

**RUSSIA IN THE NEWS OF ITS NEIGHBOURS:
CROSS-BORDER MEDIA INFLUENCE IN UKRAINE AND
BELARUS**

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ABSTRACT

Thesis title Russia in the news of its neighbours: Cross-border media influence in Ukraine and Belarus

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This thesis investigates the nature and impact of Russian influence on Russian-language print and broadcast news in Ukraine and Belarus. TV channels and publications with shareholders or partners in Russia are widely available in both the countries studied; existing literature suggests that such 'Russian' media are a source of regional power for the Kremlin. To shed light on how Russian partners and shareholders affect editorial treatment of Russia, the thesis compares content samples from 27 TV news bulletins and newspapers available in Ukraine or Belarus, some of which have Russian partners or shareholders while others do not. It also draws on in-depth interviews with 46 journalists and other media professionals. The thesis then compares the cases of Ukraine and Belarus to explain how political and economic conditions in a 'target' state affect the Russian authorities' scope for communicating messages to mass audiences abroad via pro-Kremlin broadcasters. The findings of the thesis serve as a basis for assessing whether Russian news exports might contribute to Russian foreign policy success in the way envisaged by the literature on soft power.

This research reveals complexities which have previously been overlooked in discussions about Russia's media influence in the post-Soviet region. The news providers in Ukraine and Belarus which have Russian partners or shareholders are diverse and often vulnerable to constraints within their operating environment. Their utility as a source of soft power for the Kremlin is questionable, because the association between media and soft power is premised on public sentiments swaying foreign policy decisions. This premise is problematic, particularly in authoritarian Belarus. Pro-Kremlin Russian news exporters undoubtedly play a role in Moscow's relations with Minsk and Kiev. However, their significance may lie at least as much in their capacity to provoke as their capacity to 'softly' attract and persuade a mass audience.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	iv
TRANSLITERATION	vi
ABBREVIATIONS	vii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Research topic	1
1.2 Research questions and objectives	3
1.3 Choice of countries and cases	4
1.4 Literature and hypothesis	8
1.5 Methods and data	25
1.6 Thesis outline	32
CHAPTER 2. A ‘SINGLE INFORMATION SPACE’?	
2.1 Chapter topic and objectives	34
2.2 The single information space: Russian policy intentions	35
2.3 Implementation of policy: An uphill struggle	41
2.4 Market forces, the Soviet legacy and Russia’s major news exporters	46
2.5 Chapter summary	57
CHAPTER 3. UKRAINE	
3.1 Chapter topic and objectives	59
3.2 Television news bulletins: <i>Podrobnosti, Sobytiya</i> and <i>Vremya</i>	61
3.3 Daily tabloids: <i>Segodnya, Fakty i Kommentarii</i> and <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine</i>	75
3.4 Daily broadsheets: <i>Den, Izvestiya v Ukraine</i> and <i>Kommersant-Ukraina</i>	90
3.5 Weekly newspapers: <i>Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine, Zerkalo Nedeli, Kommentarii, Stolichnyye Novosti</i> and <i>2000</i>	108
3.6 Chapter summary	126

CHAPTER 4. BELARUS

4.1 Chapter topic and objectives	130
4.2 Television news bulletins: <i>Panorama, Vremya, Nashi Novosti, 24 Chasa, Segodnya</i> and <i>Vesti</i>	133
4.3 Daily newspapers: <i>Sovetskaya Belorussiya</i> and <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii</i>	154
4.4 Weekly newspapers: <i>Obozrevatel, BelGazeta, Svobodnyye Novosti Plyus, Belorusy i Rynok</i> and <i>Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii</i>	169
4.5 Chapter summary and discussion	187

CHAPTER 5. MASS MEDIA AND REGIONAL POWER

5.1 Chapter topic and objectives	195
5.2 Laws, regulations and broadcasting pro-Kremlin news	197
5.3 Incomes, competition and the audience share of pro-Kremlin broadcasters	203
5.4 Public sentiments and foreign policy decisions in Belarus	214
5.5 Public sentiments and foreign policy decisions in Ukraine	219
5.6 Chapter summary	222

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Main findings and arguments	225
6.2 Questions for future research	231

APPENDIX 1. CODING FRAME 233

APPENDIX 2. STORY COMPARISON TABLES 235

REFERENCES

List of interviewees	288
List of TV news bulletins and newspapers used in content analysis	293
Laws, treaties, international agreements and other legal documents	294
Books, articles and online resources	299

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

CHAPTER 3. UKRAINE

Table 3.1 Proportion of stories in TV bulletins coded as ‘featuring Russia’	62
Table 3.2 Proportion of stories in daily tabloids coded as ‘featuring Russia’	76
Table 3.3 Proportion of stories in daily broadsheets coded as ‘featuring Russia’	91
Table 3.4: Proportion of stories in weekly newspapers coded as ‘featuring Russia’	109

CHAPTER 4. BELARUS

Table 4.1 Proportion of stories in TV bulletins coded as ‘featuring Russia’	134
Table 4.2 Proportion of stories in daily newspapers coded as ‘featuring Russia’	154
Table 4.3 Proportion of stories in weekly newspapers coded as ‘featuring Russia’	170

CHAPTER 5. MASS MEDIA AND REGIONAL POWER

Table 5.1 Means of TV reception in Ukraine	205
Table 5.2 Ukraine’s main national TV news providers	208
Table 5.3 Leading sources of information in Belarus	213
Table 5.4 Responses to survey question ‘Russia has expressed the desire to acquire major Belarusian firms such as Beltransgaz, MAZ, Belaruskali and others. How do you regard these plans?’	214
Table 5.5 Responses to survey question ‘At the end of last year [2011] the Belarusian government sold its share in the gas transit firm Beltransgaz, which now entirely belongs to the Russian gas company Gazprom. How do you assess this decision?’ ...	215
Table 5.6 Responses to survey question ‘Negotiations have been going on for some time about the sale of Belaruskali, the Belarusian plant for extracting potassium salts, to a Russian investor. How do you regard the possible sale deal?’	215
Table 5.7 Responses to survey question ‘Some people believe that Belarus should reduce its level of integration with Russia and withdraw from certain integration structures. What do you think?’	216
Table 5.8 Responses to survey question ‘The presidents of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan recently signed a declaration of Eurasian economic integration in Moscow. The Belarusian authorities believe the new association will “become the key regional player, which will help settle relations with the leading global economic structures”, but the opposition believe that “Belarusian participation in Eurasian integration will negatively affect prospects of integration in the global economic and political space”. What is your view?’	216

Table 5.9 Responses to survey question ‘Which solution to the problem of Abkhazia and South Ossetia do you consider best?’	217
Table 5.10: Responses to survey question ‘Do you think Belarus should follow Russia in recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia?’	218
Table 5.11: Responses to survey question ‘Do you think Belarus should follow Russia in recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia?’	218
Table 5.12: Responses to survey question ‘What should Ukraine decide regarding the Russian Black Sea Fleet staying in Sevastopol after 2017?’	220
Table 5.13: Attitudes towards the signing of the Kharkov ‘gas-for-fleet’ accords recorded during a survey in April 2010	220
Table 5.14: Responses to the survey question ‘Would you like Ukraine to sign a treaty this year on joining the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan?’	221
Table 5.15: Responses to survey question ‘Do you think Ukraine should join the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan?’	221
Table 5.16: Responses to survey question ‘Which integration path should Ukraine take?’ Only one choice allowed	221
Figure 5.1 Ukrainian attitudes towards various information sources	211
Figure 5.2 Ukrainian attitudes towards selected TV news providers	212

APPENDIX 2. STORY COMPARISON TABLES

Table C1 Comparison of stories ‘featuring Russia’ reported by <i>Podrobnosti, Sobytiya</i> and <i>Vremya</i> , 31 May – 24 September 2010	235
Table C2 Comparison of stories ‘featuring Russia’ reported by <i>Segodnya, Fakty i Kommentarii</i> and <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine</i> , 31 May – 25 September 2010	237
Table C3 Comparison of stories ‘featuring Russia’ reported by <i>Den, Kommersant-Ukraina</i> and <i>Izvestiya v Ukraine</i> , 31 May – 25 September 2010	244
Table C4 Comparison of stories ‘featuring Russia’ reported by <i>Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine, 2000, Stolichnyye Novosti, Kommentarii</i> and <i>Zerkalo Nedeli</i> , 31 May – 25 September 2010	253
Table C5 Comparison of stories ‘featuring Russia’ reported by <i>Panorama, Nashi Novosti, 24 Chasa, Vremya, Vesti</i> and <i>Segodnya</i> , 23 August – 5 November 2010	261
Table C6 Comparison of stories ‘featuring Russia’ reported by <i>Sovetskaya Belorussiya</i> and <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii</i> , 23 August – 5 November 2010	266
Table C7: Comparison of stories ‘featuring Russia’ reported by <i>Obozrevatel, BelGazeta, Svobodnyye Novosti Plyus, Belorusy i Rynok</i> and <i>Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii</i> , 23 August – 5 November 2010	277

TRANSLITERATION

The transliteration of Russian-language text in this thesis follows the system set out below.

Exceptions to these transliteration rules are the names of authors whose work is published in English; such authors' names are rendered as they appear in the original English-language source.

а	a	з	z	п	p	ч	ch
б	b	и	i	р	r	ш	sh
в	v	й	y	с	s	щ	shch
г	g	к	k	т	t	ъ	-
д	d	л	l	у	u	ы	y
е	e*	м	m	ф	f	ь	-
ё	e*	н	n	х	kh	э	e
ж	zh	о	o	ц	ts	ю	yu
						я	ya

*The Russian letters 'е' and 'ё' are transliterated as 'ye' at the start of words, after the soft sign 'ь' and after the vowels 'а', 'я', 'ы', 'и', 'э', 'е', 'ё', 'о', 'у' and 'ю'. For example, Елена is rendered Yelena (not Elena) and *Столичные Новости* is rendered *Stolichnyye Novosti* (not *Stolichnye Novosti*).

For the sake of consistency, transliterations are based wherever possible on Russian spellings rather than Ukrainian or Belarusian alternatives (e.g. Lukashenko rather than Lukashenka; Dmitriy rather than Dmytro). However, Ukrainian-language text is transliterated in a few instances where no official Russian-language translation exists, such as the titles of legislative acts. For transliteration from Ukrainian, the thesis uses the online transliterator <http://ua.translit.cc>.

All Russian to English translations are the author's own, unless otherwise indicated.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AiF</i>	<i>Argumenty i Fakty</i> (newspaper)
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
EU	European Union
FSU	Former Soviet Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IIEPS	Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ISS	International Space Station
KGB	<i>Komitet gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti</i> (Committee for State Security)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NTRBC	National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council (Ukraine)
PoW	Prisoner of War
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
VGTRK	<i>Vserossiyskaya gosudarstvennaya televizionnaya i radioveshchatelnaya kompaniya</i> (All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company)
WTO	World Trade Organization

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research topic

This thesis examines the nature and impact of Russian influence on Russian-language print and broadcast news in Ukraine and Belarus. TV channels and publications with partners or shareholders in Russia are widely available in both the countries studied. The thesis pays particular attention to such ‘Russian’ media: it considers how they differ from ‘non-Russian’ rivals in their editorial treatment of Russia; elucidates factors which affect how they function; and reflects on their role and significance within regional politics.

Existing literature suggests that the Russian authorities derive regional power and influence from the fact that media content made in Russia is available throughout much of the former Soviet Union (Bogomolov and Lytvynenko, 2012, Tsygankov, 2006). In Ukraine and Belarus, the information ‘threat’ from Russia is discussed as a matter of national security. Meanwhile, politicians in Moscow voice concern about their diminishing ability to communicate with ‘Russian compatriots’ abroad. The mass media are viewed by the Kremlin as a geopolitical battleground where states must compete to promote their own interpretation of events (Feklyunina, 2008). Establishing a so-called ‘single information space’ in the CIS has become an official Russian objective.

Yet despite its political salience, Russian influence on news in the post-Soviet republics has received little attention from researchers. There has been a failure to distinguish between various types of media labelled as ‘Russian’, ranging from state-owned TV channels to tabloid franchises and business publications produced by locally-based editorial teams. The literature has neglected to consider how political and economic conditions in different countries affect the behaviour and consumption of ‘Russian’ media. Furthermore, there has been no critical assessment of the kind of impact which Russian news exports exert on regional relations.

By analyzing and comparing the cases of Ukraine and Belarus, the aim here is to address such issues and explore the ‘soft power’ potential of Russian transnational media activity. The thesis begins by tracing the media ties which have arisen between Russia and its neighbours due to government action, commercial incentives and the Soviet legacy. Next, content analysis establishes how news coverage of Russia varies among a range of Russian-language TV bulletins and newspapers which are widely available to citizens in Ukraine or Belarus. The content samples come from tabloids, broadsheets and TV channels, some of which have Russian partners or shareholders while others do not. The content analysis findings are explained through 46 original fieldwork interviews conducted with media professionals in Kiev, Minsk and Moscow. The Russian authorities aspire to use the news to influence public opinion abroad, but their scope for doing so depends on conditions in the ‘target’ state; this is demonstrated by scrutinizing and contrasting the Ukrainian and Belarusian cases. Finally, the thesis discusses whether Russian news exports might contribute to Russian foreign policy success in the manner envisaged by the literature on soft power. The association between mass media and soft power is premised on the notion that public sentiments sway policy-making after media have shaped public sentiments. The plausibility of this premise is tentatively probed in relation to Belarusian and Ukrainian foreign policy by studying Russia’s record of achieving its objectives in each country alongside public opinion surveys and official statements about policy decisions.

The central argument here is that Russian media influence in neighbouring states is considerably less straightforward than existing accounts suggest. This thesis reveals the diversity that exists among so-called ‘Russian’ news providers in Ukraine and Belarus: some clearly serve Kremlin interests but others are motivated primarily by commercial considerations. Some are not in fact fully Russian and would be better described as ‘hybrid’ (i.e. Russian-Belarusian or Russian-Ukrainian). The research in this thesis also exposes the vulnerability of such news providers to constraints within their host environment. For instance, political pressure on their reporting

sometimes comes more from the local context than from Moscow. Moreover, the notion that Russian news exports might provide a ‘soft power’ boost to the Kremlin by winning over foreign citizens is problematic in an authoritarian state like Belarus, where public sentiments have little opportunity to feed into political decision-making. Pro-Kremlin news exporters undoubtedly play a role in Moscow’s relations with Kiev and Minsk. However, their negative coverage of Ukrainians and Belarusians has had a more visible political impact than their sympathetic coverage of Russia, as this study shall explain. An alternative perspective is therefore needed to understand Russian cross-border media influence. Instead of soft power, we might use the metaphor of a Soviet-era communal apartment with very thin walls. When Russia talks about its neighbours it tends to be overheard and the neighbours inevitably react. Yet the thin walls are of questionable benefit to Russia. To date there is little evidence to suggest that Russia’s audibility has made its life in the apartment any easier – quite the reverse.

1.2 Research questions and objectives

The following four research questions are investigated in this thesis.

- Q1. In each country case, how do the leading Russian-language TV news bulletins and newspapers vary with regard to the kind of coverage (extensive or limited, favourable or unfavourable) they devote to Russia?
- Q2. In each country case, why does the scale and tone of news coverage about Russia vary from one Russian-language news provider to another?
- Q3. How do varying political and economic conditions affect the scope of the Russian authorities to communicate messages to mass audiences in Ukraine and Belarus?
- Q4. Is it likely that Russian news exports could contribute to the success of Russian foreign policy in Ukraine and Belarus as envisaged by the literature on soft power?

In addressing these questions, one objective is to advance our knowledge and understanding of journalism and Russian influence in two important post-Soviet states. Another objective is to introduce insights from the former Soviet Union into the broader debate about soft power. Soft power is described by Joseph Nye as ‘attractive power’ in international relations: ‘getting others to want the outcomes that you want’ and achieving such outcomes ‘through attraction rather than coercion or payment’ (Nye, 2008, pp 94–95).¹ Both in the literature (reviewed below) and among policy-makers, the mass media are frequently associated with soft power. However, this association is underdeveloped theoretically and Nye’s claims about the media’s impact on international relations remain largely untested. In this thesis the association between the media and soft power is a theme for critical analysis and scrutiny: assumptions underlying the association are unpacked and their validity is examined in light of the thesis findings. It should be stressed that the thesis does *not* use soft power as an overarching conceptual framework. Rather, the thesis argues that soft power is an inadequate, even misleading conceptual tool for understanding the role played by news media in relations between Russia and its post-Soviet neighbours.

1.3 Choice of countries and cases

The post-Soviet republics of Ukraine and Belarus are the focus of study in this thesis. Selection of these countries is justified primarily by the level of interest and debate that surrounds their relationship with Russia. Bordering both Russia and the EU, they have become objects of geopolitical rivalry as Moscow and Brussels compete over their future direction. Consequently, the question of Russian influence in these countries is of relevance in the world beyond academia.

¹ Nye is closely associated with the term ‘soft power’; he introduced it as a concept in his 1990 book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* and has been writing about it prolifically ever since. The idea behind soft power – the importance of opinion, or ‘winning hearts and minds’ in the international political arena – has been around far longer than 20 years, however.

Studying Ukraine and Belarus also allows the thesis to explore how political and economic conditions in a ‘target’ state affect the Russian authorities’ scope for communicating with foreign audiences via news exports. Ukraine and Belarus have a lot in common. They are each home to significant numbers of people who describe themselves as ethnic Russians, as well as individuals with blurred identities incorporating a substantial Russian (or Soviet) element. They are Slavonic countries where fluency in Russian, as either a first or second language, is almost universal. These circumstances are conducive for Russian commercial involvement in their respective news media markets. They also make both countries prime targets of Moscow’s compatriot policy, parts of which explicitly concern the Russian-language mass media. Yet politically and economically Ukraine and Belarus differ substantially. Ukraine has a market economy dominated by competing, privately-owned financial-industrial groups; it has a ‘competitive authoritarian’ political regime (Way, 2004) that has seen power change hands repeatedly. Its media environment is accordingly commercial and pluralistic. In Belarus, on the other hand, important economic assets and activity generally remain under tight state control, while President Aleksandr Lukashenko has established a form of rule that is essentially hegemonic – the ‘last dictatorship in Europe’ (Marples, 2005, Bennett, 2011, Wilson, 2011). The Belarusian media environment is consequently characterised by heavy-handed regulation and a lack of competition. Ukraine and Belarus thus present quite different challenges to news providers operating within their territories and to Russian officials hoping to achieve political ends through news exports.

In this thesis Ukraine and Belarus are initially researched *separately* as two small-*n* comparative studies (based on methodological principles described in Brady and Collier, 2010, and Mahoney, 2000), in which the cases for comparison are leading news bulletins and newspapers. In other words, the aim is to explain variation among news providers within each country, not the variation between news providers in different countries. In Chapter 3 about Ukraine, *n* = 14 (three TV news bulletins, three daily tabloids, three daily broadsheets and five weekly newspapers). In Chapter 4

about Belarus, $n = 13$ (six TV news bulletins, two daily newspapers and five weekly newspapers). The dependent variable of interest is news coverage of Russia, or more specifically, the *scale* of such coverage (the proportion of stories in which Russia features) and its *tone* (the extent to which Russia, its actions and representatives are portrayed in a favourable or unfavourable light). Scale of coverage is assessed through quantitative content analysis. Tone of coverage is assessed qualitatively with particular attention paid to story selection. More details are provided in the methods section below.

The cases (news providers) are drawn from a universe defined by the following criteria:

- the medium is either (a) a flagship news bulletin of a television channel falling within the national top 10 by audience share at the start of the study, or (b) a newspaper published at least once a week;
- the primary language of broadcast or publication is Russian;
- the geographic reach is nationwide;
- the estimated weekly print run (in the case of newspapers) is over 50,000 in Ukraine and over 10,000 in Belarus.²

This universe arguably encompasses the majority of leading Russian-language news providers in each country. Evening TV bulletins are considered particularly influential because they reach the widest audiences; the press matters because it has the capacity to generate original stories which are later picked up and amplified by other outlets. It must be noted, however, that this universe is far from representing the full range of news providers available in Ukraine and Belarus. News in the titular languages of the selected countries – Ukrainian and Belarusian – is not studied here. Nor

² These print run figures are used to identify the countries' leading newspapers for want of a better indicator. They are, however, undeniably arbitrary, and the accuracy of official print run figures in the countries under study is somewhat questionable. A higher weekly print run is required of the newspapers in Ukraine because national newspaper circulations are larger in there than in Belarus, reflecting Ukraine's larger population.

does the thesis encompass all forms of media; attention is concentrated on television and the press. Regional differences within each country are not examined either, although they are substantial. Crimea has a distinct media environment in which links to Russia are particularly strong, but this research only looks at news providers with a nationwide reach. The thesis therefore offers only a partial view of each media environment, but its scope had to be limited in order to keep the project feasible.

All flagship evening news bulletins which meet the abovementioned criteria are included in the research. However, some newspapers are excluded, as otherwise the amount of content to be analyzed would be unmanageable. The selection of newspapers from the universe of potential cases is non-random. It is designed to encompass different types of media ownership because the existing literature on post-Soviet journalism, as well as media theory, suggests that ownership is important in explaining content patterns. Thus, some of the publications studied belong to the state; others to major tycoons; some belong to career journalists; others to multiple shareholders. News providers with a Russian shareholder or partner are included deliberately so that the nature of Russian influence on news in Ukraine and Belarus can be explored.

The following news providers constitute the cases in the chapter on Ukraine:

- three nightly news bulletins: *Podrobnosti* on *Inter*; *Sobytiya* on *TRK Ukraina*; *Vremya* on Russia's *Pervyy Kanal*;
- three daily tabloids: *Segodnya*; *Fakty i Kommentarii*; *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*;
- three daily broadsheets: *Den*; *Kommersant-Ukraina*; *Izvestiya v Ukraine*;
- five weekly newspapers: mass circulation tabloid *Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine*; broadsheets *Zerkalo Nedeli* and *2000*; Berliner-format *Stolichnyye Novosti* and *Komentarii*

In the chapter on Belarus, the news providers selected as cases are:

- six nightly news bulletins: *Panorama on Belarus 1*; *Vremya on ONT* (but produced by Russia's *Pervyy Kanal*); *Nashi Novosti on ONT*; *24 Chasa on STV*; *Segodnya on NTV-Belarus* (but produced by Russia's *NTV*); *Vesti on RTR-Belarus* (but produced by Russia's *Rossiya 1*);
- two daily newspapers: *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*;
- five weekly newspapers: *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii*; *Obozrevatel*, *BelGazeta*, *Svobodnyye Novosti Plyus* and *Belorusy i Rynok*.

Further information about these news providers can be found in Chapters 2, 3 and 4.

1.4 Literature review and hypothesis

This thesis is an interdisciplinary study in that it draws on existing research from several academic fields. Media and communication theory is briefly reviewed here, as – despite certain weaknesses – it offers insights into the complex nexus of factors which shape news content. The area studies literature on post-Soviet politics and journalism has paid negligible attention to the transnational dimension of news provision in the region, but it does make claims about the behaviour of 'Russian' media abroad which are formulated as hypothesis H1. Last but not least, the prominent concept of soft power from the field of international relations constitutes a theme for critical analysis when it comes to assessing the impact of Russian news exports on Russian foreign policy success in Ukraine and Belarus.

Theories about what shapes the news

The literature which professes to explain the nature of news content is vast and fragmented, spanning several disciplines and diverse methodologies. It ranges from classic newsroom observation studies by media sociologists like Sigal (1973), Tuchman (1978), Schlesinger (1978)

and Gans (1979) to the ‘propaganda model’ developed by Herman and Chomsky (1988); from global news flow studies (such as Galtung and Ruge, 1965, Sreberny-Mohammadi, 1984) to complex models of slant and bias constructed by economists (for example, Mullainathan and Shleifer, 2005, Baron, 2006, Gentzkow and Shapiro, 2010).

It would appear that very few scholars working in media, communication and international communication have attempted to theorize as to why news providers within one single country (‘Country A’) may vary in their scale and tone of reporting about another single country (‘Country B’). One scholar, Melissa A. Johnson (1997), investigated varying coverage of Mexico in different parts of the USA. She found newspaper circulation size and the percentage of the potential readership with a Mexican heritage to be strong predictors of the volume of Mexico coverage. Yet her findings have limited generalizability and similar studies are rare. Theories about the nature of foreign news coverage have tended to address other kinds of variation – most notably, disparities in the level of attention which editors and journalists devote to different parts of the world. For example, Galtung and Ruge posited a series of hypotheses to explain how international ‘events’ become ‘news’ (Galtung and Ruge, 1965). By analysing content from Norwegian newspapers they showed that journalists were inclined to perpetuate a negative image of countries ‘low in international rank’. This idea was extensively pursued during the 1970s and 1980s by critical scholars (e.g. Herbert I. Schiller, Kaarle Nordenstreng) who argued that international communication structures empowered some nations (the rich) at the expense of others (the developing world). The geographical scope of this literature limits its relevance to the present thesis; it has traditionally dealt with the flow of news from South to North and Periphery to Centre while neglecting dynamics elsewhere. As Hamid Mowlana has observed, ‘there is still a lamentable lack of material dealing with Eastern Europe’ in the literature on global television flows; most research has been conducted in the United States and Western Europe on the flows in and out of those regions (Mowlana, 1997, p 70). The cross-border flow of media content and information

between the post-Soviet states does not feature at all in major recent works within the field such as Thussu's *International Communication* (Thussu, 2006), Chalaby's *Transnational Television Worldwide* (Chalaby, 2005), *International Media Communication in a Global Age* by Golan et al. (2010), or McPhail's *Global Communication* (McPhail, 2010).

Some ambitious media scholars have developed theoretical frameworks to explain not just news reporting of foreign countries, but news content more generally. *Mediating the message: Theories of influences on mass media content* by Pamela Shoemaker and Stephen Reese (1996) is perhaps the best known example. It arranges established influences on media content into a hierarchy of five levels. From bottom to top these levels are individuals (i.e. media workers, their training and background); newsroom routines; features of the media organization (e.g. ownership); forces outside the media organization (sources, advertisers, governments and the like); and ideology. Influences located at the higher levels of the hierarchy are deemed able to shape and potentially outweigh influences located further down. More recently, Cristina Archetti has proposed an interdisciplinary 'Global News Model', which draws together ideas from media sociology, political communication and international communication with the aim of creating a 'single, seamless theoretical framework' for news research (Archetti, 2010a, p 581). According to Archetti's model, news variation across different media organizations and countries can be explained by looking at how three main variables – national interest, national journalistic culture and the editorial policy of each media organization – affect journalists' news values (Archetti, 2010b).

Both *Mediating the Message* and Archetti's *Explaining News: National Politics and Journalistic Cultures in Global Context* build bridges between different areas of news research, thereby introducing some cohesion and structure to the generally disjointed debate about how news content takes its shape. It is undoubtedly a valid point that researchers seeking to explain news content should engage in interdisciplinary dialogue rather than limiting themselves to the perspective of any one field. However, a good theory about the shaping of the news ought to be able to generate

predictions – testable hypotheses – linking independent variables to specific patterns in content, and by this measure both the ‘Global News Model’ and the ‘hierarchy of influences’ are unsatisfactory. The former yields the hypothesis that editorial policy ought to account for variation in news content across media organizations. This is certainly a logical contention, but we are then left without guidance when it comes to explaining why editorial policies themselves vary. The ‘hierarchy’ identifies dozens of independent variables which are potentially relevant to variation in news content and suggests how these variables might interact. Yet the weak predictive power of the theory with respect to content patterns becomes clear when one examines the 50 or so hypotheses listed at the end of *Mediating the Message*. Few of them explicitly predict *what kind* of variation in content one would expect to see resulting from the influences identified within the hierarchy. Instead, loose predictions are made about media content ‘being affected’ by various factors, and content ‘with different characteristics’ being generated under various conditions. Such hypotheses are not very meaningful, since any two samples of news are almost inevitably going to differ in one way or another, whatever the unit of analysis and focus of study.

Arguably, no single theory could account for all the content patterns in all the media around the world; in other words, the task of constructing a single and universal theory of news content may be too ambitious. However, the lack of predictive power in existing theory also reflects a tendency among some researchers to theorize about what shapes the news as if news content were a single dependent variable. For example, Shoemaker and Reese state:

‘[W]e define the message itself as a dependent variable. We argue that the message, or media content, is influenced by a wide variety of factors both inside and outside media organizations.’ (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996, p 9)

News content is complex; it can and should be explicitly disaggregated into a whole series of dependent variables: the scale and tone of coverage devoted to particular people, groups, places or events; the balance between factual reporting and comment; the balance between hard news and soft

news; the sources cited; and so on. An independent variable identified as an influence on news may cause variation on some content parameters but not on others. The existing theoretical literature about what shapes the news would be more useful if it distinguished more systematically between the different kinds of variation associated with different sources of influence.

