



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Media Psychology And International Conflict: How Framing Effects Shape Public Support For War?

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of media framing on public support for international conflicts, emphasizing the roles of framing techniques, digital amplification, and government-controlled media. Using qualitative secondary data from 2019–2025, key themes were identified, including episodic versus thematic framing, nation-focused versus leader-focused narratives, and algorithmic and visual influences. Comparative analyses reveal that regional and ideological contexts shape divergent public perceptions. Findings highlight the importance of media literacy, diversified media consumption, and critical engagement to navigate biased narratives. Recommendations include cross-regional research, monitoring digital platforms, policy awareness, and longitudinal studies to better understand framing's sustained impact on public opinion.

Keywords: *Media Framing, Public Support for War, Digital Media, Government-Controlled Media, Comparative Media Analysis*

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Media framing—the way information is packaged, emphasized, or depicted—plays a decisive role in shaping public attitudes toward international conflict. For example, experimental survey evidence shows that emphasizing the **international security impacts** of the Russian invasion of Ukraine significantly increases public support for humanitarian aid compared to framing that focuses only on human suffering (Smith & Zamore, 2024). In a separate study of U.S. polling from 2003, approximately **70% of Americans** supported the Iraq War when presented with aggressive frames emphasizing regime threat and weapons of mass destruction; but a year later, support dropped to about **55%** as alternative frames—cost, casualties, credibility—gained traction (Oliphant, 2018). Surveys also show that in Russia, support for the war has been

steady in the **70-75%** range among the general public, with roughly **20%** opposing, across various polling modes (Snegovaya, 2024). Another study examining military withdrawal framing found that when polling questions frame withdrawal as an **enemy victory**, support for withdrawal drops by up to **26 percentage points**. These findings suggest that public support for war (or withdrawal, aid, etc.) is not fixed; it is highly sensitive to how media and polling frames define problems, cast moral judgments, and highlight consequences (Silverman & Fealing, 2025). Thus, to understand public support for war, one must study framing effects, cultural/political moderators, and long-term preference shifts.

1.2 Research Rationale

Understanding how media framing affects public support for war is urgent because empirical data show that framing can shift public opinion by large margins. For example, when a country is presented as a U.S. ally, support for intervention rises to about **79%**, compared with **46%** for non-allies under otherwise identical conditions (Tomz & Weeks, 2021). Similarly, in Russia, support for the invasion of Ukraine has hovered between **70-75%** in multiple polls, with roughly **20%** consistently opposing—even as more Russians express war fatigue (Snegovaya, 2024). These figures suggest that how conflicts are framed (ally vs non-ally, moral obligation vs threat, etc.) has a major influence on whether the public backs war. This justifies investigating framing effects, cultural/political moderators, and shifts over time to better predict support or opposition in diverse contexts.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

Aim

The aim of this study is to examine how media framing influences public support for international conflict and war policies.

Objectives

- To analyse how media framing influences public perception of international conflicts.
- To examine the relationship between specific framing techniques (e.g., episodic vs. thematic) and public support for war.
- To investigate the role of cultural and political contexts in moderating framing effects on war support.
- To evaluate the long-term impact of media framing on citizens' policy preferences regarding international conflict.

1.4 Research Question

- How does media framing shape public perception of international conflicts?
- What is the relationship between different framing techniques and levels of public support for war?
- How do cultural and political contexts moderate the influence of framing on public support for war?
- What are the long-term impacts of media framing on citizens' policy preferences regarding international conflict?

1.5 Research Problem

Global public opinion on war is highly volatile: in a 27-country Ipsos survey, **70%** of adults reported following the Ukraine war closely, yet only **61%** believe it poses a risk to their country (Boyon, 2022). Also, experiments show that framing a victim as a military ally boosts support for intervention from **46%** to **79%** (Tomz & Weeks, 2021). These shifts suggest framing effects may profoundly alter war support worldwide.

1.6 Research Significance

This study is significant because media framing has measurable effects on public support for war-related policies. A survey-experiment of 1,415 U.S. adults found that when media emphasise the **international security** impacts of the Ukraine war, support for military and humanitarian aid rises significantly compared to humanitarian-only framing (Smith & Zamore, 2024). Also, large-scale analysis shows that media coverage of China in *The New York Times* explains about **54% of the variance** in U.S. public opinion toward China in the following years (Huang et al., 2020). Further, computational framing research into the Russian-Ukrainian war shows the changing narrative patterns that can shape perceptions with time (Ibrahim et al., 2025).

