Separatists, Rebels and Ukrainians, Who's Who in the Eastern Ukrainian Conflict

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1. The Ukrainian conflict: "a war about identity and sovereignty"

This case study focuses on the analysis of the linguistic means used in three audio-visual news outlets to refer to and describe the events concerning the Ukrainian conflict. Before considering the methods, data and results of this case study, I would like to briefly examine the context in which the events of the Ukrainian conflict unfolded. To do so, I will provide a brief summary of them considering the ceasefire negotiations of February 2015 as the main turning point in the conflict.

There are two main events that led to this conflict: the "Euromaidan" revolution and the annexation of Crimea by the Russian federation. Both have strong cultural and geopolitical implications, which are important when dealing with the overall evolution of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

The "Euromaidan" revolution was run by the namesake movement, which was born in November 2013 and advocated for Ukrainian integration into the European Union. This movement aroused civil unrest in Ukraine especially towards the then President Viktor Yanukovych, who, being very close to the Russian Federation, was against the "Europeanization" of Ukraine and whose election was tarnished with criticism due to suspicions of rigging and corruption.

As a reaction to these suspicions, the "Euromaidan" movement organised protests against the government, culminating in the Euromaidan or Ukrainian revolution around mid-February 2014. The core of the protests took place in Kiev,

where protesters and riot police clashed heavily and blood was shed under the receptive eye of international media which reported repeated infringements of human rights at the expense of the pro-Europe protesters.

Under the pressure of European leaders' mediating effort, President Yanukovych made concessions to protesters in order to end the so called crisis and, on 21st February 2014, signed together with the opposition the "Agreement on settlement of the political crisis in Ukraine"[1] at the presence of Polish, German and French Foreign Ministers. On that occasion, Vladimir Lukin, the Russian special envoy, refused to sign the agreement. Shortly after, Yanukovych fled the country and sought asylum in Russia. Protesters took over and established a pro-European government, removing Yanukovych from office and announcing a forthcoming presidential election, which resulted in Petro Poroshenko being elected President on 25th May 2014.

The ousting of Viktor Yanukovich ignited reactions in Crimea[2], a country on which the Russian Federation was looking forward to reaffirming its presence. Therefore, a few weeks after the "Euromaidan" revolution and Yanukovich's ousting, unidentified militaries took over the Crimean parliament, and Crimea declared its independence from Ukraine. Then, on 16th March 2014, it requested to be annexed to the Russian Federation through a referendum, which bore the suspiciously stunning result of 96.7% "yes".

This event comprehensibly raised concerns among the international community, who saw this as an extension of Russia's imperialistic aims. Ukraine did not recognize the vote as rightful; the United Nations and major international interlocutors, such as the European Union and the United States, also deemed it unlawful, and Russia was sanctioned for its annexation of Crimea.

As a result, the situation within Ukrainian borders became fragile and unstable. Allegedly, it was the Crimean vote that inspired revolts and uprisings by separatists in the Donbass region. The tension eventually erupted and the fighting

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[1] The Ukraine Crisis Timeline. Retrieved May 31, 2019, from http://ukraine.csis.org/kyiv.htm#9.
[2] Crimea was an independent republic under Ukrainian aegis, it presents a complex ethnic situation with more than 70% of Crimeans identifying themselves as Russian, the rest of the population as Ukrainian and Tatar.

started in April 2014. Even though Russia was proved to be actively supporting the far-right separatists in the fighting, the Russian Federation never publicly admitted to it (Kovalov 2014). NATO did not intervene in Poroshenko's favour, for two main reasons: firstly, because Ukraine is not part of NATO[3], secondly because this conflict was labelled as an internal or civil war by (Western) international agenda setters.

In the vain effort of discouraging Russia, the UN repeatedly sanctioned the Russian Federation and the EU sent emissaries and mediators; however, no military action was taken by the West. Western politics and media monitored the conflict, occasionally intervening and mediating to promote a ceasefire between separatists and Ukrainian government forces.

The violence escalated in the Donbass until a first ceasefire was reached in September 2014. This agreement was not effective, violence escalated again to the point that on 22nd January 2015 the separatists gained control over the strategic outpost of Debaltseve and its airport. A second ceasefire deal was agreed upon between President Poroshenko and President Putin, who was vouching for the separatists, although continuing to deny Russia's involvement in the conflict. This second ceasefire was watched closely by European foreign ministers, who were also witnessing its signing. Furthermore, the then President of the United States, Barak Obama, threatened to "[consider] giving weapons to the Ukrainian government forces", should diplomacy fail.

After the second ceasefire, the attention western media paid to the Ukrainian conflict seems to have gradually decreased. However, OCSE is monitoring the conflict[4] which is currently evolving and includes a line of fire and trenches between Ukrainian government forces and separatists in eastern Ukraine[5].

As pointed out above, this conflict was labelled and framed as civil war from its outset, especially to justify and explain NATO and EU's non-interventionist

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[3]   NATO   member   countries.   Retrieved   May   31,   2019,   from http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/nato_countries.htm
[4]   Special   Monitoring   Mission   to   Ukraine.   Retrieved   May   31,   2019,   from https://www.osce.org/special-monitoring-mission-to-ukraine
[5]   UNIAN   Information   Agency,   War   section.   Retrieved   May   31,   2019   from https://www.unian.info/war

attitude. Even though this label might seem suitable and convenient for the West, it has a reason to be. Indeed, this conflict involves the definition of a national pro-Western Ukrainian identity opposed to an Eastern Ukrainian identity or, as it has been defined by the media, pro-Russian identity of the separatists from the Donbass region, ultimately configuring itself as "a war about identities and sovereignty" (Ian Pannell, BBC Weekend News Afternoon, 15/02/2015, 00:08:10). These labels referring to the conflict and its actors play a key role in defining the Ukrainian identity and the war itself on both sides, the West and Russia (Makarychev 2014), as I will try to demonstrate in this case study.

In connection to this, Fedor and Pavlyshyn[6] reported how Western media disregarded and silenced the Ukrainian perspective on "Russian hybrid warfare", which led to ignore Ukraine's claims in this conflict and eventually strengthened Russia-backed separatists' ones. According to them, the Russian media labelled the conflict as "new Cold War" in order to manipulate Russian audiences and reinforce the idea that Russia is at war with the West, while distracting Russian viewers and readers from internal issues that are affecting their daily lives, such as embargos and international sanctions.

