

Article

Cultural Russophobia: Framing of Russian Monument Removal in Ukraine by Russia Today (RT) in 2022

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Abstract: This study analyzes Russia's response to dismantling response to the dismantling of Russian monuments by Ukrainian authorities through media coverage funded by the Russian government, Russia Today (RT), using the framing model. During the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which started on 24 February 2022, the media provided extensive reporting media produced extensive coverage with various reportsextensive coverage with diverse reports regarding the invasion. The demolition of four Russian monument figuresmonuments of Russian figures is assumed to be framed as a form of Russophobiaais framed as a form of Russophobia by the Ukrainian authorities in several cities: Dnepr, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, and Zhytomyr. This study employs Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) framing analysis, which is supported by five forms of framesfive framing categories identified in previous research: conflict, human interest, economic consequence, morality, and responsibility. The data used in this study are from English-based news units owned by Russia Today (RT)English-language news articles published by Russia Today (RT) for the period August 16—December 29, 2022. The results show that Russia Today (RT) actively uses four frames to support the Russian Government in discrediting the Ukrainian Governmentsupport the Russian government's efforts to discredit the Ukrainian government in eliminating cultural symbols by dismantling Russian monuments.

Keywords: Framing; Dismantling Monument; Russia; Russophobia; Ukraine

1. Introduction

Monuments, memorials, and official museums shape a country's identity. It can reflect how political leaders present a nation's image to the public. With the construction of monuments in the public sphere, the state and interest groups seek to determine historical figures who become national heroes and ensure that certain historical events are recognized as part of a nation's identity [1–4]. During the era of the Soviet Union, monuments were built in territories controlled by the Soviet Union and its colonies as a form of historical marker. On December 31, 1991, the Soviet Union officially dissolved, and its territory was divided into 15 independent states. As a result, memorial symbols of Soviet power in the form of monuments were scattered in the ex-Soviet Union countries.

On February 24, 2022, the Russian Federation launched a military campaign on Ukraine, which was recognized as a special military operation. Russian President Vladimir Putin said Russia's military operations were aimed at "demilitarizing" and "denazifying" Ukraine [5]. The Russian government stated that military action taken against Ukraine was necessary to stop Ukraine's attack on the two breakaway regions, namely Donetsk and Lugansk, which Moscow recognized as sovereign states [6]. Ukraine, also known as a former Soviet Union country, has several monuments from the Soviet Union still standing there. As a result of the military invasion carried out by Russia, Ukraine retaliated by conducting the demolition of Russian monuments in Ukraine. On April 26, 2022, Ukraine carried out its first monument demolition after the Russian invasion. The statue in Kyiv, with a height of eight

meters, was built in 1982 to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Soviet Union, symbolizing the friendship between Russia and Ukraine [7]. After the first demolition in April, Ukraine has conducted widespread demolition of Soviet-era and Russian-related monuments. Starting from monuments to Soviet leaders, monuments to famous Russian writers and poets, and others.

During the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the media provided extensive reportingmedia produced extensive coverage with various cases regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The demolition of Russian monuments in Ukraine has become quite a lively topic in the heat of the conflict between Russia and Ukraine [8–13]. Many media, both Russian and foreign, have published news coverage about the dismantling of Russian monuments that occurred in Ukraine. The demolition of four Russian monument figuresmonuments of Russian figures was assumed as a form of Russophobia carried out by the Ukrainian authorities in several cities, namely Dnepr, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, and Zhytomyr [8]. Russophobia is a negative view of Russia, including hatred of Russian society, culture, language, religion, and politics. Given the issues outlined above, this study aims to investigate how Russia responds to Ukraine's demolition of monuments through the coverage provided by Russian state-owned media. Specifically, it examines Russia Today (RT), a media outlet funded by the Russian government that extensively reports on the demolition of monuments in Ukraine.

The analysis employs a framing model to examine how RT constructs narratives about these events and shapes public perception. The research on news framing analysis on the demolition of Russian monuments in Ukraine by Russia Today (RT) will be seen as a consideration for explaining the nature of media coverage funded by the Russian government for the demolition of Russian monuments in Ukraine using the Semetko & Valkenburg framing model analysis [14]. The analysis is based on five frames that have been identified: the conflict frame, human interest frame, economic consequence frame, morality frame, and responsibility frame. Each frame consists of three to five questions from the five frames that have been identified to determine the extent to which specific frames are present in the news. This study argues that the construction of new texts produced by Russia Today (RT) indicates a form of Russophobia shown by the Ukrainian authorities in a series of actions dismantling monuments to Russian figures from August to December 2022. With this framing technique, Russia Today (RT) seeks to shape readers' perceptions of the form of Russophobia carried out by the Ukrainian authorities by demolishing monuments to Russian figures. The study proposes the research question, 'What is the response from Russia regarding the demolition of monuments carried out by Ukraine through Russian-owned media coverage, and what forms of frames are used in reporting on the demolition of Russian monuments in Ukraine?'

2. Conceptual Framework

Media is not a neutral or transparent channel; rather, it is a discursive arena where power is exercised and contested. As Eriyanto [15] argues, the facts presented in media texts are not objective realities but are constructed narratives shaped by ideological interests and political agendas. In this context, Russia Today (RT), a state-funded media outlet owned by the Russian government, operates within a dual mandate: to enhance Russia's national security and to construct a positive international image of Russia [16]. Thus, RT functions not as a mirror of reality, but as an active agent in shaping public perception, particularly during geopolitical conflicts.

This study views the news texts produced by RT on the demolition of Russian monuments in Ukraine from August to December 2022 as part of a broader discursive project that frames these actions as manifestations of Russophobia. Russophobia, defined as deep-seated hostility toward Russian culture, history, and politics [16–18], is presented by RT not simply as prejudice, but as a historical and symbolic rupture. Drawing on Pierre Nora's [19] concept of lieux de mémoire, monuments become contested sites of memory where identity, power, and belonging are negotiated. The demolition of Russian monuments, in this view, symbolizes Ukraine's attempt to decolonize public space and memory, rejecting a Russian-imposed historical narrative.

At the same time, RT's framing of these demolitions can be read through Homi Bhabha's theory of postcolonial ambivalence [20–22], wherein postcolonial subjects (in this case, Ukraine) oscillate between mimicry of and resistance to former imperial powers. Rather than recognizing this ambivalence, RT constructs the events as culturally hostile, invoking a monolithic narrative of Russophobia. This reveals a deeper struggle over narrative authority and symbolic control in the post-Soviet space. By portraying the demolition of monuments as irrational and hateful, RT attempts to stabilize its own identity discourse while undermining Ukraine's efforts to redefine its national memory. In doing so, RT reasserts a form of imperial cultural continuity, resisting the postcolonial condition through

media representation.