This thesis is concerned with explaining variation in coverage of a particular country (Russia) across different news providers that broadcast or publish within the same national territory (Ukraine and Belarus, studied separately). Unfortunately, existing media theory offers limited guidance on this issue, because researchers have rarely discussed why foreign affairs coverage varies from one news provider to another *within* a national media system; they have rather examined variation *across* national media systems (e.g. Schramm, 1959, de Vreese et al., 2006, Ghanem, 2010) or between representations of *multiple countries* in a national or global setting (e.g. Lent, 1977, Wu, 2000, Golan, 2006, Jones et al., 2013, to name but a few). Theory and common sense do tell us that a large number of independent variables are potentially important in shaping news content, including reporting about a particular neighbouring state. These include the views and values of individual media workers, newsroom routines, features of the media organization such as ownership and pressures from third parties such as the government, target audience, sources and advertisers. However, it is difficult to proceed from this plethora of explanatory factors to hypotheses about what kind of coverage of Russia one should expect from specific news providers in Ukraine and Belarus. Among the many hypotheses in *Mediating the message*, the only one which links a source of influence to a specific kind of content variation across news providers in a way that is relevant to this study is the following:

‘The personal attitudes and values of news media owners may be reflected not only in editorials and columns but also in news and features. Not only can owners hire and fire editors, columnists, and reporters according to their stated political beliefs, but

they can also cause subtle “slants” in coverage as the employees try to anticipate what the owner wants.’ (Shoemaker and Reese, 1996, p 267)

Media owners and their views are among the most frequently discussed determinants of news content and editorial policy. This is particularly true in the former Soviet Union.

The regional perspective

The area studies literature on post-Soviet politics and journalism intersects little with the media and communication literature described above. It sheds light on how mass media in the region operate without addressing cross-border interconnectedness or foreign affairs coverage *per se*. The majority of work in this field has been conducted within a single-country framework and Russia has been the main focus of attention. Numerous scholars have described Vladimir Putin’s assertion of control over Russian TV following the more liberal presidency of Boris Yeltsin (for instance, Lipman and McFaul, 2003, Belin, 2004, Fossato, 2006, Beumers et al., 2008); while Koltsova (2006) has taken a broader view, highlighting other ‘agents of power’ besides the government which shape the news in Russia. Oates (2006) and Mickiewicz (2005, 2008) have addressed how news content is received, interpreted and acted upon by Russian viewers, while Pasti (2005) has investigated how Russian journalists perceive their professional role. A comparative perspective encompassing multiple post-Soviet or post-Communist countries is less common; such studies have tended to concentrate on the media’s role in political transitions (e.g. Downing, 1996, Gunther and Mughan, 2000, Sparks, 2008). Rantanen has looked at the role of the media and communication as agents of globalization in post-Communist Russia, but her claim that Russia only imports media products with ‘no contra or reverse flows’ (Rantanen, 2002, p 134) is misleading – Russian media content in fact remains widely available across much of the former USSR, even if exports to former Communist satellite states have diminished. The past decade has produced few scholarly works relating specifically to the media in Ukraine or Belarus. Eke (2002) and Sahm (2009) have described the repressive media

policies of Aleksandr Lukashenko, but neither examined Russia's media involvement in Belarus in any depth. As for the Ukrainian media, the most notable contributions have come from Marta Dyczok (2006, 2009), whose analysis raises doubts about the power of the Ukrainian authorities to manipulate public sentiments via censorship. Nikolayenko (2004), Baysha and Hallahan (2004), Krasnoboka and Brants (2006) and Richter (2002, 2007) have also addressed issues of press freedom and state influence on news in Ukraine.

A view voiced by many of the abovementioned researchers is that news content throughout the post-Soviet world tends to reflect the views and interests of whoever controls the news provider's purse strings. Back in 2003, a report about Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova by Article 19, a press freedom NGO, highlighted a sharp divide between state-subsidized and privately-funded media:

‘The former tend to cover news in a pro-government light and largely ignore or denigrate opposition events; the latter, when they are funded by oligarchs or businessmen, present the funders' views and political alignment.’ (Prina and Pugsley, 2003, p 32)

The same report stated that funding from international donors could create ‘a relationship of dependency’ where beneficiaries attempt to please their donors when they write (Prina and Pugsley, 2003, p 36).

In Ukraine, private media ownership is the norm. State interference in the media declined from 2005 following the Orange revolution. However, channels and publications are said to remain caught between state and business influences, with patrons continuing to ensure that ‘their’ media take the required editorial line. At the first round of the 2010 Ukrainian presidential election, for instance, the International Election Observation Mission declared that most private broadcasters ‘showed editorial bias reflecting the political views of their ownership’ (International Election Observation Mission, 2010, p 7). In the Ukrainian context, the clandestine practice of *dzhinsa* is

also mentioned frequently. *Dzhinsa* literally means ‘denim’ or ‘jeans’, but it has become a slang expression to describe the way journalists produce stories to order in exchange for material incentives from third parties (Tsetsura and Grynko, 2009). Viktoriya Syumar, executive director of the Kiev-based NGO Institute of Mass Information, has been cited as saying: ‘Mass media give information on politicians in exchange for money... Nowadays one can practically buy every media space or broadcasting time one would like’ (Dujisin, 2008). Similarly, observers at the 2010 presidential election found that coverage in the electronic media ‘was often not determined on the basis of newsworthiness, but rather as a result of candidates paying to appear in the news or current-affairs programmes’ (International Election Observation Mission, 2010, p 7).

In Belarus, most leading news providers belong to the state and President Aleksandr Lukashenko openly demands that they work to promote the approved state ideology. In 2008 he was quoted as saying: ‘Media of a serious character, as well as ideology on the whole, are not privatized in Belarus. Everything should be in the state's interests’ (Belapan news agency, 2008a). Covert payments are rarely mentioned as determinants of news content. Discussions about what shapes the news in Belarus tend to focus heavily on the stifling hand of the authorities, which not only own most of the country’s mass media, but also apply pressure on any non-state-owned news providers that try to take an independent line.

It is notable, however, that when observers criticize news providers in Ukraine and Belarus for serving the interests of their financial backers, such criticism generally relates to biased reporting of domestic matters. In domestic politics, the views and interests of media proprietors are often fairly clear. Representatives of the incumbent authorities have a major interest in maintaining their political position so they use their influence on the state-owned media to secure flattering coverage of themselves and their policies – as President Lukashenko does so comprehensively in Belarus. Certain media tycoons are associated with one political party or another (e.g. Ukraine’s Rinat

Akhmetov backs the Party of Regions); they are generally expected to generate favourable news coverage for ‘their’ politicians in exchange for political favours which benefit their businesses.

Where media coverage of Russia is concerned, however, the relationship between owner influence and content patterns is less obvious. This is particularly true with regard to the privately owned news media. Many media proprietors in the countries under study cannot be labelled as unambiguously pro-Russian or anti-Russian; their views and interests in relation to Russia are ambivalent, unknown or dependent on circumstance. Businessmen like Akhmetov or Viktor Pinchuk may have nothing in particular to gain from dictating an editorial policy towards Russia at the channels and publications under their control.

The influence of state media ownership on news reporting about Russia also defies prediction in certain cases. One would expect Belarusian state-owned TV channels to adjust their news coverage of Russia in line with the volatile trajectory of relations between Minsk and the Kremlin. Yet two of the most popular channels owned by the Belarusian state, *NTV-Belarus* and *RTR-Belarus*, operate in partnership with Russian state-owned channels and rebroadcast Russian content. As Chapter 4 shall demonstrate, these channels, despite being fully owned by the Belarusian state, can be found giving favourable news coverage to the Russian leadership even at times of bilateral tension. Transnational content-sharing arrangements of various kinds are an important feature of the media environments in Ukraine and Belarus, yet the literature on post-Soviet journalism pays little attention to them. The behaviour of news providers under split ownership has been similarly neglected.

Across the board there has been a failure to recognize and explore the complexities and diverse forms of transnationality in post-Soviet news provision. A recurring refrain among political commentators in Ukraine is that ‘Russian media’ with a transnational reach are a source of

Kremlin-driven news narratives which threaten the national interest.³ A similar refrain can be found in the work of Hedenskog and Larsson, who describe the Russian-speaking (sic) mass media as ‘a tool to influence the Russian minorities in the whole FSU area’ (Hedenskog and Larsson, 2007, p 43). Without going into detail, they argue that Russia conducts media campaigns in neighbouring countries to manipulate political sentiment among Russian-speakers and heighten ethnic tensions. Taras Kuzio writes of Russian mass circulation newspapers reprinting information from a fake German source about Ukrainian presidential candidate, later president Viktor Yushchenko’s poisoning in September 2004 (Kuzio, 2005, p 512). Stephen Shulman has described how mass communications in Ukraine became a battleground during the 1990s: while some people warned of the threat posed by foreign media and called for countermeasures, others insisted that Russian media must remain available (Shulman, 1998). Nationalist party leaders interviewed by Shulman ‘consistently argued that Russian television, radio and newspapers were “anti-Ukrainian”’; they believed that Russia, through informational ties with Ukraine, provided ideological and propagandistic assistance to anti-Ukrainian ethnic Russians living in Ukraine (Shulman, 1998, p 297).

Such comments and observations fit neatly into the ‘market for loyalties’ model developed by Monroe Price (1995). The market for loyalties describes how states and other competitors for power interact with the mass media in their struggle for people’s allegiances. Price suggests that national governments participate in this market as ‘manufacturers of identities’: they censor and generate images; enforce and reinforce identities that are useful to them; use legislation to mediate among competitors within their domestic market; and export their views internationally.

³ For example, see the series of articles about ‘information war’ with Russia published on the Telekritika.ua website in September 2011, available at telekritika.ua/media-suspilstvo/bezpeka/2011-09-13/65688; telekritika.ua/media-suspilstvo/bezpeka/2011-09-15/65751; telekritika.ua/media-suspilstvo/bezpeka/2011-09-18/65826; telekritika.ua/media-suspilstvo/bezpeka/2011-09-19/65835; telekritika.ua/media-suspilstvo/expert/2011-09-20/65807 and telekritika.ua/media-suspilstvo/bezpeka/2011-09-22/65926 (accessed 13 March 2013)

Conspicuously absent from this debate about the Russian information threat, however, is a clear description of Russia's cross-border 'propaganda machine', what it consists of and how it works. The major Russian federal TV channels are referred to frequently in this context, but it is uncertain whether other Russian media should also be viewed as weapons in the Kremlin's arsenal. Even the question of what constitutes a 'Russian' news provider remains to be clarified. As explained above, some popular news providers rely on content from Russia which they republish or rebroadcast by agreement, yet their owners are not Russian (e.g. *RTR-Belarus*, *NTV-Belarus*). Other news providers are owned partially by Russians and partially by local businessmen (e.g. *Inter*, and – according to one source – *Izvestiya v Ukraine*). One newspaper – *Kommersant-Ukraina* – is entirely Russian-owned, yet based in Kiev and largely produced by Ukrainian staff. Thus, references to the 'Russian media' operating in Ukraine and Belarus blur some important boundaries and fail to capture the complex picture of Russian media proprietors' involvement in the regional market for news.

Proceeding from claims about the propagandistic role of 'Russian media' in the post-Soviet region, this thesis investigates the following hypothesis, H1.

A news provider with a shareholder or partner in Russia is likely to generate (a) more extensive and (b) more favourable coverage of Russia than market rivals because of its Russian connections.

This hypothesis collates the links to Russia which are usually deemed to render a news provider 'Russian'. There are some media with Russian shareholders or partners that would be more accurately described as 'hybrid' (i.e. Russian-Ukrainian or Russian-Belarusian). Yet the hypothesis has been formulated in this way in order to explore whether all so-called 'Russian' media behave similarly when it comes to their reporting about Russia.

Of course, a multitude of variables besides shareholders and partners have the potential to influence news content. To investigate why reporting about Russia varies, this thesis therefore employs mixed methods and triangulates multiple forms of evidence. Semi-structured interviews with editorial staff are used to probe the impact of other factors mentioned in the media and communications literature, including government pressure and audience expectations.

Mass media as a source of power in international relations

References to the mass media occur regularly in the literature on soft power. Joseph Nye states that ‘information is power’ (Nye, 2004, p 105) and that success in the information age depends not only on whose army wins, but on ‘whose story wins’ (Nye, 2010a, p 8). Observers have claimed that Russian mass media help Moscow to project or exert soft power over neighbouring states (Bogomolov and Lytvynenko, 2012). No-one so far has developed a coherent *theory* of soft power to explain how it works and clarify the part played by the media. Nye, who has written most on the subject and takes credit for coining the term, says that soft power is ‘an analytical concept, not a theory’ (Nye, 2010b, p 219). The concept’s relevance to this thesis can be seen in the fact that the Russian authorities themselves have spoken about the importance of soft power and their desire to develop greater ‘information influence’ on public opinion abroad (see below).

In one recent book Nye defines soft power as:

‘the ability to affect others through the co-optive means of framing the agenda, persuading and eliciting positive attraction in order to obtain preferred outcomes.’
 (Nye, 2011, p 20)

A state’s soft power, according to Nye, comes principally from its culture, political values and foreign policy (Nye, 2004, p 11). These three resources (and others) can be turned into soft power

by 'skilful conversion strategies' which may involve public diplomacy and various other tools (Nye, 2011, p 99).

The idea that soft power affects foreign policy success has certainly caught on in policy-making circles around the world. Gary Rawnsley suggests that we have witnessed a bandwagon effect, 'whereby soft power has become the latest fashionable catch-all term that all governments must claim to do otherwise they are out of step with the times' (Rawnsley, 2012, p 124). As governments have spoken more and more about soft power, the academic literature on the topic has expanded accordingly. Multiple studies have been conducted of Chinese, American, Japanese and even Venezuelan efforts to exert soft power (see Li, 2009, Lai and Lu, 2012, Kurlantzick, 2007, Wang, 2011, McConnell and Watanabe, 2008, Hayden, 2012).

One notable weakness of this literature, however, is the lack of research into soft power's effectiveness. On the whole, scholars have limited themselves to describing what countries do under the banner of soft power; they have not assessed the impact of soft power initiatives on the outcomes of foreign policy. Remarkably – given how widely Nye is cited – Nye's assertions about the workings of soft power remain untested. Nye himself relies on simplistic vignettes to make his argument rather than case studies with thorough process-tracing.⁴ And this failure to empirically establish a causal connection between 'co-optive means' and 'obtaining preferred outcomes' raises doubts about the validity of the concept of soft power itself. If soft power cannot be shown to be effective, how do we know that it is genuinely potent? As things stand, it might be most accurate to define soft power as a label signifying actions undertaken by states *in the hope* of influencing opinions abroad, *in the hope* that by doing so their chances of foreign policy success will improve.

Nye argues that 'attraction often has a diffuse effect, creating general influence rather than producing an easily observable specific action' (Nye, 2004, p 15). This may be true – the fact that

⁴ Nye asserts, for example, that American popular culture helped the USA to achieve post-war foreign policy goals in Europe (Nye, 2004, p 48) and that soft power contributed to the fall of Soviet system (Nye, 2004, p 50); both these claims are contestable given the number of other factors at work.

soft power's impact is hard to observe does not necessarily mean the phenomenon does not exist. Rawnsley (2012, p 123) suggests that soft power functions as 'a long-term process that should be barely noticeable'. However, the problem of joining the dots between soft power *cause* and soft power *effect* is not only empirical – it is also theoretical. Although Nye denies that soft power is a theory, he nonetheless advances hypotheses about how soft power is supposed to work and specifies its causal mechanisms (Layne, 2010, pp 53–54), which unfortunately are 'fuzzy' and give rise to ambiguity. As Edward Lock (2010) and Janice Bially Mattern (2005) have pointed out, there is a problematic conflation of distinct understandings of power through attraction in Nye's work. On the one hand, Nye implies that attractive power occurs as a natural by-product of a country's culture, values and policies which hold inherent appeal for particular subjects. Affinity arising from shared principles is said to result in goodwill and acquiescence – boosting the likelihood of foreign policy success. He states:

'When a country's culture includes universal values and its policies promote values and interests that others share, it increases the probability of obtaining its desired outcomes because of the relationships of attraction and duty that it creates.' (Nye, 2004, p 11)

Lock calls this 'structural' power because the power is not strictly possessed by an agent; rather, it resides in social structures such as shared norms or values.

On the other hand, Nye implies that soft power can be 'produced' by a country investing in broadcasting and public diplomacy (Nye, 2004, p 123). He describes *Al Jazeera* as a 'soft power resource' (Nye, 2004, p 28), not because the TV channel holds attraction for others but because it can transmit messages and frame issues. This understanding of soft power is very agent-centric. Desired outcomes are achieved through communication – wielders of soft power persuade subjects to change their values and priorities, rather than exploiting values and priorities which are already shared. Lock calls this 'relational' power, as the power exists within the context of a relationship between actors.

Nye does not systematically differentiate between these two mechanisms of attraction. His definition of soft power has consequently been described as ‘maddeningly inconsistent’ (Layne, 2010, p 54) and it is not surprising that confusion about how soft power works persists among academics, not to mention governments. Nye’s 2011 book *The Future of Power* does briefly mention that attraction – and ensuing soft power – can arise in two ways: passively, like the light shining from ‘a city on the hill’; or through the active efforts of actors, involving broadcasting and public diplomacy (Nye, 2011, p 94). Yet Nye fails to develop this point; his two models of how target countries are affected by soft power only distinguish between direct influence on policy decisions via sympathetic elites, and indirect influence on policy decisions via favourable public opinion.

Interestingly, there is some evidence that the relationship between cross-border information flows and international political outcomes may function in a way that Nye and the soft power scholars do not even envisage. In their work on the varying development pathways of competitive authoritarian regimes, Steven Levitsky and Lucan Way highlight the importance of ‘linkage’ to the West, which they define as ‘the density of ties (economic, political, diplomatic, social, and organizational) and cross-border flows (of capital, goods and services, people, and information)’ connecting particular countries to the USA, the EU, and Western-dominated multilateral institutions (Levitsky and Way, 2010, p 43). Linkage to the West is said to have increased the likelihood of regime democratization in the post-Cold-War period. Levitsky and Way mention the concept of soft power in passing, noting that linkage generates soft power and decentralized forms of pressure on decision-making (Levitsky and Way, 2006, pp 385–386). Communication, or the flow of information, is described as one of linkage’s five dimensions (Levitsky and Way, 2006, pp 383–384). Yet when Levitsky and Way discuss the impact of Western media penetration in countries with hybrid political regimes, they are not talking about the spread of ideas, values or the framing of issues. Western media penetration was found to affect political outcomes not by bringing messages *into* states but by

bringing messages *out*: in places like Mexico a Western media presence increased the level of external monitoring so that antidemocratic actions were more likely to become news in Western capitals and trigger responses from Western powers (Levitsky and Way, 2010, p 70).

The literature on soft power undoubtedly suffers from a lack of theoretical and conceptual clarity, but it does serve as a popular lens through which to view the political significance of Russian news exports. On the one hand, it directs us to consider the possibility that common values and cultural affinity are maintained in part through the consumption of Russian TV programmes and newspaper content. Such common values and cultural affinity should in turn (according to the structural interpretation of soft power) reduce public resistance to Russian foreign policy plans. On the other hand, the soft power literature suggests that the same news exports could be generating support for Russian policies by framing salient issues, thereby persuading Ukrainian and Belarusian citizens to back Russian initiatives. Public opinion would then (according to the agent-centric view of soft power) sway decision-makers, who would be more likely to acquiesce to Kremlin demands. In either case, public sentiments are central to the process.

The fourth research question listed in Section 1.2 asks whether Russian news exports are likely to contribute to the success of Russian foreign policy in Ukraine and Belarus as envisaged by the literature on soft power. Unfortunately, it is not possible here to test whether Russian news exports increase public affinity for Russia and/or public support for Russian policy objectives. Investigating the impact of Russian news exports on audiences would require data, time and resources which are not available to the author of this thesis. However, the association between media and soft power rests heavily on premise that public sentiments sway policy-making, once the media have shaped public sentiments. The thesis tentatively probes the validity of this premise in relation to Belarusian and Ukrainian foreign policy. It thereby sheds light on whether soft power, as conceptualised in the literature, is an appropriate lens through which to view Russian involvement in the media environments under study.

Within Russia itself, there appears to be no clear understanding of how soft power works – but politicians do believe it matters. Speaking at a government-backed roundtable on public diplomacy in December 2011, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said it was now ‘impossible to effectively defend the interests of one’s state in the world without proper use of solid soft power resources’ (Lavrov, 2011). A document titled *Osnovnyye napravleniya politiki Rossiyskoy Federatsii v sfere mezhdunarodnogo kulturno-gumanitarnogo sotrudnichestva* (Main vectors of the Russian Federation’s policy in the area of cultural-humanitarian cooperation), approved by President Dmitriy Medvedev in late 2010, constitutes Russia’s first official public diplomacy policy.⁵ It reveals a pronounced competitive streak in Moscow’s approach to soft power activity. There is an apparent conviction that public diplomacy is a battle between states seeking the advantage over one another, as the following excerpt makes clear:

‘Cultural diplomacy acquires ever more significance in the context of efforts to actively counter the propaganda campaigns under the slogan of restraining Russia... Cultural diplomacy, like no other instrument of soft power, is able to work to strengthen a country’s international authority and serve as convincing evidence of the Russian Federation’s renaissance as a free and democratic state.’ (*Osnovnyye napravleniya*, 2010)

The same zero-sum view of public diplomacy can be seen in Russia’s Foreign Policy Concept of 2008, which read:

‘In public diplomacy, Russia will seek its objective perception in the world, develop its own effective means of information influence on public opinion abroad, strengthen the role of the Russian mass media in the international information environment providing

⁵ It should be mentioned that the Russian word *gumanitarnyy* (humanitarian) is used in a broad sense to describe anything related to human society; the first page of the *Osnovnyye napravleniya* states that ‘international cultural-humanitarian cooperation includes ties in the area of culture and art, science and education, media, youth exchanges, publishing, museum, library and archive matters, sport and tourism.’

them with essential state support, as well as actively participate in international information cooperation and take necessary measures to repel information threats to its sovereignty and security.’ (*Kontseptsiya vneshney politiki*, 2008)

Judging from the above statement, Russian officials view media and communication as central to soft power; they favour an active state-led approach over letting Russian culture, values and policies ‘shine’ by themselves. However, this thesis raises doubts about the likelihood of Russia deriving a significant soft power boost from its news exports to Ukraine and Belarus. To date, the ability of Russian news exports to provoke has been more evident than their ability to attract and persuade.

1.5 Methods and data

To set the scene, the thesis begins by considering Russia’s ambition to (re-)create a ‘single information space’ in the CIS. The meaning of this term is explored, drawing on evidence from Russian policy statements and legislation; CIS agreements; face-to-face interviews with representatives of the Russian media industry; and media reports accessed via websites and databases. Cross-border media ties between Russia and its neighbours arising from government action, commercial incentives and the Soviet legacy are described.

With the context thus established, the thesis sets out to investigate hypothesis H1, which states that

a news provider with a shareholder or partner in Russia is likely to generate (a) more extensive and (b) more favourable coverage of Russia than market rivals because of its Russian connections.

The strength of this hypothesis is tested in separate studies of Ukraine and Belarus. As explained above, Ukrainian news content is not compared against Belarusian news content at any point. The aim is to explain content variation between news providers which are market rivals, as stated in the hypothesis. Therefore, the national media environment is held as a ‘constant’: Ukrainian news

providers are compared against other Ukrainian news providers and Belarusian news providers are compared against other Belarusian news providers. This strategy constitutes small-*n* comparative research and follows principles laid down by Mahoney (2000) as well as Brady and Collier in their edited volume, *Rethinking Social Enquiry* (2010). Causal inference is based on a combination of nominal comparison (analysing content from news providers that are broadly similar, but differ on the key independent variable of having a Russian shareholder or partner) and within-case analysis (interviewing present and former editors and journalists from the news providers under study who explain the decision-making behind news coverage of Russia).

This thesis employs both quantitative and qualitative methods of content analysis due to the focus of research question Q1 and the hypothesis. Quantitative content analysis was adopted as the only logical method for measuring variation in the scale of news coverage devoted to Russia. In order to identify variation in the tone of news coverage devoted to Russia, qualitative content analysis was preferred, because tone of coverage is often conveyed ‘between the lines’ through subtle details of language and the selective inclusion or omission of particular pieces of information. Such latent characteristics of news cannot be studied effectively using quantitative content analysis, which ‘deals with manifest content, by definition, and makes no claims beyond that’ (Riffe et al., 2008, p 38). The techniques of comparative qualitative content analysis used here were developed specifically for this research, but a similar approach has been used successfully to assess tone of news coverage in other studies (such as Oates and Lokot, 2013).

The quantitative element of the content analysis starts with the identification of all stories within the sample that ‘feature Russia’. A story is deemed to feature Russia if it contains at least three Russia-related keywords from a list (e.g. Russia, Russian, Moscow and Kremlin; the full list of keywords

can be found in the Coding Frame in Appendix 1).⁶ The number of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each issue or bulletin is expressed as a proportion of the total number of stories in the given issue or bulletin. A mean proportion (of all stories ‘featuring Russia’ per issue or bulletin) is calculated for each news provider for the sample period. This provides a rough measure of Russia’s prominence and indicates which news providers devote the greatest attention to Russia.⁷

The qualitative element of the content analysis concentrates on the reports identified as ‘featuring Russia’. These reports are compiled into comparison tables, which are designed to reveal the news involving Russia (including interviews and commentaries) which each news provider selected or ignored each week. The comparative approach exposes what is ‘missing’ from the content sample of each news provider; ‘missing’ news is often just as important in determining the tone of coverage as news which does make it into print or onto air. Patterns in story selection emerge from the tabular comparison: certain news providers were more likely than others to print or broadcast news highlighting the advantages of cooperating with Russia; drawing attention to Russia’s democratic deficit; or conveying the thoughts of politicians and pundits negatively disposed towards the Kremlin. Abbreviated versions of the story comparison tables can be found in Appendix 2. Stories are not slotted into pre-defined rigid categories of ‘favourable’, ‘unfavourable’ or ‘neutral’, as such categories are almost impossible to create in advance and obscure ambiguities. Instead, selection patterns are discussed transparently, with extensive references to the sample backing up the conclusions drawn.

To complete the qualitative content analysis, the ‘biggest’, most widely reported stories about Russia from the sample period are studied in great detail. Systematic descriptive comparison of the coverage devoted to such stories by different bulletins and newspapers reveals how certain editors

⁶ It should be noted that many stories identified using this method do not have Russia as their main focus; they are not all stories ‘about Russia’. They are better described as stories in which Russia figures – not necessarily in a big way, but as more than a one-off passing reference.

⁷ No inter-coder reliability check was carried out because the coding was based entirely on counting words; hence there was negligible room for inter-coder disagreement.

have a selective eye for facts, details and opinions. In the chapter on Ukraine, the big news story studied is a visit by Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus. In the chapter on Belarus, the big news story studied is the so-called ‘information war’ between Moscow and Minsk.

The raw data for the content analysis – i.e. the news content – comes from a purpose-built archive of TV news bulletins (recorded to DVDs) and newspapers (hard copies) accumulated over roughly six months in 2010. In the chapter on Ukraine, the content sample is drawn from a sampling population of 17 consecutive weeks from 31 May to 24 September. In the chapter on Belarus, the content sample is drawn from a sampling population of 11 consecutive weeks from 23 August to 5 November. The original intention had been to take the Ukrainian and Belarusian samples from exactly the same time period. However, it proved difficult to recruit a volunteer to record news bulletins in Minsk, which caused the Belarusian sample to be collected slightly later than planned. As the Ukrainian and Belarusian content samples are not compared against each other, the fact that they come from different weeks poses no methodological problems. The time period studied was essentially determined by the need to collect content as quickly as possible following commencement of the doctoral project. Studying an earlier period was impossible because not all the newspapers and TV bulletins of interest are available in publicly accessible archives.

For both countries studied, the sampling unit is a week, Monday–Friday. Sampling blocks of time is preferable to sampling individual issues or broadcasts, since it means the content samples from each news provider are based on roughly the same pool of potentially ‘newsworthy’ current events.

Current events inevitably have a major impact on news content, so it is important to hold this factor as constant as possible. Sampling weeks of content rather than other units also means that news providers with different broadcast and publishing schedules (daily/weekly/thrice-weekly, etc.) can be more easily compared. The aim was to include in the sample every second week of the sampling period. However, some weeks are omitted due to data collection problems and holiday breaks in

broadcast and publishing schedules. Thus, the sample for each country comprises five weeks of news in total.⁸

Besides content analysis, causal inference in this thesis also relies on the method of semi-structured interviews. Interviews with editorial staff are a commonly used method for elucidating influences on news production (e.g. Kim and Hama-Saeed, 2008, Tong and Sparks, 2009). They are employed here because they are an effective means of 'process tracing', i.e. obtaining evidence that the observed patterns in content are indeed related to the hypothesized explanatory variable. The only possible alternative method in this regard would have been newsroom observation, but the latter was not an option due to the relatively large number of news organizations under study (a single researcher could not observe news production at dozens of different newspapers and TV channels in the time available).