Together, these facts support the central idea that framing effects are not peripheral to shaping popular attitudes and policy endorsement, and thus the conceptual backing of systematic research into the methods of framing, culture mediators, and the long-term impacts.

1.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter explains the effects of media framing on popular international conflict and war policy support. It studies how the technique of framing, culture, and sustained changes in opinion influence matters. As noted in the study, media framing seriously changes the views and preferences of people in matters of policy making, making it significant to grasp the effects of framing the world over.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Media framing and its connection to popularising foreign war have been receiving more and more academic attention in recent years. Media shape the beliefs of people by deciding which stories to highlight, which details of a conflict to focus on, and how to present the events, which transforms the opinions of people and their policy choices. This is a synthesis of the major scholarly articles that outline the effects of media framing on popular pre-war support based on different types of wars, how these wars were framed and research approaches.

2.2 General Overview

2.2.1 Framing Techniques and Public Opinion

Framing theory holds that how the media packages information can have drastic effects on what individuals think and believe. A work by Wang et al. (2025) indicates that the idea of framing international conflicts concerning the national identity or leadership may make it possible to alter the perceptions of people in the countries in question. Specifically, nation-framed news (e.g. Russia invades Ukraine) was associated with worse impressions of Russians than news leader-framed (e.g., Putin invades Ukraine). The research has

cited an instance where the more human suffering in wars is covered by media, the more citizens choose to intervene. Contrarily, downgrade support can be a saw of focusing on political and economic outcomes of war. This means that the way conflicts are presented may affect the way the population will regard foreign people.

2.2.2 Media Framing in the Russia-Ukraine Conflict

The Russia-Ukraine war has emerged as a prominent research topic on the role of policy framing in controversies and public perceptions. Ibrahim et al. (2025) show two-year media reporting by unsupervised machine learning models to obtain a summary of shifting narrative reporting, dominant frames, and depictions of key players in the conflict. They found out that media framing is not fixed, and it affects the propensity nature to view the events by the viewers and form a point of view of war. Akinboade et al. (2023) applied a related descriptive content analysis of early news on conflict in Western, Asian, and African media. Western media emphasised humanitarian disasters, and Asian media covered economical, trade, and geopolitical effects. These trends expose the impact of ideology and geography on media and popular opinion.

2.2.3 Comparative Media Framing

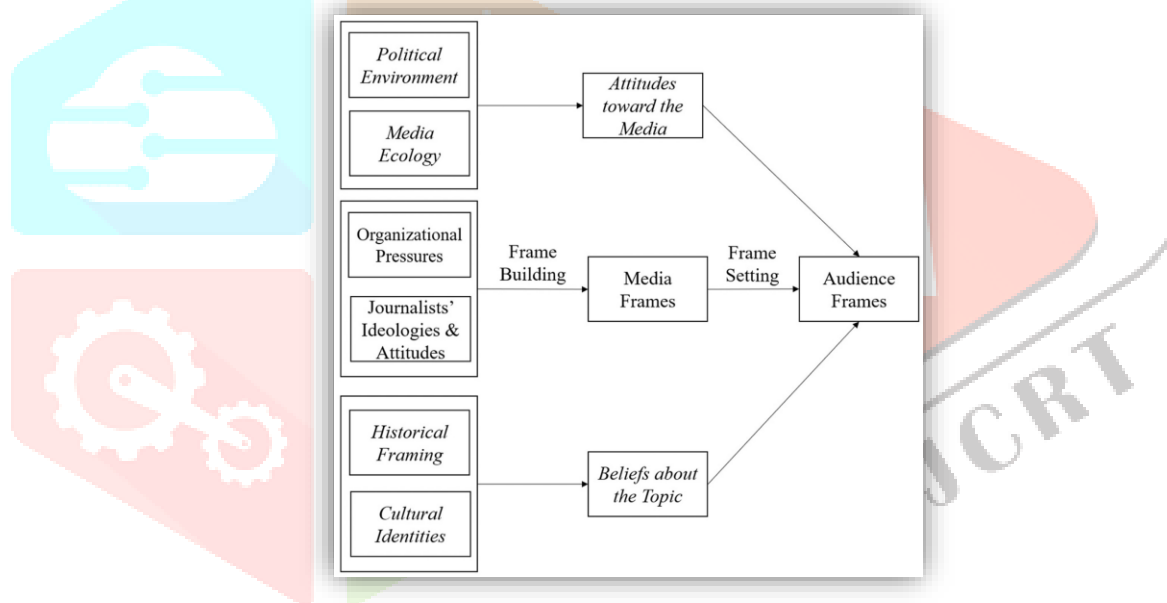


Figure 1: Media Framing Effects

(Source: Chen et al., 2023)