This study argues that the construction of the news texts produced by Russia Today (RT) shows the form of Russophobia displayed by the Ukrainian authorities in several demolition actions of monuments to Russian figures from August to December 2022. Russia Today (RT) seeks to shape readers' perceptions of the form of Russophobia from Ukraine's authorities. Russophobia is a negative view of Russia, including hatred of Russian society, culture, language, religion, and politics. Russophobia has occurred for the past five centuries and has been rooted for generations as a form of prejudice in Western countries viewing Russia. Russophobia occurs because deep historical roots cause Western countries to regard Russians as evil, barbaric, and without intellectual knowledge [23]. Russophobia is not limited by time. Like other forms of prejudice, Russophobia has deep roots and can resurface unexpectedly. Russophobia is a kind of reincarnation that can be lost for several generations and reborn due to geopolitical reasons [24].

The phenomenon of Russophobia has been around for a long time and is widely discussed by academia. Many countries have sentiments against Russia, and Russophobia is done in several countries. During the 19th century, after the Congress of Berlin, the British produced British foreign policy in the Balkans by maintaining the status quo in the Balkans to freeze Russian expansion and Pan-Slavism in the Balkans because of fear of heavy Russian influence [24]. Other research stated that Russophobia also occurs in the United States. The United States supports the Chechen separatist movement and accuses Russia of human rights violations against the Chechen people [25]. In another study, Russophobia occurred in Finland, which is rooted in the 18th century after the war [26–30]. The basis for the existence of Russophobia is the fear of Russia, which in the 18th century, Finland was under the rule of the Russian Empire. Finland agreed to cooperate with the Soviet Union on economic security, but Finland opposed specific sectors of policy and never considered Russia and the Soviet Union as friends [28–30]. Based on these studies, Russophobia has its basis in political and economic elements. In this study, the author will discuss forms of Russophobia based on cultural elements towards demolishing Russian monuments in Ukraine through Russia's online media coverage, Russia Today (RT), in 2022.

The occurrence of the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a form of the re-emergence of Russophobia in Ukraine. The most visible form of Russophobia in Ukraine is in politics and culture. The cities of Halych and Bukovina, which were former parts of the Austro-Hungarian province, were the focus of Russophobia. In addition, cities such as Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi, and Ternopil intensely hate Russia and Moscow. The people of these cities have the deep-rooted notion that the Russians and the "Muscovites" have made a colossal mistake. They justify this form of hatred towards Russia by taking several facts, such as the prohibition of the use of the Ukrainian language during the Tsar's government and the execution of Ukrainian activists by the NKVD. Besides, the current gas dispute is also a form of Russian encroachment into Ukraine. Currently, the Ukrainian government is carrying out a Russophobia campaign in Galicia to unite the country's population and manipulate the consciousness of the entire Ukrainian society [31]. According to Sizov [31] (p. 255), the following ways to express Russophobia in Ukraine:

The mass killing of Russian and Russian-speaking citizens in the predominantly civilian part of Southeastern Ukraine.

Demonization of Russia and Russian President, Vladimir Putin.

Insulting Russian society and Russian leaders through the media.

Attack on diplomatic representatives of Russia.

Forcing Russian-speaking Ukrainians not to use Russian in Russian-speaking areas.

Justification and exaltation of the Nazi criminals Bandera.

Prohibition of Russian TV channels and distribution of films in Russian.

Destruction and destruction of Russian monuments in Ukraine.

Instilling Russophobia ideas through Ukrainian history books.

Persecution of Russian journalists, politicians, and public relations who voice different opinions.

Providing support to countries hostile to Russia, Ukrainian arms transfers to Georgia during the events of August 2008, and a desire to join NATO, which is not friendly to Russia.

Planted hostility towards the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate.

This study, therefore, analyzes RT's media coverage not only as a source of political propaganda but also as a vehicle for maintaining imperial memory regimes in the face of postcolonial resistance. By intersecting media

framing theory with postcolonial thought, particularly Bhabha's and Nora's contributions, this research aims to reveal how state narratives are constructed to contest symbolic decolonization in post-imperial contexts.

3. Semetko & Valkenburg Framing Analysis (2000)

Framing is how the media selects several aspects of an event and makes it more prominent to present an event or issue to influence public views [32]. Framing is a tool that can associate or connect several concepts to an issue [30]. Tewksbury and Scheufele further explained that the most potent effect of framing is to make the audience think about an issue in a certain predetermined way [33]. Framing occurs implicitly, which means that the audience may not be aware of the framing of an issue. Based on the definition and explanation of the framing theory that has been presented by Tewksbury and Scheufele [33], it can be understood that framing regulates how the media conveys issues that will be conveyed to the public. Framing can be seen in symbols, arguments, metaphors, and photos used or inserted in the news. The framing theory states that the form or method of presenting and framing information can influence the public in processing the information received and influence public views and perceptions of the information presented by the media.

This study uses the analysis of the framing theory from Semetko & Valkenburg [14], which is a continuation of the analysis of the framing theory by Entman [32]. According to Semetko & Valkenburg, there are two methods for analyzing framing content in the news, namely inductive and deductive approaches. The inductive approach involves analyzing the news with an open view and starting with a loose preconceived notion of framing. Although these methods can reveal how problems are structured, they are complex, usually based on only small samples, and challenging to replicate. Meanwhile, the deductive approach involves selecting specific frames as content analytic variables to verify the extent to which these frames are present in the news. The deductive approach is easier to replicate, solving large samples [34]. Semetko & Valkenburg classify five framing categories that have been identified from previous research:

1. Frame conflict. Focus on conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a strategy to attract public interest. According to Neuman et al. [34] (pp. 61-62), conflict frames are the most common form of frames used by the media in news.
2. Human interest frame. Try to include human or emotional elements in an event, issue, or problem. The framing aims to give a personal touch to the news by adding dramatization or emotional elements to the news so that it can attract and maintain the interest of readers or viewers.
3. Economic consequence frame. This frame examines the economic consequences for individuals, groups, institutions, regions, or countries if an event, issue, or problem occurs. Economic consequences are a sizeable impact of events, issues, or problems that occur and can be a significant value for news.
4. Morality frame. This frame associates an event, problem, or issue with the context of religious teachings or moral guidelines.
5. Frame of responsibility, this frame describes an event, issue, or problem by placing responsibility for the cause or solution on the government, individuals, or specific groups.

Furthermore, to determine the frames contained in the news based on five framing categories, questions belonging to Semetko & Valkenburg are used to measure and determine the extent to which specific frames are present in the news [14]. Each frame consists of three to five questions from the five frames that have been identified: the conflict frame, human interest frame, economic consequence frame, morality frame, and responsibility frame. **Table 1** below presents the questions used to identify the frames present in the data:

Table 1. Frames and Questions Based on Semetko & Valkenburg Framing Model.

Form Frame	Question
Frames Conflict	1. Do incidents reflect disputes between individuals, groups, or countries?
	2. Do individuals, groups, or countries mutually reproach?
	3. Is the incident related to two or more aspects of something problem or an issue?
	4. Does the incident discuss winners and losers?

Table 1. Cont.