In total, 46 interviews with representatives of the media industry were conducted in Kiev (16), Minsk (18) and Moscow (12). Almost all the interviews were conducted face-to-face, in Russian, during a series of fieldwork trips in 2011 and 2012 (one interviewee responded in writing, one other via Skype). The choice of interviewees was guided first and foremost by the aim of speaking to at least one representative from each newspaper and TV news bulletin included in the content sample. Editors-in-chief or editors responsible for international and political news reporting were preferred. In the case of news providers with Russian partners and shareholders, representatives from Moscow-based head offices were also particularly targeted. Such interviewees were deemed best-placed to explain the decision-making behind coverage of Russia at the news providers under study. The interviewees were identified through a combination of personal contacts, 'snowballing' (i.e. asking each interviewee for the contact details of other possible interviewees) and cold-calling. In general, there was a high level of willingness to participate in the research. This thesis studies 27

⁸ For Ukraine, the sample comprises weeks beginning 31 May, 14 June, 12 July, 26 July and 20 September 2010; for Belarus, the sample comprises weeks beginning 23 August, 6 September, 20 September, 4 October and 1 November 2010.

news providers in total and interview data was secured for all of them apart from *Vremya* (multiple requests for an interview sent to *Pervyy Kanal* in Moscow went unanswered). The responsiveness of interviewees in Belarus, where the political environment is not generally considered conducive for gaining access to journalists, can perhaps be explained by the fact that foreign affairs coverage is a less sensitive matter than domestic affairs coverage. It should also be mentioned that all the interviewees from the Belarusian state TV channels were highly-placed employees speaking with official permission rather than rank-and-file journalists. At certain newspapers and TV bulletins it was possible to interview more than one representative, but other editorial offices were willing to provide only one interviewee (they often suggested that a second interviewee would have nothing more to add). In addition to members of editorial staff, a number of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian media analysts were asked for their views about Russia's cross-border influence on news. Although their responses are not quoted in the subsequent chapters, they nevertheless informed the research and suggested important avenues for enquiry.

The described methods have both strengths and weaknesses. Use of qualitative content analysis reduces the size of the news sample which can be considered because it is very labour-intensive. Some people might also argue that there is too much subjectivity inherent in a qualitative assessment of 'favourable' and 'unfavourable' reporting about Russia. However, as explained above, quantitative techniques simply cannot handle latent meaning and the subtle ways in which tone of coverage is expressed; they are designed to measure explicit features of news content whereas editorial stance is often conveyed implicitly. A quantitative approach was in fact attempted, but it proved impossible to design a coding frame with categories exhaustive enough to capture all the variation of interest. A risk of subjectivity may remain in the chosen approach, but it is mitigated as much as possible by being transparent and systematic in the dissection of stories. Extensive quotes and references to the content sample help to back up the conclusions drawn. It should also be noted that almost any kind of content analysis which goes beyond mere word-

counting, whether qualitative or quantitative, is bound to contain an element of subjectivity as complex texts are always liable to be interpreted differently by different readers.

There are further risks in relying on information from interviews. Journalists and editors may not be willing to talk freely about the pressures they face and their reasons for selecting certain stories over others. To reduce this risk to a minimum, interviewees were offered anonymity (although very few actually requested it; most had no objection to being publicly identified). Moreover, an advantage of the research strategy used here is that the evidence generated from interviews can be ‘triangulated’ (Jick, 1979, Tarrow, 2004) against the evidence from the content analysis. Triangulation reduces the risk of drawing false conclusions because what we fail to learn from one method, we find out by using another method. Triangulation is essentially a verification process: provided the evidence generated by each method can be reconciled, the validity of the research findings is enhanced. To provide a concrete example, one Ukrainian journalist claimed that material received from a Russian partner was always modified for Ukrainian readers prior to publication, yet this claim could be dismissed as false on the basis of the content analysis.

Having assessed the nature of Russian influence at individual news providers, the thesis proceeds to consider the broader political implications of Russian news exports to Ukraine and Belarus.

Research questions Q3 and Q4 are addressed through detailed documentary analysis and careful process-tracing. Laws, regulations, industry reports and economic statistics are scrutinized to demonstrate how political and economic conditions in a ‘target state’ can affect the Russian authorities’ ability to get messages across to mass audiences (as noted above, the internalization of such messages by audiences is not studied here). Finally, the likelihood of Russian news exports contributing to Russian foreign policy success in the manner envisaged by the soft power literature is tentatively probed by exploring whether public sentiments have influenced recent Ukrainian and Belarusian foreign policy decisions relating to Russia. Evidence is drawn from the statements of politicians and surveys of public opinion. The Belarusian opinion surveys were all conducted by the

Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS), which is virtually the only independent polling institution still able to operate in the country. The Ukrainian survey data comes from a range of sources, including the Research & Branding Group, the Razumkov Centre, the IFAK Institut and the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation. In an ideal world, the thesis might have used data from original, tailor-made surveys and original elite interviews to address Q3 and Q4. However, limited resources restricted the choice of method to analysis of existing documentary evidence.

1.6 Thesis outline

Chapter 2 provides an introductory overview of Russian activity within the media environments of Ukraine and Belarus. It describes how Russian policy-makers have sought to (re-)create a 'single information space' in the former Soviet Union; it also looks at cross-border media ties arising from commercial activity and the Soviet legacy. The chapter introduces the major Moscow-based news providers which operate in Ukraine and Belarus, describing their *modi operandi* abroad and their relationship to the Russian authorities.

Chapter 3 is devoted to Ukraine. The results of the content analysis and interviews with editorial staff are presented and discussed in relation to hypothesis H1.

Chapter 4 is devoted to Belarus, and follows the same structure as Chapter 3. The results of the content analysis and interviews with editorial staff are presented and discussed in relation to hypothesis H1.

Chapter 5 demonstrates how political and economic conditions affect the scope of the Russian authorities to communicate via news exports with mass audiences in Ukraine and Belarus. It then discusses whether Russian news exports could plausibly facilitate Russian foreign policy success in Ukraine and Belarus as envisaged by the soft power literature.

Chapter 6 concludes by summing up the thesis findings and considering their implications for our understanding of political dynamics in the post-Soviet region.

CHAPTER 2. A ‘SINGLE INFORMATION SPACE’?

2.1 Chapter topic and objectives

This chapter provides an introductory overview of Russian activity within the media environments of Ukraine and Belarus. The aim is to set the scene for the subsequent inquiry into Russian cross-border influence on news. As a framework for discussion, the chapter considers the idea of the single information space (*yedinoe or obshcheye informatsionnoye prostranstvo*) which the Russian authorities would like to (re-)create in the post-Soviet region.¹

Russia’s enthusiasm for the idea of a post-Soviet single information space is expressed in statutes, statements and CIS agreements dating back to the early 1990s. Prime Minister Yevgeniy Primakov said in 1998 that the single information space was ‘extremely important for Russia, for strengthening the unity of Russia and for the development of integrationist processes’ (*RTR TV*, 1998). Over a decade later, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin named the single information space among the forces which held neighbouring countries together ‘to the greatest extent’ (*RIA Novosti news agency*, 2009). However, there is no precise explanation of what the single information space should look like. Official definitions tend to be so abstract as to be virtually impenetrable. In one CIS document, for instance, the ‘formation of the CIS information space’ is described as:

‘the entirety of measures and conditions, agreed at the inter-state level, to develop inter-state information exchanges on a mutually advantageous basis in the interests of cooperation between CIS member states in the agreed areas of activity, and in accordance with international principles of distributing information for the purpose of providing for and satisfying the information needs of citizens, enterprises,

¹ It should be noted that the Russian word *informatsiya* (literally ‘information’) can often be translated into English as ‘news’. For instance, news agencies like Interfax or ITAR-TASS are known in Russian as *informatsionnyye agentstva* (‘information agencies’).

organizations and government bodies of the CIS member states.’ (*Kontseptsiya formirovaniya*, 1996)

Yet this vague language surrounding the single information space does not make the term meaningless. The single information space is best understood as a political euphemism for Russian access to CIS audiences. Moscow recognises the importance of being able to communicate with the public in strategically significant neighbouring states. Therefore, it would like to reinforce or at least defend the legacy of media interconnectedness inherited from the USSR. It is also seeking to develop new media-related initiatives to promote a favourable image of Russia abroad.

On the one hand, the single information space is a concept of official policy. This chapter therefore begins with a review of Russian government policy concerning mass media, journalists and audiences in the CIS. Section 2.2 looks at Russian policy intentions as expressed in statutes, the public statements of politicians and CIS agreements, while Section 2.3 describes the policy measures that have been put into practice.

On the other hand, there is a flow of information (news) from Russia to the wider CIS that owes little to deliberate political intervention. To a certain extent, the single information space (if understood as Russian access to CIS audiences) is a non-orchestrated consequence of commercial activity and the Soviet legacy. Section 2.4 is devoted to this aspect of interaction between Russia and the media environments of its neighbours. It introduces the major Russian news exporters to Ukraine and Belarus, outlining their various *modi operandi* abroad as well as their relationship with the Russian authorities. The main points of the chapter are summed up at the end in Section 2.5.

2.2 The single information space: Russian policy intentions

The frame of reference for Russia’s approach to media and audiences in the CIS is established by the Doctrine of Information Security adopted in September 2000. The doctrine does not explicitly

address the idea of a single information space. In fact, the CIS is mentioned only three times. What the doctrine does do, however, is clearly mark out international public opinion as a security issue; an arena where Russia requires defences and countermeasures against the hostile moves of rivals, particularly the West. Among the security threats to Russia which the doctrine identifies are ‘the blocking of the activity of [Russian] state mass media to inform the Russian and international audience’; ‘the efforts of a number of countries to dominate and to harm Russia’s interests in the global information space and squeeze Russia out of the domestic and external information market’; ‘the distribution abroad of disinformation about the Russian Federation’s foreign policy’; and ‘the violation of rights of Russian citizens and legal entities abroad in the area of information’ (*Doktrina informatsionnoy bezopasnosti*, 2000).

In order to address such threats, ‘strengthening the state mass media and expanding their capability to deliver reliable and timely information to Russian and foreign citizens’ is advocated, along with ‘the creation of conditions for Russian representatives and organizations abroad to work to neutralize disinformation distributed there about the Russian Federation’s foreign policy’ (*Doktrina informatsionnoy bezopasnosti*, 2000). The doctrine adds that ‘problems of interaction with member states of the CIS’ should receive special attention in Russia’s international information security cooperation. It is apparent from the doctrine’s vocabulary of antagonism and danger that international news narratives are not just a matter of national pride from Russia’s point of view. Rather, they are perceived as an issue of geopolitics and power.

Russian statutes on compatriot policy describe, albeit loosely, the objectives and instruments of Moscow’s media strategy in the post-Soviet region. Cornerstones of legislation in this area are the 2010 federal law On the State Policy of the Russian Federation towards Compatriots Abroad; and successive three-year programmes adopted since 2002 for work with compatriots abroad. The federal law deals with ‘support for compatriots in the area of information’ in Article 18. Three main elements to this support are defined. First, the law stipulates support for compatriots’ use of

information in the Russian language in their countries of residence, including ‘the creation of mass media’ and ‘the development of information ties between the compatriots’ states of residence and the Russian Federation’ (*Federalnyy zakon*, 2010, Article 18.1). Second, it stipulates the creation by Russia of ‘the conditions necessary to transmit information from the Russian Federation to compatriots by means of TV and radio broadcasting, the distribution of periodical and other printed publications, cinema production, audio and video materials and via the Internet’; including the provision of ‘financial and material-technical resources’ to Russian mass media which work to inform compatriots (*Federalnyy zakon*, 2010, Article 18.2). Third, it stipulates Russian support for ‘mass media belonging to compatriots’ (*Federalnyy zakon*, 2010, Article 18.3).

It follows that Russian-owned media are not the only targets for Russian support. Media in the Russian language and media belonging to Russian ‘compatriots’ also qualify. Moreover, there is no clear definition of what Russian support entails. Financial assistance is prescribed, but other kinds of support may also be envisaged.

All the three-year programmes adopted in the past decade for Russia’s work with compatriots feature a section on information. The programme for 2006–2008 talked of establishing a website and a publication for compatriots; a weekly programme on the *Sodruzhestvo* radio station;² ‘maintaining or expanding Russian TV and radio broadcasting to various countries and regions of the world, preparing specialized programmes’; and ‘cooperating with Russian-language mass media abroad in the interests of providing them with objective information about life in the Russian Federation and about the Russian Federation’s support for compatriots’ (*Programma raboty*, 2006). The programme for 2009–2011 envisaged the creation of Russian-language information resources; helping compatriot organizations to subscribe to Russian publications; and ‘facilitating the receipt

² *Sodruzhestvo* (Commonwealth) is the former name of a Russian language service broadcast to the CIS by *Golos Rossii* (Voice of Russia), a state-owned Russian radio station for international audiences.

of objective information about Russia and its policy towards compatriots by Russian-language mass media abroad, conducting round tables, seminars and conferences’ (*Programma raboty*, 2008).

Responsibility for implementing the above-mentioned tasks has been handed to a range of government bodies. Key players include the Russian Foreign Ministry; the Federal Agency for the Affairs of the CIS, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (*Rossostrudnichestvo*); the Ministry of Telecommunications and Mass Communications (*Minkomsvyaz*); and the Federal Agency for the Press and Mass Communications (*Rospechat*).

Russian state news agencies ITAR-TASS and RIA Novosti also have a role to play.

The Russian president has spoken about the Russian media’s presence abroad more than once – an indication of the importance ascribed to the issue. In 2010, for example, Dmitriy Medvedev suggested that TV companies from CIS states could be granted access to the Russian audience on the basis of ‘reciprocity’, i.e. on the condition that Russian TV companies get access to CIS audiences in return. He said:

‘[I]f we enter into such an agreement [granting access to a Russian satellite platform] as honest partners, we expect that there will be proportionality and parity on the part of other countries whose channels are going to be hooked up to our satellite. In other words, we are counting on the fact that in this case they will at the very least maintain the broadcasting opportunities they currently have for our channels. If they wish, they can build on these opportunities or restore what existed in the past, because such relations are always built on the principle of reciprocity.’ (Medvedev, 2010b)

Medvedev has also made pledges to help the Russian-language press abroad. Denying that such help would constitute interference in the domestic affairs of other states, he said support would be rendered via state programmes and public foundations:

‘We have such foundations. Several of them have been created recently, and we are going to strengthen them. We will strengthen [them] in terms of both financing and organization, so that this kind of support and help happens not only at the expense of the state budget but also at the expense of private investment, which, generally, sometimes seems more acceptable for various reasons, including issues of national legislation.’ (Medvedev, 2009)

The role of public foundations in Russia’s plans was discussed during a radio programme in July 2010 by Viktor Malashenko, a member of the State Duma committee for CIS affairs. Asked whether the Russian state was supporting foreign media directly, Malashenko said:

‘Many issues are resolved not directly, but via the appropriate public organizations... As far as I know about the media, the help here is more via intermediaries.’
 (Malashenko, 2010)

He named the *Russkiy Mir* (Russian World) foundation as one organization with a part to play, but described the present level of such help as ‘extremely insufficient’. On the one hand, Malashenko stressed that Russia strictly observed legislation when rendering assistance to media in other countries. On the other hand, he noted that it was possible to ‘bypass the various legal snags’ (Malashenko, 2010).

Russia has raised the idea of the single information space with its neighbours on many occasions, using CIS meetings as opportunities to press for the strengthening of information ties and information cooperation. To date, however, these CIS negotiations have secured few improvements to Russia’s access to audiences in the post-Soviet region. There are roughly a dozen CIS accords concerning information and the media (*Soglasheniye o sotrudnichestve v oblasti kultury*, 1992, *Soglasheniye o sotrudnichestve v oblasti informatsii*, 1992, *Soglasheniye o sozdanii Mezhgosudarstvennoy teleradiokompanii*, 1992, *Soglasheniye o sozdanii Soveta rukovoditeley*

gosudarstvennykh informatsionnykh agenstv Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv, 1995, Kontsepsiya formirovaniya informatsionnogo prostranstva Sodruzhestva nezavisimykh gosudarstv, 1996, Uchreditelnyy dogovor o sozdanii Fonda podderzhki kulturnogo sotrudnichestva Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv, 1998, Soglasheniye o sotrudnichestve gosudarstv - uchastnikov Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv v oblasti periodicheskoy pechati, 1999, Soglasheniye ob obmene materialami natsionalnykh informatsionnykh agenstv gosudarstv - uchastnikov Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv, 2003, Konventsiya o statuse korrespondenta, predstavlyayushchego sredstvo massovoy informatsii gosudarstva - uchastnika Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv v drugikh gosudarstvakh Sodruzhestva, 2004, Soglasheniye o gumanitarnom sotrudnichestve gosudarstv-uchastnikov Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv, 2005, Dogovor o sozdanii Mezhhosudarstvennogo fonda gumanitarnogo sotrudnichestva gosudarstv - uchastnikov Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv, 2006, Resheniye o sozdanii Soveta rukovoditeley gosudarstvennykh i obshchestvennykh teleradioorganizatsii gosudarstv - uchastnikov Sodruzhestva Nezavisimykh Gosudarstv, 2007). They are generally characterised by abstract statements of intent rather than tangible deals. Moreover, several member-states have demonstrated reluctance to sign up to information-related agreements.³ Hardly any of the CIS agreements on information cooperation have been endorsed unreservedly by all the member states. When the Agreement on Cooperation in the Area of Culture was signed back in May 1992, all parties except Azerbaijan and Georgia pledged:

‘to facilitate the creation of a single information space on the basis of treaties, agreements and consultations through the free exchange and distribution on their territories of TV, radio and video programmes; the products of news agencies, the periodic press, books and other printed products, excluding cases that contravene the

³ Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Georgia (when still a member of the CIS) and Uzbekistan have been particularly recalcitrant in this regard, and they have demanded various exemptions and provisos over sensitive points.

legislation of the member-states of the Agreement.’ (*Soglasheniye o sotrudnichestve v oblasti kultury*, 1992)

Yet by October of the same year, Ukraine was already having second thoughts. It refused to sign parts of the Agreement on Cooperation in the Area of Information which stated that CIS member states ‘proceed from a desire to develop a common information space’ and ‘facilitate all forms of cooperation between the various mass media of their countries to ensure the wide and free distribution and exchange of information, including the creation of common information structures’ (*Soglasheniye o sotrudnichestve v oblasti informatsii*, 1992). Some of Russia’s neighbours are clearly concerned that excessive integration and collaboration over information could threaten their independence. This is reflected in Article 7 of the Concept for the Formation of the Information Space of the CIS, which establishes the importance of the ‘information sovereignty’ of each of the CIS countries – a point which goes against the grain of increased cooperation (*Kontseptsiya formirovaniya informatsionnogo prostranstva*, 1996).

Thus, progress towards the creation of the single information space has been problematic even in declarative terms. Implementation of projects has been patchy too. A lack of interest and money has hindered many initiatives, as shall now be explained.

2.3 Implementation of policy: An uphill struggle

With the aim of building bridges to audiences in the CIS, Russian policy-makers have implemented initiatives which can be loosely grouped into three types: collaborative media production projects; journalist networking opportunities; and provisions of funding.

The most ambitious and high-profile collaborative production project is the TV channel *Mir*. *Mir* was set up in 1992–1993 by ten CIS member-states: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (*Mir TV*, 2013). The channel

is supposed to be a central feature of the single information space and it carries a substantial amount of news programming with the stated aim of strengthening a positive image of each CIS state and the CIS as a whole. From the start, Russia agreed to pay almost 70 per cent of *Mir*'s running costs in line with its audience share (*Resheniye Mezhhgosudarstvennogo Koordinatsionnogo Soveta*, 1993) and by 2009 that figure had risen to 80 per cent (Gansvind, 2009). Yet Russia's financial backing has not been sufficient to overcome a discernible lack of commitment to the project among the other participants. Several appeals have been issued to address problems at the channel. In 2002 a decision of the CIS Council of Heads of Government pointed out that *Mir* lacked broadcasting licences to broadcast terrestrially in a number of its founding states (*Resheniye o dalneyshey deyatelnosti*, 2002). It asked the relevant governments to facilitate the allocation of airtime to *Mir*, but apparently this request was not met, as two years later the council observed the need for 'additional measures to activate implementation' of its 2002 decision (*Resheniye ob otchete Predsedatelya*, 2004). Then in 2008 yet another decision was adopted by the council, drawing the attention of *Mir*'s participating states to 'the need to meet obligations in full' with regard to their financial contributions to the channel (*Resheniye o povyshenii effektivnosti*, 2008). The same year, it was acknowledged that *Mir* did not yet 'fit the image of a modern, dynamic TV and radio company, which is in large part due to insufficient budget financing' (*Predlozheniya po obespecheniyu*, 2008).

The size of *Mir*'s audience is hard to determine. In 2009, *Mir* chairman Radik Batyrshin claimed that the channel's audience had increased from 5 million to 43 million across 14 states over two years (Gansvind, 2009), but such a huge leap in popularity seems somewhat unlikely and cannot be corroborated. Such figures may represent the *potential* audience of the channel rather than the number of people who actually watch it. According to Batyrshin, *Mir* was broadcasting terrestrially in Kazakhstan, Belarus and Armenia in 2009; elsewhere, including in Russia, it was only available via cable and satellite (Gansvind, 2009). In 2013, *Mir* claimed to be broadcasting in one form or

another to all states of the former Soviet Union apart from Turkmenistan, with a total *potential* audience of over 60 million (*Mir TV*, 2013).

Since 2007, another joint TV channel – *TRO Soyuz* – has been attempting to consolidate the single information space of Russia and Belarus (*Soyuz. Belarus - Rossiya*, 2007). It broadcasts around the clock via satellite. A *TRO Soyuz* radio project has existed since 2003; its programmes have been broadcast on Russian state-owned stations *Radio Mayak* and *Radio Rossiya*. Other collaborative production initiatives of the Russia-Belarus Union State include the weekly newspaper *Soyuznoye Veche* (distributed free with *Narodnaya Gazeta* in Belarus and as a separate publication in Russia); the weekly insert *Soyuz* (distributed with official dailies *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* and *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*); *Lad* (a monthly supplement in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*); and the news agency *Soyuz-Info* (*Parlamentskoye sobraniye Soyuz* Belarusi i Rossii, 2013). However, Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko conceded in 2003 that few people had ever heard of these media and that they were at an ‘embryonic stage’. He complained:

‘We agreed to create a common newspaper and support it. We were to take one channel, either *Mayak* or *Radio Rossiya*, and make it a Union State channel. We decided to create a Union State TV company, did we not? We did. But they can hardly make ends meet. Why? Because almost all the projects have barely got off the ground. No project has been implemented completely.’ (Lukashenko, 2003)

In addition to jointly-run channels and publications, mechanisms have been established for the exchange of material between national media organizations of CIS member states. In 2008, a video sharing project was announced under the auspices of *Mir TV* (*Press-sluzhba Iсполnitelnogo komiteta SNG*, 2008), four years after an almost identical project had been launched by Russian state broadcasting organization VGTRK (*ITAR-TASS news agency*, 2004). The earlier project apparently never came to anything, but the 2008 attempt, named the Inter-State Information Pool of CIS Broadcasters, was more successful. By March 2010 it had nine members: the state TV

companies of Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Russia; private companies *NIT* in Moldova and *Inter* in Ukraine; and *Mir* itself. The pool works as follows: each participating broadcaster selects one or two of its own video reports to contribute to the pool each day; this material is then exchanged between countries via *Mir*'s satellite system and at *Mir*'s expense. Each broadcaster can then include reports from the pool in its news bulletins, free of charge, if it so chooses. At a press conference marking the first anniversary of the pool's launch, *Mir* chairman Radik Batyrshin said that over 3,000 video clips had been exchanged in the pool's first year of existence (RIA Novosti news agency, 2010). However, a journalist from leading Ukrainian TV channel *Inter* who was interviewed for this thesis was less enthusiastic. He observed:

'We rarely use material from there [the pool], because, firstly, it is not very good quality... The events which they cover in the pool are often not very interesting. We might take something from it once in three months.' (Interviewee 10, 2011)

Exchange of information between Russian-language radio broadcasters is facilitated by the International Association of Russian-language Broadcasters, which names 'exchange of information, audio programmes, video materials and internet-content' among its objectives (Korotun, 2010). Finally, an Association of National Information Agencies (ANIA) was established in 2004 within the framework of the CIS (*Resheniye ob Otchete*, 2005). ANIA's founders – the national news agencies of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia and Tajikistan – each agreed to submit news reports for collective publication by the ANIA newswire service. According to its charter, ANIA's organizational costs are supposed to be covered by selling ANIA products outside the CIS, while each participating national news agency is allowed to keep the proceeds from distributing ANIA materials within its own country (ANIA, 2004). However, ANIA has not begun operating as a commercial service and its prospects of winning customers seem more than a little shaky, since it offers no original material of its own.

Networking opportunities for journalists are the second type of Russian initiative aimed at facilitating communication between the Russian state and CIS audiences. A multitude of forums, conferences and associations have been launched. Examples include the annual *Forum yevropeyskikh i aziatskikh media* (Forum of European and Asian Media) run by RIA Novosti; the annual *Vsemirnyy kongress Russkoy pressy* (World Congress of Russian Press); the annual *Dialog kultur* (Dialogue of Cultures) forum of young journalists; the International TV and Cinema Forum *Vmeste* (Together); the *Mezhdunarodnoye obyedineniye russkoyazychnykh veshchateley* (International union of Russian-language broadcasters); and the *Forum tvorcheskoy i nauchnoy intelligentsia gosudarstv-uchastnikov SNG* (Forum of the Creative and Academic Intelligentsia of CIS States).

The majority of networking opportunities mentioned above were launched after 2005. The annual RIA Novosti forum has enjoyed a particularly high level of political support. President Medvedev himself attended in 2009, and conducted a lengthy question-and-answer session with the visiting journalists. However, if the organizers were hoping to underscore and consolidate the unity of the post-Soviet region, they fell some way short of their goal. A Georgian delegate challenged Medvedev over the lack of direct flights between Moscow and Tbilisi, while a participant from Ukraine asked why media coverage of gas issues had such a ‘mutually accusatory’ tone (Medvedev, 2009).

As for the final type of single information space initiatives – offers of funding– it is hard to be sure exactly where and on what scale Russia is financing broadcasters and publishers in the post-Soviet region, as those concerned may not advertise the receipt of such money. However, there is little evidence of financial assistance from the Russian state reaching news providers in particularly large volumes. The *Russkiy Mir* foundation, a likely channel for Russian donations, has allocated little money to projects of this nature. A spokesperson for *Russkiy Mir* said the foundation does not receive many grant applications from mass media; organizations may not be aware that grants are

available, she added. In Ukraine, *Russkiy Mir*'s only media project as of 2010 was a magazine for 10- to 15-year-olds. In Belarus *Russkiy Mir* had no projects at all, as the situation is 'quite complicated' there, the representative said (Interviewee 1, 2011).

2.4 Market forces, the Soviet legacy and Russia's major news exporters

In all likelihood, the politically driven media projects described above remain well below the radar of most media consumers in the countries under study. Yet while *Mir*, *Soyuznoye Veche* and the like have been struggling for attention, other more established media organizations from the Russian domestic market have been providing news to sizable audiences in multiple post-Soviet countries. Some of them inherited a presence in the region when the USSR disintegrated; others expanded to the CIS in response to demand from consumers or business partners. Most have developed their CIS operations with little observable input from the Russian Foreign Ministry, *Rossotrudnichestvo* or other architects of the single information space policy; not all of them can be described as loyal to the Russian authorities. Nevertheless, the level of state influence at some of these transnational Russian news providers does mean that the messages they convey to foreign audiences often originate in the Kremlin or coincide with the Kremlin's preferred narrative of events.

This section introduces some major Russian TV broadcasters and newspaper publishers which export news, one way or another, to consumers in Ukraine and Belarus. Between them they employ a considerable range of *modi operandi* to reach audiences in the post-Soviet region. Sometimes they sell foreign partners the right to use their brands and content; other times they run wholly-owned foreign subsidiaries. In some cases one virtually identical news product (created primarily for the Russian domestic audience) is offered right across the region; in other cases the news product is adapted for each national or regional audience and content from Moscow is supplemented with varying amounts of locally-produced material. In fact, when it comes to content, ownership and editorial control there are 'Russian' news media which are not so much Russian as hybrid (Russian-

Ukrainian, Russian-Belarusian etc.). This is significant because it affects the degree of control over content exercised by editorial staff in Moscow, as well as the opportunities for Russian state influence.

TV broadcasters

Pervyy Kanal (First Channel) is Russia's leading state-controlled TV channel and a direct successor to *Pervaya Programma Tsentralnogo Televideniya SSSR* (Programme One of Central Television of the Soviet Union).⁴ The channel's flagship evening news bulletin, *Vremya*, retains the same name, time slot and even the same theme tune as its Soviet precursor,⁵ which was beamed to massive audiences across the length and breadth of the USSR from the 1960s until 1991.⁶ Virtually all residents of Belarus can still watch terrestrial transmissions of *Vremya* because it is rebroadcast each evening by a major Belarusian state TV channel, *ONT*. In Ukraine, *Vremya* fans have to rely on cable and satellite transmissions of *Pervyy Kanal*'s international version, but the bulletin is still potentially viewable by up to half the population as cable is widespread in urban areas. The international version of *Pervyy Kanal* is also available to satellite-owners in Belarus who have an appropriate dish, but it was dropped from the country's cable networks in 2009 along with a number of other Russian channels (see Chapter 5).

⁴ When the USSR disintegrated, *Pervaya Programma Tsentralnogo Televideniya SSSR* became *Pervyy Kanal* of Russian State TV and Radio Company Ostankino. In 1994–1995 Ostankino was turned into the joint-stock company ORT (which stands for Public Russian Television) and *Pervyy Kanal* was renamed *ORT* accordingly. The state owned fifty-one per cent of *ORT*, while private investors controlled the remaining 49 per cent. The name *Pervyy Kanal* was restored in 2002.

⁵ Since the 1970s *Vremya* has used a highly recognisable fragment of the 'Time, Forward!' film score by composer Georgiy Sviridov as its theme tune; compare [youtube.com/watch?v=8B2hnVbZftU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8B2hnVbZftU) (the late 2000s version) against [youtube.com/watch?v=bU4ML80fKnU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bU4ML80fKnU) (the late 1980s version).

