



Semiotic Analysis of the Russia-Ukraine War Images in the USA's TIME Magazine

Maham Riaz¹, Tamsila Naeem², Ayesha Zafar³

¹ M.Phil. Scholar, University of Management and Technology (UMT), Pakistan.

² Assistant Professor, University of Management and Technology (UMT), Pakistan.

³ Associate Professor, University of Sialkot, Pakistan. Email: ayeshazafarsultan@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

War is never a panacea for any conflict. With the expansion of NATO towards the east and Ukraine's interest in its membership, things have become quite problematic for Russia in the security paradigm. Both Ukraine and the West have neglected the security concerns of Russia that could arise if Ukraine joins NATO. This paper explores the inhumane and despotic reality of the Russia-Ukraine war on the innocent and faultless civilians of Ukraine with the help of war photography. These images are semiotically analyzed through the critical approach of Gillian Rose which she put forward in 2001. The nature of this research is descriptive-qualitative. Six images of this war are taken from TIME, an American magazine. The results of this research highlight the gory nature of war. It also portrays that the civilians have to bear the repercussions of the political tensions between the states and of the geo-strategic interests on the international stage. This study also suggests that the main essence of life is peace. Any Gordian knot can be undone with diplomacy and debate.

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Corresponding Author's Email: ayeshazafarsultan@gmail.com

1. Introduction

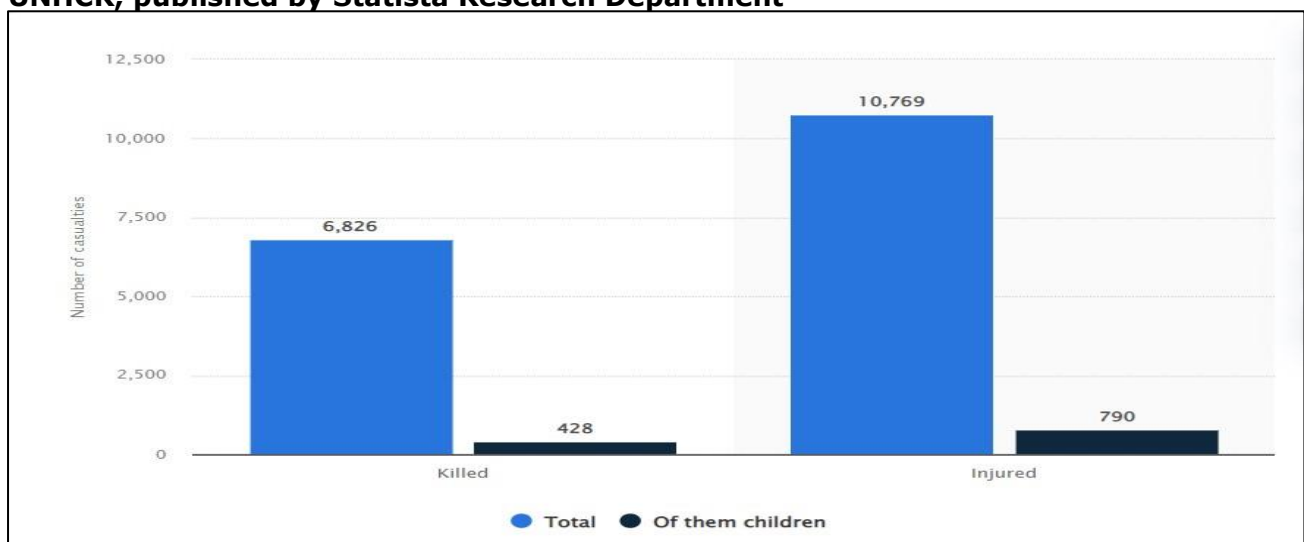
Communication around us takes place in various forms. It could be through words, images, and symbols. We pick up newspapers, we see our cell phones, or we travel by road, these mediums of communication are observed everywhere. It is often said that a picture can convey thousands of words and can portray a scenario better than words. Images in electronic, print, and social media become interactional when the viewers see them. It always communicates something to the viewer. The press images are of great significance in showing the political, cultural, social, and other dimensions of the reality being projected. The print and electronic media usually place images with a piece of brief information about them beneath them. Sometimes, more space or even the whole section of the page is allocated to such images to depict their importance. Similarly, a news magazine in America, TIME, has shown the top 100 images to give an inkling about how 2022 went in its course. The images have been selected by a team of eight photo editors of the magazine. Their basic motto is to show how 2022 has been different from the previous years. This study aims to explore the war images of the Russia-Ukraine conflict in the above-mentioned magazine.