This is confirmed in Kovalov's work on the three competing narratives underlying the eastern Ukrainian conflict (2014). Kovalov demonstrates how Russian media employed the "domestic causes", "Russia-centric" and "Western fault" narratives to persuade viewers that the Euromaidan revolution was supported by far-right groups and backed up by the US, and that the European and US interference in these matters brought both to Euromaidan and to the annexation of Crimea.

Furthermore, Kovalov suggests that, by employing the "Russia-centric" narrative, "Russia engaged in a modern type of warfare through limited military action, strong domestic media support and political muscle" (Kovalov 2014: 147).

While I do not have the necessary linguistic skills to verify these issues in Russian media outlets, I intend to verify the presence of labels and/or polarizing attitudes

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[6] Monash European and EU Centre, LLCL – The Geopolitics of Eastern Europe Today: The Case of Ukraine. (2016, October 23). Retrieved May 31, 2019, from http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/events/events/monash-   european-and-eu-centre-llcl-the-geopolitics-of-eastern-europe-today-the-case-of-ukraine/.

representing similar narratives within my dataset.

These points are pivotal to frame the analysis that follows, as they hint at how language transfer, i.e. translation, can be used to support or dismiss views and claims on either side of the conflict. In fact, translation is a form of "relayed communication" (Baker 2006), but it also "appears as the arena par excellence to reconfigure and 'reframe' existing discourse through more or less subtle shifts" (Spiessens and Van Poucke 2016: 322).

2. Methodology: corpus-based cross-linguistic analysis of audio-visual news outlets

This case study analyses the reporting of the Ukrainian conflict in 2015 within audio-visual news cross-linguistically; it employs a (sub-)corpus of newscast transcriptions of three news providers (Rai, BBC and Euronews), which will be referred to as AVNews Corpus (whole corpus; see Aragrande 2018) and UKR-sub-corpus (partition used in this study).

By exploring keyword lists and extended concordance lines, this paper intends to shed light on how the Ukrainian conflict and its actors were labelled by these broadcasters in order to verify whether Western media promoted a polarized narrative of the war or not.

Before describing the dataset employed in this study, some information about the AVNews corpus is provided. This corpus was built during the course of my Ph.D., whose aim was to grasp the complexities and ramifications of different forms of journalism (i.e. broadcasting, online, written and a mix of the three) in different national, supranational and international contexts (i.e. in Italy, the UK, Europe, Australia and on the Internet), by merging different methodological approaches in what I defined as *convergence* framework (Aragrande 2016).

As table 1 shows, the AVNews Corpus consists of three sub-corpora of transcribed newscasts (*RAI* and *BBC*) and video news (*Euronews*). This audio-visual corpus is therefore rather small, but it is possible to consider it as a specialized corpus (Haarman and Lombardo 2009: 9) since it focuses on a

specific genre (i.e. audio-visual journalism). What is more, the AVNews corpus comprises a so-called thematic tagging which allows the analyst to isolate components according to a specific topic (e.g. Ukraine).

	Channels and newscast typologies		
Time span 9-22 Feb. 2015 + 6-16 Aug. 2015	*Rai Uno* – 8 pm newscast *Rainews24* – 1 and 3 pm newscasts	*Euronews* – online video news (English and Italian *Euronews'* website)	*BBC One* – 6 and 8 pm newscasts
Type of corpus	Monolingual (IT), comparable	Bilingual (IT, EN), comparable	Monolingual (EN), comparable
No. Of tokens	204,369 (Rai Uno 91,941; Rainews 112,428)	104,689 (IT 51,340, EN 53,349)	115,614

Table 1. AVNews Corpus sources and time span

The two monolingual components of the AVNews Corpus are thought to be representative of the two nationalities of the broadcasters (Italian or British). Therefore the latter address their respective audiences, who primarily identify with those nationalities in inherently and almost exclusively monolingual media settings. The two monolingual components thus represent a national stance on the news from the point of view of two public broadcasters.

I chose to employ public broadcasters because they are supposed to share the same mission and purpose, moreover they are widely available and easily accessible. Despite the profound difference between them especially in terms of management, I believe that using *BBC* and *RAI* is the most straightforward way to compare Italy's and the UK's broadcast journalism.

Similarly to *Rainews24*, *Euronews* is a rolling news (web-)channel and it mainly appeals to a European audience. It is one of the few channels in the world that not only broadcasts news in many languages without holding any particular national affiliation, but also (and more importantly) provides the same audio-visual material in all the languages comprised in their services, thus providing a great deal of research material for academics interested in investigating language

transfer processes in the news.

As a concluding remark of this section, I would like to briefly comment on the ownership of the three broadcasters considered in this study. On the one hand, *BBC* and *RAI* are public broadcasters fulfilling, albeit with substantial differences, their mandate towards the audience. Both are sustained by public money and license fees, and this assures a good degree of comparability of the purposes of this study.

On the other hand, *Euronews* represents a hybrid situation. Indeed, since 2015 it was acquired by Media Global Networks, which currently owns 53% of the network. The remaining 47% is shared among its NBC Universal (25%) and European public broadcasters (22% - among which RAI).

I am well aware of the huge diversity of the three sources informing the AVNews corpus, nonetheless, when I was building the corpus, those broadcasters represented a suitable compromise for achieving a high degree of comparability among its components.

3. Sub-corpora and keywords: a starting point for understanding actors in and defining the Ukrainian conflict

In this section, I will discuss some of the results of the analysis I carried out using the UKR_sub-corpus with two main aims: first, to verify the existence of a polarized portrayal of the Ukrainian conflict; second, to compare the attitude of the three newscasters towards the Ukrainian crisis and its actors.

Starting from the assumption that audio-visual news is one of the most powerful tools for disseminating and propagating stances over a news item, I believe the eastern Ukrainian conflict to be a widely discussed topic not only in Europe, but also at a global level, since peace in Europe was at stake. Moreover, the topic of the Ukrainian conflict did not directly involve Italy nor the UK (or the European Union), allowing thus for a comparison of linguistic and journalistic contents starting from a similarly distant position.

