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RUSSO-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT AND EU ENERGY SECURITY: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CROATIAN ONLINE MEDIA

Abstract: *The Russo-Ukrainian conflict has prompted a reform of the European Union's energy policy, which had largely relied on the energy capacities of the Russian Federation. In this context, such heavy dependence has been identified as a security risk for the European Union, necessitating a shift toward alternative solutions. The aim of this research is to determine, through an analysis of selected media articles, how the consequences of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict have been a primary driver behind changes in the European Union's energy policy. Using an analytical-interpretative approach, this study seeks to clarify the connection between the ongoing conflict and the energy security of the European Union. In this regard, the study will focus on examining how the current conflict influences media perspectives on EU energy security. Preliminary research reveals a significant amount of media content analysing the conflict through the lens of diversification efforts aimed at achieving a stable and sustainable long-term energy supply. This structured qualitative analysis of media articles highlights how the Russo-Ukrainian conflict has exposed vulnerabilities in EU energy security, primarily due to its dependence on Russian energy imports. Croatian media coverage reflects both the resulting geopolitical shifts and the EU's pressing need to adapt its policies.*

Keywords: *Russo-Ukrainian conflict, energy security, European Union, Croatian online media*

Energy security

The increase in economic interactions among states in the second half of the 20th century highlighted the fact that military power does not dictate everything that happens in the world (Tatalović, 2006, pp. 69). States can achieve power by focusing on developing their economies, controlling key economic resources, or expanding their diplomatic influence globally, without resorting to weapons or threats of force (Hough, 2004, pp. 4). In this context, the evolution of inter-state relations has led to the development of new forms of security that exclude military intervention as the exclusive means of protecting national interests. Potential dangers arise from many sources, as seen in Europe at the beginning of the 21st century, where the concept of energy security has gained significant importance.

The term "energy security," both in public and academic discourse, has become a frequent and omnipresent phrase, establishing itself as an accepted part of security agendas (Radić Đozić, 2021, pp. 38). This widespread use suggests that energy security is a multidimensional concept, open to numerous interpretations, and requires precise definitions within specific contexts (temporal, geographical, etc.). Due to the need for contextualization, disagreements among scholars are evident regarding the historical origins of the term "energy security." Radić Đozić (2021, pp. 40) links its first mention to the Arab-Israeli conflict of 1973 when OPEC's Arab member states imposed an oil embargo in response to the United States' support for Israel and reduced oil production. This embargo had a severe impact on the U.S., whose economy, like Ukraine's, heavily depended on energy imports.

According to Chester (2010, pp. 889), the term emerged after World War II and is more characterized by the complexity of energy supply systems rather than dependence on a specific primary energy source. Mrnjavčić and Brkić (2022, pp. 76) argue that until the beginning of the 21st century, energy security was not even considered a significant issue. Proponents of the expanded concept of security—the Copenhagen School—introduced economic, political, environmental, and social dimensions of security alongside the military dimension, each with different types of threats. Thus, the expanded concept of security includes not only traditional military threats but also non-traditional ones not traditionally linked to security. Although "energy security" connects energy issues, traditionally considered non-security issues, to the

realm of security, the Copenhagen School's expanded concept of security does not specifically recognize energy security as a separate domain. According to Christou and Adamides (2013), the securitization of energy is often part of political, economic, or even military discourses on threats, and thus should be studied comprehensively and multidimensionally. Radić Đozić (2021, pp. 51) contends that the concept of energy security represents a hybrid—a blend of traditional security concerns and Cold War-era threats with new, mostly post-Cold War, non-traditional threats.

There is no universally accepted integrated definition of energy security, but it is most often associated with the security of energy supply. However, energy security is not merely an economic issue, as resources like gas and oil are frequently used to achieve foreign policy objectives (e.g., Ukraine, the Middle East). Therefore, energy security is also a vital political issue deeply connected to the protection of national interests.

Modern states aim to achieve a satisfactory level of energy security, which primarily entails a reliable supply of sufficient energy at affordable prices (IEA, 2022), and on the other hand, the diversification of energy sources and supply routes to avoid dependence on a single energy source or supplier. The focus of this paper is on the diversification of EU energy supplies and sources in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.

The European Union's challenging situation, characterized by limited energy capacity combined with Russia's new foreign policy strategy, underscores the growing importance of the concept of energy security. Although potential threats were present, it was Russia’s 2006 gas supply halt to Ukraine that forced the European Union to prioritize energy security in both its foreign and domestic policy agendas (Mrnjavčić and Brkić, 2022, pp. 77). The oil embargo (1973) and the gas crisis (2006) are key events that have shaped political elites' awareness of the impact of energy resources on national security on both European and global levels. Energy security, historically given relatively little attention, is now poised to shape European policy for the coming decades (Surwillo, 2019).