Man has been facing the goriness of war since he has been on this planet. It is the sole reality that is faced even in the past era and has not ceased to exist till this century. War can be described in various ways. von Clausewitz (1976) asserts that war is a brutal way of negotiating with your foes. He stated that it is the extension of politics artistically to bind your enemies according to your wishes. War is a discord in which violence occurs. This bad blood exists within at least two of the actors who are connected by place and time. Eker (2015) mentions that people, city, states, kingdoms, empires, war groups, and nation-states can be actors in modern wars. War has been waged through various strategies and methods if an overview of history is made. Ranging from the ground force in primitive times to the current innovative techniques of hybrid warfare, the stark clouds of war have covered humanity at all times. Münkler (2009)

claims that the current wars are more destructive than the classical wars have been. They hit large areas within no time and perturb the social base. Eker (2015) states that war is employed to achieve a certain target like the protection of one’s beliefs or the attainment of fame. As SUN (2022) claims that for some nation-states, war is the point of life and death. It is just like a passage through which the safety or destruction of one nation-state is guaranteed. War is a matter of great significance and it is to be given attention through all sorts of means.von Clausewitz (1976) says that war is the extreme option for a state to solve its problems and carry on its politics.

The Russia- Ukraine War: After the First World War, the two republics of Ukraine came into being on both sides of the border of the former Russian-Austrian land. These two republics joined hands with each other and became the independent Ukrainian People’s Republic in 1919. This state laid the foundations for the United Soviet Socialist Republics in 1922. A referendum, however, depicted that 90% of the Ukrainians were in favor of the independence of Ukraine from the USSR in 1991. Therefore, the Soviet Union disintegrated resulting in the independence of the tens of the states. Nevertheless, peace did not last and soon another conflict emerged. The crisis between Russia and Ukraine aggravated in 2014 when Russia annexed the eastern parts of Ukraine. Welt (2021) states that some observers believe that Russia has been in the most difficult phase since Ukraine got its freedom. With the same cultural and ethnic values, Russians have considered Ukrainians to be their close brothers. It is even noticed in the published essay of Vladimir Putin that the people of Russia and Ukraine are ‘one people (Putin, 2023)’. The current conflict emerged when Ukraine wanted to join the western alliance, and the Northern Atlantic Treaty Organization, NATO, for its security from the invasion of Russia. The chaos occurred when the eastern part of Ukraine wanted to join with Russia and the other half of Ukraine wished to move to the western and European block. In all this fiasco, many innocent lives have ceased to exist and a large number of Ukrainians are wounded. Many have been displaced from the comfort of their homes and many have been separated from their loved ones. It is a common and ordinary man who always bears the brunt of situations like war. Statista. (n.d) has published the official number of casualties of civilians which is verified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Table 1 shows the statistics of the casualties in this war.

Table 1: Number of civilian casualties during the war in Ukraine 2022-2023, verified by UNHCR, published by Statista Research Department



(Statista Research Department, 2023)

2. Literature Review

The Greek word semion gives the English word semiotic which means sign. Chandler (2002) states that semiotics is used as a theoretical framework for the construction and analysis of meaning. Semiotics is known as the study of signs. Semiotics divides signs into two types: verbal and non-verbal signs (Al-Khafaji & Al-Saadi, 2014). Charles Sanders Peirce and Ferdinand de Saussure are the two key figures in the field of semiotics. Visual semiotics is a sub-field of semiotics that analyzes images and visual signs. Rose (2001) in ‘Visual Methodologies’ puts forward a ‘critical approach’ to analyzing images. The critical approach of Rose has certain steps to be followed. Firstly, ‘takes images seriously (Rose, 2001).’ The historians of art often mention

this thing that social scientists do not explore the effects of visual pictures. They only read images with the help of social contexts; however, they fail to acknowledge how the images influence them. This is the reason why Rose has emphasized to look at each image with great concern and focus. Under keen observation, a social scientist can extract the impacts of such pictures. The effects of war on humanity can be segregated at individual and community levels. In addition to these, social, economic, political and national impacts can be studied through war images. Therefore, a keen eye is significant in pinpointing the minute details. Secondly, 'thinks about the social conditions and effects of visual objects (Rose, 2001).' In this point, Rose gives great importance to the visual objects and things present in an image. If an image is captured in the times of war, the depiction of elements or objects in a frame would describe the social environment. For example, a war image shows the scattered utensils in a kitchen. Any culture would suggest that human beings organize their things in a proper manner. So, a meaning is generated from this cultural thought. Therefore, such an unorganized kitchen would show the disturbance of a human life in the times of war. Rose mentions Griselda Pollock as: 'cultural practices do a job which has major social significance in the articulation of meanings about the world, in the negotiation of social conflicts, in the production of social subjects (1988).' Thirdly, it 'considers your way of looking at images (Rose, 2001).' The book further paves the way for the semiotic analysis of an image. Rose (2001) states that the signs in an image are to be decided, then the signified concepts of the images are to be found, and then the relation of these signs is to be analyzed with other signs present in the same image and in the other images under study. Then, the link of these signs to 'codes, referent systems or mythologies (Rose, 2001)' is evaluated. Lastly, the researcher of the images would come back to the signs through codes to interpret mythology and ideology.