Comparational analysis has indicated that media outlets in different countries are more prone to reflect an international conflict in a specific manner that is likely to influence popular opinion and can perhaps serve as a factor in the establishment of a policy. In the analysis of the news on Israeli-Palestinian conflict articulated by Western and Middle East media outlets, Saragih (2025) found out that the former frequently emphasised Israel as the need to deal with terrorists, addressing the security issue. Rather, the Middle Eastern press focused on the humanitarian situation of Palestinians and condemned Israeli government actions. These varying framing causes made different accounts that have influenced world opinion as well as policy and even diplomacy.

2.2.4 Visual and Algorithmic Framing

Digital media has formed an entirely new media framing landscape that complicates information presentation and utterance further. Li et al. (2025) came up with a multimodal model of framing to analyse how algorithmic mediation, visual content, and narrative text interact in war reporting. Their study illustrates how digital platforms not only transmit but also influence audience perceptions via curated content and recommendation algorithms, as well as visual emphasis. The analysis highlights how imperative media literacy is, and audiences should approach news materials with care to recognise bias, contextual deficiencies, and manipulative framing in the 21st century.

2.2.5 Government-Controlled Media and Framing

The government-regulated media are instrumental in influencing the general opinion, especially when the repressive or semi-repressive governments restrict information sources of the people. Pan et al. (2021) revealed that state-operated media could intentionally present the same policy matter to evoke varying responses in people, commonly focusing on the stories that would promote state-related causes and diminish or eliminate the opponents. Serving controversial policies as significant to national security, morality, or political stability may cultivate their approval. Governmental media framing holds a key to understanding the construction and support of war.

In the analysed literature, media framing has a potent impact on popular approval of foreign wars. Such framing strategies as national identity, leadership, and human or economic outcomes can shape policy and opinion. Comparative analysis reveals that media outlets in various places and ideologies report conflicts differently, shaping the global opinion. Digital media and governmentally constructed accounts complicate and necessitate ongoing research in trying to frame popular support of war through media.

2.3 Literature Gap

Despite extensive research by Wang et al. (2025), Ibrahim et al. (2025), Akinboade et al. (2023), Saragih (2025), Li et al. (2025), and Pan et al. (2021), several gaps remain in understanding media framing and public support for war. Most studies focus on Western, Asian, or Middle Eastern media, leaving African, Latin American, and South Asian perspectives underexplored. Longitudinal analyses are limited, especially regarding how framing evolves across digital platforms and social media. Few studies examine the combined effect of algorithmic, visual, and government-controlled framing on global public opinion. Additionally, comparative cross-regional impacts of these framing strategies remain insufficiently investigated, highlighting the need for broader, multi-contextual research.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