Therefore, I decided to focus on this topic because of its prominence in the media agenda in general, and in my dataset in particular. Indeed, thanks to the thematic tagging of AVNews Corpus, I was able to build the UKR_sub-corpus, which consists of three separate comparable sub-corpora[7] comprising news reports about Ukraine, and to compare them against the main audio-visual sub-corpora.

Table 2 contains information about the frequency of the tag <topic item="Ukraine">, which was used to build the sub-corpora. Dividing AVNews Corpus using the thematic tagging I obtained the three UKR_sub-corpora, which are composed as shown in Table 3.

Rainews 24	Rai Uno	Euronews IT	Euronews EN	BBC One
4.4%	2%	6%	6%	4%

Table 2. <topic item= "Ukraine"> frequency in % in the AVNews Corpus

Rai		Euronews IT	Euronews EN	BBC One
Rainews 24	Rai Uno			
13 reports, 10 headlines	5 reports, 3 headlines	20 reports	20 reports	12 reports, 7 headlines
Tokens 6,907	Tokens 1,855	Tokens 4,225	Tokens 4,097	Tokens 5,119

Table 3. UKR_sub-corpora information

The three UKR sub-corpora were compared against the main AVNews corpus in order to extract keywords: Tables 4 and 5 show the top 20 keywords found in each sub-corpus. Being the sub-corpora rather small, minimum frequency of occurrence was set at five occurrences and the keywords were calculated using AntConc (Anthony 2014). As we can see, there are many shared keywords across the sub-corpora. In order to investigate how the conflict was framed and "translated" by the news channels for their respective audiences, it is worth looking closely at words expressing nationalities or qualifying actors in the news reports (e.g. Ukrainian, separatists, etc.).

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[7] For the purposes of this study Rainews and Rai Uno were considered as one sub-corpus since they are part of the same network and thus share a similar view on the Ukrainian crisis. However, it would be technically possible to consider them separately.

UKR_Rai			Rank	UKR_EuronewsIT		
Raw f.	Keyness	Keyword		Raw f.	Keyness	Keyword
64	233.186	Ucraina	1.	31	67.831	Ucraina
53	196.532	Filo	2.	20	52.661	Kiev
44	170.452	Russi	3.	20	52.661	Separatisti
38	147.950	Minsk	4.	16	41.891	Donetsk
33	129.421	Kiev	5.	17	39.252	Ribelli
27	103.17	Ucraino	6.	14	37.715	Minsk
25	95.260	Prigionieri	7.	12	29.998	Ucraino
25	92.918	Putin	8.	11	29.633	Poroshenko
21	76.057	Cessate	9.	10	26.939	Osce
19	75.263	Donetsk	10.	11	26.270	Cessate
23	74.269	Est	11.	11	25.285	Tregua
21	72.961	Soldati	12.	12	23.640	Russi
19	71.542	Poroshenko	13.	8	21.551	Debaltseve
23	70.996	Merkel	14.	7	18.857	Starkov
20	70.056	Tregua	15.	8	17.391	Filo
22	68.012	Russia	16.	6	16.163	Accordi
17	67.340	Ucraini	17.	6	16.163	Filorussi
15	58.137	Debaltseve	18.	6	16.163	Mariupol
18	56.887	Esercito	19.	10	16.064	Armi
24	56.149	Fuoco	20.	12	15.981	Fuoco

Table 4. Italian UKR Sub-Corpora, Keyword lists

UKR_BBC			Rank	UKR_EuronewsEN		
Raw f.	Keyness	Keyword		Raw f.	Keyness	Keyword
39	140.38	Ukraine	1.	40	95.462	Ukraine
26	98.787	Ukrainian	2.	21	52.502	Ceasefire
21	80.831	Ceasefire	3.	20	50.886	Ukrainian
19	73.133	Debaltseve	4.	17	46.246	Kiev
22	65.630	Town	5.	23	38.613	Russian
21	62.754	Russian	6.	14	38.085	Donetsk
23	62.080	Eastern	7.	12	32.645	Osce
15	56.460	Rebels	8.	14	29.930	Rebels
15	55.244	Sides	9.	14	26.819	Conflict
15	51.909	Rebel	10.	14	25.433	Eastern
18	50.408	Russia	11.	9	24.483	Debaltseve
13	50.038	Donetsk	12.	9	24.483	Minsk
16	45.356	Peace	13.	16	24.308	Peace
21	41.548	War	14.	7	19.043	Shelling
10	38.491	Shells	15.	9	18.538	Rebel
16	35.950	Both	16.	7	16.806	Separatists
9	33.386	Merkel	17.	6	16.322	Luhansk
12	33.145	Fighting	18.	6	16.322	Poroshenko
12	29.443	Army	19.	6	16.322	Separatist
9	29.193	Obama	20.	6	16.322	Starkov

Table 5. English UKR Sub-Corpora, keyword lists

Focusing on the keywords describing and qualifying actors in the reports, we can note how "rebel*"/"ribell*" features in UKR_BBC, UKR_Euronews_EN and UKR_Euronews_IT while it is not prominent in UKR_RAI, where "separatist*" does not come up as salient either. This difference across the four UKR comparable sub-corpora, is surely worth examining. Therefore, looking at the frequencies of "ribell*" and "separatist*" across the different corpora can be instructive and give us a more detailed picture of the situation, as Table 6 shows.

	Separatist*/Separatist*		Rebel*/Ribell*	
	Raw	Norm.	Raw	Norm.
UKR_RAI	11	1.59	21	2.8
UKR_EuronewsIT	24	6.37	17	4.51
UKR_EuronewsEN	13	3.52	23	6.23
UKR_BBC	3	0.74	30	6.67

Table 6. Raw and normalised (p1000w) frequencies of "separatist*"/"separatist*" and "rebel*"/"ribell*" in the UKR sub-corpora

Although the UKR_RAI keyword list does not show "ribell*" and "separatist*" as particularly salient words, they are quite frequent in this sub-corpus. "Ribell*" seems the preferred option within the UKR_RAI sub-corpus, while the UKR_EuronewsIT sub-corpus seems to favour "separatist*" over "ribell*". In the English sub-corpora, we observe instead a preference for "rebel*" over "separatist*" that is more evident, in terms of frequency, in the UKR_BBC sub-corpus than in the UKR_EuronewsEN one.