Form Frame	Question
Human Interest Frames	1. Does a story from the news give a man an example or display a “human face” on the events?
	2. Does the story use adjectives or sketch an individual who can raise anger, empathy, sympathy, or feeling mercy or pity?
	3. Does the story emphasize how incidents affect individuals and groups?
	4. Does the story attack life privacy?
	5. Does the story contain visual information that can raise feelings of anger, empathy, sympathy, or feelings of mercy and pity?
Frames Economic Consequences	1. Has someone mentioned loss or profit financially now or in the future?
	2. Is there any indication related to fee/rate expenses mentioned in the story?
	3. Are there any references pertaining to economic consequences from chase or no chase some action?
Frames Morality	1. Does the story contain a moral message?
	2. Is the story related to morality, God, or other religious teachings?
	3. Does the story give a number of social prescriptions about how to behave?
Frames Responsibility	1. Does the story show that several governmental levels can tackle the problems in events?
	2. Does the story show that there are several responsible answers from the governmental levels to events that happened?
	3. Does the story offer a solution to problems with events or issues?
	4. Does the story indicate the individual, group, or country responsible for answering an incident or issue?
	5. Does the story show the need for immediate action to problem right away?

4. Research Methods

This study uses a qualitative method by applying the Semetko & Valkenburg framing analysis model [14]. The data used for this research is an English version news unit from the Russia Today (RT) news agency, from August to December 2022, containing the demolition of Russian monuments in Ukraine. The use of English-version news units of Russia Today (RT) is to determine the framing techniques used to influence public opinion globally, and with the selection of these framing techniques can consider how large the scope of prospects the audience is expected to be in consuming news of the dismantling of Russian monuments in Ukraine.

This study aims to analyze Russia’s response to the dismantling of Russian monuments in Ukraine as presented in Russia Today (RT), a Russian state-funded media outlet. This study selects Russia Today (RT) as the sole media outlet for analysis due to its strategic role as a state-funded broadcaster closely aligned with the Russian government. As a global media platform, RT is widely recognized for constructing and disseminating narratives that reflect the interests and foreign policy objectives of the Russian state. Given the research aim—to examine how Russia responds to the demolition of Russian monuments in Ukraine—RT provides direct access to how official or semi-official discourses are framed for international audiences. RT’s consistent and extensive coverage of the monument demolition issue between August and December 2022 also offers a rich and focused corpus for applying the Semetko & Valkenburg framing model. This model, which categorizes media content into five frames (conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility), requires ideologically motivated reporting that RT reliably supplies. The selection of a single media outlet ensures analytical depth and internal validity, allowing for a coherent and systematic examination of narrative construction. Furthermore, RT’s English-language content and public accessibility make the data collection process transparent and replicable. Overall, focusing solely on RT strengthens the methodological rigor of the study and aligns closely with its objective to analyze state-sponsored media framing.

The steps taken in this research are first to understand the case of dismantling Russian monuments in Ukraine by exploring news from various online media. Then, determine the selected media and collect data in the form of news units from the media that have been determined based on the media that publish the most about the demolition of monuments, media that have comprehensive coverage, and funded by the Russian government to determine how Russia presents the response through news from the media regarding the demolition of Russian monuments in Ukraine, namely Russia Today (RT). **Table 2** presents data for the period selected from August 16, 2022, to December 29, 2022, nine news units were found from Russia Today (RT) through searches with the keywords “Monument”, “Demolished”, “Dismantling”, “Russia”, “Ukraine”. The following are news units from Russia Today (RT) found during the period August 16, 2022—December 29, 2022:

Table 2. List of News as Primary Source.

No	Title News	Date Publication
1	Kiev removes monument to famous literary native	August 16, 2022
2	Pushkin monument demolished in Kiev	October 12, 2022
3	Statue of Russian empress vandalized in the city she founded	November 2, 2022
4	Monument to Russian empress set for demolition	November 6, 2022
5	Russia's former southern capital renounces its past: How Ukraine is destroying its heritage	November 22, 2022
6	Ukrainian city to destroy the iconic statue of the Russian empress	November 24, 2022
7	Ukraine dismantles monument to iconic Soviet author	December 26, 2022
8	Key Ukrainian city begins removal of monument to founder – media	December 28, 2022
9	Ukraine falsifying history and 'replacing' memory – Moscow	December 29, 2022

Based on the nine news units above, four figures were discussed from the nine news units: Mikhail Bulgakov, Catherine the Great, Alexander Pushkin, and Maxim Gorky. Nine news units have been categorized into the demolition of the four figures monument and were analyzed using Semetko & Valkenburg's [14] framing analysis and questions to measure and find out the extent to which specific frames are present in the news. Each frame consists of three to five questions from the five frames that have been identified, namely the conflict frame, human interest frame, economic consequence frame, moral frame, and responsibility frame.

5. Results

5.1. Demolition of the Mikhail Bulgakov Monument

5.1.1. Frame Conflict

In the news article titled Kyiv removes monument to famous literary native, published on August 16, 2022, a conflict frame was found in the subtitle "Ukrainian activists successfully lobbied the national university to Purge Mikhail Bulgakov." The efforts made by Ukrainian activists in asking the National University to dismantle the Bulgakov monument were a form of retaliation that occurred because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. In this news, the conflict is focused on Ukrainian activists who persuaded the National University to dismantle the Bulgakov monument. In addition, the word "purge" is used to mean getting rid of the Bulgakov monument through a statement given by Ukrainian activists. The choice of words and conflict between individuals and Russian cultural symbols may engage public attention.

5.1.2. Human Interest Frame

In the news, a human interest frame was found from a quote by an activist, Tatiana Shvydchenko, regarding the character Bulgakov "Bulgakov is a symbol of Russian culture, and had nothing to do with the Ukrainian one – quite the contrary, in his works he denigrated everything Ukrainian" further, found another quote from Shvydchenko who states that Bulgakov is a figure who is proud of Russia and does not like Ukraine in the sentence "Ukrainophobe and praiser of the Russian world" and according to him monuments are relics of the past that need to be removed in the sentence "atavisms of the occupation period, which we urgently need to get rid of" through the activist statement quoted, Russia Today (RT) seeks to present the Bulgakov character through the point of view of Ukrainian activists who consider the demolition of the Bulgakov monument to be an action that must be taken because Bulgakov is a symbol of Russian culture and of course, with the framing, it can affect Ukrainian society. In this news, Russia Today (RT) displays quotes from Ukrainian activists regarding the Bulgakov character indicating that Russia Today (RT) wants to photograph the emotional condition of the Ukrainian people who are considered related to the demolition of the monument so that readers can find out the response given by the Ukrainians to the figure Bulgakov.

5.1.3. Morality Frames

The frame of morality in this news found using word choices that show that Russia is the aggressor through quotes by Ukrainian activists about the character Bulgakov in the sentence, "Bulgakov is a symbol of Russian culture and had nothing to do with the Ukrainian one – quite the contrary, in his works he denigrated everything Ukrainian" the activist justified moral reasons for acting demolishing the Bulgakov monument. The activist's statement was a response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The activist linked the problem of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and targeted the Bulgakov monument because it is a symbol of Russian culture. According to him, Bulgakov's works

have nothing to do with Ukraine. That way, the demolition was a moral action by linking the problem of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Thus, the demolition Bulgakov monument is an act that Ukrainian activists consider correct. The article also employs the word "denigrated," which is morally clear as a symbolic attack on Russia by demolishing the Bulgakov monument.

