - Representatives of non-governmental organizations
      - Representatives of religious organizations
      - The Fourth President (Salome Zurbishvili)
      - The Third President (Mikheil Saakashvili)
      - Georgian citizens (including recognizable faces)
      - Activists
      - Ukrainians in Georgia
      - Russian citizens and ethnic Russians in Georgia
      - Ethnic Russians living abroad and/or in Russia
      - Ukrainians in shelters and refugees
      - Georgians in Ukraine
      - Foreign citizens (including famous people)
      - Others
  3. **Expressing Gratitude for Solidarity from the Government of Ukraine:**
    - From the side of the President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky
    - From Ukrainian politicians
    - Thank you to the Georgian people
  4. **Solidarity Actions:**
    - Solidarity actions held abroad
    - Solidarity actions held in Georgia (including live broadcasts)
  5. **Solidarity and War Loss Awareness:**
    - Charitable campaigns conducted by media organizations (fundraising)
    - Mobilization of humanitarian aid
    - Statistics of the dead and injured in the war
    - Engagements, interviews from the battlefield (including recognizable faces)
  6. **Coverage of Sanctions as an Expression of Solidarity:**
    - Famous brands leaving the Russian market
    - Boycott of Russian brands in Georgia
    - Sanctions against Russia worldwide
  7. **Glossary of Solidarity: Media Language and Context:**

- In the context of Russia: Emphasis on the word "occupier" and Russia's role in starting the war; Provocations by Ukraine emphasized from Russian sources.
- In the context of Ukraine: Mention of the brotherly nation and friendly country.
- In the context of the national interests of Georgia: Commemoration of the 2008 Russia-Georgia war; Parallel to the war in Abkhazia; Presentation of Russia as a common enemy; Highlighting dangers in Georgia after the war in Ukraine; Mention of past aid provided by Ukraine to Georgia.
- Ukrainian humor in media coverage: Inclusion of slogans and incidents expressing humor related to Russia and Ukraine.

According to the analysis of the first six categories, the Georgian media most frequently expressed solidarity by covering supporting statements made by individual organizations, groups, and specific individuals. Solidarity rallies were covered with the least frequency, although it should be noted that the airtime allocated to the rallies often encompassed the entire news broadcast. Table 3 presents the frequency of coverage of solidarity categories on television.

*Table 3. Frequency of Use of Media Solidarity Categories*

media solidarity categories	Frequency
Statements of solidarity	49%, n=1280
Symbols, signs, indices supporting Ukraine	21%, n=556
Expressing gratitude for support from Ukrainian government	11%, n=282
Solidarity awareness raising information	10%, n=258
Sanctions as an expression of solidarity with Ukraine	5%, n=141
Solidarity demonstrations	4%, n=110
Sum	100%, n=2627

Out of the 2,627 indicators employed in media coverage, 49% stemmed from statements conveying solidarity, while 21% originated from symbols, signs, and indications of support. Table 3 visually represent the distribution frequency of the six categories of media solidarity.

Overall, TV First exhibited the most pronounced utilization of all solidarity categories, constituting 25% of the indicators. In contrast, TV Company "Imedi" and "Rustavi 2" showcased the lowest usage of solidarity categories, accounting for 14% and 11% respectively. Quantitative data outlining the distribution frequency of the six categories of media solidarity across TV stations is detailed in Table 4 provides a representation of the distribution patterns.



Table 4. Distribution Frequency of Six Categories of Media Solidarity in TV Stations

Category	Public Broadcaster	Rustavi 2	Imedi	Main Channel	TV First	Formula TV	Sum
Signs: symbols, icons, indexes	85	51	69	106	131	114	556
Statements	208	128	184	181	368	211	1280
Expressing gratitude for support from Ukrainian government	45	35	42	47	77	36	282
Solidarity demonstrations	15	13	8	12	25	37	110
Raising awareness	64	34	39	25	38	58	258
Sanctions	22	20	30	25	26	18	141
Sum	439	281	372	396	665	474	2627