The use of "rebel*" and "separatist*" (as nouns and adjectives) appears to shift from one Euronews sub-corpus to the other, hence it is worth looking at the concordance lines of both lemmas in the UKR_Euronews sub-corpora, as well as in the other UKR_sub-corpora, in order to have a clearer picture. Given the size of the UKR_Euronews sub-corpora, I decided to manually analyse their concordance lines in order to highlight patterns in the immediate co-texts of the node.

Tables 7 and 8 contain the concordance lines of "rebel*"/ "ribell*" from the two

Euronews sub-corpora. In both sub-corpora, the noun "rebel*"/ "ribell*" is often preceded or followed by the adjective "pro-Russian" or "filo-russ*", frequently in opposition to the internationally recognized Ukrainian government led by Petro Poroshenko. In the UKR_EuronewsEN sub-corpus "rebel*" is also found in the participial compound "rebel-held" followed by a noun indicating a place (e.g. Table 4 lines 7, 8, and 20). In both UKR_Euronews sub-corpora "rebel*"/ "ribell*", in object position, are objects of accusations, whereas "rebel*"/ "ribell*" in subject position are often denying or confirming something, such as attacks or adherence to ceasefire deals.

1	fighting escalates between government troops and	rebels	in eastern Ukraine, despite the February
2	across Ukraine with both government and	rebels	launching offensives to gain ground ahead
3	of July. Kiev says shelling by	rebels	over the last 24 hours is the
4	months as well as fresh fighting.	rebels	have accused government troops of increased
5	Kiev's military reported the heaviest	rebels	artillery attack in six months as
6	fragile truce appears to be holding.	rebels	are now in control here and
7	shell hit a bus station in	Rebel	-held Donetsk. The body of a
8	to the village of Yasne, in	Rebel	-held territory, but lost his way
9	separatist eastern regions as alarming. one	Rebel	official is warning of the threat
10	a ceasefire deal being in place. 400	Rebel	fighters, backed by tanks, attacked government
11	Representatives of Russia, Ukraine, pro Russian	rebels	and the OSCE security watchdog holding
12	in the week, the pro Russian	rebels	captured the town of Debaltseve from
13	deads. Ukraine has accused pro Russian	rebels	in the east of the country
14	Donetsk, controlled by the pro Russian	rebels	, the guns couldn't fall silent
15	last? In ominous remarks, a senior	rebel	commander has said that despite the
16	ose who lost their lives. Separatist	rebels	have said they would begin to
17	a significant strategic gain for the	rebels	because it straddles the railway that
18	thread, the Ukrainian military said the	rebels	continued attacks on their forces near
19	in the rocket fire. Though the	rebels	denied firing on the city, the
20	. In Donetsk, the leader of the	rebel	-held region has repeated his call
21	work impossible for the OSCE. The	Rebel	side ehm would not ehm guarantee
22	caused by a government missile. The	rebel	stronghold lies in the middle of
23	he pessimism felt in Kiev. Ukrainian	rebels	in Donetsk claim an overnight explosion

Table 7. UKR_EuronewsEN sub-corpus, "rebel*" concordance lines

1	quelli che combatteranno nelle truppe	**ribelli**	, in tutto questo, la Russia ha
2	vuole aggredire la pacifica Ucraina. I	**ribelli**	filo-russi hanno negato di aver lanciato
3	pare reggere. Tacciono le armi dei	**ribelli**	filo-russi, come stabilito negli accordi
4	Russia, non riesce ad arrivare. I	**ribelli**	non ci garantiscono un passaggio sicuro
5	e si rifugiò in Russia. I	**ribelli**	filorussi nell'Ucraina orientale confermano
6	riupol, dove Kiev denuncia 44 attacchi	**ribelli**	nelle ultime 24 ore. Lo scambio di
7	, con la cattura da parte dei	**ribelli**	della città di Debaltseve. Qu
8	di accuse tra Kiev e i	**ribelli**	. Kiev ha parlato di un attacco
9	con carri armati da parte di 400	**ribelli**	filo-russi nella città di Starohnativka,
10	, ultimo bastione dei governativi. Smentiscono i	**ribelli**	che puntano il dito contro le
11	e di accuse tra ucraini e	**ribelli**	filo-russi, in un crescendo che
12	strada tra Donetsk, la roccaforte dei	**ribelli**	, e la città portuale di Mariupol.
13	. L'esercito ucraino ha accusato i	**ribelli**	di aver attaccato le truppe regolari
14	immediatamente da contraltare il negoziatore dei	**ribelli**	, che ha ribaltato l'accusa. Sfortun
15	situazione creatasi con gli attacchi ai	**ribelli**	filo-russi e alla popolazione dell'
16	il villaggio di Yasne, controllato dai	**ribelli**	. Non conoscendo la zona, è però
17	russo, e di munizioni destinate ai	**ribelli**	. Queste armi non sono prodotte in

Table 8. UKR_EuronewsIT sub-corpus, "ribel*" concordance lines

In lines 16 and 23 of Table 7, "rebel*" is preceded by "separatist" and "Ukrainian" respectively. This rather contradictory choice of adjectives feeds into the terminological imprecision with which separatists are addressed by the media; however, it is worth mentioning that the UKR_EuronewsEN is the only sub-corpus in which the national label of "Ukraine" is associated with the insurgents. Despite this, those flagged as rebels or separatists are frequently described with the label of pro-Russian, as the following concordance lines of "separatist*" from UKR_Euronews sub-corpora suggest (Table 9, lines 8, 9, 10; Table 10 lines 1, 2, 9, 13, 15, 16, 22 and 23).

Among the concordance lines in Tables 9 and 10 we can observe again how words referring to the internationally-recognised Ukrainian government occur in the immediate co-text of "separatist*", reinforcing the polarity (Ukrainian vs. non-Ukrainian/pro-Russian, East vs. West) of the conflict. Interestingly, this polarization takes up yet another nuance in the UKR_EuronewsIT sub-corpus, where "separatisti" are met by "lealisti" (loyalists) on the other end of the conflict, this time contrasting loyal and lawful vs. disloyal and unlawful.