⁶ After becoming independent, all the former Union republics initially continued to allow terrestrial rebroadcasts of the *Pervyy Kanal* signal from Moscow (they did not even pay for the privilege). However, by the mid-1990s *Pervyy Kanal* found itself being demoted to less desirable frequencies as the newly sovereign states gave precedence to their own domestic TV companies. In Ukraine, full nationwide terrestrial retransmission of *Pervyy Kanal* (*ORT*) ceased altogether in 1996, although terrestrial rebroadcasts continued in some areas at the regional or local level. In Belarus, retransmission of *Pervyy Kanal* programming declined following the launch of *ONT*, Belarus's second national TV channel, in 2002. At first, *ONT* filled almost all its airtime by rebroadcasting *Pervyy Kanal* programmes, but as time went on it began to replace Russian content with its own shows.

The Russian state owns a majority stake in *Pervyy Kanal* and news programming on the channel is unerringly in harmony with the stance of the Russian authorities.

VGTRK (*Vserossiyskaya gosudarstvennaya televizionnaya i radioveshchatelnaya kompaniya*, or the All-Russian State TV and Radio Broadcasting Company) can trace its origins back to 1990, when it was founded as counterweight to *Gosteleradio* and Mikhail Gorbachev by the Supreme Council of the RSFSR and Boris Yeltsin (VGTRK, 2013, Tsvik and Kachkaeva, undated). It is now a huge holding company that includes *Rossiya 1*, the second main state-run TV channel in Russia.⁷

The VGTRK news service, which also dates back to 1991, is known as *Vesti*. In Ukraine, *Vesti* bulletins can be viewed on *RTR-Planeta*, an international version of *Rossiya 1* that is widely available by cable and satellite. In Belarus, *RTR-Planeta* is available by satellite only, not cable (like *Pervyy Kanal* it was dropped by the Belarusian cable networks in 2009). However, Belarusians are most likely to watch *Vesti* on *RTR-Belarus*, a terrestrial channel owned by the Minsk city government which rebroadcasts the majority of *Rossiya 1* programming. *RTR-Belarus* can be received by 64 per cent of the Belarusian population (Belarusian Ministry of Communications and Informatization, 2013). The channel was established in 2008 as a partnership between VGTRK and Minsk-based *Stolichnoye Televideniye (STV)*. *STV* had been including *Rossiya* programmes in its own schedule up to that point (Belapan news agency, 2008b). *RTR-Belarus* has a line-up very similar to that of *RTR-Planeta* but it does produce a little content of its own, such as daily *Novosti-Belarus* news bulletins, which are 10 minutes long and shown just before *Vesti* during the week.

VGTRK belongs entirely to the Russian state. News programmes on *Rossiya 1*, like those on *Pervyy Kanal*, reflect the stance of the Russian federal authorities.

⁷ Also within the holding are the TV channels *Rossiya 2* (youth-oriented), *Rossiya K* (culture), *Rossiya 24* (round-the-clock *Vesti* news), *RTR-Planeta* (international version of *Rossiya 1*) and *Bibigon* (for children); dozens of regional broadcasters; and five national radio stations (including *Mayak*, *Radio Rossiya* and *Vesti FM*).

NTV was set up in 1993 by a handful of journalists with financial support from several banks, most notably Vladimir Gusinskiy's Most Bank. It initially made a name for itself through the quality of its news, aspiring to Western standards of production. However, the channel lost its relatively high degree of independence from the state during Vladimir Putin's first term as president when it passed into the ownership of Russian state gas giant Gazprom. These days, *NTV's Segodnya* news bulletins are very similar in content to *Vremya* and *Vesti* bulletins on *Pervyy Kanal* and *Rossiya 1*. *NTV* is part of the Gazprom-Media holding, which has a rather complicated ownership structure with ties to *Bank Rossiya* and various individuals considered close to Putin (Szostek, 2009). In Ukraine and Belarus, *Segodnya* news bulletins can be seen by viewers who subscribe to a satellite deal that includes *NTV-Mir*, the channel's international version for Europe. In Ukraine, *Segodnya* can also be watched by some cable subscribers although it is not generally part of the cheapest packages. Belarusians have their own terrestrial version of *NTV*, *NTV-Belarus*, which began broadcasting in 2006 when Belteleradiokompaniya (the Belarusian National Broadcasting Company) was granted the rights to transmit *NTV* programmes (Yefanov, 2006, Belteleradiokompaniya, 2013). *NTV-Belarus* describes itself as a 'Belarusian state commercial TV channel, broadcasting in the Republic of Belarus on the basis of the concept, programme line-up and programme content of *NTV*' (Belteleradiokompaniya, 2013).

Russian TV news is thus available via a range of broadcasting platforms in Ukraine and Belarus. When bulletins are transmitted via satellite or cable, journalists in Moscow have full editorial control and there is no adaption of material for different national audiences. However, when Russian channels work with a terrestrial partner (i.e. in the case of *Vremya* on *ONT*, *Vesti* on *RTR-Belarus* and *Segodnya* on *NTV-Belarus*), control over content is divided: the partner has the ability to drop bulletins from the schedule or edit out individual reports should the need arise. For the most part, there is little editing of the Russian news that goes out on Belarusian terrestrial networks. However, there were several instances of *Vesti* bulletins being cut in the months either side of the

2010 Belarusian presidential election, with reports critical of President Lukashenko omitted.

Similarly, reports about President Medvedev's video blog attack on President Lukashenko were removed from *Vremya* on *ONT* in autumn 2010 (more on this in Chapter 4).

Newspaper publishers

Komsomolskaya Pravda, often known as *Komsomolka*, is a mass-circulation daily newspaper that began life in 1925 as the mouthpiece of the *Komsomol* (Communist Union of Youth). These days it tends to carry a lot of human interest and celebrity news alongside some socio-political stories. It is one of the most popular publications in Russia. In 2011 the Russian print run of the Thursday edition containing the weekly TV guide (known as *tolstushka*, the fat one) stood at over 3 million; on other days the print run was just under 800,000 (*Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 2011).

Komsomolskaya Pravda effectively operates as a Russia-wide network; dozens of Russian regions have their own edition, with local *Komsomolka* staff producing localized content for local readers.

The *Komsomolskaya Pravda* publishing house belongs to people loyal to the Kremlin.⁸ In Russia, the newspaper tends to take an editorial line supportive of the authorities. *Komsomolka*'s general director Vladimir Sungorkin is on record as saying that it is obliged to support the higher state and religious leadership because an 'unpatriotic' newspaper would not be accepted by the people. At the same time, Sungorkin said articles displeasing to the Kremlin were occasionally published, since newspapers that are 'nothing but servile' are also unlikely to achieve popularity (Rostova, 2009).

Ukraine and Belarus each have their own editions of *Komsomolka*. In both countries circulation figures for the title are high. The Ukrainian and Belarusian editions differ in terms of their ownership structure, however. *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* is a franchise, owned and run by

⁸ Past press reports have linked ownership of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* to businessmen Oleg Rudnov and Grigoriy Berezkin. However, informed sources interviewed for this thesis indicated that the paper has changed hands several times and now belongs to a major Russian company with close ties to the Russian state and its political leadership.

Ukrainian Media Holding (UMH). *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* is a subsidiary of the Russian publishing house, but run in conjunction with a local partner (Interviewee 2, 2011).

The Ukrainian and Belarusian editions of *Komsomolka* each contain a substantial amount of locally produced content alongside material received from Moscow. The editorial offices of *Komsomolskaya Pravda* in each country are not obliged to get prior approval from Moscow for the articles they publish. They are, however, contractually required to abide by the newspaper's editorial policy. According to Tatyana Mityusova, head of the project to publish *Komsomolskaya Pravda* abroad, this includes a requirement that no 'filth' ('*gadosti*') be written about Russia (Interviewee 2, 2011). For the most part, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* prefers its foreign partners to publish articles from Moscow in their original form, without editing, she said. However, the 'mood' of certain stories may occasionally be adjusted in line with local political or popular sensitivities.

The Russian authorities have made some attempt to capitalise on *Komsomolka*'s international popularity. One clear example is the *Sootechestvenniki* (Compatriots) insert launched in conjunction with the Russian Foreign Ministry and government which carried 'useful information' about resettlement in Russia. At one point, a limited number of free subscriptions to *Komsomolskaya Pravda* were available from Russian embassies at the expense of the federal budget (Interviewee 2, 2011).

Argumenty i Fakty (*AiF*) is a weekly newspaper with a circulation in Russia of around 3 million; it claims to be read by about 12 per cent of the country's adult population (Argumenty i Fakty, 2013). Like *Komsomolka*, *AiF* has Soviet roots. It began life in 1978 as a weekly bulletin published by *Znaniye* (Knowledge), an all-Union society which organized public educational lectures throughout the USSR. The bulletin's question-and-answer format proved extremely popular, so much so that in 1990 *Argumenty i Fakty* entered the Guinness Book of Records for having the largest circulation of any newspaper in the world. Today, *AiF* continues to base a lot of its articles on questions from readers. It is tabloid in format but less sensationalist and gossipy than other mass circulation

publications. It tends to write more about everyday problems (prices, health, public services etc.) than the lives of celebrities. Each issue contains several pages of socio-political and economic news. Like *Komsomolka*, *AiF* has an extensive network of regional and international offices – over 60 in Russia and around 16 abroad – which were set up during the 1990s to produce localized versions of the newspaper (Argumenty i Fakty, 2013). *Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine* and *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii* are among the leading newspapers in their respective countries in terms of circulation. The Belarusian edition is a subsidiary of the Russian publisher in the same way as *AiF* editions in the Russian provinces. In Ukraine, on the other hand, *AiF* works on the basis of a publisher's agreement, i.e. it sells to local partners the right to use *AiF* content for a certain number of years. *Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine* is part of UMH, the same holding that owns *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*.

Partner organizations abroad do not have the right to change the essence of *AiF*'s format, style or editorial policy, but they can and do supplement content from Moscow with their own material without getting prior approval from the centre. According to Sergey Kalinin, deputy editor for work with *AiF* regional supplements, there is little regular communication between editors in Moscow and those in Kiev and Minsk (Interviewee 4, 2011). If the Ukrainian or Belarusian editors publish something that is not to the liking of *AiF*'s managers in Russia, objections are raised post-publication. Rather than imposing direct censorship, *AiF* trusts that the international offices will comply with the relevant editorial guidelines out of 'common sense', Kalinin said. Like *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *AiF* pragmatically allows editing or omission of any articles from Moscow that might go down the wrong way with the local audience or authorities and thereby harm the business interests of the local partner organizations.

Argumenty i Fakty does not have an overly close relationship with the Russian authorities but neither does it set out to criticise or oppose the Kremlin. It belongs to the Media3 holding (media3.ru), reportedly owned by billionaire brothers Aleksey and Dmitriy Ananyev. Their joint

business interests encompass banking, IT and real estate; Dmitriy is also a member of Russia's Federation Council (Forbes, 2013). Igor Nikiforov, editor for work with *AiF* regional supplements, said the paper had no regular contact with representatives of the Russian state on matters such as communicating with compatriots. 'Above all, we target readers with information that interests them, we don't attempt to influence anything there,' Nikiforov said (Interviewee 3, 2011).

Izvestiya is another Russian daily with a long history. It was founded before the revolution in 1917 and eventually became the official organ of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR. *Izvestiya* renounced its ties to the state in August 1991 and initially passed into the control of its editorial staff. However, in difficult financial conditions the newspaper's autonomy did not last long. During the 1990s it was bought up by Oneximbank and Lukoil, whose respective owners, Vladimir Potanin and Vagit Alekperov, used the paper as a vehicle for their interests. Then from 2005 *Izvestiya* spent almost three years in the ownership of Gazprom-Media; a period which saw the introduction of new management and a consistently pro-Kremlin editorial policy (Szostek, 2009). As things stand in 2013, *Izvestiya* belongs to National Media Group (nm-g.ru), which has close ties to the Russian state elite via Bank Rossiya and Yuriy Kovalchuk (Szostek, 2009). The paper rarely, if ever, challenges the political status quo in Russia or the merits of government policy; it tends to be rather 'patriotic' in its reporting.

Izvestiya has less extensive international operations than the mass-circulation publications described above. Apart from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan were the only CIS states to have their own edition of the newspaper in 2011. Vladimir Mamontov, president of *Izvestiya*, explained that expansion to foreign markets was not a priority for the newspaper:

'We do not object to newspapers being published under the *Izvestiya* brand in the countries of the CIS, in any countries where there is demand. But we don't do anything especially for this purpose. We don't spend any money. We are willing to provide

general Russian content... the basic story is that we don't spend money on it.'

(Interviewee 5, 2011)

The daily print run of *Izvestiya v Ukraine* was around 20,000 at the start of 2010 (Interfax news agency, 2010b). Mamontov noted that the Ukrainian paper was probably not profitable, but added that this was of no concern to managers in Moscow since the losses were borne by the Ukrainian side (Interviewee 5, 2011). Press reports say that *Izvestiya v Ukraine* is owned by Ukrainian oligarch Igor Kolomoyskiy, although Mamontov indicated that the *Izvestiya* publishing house retained a 49-per-cent stake.

Izvestiya v Ukraine produces about 50 per cent of its own material and republishes the other 50 per cent, generally unedited,⁹ from the Russian edition. Editorial control over the paper lies with staff in Kiev in the sense that they do not have to get Moscow's prior approval for the content and layout of each issue. However, Mamontov made it quite clear that certain editorial principles had to be observed:

'There were people in the leadership of the Ukrainian editorial team, in whom we suddenly noticed a certain disdain for the interests of Russia. We did everything so that these people first found out about this, put things right, and if they didn't put things right, they left. This is natural, at the end of the day... If we have a certain editorial policy, then the editorial policy of the edition in [v] Ukraine, in [na] Ukraine, should match this.' (Interviewee 5, 2011)

He added that conflicting views could be published on the Opinions and Commentaries page, but that 'things which directly violate or distort Russia's policy towards Ukraine' could not appear in the main body of the newspaper without provoking objections (Interviewee 5, 2011).

⁹ Mamontov did say that the editors-in-chief in Kiev and Moscow had occasionally agreed to 'tone down' the language in articles on sensitive topics.

Kommersant is one of Russia's leading daily broadsheets, with a particularly strong business section. Although the title dates back to the pre-revolutionary era, the modern *Kommersant* was launched in the late 1980s by a correspondent from the magazine *Ogonek*, Vladimir Yakovlev. It was originally aimed at entrepreneurs involved in the cooperative movement. *Kommersant* quickly achieved success by occupying an empty niche in the newly emerging market and abandoning many outdated practices of Soviet journalism in favour of a more Western style and format (Kommersant, 2013).

Kommersant and its eponymous publishing house have belonged to the tycoon Alisher Usmanov since 2006. Despite Usmanov's fairly close relationship with the Russian political elite, *Kommersant* cannot be described as deferent to the Kremlin. Unlike a large proportion of the Russian media, it does not ignore the activities of the opposition. Its circulation is not huge (roughly 300,000 in 2011), but its reputation for solid and impartial analysis make it one of Russia's more influential publications.

Kommersant has two projects targeted specifically at audiences in CIS states. *Kommersant.md* is a news website launched in November 2010 aimed at a Moldovan audience. It is a franchise and belongs entirely to a Moldovan partner organization which pays for the right to use *Kommersant* content (Interviewee 6, 2011). *Kommersant-Ukraina* is a newspaper with corresponding website, launched in 2005 for Ukrainian readers. It is 100-per-cent owned by the *Kommersant* publishing house (Interviewee 6, 2011). Like the Russian original, *Kommersant-Ukraina* does not have a particularly large readership, but that is not its aim. It is a quality publication targeted at business professionals and the elite; therein lies its influence. According to Pavel Filenkov, *Kommersant*'s commercial director, launching a newspaper for the Ukrainian market was a 'strategic investment' (Interviewee 6, 2011). As of 2011 it was being run at a loss in hope that it would eventually become profitable. 'There are 50 million Russian-speakers [in Ukraine], we can't miss out on an audience like that,' Filenkov said. He added that attempts had been made to set up a *Kommersant* edition for Kazakhstan too, but this had failed due to 'political aspects' (Interviewee 6, 2011).

Editorial staff in Moscow exercise rigorous control over the tone and quality of material published by *kommersant.md* and *Kommersant-Ukraina* (journalists are not permitted to express their own views in print explicitly, for instance). Filenkov said: ‘They don’t have the opportunity to put in something that we have not checked’ (Interviewee 6, 2011). However, in matters of substance the Moscow editorial team allow their counterparts in Kiev leeway. One *Kommersant-Ukraina* journalist said:

‘If they have written that it is *so*, but we understand that it is *not quite so*, we have the right to write it differently. They [*Kommersant* in Moscow] do not control us in that respect.’ (Interviewee 21, 2011)

Kommersant-Ukraina sometimes prints news which ‘Russia would prefer not to see printed’, he added.

Very little content in *Kommersant-Ukraina* is actually imported from Moscow. Over 80 per cent of the paper is produced by staff in Kiev, who number over 130. *Kommersant* also favours re-writing articles of Russian news for the Ukrainian audience over republishing them verbatim; in this respect it differs markedly from *Izvestiya v Ukraine*. According to Pavel Filenkov, ‘news published in Moscow cannot be reproduced in Ukraine in an identical form.’ ‘When an article is written about news from Russia, it is quite often re-written for Ukraine,’ he added (Interviewee 6, 2011).

There are other Russian broadcasters and publishers which have operations in Ukraine and Belarus. However, the news providers mentioned here are particularly significant due to their market position, reputation and audience. In the following chapters, content from these news providers is analysed and compared against content from a range of Ukrainian and Belarusian media without Russian roots.

2.5 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored what Russian politicians mean when they speak of a single or common information space (*yedinoye* or *obshcheye informatsionnoye prostranstvo*) in the post-Soviet region. The term has appeared repeatedly in Russian rhetoric and legislation since the Soviet Union disintegrated. This chapter has argued that the single information space is best understood as a political euphemism for Russian access to CIS audiences. It is clear from Russian statutes and statements that politicians in Moscow place considerable importance on being able to communicate news to citizens in neighbouring states, particularly ‘compatriots’. International news narratives are perceived in Moscow as an issue of geopolitics and power, not just a matter of national pride.

This chapter has also drawn a distinction between policy-driven attempts to secure a single information space and the news flow from Russia to the CIS which stems primarily from commercial interests and the Soviet legacy. The efforts of politicians have generally run into problems. Purpose-built news providers, such as the *Mir* TV channel, have struggled due to a lack of interest and money. The funding Russia has pledged to support Russian-language media abroad does not appear to be reaching beneficiaries in particularly large volumes.

Russia’s long-established major news providers, on the other hand, have a substantial presence in the wider post-Soviet region that owes little to activity by the Russian Foreign Ministry, *Rossotrudnichestvo* or other architects of the single information space policy. Russian newspapers and TV channels have extended their operations to other CIS countries in search of profit or in response to demand from consumers and business partners. Many of them used to be popular Soviet news providers. When the collapse of the USSR made them Russian, they found ways to retain viewers and readers in the newly independent states. Such Moscow-based transnational media can export news from Russia to far larger audiences across the CIS than any communication channels created specifically for this purpose by politicians. Some of them can be described as close to the

Russian authorities, so the content which they export to Ukraine, Belarus and elsewhere is shaped by an editorial policy that is susceptible to pressure from the Russian leadership.

Importantly, however, this chapter has explained that certain newspapers and TV channels operate in the CIS using Russian brands and content without being fully under Russian ownership and control. In order to reach audiences in neighbouring states, Russian broadcasters and publishers sometimes enter into partnerships or franchising agreements. When this happens, control over content is divided. Interviews cited in this chapter indicate that editorial teams working for ‘Russian’ media in Kiev and Minsk enjoy varying degrees of autonomy from Moscow.

The next two chapters look closely at news coverage of Russia generated by a range of Russian-language media in Ukraine and Belarus. Newspapers and TV bulletins mentioned in this chapter – *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*, *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii*, *Vesti*, *Vremya* and the like – are compared against other leading Russian-language news providers, most of which do not have a shareholder or partner in Moscow (for example, *Sobytiya* on Ukraine’s *TRK Ukraina*; *Nashi Novosti* on Belarusian channel *ONT*; the *Fakty i Kommentarii* tabloid in Ukraine; the *Belorusy i Rynok* weekly in Belarus). The effect on reporting of having a Russian partner or shareholder is thereby assessed, while interviews with editorial staff reveal how cross-border forces interact with other key explanatory variables in determining the shape of news content.

CHAPTER 3. UKRAINE

3.1 Chapter topic and objectives

This chapter investigates the factors which shape news coverage of Russia in Ukraine. It addresses two research questions:

Q1. How do the leading Russian-language TV news bulletins and newspapers in Ukraine vary in terms of the kind of coverage (extensive or limited, favourable or unfavourable) they devote to Russia?

Q2. Why does the scale and tone of news coverage about Russia vary from one Russian-language news provider to another?

The chapter particularly aims to shed light on how news reporting is affected by the influence of Russian partners and shareholders. It compares 14 news providers to test hypothesis H1:

A news provider with a shareholder or partner in Russia is likely to generate (a) more extensive and (b) more favourable coverage of Russia than market rivals because of its Russian connections.

Russian media have been described as a threat to Ukraine's sovereignty and an instrument of the Russian authorities (see Chapter 1). However, the news providers with Russian shareholders or partners which operate in Ukraine are actually quite diverse. Few would dispute that news bulletins from Russian federal TV channels are part of the Kremlin's 'information arsenal'; they have long been observed showing news that flatters the Russian leadership. Yet the situation is less clear-cut when it comes to 'Russian' newspapers. Some have Ukrainian shareholders and produce a large amount of content locally. This chapter explores whether all media commonly labelled as 'Russian' behave as predicted where reporting about Russia is concerned.

Hypothesis H1 is tested on TV bulletins in Section 3.2; on daily tabloids in Section 3.3; on daily broadsheets in Section 3.4; and on weekly newspapers in Section 3.5.¹ In Section 3.6 the chapter findings are summarized and discussed.

The results largely support part (b) of the hypothesis. All six news providers with a Russian shareholder or partner were found to be more restrained in their criticism of Russia than comparable news providers without ties to Moscow. Some of them – but not all – generated tendentious coverage of Russia which flattered the Russian authorities. Part (a) of the hypothesis, about scale of coverage, proved correct in three of the six ‘Russian’ cases.

Yet the strength of part (b) of the hypothesis obscures complexities in how Russian influence affects news providers in Ukraine. Interviews conducted for this chapter show that journalists and editors at ‘Russian’ newspapers face conflicting pressures. Constraints imposed from Moscow must often be navigated alongside other constraints, such as the perceived demands of the target audience. The precise balance of these pressures and constraints varies from one publication to another.

As Chapter 1 explained, this study of Ukraine employs a mixed-method approach. Variation in news coverage of Russia is documented using content analysis techniques, before semi-structured interviews with editorial staff uncover the reasons for the observed reporting patterns. The content analysis has three stages: (1) quantitative analysis of the whole news sample to establish the proportion of total news stories in which Russia features; (2) tabular comparison of the news stories (events, interviews and commentaries) featuring Russia which each news provider ran or ignored in

¹ Comparisons are conducted within these medium-based groups because medium is expected to influence content; this approach also simplifies the presentation and discussion of the findings. Unfortunately, comparison of the weekly newspapers is hampered by missing data.

each week of the sample period; and (3) detailed qualitative description of the most widely reported news story featuring Russia – the visit to Ukraine by Kirill, Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus.²

3.2 Television news bulletins: *Podrobnosti*, *Sobytiya* and *Vremya*

The three TV news bulletins under study here are *Podrobnosti*, *Sobytiya* and *Vremya*. *Podrobnosti* is the flagship evening bulletin on *Inter*, one of Ukraine’s most-watched channels. From 2005 until February 2013, *Inter*’s main shareholder (with a 61-per-cent stake) was Ukrainian politician Valeriy Khoroshkovskiy; it was then sold to Dmitriy Firtash (Ligacheva, 2013). Russian state-controlled *Pervyy Kanal* has been a minority shareholder at *Inter* since the latter’s launch in 1996 and it apparently continues to own a 29 per cent stake, while a company called Pegasus (linked to the family of *Inter*’s previous major shareholder, Igor Pluzhnikov) owns the remaining 10 per cent (Leshchenko, 2005, Khalizeva, 2006). *Sobytiya* is broadcast each weeknight on *TRK Ukraina*, a channel which belongs to Ukraine’s richest tycoon and Party of Regions MP Rinat Akhmetov. *Vremya* is the main nightly news on Russian state-owned channel *Pervyy Kanal*. As explained in Chapter 2 it is available in Ukraine via satellite and cable.

According to hypothesis H1, one would expect *Vremya* (on a channel owned by the Russian state) to carry the most extensive and favourable coverage of Russia, followed by *Podrobnosti* (on a channel with a minority Russian shareholder). One would expect *Sobytiya* (on a channel with no Russian shareholder or partner) to run the least extensive, least favourable coverage.

The results of the quantitative content analysis, presented in Table 3.1, are in line with these expectations. Among the three TV news providers, Russia figured most prominently by far on

² Patriarch Kirill’s visit to Ukraine took place between 20 and 28 July 2010. Coverage appeared during the sample week beginning 26 July in 11 of the 14 news providers under study; the three exceptions were *Zerkalo Nedeli* (not published during the relevant week due to a holiday); *2000* (relevant issue missing from the sample); and *Komentarii* (relevant issue was a special edition about Ukrainian mayors).

Vremya. On average, 85 per cent of stories on *Vremya* were marked as ‘featuring Russia’, compared to around 10 per cent of stories on *Podrobnosti* and fewer than 5 per cent of stories on *Sobytiya*.

Table 3.1: Proportion of stories in TV bulletins coded as ‘featuring Russia’

TV bulletin	Mean number of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each bulletin	Mean % of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each bulletin
<i>Podrobnosti</i>	1.7 (ranging from 0 to 4)	10.8 (min. 0; max. 26.7; 25 observations)
<i>Sobytiya</i>	0.5 (ranging from 0 to 3)	4.7 (min. 0; max. 30; 25 observations)
<i>Vremya</i>	10.1 (ranging from 4 to 14)	84.6 (min. 50; max. 100; 24 observations)

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the Bonferroni follow-up test showed statistically significant differences in mean between both *Vremya* and *Podrobnosti*, and *Vremya* and *Sobytiya* ($p < 0.001$ in both cases). The difference in mean between *Podrobnosti* and *Sobytiya* was statistically significant at the 10 per cent confidence level ($p = 0.08$).

There is some further support for the hypothesis in the tabular comparison of story selection. A comparison table (Table C1, see Appendix 2) was compiled to reveal stories that were reported and ignored during the sample period. It lists all the stories coded as ‘featuring Russia’ that were broadcast by either *Podrobnosti* or *Sobytiya* (or both) in the course of the five weeks. It also shows whether these stories appeared on *Vremya*.

Vremya’s story selection was very much in line expectations. Bulletins were dominated by uncritical reporting of the daily activity of President Dmitriy Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. In the course of the five-week sample period, *Vremya* showed 74 reports in which the main news event involved one of the two leaders meeting somebody, visiting somewhere or announcing something (an average of roughly three such stories per day). These stories were of little interest to *Sobytiya* and *Podrobnosti*, which showed only a handful of stories in which

Medvedev and Putin figured: the EU-Russia summit on 31 May, the German chancellor's visit to Yekaterinburg on 15 July and a couple of reports about the heat and wildfires in Russia. Unlike *Vremya*, *Sobytiya* and *Podrobnosti* did not broadcast any reports in which the Russian leaders dominated proceedings or constituted the news event in their own right.

Vremya did not give any airtime to the genuinely anti-Kremlin opposition, unlike *Podrobnosti* and *Sobytiya*, which both carried reports about the Strategy 31 demonstration in defence of freedom of assembly in Russia on 31 May. Despite *Pervyy Kanal* being a minority shareholder at *Inter*, *Podrobnosti* reported from the scene of the protest in Moscow and interviewed demonstrators, thereby portraying the human rights situation in Russia as rather negative. *Sobytiya* broadcast video of a protest held outside the Russian embassy in Kiev to support the Moscow demonstration. The *Sobytiya* presenter noted that the Ukrainian protesters, despite their provocative behaviour, had not been touched by law-enforcers (in implicit contrast to their Russian counterparts).

Podrobnosti's report on 31 May about the EU-Russia summit mentioned European criticism of Russia's human rights record and the failure to reach a visa-free travel deal. *Vremya* chose to omit both these points; its correspondent report on 31 May instead showed European officials talking about a strategic partnership with Russia.

On the other hand, *Podrobnosti* regularly broadcast reports which looked back nostalgically to the Soviet era and beyond. For example, in the week beginning 31 May it reported extensively on the death of poet Andrey Voznesenskiy. It ran lengthy features to mark the anniversaries of the Tu-104 passenger jet's first flight ('the pride of the Soviet Union', 17 June), the first joint US-Soviet space mission (15 July) and the death of Soviet bard Vladimir Vysotskiy (28 July). There were also special features about old icons discovered in the Kremlin (12 July) and the adoption of Christianity in Rus (*Kreshcheniye Rusi*, 28 July). One might argue that such reports are favourable from Russia's point of view because they emphasize the positive side of its historical relationship with

Ukraine. Table C1 shows that none of these nostalgic stories appeared in *Sobytiya*. In fact, not a single one of the *Sobytiya* stories ‘featuring Russia’ had an historical element.

Both *Podrobnosti* and *Sobytiya* were attracted to quirky or slightly absurd stories from Russia. *Sobytiya* reports about a Canadian model on Chechen TV (16 June), an anti-ageing pill (23 September) and a simulated journey to Mars (2 June) fall into this category, as does the *Podrobnosti* report about scuba divers on bikes (20 September).