In the initial phase of the research, it is evident that the category of symbols, signs, and indices of solidarity was the most frequently employed, with "TV First" utilizing it most frequently (24 times), and "Rustavi 2" featuring it the least (9 times). Similarly, statements containing expressions of solidarity were most prominently featured by "TV First" (29%) and least by "Rustavi 2." Notably, coverage of statements originating from the Ukrainian government was most prevalent on "TV First" (27.3%) and least on "Rustavi 2." Concerning solidarity actions, "Formula" presented the highest coverage (33%), while awareness-raising content was most extensively employed by the public broadcaster (25%), and least by "Main Channel" (10%). In terms of information concerning sanctions (in the context of solidarity), "Imedi" displayed it most frequently (21%), while "Formula" exhibited it least (13%).

During the second phase of the research, spanning 10 specific calendar days in the month of May (2, 4, 6, 10, 12, 14, 18, 23, 26, and 31), a total of 700 materials from the primary news programs of the six broadcasting companies underwent analysis. These materials encompassed a range of formats, including news segments, stories, live broadcasts, and talk shows, aggregating to approximately 120 hours. Table 5 provides a comprehensive overview of the materials centered around Ukraine within the main news outlets of RBA during the second research phase.

Table 5. Materials Covered in the Context of Ukraine (Second Research Phase)

Media content	Without context with Ukraine	In context with Ukraine	Sum
Public Broadcaster	93	42	135
Rustavi 2	82	66	148
Imedi	76	37	113
Main Channel	48	13	61
TV first	55	31	86
Formula	73	84	157
Sum	427	273	700

As discernible from Table 6, two months following the commencement of Russia's war in Ukraine, a noticeable shift in the media agenda has transpired. Over this phase, a total of 273 materials were encompassed within the context of Ukraine, featuring 434 solidarity indicators. This reflects a substantial decrease of 2,193 indicators in comparison to the data derived from the first research phase. Moreover, owing to the observational nature, the number of categories that articulate media solidarity has been streamlined.

Over the entire research duration, within the purview of solidarity with Ukraine, media monitoring identified a consolidated total of 5 categories of media solidarity. Quantitative content analysis was employed to dissect these five categories. The hierarchical ranking of these categories is meticulously delineated in Table 6.

*Table 6.* Frequency of Use of Media Solidarity Categories (Second Phase: May)

<b>N</b>	<b>Solidarity Categories</b>	<b>Sum</b>
1.	Symbols, signs, indices supporting Ukraine	184
2.	Solidarity awareness raising information	132
3.	Coverage of Ukrainian Government's activities	54
4.	Sanctions as an expression of solidarity with Ukraine	33
5.	Solidarity media language and context	33

As illustrated in the table, during the second phase of the investigation, 42% of the solidarity indicators emanated from symbols embodying solidarity, while 30% were drawn from awareness-raising information. The comprehensive hierarchy of indicators during the second phase of the study, classified by broadcasting companies, is meticulously laid out in Table 7.

*Table 7.* Frequency of Media Solidarity Indicators by Broadcasting Companies (Second Phase)

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Public Broadcaster</b>	<b>Rustavi 2</b>	<b>Imedi</b>	<b>Main Channel</b>	<b>TV First</b>	<b>Formula</b>	<b>Sum</b>
Signs	39	27	50	32	7	27	182
Awareness raising information	33	12	7	1	1	0	54
Ukrainian Government's activities	48	15	39	6	12	12	132
Sanctions	8	8	1	3	0	13	33
Solidarity media language and context	8	8	1	3	0	13	33
<b>Sum</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>434</b>

Table 7 shows that, in total, in the second phase, the public broadcaster used solidarity categories the most (33%, n=146), followed by "Imedi" (23%, n=100), "Rustavi 2" 65 (15%, n=65), "Formula" (14%, n=60), "Main Channel" (10%, n=42) and "TV First" (5%, n=21).