Energy trade between the EU and the Russian Federation

With the rise of Vladimir Putin to power in 2000, a new dynamic emerged in the energy relationship between the European Union and the Russian Federation. During his tenure, Putin actively promoted the policy of using the energy sector for foreign policy purposes (Gidadhubli, 2003; Smith, 2010), which forced the European Union to rethink the role of this original economic relationship (Radić Đozić, 2021, pp. 158).

The EU's response to the politicization of the energy sector came in the form of gas market liberalization. Guided by free-market principles and encouraging competition among suppliers, the plan was based on opening Russia's energy market to foreign investors. Free access to energy resources and infrastructure threatened the monopolistic position of the Russian Federation in gas trade with the EU (Kričković, 2015; Boussena & Locatelli, 2013; Siddi, 2018). Additionally, the increasing number of international suppliers reduced the influence of those under majority state control. This approach conflicts with the stance of the Russian Federation, which believes that the energy sector must be under state control to ensure economic progress (Balzer, 2006).

The attempt at market liberalization resulted in partial success. The Russian Federation restructured its energy sector by applying a market economy model. Domestic gas prices, previously non-competitive and low, rose, opening the market to international competition. Although access to energy resources was granted to new players, the export aspect of trade and associated transport infrastructure remained under strict state control. For this reason, the Russian Federation never ratified the Energy Charter Treaty, whose key provision required open access to transit energy infrastructure (Kuzemko, 2014).

Russia's manipulation of the energy sector to strengthen its position relative to the EU forced the latter to diversify its sources and supply routes, as well as to build pipelines outside the territory and control of the Russian Federation (Radić Đozić, 2021, pp. 170). Consequently, the EU focused on developing a southern energy corridor that would connect the energy-rich Caucasus region to Europe, bypassing the Russian Federation entirely.

The Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) project exemplifies EU diversification policies and served as an alternative to the strategically significant Nabucco project. Originally envisioned to connect

the Central European market with natural gas sources in the Caucasus, the Middle East, and Central Asia, Nabucco never materialized. While both projects were designed to follow the same supply routes until reaching Europe, TAP's final European destination is Italy, supplying some Balkan countries along the way. Nabucco, however, was intended to link directly with the more energy-dependent Central European market, which has a greater reliance on the Russian Federation (Kričković, 2015, pp. 14). Supplying the Central European market with alternative sources and routes would reduce the asymmetry of interdependence in favor of the EU. The application of liberal economic principles, such as market liberalization and diversification of sources and supply routes to ensure energy security, underscores the EU's identification as a genuine geopolitical actor (Radić Đozić, 2021, pp. 158).

An important prerequisite for the Russian Federation's dominance in energy trade with the EU was the transportation infrastructure inherited from the Soviet Union. Thanks to this Soviet legacy, the Russian Federation established a monopoly over the export of gas from Central Asia to Europe (Kričković, 2015, pp. 16). This infrastructure benefited not only Russia but also some former Soviet states, as all gas transit between Russia and the EU passed through Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova. The bulk of this transit occurred via Ukraine, which, according to 2004 data, accounted for over 80% of Russian gas deliveries to the European market (Stern, 2006, pp. 2).

The Russo-Ukrainian Conflict of 2022 and its impact on EU energy security

In February 2022, Vladimir Putin launched a "special military operation" in eastern Ukraine shortly after the Kremlin recognized the independence of the separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. The European Union strongly condemned the invasion and implemented sanctions and restrictive measures against the Russian Federation, irrevocably damaging their mutual relations.

A significant part of the relationship between these international actors was based on cooperation in energy supply. Approximately 40% of Europe’s natural gas needs were met through domestic production (Aitken & Ersoy, 2023, pp. 889), with the remainder primarily imported from Russia. Despite this, the EU has managed to reduce its dependency on imports from Russia, even though the volume of gas supplied over the past two decades has remained relatively stable.

Norway also demonstrated potential as a key supplier to the EU, doubling its export capacities to the European market following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Additionally, the invasion directly led to severe disruptions in energy markets. The interruption of gas supplies by Russia forced the EU to turn to other suppliers and import gas in alternative forms.

An alternative to traditional pipeline gas delivery is achieved by changing the aggregate state of gas. Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) is easier to transport, and while both methods require complex and costly infrastructure, LNG allows for cooperation with a broader range of suppliers. For example, Qatar and the United States are the EU's largest energy partners for LNG supply. The advantage of the intercontinental gas trade lies in its reduced susceptibility to monopolistic control (Aitken & Ersoy, 2023, pp. 889-891).