The bulletins’ story selection differed markedly in the area of Russian-Ukrainian relations, however, with *Podrobnosti* paying much more attention to this topic than *Sobytiya* or *Vremya*. *Podrobnosti* was the only bulletin under study to report economic developments in Russian-Ukrainian ties such as the sale of Lugansk Teplovoz (a train manufacturer) to the Bryansk Machine-Building Plant (15 June); the announcement of a joint venture in aircraft production (3 June); and the lifting of a Russian ban on Ukrainian dairy produce (12 July). In all these cases the importance of the Russian market to Ukrainian businesses was mentioned. Yet Russia was not always portrayed as a benign economic partner. The ban on dairy produce was described by *Podrobnosti*’s correspondent in terms of a ‘milk war’ and the ‘political character’ of Russia’s actions was made quite clear. Another economics-related *Podrobnosti* report – about Ukraine joining the European Energy Community – stated that Kiev needed European support to prevent Russia bypassing Ukrainian territory when selling gas to Europe (24 September).

Sobytiya showed absolutely no interest in the economic dimension of Russian-Ukrainian interaction during the sample period. Its only reports on bilateral affairs dealt with Patriarch Kirill’s visit to Ukraine (26, 27, 28 July). *Sobytiya* tended to ignore potential Russian angles in political stories. For example, it ran reports on Ukraine’s new foreign and domestic policy principles (3 June); the anniversary of Ukraine’s independence declaration (16 July); and the Millennium Goals summit in New York (21 September) without mentioning Russia once. *Podrobnosti*, on the other hand, referred to Russia when reporting all three of these events.

The *Vremya* sample contained few stories about interaction between Russia and Ukraine. Like *Podrobnosti* and *Sobytiya*, *Vremya* reported Patriarch Kirill’s visit (27 July). It also reported the adoption at the first reading of Ukraine’s new policy principles (3 June); an occasion used by the correspondent to highlight improving relations between Moscow and Kiev. Viktor Yanukovich reaching his hundredth day as Ukrainian president was the subject of another such report (4 June).³ *Vremya*’s interest in Russian-Ukrainian interaction was thus limited to big news events involving high-profile state representatives (with Patriarch Kirill included in that category). Lower-profile developments in economic or cultural relations fell below *Vremya*’s radar.

Overall, the story selection of *Podrobnosti* and *Sobytiya* showed Russia in a mixed light – neither exclusively favourable nor exclusively unfavourable. *Podrobnosti* ran stories where Russia came across as undemocratic and a difficult partner but also stories about partnership and the shared past. *Sobytiya* was generally disinterested in Russia.

Yet detailed comparative analysis of how Patriarch Kirill’s visit to Ukraine was reported reveals a much more slanted picture on *Podrobnosti*. The boxes below illustrate the variation between the three news bulletins in their coverage of this story. The boxes address three questions:

1. What facts and details relating to the story were reported?
2. What opinions relating to the story were reported and to whom did they belong?
3. How did the newspaper or TV reporter(s) most frequently refer to Kirill?

<i>Podrobnosti</i>: Controversy? What controversy?
1. Kirill conducted prayers; presented an icon, visited a church, a monastery and a missile construction workshop; blessed believers; called for unity; met Ukraine’s political leaders; and led a procession. (26, 27, 28 July)

³ This story is not included in Table C1 because *Podrobnosti* and *Sobytiya* both reported the event without paying attention to the Russian angle.

Believers came to listen to Kirill; waited from early morning to see Kirill and prayed with Kirill. (27, 28 July)

The Holy Synod convened and issued an appeal urging 'schismatics' to repent. (26 July)

2. 'The circumstances that led to the split [in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church] were political in nature. The situation has changed for the better now...'; 'The Patriarch was left satisfied with his pastoral visit.' (reporter, 26 July)

'Living as a schismatic is sinful and bad for the soul.' (Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, 26 July)

'Returning to the church [i.e. the Moscow Patriarchate] is a natural process. There is nothing humiliating in returning.' (Metropolitan Ilarion of the Moscow Patriarchate, 26 July)

'We are not encroaching on either people's sovereignty or national self-determination. We are defending what belongs to God...' (Kirill, 28 July)

'He is like our Father Superior of our Orthodox Church, so to speak. We hope he will try to unite all our Orthodox Church.' (believer, 27 July)

3. 'His Holiness' ('yego Svyateyshestvo'); 'Patriarch Kirill'; 'most holy patriarch' ('syateyshiyy patriarkh')

Sobytiya: Police in their thousands and two rival patriarchates

1. Police in their thousands came onto the streets to keep order, prevented two protests and arrested eight opponents to Kirill. (26 July)

Kirill conducted prayers, a service and a liturgy; called for Orthodox Church unity; led a traditional procession and opened an exhibition. (26, 27, 28 July)

Nationalists and opponents to Kirill's visit performed a sketch of the 'glamorous tour of the

<p>Kremlin’s KGB man’ and unfurled the biggest Ukrainian flag in the world. (27 July)</p> <p>Some believers came to listen to Kirill; others attended a service led by Patriarch Filaret of the Kiev Patriarchate. (27 July)</p> <p>Patriarch Filaret conducted a vigil service and led a procession of many thousands of people. (28 July)</p>
<p>2. ‘Be gone with the Moscow priestling!’ (chanting protesters, 26 July)</p> <p>‘If this was a normal state with normal authorities they would make him [Kirill] <i>persona non grata</i> like in the performance and kick him out of Ukraine.’ (protester, 27 July)</p> <p>‘[Kirill] radiates such love and grace, it’s simply inexplicable. And all Orthodox people await his arrival.’ (believer, 27 July)</p> <p>‘All Ukraine, Russia, Belarus. And all countries, that we might be one as the Lord said, one faith, one baptism.’ (believer, 27 July)</p> <p>‘The more he [Kirill] comes to Ukraine, the more the Kiev Patriarchate will grow.’ (Patriarch Filaret of the Kiev Patriarchate, 28 July)</p>
<p>3. ‘Patriarch Kirill’ and ‘the patriarch’</p>

<p><i>Vremya</i>: Overcoming divisions that were ‘so unwisely implanted and exploited...’</p>
<p>1. Kirill conducted prayers, led a liturgy and spoke about unity. (27 July)</p> <p>People came to listen and gave Kirill white doves. (27 July)</p>
<p>2. ‘Unity of the people is sacred and sacrosanct...’; ‘Everyone who loves their country should concern themselves with overcoming division...’; ‘divisions, which were so unwisely implanted and exploited to get some momentary political advantages.’ (Kirill, 27 July)</p>

3. 'Leader of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill'

The boxes illustrate how editorial stance can be conveyed without journalists ever stating their own views explicitly or drawing a single conclusion for the audience. At first glance, the reporters on *Podrobnosti*, *Sobytiya* and *Vremya* all appeared to be acting as neutral observers: they limited themselves to statements of fact about where Kirill had been and what he had done, and left it to people involved in the story (Kirill himself, church officials, believers etc.) to provide statements of opinion in interview clips. An unmistakable editorial 'slant' becomes clear, however, when one compares the facts and details reported by *Vremya* and *Podrobnosti* against those reported by *Sobytiya*. The former two bulletins completely ignored the tensions surrounding Kirill's presence in Kiev. They made no mention at all of the noisy protests, the thousands of police deployed to keep order, or the multiple arrests. Only *Sobytiya* viewers were informed that many thousands of Orthodox believers had joined a procession led by Patriarch Filaret of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kiev Patriarchate) instead of that led by Patriarch Kirill. Selective vision towards what had taken place was accompanied by selective hearing towards opinions. On *Vremya*, the only opinions expressed on matters of contention belonged to Kirill; on *Podrobnosti*, opinions were expressed by Kirill, representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate and a believer supportive of Kirill. Only *Sobytiya* broadcast the views of the Kiev Patriarchate and an opponent to Kirill. *Podrobnosti*'s reverence and respect for the patriarch was further underlined by the correspondent's constant use of the terms 'his Holiness' and 'most holy patriarch' to describe the visitor from Moscow.

To explore the reasons for these content analysis findings, interviews were conducted with editorial staff from *Podrobnosti* and *Sobytiya*. Unfortunately, nobody from *Vremya* was prepared to contribute to this research.

The hypothesis suggests that *Inter*'s Russian shareholder might explain why *Podrobnosti* produces more extensive news coverage of Russia than *Sobytiya*. However, the interviews indicate that this

difference is primarily attributable to the scale of resources which each bulletin has at its disposal.

Inter can afford to maintain a correspondent in Moscow, whereas *TRK Ukraina* cannot. A

Podrobnosti correspondent said:

‘*TRK Ukraina* does not have its own correspondent here [in Russia], no news bureau. If there is a news bureau, correspondingly, in one month I produce around 15 reports, so basically once every two days a story from Russia goes out. [*TRK Ukraina*] cannot afford that because they don’t have their own correspondent here.’ (Interviewee 10, 2011)

At *TRK Ukraina*’s news studio in Kiev, a senior editorial figure complained:

‘They [*Inter*] have huge resources. In Kiev alone they have 40 correspondents... We have 12 people here. They have a news bureau in Moscow, so it’s easy for them to send culture over from Moscow. If there is some Russian-Ukrainian exhibition there, they will surely run a story on it. But we cannot.’ (Interviewee 12, 2011)

To deploy a Ukrainian journalist to Moscow would be ‘very expensive’, while it is hard to find a suitable Muscovite journalist due to the Ukrainian language requirement, another *Sobytiya* representative explained (Interviewee 11, 2011).

Another reason for *Sobytiya*’s relatively limited Russia coverage is the length of the bulletin. One interviewee from *TRK Ukraina* said:

‘The problem is the length of our bulletin – the fact that it is very short – 20 minutes, that’s rather bad. *Inter* has 30 minutes.’ (Interviewee 11, 2011)

Two senior managers responsible for *TRK Ukraina*’s news output argued that viewers were uninterested in stories without a Ukrainian angle. Interestingly, however, both were Muscovites and they indicated that their arrival in the newsroom had caused *Sobytiya* to pay more attention to Russia:

‘We have been here since 1 January this year [2011]. I should say that the situation has changed since then: we mention Russia much more often.’ (Interviewee 11, 2011)

All the interviewees were asked to talk about the kind of news topics which attracted their attention. Their answers corresponded neatly to the patterns observed in the content analysis. The *Podrobnosti* correspondent mentioned nostalgia without any prompting:

‘The first thing that interests us is everything connected to Ukraine... The second point is anything which may simply be interesting to Ukrainian viewers... For example, there was a festival of Soviet advertising in Moscow... Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union, it’s only been independent for 20 years, so many people there still remember those times and the Soviet Union, it will be interesting for them to get nostalgic [*ponostalgirovat*] and remember. Familiar people and actors, familiar Aeroflot, familiar Soviet sparkling wine being advertised. Adverts for familiar *Zhiguli* or *Zaporozhets* [cars]. Maybe they never saw the ads [originally], but it will be interesting for them to watch because it’s their youth.’ (Interviewee 10, 2011)

An interviewee from *TRK Ukraina* gave more weight to infotainment-type criteria:

‘In journalism there is a thing known as the six Ss and one D. Have you heard of it? They are the hooks which hold a viewer and rivet attention to the news. What is news? News is information which contains something from the six Ss and one D. What are the six Ss? Fear [*strakh*], death [*smert*], sex [*seks*], scandal [*skandal*]. What else was there? Laughter [*smekh*] and something else. I just can’t remember. I would also add nostalgia. It’s also one of those very vivid things which grips [viewers]. D is for money [*dengi*]. Anything that doesn’t fall into those categories isn’t news. Because it’s a minus, it misses the cash till. It’s propaganda.’ (Interviewee 13, 2011)

She suggested that some content differences between *Podrobnosti* and *Sobytiya* could be explained by their different target audiences:

‘[At *Inter*] it’s about old ladies over 50. They are deliberately working for [an audience of] grannies. That’s their contingent... In general, we [at *TRK Ukraina*] are working for a commercial audience – 18 to 45 year olds.’ (Interviewee 13, 2011)

Thus, the interests of viewers rather than shareholders would seem to be the primary explanation for why *Podrobnosti* favours nostalgic reports about the Soviet era more than *Sobytiya*.

Some of the interviewees did however state that shareholder interests can and do affect news content on occasion. One representative of *TRK Ukraina* described Akhmetov’s influence on *Sobytiya* news as follows:

‘Everything depends on how you phrase it. You might say, presses through his interests, or you might say supports certain [political] forces. You might say lobbies. In America that’s absolutely normal... The channel reflects the interests of its owner in the majority of cases. I stress, in the majority of cases, since it is a media outlet and a media outlet has to be interesting to a much wider circle of people than just the owner. Correspondingly, a number of topics arise which might be uninteresting or sometimes unpleasant to the owner, but they have to be reflected otherwise it will be uninteresting to the viewer. Besides everything else, a media outlet cannot fulfil only one function. Yes, it’s a business. Yes, it’s a conduit for the owner’s interests. In accordance with this, the editorial policy is constructed. It’s normal. Besides everything else, it is a resource and a means of development for society and the country, because that is written in the channel’s mission. It is one of the owner’s values. He doesn’t just want to show moving pictures and make money from it. He understands social responsibility... Television has three functions, as they say: to inform, educate and

entertain. We try to fulfil these three functions... Of course, we are not going to produce material which threatens the owner's interests.' (Interviewee 11, 2011)

Owner influence is a topic which editorial staff may be reluctant to discuss openly. However, the interviews do suggest that *Podrobnosti* and *Sobytiya* journalists can report about Russian domestic affairs (where there is no Ukrainian angle) without much pressure from above. A question on this matter led to the following exchange between two interviewees at *TRK Ukraina* (Interviewee 11, 2011 and Interviewee 12, 2011):

Interviewee 11: 'The only limit on editorial policy is not to harm the company's interests.'

Interviewer: 'Since his [Akhmetov's] interests are concentrated in Ukraine, does it concern international issues? Can you talk about other countries without worrying?'

Interviewee 12: 'We can even make a bit of a nuisance of ourselves [*nemnozhko pokhuliganit*].'

Interviewee 11: 'And that's what we do.'

Interviewer: 'Last year you reported about Strategy 31. Is that interesting for Ukrainians?'

Interviewee 12: 'If there is a commotion, if lots of people come out and someone gets punched in the face, then it's interesting. For the most part, anything can be written there: Strategy 66, gays against Slavs.'

The *Podrobnosti* correspondent said he felt free to report 'a full range of opinion' about Russian political matters. He drew a contrast with the situation at Russian state TV channels:

'We show the full range of opinion. The full range is missing from the Russian federal channels, but we maintain a balance of opinion. Of course, [we report on] United

Russia, those who are currently in parliament... But at the same time we talk about the political parties which are small... Let's say [opposition activist Boris] Nemtsov, perhaps... [opposition-minded satirist Viktor] Shenderovich. [The people] who take an active citizens' position, people who protest against the current regime and believe that these [December 2011 parliamentary] elections are simply a farce, in principle...'

(Interviewee 10, 2011)

Thus, the interview data corroborates the content analysis finding that *Podrobnosti* and *Sobytiya* report anti-Kremlin opposition unlike *Vremya*, which tends to ignore it. Although no-one from *Vremya* provided an interview for this study, there is little doubt as to why *Vremya* turns a blind eye to Russia's genuine opposition movements. Story selection at all Russia's state-owned channels is reportedly coordinated at weekly meetings in the Kremlin (Varshavchik, 2004).

The *Podrobnosti* correspondent completely rejected the notion that *Pervyy Kanal*'s shareholding in *Inter* had any effect on content. He pointed out that there was no day-to-day cooperation between *Vremya* and *Podrobnosti*. He also made it quite clear that *Podrobnosti* enjoyed no special relationship with the Russian authorities by virtue of its links to *Pervyy Kanal*. When asked about his interaction with the Russian authorities, he said:

'They [the Russian authorities] invite [*Podrobnosti* journalists to media events]. But here you have to understand that if you are invited by an official state structure... they'll show you the very best and not how it really is: they'll paint the fence, change the doorknobs, wash the children in school, make the teacher look nice – not how it is in reality. What reason do we have for filming that sugar-coated reality? We can easily go ourselves and film on another day.' (Interviewee 10, 2011)

The interviewee insisted that not once during his time at *Inter* had he been instructed to leave out certain information or refrain from asking certain questions. He said that all 'generally accepted

standards’ – including ‘balance of opinion, objectivity, not expressing one’s own opinion’ – were observed at *Podrobnosti*; these standards even hang on the wall of the newsroom and editorial staff regularly attend ethics training sessions at Internews, he added. The content analysis findings support his claims where coverage of Russian domestic politics is concerned. Yet *Podrobnosti*’s coverage of Patriarch Kirill’s visit to Ukraine was clearly one-sided. Interviewees at *TRK Ukraina* suggested that *Inter*’s close relationship with the Ukrainian authorities was to blame. They said:

‘*Inter* is the mouthpiece of the authorities. Everyone understands this... It is a particular structure, which fulfils the functions of propaganda, not broadcasting. It has its own particular role. It doesn’t chase ratings – they have [good ratings] as it is, because *Inter* is the country’s first button.’ (Interviewee 13, 2011)

‘With all respect to colleagues at *Inter*, *Inter* has practically turned into a state channel... There [in the Ukrainian authorities] they really don’t like additional agitation of the situation.’ (Interviewee 11, 2011)

As these comments indicate, *Inter* has been widely perceived as loyal to the Ukrainian authorities during Viktor Yanukovich’s presidency. At the same time, it has been described as ‘an outpost of the Kremlin’s information presence in Ukraine’ (Dovzhenko, 2010). In many news stories from 2010 about bilateral relations (the accords on the Russian Black Sea Fleet’s Crimean base, for instance) it is difficult to distinguish between ‘pro-Russian’ reporting and ‘pro-Yanukovich’ reporting because the Ukrainian president was promoting rapprochement with Russia. The picture is blurred further by the fact that a key figure linking *Inter* to the Ukrainian Presidential Administration – political strategist Igor Shuvalov – is a Muscovite. In 2011 Shuvalov described himself as an advisor to *Inter* (Vysotskiy, 2011). Head of the Ukrainian Presidential Administration Sergey Levochkin acknowledged that he too had paid for Shuvalov’s advice (Ukrayinska Pravda, 2011). According to the Ukrayinska Pravda website, Shuvalov became Levochkin’s ‘informal curator’ at *Inter* in 2009 before acquiring influence over the new Ukrainian authorities’ information

policy from 2010 (Leshchenko, 2011). Shuvalov was reportedly handed the task of ‘simulating reality’ for Yanukovich in a way that reflected well on Levochkin as a manager. For his part, Shuvalov described the notion of him being the Presidential Administration’s chief political strategist as ‘nonsense’ and he completely denied overseeing *Inter*’s editorial policy (Vysotskiy, 2011).

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of these claims and counter-claims, however, is that Shuvalov has primarily been portrayed as an instrument of the Ukrainian authorities rather than the Kremlin, despite his Russian citizenship. This fact, together with certain patterns which emerged from the content analysis (i.e. *Podrobnosti*’s willingness to show protests against the Kremlin), indicate that the ‘pro-Russian’ slant of which *Inter* has been accused is more likely due to domestic Ukrainian political forces than direct Russian shareholder influence at the channel.

3.3 Daily tabloids: *Segodnya*, *Fakty i Kommentarii* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*

The daily tabloids included in this study are three of the most widely read news publications in Ukraine. Each would claim to have a readership of more than a million. There is *Segodnya*, which belongs to Rinat Akhmetov; *Fakty i Kommentarii*, which belongs to another Ukrainian billionaire, Viktor Pinchuk; and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*, which is the Ukrainian edition of Russia’s *Komsomolskaya Pravda*. *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* is run as a franchise (see Chapter 2); officially it belongs to the Ukrainian Media Holding (UMH), which in turn belongs to company president and founder, Ukrainian businessman Boris Lozhkin. The Russian franchisor does not appear to own any stake in *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*. Like much of the Ukrainian media, however, its ownership structure is not transparent; one report suggested that Ukrainian tycoon Gennadiy Bogolyubov may be a shareholder (Nayem and Leshchenko, 2008).

According to the thesis hypothesis, one would expect *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* to carry the most extensive and favourable coverage of Russia among the three tabloids since it is the only one with a Russian partner. None of these papers has a Russian shareholder according to the information available.

The results of the quantitative content analysis do not support the hypothesis in this instance. Table 3.2 shows that the mean proportion of stories per issue coded as ‘featuring Russia’ was actually a little lower for *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* (14.2 per cent) than *Segodnya* (15.5 per cent) and *Fakty* (16 per cent). A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) showed that the differences in mean were not statistically significant.

Table 3.2: Proportion of stories in daily tabloids coded as ‘featuring Russia’

Daily tabloid	Mean number of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each issue	Mean % of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each issue
<i>Segodnya</i>	4 (ranging from 1 to 7)	15.5 (30 observations; min. 3.3; max. 31.2)
<i>Fakty i Kommentarii</i>	5 (ranging from 2 to 10)	16.0 (25 observations; min. 6.1; max. 37.0)
<i>Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine</i>	5 (ranging from 2 to 11)	14.2 (22 observations; min. 5.4; max. 45.8)

Tabular comparison revealed that the types of story ‘featuring Russia’ were also quite similar across the three publications, offering no clear support for the hypothesis. The comparison table (Table C2 in Appendix 2) demonstrates that *Segodnya*, *Fakty* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* all took great interest in accidents (the Polish presidential plane crash, the burst tyre of Putin’s car, the illegal racing car hitting pedestrians, the lion attack, etc.); criminal activity (the stolen jeep, the safe box theft, the con artists targeting pensioners, etc.); ordinary people doing unusual things (two separate octogenarians becoming fathers; parents giving their children strange names, a pensioner defeating a burglar, etc.); and spy stories.

Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine paid no more attention to events in Russia than *Segodnya* and *Fakty*, despite its Moscow roots. None of the three tabloids displayed much of an interest in domestic Russian politics. *Segodnya* was the most attentive. On 1 June it reported Putin's run-in with the opposition-minded Russian rock musician Yuriy Shevchuk and the Strategy 31 protest; on 27 July it ran a story, citing the Russian broadsheet *Vedomosti*, about Russian oligarchs seeking election; on 24 September it reported Putin's cousin getting a top job in a bank. Both *Segodnya* and *Fakty* picked up on the troubles of (soon to be dismissed) Moscow mayor Yuriy Luzhkov in the week beginning 20 September. It is hard to identify a single story in *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* that dealt with Russian domestic politics – it even ignored Putin's singsong with spies deported from the USA. Thus, its story selection in this area might be described as uncritical of the Russian state, but not extensive or particularly favourable.

In all three tabloids, many stories 'featured Russia' in contexts that would be best described as banal. For instance, in *Fakty*'s report about the Ukrainian pensioner who fought off burglars, Russia was simply the place where the hero of the story used to live and where people in his village were selling vegetables (24 September). In another *Fakty* story, a jackpot-winning driver from Dnepropetrovsk talked about Russia as the place where he grew up (16 July). Even Georgian Foreign Minister Grigol Vashadze, interviewed by *Fakty*, talked about Russia as a location in his personal life rather than the invader of his country (18 June).

None of these tabloids are apolitical, however. Table C2 shows that they paid some attention to Ukraine's interaction with Russia during the sample period. Stories about bilateral economic ties were reported regularly, particularly by *Segodnya* (which picked up talks between Gazprom and Naftogaz on 31 May, a high-speed rail link on 16 June and the sale of the Ukrainian train manufacturer to Russians on 16 June) and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* (which picked up statistics about Ukrainian migrant workers in Moscow on 22 September, a plan to modernize Ukraine's gas pipelines on 26 July, a meeting between businessmen from Moscow and Kiev on 18

June and the sale of the train manufacturer on 17 June; it also ran a special feature about Ukrainians working on Russian oil fields on 20 September). In almost all the economic stories across all three papers Russia had the role of a partner rather than a rival or predator. The only economic story in which Russia's role was depicted as a little controversial concerned the struggle for control of two Ukrainian industrial plants: Zaporozhstal and the Mariupol-based Ilich Metallurgical Mill (MMK). On 31 May *Segodnya* reported that the latter plant had been subject, in the words of the plant's director, to a 'raider attack' (illegal seizure) by Russian investors, but it did not particularly play up this angle, stressing instead that the whole affair was rather murky. *Fakty* reported the same story on 3 June, but somewhat sensationalized the 'Russian predator' angle through the headline 'Are Ukraine's metallurgical giants sailing into the northern neighbour's hands in a forced-voluntary way?'

Although the difference was marginal, *Fakty* did seem to dramatize tensions in Russia's relations with Ukraine and its other neighbours slightly more than *Segodnya* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*. For instance, on 17 July it reported the plan of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to conduct a promotional campaign in Ukraine under the headline 'The CSTO is only a means for the Kremlin to restore its control over the post-Soviet space, says MP Ivan Stoyko'. Similarly, on 27 July it gave full and sympathetic vent to the indignation of an elderly Ukrainian human rights activist, a former political prisoner, who was told he was *persona non grata* when he tried to attend a conference in Russia. *Fakty's* report recalled that President Medvedev was supposed to have ended the practice of blacklists in relations with Ukraine, implying that Russia was failing to keep its word. *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* reported this story too – but one day later, on 28 July, once Russia had expressed regret for the incident. The report in *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* was titled 'Ukrainian human rights activist was not allowed into Russia by mistake'.

Overall, none of the papers took a clear-cut editorial position on matters relating to Russia through their story selection. Only *Segodnya* had regular opinion columns relating to Russia: the content sample encompassed six commentaries by Oles Buzina in which Russia featured. Buzina is a regular *Segodnya* columnist who supports the ‘tri-unity of the Russian people’, i.e. the idea that Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians are one nation (Buzina, 2013). He is pro-Russian in the sense that his views on the past and the unity of Russians and Ukrainians resemble ideas expressed among the Russian elite. It should be noted, however, that none of the Buzina columns in the sample discussed the modern Russian state. Rather, support was expressed for a historical Russia, Russian culture and identity.

It is difficult to argue on the basis of story selection during the sample period that coverage of Russia in *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* was noticeably more favourable than coverage of Russia in *Segodnya* and *Fakty*. The three papers actually demonstrated a similar approach: none of them showed much interest in the Russian political situation and Russia tended to feature in their news content as a banal adjacent space where Ukrainians have relatives or do business rather than as a malign or benevolent geopolitical force. The most notable differences observed were that *Segodnya* ran regular opinion columns by a ‘pro-Russian’ pundit while the others did not; *Fakty* was occasionally prone to dramatize Russian-Ukrainian tensions when the others did not; and *Segodnya* paid the most attention to events in Russian political life – including one report about an opposition protest.

The third stage of the content analysis, on the other hand, did produce results in line with the hypothesis. As in the previous section, variation in news coverage of Patriarch Kirill’s visit to Ukraine is illustrated by answering three questions:

1. What facts and details relating to the story were reported?
2. What opinions relating to the story were reported, and to whom did they belong?
3. How did the newspaper or TV reporter(s) most frequently refer to Kirill?

The results are presented in the boxes below.

<i>Segodnya</i>: ‘This is all working to form an image of Russia...’	
1.	<p>Airport welcomers formed a guard of honour for Kirill, laid a red carpet and greeted Kirill with dances and gifts (26 July).</p> <p>Patriarch Kirill conducted prayers; presented icons; visited a missile factory, an exhibition and the memorial to Holodomor victims; met Ukrainian political leaders; accepted gifts (including a miniature missile launcher); called for less political tension; and met young believers (26, 27, 28, 29 July).</p> <p>Traffic police advised people not to travel to the city centre (26 July).</p> <p>Nationalists and opponents to Kirill’s visit tried to perform a sketch of the ‘glamorous tour of the Kremlin’s KGB man’ and shouted slogans (27 July).</p> <p>The Holy Synod convened and appealed to ‘schismatics’ (27 July).</p> <p>The Kiev Patriarchate issued a warning to potential defectors (29 July).</p> <p>Patriarch Filaret conducted a service and led a procession of many thousands of people (29 July).</p>
2.	<p>‘Down with the Moscow priestling!’ (protesters, 27 July)</p> <p>‘Living as a schismatic is sinful and bad for the soul.’ (Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, 27 July)</p> <p>‘We [in the Kiev Patriarchate] are not schismatics...’; ‘If the state adheres to the principle of treating the denominations equally, it shouldn’t deny us [permission to conduct prayers in St Sophia Cathedral] anymore.’ (representative of the Kiev Patriarchate, 27 July)</p> <p>‘After Kirill’s sermons I have peace in my soul.’ (believer, 28 July)</p> <p>‘It is very interesting to listen to the patriarch.’ (believer, 28 July)</p> <p>‘Hard times have come for Kiev Patriarch Filaret.’ (reporter, 29 July)</p>

‘The patriarch talked to young people a lot and stressed he was on good terms with the internet. This is all working to form an image of Russia as an “advanced” country in the eyes of Ukrainians.’ (reporter, 29 July)

‘The patriarch’s visit draws a thick line under all possible projects concerning a local [Ukrainian] church and the separation of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church from the Russian one.’ (political scientist, 29 July)

‘He [Kirill] acts like a boss here, although in fact he is a foreigner and a guest.’ (political scientist, 29 July)

‘Today the field of battle is a battle of cultures, a battle with Western influence, a battle of images.’ (political scientist, 29 July)

‘Despite the talk about Patriarch Kirill coming to restrict the rights of the head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, this is not so.’ (Kirill, 29 July)

3. ‘Kirill’; ‘Patriarch Kirill’; ‘the patriarch’

Fakty i Kommentarii: Bare essentials

1. Traffic police advised people not to travel to the city centre (27 July).

Kirill conducted a service and prayers; conducted a meeting of the Holy Synod; presented an icon and spoke against conflicts in Ukrainian society (28 July).