In addition to the critical approach, Rose has also utilized the checklist of Dyer (1982). The points, which are given by Dyer, further assists in decoding the image. These points analyze an image on three fronts. The first section covers the physical illustration of people in the picture. It is concerned with the gender, race, hair, looks, age and body of a person. The second section studies the manner of a person. It includes the facial expression, pose and eye contact. The third section decodes the body movement such as communication through position, touch and pose of a person. There is no doubt that photos hold inexplicable power to depict the happenings around the world. Reiche (2003) asserts this belief: "We believe what we see and we see what we believe. Images become icons and individuals become myths as well as legends. Both the church and the state instrumentalize the power that is inherent in photographs and equally benefit from visual trustfulness among human beings (Reiche, 2003)." People believe what they see in images. This is one of the reasons why the media is relying on photos while covering any situation in the world. Pictures stay in mind for a longer period if they are compared with words. Scientists claim that long-term memory internalizes those facets of an image that arouse a strong feeling of shock and surprise. Therefore, the media selects those pictures that are bound to emotionally awaken the audience positively or negatively (Krzeminski, 2001, p. 180 /Schierl, 2001, p. 198). Today, pictures hold a crucial position in the discernment of news, and they induce emotions among viewers (Barnhurst & Nerone, 2002). These press photographs illustrate more than they represent or denote in various ways (Huxford, 2001). The meaning from the visual means is constructed in the way of structuring of images, their presentation in a specific context, and the temporal and spatial knowledge of the viewer (Mendelson, 2007). The images exercise noteworthy power over the viewer which is 'unavailable to the verbal version'(Blair, 2012). Sontag (2003) states that the photographs of war casualties 'reiterate. They simplify. They agitate. They create the illusion of consensus. (2003)' Owing to this, the pictures can represent something rhetorically which may not be possible or acceptable with verbal statements. Geertz (1976) asserts that this quality helps in interpreting the images ideologically and presenting complicated matters with greater ease in certain frameworks. The ideological interpretations curtail the ambiguity in meaning that may arise in the simple symbols. Such symbols may have a 'layer of broader concepts, ideas, and values which the represented people, places, and things "stand for", or "are signs of"' (Van Leeuwen, 2004). The notion of a sign has an important place in the semiotic analysis method.

Khan and Butt (2024) in 'Representation of Kashmir's Subjugation through War Photos: A Semiotic Analysis,' have conducted a semiotic analysis of the war images of the Kashmir conflict. This study reveals the relation between the sign systems and language used to describe these images. It also focuses on the emotional appeal and the ideological narratives that have arisen in the Kashmir conflict. The researchers have collected the images from the three Indian

and Pakistani newspapers by purposive sampling technique. The Rose model is applied to decode the signs present in the Kashmir conflict images. As a result, they are able to find the relation between the visual and verbal signs. Kara and Nisan (2020) also performed their work on "Semiotic Analysis of War Pictures Drawn by Syrian Children". They explored the Tunisian protests that began on the 18th of December, 2010, and then expanded to other Arab nations. Owing to all these public reactions, the governments ceased to work and civil wars occurred and continued for numerous years. Similarly, protests broke out in Syria, which resulted in a horrible civil war. On account of this, other world powers also started proxy wars on the soil of Syria. There were severe social, economic, and psychological outcomes of this war. Mass migration took place as civilians were unable to live in the war-struck country. Their migration, however, could not erase the goriness of war from their minds. These bleak realities were portrayed in the form of drawings of the Syrian children. The paper studies these drawings and the perception of war that existed in the minds of these children. The semiotic model was used to analyze these drawings. It concluded that women, children, and older people are the ones who suffer the brutality and drastic results of such wars.

During the war in Iraq, Dunleavy (2015) in "A Search for Meaning in Iconic News Images of the Iraq War" studied the meaning through subjective discussions of the two iconic Iraq war news photographs in some of the sources. The author has used semiotic analysis to describe the role of these images in media in projecting and influencing the social, moral, and cultural traditions in the West. The author analyzes the iconic picture of a prisoner of Iraq who is treated cruelly and the picture of an exhausted marine of the United States of America. The results of studying these images of news expose the differences of the antagonistic norms, ideology, ideas, and moral bias. Topbaş (2011) employed a semiotic method in the dissertation, "War Photography, A Semiotic Analysis of Photographs in Turkish National Press During the Cyprus Operation in 1974." The graphics of war, specifically the images of war have been semiotically studied and the impact of these images on the minds of the audience is observed. It also focused on the reasons for the emergence of battlefield settings and images over some time. This study looked into the images of the Cyprus Operation in the press of Turkey. Though the operation is said to be done for peace, many states have termed it as the Turkish occupation of Cyprus. The findings suggest that the Turkish newspaper has illustrated the political and national values through these images. "Iconic photos of the Vietnam War era, A semiotic analysis as a tool of understanding" is a study performed by Lovelace (2010). This study establishes the Vietnam War as the first war which has been broadcasted. The still images and the single frames of this war, however, have been of utmost significance in annals of history. Historians say that Nick Ut's picture of a little unclothed girl running in the street after being teased by napalm and the photograph taken by Eddie Adams of a Viet Cong person being killed in Saigon are the two instances of iconic photographs. These have been depicted in the texts of history as visual representations of war. A combination of previous work on such photographs and the method of semiotic analysis are used by the author. By the application of these methods, the author finds innocence, emotional disturbance, and the theme of powerlessness and vulnerability in these war pictures.