Norway's role as a potential key supplier and the growing demand for LNG sources indicate the EU's efforts to diversify energy sources and suppliers. The goal is to minimize dependence on Russian energy sources, weaken Russia economically, and enhance energy security by collaborating with reliable partners who share similar values.

A significant step in this regard was the adoption of the REPowerEU plan. Launched in May 2022, the plan includes measures to reduce gas demand across all EU member states.

In addition to energy reduction measures, the economic implications of distancing the EU from Russia must be considered. Russia heavily depended on revenues from gas exports to the EU. In the year preceding the invasion, 41% of the EU's total gas capacity was imported from Russia, but a year later, this figure had dropped to 8% (European Council, 2022).

However, Russia's years of accumulating foreign reserves and its ability to offset losses in the EU market with increased oil exports to India and China, particularly at high market prices, helped stabilize its economy. In fact, oil revenues generated three times more income for Russia than gas revenues in 2021 (Mrnjavčić & Brkić, 2022, pp. 80).

In the context of this study, it is essential to mention the package of restrictive measures imposed by the European Commission on the Russian Federation, which also included a ban on broadcasting for three media outlets: RTR Planet, Russia 24, and TV Centre International.

Distribution of their content was prohibited across the EU due to disinformation and propaganda concerns. Given that media, in today's information age, undoubtedly serve as key instruments of warfare (Payne, 2005), the EU's reaction to censor Russian media outlets is not surprising.

Moreover, the role and significance of the media must be contextualized within the framework of current wartime events.

The role of mass media in the Russo-Ukrainian conflict

The shaping of public opinion through war reporting is heavily influenced by the timing of information released to the public. The development of media technologies has enabled the rapid exchange of information, which sometimes bypasses proper verification. The advent of new media has somewhat mitigated this problem, as internet portals now publish news and commentary, establishing two-way communication channels (Čerina, 2012, pp. 102). The need for real-time reporting has also opened up opportunities for media space to be used for manipulation.

On the other hand, governments of countries directly involved in war make additional efforts to justify their military missions (Čerina, 2012, pp. 102), highlighting the role of media manipulation in creating a desired narrative. For example, in the current Russo-Ukrainian conflict, different interpretations of the conflict are emphasized by various media sources. Western media focus on the humanitarian aspects of the war, while Russian media frame the invasion as a necessity for the demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine (Hanley, Kumar & Durumeric, 2023, pp. 339). The significance of mass media was also evident in the earlier example of Russia's annexation of Crimea. Although the act itself was purely political, the activities leading up to it were accompanied by media efforts to portray Ukraine in a negative light. Media distribution largely centered on spreading political propaganda aimed at destabilizing Ukraine by undermining its sovereignty and weakening its European and transatlantic aspirations. Key anti-Ukrainian slogans and stereotypes were frequently broadcast by mass media to provoke an emotional response among the local population, encouraging a desire to reunite with Russia. The younger population was targeted through new media, primarily social networks, with the same aim (Kushnir, 2017, pp. 123).

The digitalization of mass media has enabled the instant spread of information globally, leading to new reporting models. Social media has proven to be a valuable addition to traditional media by providing a wide range of information from numerous users. However, the lack of reliability and credibility of information sources is a notable drawback. Additionally, since the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict in 2014, the conflict has fallen under the domain of hybrid warfare, which involves using various forms of warfare that go beyond traditional military concepts, including information operations and disrupting the enemy's access to economic resources.

Information can cause significantly greater destabilizing effects, even when compared to the most sophisticated weapons. The previously mentioned media preparations that preceded the annexation of Crimea demonstrate a high level of awareness by the Russian Federation regarding the role of media in achieving political-strategic goals.

The Russo-Ukrainian relations, in the context of international energy security, will be examined through the lens of the current conflict. The timeframe for analysis is set to one year, from the onset of the conflict on February 24, 2022, up to February 24, 2023. This period was chosen partly due to the emergence of the conflict, as the first year of the war saw the European Union rapidly trying to adjust to its reliance on Russian gas and energy. For this purpose, the authors have selected Croatian online media to identify key reports made by these outlets, as the initial year of the conflict was marked by significant uncertainty regarding the sustainability of the EU's energy sector in meeting its needs.

Methodology and data collection

This study employs a mixed-methods content analysis to examine Croatian online media coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, with a specific focus on implications for EU energy security. By integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches within a structured coding framework, the research systematically identifies trends and patterns in media narratives while also exploring the thematic depth and narrative perspectives on energy stability in the EU.