1	deal was signed seven months ago.	**Separatist**	commanders, however, have denied
2	been killed though says Kiev, blaming	**Separatists**	for isolated incidents. In Luhansk r
3	mission. The OSCE has accused both	**Separatists**	and Ukrainian troops of failing to
4	have described the recent escalation in	**Separatist**	eastern regions as alarming. one re
5	to those who lost their lives.	**Separatist**	rebels have said they would begin
6	a pocket between the two main	**Separatist**	controlled regions. Nine Ukrainian tr
7	coastal town of Mariupol, to relieve	**Separatist**	pressure on Debaltseve. It's been
8	ombardment. Ukraine and pro-Russian	**Separatists**	are accusing each other of attemptin
9	it is our territory. Pro Russian	**Separatist**	soldiers have been celebrating in th
10	crossing from Russia to reinforce the	**Separatists**	in clear breach of the truce
11	he was recruited to assist the	**Separatists**	on Ukranian territory. Vladimir Star
12	he was supposed to deliver to	**Separatists**	. These kinds of weapons aren't
13	of peace talks in Minsk tomorrow.	**Separatists**	have pushed to cut off a

Table 9. UKR_EuronewsEN sub-corpus "separatist*" concordance lines

1	di tagliare i rifornimenti russi ai	**Separatisti**	che Mosca ha mostrato di non
2	dalla Russia per portare rinforzi ai	**Separatisti**	. Per completare questa fase, sono
3	delle sponde perfino in alcuni ambiti	**Separatisti**	. Dobbiamo introdurre dei contingen
4	er una maggiore autonomia delle aree	**Separatiste**	sudorientali. Un'esplos
5	pace e prosperità. I conflitti coi	**Separatisti**	nell'est hanno relegato in secondo
6	cambiato. Debaltseve, i combattenti	**Separatisti**	pattugliano le strade della città orie
7	è quello di Debaltseve, circondato dai	**Separatisti**	. Gli abitanti continuano ad abbandona
8	restare soltanto loro, circondati dai	**Separatisti**	. La diplomazia non fa passi avanti
9	inviare a combattere a fianco dei	**Separatisti**	filo-russi. Vladimir Starkov è stat
10	una centrale chimica nelle mani dei	**Separatisti**	. Il risultato è stato una gigantesca
11	Donetsk e Luhansk. L'obiettivo dei	**Separatisti**	ora è lo strategico porto marittimo
12	smentite di Mosca. L'avanzata dei	**Separatisti**	è stata accelerata dalla conquista di
13	fronte dei combattimenti tra esercito e	**Separatisti**	filo-russi, Kharkiv è controllata dal g
14	cessate il fuoco di febbraio fra	**Separatisti**	e lealisti continuano gli scambi di
15	due, le forze ucraine e i	**Separatisti**	filo-russi si accusano a vicenda.
16	ha lanciato un'offensiva contro i	**Separatisti**	filo-russi vicino a Mariupol, nel sudes
17	Donetsk. Unendo Lugansk e Donetsk, i	**Separatisti**	hanno realizzato la continuità territo
18	che l'esercito regolare e i	**Separatisti**	intendano rispettare i patti. Ma il
19	'onda degli ultimi successi militari, i	**Separatisti**	ora cercano di dettare il calendario
20	dozzina di zone calde nelle regioni	**Separatiste**	di Donetsk e Luhansk. L'obiettivo
21	l'Ucraina e le autoproclamate repubbliche	**Separatiste**	, ma anche le frontiere fra queste
22	nella guerra che oppone da tempo	**Separatisti**	filo-russi e governo di Kiev. Lo
23	ria pesante. Rappresentanti di Russia, Ucraina,	separatisti	filo-russi e dell'OSCE, hanno reso
24	li abbiamo completamente circondati. Dice un	**Separatista**	. Questa sconfitta, tenuta segreta fin

Table 10. UKR_EuronewsIT sub-corpus "separatist*" concordance lines

Shifting the focus to the other sub-corpora, UKR_BBC and UKR_RAI present the same pattern linking the noun "rebel*"/ "ribell*" to the adjective "pro-Russian"/ "filoruss*" or to the participial compound "Russian-backed" in pre- and post-attributive position witnessed to in Euronews sub-corpora. Here, "rebel*" as well as "separatist*" appear, so to speak, in "Russian company" and often in opposition to Ukrainian institutions, such as the government, Kiev, or the army.

1	a western leaning government against a	**Rebel**	army that turns to its Russian
2	a western leaning government against a	**Rebel**	army that turns to its Russian
3	may be held here at a	**Rebel**	building in Donetsk. The fate of
4	thanks God they're still alive.	**Rebel**	leaders say they'll stick to
5	thanks God they're still alive.	**Rebel**	leaders say they'll stick to
6	. Both Ukrainian forces and Russian backed	**Rebels**	say they will honour the ceasefire
7	in the hands of Russian backed	**Rebels**	. The key railway hub has endured
8	town which fell to Russian backed	**Rebels**	this week, our correspondent is there.
9	battles of the entire war. Here	**Rebels**	corralled the defeated government soldiers.
10	week. She will stay here in	**Rebel**	held territory until that happens. James
11	, has made the journey alone into	**Rebel**	held territory to get her husband
12	husband. On the 21st of January,	**Rebel**	fighters took Donetsk Airport in one
13	been heavy shelling around the mail	**Rebel**	held city of Donietsk, with no
14	in the fighting between pro-Russian	**Rebels**	**rebels** and Ukrainian government forces. Prisoners
15	Kiev should try to re-take	**Rebel**	held areas. If Ukrainian troops will
16	, the Ukrainian army fought off the	**Rebel**	advance for weeks. Three days ago
17	, the Ukrainian army fought off the	**Rebel**	advance for weeks. Three days ago
18	troops and armour to help the	**Rebels**	, an allegation Moscow denies. But th
19	troops and armour to help the	**Rebels**	, an allegation Moscow denies. But the
20	shelling have taken their toll. The	**Rebels**	are everywhere, but the town is
21	shelling have taken their toll. The	**Rebels**	are everywhere, but the town is
22	are the young men of the	**Rebel**	army. This crisis is escalating at
23	are the young men of the	**Rebel**	army. This crisis is escalating at
24	correspondent Ian Pannell reports from the	**Rebel**	held town of Donetsk. Ukraine's
25	between the Ukrainian government and the	**Rebels**	here, it will have to include
26	a half uprooted. These are the	**Rebels**	, pro-Russian and battling government's
27	a hald uprooted. These are the	**Rebels**	, pro-Russian and battling government's
28	swap. Both the government and the	**Rebels**	promised a quick release of the
29	In eastern Ukraine,	**Rebels**	parade and humiliate captured army soldiers
30	the road out of Debaltseve, victorious	**Rebels**	are leaving their job done. They'