5.1.4. Responsibility Frames

In this news, there is a frame of responsibility with the discovery of efforts made by the Ukrainian government in solving this problem through the quote, "Bulgakov – along with 'Taras Bulba' author Nikolay Gogol – will not be touched because their "life and work were closely connected with Ukraine" the efforts made by the Ukrainian government by not disturbing the Bulgakov monument because its work is related to Ukraine are a form of responsibility of the Ukrainian government in providing a solution to the problem of dismantling the Bulgakov monument. In this news, there is no frame of economic consequences.

5.2. Destruction and Demolition Catherine the Great Monument

5.2.1. Conflict Frame

In the news entitled Statue of Russian Empress vandalized in the city she founded which was published on November 2, 2022, a conflict frame was found, mentioned on the news headline showing that indicating that there was an act of destroying the monument. This premise is supported in the sentence, "A monument to Russian Empress Catherine the Great in the Ukrainian city of Odesa was defaced on Wednesday by unidentified accusers, this comes amid a campaign by the Ukrainian authorities targeting Soviet and Russian-related monuments, as well as the conflict between Moscow and Kyiv" The destruction of the Catherine the Great monument in Ukraine was due to a campaign by the Ukrainian authorities targeting monuments related to the Soviet Union and Ukraine in the dispute between Russia and Ukraine. Then, we found a denouncing activity carried out by Ukraine by making an online petition addressed to the President of Ukraine to approve the petition to replace the Catherine the Great monument with a porn star monument from the United States in the sentence "In July, a petition calling on Ukrainian President Vladimir Zelensky to replace the monument with a statue of American porn actor Billy Herrington passed the threshold of 25,000 votes required for consideration". Furthermore, the petition contains actions denouncing Catherine the Great as a controversial figure who caused damage to Ukrainian culture which can be evident in the statement "the petition described the empress as a "controversial historical figure whose actions caused great damage to Ukrainian statehood and culture." In addition, it was found that the aim was to dismantle monuments carried out by Ukraine to break with its communist past by targeting the demolition of monuments related to the Soviet Union and Russia. "While the stated aim was to help Ukraine break with its communist past, in practice, it has also been applied to landmarks linked to Russia." In this news, Russia Today (RT) seeks to sharpen the conflict by using the terms "vandalized," "defaced," "replace," and "controversial historical figure," which can be associated with a conflict situation that occurred between Russia and Ukraine so that it can make readers more interested regarding may elicit heightened reader engagement in the news of the demolition of the monument to Catherine the Great.

After the destruction of the monument and the online petition regarding the dismantling of the Catherine the Great monument by the people of Ukraine, the early stages of the demolition process of the Catherine the Great monument were also discovered in the news entitled Monument to Russian Empress set for demolition published on November 6, 2022, the premise is supported by a quote from the Mayor of Odesa, Gennady Trukhanov in the sentence "The majority of Odesa residents who voted supported the idea of dismantling the monument from Eka-terininskaya Square" after a voting process regarding the demolition and a statement from the Mayor, the stage the beginning of the demolition process which can be found in the sentence evident in the statement "On Sunday, the monument was fenced off by construction workers, with a notice on the fencing stating the works were in preparation for "demolition and moving" of the monument, as imagery circulating online shows." In this news, Russia Today (RT) seeks to sharpen the conflict by using the terms "dismantling," "fenced off," "demolition and moving", which can describe the conflict situation that occurred between Russia and Ukraine so that it may draw readers' interest to reporting on the demolition monument to Catherine the Great.

After the destruction of the monument, the online petition for the demolition of the monument, and the instal-

lation of guardrails on the monument, members of the Odesa city executive committee have decided to demolish the Catherine the Great monument in the news titled article titled Ukrainian city to destroy the iconic statue of the Russian empress published on November 24, 2022. The premise for making this decision is supported by a quote in a Telegram post on the official account of the Odesa City Council taken by Russia Today (RT), which reads “Members of the executive committee supported the draft decision on the dismantling and transfer of the monument to the Founders of Odesa.” In this news, Russia Today (RT) seeks to exacerbate the conflict by using the terms “dismantle” and “dismantling and transfer of the monument,” which can describe a conflict situation regarding the demolition of the monument. Thus, it may draw readers’ interest to the news about the demolition of the Catherine the Great monument.

In the news entitled Key Ukrainian city begins removal of monument to founder – media published on December 28, 2022, the demolition of the Catherine the Great monument was carried out after the decision of the Odesa city executive to demolish the Catherine the Great monument. Russia Today (RT) published about anonymous local media sources regarding the dismantling of the monument, which started with the sentence, “Workers in the Ukrainian city of Odesa have started dismantling the monument to its founder, Russian Empress Catherine II, commonly known as Catherine the Great, local media has reported.” Furthermore, the premise that the Catherine the Great monument has been dismantled is supported by the sentence, “The site where the statue is located was cordoned off on Wednesday. Images from the scene shared online showed workers removing fiberboard shields, which have kept the monument out of public sight since the city council voted to rid the monument at the end of November.” In this news, Russia Today (RT) seeks to sharpen the conflict by using the terms “removal,” “dismantling,” “cordoned off,” and “removing” which can describe the conflict situation that occurred regarding the dismantling of the Catherine the Great monument which had been carried out so that it could make readers more interested in the news about the demolition of the Catherine the Great monument.

After the demolition of the Catherine the Great monument, a dispute between Russia and Ukraine was shown in the news headline Ukraine falsifying history and ‘replacing’ memory – Moscow which was published on December 29, 2022, this premise is supported by a quote from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maria Zakharova regarding the demolition of monuments carried out by Ukraine “In their futile attempt to abolish Russian culture, to ban speaking and even thinking in Russian, Ukrainian authorities are trying to wipe off the face of the earth any objects that could awaken in the large Russian-speaking population of the country the awareness of what they are trying to take from them,” Russia Today (RT) tries to show seeks to show the conflict that can already be seen in the news headlines by using the terms “falsifying,” “replacing”. In addition, a statement from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maria Zakharova, found the terms “abolish” and “wipe off” to sharpen the conflict so that it may draw readers’ interest to the news about the demolition of the Catherine the Great monument.

5.2.2. Human Interest Frame

In the article titled Statue of Russian empress vandalized in city she founded published on November 2, 2022, the character Catherine the Great is shown in the sentence, “According to photos posted on social media, the vandals splashed red paint over the statue. They also placed a red hood on the head and a hangman’s nose in hand, apparently to portray the empress, who founded the city in the late 18th century, as an executioner.” Furthermore, Catherine the Great is considered a controversial figure in the sentence “the petition described the empress as a “controversial historical figure whose actions caused great damage to Ukrainian statehood and culture.” Catherine the Great was considered a figure who could influence the culture of the Ukrainian people, so efforts were made to destroy the Catherine the Great monument by the Ukrainian people. In this news, information was given that Catherine the Great was the Russian leader who founded the city of Odesa, which the Ukrainians opposed. The destruction of the monument to Catherine the Great by Ukraine will emotionally spark the anger of the Russian people because they have damaged the monument to the Russian empress.