3. Research Methodology

This study applies the model of Rose (2001) for the visual semiotic analysis of the images of the victims of the Russia-Ukraine war. The data which is collected for the study includes war images of the Ukrainian people who have faced the brunt of brutal discord between Russia and Ukraine. The images are taken from TIME magazine under the heading 'TIME's Top 100 Photos of 2022 (TIME Photo Department, 2022).' These photos are selected through purposive sampling technique. The war images are firstly analyzed by the critical approach of Rose, and then, by the checklist of Dyer (1982). Rose (2001) points out in her critical approach that there are various steps to do semiotic analysis of images. The first step is to find out the signs in an image. The second step is to make out what these selected signs signify. The third step deals with how one sign in an image is connected to other signs in the same image. The second analysis is employed with the help of Dyer's checklist as explained by Rose in Visual Semiotics (Rose, 2001). Rose (2001) utilizes the checklist of Dyer (1982) to evaluate images and to understand the meanings that images convey. This list incorporates the analysis on three bases. Firstly, the physical appearance of the people such as hair, race, gender, age, body, hair, and looks are determined. Then, the demonstration of manner comes in which eye contact, expressions on the face, and

pose are analyzed. Lastly, the activity representations are understood in which movement of the body, touch, communication through position, and settings are looked at.

3.1. Semiotic analysis of the selected images

Image 1

In TIME magazine, the text beneath the image informs that a person George Keburia sees off his children and wife, Maya, at a train station in Odessa. On May 5, 2022, the family leaves for Lviv which is a town next to the Polish border.

Figure 1: A Ukrainian husband, George Keburia, sees off his family at a train station



4. Analysis

Table 1

Signs observed in the image	What signs signify
A husband and a wife (as the text beneath the image tells)	The basis of a family; is a union that will go through different phases of life together.
A white dress	Depiction of grief.
A window	It acts as a type of divider between the couple.
Fog	It shows the obscurity of the future in the prevalent times of the Russia-Ukraine war. Both individuals are in doubt as to whether they will see each other again or not once the war stops.
Darkness	This depicts the conditions of lifelessness in Odessa, a city in war-torn Ukraine.
Light in the train	It illustrates the state of optimism for the Ukrainian people for survival and life as they are being taken to another city.

There are various signs in the image. A husband and a wife as informed by TIME magazine, a window, fog, curtain, and another person are the signs that are observed in this picture. The wife is wearing a white dress which signifies the state of mourning and loss. There is a window that divides the couple. The fog on the window shows the uncertainty about the lives of Ukrainian people in times of war with Russia. Fog signifies mystery and confusion about the circumstances during war times. The husband faces his wife. It is to be noted that the husband is standing in the dark while his family leaves for another place. The darkness shows that there is danger at the place and it would likely be hit in the coming days of the war. The darkness also signifies that the place is devoid of life. On the other hand, the light in the train signifies hope and life for the displaced people. It depicts that they would be able to escape the deadly war by reaching a safe place. The touch of the hands of the couple shows that they do not want to leave each other. The window, however, plays the role of the divider and signifies their separation. According to the list of Dyer, which Rose has employed in the analysis of images, the physical appearance of the people is described. The woman is middle-aged with brown hair which shows her youthfulness. Her looks are sorrowful and melancholic as the war has been successful in parting ways of the husband and wife. The husband is looking away from the camera. His side

pose is blurred. Only his hand is seen, stretching it to his wife as if to feel the warmth of their relationship. The boy standing with her, maybe her son, is witnessing the gloomy scene.

The second step of this list is to examine the manner of these people. The expressions of the woman are noteworthy. Her eyes are filled with tears. Her face is communicating agony and helplessness due to the horrible war between Russia and Ukraine. She looks at her husband as if she is trying to recollect all the moments spent with him. Her posture shows her disturbed and agitated mental state. Her face shows signs of uncertainty and vulnerability at the hands of a deadly war. Her placement of the hand suggests that she is unable to freeze the moment of division. In the third stage, the depiction of movement is studied. The image is taken at the Odessa terminal of the train. The image is presented in sepia effect which represents a sense of nostalgia. Sepia tone connects all the other signs and what they signify as it illustrates the happy times of the past and how the victims of war yearn to return to that time. Time magazine states that an elder woman becomes the target of the war crimes of the Russian army over the civilians of Ukraine. The magazine claims that the place in the image is Bucha in Ukraine where the massacre of killing innocent people happened.