Protesters tried to demonstrate against Kirill; unfurled an enormous Ukrainian flag and chanted hostile slogans (27, 28 July).

Police arrested eight protesters and prevented a demonstration (27 July).

Believers came to listen to Kirill (28 July).

The Kiev Patriarchate called on believers to support the idea of an independent Ukrainian

church and conducted a procession (28 July).

The Holy Synod convened and confirmed members of the patriarch's culture committee (28 July).

2. 'Living as a schismatic is sinful and bad for the soul.' (Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, 28 July)

3. 'Most Holy Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus Kirill'; 'leader of the Russian Orthodox Church'; 'His Holiness'

Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine: A carpet of rose petals for 'our Patriarch Kirill!'

1. Patriarch Kirill accepted gifts (including a miniature missile launcher); visited a missile factory; stayed in a five-star hotel and rode in an expensive jeep; conducted prayers; presented an icon; conducted a meeting of the Holy Synod; met Ukrainian political leaders; led the divine liturgy; led a traditional procession; ate fruit dumplings; departed to cries of 'Our Patriarch Kirill!' (26, 27, 28, 29 July)

Believers came to see Kirill; waited all night outside Kirill's hotel; suffered in the heat to see Kirill; greeted Kirill with glad shouts; scattered a carpet of rose petals for Kirill (26, 27, 28, 29 July).

Police shut roads, causing traffic jams; feared 'provocations' by 'right-wing radicals'; arrested protesters (27 July).

Nationalists tried to perform a sketch of Kirill's visit (27 July).

The Kiev Patriarchate was displeased at Kirill's visit (27 July).

Head of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) Metropolitan Vladimir

<p>accompanied Kirill and fell ill in the heat (28 July).</p>
<p>2. ‘There are few places on earth where people pray like you do’; ‘[Last visit] I concluded that your people [in Kiev] live peacefully and in Christian Orthodox faith’; ‘God will hear our prayer about the unity of the church, let no-one doubt it!’; ‘The Russian world [<i>Russkiy mir</i>] has nothing to do with either the state or power. It is a spiritual force which unites all Orthodox Christians above politics.’ (Kirill, 26, 27, 29 July)</p> <p>‘Kirill intends to fundamentally change tactics towards Ukraine. He is showing that he will increase his influence in the religious life of our country.’ (religious expert, 27 July)</p> <p>‘A ban [on protests] is a ban.’ (reporter, commenting on arrest of nationalist protesters, 27 July)</p>
<p>3. ‘Patriarch Kirill’; ‘the Patriarch’; ‘the leader of the Russian Orthodox Church’</p>

Much like their TV counterparts, the reporters writing about Patriarch Kirill’s visit for the daily tabloids stated few opinions of their own about the patriarch explicitly, so editorial sentiment was again conveyed primarily through a selective approach to the facts and the range of views deemed worthy of mention. All three daily tabloids gave reasonably detailed accounts of where Kirill went, whom he met and what he did. None of them failed entirely to mention the protests and tensions his presence prompted. However, several points make the content of *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* more ‘pro-Kirill’ (and by extension, favourable to Russia) than that of *Fakty* and *Segodnya*. *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* was alone in mentioning the rose petals scattered at Kirill’s feet by his Ukrainian supporters, and the only one to report the ‘glad shouts’ which welcomed Kirill and the cries of ‘our patriarch’ to which he departed. It quoted Kirill more extensively than either *Segodnya* or *Fakty*, and implicitly endorsed the detention of nationalist protesters through the pointed remark that ‘a ban is a ban’ (referring to a court ruling to prohibit demonstrations). Both

Segodnya and *Fakty* reported the procession of thousands of believers led by Patriarch Filaret of the Kiev Patriarchate, whereas *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine v Ukraine* ignored it. Of the three, *Fakty* spent least time dwelling on opinions; it opted to recount what happened without paying much attention to issues or politics. *Segodnya*, meanwhile, was the most explicit in pointing out the political subtext of Kirill's visit. Its reporter suggested that Kirill was deliberately trying to 'form an image of Russia as an "advanced" country in the eyes of Ukrainians' (29 July), and a pundit described the patriarch's visit as part of a 'cultural battle' (also 29 July). *Segodnya* could thus be described as the most politically conscious paper in relation to this story.

To shed light on the content analysis findings, interviews were conducted with journalists representing all three of the daily tabloids under study.

The content sample did not support the hypothesis that *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* would generate more extensive coverage of Russia than its rivals. In fact, none of the tabloids paid much attention to events in Russia. When asked why this might be, the journalists pointed to their readers. The representative of *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*, for instance, said:

'Russia and Ukraine have realised that they are sovereign countries, and news concerning one's own country comes first... Our [Ukrainian] political and economic situation is the priority. The situation of our neighbours – even the closest ones, which were with us in the Soviet Union – is becoming secondary.' (Interviewee 14, 2011)

An interviewee at *Fakty* expressed a similar view, conceding that Russia was effectively becoming just another foreign country:

Interviewer: 'It turns out that Russia is just one of many countries.'

Interviewee: 'Yes. We do not make any kind of special zone or place for Russia.

Perhaps we used to do that, when the paper was just forming and ties between Russia

and Ukraine were very dense and close, but now, for six years already at least, that has not been done.’ (Interviewee 15, 2011)

At *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*, the interviewee also stressed the independence of the Ukrainian edition from Moscow, saying:

‘At the start I think the ratio of national [Ukrainian] content to Moscow content was 50:50... Since the [Ukrainian] editorial office developed well and intensively, the percentage of material from Moscow diminished... No-one sets the condition that there absolutely must be material from Russia.’ (Interviewee 14, 2011)

Rather than simply reprinting stories from the Russian federal edition, she added, *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* may borrow ideas from it and replicate them in the Ukrainian context:

‘The federal [Russian] *Komsomolka* has always been strong in terms of talking politics indirectly, through tales about people, real-life situations which happen in provincial Russia. The situations are archetypal... the difficult life in some small mining town or [word indistinct] village. Exactly the same situation can be found in Ukraine. Basically, that’s what we do... We prepare a report on Ukraine in the same tone.’ (Interviewee 14, 2011)

The interviews indicate that *Segodnya*, *Fakty* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* use similar story selection criteria in their coverage of Russia, in line with the content analysis findings. At all three publications, stories about Russian politics need to involve very high-profile individuals – the *verkhushka* or *pervyye litsa* (top leaders) – in order to make it into print. At *Fakty*:

‘... the principle is as follows: we mention only those people who are so famous that we don’t have to explain who they are. If it’s necessary to explain who they are, then something really outstanding has to happen to them.’ (Interviewee 15, 2011)

Political news about Russia ‘must concern the top leaders [*pervykh lits*]’ or ‘one of the opposition leaders’, a *Fakty* editor said, adding:

‘The main thing is that they are famous in this country [Ukraine]; their political colours are not important.’ (Interviewee 15, 2011)

Segodnya takes a similar approach. An editor said:

‘First of all, [we are interested by news] which concerns the very top of the Russian government – everything concerning Medvedev, Putin and their relationship – that’s interesting to us. But we are not interested in Russia’s domestic decisions which do not have consequences for Ukraine... Various domestic events happening in Russia don’t interest us much either, but if it is some kind of catastrophe or large-scale accident, then of course we write about it.’ (Interviewee 17, 2011)

She added that the Russian opposition ‘very rarely’ attracted attention and ‘only when there are very good photographs’. As she explained it:

‘People are already a bit tired of that topic. And the [Ukrainian] reader doesn’t quite understand it, because anyone can go out and shout something here... In just the same way, we don’t follow every protest in Minsk. We wrote that there is such a movement, and that’s it. If there is some kind of “Wow, they’re arresting everyone there!”, then of course we write. But simply slow-moving events are not very interesting.’

(Interviewee 17, 2011)

The journalist from *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* said the paper’s readers were interested in ‘the situation in the Russian authorities’, particularly the relationship between Putin and Medvedev. However, she identified ‘gas relations’ as the most newsworthy topic, noting that it ‘leads by a wide margin’ (Interviewee 14, 2011).

The content analysis established that all three tabloids generally avoid taking an explicit editorial stance on matters concerning Russia. It was rare to see reporters expressing their own opinions openly, and only *Segodnya* ran regular opinion columns. The interviewees were asked to explain the lack of editorializing on matters concerning Russia. At both *Segodnya* and *Fakty*, editorial staff pointed to the need to appeal to as wide an audience as possible: an editorially dispassionate position is deemed necessary to retain a mass audience in a country like Ukraine. At *Fakty*, a columnist said:

‘We consider ourselves a mass [circulation] newspaper. Therefore, we understand that we are read by people with different political and religious views. Why should we impose our opinion on them? We don’t have that right! Why do others behave differently? That’s their concept.’ (Interviewee 15, 2011)

He explained further and gave an example:

‘A recent case: Russian President Medvedev said that Ukraine is like a poor relative because we go around begging and asking for a discount. We print this, because it really does offend national feelings. We give his [Medvedev’s] phrase. We give the reaction of our officials... We give the reaction of people who are famous in the country. And the reader has the opportunity to determine his own position. But the journalist does not give his assessment. It’s our [concept], which we try to stick to. It concerns not only Russia, but any country and events inside the country.’ (Interviewee 15, 2011)

An editor at *Segodnya* made a similar point:

‘Our reader is very clever, we have communicated with him. He believes that we should not complete the thought at the end of the article. We should give him the opportunity to draw a conclusion himself on the basis of the facts which we lay out in

the article. Then he feels: I'm so great! I'm so clever! I guessed! ... I consider it a great skill: to be able to lay out all the facts so that the conclusion is clear, but you haven't prescribed it; the reader himself draws a conclusion and is proud to be so clever.'

(Interviewee 17, 2011)

However, unlike *Fakty, Segodnya* does have the regular columnist Oles Buzina who is very forthright in his views. When asked how such opinionated material goes down with readers, the editor said:

'If they buy the paper, that means they're OK with it. Obviously, our society is split in two halves due to all these political [changes tack]. So we are read by the half which is closer [to the views expressed in the columns]. But in general, we try to be objective.'

(Interviewee 17, 2011)

Thus, *Fakty* tries to occupy the middle ground between different points of view among its mass readership; *Segodnya* orients itself more towards that section of Ukrainian society which feels a historical affinity with Russia, yet avoids presenting news in an overtly tendentious manner because of the belief that its readers like to work things out for themselves.

At *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* there is a need to balance mass audience preferences with the preferences of the paper's Russian franchisor. When asked about how the paper covered Russian-Ukrainian relations, a correspondent from the paper said:

'That's probably the most complicated moment. There are a lot of underwater currents here. Here, one has to be extremely careful [*akkuratnyy*] in one's conclusions and assessments... When you write about this, you have to take into account that *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* represents the point of view of the majority of people living in Ukraine, after all. The federal Russian paper exactly represents the point of view of the majority of Russians.' (Interviewee 14, 2011)

She went on to say:

‘A journalist who tries to analyze the situation linked to Ukraine’s political relations, certain economic conflicts, he risks falling towards one side... Staying on the line and balancing is the hardest thing... Sometimes one has to step on the throat of one’s own political impressions of what’s correct and what’s incorrect... In my view, Ukraine is being violated here, but I have to find certain arguments so that the other side’s point of view is also represented. I suppose [the hardest thing is] to stay on the line and not fall into the same rhetoric as the Russian and Ukrainian politicians use.’ (Interviewee 14, 2011)

The presence of a Russian franchisor clearly does affect coverage of Russian-Ukrainian relations in *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*, but editorial stance does not appear to be explicitly dictated from Moscow. Rather, the correspondent’s comments suggest that the paper generally ends up acknowledging any obvious tensions, but playing down their significance:

‘We do not so much seek a compromise with the owners and publishers, as [changes tack]. It would be very strange if the Ukrainian editorial office, knowing the mood of people in Ukraine, started to pursue the line which is close to the federal Moscow editorial office. We have to reflect the situation we live in. We have to take into account the opinion of our readers and the majority of citizens... When there are two opinions on one page, the compromise solution in that situation is [to include] some comments by pundits, who say that this is all normal, in fact. There are two points of view and there is no solution other than to look for some points of common ground, so thankfully, they are found. So there is no internal conflict between journalists of the Ukrainian and Moscow editorial offices.’ (Interviewee 14, 2011)

Finally, none of the tabloid journalists would acknowledge any direct interference from owners in their coverage of Russia. The editor at *Segodnya* said ‘the editorial board decides everything’ (Interviewee 17, 2011), while the columnist at *Fakty* said:

‘Pinchuk does not get involved. I do not know why that is so. Perhaps [it’s] because of some moral principles, or because he understands that the editor-in-chief can maintain the things about which they apparently agreed when they set up the paper. Perhaps it all works together.’ (Interviewee 15, 2011)

3.4 Daily broadsheets: *Den*, *Izvestiya v Ukraine* and *Kommersant-Ukraina*

The three daily broadsheets studied here are *Den*, *Izvestiya v Ukraine* and *Kommersant-Ukraina*. The identity of *Den*’s owner(s) is unknown. The *Den* journalist interviewed for this study said he did not know to whom the paper belonged and suggested that the paper had changed hands ‘several times’ (Interviewee 19, 2011). *Izvestiya v Ukraine* is the Ukrainian edition of Russia’s *Izvestiya* (see Chapter 2). A substantial proportion of its content comes from Moscow, although some is written locally in Kiev. It is part of the Glavred Media Holding owned by Ukrainian multibillionaire Igor Kolomoyskiy. However, its precise ownership structure is unclear. When interviewed for this study, *Izvestiya* president Vladimir Mamontov said the Russian publisher retained a 49 per cent stake in the Ukrainian edition (Interviewee 5, 2011), yet first deputy editor of *Izvestiya v Ukraine* Vyacheslav Stareychenko said he knew only of the Ukrainian shareholder (Interviewee 20, 2011). *Kommersant-Ukraina* is a subsidiary of the *Kommersant* publishing house, which ultimately belongs to Uzbek-born Russian multibillionaire Alisher Usmanov.

There is no evidence to suggest that *Den* is Russian-owned, so the thesis hypothesis would lead one to expect *Kommersant-Ukraina* and *Izvestiya v Ukraine* to produce more extensive and more favourable coverage of Russia than *Den*.

The quantitative content analysis results only partially conform to these expectations. As Table 3.3 illustrates, *Izvestiya v Ukraine* was found to have the most Russia-centric content. On average, around half the stories in each issue ‘featured Russia’. However, *Den* also proved to be relatively Russia-centric; on average, just over a quarter of its stories ‘featured Russia’. *Kommersant-Ukraina* had the lowest proportion of stories featuring Russia per issue, at 17.5 per cent. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the Bonferroni follow-up test showed statistically significant differences in mean between *Izvestiya v Ukraine*, *Den* and *Kommersant-Ukraina*.

Table 3.3: Proportion of stories in daily broadsheets coded as ‘featuring Russia’

Daily broadsheet	Mean number of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each issue	Mean % of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each issue
<i>Den</i>	7 (ranging from 2 to 12)	26.3 (20 observations; min. 6.9; max. 45.5)
<i>Izvestiya v Ukraine</i>	20 (ranging from 13 to 24)	46.7 (23 observations; min. 31.6; max. 57.1)
<i>Kommersant-Ukraina</i>	4 (ranging from 1 to 8)	17.5 (24 observations; min. 5.3; max. 40.9)

Table C3 (see Appendix 2) lists and compares the stories selected by *Den*, *Izvestiya v Ukraine* and *Kommersant-Ukraina* during the sample period. *Den* and *Izvestiya v Ukraine* were found to behave in line with the hypothesis. The former ran many reports in which the Russian state was depicted as a threat or malefactor. The latter carried a copious amount of uncritical news about the Russian authorities. *Kommersant-Ukraina*, however, had little in common with either *Izvestiya v Ukraine* or *Den* in the kind of stories it selected; its editorial stance towards Russia, as expressed through story selection, was much more ambiguous.

In *Izvestiya v Ukraine*, over a third of the stories coded as ‘featuring Russia’ were exclusively concerned with Russian domestic matters, i.e. they contained no reference to interaction with Ukraine or other countries. In fact, there were so many stories about Russian domestic matters in *Izvestiya v Ukraine* that they are not individually listed in Table C3; only examples are given. These stories included a lot of crimes and accidents, as well as consumer concerns, cultural events and celebrity interviews – content that would not be out of place in a tabloid. Unlike the tabloids described earlier, however, *Izvestiya v Ukraine* also reported frequently on the domestic initiatives and activities of the Russian government and authorities at every level, including regional. For example, discussions of Russian legislative proposals to do with land ownership and housing reform made it into the paper during the sample period, as did information that the leader of the Russian republic of Bashkortostan would shortly be replaced. Some reports had an element of national pride to them – Russian national pride, as opposed to Ukrainian. For example, on 16 June *Izvestiya v Ukraine* reported that Medvedev had launched a new nuclear submarine described as ‘unrivalled, not only in Russia but in the world’. On 26 July it reported the story of a French-Russian dual national teenager who was battling to be accepted into the Russian army because he had ‘dreamt about it since childhood’. *Izvestiya v Ukraine* was not entirely blind to Russia’s failings. On 20 September it reported that not a single Russian institution had made it into *The Times*’ ranking of the world’s top 200 universities, for instance. However, none of its reports linked Russian problems to failings on the part of the ruling tandem or in the political system itself. *Izvestiya v Ukraine* did not report the Strategy 31 opposition protest staged in the first week of the sample period. Neither did it report Putin’s exchange with opposition-minded rock musician Yuriy Shevchuk at the time it happened, although the incident was discussed many weeks later in an interview with another Russian musician, Sergey Mazayev. On 30 July Mazayev was quoted as saying that he ‘felt very sorry’ for Shevchuk, who ‘didn’t really understand the essence of events’ and had ‘overdone it, with his harassment of Putin and all these dissenters’ marches’.

In stark contrast to *Izvestiya v Ukraine*, *Den*'s story selection reflects considerable interest the formation of the Ukrainian national consciousness and a worldview in which Russia is very much the hostile Other. At the start of June, for example, *Den* ran a series of long articles by a history professor about the proposal to create a joint Russian-Ukrainian history textbook for use by schoolteachers. The articles made a detailed case against the project, concluding on 3 June that 'to accept all this [the Russian view of history] means to abandon our own national identity and to declare the independence of Ukraine a historical mistake'. Similar concerns about a Russian threat to Ukraine's identity were raised repeatedly throughout the sample period. On 30–31 July, two historians contributed an article titled 'Neo-imperial project – Or why they are trying to deny Ukrainians the right to be themselves in their own state', in which they declared that Russia's whole history had been 'an almost continuous chain of wars, expansions, conquests of the territory of others and the enslavement of other peoples'. Then on 24 September, *Den* was the only newspaper studied here to report on a conference by the Sea of Azov devoted to 'prospects for the development of the Russian World [*Russkiy Mir*] concept in modern Russia, Ukraine and Belarus'. The article in question was titled 'Geopolitical goods – Why talk about the Russian World starts with the health of Holy Rus and ends with the repose of Ukraine and Belarus'.

Table C3 shows that *Den* was reasonably attentive to developments in Russian politics, yet the stories of Russian domestic affairs which caught its attention were entirely different to those on the pages of *Izvestiya v Ukraine*. *Izvestiya v Ukraine* gave extensive coverage to the everyday 'output' of Russia's political system – expenditure decisions, legislative changes, government initiatives etc. It never really questioned the functionality of the system itself. *Den*, on the other hand, was interested almost exclusively in stories that illustrated flaws in Russia's political foundations. For instance, on 1 June *Den* printed a transcript of Yuriy Shevchuk's public conversation with Vladimir Putin, observing that the 'legendary' musician had exposed the prime minister as an 'irritated bureaucrat, not the blessed saviour of Russia'. The Strategy 31 protest in Moscow demanding

freedom of assembly was front-page news on 2 June; the *Den* reporter asked his readers ‘why an article of the constitution has direct effect in many countries, but not in Russia’. On 22 September *Den* translated an article from the *Washington Post* which focused on violations of human rights in Russia; the issue of rights was also highlighted in *Den*’s 13 July report about the conviction of the organizers of a Moscow art exhibition.

As for international news, *Den* tended to select stories in which Russia played a negative role. It was the only paper studied here to mention the adoption of a parliamentary resolution in Lithuania which declared Russia’s actions in Abkhazia and South Ossetia to be illegal (4 June). On 1 June it reported the trial of an Estonian veteran on charges of war crimes under the subtitle ‘Moscow finds yet more grounds for anti-Western hysterics and the fight against “falsifiers” of history’.

During the sample period both *Den* and *Izvestiya v Ukraine* ran numerous opinion columns and interviews in which Russia was discussed and analysed. Guest columnists and political interviewees in *Izvestiya v Ukraine* came predominantly from Russian academic circles and think-tanks. They ranged in worldview from moderates with a relatively relaxed view of the West (Mikhail Ozerov, Dmitriy Polikanov) to outspoken anti-Western Russian nationalists (Aleksandr Dugin and Vladimir Zharikhin). Several could be described as close to the structures of Russian power, such as the director of the *Russkiy Mir* foundation Vyacheslav Nikonov, who contributed his views once a week on subjects ranging from the Russian diaspora to American foreign policy. *Den*, meanwhile, gave greater weight to Polish and Western commentators than to Russian ones. For example, Polish journalist and Soviet-era dissident Adam Michnik was interviewed on 1 June; Sam Greene of the Moscow Carnegie Center on 3 June; French historian Alain Bezancon on 15 June (translated from a Polish newspaper); Canadian MP Borys Wrzesnewskyj on 16 June; British political scientist Andrew Wilson on 13 July; and Polish-American statesman and academic Zbigniew Brzezinski on 15 July. None of these experts had anything particularly complimentary to say about modern Russia or its leaders. On the contrary, Russia was largely discussed as a problem, a threat, or both. *Den*’s

most high-profile (i.e. front-page) interview with a Russian political commentator during the sample period was with opposition leader Boris Nemtsov (28 July).

Kommersant has always been known for its strong business section. Unsurprisingly, *Kommersant-Ukraina* ran many economic stories ‘featuring Russia’ that were ignored by all the other news providers studied. References to Russia were frequently found in the context of news about the oil and gas trade. Such news tended to be reported and analysed from an economic perspective, while the geopolitical dimension was downplayed. Thus, *Kommersant-Ukraina* wrote about the construction of a new pipeline in Turkmenistan without discussing its potential significance for Russia’s political ambitions in the region (1 June). In an 18 June report about reversing the flow of the Odessa-Brody oil pipeline (in order to take Venezuelan oil to Belarus), Russian influence on Belarus was mentioned briefly but the topic was not developed. Similarly, when Gazprom invited Germany’s RWE to join the South Stream pipeline consortium, *Kommersant-Ukraina*’s report of 14 July concentrated on commercial implications; only in passing was it stated that Russia considered South Stream a ‘political project aimed at eliminating transit countries’. There was very little in these reports about Russia desiring to manipulate its smaller neighbours or using its hydrocarbon resources to get the upper hand over Europe politically. Overall, *Kommersant-Ukraina* placed far greater emphasis on pipeline economics than pipeline politics.

The tendency of *Kommersant-Ukraina* not to over-dramatise the political angle of economic stories extended to its ample coverage of business dealings among Russian and Ukrainian companies. Column space was divided fairly evenly between the positive and negative sides of the Russian-Ukrainian economic relationship. Some reports referred to Ukrainian plants benefiting from Russian contracts; others dealt with clashes of interest, such as Lukoil’s efforts to sell Central Asian gas to China instead of Ukraine (20 September) and a threat from Russia to abandon Ukrainian-made aircraft engines in favour of Russian-made ones (30 July). There were multiple reports about the legal dispute at the Stockholm court of arbitration between gas trader Rosukrenergo and

Ukraine's state gas company Naftogaz. Gazprom's actions in this dispute were portrayed as detrimental to Ukrainian interests. However, when Russian concerns acquired (or tried to acquire) major Ukrainian assets – a train manufacturer, a metallurgical plant, the PFTS stock exchange – the possibility that Russia might be increasing its influence in Ukraine was not explored in any depth. On 1 June *Kommersant-Ukraina* cited market players who suggested that the Russian authorities were creating 'a transnational metallurgical holding, which will include the biggest Ukrainian enterprises'. Another article from 16 June quoted an analyst as saying that Russian investors were returning to Ukrainian firms because the Putin-Azarov commission had discussed 'the issue of restoring the interests of Russian investors in Ukraine' several times. In other publications, such statements might have prompted laments about Ukraine's sovereignty and independence, or talk of 'spheres of influence'. Yet in *Kommersant-Ukraina* they were simply presented as statements of fact; no further conclusions were drawn. One of the most striking differences between *Kommersant-Ukraina* and the other two other daily broadsheets is that it carries very little comment and opinion. Its journalists rarely express value judgements or their own normative assessments of events and there are no regular opinion columns. This makes it harder to discern a clear editorial line on any given issue.

In *Kommersant-Ukraina* there were only a few reports about Russian domestic politics, but almost all were indicative of problems with Russian democracy. The Strategy 31 opposition protest calling for freedom of assembly received coverage on 1 June; on 15 June *Kommersant-Ukraina* picked up the publication of a highly critical report about Putin by the Russian opposition; on 29 July it reported a ban on YouTube imposed in the Russian Far East. Where political interaction between Russia and Ukraine was concerned, *Kommersant-Ukraina* selected the same 'big stories' as most of the other newspapers studied here: meetings between Yanukovich and Medvedev, Putin's visit to Sevastopol and Patriarch Kirill's visit to Kiev. In contrast to *Den* and *Izvestiya v Ukraine*,

Kommersant-Ukraina displayed very little concern for issues of history and identity in its story selection.

There is support for hypothesis H1 in how *Den* and *Izvestiya v Ukraine* reported Patriarch Kirill’s visit to Ukraine. The former’s response to the visit was extremely negative while the latter gave the patriarch very flattering coverage. *Kommersant-Ukraina* again took no clear editorial position on the matter. The boxes below illustrate the variation in the broadsheets’ coverage of this story by answering three questions:

1. What facts and details relating to the story were reported?
2. What opinions relating to the story were reported, and to whom did they belong?
3. How did the newspaper or TV reporter(s) most frequently refer to Kirill?

***Den*: ‘The attack on democratic and independent Ukraine is clearly not weakening...’**

1. Police arrested 39 activists in Dnepropetrovsk and stopped buses of believers coming into Kiev (27, 29 July).
 Dnepropetrovsk believers came to see Kirill but were refused access (27 July).
 Kirill waved at believers from a black limo; got wrong the name of the university awarding him an honorary doctorate; spoke about religion and science; let off ‘poisoned arrows’ at his opponents in the Kiev Patriarchate; led a divine liturgy; called on the Kiev Patriarchate to repent and met politicians (27, 29 July).
 Patriarch Filaret led a procession (29 July).
2. ‘Moscow has begun an all-too-clear ideological campaign with clear goals. We cannot and must not fail to respond’; ‘The clear goal of Patriarch Kirill is to reintegrate Ukraine into Russia’s sphere of interests and influence’; ‘Like any Russian politician of a modern neoimperial spirit, Kirill regards Ukrainian “specialness” with extreme nervousness’; ‘A state

which cannot build and defend its own national church cannot consider itself fully-fledged and complete...' (columnist / political scientist, 27 July)

'In [Kirill's calls] were present the position and interest of only one church, one state, one people – not mine. The state is a foreign one to me; the people and church are fraternal, but not mine'; 'The patriarch's arrival hasn't united Ukrainians, but polarized them...' (academic, 29 July)

'The patriarch is undoubtedly an educated and intelligent person and also a great orator, who can carry out his line to strengthen Orthodoxy'; 'He is a clear reformer and is compared in many ways to Mikhail Gorbachev.' (dean of university, 27 July)

'What was worrying in the sermons of Patriarch Kirill? Above all, the way he interprets secession (separation) in such a one-sided way'; 'As a Ukrainian citizen, I am also worried that Patriarch Kirill is very keen to talk about "our people", and the unity of "our people"'; 'The attack on democratic and independent Ukraine is clearly not weakening...' (reporter, 28 July)

'For Ukrainians I want to stress that *Russkiy Mir* [the Russian world in an ethnic or cultural sense] doesn't mean *rossiyskiy* [Russian in a political sense]. Even less is it the world of the Russian Federation'; 'I think those who deny the existence of the Russian world should deny the Baptism of Rus'; 'We can't accept it when, instead of unity in Christ, they want to impose unity on us under the power of a foreign hierarch [Patriarch Bartholemew of Constantinople].'
(Kirill, 27, 29 July)

3. 'Kirill'; 'the Patriarch'; 'Patriarch Kirill'; 'the Moscow patriarch'

(other references, used once, included 'main church hierarch of the empire' and 'high-ranking imperial official')

Izvestiya v Ukraine: 'Miserly' number of protesters insult 'ambassador of Holy Rus'

1. Airport welcomers greeted Kirill with a guard of honour (26 July).

Kirill visited a missile workshop; rode in a black Mercedes; spoke about science; received an honorary doctorate; conducted a liturgy; presented an icon; read a sermon; met young people; categorically denied accusations that his visit was political; ate dumplings and other Ukrainian food; visited the Holodomor memorial and stayed in a humble cell (26, 27, 28, 29 July).