In the news entitled Monument to Russian empress set for demolition, which was published on November 6, 2022, another character was featured, namely the Mayor of Odesa, Gennady Trukhanov, and he quoted Trukhanov’s statement regarding an online petition being carried out for the demolition of the monument to Catherine the Great “The the majority of Odesa residents who voted supported the idea of destroying the monument from Ekaterinin-skaya Square. Despite the war that is going on in our country, we have managed to follow a legitimate democratic procedure,” Russia Today (RT) features the Ukrainian side, the Mayor of Odesa, Gennady Trukhanov, quoting his

statement regarding the petition to dismantle the Catherine the Great monument. Attempts to present other figures who played a role in the monument's demolition will undoubtedly provide readers with information. They can cause anger, especially among the Russian people, towards Ukraine, especially Mayor Odesa.

After that, the news narrative written by Russia Today (RT) denied the online petition, which was underrepresented because there was still a lack of participants in the petition for the demolition of the monument through the sentence "Less than 8,000 of Odesa's nearly one million inhabitants took part in it, with some 3,900 supporting its complete demolition and 2,800 voting to leave it in its place while providing additional information about Catherine the Great". Then this premise is supported by the news entitled Ukrainian city to dismantle the iconic statue of the Russian empress published by Russia Today (RT) on November 24, 2022, in the sentence "Only about 8,000 of the city's nearly one million inhabitants took part in the poll. Some 3,900 voted for demolition, but only 2,900 of those voters had a "confirmed" status, which means they live in the city," furthermore, in the news entitled Key Ukrainian city begins removal of the monument to founder - the media also found a premise that similar to the sentence "Only about 8,000 people out of nearly a million residents participated in the opinion poll he cited" Russia Today (RT) through three news reports that published the demolition of the Catherine the Great monument, the three news actively discussed online petitions which were considered not representative of the whole public. In the two article titled Ukrainian city to destroy the iconic statue of the Russian empress and Key Ukrainian city begins removal of monument to founder - the media has a minimal emotional dimension. Russia Today (RT) tried to express its opinion by providing arguments regarding the online petition made by Ukraine to dismantle the Catherine the Great monument as just a formality because not all Ukrainian people followed the online petition. Efforts made by Russia Today (RT) by providing argumentative opinions are a form of effort to influence readers.

In the article titled Ukraine falsifying history and 'replacing' memory - Moscow published on December 29, 2022, after the dismantling of the Catherine the Great monument, another figure was shown, the spokesperson of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Maria Zakharova who responded to the demolition and transfer of the monument Catherine the Great carried out by Ukraine through her spokesperson in the sentence "Kiev's campaign to remove monuments and erase Russian culture is an attempt to rewrite Ukraine's history and forcibly alter the memory of its own population, Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday" more further, found a quote from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Maria Zakharova "In their futile attempt to abolish Russian culture, to ban speaking and even thinking in Russian, Ukrainian authorities are trying to wipe off the face of the earth any objects that could awaken in the large Russian-speaking population of the country the awareness of what they are trying to take from them" the demolition of the Catherine the Great monument caused anger with the response made by Maria Zakharova who thought that Ukraine did not respect its past.

5.2.3. Morality Frame

In the news entitled Statue of Russian Empress vandalized in the city she founded which was published on November 2, 2022, there is a morality frame in the sentence, "Last week, unknown actors wrote on the memorial: "demolition is coming, Gena won't help." This was apparently about Major Gennady Trukhanov, who has publicly opposed what he called "a monument war" arguing that attempting to rewrite history could polarize the country" vandalism of the Catherine the Great monument was committed by unknown perpetrators addressed to the Mayor Odesa, Gennady Trukhanov who opposed the destruction of the monument because it could increase the consequences of an increasingly ongoing conflict. In this news, the sentence "arguing that attempting to rewrite history could polarize the country" is found to be moral and can direct the reader to potential polarization because a solid argument is given by trying to change the history and cultural identity of a nation. Furthermore, different actions were found by the Mayor of Odesa after the people of Ukraine held an online petition to dismantle the monument in the news entitled Monument to Russian empress set for demolition was published on November 6, 2022, through the sentence "The demolition of a monument to Russia's Empress Catherine the Great will be considered during the next meeting of Odesa's city council, Major Gennady Trukhanov announced on Saturday, after an online poll on the matter concluded." an online petition has been created. Efforts made by Russia Today (RT) by presenting changes to Mayor Odesa's statement to show Mayor Odesa's inconsistency in taking a stand and not having firmness in making decisions because they tend to be influenced by survey results showing Mayor Odesa's character as a populist leader.

In the news entitled Ukrainian City to destroy the statue of the iconic Russian Empress, published on November

24, 2022, another frame of morality regarding the act of vandalizing the monument was evident in the statement, "The monument to Catherine the Great, who founded the city of Odesa in the late 18th century, has been vandalized on several occasions since Moscow launched its military offensive against Kyiv in late February. Vandals have doused the monument in red paint and left inscriptions such as "Ekaterina = Putin" on the pedestal." protected from external threats. Ukraine's efforts to protect national sovereignty, specifically by carrying out resistance to the Catherine the Great monument, which is a symbol of Russian domination. The actions taken by Ukraine by damaging the monument to Catherine the Great are considered correct because Russia was the aggressor who invaded Ukraine.

In the news entitled Ukraine falsifying history and 'replacing' memory – Moscow published on December 29, 2022, there is another frame of morality through the response of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson, Maria Zakharova, "In their futile attempt to abolish Russian culture, to ban speaking and even thinking in Russian, Ukrainian authorities are trying to wipe off the face of the earth any objects that could awaken in the large Russian-speaking population of the country the awareness of what they are trying to take from them" the statement explains the form of nationalism by maintaining cultural and historical heritage which the Minister of Foreign Affairs raised for the demolition of monuments carried out by Ukraine.

5.2.4. Responsibility Frame

In the news entitled Monument to Russian empress set for demolition published on November 6, 2022, there is a frame of responsibility indicating that the Ukrainian government is responsible for dismantling the monument to Catherine the Great in the sentence "The official had vowed on Facebook to personally vote for the removal of the statue and its relocation into a proposed "park of Imperial and Soviet past." Furthermore, it was also found regarding the transfer of the monument in the news entitled Ukrainian city to dismantle the statue of the iconic Russian empress published on November 24, 2022, in the sentence "after which the monument may be moved from Ekaterininskaya Square to a proposed "park of Imperial and Soviet past" The Ukrainian government has made efforts to move the monument to the park's Imperial and Soviet past as a solution to the problem of demolishing the monument.