The dual approach of mixed methods is particularly valuable in conflict studies as it captures both structural patterns (macro-level) and individual agency (micro-level) within public discourse, offering a comprehensive view of complex issues like energy security and conflict. Thaler (2017) highlights that this

combination enhances both internal and external validity, making it well-suited to capturing quantitative trends while simultaneously validating these trends through qualitative insights, an approach that strengthens the empirical and theoretical robustness of the findings.

Studies on media portrayals of conflict, such as Pauković and Roško's (2023) analysis of Western newspaper narratives during the Croatian War of Independence, show that coding frameworks can reveal underlying political biases and media framing techniques, particularly in conflict contexts where narratives may fluctuate between neutral, pro- and anti-nation stances to influence public opinion.

Lindgren (2008) also emphasizes the need for methodological transparency in coding media representations, particularly in conflict narratives, where media framing can impact public understanding of complex geopolitical issues. Furthermore, Riffe et al. (2024) underline that structured quantitative content analysis enhances validity and reliability in categorizing communication content, crucial for accurate analysis in national and international conflicts where narrative frames and biases play significant roles in shaping public and policy perceptions.

Given the unique nature of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, particularly Russia's critical role as an energy supplier to the EU, along with the evolving dynamics of media platforms and shifting journalistic practices, this study adopts a custom-designed coding framework for Croatian online media. Several factors were prevalent in this decision. First, due to the conflict's geopolitical complexities and its specific implications for EU energy security, conventional coding frameworks may overlook key thematic distinctions, such as the dependency on Russian resources and the impact of sanctions on local economies. A custom coding structure allows the research to align its methodology with these specific contextual details, enabling a focused analysis of how energy stability and policy responses are portrayed in public discourse.

Thus, the coding framework developed by the authors for this study categorizes articles based on:

- **Headlines**: An analysis focused on distinguishing between informative headlines, which accurately reflect the article's content, and clickbait headlines, designed primarily to attract reader engagement without necessarily providing substantial information. This classification helps reveal journalistic intent and media strategies for engaging audiences.
- **Main topics**: Identification of key topics related to EU energy security, including dependence on Russian energy resources, sanctions related to the Ukraine conflict, local price impacts, energy diversification efforts, international cooperation, and diplomatic responses to energy challenges.

This thematic coding framework reveals the focal points in media reporting, highlighting the prioritized aspects of energy security within public discourse and policy discussions.

- **Narrative**: Captures the tone of discourse by coding articles according to their stance as positive, negative, or neutral regarding EU energy security. This provides insight into media sentiment and helps assess whether coverage supports, critiques, or objectively reports on EU energy policies and stability efforts in the context of the conflict.
- **Source credibility**: Evaluates the authority of sources cited in articles, categorizing them into Croatian political figures, energy experts, independent analysts, EU institutions, and external media reports. This classification also distinguishes whether the information was independently gathered by the media outlet or sourced from other media reports.

To implement this structured coding framework effectively, a carefully selected sample was essential. The research sample consists of online news articles sourced from major Croatian online media: Index.hr, 24sata.hr, Dnevnik.hr, and Jutarnji.hr. These sources were selected based on their popularity within the Croatian online media landscape, as identified by the Digital News Report 2023, published by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2023) at the University of Oxford. The four selected online media outlets, Index.hr, Jutarnji.hr, 24sata.hr, and Dnevnik.hr, are among the most popular in Croatia based on weekly usage statistics. Index.hr operates exclusively as an online news platform, while Jutarnji.hr and 24sata.hr also publish daily print editions. Dnevnik.hr serves as the online news portal for Nova TV, a commercial television network with a regular programming schedule that includes multiple daily news segments.

Articles from these selected online media were extracted from their respective websites using the TakeLab Retriever (Ćurković et al. (2022), a platform developed by a research group at the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computing in Croatia. This platform scans articles and their metadata from Croatian news outlets, performing real-time text mining and semantic analysis. In order to get precise results, the analysis in this paper focuses exclusively on articles explicitly mentioning "energy security" within the context of EU stability concerns amid the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. The filtering process of data excluded irrelevant content, such as unrelated articles and live blog posts, refining the dataset to include only materials directly relevant to the study's objectives. A total of 317 articles were selected, and distributed across media outlets as follows: Index.hr with 107 articles, 24sata.hr with 67 articles, Dnevnik.hr with 26 articles, and Jutarnji.hr with 117 articles.

Findings and interpretation

In this part of the research, the authors will first analyze the frequency of media articles over time to identify peaks and discern when reporting on energy security was at its highest. This initial quantitative assessment provides insight into fluctuations in media attention, establishing a temporal framework for understanding when energy security became a prominent issue in Croatian media in response to the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Following this, the study will transition to a qualitative analysis, where selected texts will undergo an interpretive examination to uncover how Croatian media portray the EU's energy challenges and policy shifts, capturing the nuanced perspectives and themes associated with energy security discourse. This dual approach—first quantitative, then qualitative—enables a comprehensive understanding of both the prevalence and framing of energy security within the public sphere during a period of heightened geopolitical tension.