Table 11. UKR_BBC sub-corpus, "rebel*" concordance lines

1	e Luhansk, le due città	**Ribelli**	, è caduta. Ciao Poroshenko , dice
2	prigionieri. Ma questi, esibiti dai	**Ribelli**	a Donetsk come i 90 di
3	collegamento le due aree dai	**Ribelli**	controllate, cioè Donetsk e Luhansk,
4	mare, le città capoluogo della	**Ribellione**	, Luhansk e Donetsk. Come potete
5	città con Donetsk capoluogo della	**Ribellione**	. Una fragile tregua sulla cui
6	scambiati con una cinquantina di	**Ribelli**	filo-russi. Nella fredda notte
7	ritirato e, secondo Kiev, i	**Ribelli**	attaccano alle porte di Mariupol,
8	ucraino Poroshenko, anche se i	**Ribelli**	filo-russi negano qualsiasi attribuzione,
9	morti e feriti. Ma i	**Ribelli**	filo-russi chiamati in causa
10	forze di Kiev e i	**Ribelli**	filo-russi nell'est dell'
11	l'esercito ucraino che i	**Ribelli**	filo-russi accusano il ehm
12	'esercito ucraino sostiene che i	**Ribelli**	filo-russi l'abbiano fatto
13	forze di Kiev e i	**Ribelli**	filo-russi nell'est dell'
14	nelle ultime 24 ore con i	**Ribelli**	filo-russi e i militari
15	di Minsk. Marco Clementi. I	**Ribelli**	filo-russi festeggiano tra le
16	Donetsk e Luhansk, mentre i	**Ribelli**	non specificano dove l'esercito
17	almeno un morto, ma i	**Ribelli**	smentiscono. Intanto proseguono i prep
18	i prigionieri dell'altra repubblica	**Ribelle**	. Per raggiungere un totale di
19	i prigionieri dell'altra repubblica	**Ribelle**	. Per raggiungere un totale di
20	nella terra di nessuno tra	**Ribellione**	filo-russa e ucraina. Tra
21	nella terra di nessuno tra	**ribellione**	filo-russa e ucraina. Tra

Table 12. UKR_RAI sub-corpus, "ribel*" concordance lines

The concordance lines in Tables 11 and 12 provide further examples of the frequent association between Russia and separatists in contrast with the Ukrainian government. What appears relevant here, is that the overall dominance of "rebel*"/ "ribell*" over "separatist*" across the UKR_BBC and UKR_RAI sub-corpora suggests that these broadcasters are framing separatists' claims to their autonomy as illegal, and that they are also actively encouraging a polar West vs. East framing of the eastern Ukrainian conflict.

Indeed, according to the OED, a rebel is "a person who rises in opposition or armed resistance against an established government or leader"[8]. In this context, "separatist*", although far from being unproblematic, seems a politically fairer term of address for Ukrainian anti-government forces. Moreover, among the collocates of both "rebel*" and "separatist*" in all sub-corpora we find a variety of

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[8] Rebel | Definition of rebel in English by Oxford Dictionaries. Retrieved December 10, 2017, from https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/rebel.

epithets referring to the Russian Federation ("pro-Russian"/ "filo-russ*", "Russia", "Moscow", "Putin"). This suggests that these broadcasters implicitly deny the Ukrainian identity of the so-called rebels.

1	over its border with Russia. The	**separatists**	, backed by Russia, want to remain
2	between government forces and Russian backed	**Separatist**	is largely holding in the east
3	between government forces and Russia backed	**Separatists**	is largely holding in the east

Table 13. UKR_BBC sub-corpus "separatist*" concordance lines

1	si abbracciano, sventolano le bandiere	**Separatiste**	**separatiste**, calpestata quella ucraina. Anche
2	fa un nuovo attacco dei	**Separatisti**	**separatisti** filo-russi nell'est del
3	del paese. I razzi dei	**Separatisti**	**separatisti** filo russi provocano almeno 15 morti
4	un'autonomia spinta, allargata dei	**Separatisti**	**separatisti** guardano con ovvio, evidente e
5	di prigionieri tra esercito e	**Separatisti**	**separatisti** filo-russi, ma una bomba
6	sporadiche manifestazioni nelle vicende ehm	**Separatiste**	**separatiste**, che sono ehm praticamente ehm
7	i filo-sep e i	**Separatisti**	**separatisti** filo-russi hanno completato lo
8	conflitto tra Kiev e i	**Separatisti**	**separatisti** filo-russi. Tutti i fronti
9	questa città in quel movimento	**Separatista**	**separatista** filo-russo, che vede protagoniste
10	dell'OSCE e i rappresentanti	**Separatisti**	**separatisti** per arrivare al vertice di
11	continuità territoriale fra le repubbliche	**Separatiste**	**separatiste** di Luhansk e Donetsk e

Table 14. UKR_RAI sub-corpus "separatist*" concordance line

In line 23 of Table 7 I found the adjective "Ukrainian" occurring with "rebel". This finding posits one further issue, that is to understand who is depicted as "Ukrainian" by the four broadcasters. The concordance lines in the Tables above suggest that insurgents are not Ukrainians, despite being of Ukrainian descent. From this evidence, one could argue that Ukrainians are those who support Poroshenkos's Western-leaning and pro-Europe government.

This argument is backed up by evidence from the text. Indeed a search for "Ukrain*"/"ucrain*" in the UKR_sub-corpus shows a division between Ukraine and its government – with "Ukrainian*"/ "ucrain*" (adjectives) frequently occurring with internationally recognised institutions or institutional figures – and eastern Ukraine and the separatists (and Russia).