In the news entitled Ukraine falsifying history and 'replacing' memory – Moscow which was published on December 29, 2022, there is a frame of responsibility in the form of an official statement from the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the dismantling of the Catherine the Great monument in Ukraine "In their futile attempt to abolish Russian culture, to ban on speaking and even thinking in Russian, Ukrainian authorities are trying to wipe off the face of the earth any objects that could awaken in the large Russian-speaking population of the country the awareness of what they are trying to take from them," the form of responsibility the answer given was in the form of information referring to the official statement of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemning the demolition of the monument.

No frames of responsibility were found in the article titled Statue of Russian empress vandalized in the city she founded which was published on November 2, 2022, and Key Ukrainian city begins removal of a monument to founder – media published on December 28, 2022.

5.3. Destruction and Demolition Monument to Alexander Pushkin

5.3.1. Conflict Frame

In the news entitled Pushkin monument demolished in Kyiv which was published on October 12, 2022, a conflict frame was found in the news title showing a dispute between Russia and Ukraine. this premise was supported by the sentence in the news "The move comes as Ukrainian authorities continue their campaign of getting rid of the country's Soviet and Russian past" there are two aspects of the problem, namely the historical aspect regarding Ukraine which was a former part of the Soviet Union trying to erase history related to the Soviet Union and Russia and the conflict aspect regarding the Russian invasion of Ukraine which causing Ukraine to demolish Russian monuments in Ukraine. In addition, in the news entitled Russia's former southern capital renounces its past: How Ukraine is destroying its heritage published on November 22, 2022, another reason for the demolition of the Alexander Pushkin monument was evident in the statement "After Russian troops entered Ukraine in February, many locals projected their hatred of Moscow onto objects of cultural and historical heritage that were in any

way linked to the Russian Empire or the Soviet Union” a form of disappointment by the Ukrainian people was expressed through the demolition and destruction of the Pushkin monument because Russia had invaded Ukraine. Demolition and destruction of monuments also occurred in several cities of Ukraine, evident in the statement, “In November, monuments to the great Russian poet were toppled in Kharkiv and Zhytomyr, while the monument in Odesa was painted over with the inscription ‘Get out!’ In Kyiv, one of the oldest monuments to the bard had been taken down a few weeks earlier”. In two news articles entitled Pushkin monument demolished in Kyiv and Russia’s former southern capital renounces its past: How Ukraine is destroying its heritage, the words “demolished,” “renounce,” and “destroying” are used in the titles which can already describe the conflict that occurred between Russia and Ukraine. In addition, in the news sentence the terms “getting rid,” “projected their hatred,” “toppled,” “painted over with the inscription ‘Get out!’”, “taken down” are found to sharpen the description of the conflict that occurred between Russia and Ukraine on the demolition of the monument to Pushkin. Thus, it can attract the attention of readers to follow the problem of dismantling the Alexander Pushkin monument.

5.3.2. Human Interest Frame

In the article titled Pushkin monument demolished in Kyiv, a human interest frame was found by showing the figure of Pushkin, who was considered a significant figure in the sentence, “Monuments dedicated to Pushkin have been particularly targeted, as the poet is widely considered to have been one of the key figures in developing modern Russian literature and advancing the Russian language” Pushkin is a significant figure who has a role in the field of literature and plays an essential role in modern Russian literature and advances the Russian language so that the demolition carried out by the Ukrainian side is one of the efforts to eliminate Pushkin’s influence on Ukrainian society. Furthermore, there is a quote from Oleg Slabospitskiy (Public Sector Coordinator of the Euromaidan civil action group) which supports that Pushkin is a symbol of Russia and is a well-known figure in advancing the Russian language “Pushkin is a symbol of Russian imperialism, the personification of the ‘great mighty Russian language’ a marker of the Russian world and identity.” Pushkin’s role in spreading the Russian language can be called a success. It is proven that in some regions of Ukraine, the Russian language is used for communication. Even before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Russian was used in the educational curriculum in Ukraine. However, because of the invasion, the Ukrainian Ministry of Education began trying to abolish the Russian language curriculum; this premise can be seen in the sentence, “As of September 1, when Knowledge Day was celebrated in some former Soviet republics, several schools across Ukraine have completely ruled out the use of Russian in the classroom, even where it is the predominantly spoken language”. Apart from that, in the article titled Russia’s former southern capital renounces its past: How Ukraine is destroying its heritage, that there was a wave of ‘de-Pushkinization’ carried out by the Ukrainian side in the sentence “Meanwhile, other Ukrainian cities saw a wave of ‘de-Pushkinization’ sweep through. In November, monuments to the great Russian poet were topped in Kharkiv and Zhytomyr, while the monument in Odesa was painted over with the inscription ‘Get out!’ In Kyiv, one of the oldest monuments to the bard had been taken down a few weeks earlier” Ukraine carried out a ‘de-Pushkinization’ to eliminate Pushkin’s influence on Ukrainian society by destroying and demolishing Pushkin’s monuments in several Ukrainian cities. In this news, apart from displaying information regarding the dismantling of the Pushkin monument, it also displays the figure of Pushkin, who is a significant figure in the field of Russian and world literature which indirectly aims to provide information to readers about the reasons for the demolition of the Pushkin monument because Pushkin was an extraordinary figure so that the Ukrainian government carried out the demolition. To eliminate Pushkin’s influence on Ukrainian society. In addition, a de-Pushkinization movement carried out by Ukraine can emotionally provoke the anger of the Russian public and global readers in general, considering the highly respected figure of Pushkin as one of the figures of Russian literature. Russia Today (RT) also presents the Ukrainian parties involved in the demolition of the monument, citing statements given by Ukrainian parties such as the Ministry of Ukraine and the public sector coordinator of the Euromaidan civil action group, Oleg Slabospitskiy. The action taken by Russia Today (RT) in dismantling the Pushkin monument by adding an emotional element is a form of personal touch to the news to attract readers’ attention.

5.3.3. Morality Frame

In the news titled article titled Pushkin monument demolished in Kyiv, a morality frame was found indicating that the act of demolishing the Pushkin monument was an appropriate action because it had killed a Ukrainian

lieutenant when fighting against Russia in the sentence “Pozdnyakov claims the statue, which was in front of the National Transportation University, was a symbol of the “Russian world” for Ukrainian authorities. Its demolition has been dedicated to a Ukrainian lieutenant, activist, and academic Denis Antipov, who died in May during a battle with Russian forces.” In addition, in the news entitled Russia’s former southern capital renounces its past: How Ukraine is destroying its heritage through the Head of the Committee for Education, Science, Family, Youth and Sports of Ukraine, Vadim Vasilchuk stated, “Teaching Russians in the current situation is inappropriate” after the invasion what Russia did to Ukraine, the use and teaching of the Russian language in Ukraine can be said to be an inappropriate action to use because Russia is the aggressor who has invaded Ukraine.

5.3.4. Responsibility Frame

A responsibility frame was found in the news entitled Pushkin monument demolished in Kyiv as a solution effort given by the Ukrainian government in the sentence, “The Ukrainian Education Ministry has also been making efforts to wipe any links to Russian literature in the nation’s school curricula, with Deputy Education and Science Minister Andrey Vitrenko stating in June that everything that somehow connects us with the Russian Empire should be thrown out” the statement from the Ministry of Education of Ukraine is a form of the government’s attempt to solve the problems experienced by Ukraine by offering a solution to eliminating everything related to Russia.