Figure 1 illustrates the topic of EU energy security within the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict over the specified timeframe, from February 2022 to February 2023. The first notable peak appears in March 2022, coinciding with the start of the conflict and triggering an immediate surge in media coverage. This initial spike reflects growing concerns over the EU's dependence on Russian energy supplies, with Index.hr alone published 17 articles during this period, highlighting the intensified media focus on the issue.

This initial spike declined from April through September, reaching its lowest in August, likely due to decreased seasonal energy concerns during warmer months. A second peak in October 2022 reflected heightened winter demand concerns, with Jutarnji.hr leading coverage at 16 articles. By February 2023, media focus had diminished, indicating a perceived stabilization in EU energy sources. Overall, Croatian media closely tracked geopolitical shifts and seasonal energy demands, with coverage intensifying during times of increased public and policy concern.

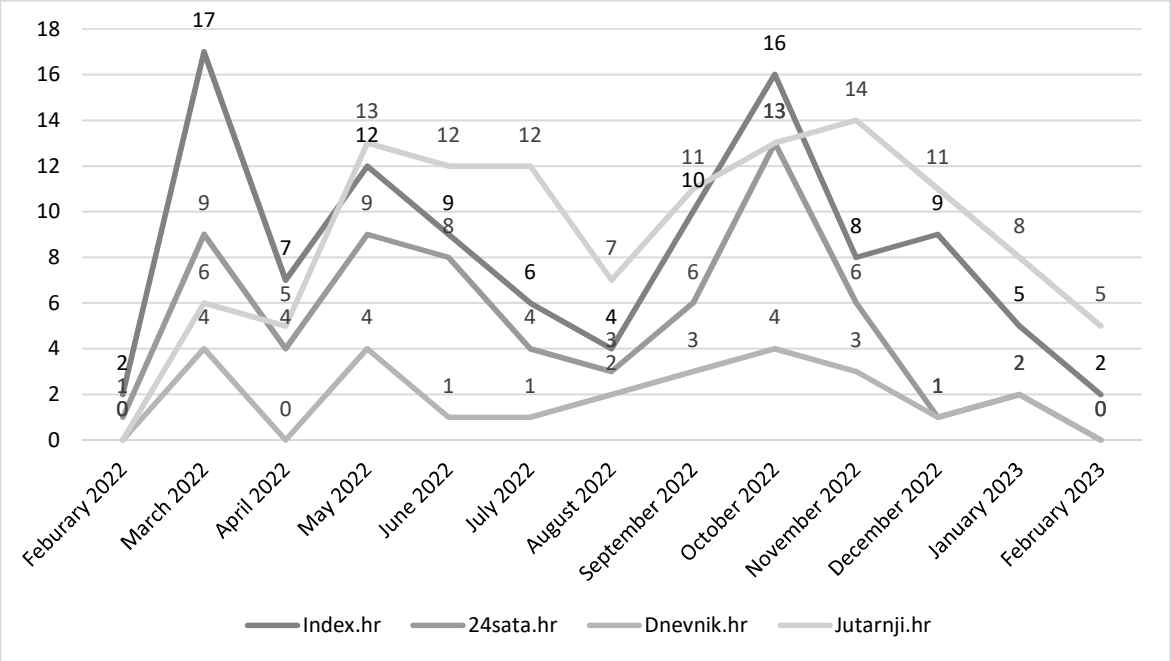

Figure 1. Frequency of articles in Croatian online media on EU energy security in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict.

Beginning with the qualitative aspect, headlines will be examined first. Figure 2 analyzes the distribution of informative and clickbait headlines. Index.hr maintains a balanced approach with 54 informative headlines and 53 clickbait ones, indicating an even split between straightforward reporting and attention-grabbing content. 24sata.hr also shows a strong informative presence, with 42 informative headlines compared to 25 clickbait, emphasizing a preference for direct reporting. Dnevnik.hr, with only 9 informative and 17 clickbait headlines, leans more heavily towards sensationalized content, likely reflecting a strategy to attract engagement with fewer overall articles. In contrast, Jutarnji.hr has the highest volume of clickbait headlines at 70, alongside 47 informative ones, showing a clear preference for attention-driven content amidst high public interest in energy issues. In summary Index.hr and 24sata.hr balancing information and engagement, while Jutarnji.hr and Dnevnik.hr prioritize clickbait to different extents, suggesting distinct strategies for capturing audience attention.