The Holy Synod convened and appealed to 'schismatics' (27 July).

Believers came from far and wide to see Kirill and sailed along the length of the Dnepr to symbolise the unity of holy Rus and the Russian world (28 July).

'Only 15 or so' nationalists (an 'incomparably miserly number' compared to previous years) held an anti-patriarch rally and chanted insulting slogans (28 July).

2. 'We are not saying one part of historic Rus should dominate another... We are saying that those who break away have no God and no grace'; '...divisions, which were so unwisely implanted and exploited to get some momentary political advantages'; 'It [the idea of the Russian world] is a spiritually uniting force'; 'I am an ambassador of Holy Rus. Therefore it [Ukraine] is my country, my land and my people.' (Kirill, 26, 28, 29 July)

'Living as a schismatic is sinful and bad for the soul.' (Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, 27 July)

'Down with the Moscow priestling'; 'the Moscow *parkhat* [derogatory abbreviation of patriarch] is a spiritual invader.' (protesters, 28 July)

3. 'the patriarch'; 'the Most Holy'; 'the primate' (*predstoyatel*)

Kommersant-Ukraina: Two conflicting sides to every issue

1. Nationalists tried to protest in Dnepropetrovsk; protested in Kiev; tried to perform a sketch; unfurled an enormous national flag (26, 27, 28 July).

Police detained 38 activists in Dnepropetrovsk; detained eight in Kiev; cordoned off roads; scuffled with nationalists; tried to prevent Kiev Patriarchate supporters entering Kiev (26, 27, 28 July).

A Kiev court banned both pro- and anti-patriarch protests (26 July).

Patriarch Kirill conducted prayers; gave a sermon; met politicians (27, 28, 29 July).

The Holy Synod convened, decided on new members for a patriarch council and appealed to Orthodox believers (27 July).

Believers took part in a procession and unfurled flags and banners (29 July).

Patriarch Filaret led a procession (29 July).

2. ‘...he is a guest here, not a master’; ‘We are opposed to the current authorities greeting the Moscow invader on their knees with foam at the mouth’; ‘In the so-called Russian world Ukrainians are allocated a place in prisons and camps’; ‘Kirill should crawl to Filaret on his knees... and ask for forgiveness for his schismatic activity!’ (protesters, 26, 27, 28 July)

‘There is nothing humiliating in repentance.’ (Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, 27 July)

‘The visit was successful. We got everything we expected.’ (Moscow Patriarchate, 30 July)

‘Yes, there are a lot of people, but they are all Filaret has got... brought in by bus from Ternopol and Volin. That’s Filaret’s agony.’ (political scientist, 29 July)

‘If those gathered here are the whole Kiev Patriarchate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, then the 400 people who prayed here yesterday with Kirill are the whole Moscow Patriarchate. Actually, we have 14 million.’ (head of the Kiev Patriarchate, 29 July)

‘We are not schismatics, but part of the holy synodic and apostolic church’; ‘This visit showed that Patriarch Kirill is foreign to Ukraine. Very few people gathered for his prayers...’

(representatives of the Kiev Patriarchate, 27, 30 July)

‘We all belong to the world which Prince Vladimir founded on these Kiev hills.’ (Kirill, 28 July)

‘The problem of the split in the Ukrainian church should be solved by believers and church leaders, not the state.’ (speaker of the Ukrainian parliament, 28 July)

‘I believe he [Kirill] was the most important guest of this year’; ‘They [Kirill and the Pope] are both respected people, they both preach friendship among peoples.’ (representative of the Party of Regions, 30 July)

‘It seems like the Russian political elite, through Patriarch Kirill, is trying to return to the Soviet practice of prohibiting academics and ordinary citizens from using the term Kievan Rus.’ (representative of the Yuliya Timoshenko bloc, 30 July)

‘The Russian secular and spiritual elite has set itself the task of destroying the hegemony of the Kiev-Lvov centre of power... in order to have full influence on Ukraine.’ (political scientist, 30 July)

3. ‘Patriarch Kirill’; ‘head of the Russian Orthodox Church’; ‘the patriarch’

As the boxes demonstrate, *Den*’s coverage of the patriarch was laden with opinion, the vast majority of which was hostile to the Kremlin and the ‘main church hierarch of the empire’, as Kirill was described at one point. *Den* wrote relatively little about Kirill’s activities during the trip, although it did mention that the patriarch had confused the name of the Ukrainian university which awarded him an honorary doctorate. In contrast, *Izvestiya v Ukraine*’s coverage of the visit read like an official itinerary. It reported that a handful of believers had sailed the length of the Dnepr River to symbolize the ‘unity of holy Rus’, yet the fact that several thousands of believers had joined the

Kiev Patriarchate's procession in Kiev instead of following Kirill was omitted. In *Izvestiya v Ukraine*, most statements of opinion came from Kirill himself. The only opposing opinions it quoted were a couple of nationalist slogans, which were clearly labelled by the reporter as 'insulting' and belonging to a 'miserly' small group of extremists.

Unlike *Den* and *Izvestiya v Ukraine*, the reporters of *Kommersant-Ukraina* drew no conclusions of their own about Kirill's visit. Instead, they conveyed the views of a wide range of interviewees encompassing politicians (from opposing camps), political scientists (from opposing schools of thought) and both patriarchates of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. Quotes from anti-patriarch protesters outnumbered quotes from the patriarch himself, but for the most part *Kommersant-Ukraina* appeared careful to accompany each view it cited with a relevant counter-view.

Interviews were conducted with a journalist-representative from each broadsheet to shed light on the content analysis findings.

Den's reporting was striking for the amount of editorial opinion it contained. The interviewee from *Den* made clear that the paper explicitly aligns itself with a particular set of political beliefs and values. He described the paper's stance as follows:

'We are not a pro-Western newspaper. We are anti-communist, what's more, a militantly anti-communist newspaper. We also take the positions of liberalism and Ukraine's independence from Russia. In other words, we want [Ukraine] to be constructed according to a European pattern. We want to be a European country not only geographically... We do indeed adhere to a pro-Western course, but exclusively to Ukraine's advantage.' (Interviewee 19, 2011)

Thus, journalistic neutrality is deliberately rejected at *Den* in favour of promoting what is best for Ukraine in the eyes of the editorial team. This makes *Den* something of an exception among the news providers under study. However, identifying the reason for its unusually forthright political

stance is difficult. The interviewee did not attribute *Den*'s position to the owner (Interviewee 19, 2011):

Interviewer: 'Does the owner's opinion make itself felt at your newspaper?'

Interviewee 19: 'No.'

Interviewer: 'I don't actually know who the owner is.'

Interviewee 19: 'To be honest, I do not know either. Incidentally, they have changed several times. To be honest, it does not really interest me. A lot also depends on the editor-in-chief.'

It seems that *Den*'s stance on Russia is at least partially attributable to the personal views of the editorial team, including the journalist interviewed, who is responsible for much of the paper's reporting on Russia. The journalist said he enjoyed a large amount of freedom in his selection of stories:

'We agree the topic with the editor. More often than not, I say: my point of view is such-and-such. I want to write about this. The editor may say: in that area, touch on this issue as well... So in that sense, I am very well-off here. I know it is not the same at other newspapers. Perhaps we earn less than our colleagues, but it is better for a person to be hungry, yet free [*luchshe chelovek golodnyy, no svobodnyy*].'

(Interviewee 19, 2011)

In the personal opinion of the journalist, Russia is a source of potential risk for Ukraine. For instance, he said:

'Even when we write about Russia's domestic affairs, we have Ukraine in mind. First, for obvious reasons, many processes that happen in Russia also happen in Ukraine in another form, or similar. Or a danger arises – I call it a virus infection – a danger of

that infection being carried in from there. For example, we are very interested in the ethnic tension in Russia, because we have had direct attempts to instil it here. We have had anti-Semitic occurrences. But it is all the work of Russian agents; it is not ours... But these splashes – I call them splashes – it means that everything that happens there [in Russia] gets carried over to us [in Ukraine].’ (Interviewee 19, 2011)

The fact that *Den* employs journalists who share a particular set of political views may well ultimately be down to the owner’s involvement and preferences. Nevertheless, the personal views of senior *Den* journalists, together with their liberty to write what they choose, can be said to explain the observed content patterns in the most immediate sense.

The content analysis indicated that *Izvestiya v Ukraine*, too, has a distinct editorial stance towards Russia; one that is diametrically opposed to the position adopted by *Den*. The editor interviewed said his newspaper tried to be ‘objective’. However, his remarks suggested that the view of Russia as Ukraine’s partner was supported over other possible views:

‘We had nightmare years when Yushchenko was president – he broke off a lot of ties with Russia and nothing good came from it... We have an independent state: we proceed from the point of view that Ukraine is an independent country-partner of Russia – partners in the economy, in the social sphere, joint social projects. Many political scientists and experts say that we are doomed to live as friends, it won’t work any other way... This is all reflected in the content of reports. In other words, we try to tell our reader objectively, without fundamental twists or contradictory points of view, about opinions for, against and neutral. We try to maintain a balance.’ (Interviewee 20, 2011)

Interestingly, the interviewee argued that *Izvestiya v Ukraine* always ‘Ukrainianized’ material from the Russian federal edition before publishing it; a claim which is not supported by the content

analysis results. He estimated that the ratio of Russian to Ukrainian material in the paper was something like 30:70 or 40:60; i.e. lower than the 50:50 figure cited by *Izvestiya* president Vladimir Mamontov (see Chapter 2). He also said that material from Moscow was edited in Kiev so that the Ukrainian reader did not ‘get the impression that he has been thrown some report which is in no way relevant to him’ (Interviewee 20, 2011). However, the content sample contained reports about the price of sunflower oil in Moscow, a Russian ban on Nestle coffee and the roaming tariffs of Russian mobile phone companies – topics that would appear to be of limited relevance to someone living in Kiev.

The interviewee from *Izvestiya v Ukraine* rejected the idea that discord might arise between the editorial teams in Kiev and Moscow on certain subjects. He said:

‘There is an objective point of view. We do not have a one-sided policy. [The division of] We’re Ukrainians, they’re Russians was a feature of certain publications under Yushchenko. We try to maintain neutrality. Let the reader decide for himself. We give him different points of view.’ (Interviewee 20, 2011)

Throughout the interview, he was keen to play down the influence of his paper’s Russian links. However, the comments of the *Izvestiya* president (see Chapter 2) and the content analysis findings suggest, on the contrary, that ground rules set by the Russian franchisor do contribute to the positive portrayal of Russia in *Izvestiya v Ukraine*.

Kommersant-Ukraina is the 100-per-cent subsidiary of a Russian publishing house, so according to the thesis hypothesis it should generate relatively extensive and favourable coverage of Russia. However, the content analysis showed *Kommersant-Ukraina* to be substantially less Russia-centric than either of the other broadsheets studied here. Compared to *Izvestiya v Ukraine* it also ran more stories showing the Russian political status quo in a negative light, although its journalists never stated their own opinions in so many words.

When asked why *Kommersant-Ukraina* was not more forthright in taking an editorial stand of its own, the journalist interviewed described the policy as a kind of a marketing strategy:

‘There is a rule: analysis is not encouraged at our paper. There is a fear that it won’t be objective. In other words, we are supposed to lay out the facts. In the Moscow *Kommersant* there is a column where authors express their opinion. But we don’t do that yet. I think it is linked to the current stage of the paper. When *Kommersant* moved over here, there was too much subjective opinion everywhere. *Kommersant* decided that we should differ in some way, there had to be a unique selling point [*fishka*]. [Our unique selling point is that] we don’t write opinion, we write news.’ (Interviewee 21, 2011)

Kommersant-Ukraina sometimes ‘avoids scandal’ in order to position itself as a ‘serious paper’, he added. At the same time, the interviewee admitted that journalists would sometimes express their views ‘between the lines’:

‘There is opinion in *Kommersant*. Usually it is expressed in the selection of comments. There is certain subjectivity... *Kommersant* differs in that it doesn’t write on its own behalf [*ne pishet ot sebya*]... Sometimes it’s boring... I, for example, express my opinion in headlines, in the lead paragraph – there’s a lot of opinion there – [or] in the photo caption, the selection of facts.’ (Interviewee 21, 2011)

The interviewee acknowledged that *Kommersant-Ukraina* was ‘accustomed’ to being viewed as Russian. ‘It’s impossible to avoid – we are a Russian publication,’ he said. He also acknowledged that the paper was often accused of writing with a pro-Russian slant. Yet he gave no indication of having to perform any kind of balancing act between the interests of Ukrainian readers and Russian colleagues or owners. He said there had never been a case wherein *Kommersant*’s Moscow editorial team had insisted on certain material being included in the Ukrainian edition. If staff-members in

Kiev disagree with the way their Moscow colleagues have written an article, they have the right to change it, he said, adding: ‘They do not control us in that regard.’ As for Alisher Usmanov, the interviewee said:

‘He doesn’t decide anything at our paper. He’s a long way away. And it’s too small an asset for him to decide anything... He simply has a mega-empire, a global one, so *Kommersant* is just a small project. So for him to call here and decide something – it’s just not his level.’ (Interviewee 21, 2011)

The journalist said he thought certain ‘unpleasant’ things were printed about Russia in *Kommersant-Ukraina*, things ‘which Russia would not like to see’. He attributed *Kommersant-Ukraina*’s coverage of the anti-Kremlin opposition in Russia to the paper’s business audience, saying:

‘It’s interesting for us, because our paper is business[-oriented], so we try to report everything from the point of view of how much businessmen need to know it. In other words, if a businessman works with Russia, it is important for him to know who will be in power. And if serious rivals arise against Putin, he has to know about it. In other words, sometimes the paper is lying in a plane, the businessman is flying to Russia – you understand?’ (Interviewee 21, 2011)

However, the interviewee made clear that no-one at *Kommersant-Ukraina* wanted to ‘sling mud’ at Russia. ‘We are very well disposed towards Russia. My boss is from Russia,’ he said.

The contrasting cases of *Kommersant-Ukraina* and *Izvestiya v Ukraine* thus demonstrate that the nature of cooperation between editorial offices in Moscow and Kiev can vary greatly and have quite different outcomes. In both cases, the Moscow-based partner or parent company appears to set certain principles by which the Ukrainian publication must abide. At *Kommersant-Ukraina* there must be no explicit statement of opinions; at *Izvestiya v Ukraine* the editorial line taken on political

issues must remain reasonably close to that of the Russian *Izvestiya*. The fact of working daily with Russian colleagues (including bosses) may facilitate a relaxed attitude towards Russia at *Kommersant-Ukraina*. However, it does not prevent the paper printing ‘unpleasant’ things about the Russian state. On the contrary, *Kommersant-Ukraina* has taken from its Moscow parent company an ethos of informing the business reader about potential risks in Russia, and this means Russia’s democratic deficit does receive coverage.

3.5 Weekly newspapers: *Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine*, *Zerkalo Nedeli*, *Kommentarii*, *Stolichnyye Novosti*, *2000*

This section considers five newspapers that have a weekly publication schedule. *Argumenty i Fakty (AiF) v Ukraine* is the Ukrainian version of the eponymous Russian tabloid. Like *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* it is part of Boris Lozhkin’s UMH. *Zerkalo Nedeli* is a broadsheet known for its in-depth political coverage; it is controlled by the Mostovoy family, who are Ukrainian journalists. *Kommentarii*, a Berliner-format publication with a focus on politics and business, is said to belong to wealthy industrialist Vitaliy Gayduk. *Stolichnyye Novosti (SN)* was owned by Ukrainian-Israeli businessman Vadim Rabinovich until some point in the second half of 2010, when it was sold to Igor Kolomoyskiy. Finally, *2000* is a broadsheet that continues to be controlled by its founder and editor-in-chief, Russian-born Canadian citizen Sergey Kichigin.

According to the thesis hypothesis, one would expect *AiF v Ukraine* to carry the most extensive and favourable coverage of Russia among these papers, since none of the others have a major shareholder or partner in Russia. It should be noted, however, that *AiF v Ukraine* is the only tabloid in this cluster, so the variable of newspaper type is not a constant in the comparison.

The five-week content sample generated a maximum of five observations (issues) per title for the weekly papers, i.e. far fewer than the 20 to 30 observations generated per daily news provider. In

fact, the number was further reduced by collection problems (*2000, AiF*) and a summer break (*Zerkalo Nedeli*). In the issues that were studied, the proportion of stories ‘featuring Russia’ varied substantially from week to week for most of the publications, as Table 3.4 indicates. Therefore, it is not possible to accept or reject part (a) of the hypothesis in relation to the weeklies; the evidence is inconclusive.

Table 3.4: Proportion of stories in weekly newspapers coded as ‘featuring Russia’

	31 May– 6 Jun	14–20 Jun	12–18 Jul	26 Jul– 1 Aug	20–26 Sep	Mean % (mean #)
<i>AiF v Ukraine</i>	18.3	15.8	Missing	32.7	22.8	22.4 (12)
<i>2000</i>	Missing	Missing	37.0	Missing	27.3	32.2 (18)
<i>Stolichnyye Novosti (SN)</i>	14.3	13.9	12.1	36.7	11.8	17.7 (6)
<i>Kommentarii</i>	30.3	22.2	8.3	7.7	22.6	18.2 (6)
<i>Zerkalo Nedeli</i>	23.1	34.9	31.2	No issue	23.5	28.2 (12)

Tabular comparison of the weeklies’ story selection is also hampered by missing issues. Table C4 (see Appendix 2) lists the stories ‘featuring Russia’ that ran during the sample weeks in *Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine, 2000, Stolichnyye Novosti (SN), Kommentarii* and *Zerkalo Nedeli (ZN)*. The table provides no clear evidence in support of the hypothesis. *AiF v Ukraine* carried a relatively large amount of Russian domestic news but its story selection did not paint a picture of Russia that was noticeably more favourable than that in the other weeklies. In fact, the weekly paper with the most unambiguously ‘pro-Russian’ editorial stance in its story selection was *2000*. Although the sample of *2000s* studied here is very small, additional evidence about editorial stance is available in the form of statements made by the newspaper’s proprietor and editor-in-chief Sergey Kichigin. Kichigin is on record as saying: ‘In every way we [at *2000*] have advocated and are advocating friendship with Russia’ (Kichigin, 2010). Kichigin made this remark in summer 2010 during a

parliamentary hearing in the Russian State Duma, where he was advising Russian MPs on how best to support Russian-language press abroad.

AiF v Ukraine was the only weekly to write regularly about developments within Russia, including Russian politics, during the sample period. Russian politicians featured on page two of each *AiF v Ukraine* issue in a ‘quotes of the week’ column. The column takes remarks made by prominent public figures – often ministers and MPs – and follows each one with a brief but witty editorial response. Most of the quips in ‘quotes of the week’ are gently sceptical about the system of authority in Russia. The quoted politicians – many senior representatives of the Russian government – are mocked and never taken at face value. One cannot qualify this mild derision as criticism, but it does subvert the official version of Russian politics promoted by the likes of *Vremya* and *Izvestiya v Ukraine*. The implicit message conveyed by the quotes is that Russian politics is a show, performed largely by scoundrels, and that nobody is taken in. Examples are given below (all ellipses as received):

‘B. Gryzlov, speaker of the State Duma of the Russian Federation: “We propose... to establish a comprehensive list of circumstances under which it will be permitted to entrust one’s vote to another MP.” – The poorest people in the country are MPs, not homeless people. The bank is in the mother-in-law’s name, the off-shore [company] is in granny’s name, the Bentley is in the name of a remote sister-in-law and the vote is used by someone else on trust...’ (16 June)

‘S. Markov, State Duma deputy: “Back then (*in the 1990s – ed.*) it was not so much liberals who were governing as traitors or absolutely unqualified thieves.” – Clear progress is apparent in the Russian state! In terms of their level of qualification, the thieves of those days were not a patch on today’s lot.’ (22 September)

‘V. Bochkarev, governor of Penza Region: “The president came to visit us and I told Dmitriy Anatolyevich Medvedev that all vegetables here cost 10 roubles each (2.5 grivnas). He took a look, didn’t believe it at first, then he believed it.” – And the residents of the region, taking a look at the TV, probably believed it at first. But now?’ (22 September)

Similar political scepticism was apparent in the small number of hard news stories from Russia that ran in *AiF v Ukraine* during the sample period. For instance, an editorial on 22 September about the troubles of Moscow mayor Yuriy Luzhkov remarked that many other politicians, ministers and governors were keeping their heads low since they, like Luzhkov, had ensured the ‘rapidly increasing prosperity of their closest allies and relatives’. The tabloid’s criticisms and indignation were never too personal, however, and never cast any aspersions on the ruling tandem.

A lot of the references to Russia in *AiF v Ukraine* came in the context of soft news stories, celebrity interviews and historical features. Yet this soft news content was not entirely apolitical. It was not uncommon for *AiF*’s celebrity interviewees to digress into their political opinions as they shared personal recollections and anecdotes. On 16 June the actor Yuriy Solomin, for example, complained to *AiF* about the treatment of war veterans; on 22 September another actor, Mikhail Boyarskiy, discussed the meaning of patriotism; on 28 July the writer Boris Strugatskiy explained why Russia would never be a democracy, saying:

‘Unfading faith in the good tsar; freedom perceived as inevitable and dangerous chaos;
readiness to exchange that freedom for the smallest certainty about tomorrow;
unwillingness and incapability to take responsibility on oneself – what liberalism can
there be here!’

On the whole, the views expressed tended to be conservative and there was plenty of nostalgia for the Soviet era.

The other papers ran very few stories ‘featuring Russia’ without a Ukraine angle. However, when *Stolichnyye Novosti* and *Kommentarii* wrote about the situation in Russia, the information they reported did not reflect particularly well on the authorities in Moscow. In the week of 27 July – 2 August *Stolichnyye Novosti* picked up on ‘hints from certain Russian MPs’ that Moscow was preparing a ‘second Bishkek’ (i.e. regime change) in Georgia. Its 21–27 September issue contained an article about a Russian political documentary which, through a series of interviews with Russian politicians, had revealed that ‘politics, with all its rhetoric and pathos, is essentially a big con’. *Kommentarii*, for its part, reported on 16 July that Chinese arms manufacturers were stealing market share from Russian rivals. Its economic pessimism about Russia reached even greater depths in the 30 July–13 August issue, which stated:

‘Russia’s share on the markets of hi-tech production is 130 times lower than that of the USA... The average Russian consumes 18 litres of alcohol a year. The UN concludes that 8 litres leads to a serious degradation of the population. In a ranking of scientific literacy among the population, Russia occupies 32nd place out of 38, Romania is at number 30... Corruption in Russia is approximately like it is in Kenya...’

With the possible exception of *AiF v Ukraine*, the weeklies all paid much greater attention to Russian-Ukrainian relations than Russian domestic affairs. Given their once-weekly publication schedule, it is not surprising that they often centred their articles on opinion and analysis of issues rather than the very latest event or announcement. *Stolichnyye Novosti*, *Kommentarii*, *2000* and *Zerkalo Nedeli* all provided a platform for experts, officials and in-house columnists to air their views on ties between Moscow and Kiev. *2000*’s stance on Russia found clear reflection in its choice of interviewees. On 16 July it ran an interview with Russian MP Konstantin Zatulin which began on the front page, occupied the entirety of page three, and went on to take up half of pages four and five. Zatulin expounded the views for which is well known: he called for the closest possible ties between Russia and Ukraine; reiterated that Ukrainians were ‘Russians who live on the

periphery [*s krayu*]; argued that not enough was being done to preserve the ‘single Russian-Ukrainian cultural and spiritual space’; and touched upon the usual contentious subjects of language, history and citizenship.

Another senior Russian MP received column space in *2000* on 16 July in the form of a transcript rather than an interview. The paper printed a speech by Aleksey Ostrovskiy, chairman of the State Duma’s committee for CIS affairs, about Russia’s compatriot policy and the problems of the Russian-language media around the world. This set of issues was also at the heart of a debate between *2000* columnists Sergey Lozunko and Maksim Mikhaylenko that extended over several weeks. In the 16 July edition, Lozunko argued that Russia’s problems were due to a *lack* of imperial thinking, called for more of it, and quoted Putin’s remark about the collapse of the USSR being the greatest geopolitical tragedy of the 20th Century. In the 24 September issue Mikhaylenko referred to Russian civilization as ‘having created great powers in the past’ and ‘able to give rise to a supra-state in the future’. Both Mikhaylenko and Lozunko described Vladimir Putin in glowing terms. Mikhaylenko asserted that ‘only someone with screws loose’ could deny Putin’s services to Russia; Lozunko praised Putin for standing up to the ‘civilizers’ in Europe and making Moscow a force to be reckoned with.

Interestingly, however, *2000*’s unequivocal Russophilia was not accompanied by equally unequivocal anti-Western editorial sentiment. Among the guest columnists who featured in the sampled issues was a senior Ukrainian diplomat who called for partnership with the USA as well as Russia. *2000* also chose to run a piece of analysis on the gas-for-fleet accords written by Simon Pirani, Jonathan Stern and Katja Yafimova of the Oxford Energy Institute. Thus, one cannot say that Russian MPs had a monopoly in the newspaper when it came to commenting on Russia-Ukraine relations.

The selection of interviewees and stories in *Zerkalo Nedeli*, *Kommentarii* and *Stolichnyye Novosti* was much less indicative of a particular editorial viewpoint on Russia. In *Stolichnyye Novosti*,

opinion-based articles were often set up to contrast opposing points of view on the same page. For example, there is a regular column in *Stolichnyye Novosti* called *Kontrvyu* (Counterinterview), which consists of three Ukrainian MPs from rival political parties expounding their thoughts on a set of questions. During the sample period two *Kontrvyu* columns addressed the matter of ties with Russia. In the 13–19 July issue MPs from the Party of Regions, the Communist Party of Ukraine, the Yuliya Tymoshenko bloc and the Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defence bloc were asked, amongst other things, ‘What is our country’s place in the new political conditions: is it condemned to choose between Russia and the West?’ The issue of 1–7 June posed the question: ‘What main conclusion can be drawn from President Medvedev’s visit to Kiev and what has changed in relations between the two countries?’ A balance was achieved between expressions of support for closer ties with Russia (which came primarily from the Party of Regions representatives) and expressions of opposition (which came primarily from representatives of the Our Ukraine–People's Self-Defence bloc). This balanced approach was characteristic of *Stolichnyye Novosti*’s Russia coverage as a whole. Its editors selected stories in which interaction with Russia was linked to potential benefits (e.g. a 15 June report on the establishment of a joint venture in aircraft manufacturing) as well as stories where such interaction had caused problems (e.g. a 15 June report about complaints that the Russian Black Sea Fleet was polluting Crimea).

Kommentarii focused more on the economic aspect of Ukraine’s relationship with Russia than the other weeklies. On occasion it highlighted advantages to Ukraine of doing business with Russia (for example, a report in the 4 June issue about Russian firms seeking to build alliances with their Ukrainian counterparts observed that some of the latter could ‘make a lot of money’ out of it). It frequently mentioned Russia in the context of business or trade without making any value judgements at all. However, the assumption that Russian and Ukrainian economic interests are essentially at odds seemed to underlie a substantial number of *Kommentarii* stories. Thus, the 4 June issue described agreements in the aviation industry as ‘compromises’ to Moscow on the part of

Kiev. The 18 June issue ran an article about the Kremlin's efforts to deny Ukraine direct access to Central Asian gas, where Russia was described as an 'iron master' [*zheleznyy khozyain*], 'who for some reason didn't disappear after the collapse of the USSR, but lives and very much wants to prosper'. In a story about the decommissioning and possible replacement of Ukrainian missiles, the 24 September issue quoted an analyst as saying that Ukraine would be 'eternally hooked' on Russian technology if it were to purchase Iskander E missile complexes. Articles about the political dimension of Russia-Ukraine ties conveyed wariness about Moscow's intentions. Commenting on the state of play between the neighbours, *Kommentarii* columnist Andrey Starostin wrote on 4 June:

'The Ukrainian authorities, and above all big business, are hinting that they won't surrender anything else without a fight. The Russians are inquiring after the price and waiting until the Ukrainians run to them by virtue of the most varied reasons.'

Kommentarii expressed no vehement opposition to the idea of increasing economic ties with Russia, but its story selection and analyses generally implied that Russia's interest in Ukraine was covetous and ambitious rather than brotherly or mutually advantageous.

Zerkalo Nedeli was somewhat similar to *Kommentarii* in that there was no outright editorial hostility towards Russia evident in its story selection, but several suggestions that Russia's influence was something of which Ukraine should be wary. A lengthy analysis of Russian gas exports to Europe on 17 July warned Ukraine against believing the 'dangerous illusion' that handing pipelines over to Gazprom would secure Ukraine's future as a transit country. The image of Moscow and Kiev being opposing parties at a bargaining table cropped up in a 5 June article about the postponement of a Russian-Ukrainian oil transit deal, titled 'Oil transit: Parity or another capitulation pact?' In its choice of interviewees, *Zerkalo Nedeli* displayed no predilection for any particular school of thought regarding Russia. In the course of the sample period it ran lengthy interviews with the head of the Crimean government who expressed support for close relations with Russia (19 June); an Our Ukraine – People's Self Defence MP who warned against closer

cooperation with the CSTO (17 July); and diplomats from Iran (5 June) and the EU (5 June) who limited themselves to diplomatic niceties when referring to Moscow. The interviewee with the most to say about Russia was Russian TV presenter Yevgeniy Kiselev, who has worked in Ukraine for a number of years. Kiselev is known for his dislike of Putin and the latter’s policies, and he made his views on Russian politics quite clear to *Zerkalo Nedeli* on 19 June.