There was no frame of responsibility found in the news entitled Pushkin monument demolished in Kyiv. In addition, in the two news stories that have been analyzed regarding the demolition of the monument to Alexander Pushkin, no frame of economic consequences is actively used by Russia Today (RT).

5.4. Demolition Monument to Maxim Gorky

5.4.1. Frame Conflict

The article titled Ukraine dismantles monument to iconic Soviet author was published on December 26, 2022. A conflict frame was found in the news title, which showed a dispute between Ukraine and Russia which led to the dismantling of the monument to the famous Soviet writer by the Ukrainian side. The premise regarding the demolition is supported by the sentence in the news “Ukrainian authorities have taken down a monument to Maxim Gorky, a revolutionary who founded socialist realism and became one of the most popular Soviet writers, in the eastern city of Dnepr” which shows that Maxim Gorky was one of the most famous figures as a writer from Soviet. In this news, the conflict shown is in the form of the demolition of the Maxim Gorky monument, which can be seen from the fact that two parties were at odds with each other. The use of words “dismantles,” “iconic Soviet author,” “taken down,” “who founded socialist realism,” “most popular Soviet writers,” and “eastern city of Dnepr” are used to sharpen the conflicts that occur so as to make the reader more interested in news of the demolition of the monument to Maxim Gorky.

5.4.2. Human Interest Frame

The news also found a human interest frame in the sentence, “Ukrainian authorities have taken down a monument to Maxim Gorky, a revolutionary who founded socialist realism and became one of the most popular Soviet writers, in the eastern city of Dnepr.” Maxim Gorky is a prominent figure who can influence Ukrainian society because of the greatness of his name as a famous figure from the Soviets. Furthermore, a short biography of Maxim Gorky was published, inserted in the sentence, “Gorky is considered the founder of Soviet literature. He pioneered the socialist realism genre, the writing style and aesthetics of which were designed to serve the purpose of building a socialist state.” In this news, in addition to displaying information about the demolition of the Maxim Gorky monument, information on the short biography of Maxim Gorky is also displayed, indirectly aiming to provide information to readers on the reason for the demolition of the Maxim Gorky monument because he was a big figure so that the Ukrainian government carried out the demolition to eliminate Maxim Gorky’s influence against the Ukrainian people. Russia Today (RT) provides the context for the demolition by providing a complete biography so that readers can find out about the problems that occurred and can be of interest to readers by knowing the causes and effects of a problem.

5.4.3. Responsibility Frame

The news also found a frame of responsibility showing that indicating that the Mayor of Ukraine was responsible for resolving the problem of dismantling the monument by moving it to another place in the sentence, “Major Boris Filatov said all monuments that are removed will be temporarily stored on the premises of the city’s animal control service.” carried out by the Ukrainian government is a form of eliminating the influence of Russian culture through the demolition and removal of the monument to the figure of Maxim Gorky. Furthermore, the Ukrainian government also considered that the problem regarding everything related to the Soviets and Russia was an action that had to be removed immediately. This premise can be evident in the statement, “In June, the Ukrainian Culture Ministry created a council tasked with coordinating “the issues of de-Russification, de-Communization, and decolonization.” Culture Minister Aleksandr Tkachenko called this month for the “boycotting of Russian culture” across the globe.” carried out by Ukraine as a form of the solution provided by the Ukrainian government in this problem. In this news, there is no frame of morality and frame of economic consequences.

5.5. Russophobia on Russia Today (RT) Reporting On The Demolition Of Russian Monuments In Ukraine

The demolition of monuments to Russian figures—Mikhail Bulgakov, Catherine the Great, Alexander Pushkin, and Maxim Gorky—in Ukraine, as reported by Russia Today (RT) from August 16 to December 29, 2022, is framed as a manifestation of cultural Russophobia. This framing aligns with RT’s role as a state-funded media outlet tasked with shaping narratives that reinforce Russia’s imperial identity and resist Ukraine’s postcolonial redefinition of its national memory. By applying Homi Bhabha’s theory of postcolonial ambivalence and Pierre Nora’s concept of lieux de mémoire, this section analyzes how RT constructs the demolition of these monuments as an attack on Russian culture, while Ukraine’s actions reflect a complex negotiation of postcolonial identity, oscillating between resistance to and entanglement with its Russian imperial past.

Bhabha’s concept of postcolonial ambivalence posits that postcolonial subjects, such as Ukraine, navigate a dual relationship with their former imperial power—here, Russia—through mimicry and resistance [20,21]. The demolition of Russian monuments, as reported by RT, exemplifies this ambivalence. Ukraine’s actions can be seen as a form of resistance, a deliberate rejection of Russian cultural symbols embedded in Soviet-era monuments to assert a distinct national identity. For instance, RT’s coverage of the Bulgakov monument’s demolition (August 16, 2022) quotes Ukrainian activist Tatiana Shvydchenko, who labeled Bulgakov a “symbol of Russian culture” that “denigrated everything Ukrainian.” This narrative frames the demolition as an act of cultural decolonization, severing ties with Russia’s imperial legacy. However, RT’s portrayal elides the ambivalence inherent in Ukraine’s actions: by targeting these monuments, Ukraine simultaneously engages with Russia’s cultural presence, acknowledging its historical influence while seeking to erase it. This paradox reflects Bhabha’s notion of the postcolonial subject’s oscillation between rejecting and redefining the colonizer’s narrative.

RT’s framing, particularly through conflict and human interest frames, constructs these demolitions as unambiguous acts of Russophobia, ignoring the ambivalence of Ukraine’s postcolonial condition. For example, in the coverage of the Catherine the Great monument’s vandalism and demolition (November 2–December 28, 2022), RT emphasizes terms like “vandalized,” “defaced,” and “controversial historical figure” to portray Ukraine’s actions as irrational hostility. By doing so, RT seeks to stabilize Russia’s narrative authority, presenting itself as the defender of a shared Russo-Ukrainian cultural heritage. This aligns with Bhabha’s observation that colonial powers resist postcolonial challenges by reasserting cultural continuity [20]. RT’s narrative dismisses Ukraine’s attempt to redefine its public space as a form of historical erasure, framing it instead as a hateful rejection of Russia’s cultural contributions, thereby reinforcing Russia’s imperial memory regime.

Pierre Nora’s concept of lieux de mémoire—sites where collective memory is crystallized and contested—provides a critical lens for understanding the monuments’ significance [19]. In Ukraine, Soviet-era monuments to figures like Pushkin, Gorky, Bulgakov, and Catherine the Great serve as lieux de mémoire, embodying Russia’s historical dominance and the Soviet Union’s cultural legacy. Their demolition, as covered by RT, represents a struggle over who controls Ukraine’s historical narrative. RT’s reporting, such as in the December 29, 2022, article “Ukraine falsifying history and ‘replacing’ memory – Moscow,” quotes Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova, who accuses Ukraine of attempting to “wipe off the face of the earth” objects that connect to Russian identity. This

framing positions the monuments as sacred sites of Russian memory, suggesting that their destruction is an attack on Russia's cultural presence in the post-Soviet space.