During the second phase of the study, the absence of emergency broadcasts or announcements on any channel indicates a significant decline in urgent and crisis-related news coverage compared to the first phase. In the initial phase, a total of 134 emergency broadcasts and announcements were aired across different channels, underlining the heightened news intensity during the conflict's early days. However, the media agenda shifted during the second phase towards other political subjects, particularly those critical of the government. Three specific topics gained prominence in the coverage of "Formula," "TV First," and "Main Channel":

1. **Prospect of EU Candidate Status:** Media outlets centered their attention on discussions and updates related to Georgia's aspiration to become a candidate for EU membership. This topic gained significance due to its alignment with Georgia's geopolitical aspirations and its ties to the European community.
2. **Arrest of Nika Gvaramia:** Media closely monitored developments surrounding the arrest of Nika Gvaramia, a notable political figure, resulting in a substantial political event or controversy.
3. **Mikheil Saakashvili's Health Deterioration:** Media highlighted the health status of Mikheil Saakashvili, a former Georgian president, and influential political figure, potentially due to his role in Georgian politics and his involvement in the public sphere.

These shifts in the media agenda signify a move from the initial crisis coverage to other pivotal political events and developments in Georgia. This transition could have influenced the discourse on Ukrainian solidarity, potentially leading to varied perspectives or levels of coverage for the solidarity indicators during the second research phase.

The first category of media content related to solidarity is "Solidarity Symbols, Signs, Indices." This category encompasses diverse audio-visual cues and indicators that express support and solidarity for Ukraine. The indicators within this category encompass:

1. **Solidarity slogan "Слава Україні, Героям Слава":** This slogan translates to "Glory to Ukraine, Glory to the Heroes" and is a common expression of solidarity with Ukraine.
2. **The solidarity slogan with a mocking context: "Putin kh\*o":\*\*** This slogan conveys solidarity with Ukraine while also ridiculing Russian President Vladimir Putin. Please note that the word has been censored for inappropriate language.
3. **#Hashtags expressing solidarity:** The use of hashtags on social media to convey solidarity with Ukraine and related events.
4. **Symbolism of the Ukrainian state (flag, coat of arms, anthem):** Visual representations of the Ukrainian flag, coat of arms, and the playing of the Ukrainian national anthem to demonstrate solidarity.

5. **Graphic representation of the map of Ukraine:** Displaying maps or graphics depicting Ukraine to symbolize support.
6. **Colors of the Ukrainian flag in studio decoration:** Adorning the studio or set with colors resembling the Ukrainian flag.
7. **Colors of the Ukrainian flag in the dress code of presenters:** Presenters wearing clothing incorporating the colors of the Ukrainian flag.
8. **Colors of the Ukrainian flag on the channel's microphone:** Attaching stickers or displaying the colors of the Ukrainian flag on the microphones used by the channel's presenters.
9. **Ukrainian flag colors on the channel's logo:** Integrating the colors of the Ukrainian flag into the logo or branding of the broadcasting channel.
10. **Solidarity graffiti on the street:** Street art or graffiti conveying messages of solidarity with Ukraine.
11. **Prosocial shots/episodes:** Broadcasting positive and supportive content related to Ukraine, such as acts of kindness, humanitarian efforts, or positive stories from the conflict.
12. **Anthem of Georgia (in the context of solidarity with Ukraine):** Playing the national anthem of Georgia to express solidarity with Ukraine.

During the first 10 days after the war's initiation, "TV First" demonstrated the highest utilization of the "Solidarity Symbols, Signs, Indices" category in its coverage, featuring these indicators 131 times, accounting for 24% of the total indicators in this category. Notably, Ukrainian state symbols (anthem, flag, coat of arms) were prominently displayed and/or sounded within the studio of "TV First."

Other television stations also actively incorporated indicators from this category. "Formula" utilized them in 21% of their coverage (n=114), "Main Channel" in 19% (n=106), the public broadcaster in 15% (n=85), "Imedi" in 12% (n=69), and "Rustavi 2" in 9% (n=51). Within the "Solidarity Symbols, Signs, Indices" category, television stations predominantly focused on three indicators, which were frequently featured in their coverage:

1. **State symbols of Ukraine (flag, coat of arms, map):** Displaying and representing the national symbols of Ukraine to demonstrate support and solidarity.
2. **Displaying solidarity graffiti:** Broadcasting images of graffiti and street art expressing solidarity with Ukraine.
3. **Prosocial shots/episodes:** Presenting positive and supportive content related to Ukraine, such as acts of kindness, humanitarian efforts, or positive stories from the conflict.