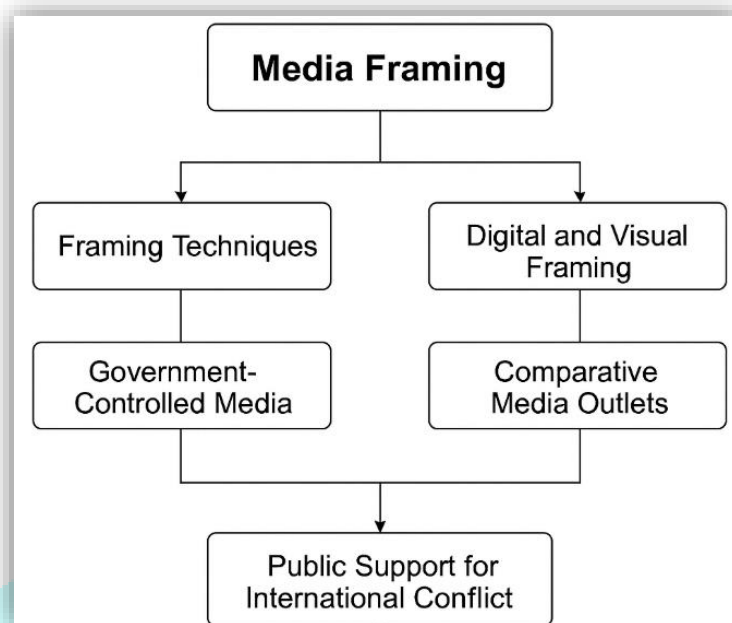


Figure 2: Theoretical Framework

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study employs a qualitative secondary research methodology to explore how media framing influences public support for international conflicts. The methodology, by examining any existing academic literature, reports, or credible sources created, allows consideration of framing techniques, media conditions, and regional differences without primary data collection (2018-2025).

3.2 Research Paradigm (Philosophy, Approach & Strategy)

This research takes a qualitative research paradigm anchored in an interpretivist philosophy, where the aim is to discover how media framing influences the perception of the people on the issue of an international conflict by subjectively interpreting existing literature (Kironko and Oduyo, 2020). It is an inductive study, where the pattern, themes, and relations across secondary data are uncovered instead of the researcher proving a preliminary hypothesis (Pandey and Pandey, 2021). The qualitative secondary analysis research strategy implies the synthesis of the data published in peer-reviewed journals, reports, and reliable online sources published between 2018 and 2025. This will enable in-depth examination of framing tactics, media effects, and public opinion in several settings, giving contextualised and rich information on the mechanics of media fueling war.

3.3 Data Collection

The proposed study makes use of secondary qualitative data, gathered through peer-reviewed journals, scholarly articles, reports, and reliable online sources, released between 2019 and 2025. The records were sorted by relevance to media framing, support, and publicity and contained multiple areas, wars, and coverage by the media (Mishra and Alok, 2022).

3.4 Qualitative Data Analysis

The study examines secondary qualitative data through thematic content analysis. Key themes, patterns and associations related to media framing, advocacy and promotion of the war are identified and clarified (Snyder, 2019). In this way, intentionally understanding the impact of various framing strategies and media settings on the opinions of people in different regions becomes possible.

3.5 Ethical Consideration

The study complies with ethical principles of research since it depends only on published, reputable secondary sources. Citation and links are made appropriately to honour original writers. The study does not plagiarise, depicts the data correctly, and is mindful of intellectual property rights, keeping integrity and transparency intact throughout the qualitative analysis process (Arifin, 2018).

3.6 Summary

The approach combines an interpretivist paradigm, an inductive approach, and secondary qualitative analysis to explore media framing and public opinion. Peer-reviewed sources were systematically used to collect and thematically analyse data. Research integrity through ethical considerations, such as citing and using credible materials, offers an insightful contextualised comprehension of media influences on war support.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

This chapter researches the influence war framing has on the public's support for war, reviews secondary data to clarify specific themes, including methods of framing, location features, online magnification and presence of government-regulated media.

4.2 Analysis of the Data

Qualitative analysis of the secondary data has brought forward some key themes concerning the impact of media framing on popular support of war. The framing techniques theme, the first one, illustrates how the way the conflict is framed, episodic or thematic, nation or leader-focused, influences the perception of the people directly. Nation-framed coverage, or reports that say Russia invaded Ukraine, creates more negative impressions about the foreign populace than leader-framed coverage that states that Putin invaded Ukraine (Wang et al. 2025). Equally, public backing of intervention is boosted by publicity on human suffering in conflicts and diminished by publicity on political and economic ramifications. This stresses that emotional and cognitive influence mechanisms can be used to control the framing strategies and channel the general opinion.

The second one is the theme of media coverage about the war between Russia and Ukraine, which accentuates the changing character of statistics. The study by Ibrahim et al. (2025) indicated media framing to be subject to change with time, an indicator of politics, emerging events, and sentiment. Western media is broadly highlighting the humanitarian crisis, and Asians are more focused on economic consequences and cancelling certain trade operations, meaning that regional and ideological priorities influence the choice of reception (Akinboade et al., 2023). These results facilitate the resolution that public backing is not fixed but rather reactive to evolving media scripts and filtering of conflict-associated news.