Nora's framework highlights that lieux de mémoire are not static but are renegotiated in moments of cultural and political transition. Ukraine's demolition of these monuments, particularly in cities like Kyiv, Odesa, and Dnepr, reflects a postcolonial effort to reclaim public space and construct a national identity free from Russian influence. RT's use of morality and responsibility frames underscores this contestation. For instance, the November 24, 2022, article on the Catherine the Great monument cites vandalism with inscriptions like "Ekaterina = Putin," linking historical Russian imperialism to contemporary aggression. RT frames this as a moral failing, accusing Ukraine of "rewriting history" to polarize society, as seen in the November 2, 2022, report quoting Odesa Mayor Gennady Trukhanov's opposition to a "monument war." By emphasizing moral and cultural loss, RT portrays Ukraine's actions as a betrayal of shared history, obscuring the postcolonial imperative to dismantle symbols of imperial domination.

RT's use of Semetko and Valkenburg's framing model—particularly conflict, human interest, morality, and responsibility frames—constructs the demolitions as evidence of Russophobia, defined as a deep-seated hostility toward Russian culture, history, and politics [17,23]. The conflict frame dominates, with RT highlighting disputes between Ukraine and Russia, as seen in the October 12, 2022, article on the Pushkin monument, which notes Ukraine's "campaign of getting rid of the country's Soviet and Russian past." This frame amplifies the geopolitical tension, presenting Ukraine's actions as a direct attack on Russia's cultural legacy. The human interest frame personalizes this narrative, emphasizing the cultural significance of figures like Pushkin, described as a "key figure in developing modern Russian literature" (October 12, 2022), or Gorky, the "founder of socialist realism" (December 26, 2022). By foregrounding these figures' contributions, RT evokes emotional responses, framing their demolition as a loss to global cultural heritage, not just Russian identity.

The morality frame further reinforces the Russophobia narrative by portraying Ukraine's actions as ethically questionable. For example, the December 29, 2022, article cites Zakharova's claim that Ukraine seeks to "abolish Russian culture," framing the demolitions as a moral transgression against shared history. The responsibility frame attributes blame to Ukrainian authorities, as seen in the November 6, 2022, article on the Catherine the Great monument, which notes the Odesa city council's decision to relocate it to a "park of Imperial and Soviet past." RT frames this as a deliberate act of cultural erasure, ignoring Ukraine's attempt to contextualize these monuments within a postcolonial narrative of decolonization.

RT's coverage aligns with Sizov's (2015) identification of Russophobia as encompassing the destruction of Russian monuments [31]. However, through Bhabha's lens, this Russophobia is not merely prejudice but a postcolonial act of resistance against Russia's lingering imperial influence. The demolitions of monuments to Bulgakov, Pushkin, Gorky, and Catherine the Great target symbols of Russian cultural hegemony, reflecting Ukraine's effort to redefine its lieux de mémoire in a post-Soviet, postcolonial context. RT's framing, however, flattens this complexity, presenting the demolitions as irrational hatred rather than a negotiation of identity. For instance, the November 22, 2022, article on "de-Pushkinization" in multiple Ukrainian cities frames the removal of Pushkin's monuments as an attack on his literary legacy, ignoring the postcolonial significance of rejecting Russian linguistic and cultural dominance.

By emphasizing Russophobia, RT seeks to maintain Russia's imperial memory regime, resisting Ukraine's postcolonial redefinition of its public space. This aligns with Bhabha's argument that colonial powers counteract postcolonial resistance by reasserting cultural narratives [20]. RT's narratives, particularly through conflict and morality frames, portray Ukraine's actions as a cultural rupture, accusing it of "falsifying history" (December 29, 2022). Yet, Ukraine's demolitions reflect a broader struggle to reclaim narrative authority, as Nora's framework suggests, by transforming lieux de mémoire into sites of national sovereignty rather than imperial legacy.

6. Conclusions

The analysis of nine Russia Today (RT) news units from August 16 to December 29, 2022, concerning the demolition of monuments to Mikhail Bulgakov, Catherine the Great, Alexander Pushkin, and Maxim Gorky in Ukraine reveals a deliberate framing of these actions as cultural Russophobia. Employing Semetko and Valkenburg's framing model, RT consistently utilizes conflict, human interest, morality, and responsibility frames to portray Ukraine's monument demolitions as acts of hostility against Russian culture, thereby discrediting Ukraine's efforts to redefine its national identity. Through Homi Bhabha's lens of postcolonial ambivalence, these demolitions emerge as Ukraine's resistance to Russia's imperial legacy, navigating a complex interplay of rejection and engagement with

its Soviet past. Pierre Nora's concept of lieux de mémoire further illuminates these monuments as contested sites where Ukraine seeks to reclaim narrative authority, transforming public spaces into symbols of national sovereignty rather than Russian dominance. RT, however, counters this postcolonial narrative by framing the demolitions as irrational cultural aggression, reinforcing Russia's imperial memory regime.

The study's focus on RT as the sole media outlet, while methodologically robust for analyzing state-sponsored narratives, presents limitations that shape the findings. By prioritizing RT's English-language coverage, the study captures Russia's strategic discourse aimed at global audiences but may overlook domestic Russian perspectives or alternative Ukrainian narratives that could provide a more comprehensive view of the Russophobia debate. The reliance on RT's ideologically driven reporting risks a one-sided portrayal, potentially amplifying Russia's narrative of victimhood while marginalizing Ukraine's postcolonial motivations. Additionally, the deductive application of Semetko and Valkenburg's framing model, while systematic and replicable, may constrain the analysis by focusing on predefined frames (conflict, human interest, morality, responsibility) at the expense of emergent themes, such as cultural decolonization or local agency, that an inductive approach might reveal. These choices limit the study's ability to fully capture the complexity of Ukraine's actions and the broader post-Soviet memory contest.

The implications of these methodological choices are significant. By focusing on RT, the study effectively highlights how Russia constructs a global narrative of Russophobia to resist Ukraine's symbolic decolonization, aligning with Bhabha's notion of imperial powers reasserting cultural continuity. However, this focus may underrepresent the diversity of perspectives within Ukraine, where monument demolitions reflect local struggles over identity and history, as Nora's framework suggests. The findings underscore RT's role in shaping international perceptions of the Russia-Ukraine conflict, but they also suggest a need for future research to incorporate Ukrainian media or other international outlets to balance the narrative and explore competing lieux de mémoire. Furthermore, expanding the framing analysis to include inductive methods could uncover additional dimensions of cultural Russophobia, such as grassroots motivations or economic impacts, enhancing the understanding of this postcolonial struggle. Ultimately, while RT's framing portrays Ukraine's actions as cultural erasure, the demolitions reflect a deeper post-colonial effort to redefine Ukraine's national memory, highlighting the ongoing tension over symbolic control in the post-Soviet space.

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