Throughout the research period, all television stations included prosocial episodes in their coverage. A total of 76 such episodes were covered, showcasing acts of support and kindness related to the conflict in Ukraine. The most pro-social and positive frames/episodes were recorded on "TV First" (21%, n=27) and the public broadcaster (22%, n=19). These episodes featured heart-warming scenes, including a Ukrainian soldier playing the piano and boosting the morale of fellow

soldiers, a Ukrainian child singing to uplift spirits in bunkers, and a restaurant in Ukraine offering free meals to military personnel and others.

Furthermore, some television channels integrated indicators such as incorporating the colors of the Ukrainian flag into the dress code of presenters. For instance, during the first research phase, 17 journalists on Rustavi 2, 13 journalists on "Mtavari Akhis," 10 journalists on "TV First," 8 journalists on "Formula," and 3 journalists on "Imedi" donned accessories or clothing featuring the state symbols of Ukraine.

However, using the colors of the Ukrainian flag on the channel's microphone was relatively infrequent, observed only once when a journalist on "TV-Pirveli" affixed a Ukrainian flag sticker to the microphone of the TV channel. Additionally, during the first phase of the research period, the anthems of both Ukraine and Georgia were played on all channels, emphasizing the connection and solidarity between the two nations during this critical time.

In the first research phase, various solidarity-related hashtags were noted on air across three broadcasting companies:

1. **Public Broadcaster - Channel One** used hashtags such as #StandWithUkraine, #RussiaInvadedUkraine, and #TBILISI4UKRAINE to express solidarity with Ukraine.
2. **"TV First"** employed hashtags such as #РоссияОставьсяДома, #StopPutin, #StopWar, and #TheWholeWorldIsWatching in their coverage to convey solidarity.
3. **"Formula"** used the hashtag #Gharibashvili does not express my position in the context of expressing solidarity.

Furthermore, the slogan "Слава Украине, Героям Слава" (Glory to Ukraine, Glory to the Heroes) was used by all broadcasting companies during the first research phase as an expression of solidarity. The frequency of usage of this slogan by different channels is as follows:

- "TV First" used the slogan 31 times (24% of its indicators in this category).
- "Main Channel" used the slogan 28 times (23%).
- "Formula" used the slogan 27 times (22%).
- "Imedi" used the slogan 18 times (15%).
- Public broadcaster used the slogan 11 times (9%).
- "Rustavi 2" used the slogan 9 times (7%).

In the second research phase (May 2022), "Imedi" utilized solidarity symbols, signs, and indices the most, comprising 27% of the indicators in this category (n=50). However, the frequency of solidarity indicators decreased compared to the first phase. For example, graffiti expressing solidarity was no longer visible in the frame, and the slogan "Слава Украине, Героям Слава" was primarily heard in stories, with the majority of mentions on the air of the "Main Channel" (83%, n=10).

During the second research phase, remarkable pro-social frames and episodes were also observed, with "Rustavi 2" predominantly featuring them (14 times, 88% of such episodes). These pro-social episodes showcased amateur footage from the battlefield, including a lecturer conducting an online lecture from the front line, the story of a clergyman serving as a soldier, and narratives from Azovstal, spotlighting acts of courage and resilience amidst the conflict.

Moving on to the category of "Statements of Solidarity," it encompasses all the solidarity-containing statements broadcast by the broadcasting companies during the first 10 days of media monitoring after the war's commencement. These statements expressed solidarity from various entities, including the Georgian government, president, opposition, non-governmental organizations, citizens, foreign politicians, and others.