Figure 2: A fallen woman after a mortar attack in Bucha



5. Analysis

Table 2

Signs observed in the image	What signs signify
A fallen woman	She portrays the non-existent life in the Russia Ukraine war.
A kitchen	An inoperative kitchen suggests the deprivation of food and health to the victims of the brutal war.
Some unclosed cabinets	They tell a disturbing picture of the mind of the victim lying on the floor as she was not given enough time to close them when a mortar attack happened.
An empty chair	The emptiness shows the state of desertedness where a human being is lifeless on the floor.
Scattered utensils	The disorganized things in the kitchen show the impacts of war on the lives of innocent civilians.

The model of Rose (2001) assists in identifying the signs first in the image. A woman, a kitchen, unclosed cabinets, a chair, a table, and utensils are the signs shown in this photograph. The woman lying on the floor of the kitchen depicts an unusual happening. The kitchen usually signifies life, comfort, family, and home, however, the woman lying on the floor signifies the absence of life and the prominence of death and stillness in the lives of the Ukrainians. The grey color of the coat signifies sadness and depression. The unclosed doors of the cabinets show the impacts of the deadly war on the people who know nothing about war and its goriness. They show how every single human being is at sixes and sevens to survive the brutality of war. The empty chair depicts the absence of human existence. Likewise, the things scattered on the table and the unorganized utensils show the mess and chaos the war has caused in the lives of civil

Ukrainians. The kitchen on the whole suggests the sustenance and maintenance of health and peace for one’s body and mind. It is the place where food is cooked and provided for the family. In the image, however, the kitchen shown suggests otherwise. The concept of the kitchen is observed in contrariness to the one shown in the image. The face of the woman is not visible in the image. The appearance of the woman can be explained by looking at her hands and her hair. There is blackness on the hands of the woman due to the Russian explosion with the help of mortars. Whenever ammunition is used in war, such illustrations of smokiness and ash are seen. Her disheveled and tangled grey hair shows that she is in her late- forties.

She is wearing a grey coat and long boots which suggests that she might have been thinking of evacuating the place, but she did not find enough time to do so. The way she is lying still right in front of the table means that the sheer magnitude of the bomb pushed her toward the table. The setting in the picture is in the kitchen. Although the kitchen as a symbol depicts that it is a place where the families are nourished, and provided with food, and their growth happens, the kitchen in the image shows the place of death for the woman. Even the kitchen could not provide comfort and ease in times of war. The stillness of the body shows her death in the attack. There is no movement in the image. Everything has ceased to exist because life is possible when human beings are alive. The magazine reports that the image depicts a father who is mourning the loss of his son’s life. The shelling began due to the Russian annexation of Ukraine when the son was playing outside. The bombardment occurred in the soccer ground where the boy was busy enjoying his game.

Figure 3: A father, Serhi, is crying for his dead son in Mariupol hospital



6. Analysis

Table 3

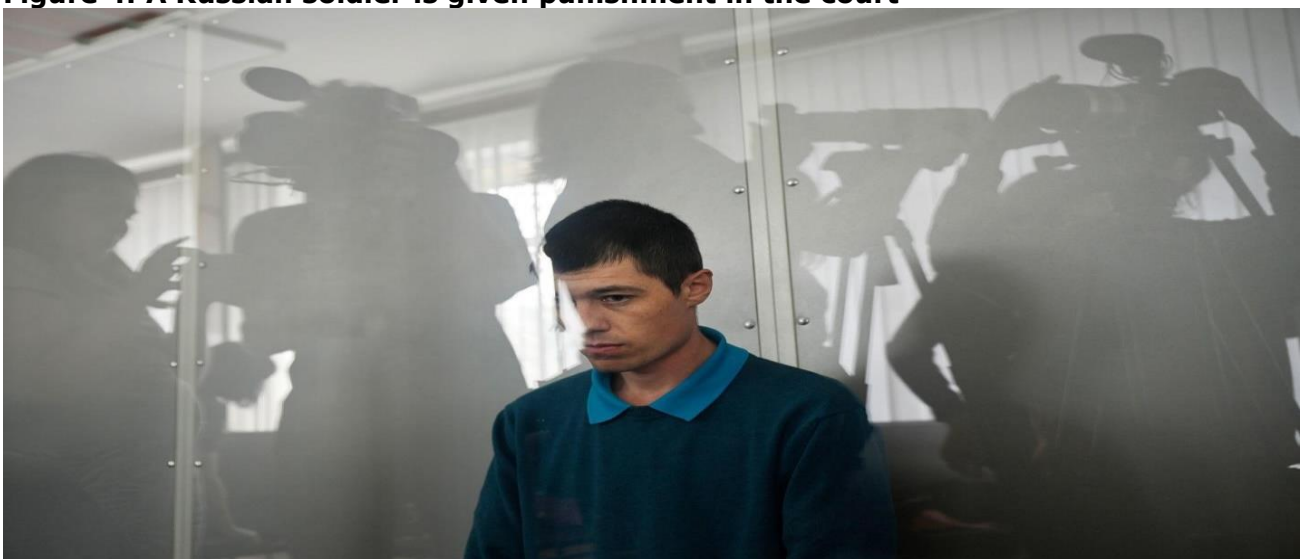
Signs observed in the image	What signs signify
A stretcher	This depicts the environment of a hospital in which patients who cannot walk or move are taken. It also suggests the poor health conditions of the victims of war.
A white cloth	This colour of cloth represents the innocence of the dead child.
Blood spots	The red blood stains on the white sheet show that the pure soul of the dead child was incognizant of the dark reality of the war.
A dead body of a son	This depicts the desolation and senselessness of the war times when the playful and harmless children are being killed by the enemy.
A father figure	The picture of a father illustrates the state of hopelessness and powerlessness as a father is a pillar of strength, however, he could not save his son.