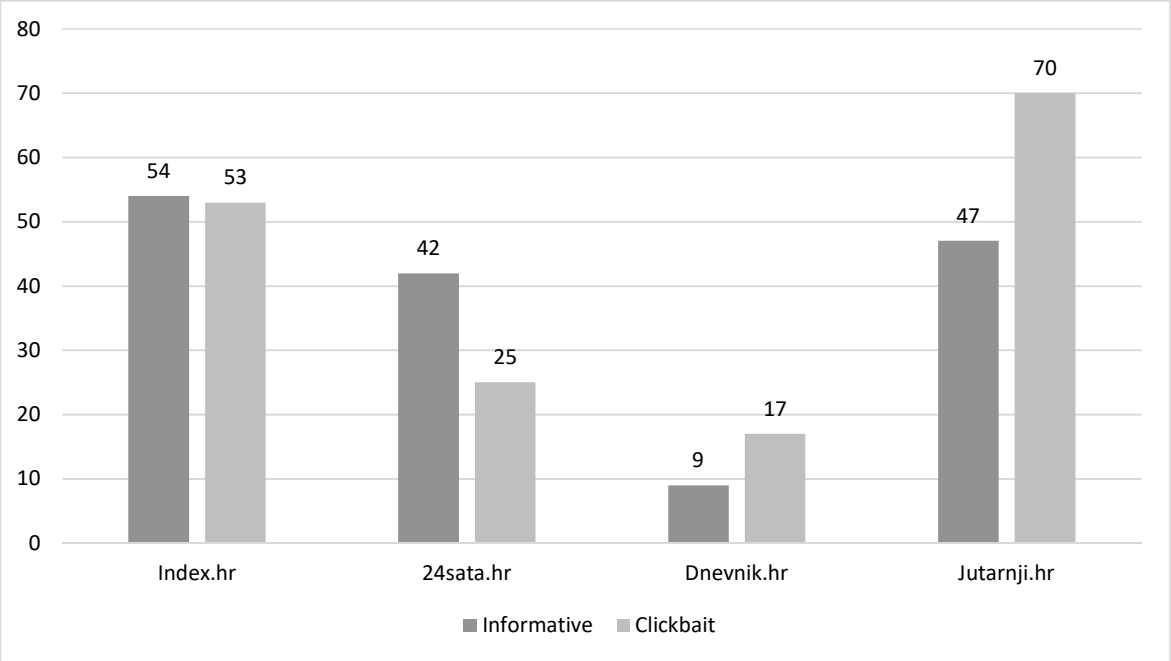

Figure 2. Headlines in Croatian online media on EU energy security in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict

Following the analysis of headlines, Figure 3 highlights the main topics covered in Croatian media regarding EU energy security in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. The most prominent topic across outlets is "sanctions and the war in Ukraine," with Jutarnji.hr and Index.hr leading, indicating a strong focus on geopolitical impacts. "Dependence on Russian energy resources" is also widely discussed, especially by 24sata.hr and Index.hr, reflecting concerns over EU vulnerability. "Energy diversification efforts" receive notable attention, particularly from Index.hr, showing interest in alternative sources. Diplomatic responses, international cooperation, and local price impacts are covered to a lesser extent, with 24sata.hr focusing on cooperation and Index.hr on price impacts. Overall, the chart demonstrates a varied media focus, with Jutarnji.hr and Index.hr addressing broader geopolitical concerns, while 24sata.hr emphasizes specific aspects like cooperation and economic impacts.