The item "Ukraine" occurs in the UKR_BBC sub-corpus with a frequency of 14.6 p1000w, around 30% of the times co-occurring with the adjective "Eastern", signalling that the *BBC* is indeed constructing the image of (Western) Ukraine in opposition to that of Eastern Ukraine. In the UKR_RAI sub-corpus, "Ucraina" has a normalised frequency of 6.6, and, around 14% of the times, it occurs with the adjectives "est" or "orientale".

According to these results, *RAI* seems to be less consistent in building an image of two divided "Ukraines". However, a closer look at the text and concordance lines of "est" in the UKR_RAI sub-corpus reveals that reporters and anchors, in order to avoid repeating "Ucraina", use the term "paese" or simply "est" (frequency in the UKR_RAI sub-corpus: 3 p1000w). Furthermore, within the UKR_RAI sub-corpus we also find the wording "repubbliche separatiste". By addressing the rebel-held territories as (self-proclaimed) Republics, *RAI* appears to give legitimacy to or, anyway, foster a representation of these areas as officially recognized political entities, which is something that none of the other channels under study does.

"Ukraine" in the UKR_EuronewsEN sub-corpus has a normalised frequency of 10.8 p1000w and occurs with "East" or "Eastern" 25% of the times. However, references to Eastern Ukraine are more frequent, as a search for "East*" in the sub-corpus gives 27 results, 26 of which referring specifically to Ukraine (thus a normalised frequency of 7 p1000w).

The UKR_EuronewsIT sub-corpus shows a very similar frequency of occurrence of the noun "Ucraina" (10.6 p1000w), 17% of the concordance lines of "Ucraina" contain either "est" or "orientale". Similar to *RAI*, it would seem that the UKR_EuronewsIT sub-corpus is less concerned with building two sides of this conflict. However, we find that, in order to avoid repetitions, "est" accompanies the noun "paese" or "regione" or it is used by itself referring to Ukraine with a

frequency of 2.3 p1000w, whereas "orientale" (1.8 p1000w) occurs with "Ucraina", but also with "frontiere" and "città".

The UKR_sub-corpora tend to promote a polar vision of the parties involved in the conflict, often removing the national label of "Ukrainian" from those who are rebelling against the Western-leaning government. However, the corpus analysis also showed that this polarization of the parties involved in the conflict is not always consistent. We observed how the UKR_BBC sub-corpus tends to represent the Ukrainian identity in unity with the Ukrainian official government, denying "Ukrainianness" to insurgents and thus feeding this bipolar, almost "Cold War"-like, view of the conflict and stigmatizing as illegal and unlawful the insurgents' claims.

This attitude can be found also in the UKR_RAI and UKR_Euronews (both) sub-corpora, albeit with some differences. Indeed, I pointed out how *Euronews*, in particular, is the only broadcaster recognizing "Ukrainness" to insurgents, whereas *RAI* tries to legitimize insurgents' territories by addressing them as Republics. Despite these differences, the bipolar display of identities within the Ukrainian conflict can be found with varying degrees in the UKR sub-corpus, thus promoting a "West vs. East" and/or a "Legal vs. Illegal" representation of its actors.

Once I analysed the actors within the Ukrainian conflict, I moved my attention to the labels by which the newscasters defined the conflict itself. Indeed I observed how the adjective "Ukrainian" often referred to Western-leaning Ukrainian institutions and forces. However, these adjective and genitive prepositions (of/di + Ukraine/Ucraina or the Saxon genitive) are also used to describe and qualify other entities in the corpus as Ukrainian.

Table 15 shows the words that occur with the adjective "Ukrainian" and "ucrain*" and those which occur with "Ukraine" and "Ucraina" in the UKR_sub-corpus divided according to five categories (Politics, Military, Places, Conflict and Miscellaneous).

Ukr/Ucr	UKR_RAI	UKR_EuronewsIT	UKR_EuronewsIT	UKR_BBC
Politics	President, governo, stato	Cittadini, ministro degli esteri, governo, stato maggiore, presidente, parlamento	People, president, authorities, leader, foreign minister	Government, president
Military	Forze armate, esercito, forze, milizie, prigionieri, soldati, truppe	Esercito, forze, esercito regolare, Servizi segreti, soldati, truppe	Border patrol, troops, rebels, government troops army, defeat, military, security service	Army, armour, military, troops, soldiers, national guard
Places	capitale	Frontiera	City, territory, border, industrial heartland	Capital, city
Conflict	Guerra civile, rivoluzione, ribellione, crisi, situazione, conflitto	Conflitto, crisi, Guerra	(Ukraine's) conflict, crisis, war	War, conflict (in Ukraine)
Misc.	Notte, bandiera			

Table 15. "Ukrainian"/ "ucrain*" (adj.) and their collocates

While the collocates in the "Politics" and "Military" category are quite predictable, those in "Conflict" and "Places" offer a somewhat unexpected starting point for a reflection about how the Ukrainian situation was labelled by the four broadcasters and how its geography is conveyed to the viewers. Although the striking majority of the occurrences of the adjective "Ukrainian" is followed by nouns representing official and internationally recognised institutions, on two occasions the *BBC* addresses the situation as "Ukrainian war", extending the conflict to the whole country. The perception of a conflict taking place on the entire Ukrainian soil is confirmed in the sentence "Ukraine's at war with itself" (Ian Pannel, 150211_BBCOne_NewsAt10, 10:43), which also strengthens the hypothesis that the Eastern Ukrainian situation was framed as a civil war by western media. In UKR_BBC "war" (4.6 fp1000w) and "conflict" (2.0 fp1000w) are the most frequent nouns defining the Ukrainian situation, however "crisis" is also found in the sub-corpus (0.8 fp1000w), but not in the immediate +/-5 word-span of the concordance lines.

When it comes to defining the Ukrainian situation, *RAI* seems to be the most

creative although not always coherent broadcaster, providing five different options: "Guerra civile" (0.26 fp1000w) or simply "Guerra" (2.26 fp1000w), "crisi" (1.73 fp1000w), and "conflitto" (1.3 fp1000w), "situazione" (0.13 fp1000w), "rivoluzione" (0.13 fp1000w), and "ribellione" (0.53 fp1000w). A closer look at the concordance lines shows that "rivoluzione" actually refers to the Maidan revolution, whereas the noun "ribellione" occurs both with the noun "Ucraina" and the adjective "filorussa".