The application of Rose (2001) method is of great use to identify the signs in a visual illustration. A man, a stretcher, a white cloth stained with blood spots, and a dead body are the signs in the image. As the magazine informs that the man is the father whose son has died in

the Russia-Ukraine war. The father figure in a symbolic way shows determination, strength, and power for his children. Even though the father is a protector of his children; the one in the image is hopeless and powerless in front of a bloodthirsty war. A stretcher is mostly seen in hospitals for carrying patients to the desired medical ward. It is also seen when a dead body is taken into or out of the ambulance. The stretcher in the picture has the dead son of the father. It is symbolic in nature to understand that when a person dies, he is not able to move, therefore, the four legs of the stretcher are attached to wheels. It becomes easy to move the person to the wanted area. The white cloth covered the body which signifies emptiness and loss. From the perspective of the son, the white color also conveys his innocence. In the days of his playfulness, he has lost his life. From the spots of blood, it can be analyzed that the blood is still fresh and the boy has just lost his life. Rose executed the steps of Dyer (1982) to apply the visual semiotic techniques to the images. From the given image, the physical semblance of the father shows that he is in his late middle age. The volume of his hair is almost negligible which depicts his age. He is wearing glasses which means that he has eyesight problems. His body stature also shows his age. His side pose from a certain height is taken which shows his vulnerability in the face of war. The body is concealed with a white sheet.

The manner in which the father holds his son's face shows his incapability to save his son from the horrors of war. His tight grip on his son depicts the desire of the father to bring his son back to life. The lines on his face depict his state of loss and deprivation. It can be noticed that his eyes are closed and his jaws are opened. This shows the crying and mourning of the father for his son. His tightly held arms and his way of sitting explain that he is recollecting all the memories with his son. The image is taken in the surroundings of a hospital. The emotions of the father give meaning to the picture. The stillness of his son suggests the devoid of movement and life in the image. The white sheet connects the meaning of all the signs in the image and shows the emptiness of humanity in times of battle. Mikhail Kulikov, a Russian soldier sentenced to 10 years in jail after he was found guilty of firing a tank at a multi-story apartment building in the first days of the Ukraine war, at the court in Chernihiv on Aug. 4. He was the second Russian soldier convicted in Ukraine since the beginning of the invasion.

Figure 4: A Russian soldier is given punishment in the court



7. Analysis

Table 4

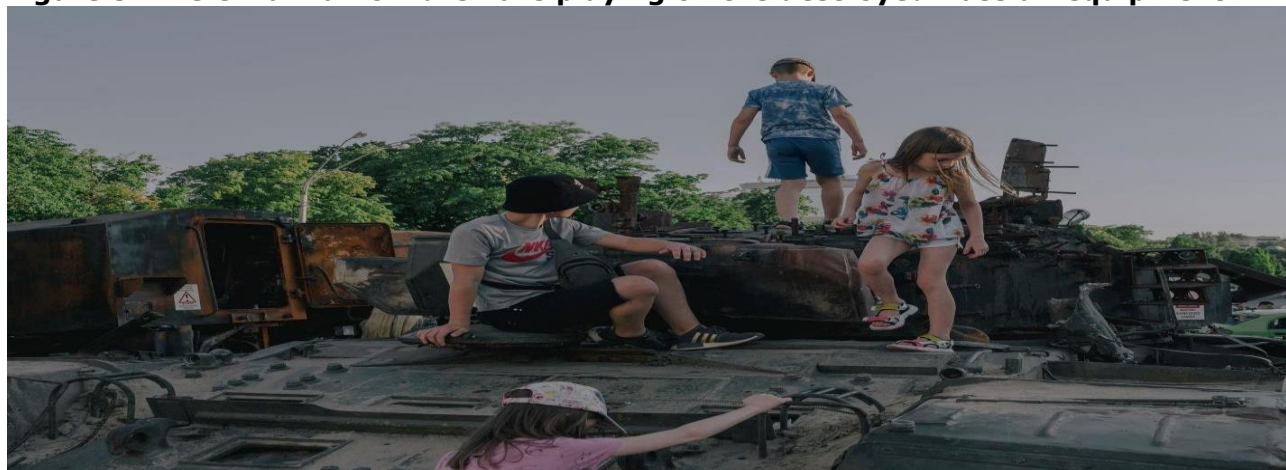
Signs observed in the image	What signs signify
A Russian soldier	A soldier is known to be a defender of his country. He fights off the enemy, however, the Russian soldier is uncomfortable with the penalty inflicted on him by the Ukrainian court.
Shadows of cameramen	These shadows show the role of the cameramen in capturing the happenings. These shadows also signify that they will chase and show the incidents occurring anywhere at any time.