Another theme of great concern is comparative media framing. Saragih (2025) indicated the opposite representation of Israeli-Palestinian conflict in which Western sources are focused in showing how Israel is insecure whereas the Middle Eastern sources depict Palestine as an afflicted state. This difference implies that cross-regional media can produce an enormous amount of polarised popular feelings, potentially impacting international policy preferences and diplomacy policy.

The fourth theme is digital/ algorithmic framing. Li et al. (2025) found out that digital platforms favour certain storeys against others due to their focus on algorithms and picture-generation. Media literacy plays a key part in interpreting highly edited flows of information that instil preexisting prejudices or reward a certain frame.

Finally, the influence of state-owned media in influencing the masses in authoritarian or semi-authoritarian nations is relatively high. Pan et al. (2021) fixed such levels that resources managed by states can adeptly resist to acquire goodwill on military invasions or aggressive politics. This highlights why it is important to consider political formations and media ownership as mediating factors that influence war perception modes.

Combining the data analysis indicates that local or political basics, digital advocacy, media background, and framing influence significantly the mass support of war. These are interrelated themes and that media are not mirrored to the conflict; it also constructs the reality that is perceived by the masses through the will of a policy. Further research, of course, would examine blind areas and the interaction of various types of framing to provide a bigger view of how world opinion on war lives.

4.3 Discussions

Recent sources stress the extent to which the means of media framing influences the perceptions individuals form regarding any international conflict. Hutagalung (2024) emphasises the importance of media framing via traditional news media and digital platforms in creating attitudes among individuals by making certain aspects of a situation visible and underemphasizing others. This biased presentation creates gaps in interpretation and reaction to information among audiences, thus steering public discussion and policy advocacy.

A central theoretical area that Zaklama (2025) explores is how presentations of information can shape reality by framing facts to highlight certain narratives. This creation of reality via framing not only influences personal inclinations but also leads to wider societal interpretations and policy inheritances. Song (2024) offers a bibliometric review of framing research, indicating the development of the theory of framing and its use in diverse media contexts. This research makes it clear that framing affects how the general population perceives by bringing attention to specific issues, thus eliciting the way people interpret and react. Nevertheless, it also notes the underrepresentation of linguistic approaches in orienting research, as an area to explore further.

Kikwete's (2024) research renders the literature review, synthesising the prominent studies and representing the mechanisms of framing and their effect on political communication and social movements. The review focuses on historical developments of the framing theory and its application in the modern media

environments, and especially in digital communication. Lee (2025) addresses a considerable role of framing in moulding the opinion of people and its extended influence on life and politics. The article highlights how the media affects mass opinion by reporting part of a story selectively, through particular use of language and imagery, and allows repetition of individual frames to make a dominant given story emerge.

Together, these studies point to the pivotal role of media framing in shaping the perception and approval of policy. They emphasise an approach to media consumerism and literacy of the media in negotiating the twists and turns of media exceptionalism.

4.4 Summary

The discussion notes that media framing, in a variety of locations and on a variety of platforms, plays an active role in shaping how the population views the war and thus media literacy is needed, along with efforts to study the global processes of framing.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1 Conclusion

This study establishes that media framing is a pivotal factor in informing societal views on international conflicts. The use of framing, between episodic, thematic, nation-focused, and leader-focused, shows a large contribution to perceptions, and digital amplification and algorithmic curation both contribute more to audience interpretation. Comparative media frameworks show that regional and ideological frameworks lead to divergent reports, and government-sponsored media in authoritarian nations use tactical framing as a strategy to gain support. Altogether, the results highlight that media reporting is a very delicate question of social opinion, and thus media literacy, critical participation and extended investigation on cross-regional framing impacts are necessary.

5.2 Recommendation

- **Tackle Media Literacy:** Promote critical literacy of news so that audiences become aware of biased framing, omissions and manipulative coverage.
- **Avert Polarised Mediated Creations:** Fulfil coverage on different places to avert polarised ideologies.
- **Monitor Digital Areas:** Experiment with Effects of Algorithms on storey amplification and opinion-making.
- **Cross-Regional Study:** Experiment with untapped destinations, such as Africa, South Asia and Latin America.
- **Policy Awareness:** NGOs and governments must learn to value the framing effect in their communication strategy development.
- **Longitudinal Studies:** Modern framing evolves through time to value longevity effects on popular war will.

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