The two most frequent nouns identifying the Ukrainian situation in the UKR_RAI sub-corpus are "guerra" and "crisi". While "guerra" seems an appropriate definition of what happened in Ukraine, "crisi" is somehow misleading, as it usually defines a temporarily difficult situation (e.g. "crisi dei migranti"), which does not necessarily include violence. Thus "crisi" seems to remove the violent and long-standing characteristics of the conflict in Ukraine, promoting a less serious picture of the situation.

Both the UKR_Euronews sub-corpora use the noun "crisis" to define the conflict, although not as frequently as UKR_RAI sub-corpus. However, if the Italian noun "crisi" was not the ideal word for describing the armed conflict in Ukraine, neither is "crisis" in English. The OED defines "crisis" (second entry) as follows:

> A vitally important or decisive stage in the progress of anything; a turning-point; also, a state of affairs in which a decisive change for better or worse is imminent; now applied esp. to times of difficulty, insecurity, and suspense in politics or commerce.[9]

Once again, this does not provide a clear picture of what this "Ukrainian situation" entails and has entailed for those involved in it. In the UKR_EuronewsEN sub-corpus "crisis" and "war" are equally frequent (1.08 fp1000w), whereas "conflict" (3.79 fp1000w) is the preferred noun to define the Ukrainian situation. We find an almost identical situation in the UKR_EuronewsIT sub-corpus. "Crisi" and "guerra" have both very low and similar frequencies (0.53 fp1000w), leaving "conflitto" (1.59 fp1000w) as the preferred word indicating the Ukrainian war.

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[9] "crisis, n.". OED Online. (June 2017). Oxford University Press. Retrieved December 12, 201 from http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.unibo.it/view/Entry/44539?redirectedFrom=crisis&.

4. Conclusion

The results of this case study suggest that all the broadcasters tended to frame the conflict along polarized axes. Actors and places of the conflict are posited either on one side or the other: continuums, nuances or scales seem not to find any place in the discourse on the Ukrainian situation.

The corpus-based analysis of actors in the conflict showed that there is a tendency to depict two neatly distinct factions: separatists, often addressed as "rebels", and Ukrainians. These factions, in turn, are part of a wider polarisation, one between East and West and more specifically between Russia and the West. Thus, the label of "new cold war" that Pavlyshin and Fedor[10] found among Russian media, is not, according to the results of this study, a Russian prerogative.

As mentioned in section 1, I do not have the skills for verifying the existence of these narratives and labels in Russian broadcasters, but it would have surely been interesting to consider the stance of Russian media. I could have done this by adding a component to the AVNews Corpus, which included newscasts from another international broadcaster, such as *Russia Today*[11], or by building a corpus composed of news bulletins from *TASS*, the Russian News Agency, or a similar bilingual publication within the Russian Federation. However, building audiovisual corpora is a very time-consuming activity and analysing the angle and stance of Russian media was not among the purposes of this study.

What this study shows is that the four Western TV broadcasters seem to replicate the Russia vs. West polarisation, albeit without mentioning it explicitly and, more importantly, by involving the European Union and its leaders as well as the USA. This is confirmed also by a brief issued by the European Political Strategy Centre in June 2018, which sees the Ukrainian conflict as intimately connected with other war-like situations involving power blocks (USA, China, and Russia), thus hinting

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[10] Monash European and EU Centre, LLCL – The Geopolitics of Eastern Europe Today: The Case of Ukraine. (2016, October 23). Retrieved May, 31, 2019, from http://artsonline.monash.edu.au/events/events/monash-european-and-eu-centre-llcl-the-geopolitics-of-eastern-europe-today-the-case-of-ukraine/.
[11] Russia Today website. Retrieved on May, 31, 2019, from https://www.rt.com/.

at the return of the so-called "great power rivalry" (EPSC 2018: 8).

Contrary to the homogeneity found among the broadcasters in the polarized discourse on actors within the Ukrainian situation, when it comes to naming the conflict itself, I observed different and often incoherent strategies. The two *RAI* broadcasters present contrasting strategies in naming the situation, calling it at times "crisi", at times "guerra" to name just the most frequent options. Arguably, the label of "crisi" is a problematic one in Italian and English as it diverts attention from the on-going and violent features that, instead, "war" or "conflict" involve. Conversely, the *BBC* employs the two near-synonyms "war" and "conflict", thus giving a more realistic picture of what this conflict entailed and entails for those involved.

Both *RAI* and *BBC* on two occasions suggest that what is happening in Ukraine is defined as a civil war, confirming Pavlyshyn and Fedor's (23 October 2016) argument. However, the data at my disposal were too scarce to dismiss or confirm their argument. The instances labelling the conflict as a civil war were too few to draw any firm conclusion, especially if compared to other labels.

As concerns the Euronews sub-corpora, we find that the labelling of the conflict is consistent across the two languages, presenting similar frequencies and discursive strategies. Both UKR_Euronews sub-corpora display the label of "conflict"/ "conflitto", showing little variance on a couple of occasions with "war"/ "guerra" and "crisis"/ "crisi". The similarities between these two sub-corpora seem to hint at language transfer activities, which are partly confirmed by the brief analysis offered while discussing "rebel"/ "ribelli" and "separatists"/ "separatisti".

Finally, it is worth reflecting upon the translational implications of the results surfaced through the corpus analysis, again by looking at *Euronews*. Indeed, it would be interesting to find out the source language (SL) in which news events originated, in order to understand if it is plausible to assume that the "original"/source audio-visual texts might be drafted in English, and then translated or reworded (Lefevere 1992) by "language journalists" (Baisnée and Marchetti 2006) within the *Euronews* newsroom.

This, in turn, might explain some similarities found between *Euronews* (Italian

and English) and the *BBC*. Even though those I am drawing are just tentative conclusions, the similarities and greater homogeneity observed within this channel could lead to the suggestion that maybe they are the result of translational activities or, more broadly, multilingual news production.

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