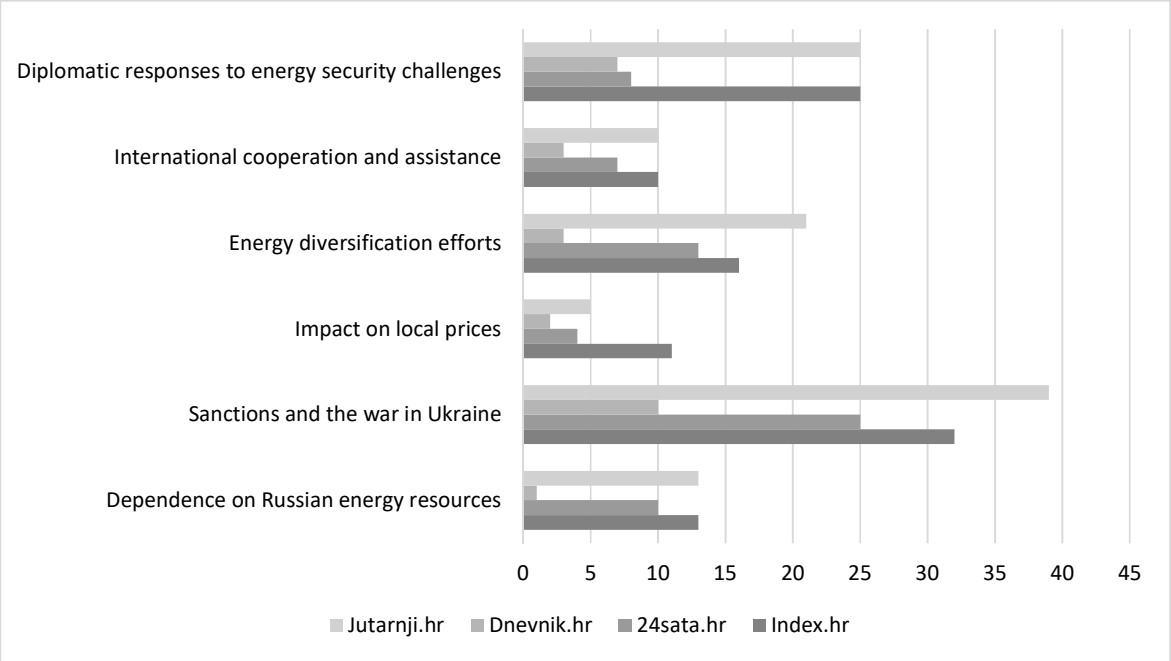

Figure 3. Analysis of main topics in Croatian online media on EU energy security in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict

In order to fully understand media coverage of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict and EU energy security, it is essential to examine the narrative tone—whether media reports were positive, negative, or neutral. Figure 4 reveals a predominantly negative tone in Croatian media coverage of EU energy security in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. Index.hr and 24sata.hr lead with a critical perspective, featuring 52 and 32 negative articles, which highlights a common skepticism toward EU policies and responses to the conflict. In contrast, Jutarnji.hr presents a more balanced narrative, with 47 negative, 37 positive, and 33 neutral articles, suggesting a broader viewpoint that encompasses both supportive and critical angles. Dnevnik.hr, with the lowest article count on this topic, leans primarily toward a negative stance, with 14 negative articles, indicating limited yet mostly critical engagement. Croatian media, therefore, tend to emphasize challenges and criticisms surrounding the EU's approach to energy security amid the conflict, reflecting prevalent concerns over the effectiveness of EU strategies and policies.

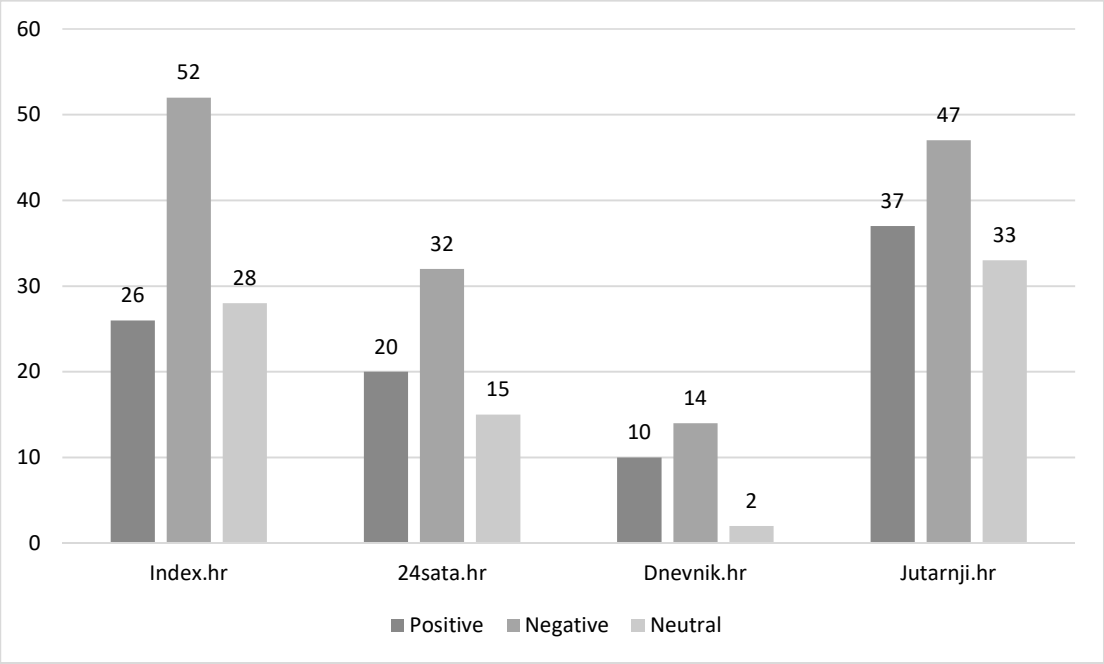

Figure 4. Analysis of narratives in Croatian online media on EU energy security in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict

Lastly, analysis of sources in Figure 5 highlights the types of authority cited by Croatian media outlets in reporting on EU energy security in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict. The most frequently cited sources are external media reports, with Index.hr and Jutarnji.hr leading, reflecting a strong reliance on international perspectives. EU institutions and bodies are also significant sources, particularly for Index.hr and 24sata.hr, indicating an emphasis on official EU viewpoints in the coverage.