Among the broadcasting companies, "TV First" aired the most solidarity statements, with 368 instances, followed by "Formula" with 211, public broadcaster with 208, "Imedi" with 184, "Main Channel" with 180, and "Rustavi 2" with 128. However, it's essential to note that there was a downward trend in the number of announcements across all broadcasting companies from the first to the tenth day. For instance, on February 25, 2022, 192 supportive statements were broadcast on research televisions, and by March 5, the number had reduced to 85. The following indicators were most prominent in this category during the Second phase:

1. **Statements of solidarity from foreign politicians**, covered a total of 196 times on all channels. The majority of these statements were covered on "Rustavi 2" (33%, n=64) and "TV First" (27%, n=52).
2. **Statements of solidarity from opposition representatives**, aired 144 times. "TV First" (43%, n=62) and the public broadcaster (17%, n=24) devoted the most time to this indicator.
3. **"Citizens' Solidarity Statements"** were aired 169 times, with 57 times (34%) on "TV First," and "Main Channel" covering 23% (n=38) of these statements.
4. **Statements of solidarity by government representatives** were recorded on all channels, with a total of 86 statements. However, statements expressing solidarity made by the ruling party were mostly covered only by the public broadcaster (37%, n=31) and "Imedi" (41%, n=35).

## Conclusion

This study delved into the identification of solidarity journalism indicators within the media during war communications, highlighting their role as a mechanism of support. The research uncovered that these media elements serve as tools for bolstering collective stress resilience, empowering vulnerable groups, and fostering discourse that encourages pro-social conduct. Across the study's timeline, solidarity indicators took center stage in media agendas and framing, being widely

and diversely employed across various television channels. In the initial research phase (February-March), Georgian media exhibited a wide-ranging, comprehensive display of solidarity towards Ukraine. These indicators of solidarity seamlessly integrated into daily broadcast schedules, adapting to different television formats. The media also showcased the alignment of national objectives between Ukraine and Georgia.

Nonetheless, the media's framing of solidarity remained influenced by political polarization and editorial policies. Expressions of gratitude from Ukrainian government officials towards Georgians often came hand in hand with critiques of the Georgian government, mirroring the contrasting viewpoints of pro-government and critical channels.

Regarding the coverage of solidarity actions, official channels placed greater emphasis on actions within Russia, while other television stations presented a more diverse geographical perspective. Noteworthy themes in media discourse encompassed portraying Russia as a mutual adversary and drawing parallels with the 2008 Russia-Georgia conflict. Even as two months elapsed since the commencement of the war, the media's practice of demonstrating solidarity with Ukraine persisted alongside the emergence of new topics on the Georgian media's agenda. The extensive utilization of solidarity features is anticipated to leave a lasting mark on the audience's memory, and the pro-social support frames preserved in archival materials might shape the future news context on this subject. In summary, this study casts illumination on the role of solidarity journalism in buttressing and empowering communities during crises. The findings provide valuable insights into comprehending media responses to international conflicts and humanitarian emergencies. Subsequent research avenues could explore the enduring impacts of this media coverage on collective memory and societal attitudes.

## References

- Freedom House (2023). *Georgia*. Available at: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/georgia/freedom-world/2023>.
- Joseph, T. (2014). Mediating war and peace: mass media and international conflict. *India Quarterly*, 70(3), 225–240.
- Kitty, A. (2005). *Don't believe it! How lies become news*. American First Edition. Disinformation Books.
- Lotman, J. (2007). *Hirm ja Segadus: Esseid kultuurisemiootikast*. (Fear and confusion: essays in cultural semiotics). Tallinn: Varrak.
- Makhortykh, M., Bastian, M. (2022). Personalizing the war: Perspectives for the adoption of news recommendation algorithms in the media coverage of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine. *Media, War & Conflict*, 15(1), 25–45.
- Reporters without Borders (2023). *Georgia*. Available at: <https://rsf.org/en/country/georgia>.
- Varma A., (2023) Solidarity reporting on marginalization: a grounded alternative to monitorial reporting's emphasis on officials. *Journalism Practice*.
- Ventsel, A., Hansson, S., Madisson, M.-L., Sazonov, V. (2021). Discourse of fear in strategic narratives: the case of Russia's Zapad war games. *Media, War & Conflict*, 14(1), 21–39.