Glass	The transparent glass also conveys that the Russian soldier is penalized for his war crimes in the Ukrainian court. The truth has prevailed in the court.
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A man, the shadows of cameramen, and glass are the signs identified by employing the model of Rose (2001). The magazine informs that this man is a Russian soldier. The cameramen signify that they are reporting an important event during the Russia-Ukraine war. The shadows reveal that the soldier is under the control of some powerful agency. From the image, the eyes of the man convey regret for fighting for the Russian cause. The eyes communicate that he is thinking about his family. His blue shirt and sweater show that he longs for peace, but due to national causes, he has come to Ukraine to fight in the name of Russia. The transparent glass indicates that the Russian soldier is caught in Ukraine and all his activities are revealed now. From Dyer (1982) perspective, the appearance of the man communicates that he is in early adulthood. Only half of the body of the boy is taken in the photograph. His dark brown hair symbolizes his young age. His body structure shows his level of fitness as he is a soldier. The manner in which the face of the soldier is cut by the shadow of the woman holding a camera. The other people are represented only in the mirrored way. Four people are capturing the picture of the soldier. More than half of their bodies are shown.

In the second stage of Dyer’s model, the boy is seen to be in a regretful and doleful mood. His expressions are sad. The soldier is not looking at the camera when the picture is taken. The looks are submissive and spiritless. The boy is in a sitting position which shows his resigned nature as he has been captured by the Ukrainian forces. The cameramen are standing which suggests that in every situation media has to convey the happening around the world. Their standing position shows their active role in covering any situation. The people whose images are mirrored are looking at their cameras and setting them. The third section explains the passive nature of the soldier as he is sitting there idle. This shows that he has been caught by the Ukrainian agencies and he has lost his freedom. The cameramen are touching their cameras and show their agile nature. The cameramen are shown in the superior position and the soldier is shown in the inferior place. The setting of the picture is in a room where a transparent glass separates the media persons and the held soldier. The TIME magazine gives the details about the image. It mentions that Ukrainian children are enjoying the ruined war vehicle of Russia. The image was taken right in front of the Monastery of Saint Michael in Kyiv city of Ukraine

Figure 5: The Ukrainian children are playing on the destroyed Russian equipment



8. Analysis

Table 5

Signs observed in the image	What signs signify
Children	The lively spirit of the Ukrainian children shows that the war cannot last longer and life has to continue in its natural course.
Trees	The green trees enrich the lives of the victims by providing them with fresh air and the hope to live their life after the war diminishes in Kyiv city of Ukraine.

The signs are first identified by using the approach of Rose (2001). Children, equipment of war, and trees are the signs in this image. Children in the picture show innocence and purity. They also symbolize the presence of life in the scene. Despite the fact, the Russia-Ukraine war has torn the Ukrainian nation apart, the children are in animal spirits. They are enjoying the leftover war vehicle of Russia. The rusted war tank shows that the Russian forces have left this area. The trees signify the return of life to this area of Ukraine. In the war zones, all the greenery is lost due to bombardment and battle, however, the picture depicts the prominence of life. Trees symbolize the support of life by providing oxygen and food to living beings. All the signs relate to each other and support the theme that war has ended in this area of Ukraine as the image shows the observance of life. Now, by analyzing the image with Dyer's method, the layers of meaning would be inspected. In the very first step, there are four children represented. They are in their childhood and this symbolizes their innocence. There are two male and two female children. They have a proper haircut which shows their return to normal life. They have slim bodies. The war vehicle is in its deteriorated form. It has been captured in such an enlarged way, to focus on the end of war. The tank has lost its color which symbolizes that the brutalities of war have ceased to exist in the Ukrainian environment. The naïve look of the children is to be noted. In the second step, the manner in which the children are shown is described. The children are consciously looking at the corroded tank. They are not looking at each other. The girl who is sitting is looking at some part of the tank, and imagining what it is for. One of the boys is standing. A girl is also moving up to the tarnished tank. The researcher looks firstly at the girl sitting on the tank as her white dress with flowers on it shows the sprouting of life again. The third step depicts the action which is done in the picture. The boy standing and the girl climbing up show the active nature, while the other two sitting shows the passive action. The way children are shown on the vehicle shows that humanity wins in the cruel face of war. The occupied tank by the children suggests the inferior status of war. The setting of this scene is in the natural environment where trees and sky are shown. The way the picture is taken from the lower angle shows the children as heroes. This angle suggests that after all the bleak days of the war, humanity in the form of children wins. The Ukrainian soldiers deal with a group of affected civilians, who were hurt by a Russian mortar while they left Irpin, Ukraine, on March 6. A volunteer who helped the family was also put to death.