Croatian political figures feature prominently as sources in Jutarnji.hr and Index.hr, showing a reliance on domestic political perspectives. Energy experts and independent analysts are less frequently cited overall, with Index.hr citing energy experts more than other outlets, pointing to a limited but specialized inclusion of expert commentary. Dnevnik.hr, which shows the lowest overall citation count, relies primarily on external media and local political figures, suggesting limited independent sourcing.

This analysis indicates a tendency among Croatian media to depend on external and official EU sources, with only minimal direct input from energy experts and analysts. This reliance on

external sources indicates a preference for established perspectives on the complex issues of EU energy security amid the conflict.

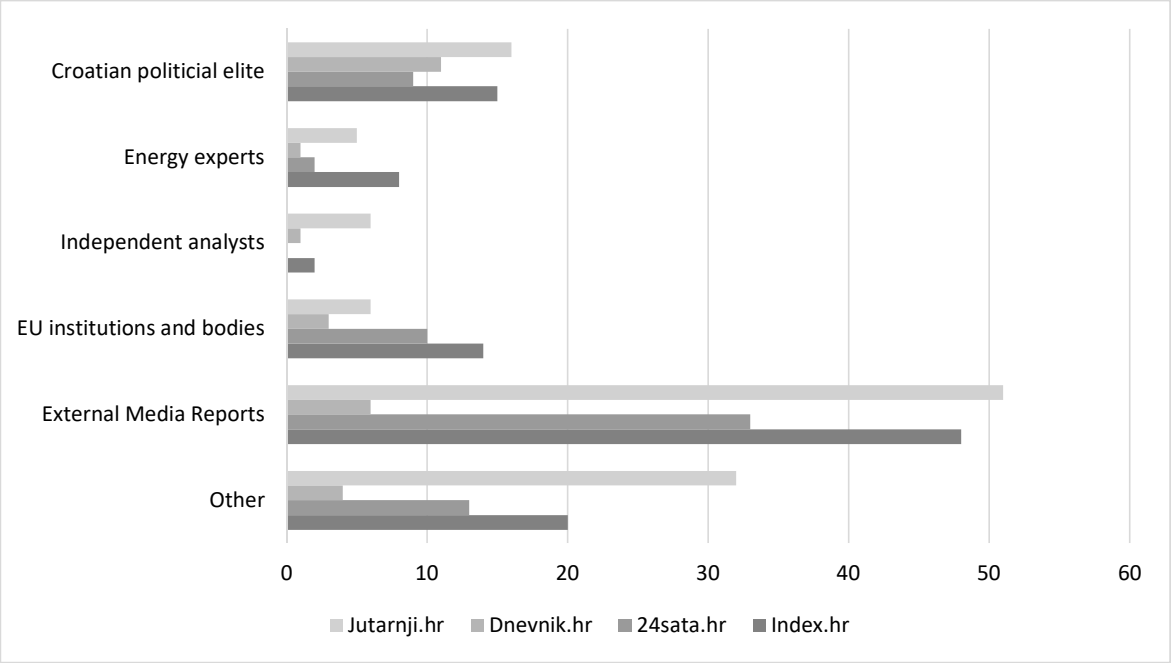

Figure 5. Analysis of sources in Croatian online media on EU energy security in the context of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict

Conclusion

This research has shown that the Russo-Ukrainian conflict has highlighted vulnerabilities in EU energy security, largely due to dependence on Russian energy imports. Croatian media coverage reflects both the immediate geopolitical shifts and the EU's urgent need to adapt its policies. Peaks in article frequency align with significant events and seasonal energy demands, revealing increased public and media interest during these periods. Headlines frequently employ clickbait tactics, particularly in Jutarnji.hr, to engage readers, while platforms like Index.hr and 24sata.hr also emphasize informative reporting.

Key themes in coverage focus on sanctions, EU dependency on Russian energy, and diversification efforts, spotlighting the broader geopolitical impact and the EU's strategic shifts. Narratively, Croatian media often adopt a critical tone, especially in Index.hr and 24sata.hr, while Jutarnji.hr provides a more balanced perspective. Analysis of sources shows a reliance on external media reports and official EU bodies, with limited input from local experts, suggesting a preference for established narratives over in-depth domestic perspectives.

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