Figure 6: The Ukrainian soldiers are looking at the dead Ukrainian people



9. Analysis

Table 6

Signs observed in the image	What signs signify
The Ukrainian soldiers	They are known to safeguard their land and people, but they are incapable of protecting the

A statue of a soldier	Ukrainians. The statue perfectly states the condition of the Ukrainian soldiers. It is in the position of submission which shows that the figure of a soldier is not able to go against the enemy.
Dead people	The bleak reality of the war is shown in the form of the deceased people. They were carrying their goods with them to evacuate to another safe place, however, they left for the eternal world empty-handed.

The way given by Rose (2001) enables us to find out the signs in the image. Four Ukrainian soldiers, four dead people, an empty road, and a statue of a soldier are the signs observed in the picture. The Ukrainian soldiers signify their role in the war. The dead people show the barbaric nature of war. They also symbolize the evil side of war. War does not consider whether the victims are children, women, or old people. It just takes their life in the most inhuman ways. The empty road represents the disrupted life of Ukrainians during the war. The road symbolizes a way that is always taken by people to travel, however, here the civilian people are dead who were trying to evacuate in times of war. The sign of a statue of a soldier in the background suggests the posture of surrendering. The signs on the whole connect well in the image as all of them illustrate the happenings of war. The established ideology of a soldier is to protect his country and nation. Despite the fact, the Ukrainian soldiers in the picture are helpless to save their civilian people. The kneeling statue also depicts this powerlessness. As it is said that even war cannot cease the feelings of love and care, the same is seen in how the soldiers are portrayed in the image. It is often said that soldiers are emotionless, but in the picture, the caring and loving nature of soldiers is represented. Dyer's list as suggested by Rose (2001) enables us to describe the age of the dead civilians. They are of different age groups and genders. They are wearing warm clothes which suggests the presence of winters. The soldier who is standing is made to look big in size which emphasizes the role of a soldier during battles. The dead people are shown as small in size which depicts the unworthiness of lifeless victims. This also indicates the value given to the living beings. The soldier who is standing on the footpath gives a serious look at the dead victims.

How the people in the image are portrayed is described in the second stage. The expression of the soldier standing is of disturbance. The dead people have peaceful faces which signifies that when they were alive, they could not sleep well. Now, they are no more in life, they rest calmly on the roads. The face with the blood shows the struggle of the person when the Russian attack on these civilians happened. The dispersed bodies show how they are prone and victims of war. The two soldiers are touching the civilians to ensure that they are alive or not. The dead are passive as they are lying on the floor as a result of a mortar attack. They are positioned in an inferior way as the camera takes the shot from the above angle. This shows the powerful grip of war over human life. The setting of the picture is on the road in a Ukrainian area. This setting depicts the reality of the times of war in Ukraine. The civilian people are not able to flee to a safe place. The statue in the background is of great significance. It symbolizes that the protectors of Ukraine have submitted in front of war. Resultantly, the nation dies when war confronts them.

10. Conclusion

War photography is of great significance in communicating the jarring impacts of deadly wars on the guiltless souls of civilians. The images from the battlefield of the Russia-Ukraine war are brimmed with the theme of blood, injuries, and scars of innocent civilians. The ever-present death is also notable in this war. The war tanks, mortars, and guns only depict the inhumane acts of human beings on the faultless people. It is also observed that Ukrainian children and women are the most affected by this war. They are seen to be vacating their homes in search of a safe place in the testing times of war. On the contrary, the ones who did not leave their residence, they are killed and seen lying on the kitchen floor. Likewise, the captured Russian soldier is also guilty of his war crimes even though he was fighting for his country.

10.1. Future Implications

The critical approach of Rose (2001) has enabled the researcher to closely pick up the signs in the images and to find what they are conveying. Dyer's steps have also assisted the researcher to have a keen eye on the facial expressions, physical appearance, and movements of the people in the images. Through this, I am able to comprehend the grief-stricken faces of

the innocent Ukrainian people in the dark tunnel of war. I have also understood that wars always end up creating miserable and depressing situations. They always bring the void that cannot be filled no matter how many years have passed. The fear of abandonment and displacement from one's comfort of home cannot be brought back. Peace is the only solution to let human beings live in harmony and union.

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