The final stage of the content analysis – examining coverage of Patriarch Kirill’s visit to Ukraine – is severely weakened by missing data. The content sample only contained coverage of Kirill’s visit from *AiF v Ukraine* and *Stolichnyye Novosti*. *Zerkalo Nedeli* was not published during the relevant week due to a holiday; the relevant issue of 2000 could not be collected; and *Kommentarii* happened to publish a special edition about Ukrainian mayors in the week when it might have written about Kirill. Therefore, the boxes below relate only to two newspapers. Once again, variation is illustrated by answering three questions:

1. What facts and details relating to the story were reported?
2. What opinions relating to the story were reported and to whom did they belong?
3. How did the newspaper or TV reporter(s) most frequently refer to Kirill?

<i>Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine: Protests and ‘unpleasantness’ fail to mar visit</i>
<p>1. Right-wing forces protested (28 July). Kirill conducted prayers (28 July).</p>
<p>2. ‘I consider myself the ambassador of Holy Rus, and will do everything so that relations between Russia, Ukraine and Belarus grow and strengthen.’ (Kirill, 28 July) ‘Despite protests by right-wing forces and attempts to organize demonstrations against the visit of Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus Kirill to Ukraine, his coming was not marred by unpleasantness.’ (reporter, 28 July)</p>

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| 3. 'Patriarch of Moscow and All Rus Kirill'; 'head of the Russian Orthodox Church'; 'Patriarch Kirill' |
|--|

<i>Stolichnyye Novosti</i>: Brief analysis and no detail

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| 1. Kirill tried to stress the common roots of the Russian and Ukrainian peoples and arrived in Kiev from Dnepropetrovsk (27 July). |
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Various dignitaries met Kirill at the airport (27 July).

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| 2. 'Ukraine is gravitating towards European values and the patriarch's visit only suspends the process – of the separation and distancing of the two countries.' (political psychologist/columnist, 27 July) |
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| 3. 'Patriarch Kirill'; 'the patriarch' |
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Coverage of Patriarch Kirill's visit in *AiF v Ukraine* and *Stolichnyye Novosti* – at least in those issues encompassed by the sample – was limited. In *AiF v Ukraine* there was a single, short report based on a letter apparently received from a reader (many reports in *AiF* take such a format). The reader, from Poltava, observed that 'many arguments' surrounded the patriarch's visit, and asked whether it was 'really another lever of Moscow's pressure on Kiev'. *AiF v Ukraine* reassured her that 'despite protests by right-wing forces', Kirill's visit had not been 'marred by unpleasantness' (it did not address the question of influence). *Stolichnyye Novosti* also eschewed detailed description and analysis of the patriarch's trip. It was mentioned only briefly in a 'results of the week' column, in which three experts identified the most important news events of the preceding seven days.

One journalist or editor from each of the weekly newspapers was interviewed to shed light on the content analysis findings.

The interviewee from *AiF v Ukraine* acknowledged that her paper regularly ran stories about Russia's domestic affairs with no particular Ukrainian angle, as the content analysis demonstrated. These stories are received from Moscow. *AiF v Ukraine* journalists write mainly about Ukraine because they get plenty of news about Russia from their Russian colleagues. Yet the reason such 'purely Russian' news gets published is not just supply-driven (i.e. due to the franchisor providing that kind of material); the interviewee also linked it to demand among *AiF v Ukraine*'s readership:

'We run quite a lot of reports on absolutely Russian topics, because our reader is a reader who has memories from the days of the Soviet Union. We have looked at the reader's profile: it is someone 35–40 years old, he still remembers that time and for him Russia is not a separate state, but part of the homeland [*rodina*]. Therefore they understand and read these reports, it's interesting for them. So we run absolutely Russian topics, for example, about the problems of migration in Russia, ethnic problems, problems of the Chechen war, scientific phenomena. If it is some kind of domestic political affair [*kukhnya*], we don't always run it, because it's a very narrow topic... someone living in Kharkov or Kiev might not understand it. But more global, human, national, historical [stories] – we run them.' (Interviewee 22, 2011)

The readership of *AiF v Ukraine* obviously differs sharply from the target audience of *Kommentarii*, *Stolichnyye Novosti* and *Zerkalo Nedeli*. When selecting stories, these analytical weeklies are trying to help decision-makers make decisions. The journalist from *Kommentarii* said his paper positioned itself as a business publication and described its readers as 'white collar'. He talked about reporting events which reflect trends – trends that might affect the 'future balance of forces in the region' (Interviewee 23, 2011). The interviewee from *Stolichnyye Novosti* said his paper was aimed 'not so much at the average Ukrainian as the political elite and people who prefer to think before they do things' (Interviewee 24, 2011). Similarly, the journalist from *Zerkalo Nedeli* said his paper was targeted broadly at 'people who want and are able to think', and more specifically, at

‘officials from the structures of power, parliamentarians, the presidential administration, the cabinet of ministers... and people who have certain financial prosperity, who are interested in knowing how predictable the situation in this country [Ukraine] is, what can be expected.’ (Interviewee 25, 2011)

In contrast to the situation at *AiF v Ukraine*, a regard for Ukraine and its future seems to be the driving logic behind coverage of Russia in these papers, and at *Zerkalo Nedeli* in particular. For example, while lamenting the lack of qualified commentators, the *Zerkalo Nedeli* representative said:

‘The biggest problem is [finding someone competent to comment on] what happens in Russia... The stumbling block [*podvodnyy kamen*], so that it is interesting, is the extent to which it will have an effect on Ukraine.’ (Interviewee 25, 2011)

He then expressed particular concern for Ukraine’s security, implying that the paper had a role to play in raising awareness of certain risks. He said:

‘There are things which need to be spoken about, for example, issues of security... Ukraine has declared itself an independent state. How should Ukraine ensure its security in this situation?... It’s an abstract question. But at the same time it is a very practical question to which the Ukrainian authorities are paying no attention. An example in fact: the Black Sea Fleet. Does it present a risk to Ukraine’s security? In my view, yes.’ (Interviewee 25, 2011)

Apart from the interviewee from *AiF v Ukraine*, the *2000* journalist was the only one to mention having readers who are interested in Russia for reasons of identity and nostalgia. Yet her comments indicate that *2000* prioritizes news with a Ukrainian angle despite the editor’s explicitly pro-Russian stance. Russia’s domestic affairs appear to attract limited attention in their own right:

‘The editor-in-chief advised [me] to write about Ukrainians who have established themselves in Moscow; about Ukrainians who come here. For example, there are often joint events with Russia. Tomorrow our minister Tabachnik will be here [in Moscow]. A month ago it was the MAKS air show, we were represented there... [Domestic Russian news] is also interesting. One can do overviews. For example, when Medvedev had been in power two years, we did a small analytical piece.’ (Interviewee 26, 2011)

Awareness of readers’ political preferences affects the tone of the 2000 journalist’s reporting sometimes. She explained:

‘I am free to develop any topics from any angle. But perhaps I always write with reference to the fact that I understand the kind of audience which reads us: 2000 readers, it seems to me and I’m certain I’m right, are people of strongly pro-Russian views, perhaps even strongly nostalgic for the Soviet past. And probably when I write, I understand that in the back of my mind and therefore I try not to write too sharply about certain obvious things.’ (Interviewee 26, 2011)

She continued:

‘Sometimes I make an allowance [*delayu snosku*] for the fact that the readers are nostalgic about the USSR, the unity of the Slavic peoples. There are many people like that. They are people who haven’t been able to adjust to the new reality. Plus that nostalgia is dictated by pity for their youth. I don’t know. That’s probably it.’ (Interviewee 26, 2011)

It became clear in the interview, however, that she herself does not particularly identify with the position she attributes to her readers. At one point she observed: ‘Journalists look at their work with

sarcasm. It's just work.' She also reflected: 'Russia very often negotiates from a position of force. The main argument sometimes is the right of force [*pravo sily*], it seems to me.'

The 2000 journalist was unable to account for her paper's stridently pro-Russian stance with any certainty. She acknowledged that 'practically all the columnists' at 2000, write in a pro-Russian tone, but said she had 'no idea' why (Interviewee 26, 2011).

The interviewee from *AiF v Ukraine*, on the other hand, offered a number of explanations for her paper's muted editorial stance on Russia. Like the journalists at mass-circulation tabloid *Fakty* she spoke about the importance of appealing to readers with a wide variety of views. She also referred explicitly to the difficulty of 'balancing' between different stakeholders, including the Russian franchisor:

'We are in quite a complicated position: on the one hand, as I've already said, our main publication is in Russia. On the other hand our reader is a Ukrainian, who has already forgotten a bit what Russia is, and on the third [*sic*] hand, that reader is Soviet nonetheless. Therefore, a complicated balance has to be maintained here, and of course it restricts us.' (Interviewee 22, 2011)

The interviewee said that *AiF v Ukraine* tried not to 'irritate' its readers or trigger reproaches for being 'pro-Russian'. These prerogatives are borne in mind when republishing material from the Russian federal edition. She said:

'We try not to annoy the reader... We try not to run controversial reports [received from Moscow], or we run them with our additions, commentaries.' (Interviewee 22, 2011)

The same prerogatives can explain the very modest coverage devoted to Patriarch Kirill's visit during the sampling period. The interviewee described her paper's approach to this story as follows:

‘When he [Kirill] arrived for the very first time, there was very great public and reader interest towards him and we ran reports about it several times... Later we reduced the share of this news, because it became clear that there is not just religion here, there is politics here too. And in order not to provoke any kind of irritation in the reader once again [we reduced coverage]. Tomorrow or the day after tomorrow Kirill is coming to some Ukrainian region and people there are already aggressively disposed towards his arrival – there is a section of such people. Believers will greet him gladly, but some people will greet him aggressively. It’s quite a conflictual topic so once again we try not to raise it. We try to maintain parity. The same with Putin. Yes, the event happens, but we don’t stress it, so that there are no reproaches. If we were not the main publication in Moscow we could allow ourselves more.’ (Interviewee 22, 2011)

A point to bear in mind is that *AiF v Ukraine* has quite a lot of readers in the Western regions. The interviewee said:

‘The Western region constitutes 18 per cent of the total readership. That’s quite a lot – one fifth, a little less. There are a lot [of readers] in Crimea, a lot in the East and the Centre. But the majority, of course, are in big cities.’ (Interviewee 22, 2011)

Thus, the editorial team at *AiF v Ukraine* must constantly navigate between the constraints imposed by its mass readership and its franchise set-up; the result is the avoidance or downplaying of Russian-Ukrainian tension.

These particular constraints do not feature in the work of journalists at the analytical weeklies, *Stolichnyye Novosti*, *Zerkalo Nedeli* and *Kommentarii*. Here, there would appear to be a broad alignment – or at least no regular or inherent conflict – between what the journalists want to write about Russia, perceptions of what the audience would like to read, and the principles or boundaries imposed by owners and managers.

Comments made by the interviewees indicate that Russia is generally perceived as a threat among editorial staff at *Stolichnyye Novosti*, *Zerkalo Nedeli* and *Kommentarii* and that journalists' personal views can have an impact on the tone of reporting. For example, the *Zerkalo Nedeli* representative said:

‘[Russia] is not just able to threaten, it does threaten! ... For those who write about the topic of international politics I think this is a common [opinion]. I think it is precisely a case when it is not stereotypes but knowledge... Russia periodically winks in such a way that one gets goose-bumps... In my view, it's a big mistake that the Ukrainian authorities do not understand this... Undoubtedly, Russia is the number one source of threat.’ (Interviewee 25, 2011)

Asked why this view prevailed among *Zerkalo Nedeli* journalists, the interviewee said he found the question ‘a little strange’, since the Russian threat was obvious and one had to be ‘playing towards the Russian goal’ not to see it. The journalists' views feed through into content to some extent, because *Zerkalo Nedeli* is a ‘paper of author journalism’ (*gazeta avtorskoy zhurnalistiki*). The interviewee explained that its journalists have ‘not only their own style of writing articles, but also their own vision of the problem, they are able to argue for their vision of the problem’. ‘Sometimes we ourselves are experts, and perhaps better than other experts,’ he added, quoting his editor-in-chief.

Kommentarii journalists also ‘give [readers] their point of view’, said the interviewee from this paper. He himself held a very wary view of Russia, saying:

‘The fact is that the post-Soviet space cannot afford, for various reasons, to build relations with Russia as equals. This makes Russia become impudent... The imperial ambitions are very strong... And joining the Customs Union is not at all appealing. Not at all. For one simple reason: the EU uses the very cynical but very effective principle

of bargaining. Whereas the Customs Union uses the no less cynical, but less effective principle of blackmail.’ (Interviewee 23, 2011)

Thus, the wariness towards Russia that was observed in both *Kommentarii* and *Zerkalo Nedeli* during the content analysis appears to stem at least partly from personal opinions held among the two papers’ editorial staff.

According to the interviewee from *Stolichnyye Novosti*, its journalists do allow their own opinions into their writing but they make use of specialists too, so that only ‘15–20 per cent is the opinion of the journalist himself’ (Interviewee 24, 2011). Moreover, as the content analysis indicated, *Stolichnyye Novosti* appears to place a lot of value on explicitly balancing and contrasting opinions. The paper tries to organize its articles so that the Party of Regions, Our Ukraine and other parties are each represented, the interviewee said, adding: ‘In order to find the middle, the golden mean, one must know the opinions of the extremes and the centre’ (Interviewee 24, 2011). As for his personal view of Russia, the journalist noted that both Putin and Medvedev ‘pressurized Ukraine a lot’. Ukraine could join one of Russia’s integration projects, but ‘then it would never get out again’, he said. At *Stolichnyye Novosti*, journalists generally share the Western view of democracy in Russia, he said, adding: ‘There is no Russophobia here, but no Russophilia here either. We look at things entirely critically and realistically’ (Interviewee 24, 2011).

At *Zerkalo Nedeli* journalists sometimes negotiate over stories with the editor-in-chief. As the *Zerkalo Nedeli* interviewee explained:

‘In our case, the editor-in-chief – the person who supervises the creative process – is also the owner, the co-owner. Therefore everything depends on whether you can convince [him]. Sometimes you don’t convince [him]. Sometimes you go away and you are wrong, but this is decided each time in an individual way. In other words, it

doesn't happen that someone leans over your shoulder and says: Here, write!

(Interviewee 25, 2011)

Meanwhile, the *Kommentarii* interviewee indicated that Gayduk's influence as owner was fairly light. It may affect reporting of certain topics in Ukrainian domestic politics, but it does not appear to extend to international affairs. The journalist said:

'At the moment we can allow ourselves to be relatively independent, because our main investor sees *Kommentarii* as a business rather than a political forum or platform ahead of the elections... I cannot say that it has no influence at all. But how that influence occurs, that's a different issue. So, he was a sympathizer of Yuliya Timoshenko for quite a long time and probably remains so. But here one has to give him credit! When we prepared critical, abusive reports during her premiership... He just wanted to be informed, that's all. So he didn't get involved [*ne zalazil*], he didn't edit the reports. I never heard of that.' (Interviewee 23, 2011)

Kommentarii is now profitable, the interviewee added.

The *Stolichnyye Novosti* representative stated that he, too, had experienced only localized owner pressure under Rabinovich and Kolomoyskiy:

'Currently Kolomoyskiy has other more significant projects – the channel *1+1* – so he doesn't particularly pay attention to us. We have his representatives, who monitor certain strategic moments, but otherwise he stays out of it... [Under Rabinovich] it was also free. Well, there were a couple of moments: Let's not touch that this month. Like [they say] about the deceased – either speak well, or say nothing. So we tried to say nothing rather than speak well. And like that, no-one shut us up.' (Interviewee 24, 2011)

He added that editorial policy had altered very little with *Stolichnyye Novosti*'s change of ownership, other than the fact that less money was available for work-related travel under the new proprietor. However, when talking about the Ukrainian media in general the interviewee suggested that owners discussed the 'big strategy' at 'all publications without exception'.

3.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has shed light on numerous factors which influence news reporting about Russia in Ukraine. Hypothesis H1, that

a news provider with a shareholder or partner in Russia is likely to generate (a) more extensive and (b) more favourable coverage of Russia than market rivals because of its Russian connections

has been investigated through comparisons of TV bulletins, daily tabloids, daily broadsheets and weekly newspapers. Six news providers with a Russian partner or shareholder were included in the analysis. Three of them (*Vremya*, *Podrobnosti* and *Izvestiya v Ukraine*) behaved as predicted by part (a) of the hypothesis, although *Podrobnosti*'s behaviour was not attributable to its Russian minority shareholder. Five of them (*Vremya*, *Podrobnosti*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*, *Izvestiya v Ukraine* and *Kommersant-Ukraina*) were found to produce coverage of Russia that was in some way more favourable – or at least less critical – than that of the market rivals against which they were compared, as predicted by part (b) of the hypothesis. Once again, however, *Podrobnosti*'s behaviour in this regard was not attributable to its Russian shareholder; interviews suggested that domestic influences were the cause.

Content analysis demonstrated that the news bulletin *Vremya* generated far more extensive and favourable coverage of Russia than either *Podrobnosti* on *Inter* or *Sobytiya* on *TRK Ukraina*.

Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine was found to generate more sympathetic coverage of Patriarch

Kirill's visit to Ukraine than *Fakty* or *Segodnya*, although the three tabloids were quite similar in their story selection and scale of reporting about Russia. Coverage of Russia in *Izvestiya v Ukraine* was both very extensive and favourable; in *Den* it was extensive and highly critical, while *Kommersant-Ukraina* devoted relatively little attention to Russia and strictly avoided editorializing. Among the weeklies, *AiF v Ukraine* carried more reporting of domestic Russian news than the others but *2000* was the most overtly supportive of the Russian state and its leadership.

The interviews showed that having a shareholder or partner in Russia does tend to influence a news provider's reporting about Russia. However, the nature of that influence is not uniform. At all the 'v Ukraine' / '-Ukraina' publications, requirements set in Moscow constitute a constraint on the work of editorial staff in Kiev, but the nature of the constraint varies according to the particular publisher's strategy. For example, the *Kommersant* publishing house is investing to make its Ukrainian edition market leader among an elite/business audience; the main constraint it imposes is that journalists should not express their own views in print, because in this way it hopes to fill a niche in the market. It has chosen to develop a substantial staff in Kiev to write for the Ukrainian edition rather than simply republishing articles from the Russian *Kommersant*; consequently its coverage of Russia is not particularly extensive. *Izvestiya* is not so willing to spend money developing its Ukrainian version, nor is it trying to satisfy the demanding business audience. Correspondingly, *Izvestiya v Ukraine* relies relatively heavily on Moscow-produced content, which is generally written from a rather pro-Kremlin perspective. Moreover, *Izvestiya v Ukraine* operates on the basis that it must not stray too far from the editorial line of its parent publication, as *Izvestiya* president Vladimir Mamontov made clear when interviewed. At *AiF v Ukraine* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*, the Kiev-based editorial teams operate with quite a lot of independence from Moscow. However, they are franchises, and unlikely to take an overtly critical stand on any issue involving Russia since that might threaten the renewal of their franchise deals.

Constraints imposed from Moscow must be navigated by journalists alongside other constraints, such as the perceived demands of the target audience. Both *AiF v Ukraine* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* want to appeal to a mass readership. Given the broad range of opinion concerning Russia that exists in Ukraine, the safest approach for such mass-circulation tabloids is to avoid controversy and forthright editorializing. Editors must find a balance which offends neither colleagues in Moscow, nor readers in different parts of Ukraine. At *Podrobnosti*, meanwhile, *Inter*'s links to the Ukrainian authorities appear to be the primary source of the constraints under which journalists must work. There is no evidence to indicate that *Pervyy Kanal*'s stake in *Inter* affects *Podrobnosti*'s Russia coverage.

This chapter has identified factors other than Russian partners and shareholders which affect the scale and tone of reporting about Russia. The interviews conducted at *TRK Ukraina* suggest that the recruitment of Muscovite managers may have led to Russia being mentioned on *Sobytiya* with greater regularity. Meanwhile, the scale of *Inter*'s resources and its ability to maintain a correspondent in Moscow allow *Podrobnosti* to report on and from Russia more extensively than bulletins with smaller budgets. The flattering coverage of Russia in 2000 can be traced back to views expressed by the editor-proprietor (precisely why he holds those views is less clear, although it may be relevant to note that Kichigin is reportedly a former KGB counter-propaganda officer). Yet the editorial policy established at 2000 attracts a readership whose views correspond to those of the owner, so journalists write to please both their readers and their editor simultaneously; many may also be expressing their own opinion. A situation of mutually reinforcing influences, albeit with a very different content outcome, seems to exist at the analytical weeklies *Zerkalo Nedeli* and *Komentarii*. Research interviews showed that journalists at these publications write about Russia as a threat because they perceive it to be so themselves, because their editors agree with them, and because they believe reports discussing the potential Russian threat are in the interest of their readers. In general, however, it is interesting to note that coverage of Russia with no Ukrainian

angle does not appear to be an area where wealthy Ukrainian media owners without formal editorial responsibilities intervene directly to shape what gets written. Both the interviews and the content analysis suggest that prominent tycoons Akhmetov (*Segodnya, Sobytiya*), Pinchuk (*Fakty*), Gayduk (*Kommentarii*), Kolomoyskiy (*Izvestiya v Ukraine, Stolichnyye Novosti*) and Khoroshkovskiy (*Podrobnosti*) do not impose tight constraints on what journalists can say about Russian domestic politics.

The findings of this chapter contribute to the literature on post-Soviet journalism, as the reporting of foreign affairs has hardly been studied until now. The findings are also relevant to the field of post-Soviet politics, for they show the view of ‘Russian’ media in neighbouring states serving as Kremlin tools to be overly simplistic. There is considerable variation among the news providers with Russian shareholders or partners in Ukraine: some disseminate pro-Kremlin narratives, but others do not due to commercial considerations.

This chapter has shed light on the nature of news content exported from Russia to Ukraine.

Logically, the political impact of such news content depends on how widely it is consumed; its soft power potential also depends on the relationship between public sentiments and political decision-making. These issues shall be addressed in Chapter 5, after the empirical findings from Belarus have been presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4: BELARUS

4.1 Chapter topic and objectives

This chapter investigates the factors which shape news coverage of Russia in Belarus. It addresses two research questions:

Q1. How do the leading Russian-language TV news bulletins and newspapers in Belarus vary in terms of the kind of coverage (extensive or limited, favourable or unfavourable) they devote to Russia?

Q2. Why does the scale and tone of news coverage about Russia vary from one Russian-language news provider to another?

The chapter particularly aims to shed light on how news reporting is affected by the influence of Russian partners and shareholders. It compares 13 news providers to test hypothesis H1:

A news provider with a shareholder or partner in Russia is likely to generate (a) more extensive and (b) more favourable coverage of Russia than market rivals because of its Russian connections.

During the presidency of Aleksandr Lukashenko Belarus has been among Russia's most enthusiastic partners in projects to (re-)build closer ties between the post-Soviet states. Official backing for a close union with Russia extends to the media sector. In 2008 Belarusian Minister of Information Vladimir Rusakevich said that creating a 'single information space' with Russia was an important strategic objective for both sides (Embassy of Belarus in the Russian Federation, 2008). In some respects, the authorities in Minsk have indeed facilitated Russian involvement in their country's media environment. Three major state-owned TV channels in Belarus have line-ups based wholly or substantially on Russian-made content. In contrast to Ukraine, Belarus has never imposed

restrictions on using the Russian language in the public sphere. Russian is used far more widely than Belarusian both on air and in print.

Yet official advocacy for the single information space is offset by Lukashenko's policy of controlling the Belarusian media environment to prevent criticism of himself and his administration. All news providers in Belarus are at constant risk of interference from the state and Russian news providers are no exception. Although Russian participation in the Belarusian media market is allowed and even encouraged, there are mechanisms in place to restrict what can be said. Such mechanisms are a means of defence against Russian 'information attacks' during periods of bilateral tension. This chapter explores whether media with Russian partners or shareholders behave as predicted despite the paradoxical media environment, where the cross-border flow of information from Moscow is simultaneously hailed and viewed with suspicion by the authorities.

Hypothesis H1 is tested on TV bulletins in Section 4.2; on daily newspapers in Section 4.3; and on weekly newspapers Section 4.4.¹ In Section 4.5 the chapter findings are summarized and discussed.

Six news providers with a shareholder or partner in Russia are included in the analysis. Five of them (*Vremya*, *Vesti*, *Segodnya*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* and *BelGazeta*) behaved as predicted by part (a) of the hypothesis, although *BelGazeta*'s behaviour could be due to its business orientation rather than its Russian shareholder(s). Four of them (*Vremya*, *Vesti*, *Segodnya*, and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*) behaved as predicted by part (b) of the hypothesis.

As in Ukraine, influence from Russian partners and shareholders was found to interact with other constraints, resulting in a range of content outcomes. For instance, apprehension of the Belarusian authorities shapes editorial policy at the Russian-owned tabloids in Belarus as much as any desire to convey a Russian perspective on events.

¹ Comparisons are conducted primarily within these medium-based groups because medium is expected to influence content; this approach also simplifies the presentation and discussion of the findings.

The findings of this chapter relate to a particularly rocky period in Russian-Belarusian relations – the second half of 2010 – when Lukashenko and the Kremlin were exchanging insults on an almost weekly basis. Unsurprisingly, they show the Belarusian Presidential Administration to be the overriding influence on news coverage about Russia at certain news providers belonging to the Belarusian state. However, the data presented here also reveals that contradictory narratives are sometimes generated by the Belarusian state propaganda machine due to its cooperation with the Russian media. Another interesting discovery concerns the symbiosis that exists between certain Russian and Belarusian TV news bulletins. When selecting news stories about Russia and the world, Belarusian producers bear in mind what their Russian counterparts are reporting. On occasion they may take steps to refute or counteract information in the Russian-made bulletins, but more often their aim is simply to avoid duplication.

As Chapter 1 explained, this study of Belarus employs a mixed-method approach. Variation in news coverage of Russia is documented using content analysis, before semi-structured interviews with editorial staff uncover the reasons for the observed reporting patterns. The content analysis has three stages: (1) quantitative analysis of the whole news sample to establish the proportion of total news stories in which Russia features; (2) tabular comparison of the news stories (events, interviews and commentaries) featuring Russia which each news provider ran or ignored in each week of the sample period; and (3) detailed qualitative description of the most widely reported news story featuring Russia – the ‘information war’ between Moscow and Minsk.²

² The ‘information war’ refers to efforts made by the Russian and Belarusian leaderships to discredit each other using the media under their control. It began in earnest on 4 July 2010 when Russian channel *NTV* ran the first of four scathing documentaries about Lukashenko, titled *Krestnyy Batka* (Godfather Batka). *Batka*, which means father, is commonly used to refer to Lukashenko. Lukashenko was accused in the series of despotism, complicity in the ‘disappearance’ of his political opponents, self-interested opportunism and hypocrisy in his dealings with Russia, and sympathy for Hitler. The remaining *Krestnyy Batka* episodes were shown on 16 July, 15 August and 8 October 2010. Other key events in the information war were a news conference given by Lukashenko to Russian journalists on 1 October, when he criticised the Russian leadership; and a video blog criticising Lukashenko that was posted by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on 3 October.

4.2 TV bulletins: *Panorama*, *Vremya*, *Nashi Novosti*, *24 Chasa*, *Segodnya* and *Vesti*

Of the six TV news bulletins in this study, three are produced in Belarus while the other three are produced in Russia before being retransmitted on Belarusian state-controlled channels. The Belarusian-made bulletins are *Panorama*, which is shown nightly at 9 pm on Belarusian state-owned channel *Belarus 1*;³ *Nashi Novosti*, which is shown nightly at 8.30 pm on Belarusian state-owned channel *ONT*; and *24 Chasa*, which is the 7.30 pm flagship news programme on *STV*, another Belarusian state-controlled broadcaster that started out as the channel of the Minsk city authorities. The Russian-made bulletins are *Vremya* (produced by Russia's *Pervyy Kanal* and retransmitted each evening at 8 pm on *ONT*, i.e. just before *Nashi Novosti*); *Vesti* (produced by Russia's *Rossiya 1* channel and retransmitted each evening at 8 pm on *RTR-Belarus*,⁴ which is controlled by *STV*); and *Segodnya* (produced by Russia's *NTV* and retransmitted each evening by *NTV-Belarus*, which belongs to *Belteleradiokompaniya*, the same Belarusian state TV company to which *Belarus 1* belongs).

Although they are rebroadcast by Belarusian state-owned channels, *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* are news providers which belong in whole or in part to the Russian state or state companies. Kremlin influence on their content is well known and documented (see Chapter 2). They are expected, in accordance with the hypothesis, to carry more extensive and favourable coverage of Russia than *Panorama*, *Nashi Novosti* and *24 Chasa*.

The quantitative content analysis results showing the scale of Russia-related reporting are fully in line with these expectations, as Table 4.1 illustrates.

³ *Belarus 1* was previously known as *Pervyy Kanal* (First Channel).

⁴ Until 18 October 2010 *Vesti* was shown in Belarus at 7 pm; the switch to a later time slot may have been prompted by the 'information war' between Moscow and Minsk, as it allows more time for unwanted reports to be edited out prior to broadcast.

Table 4.1: Proportion of stories in TV bulletins coded as ‘featuring Russia’

TV bulletin	Mean number of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each bulletin	Mean % of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each bulletin
<i>Vremya</i> on <i>ONT</i>	8.22 (ranging from 5 to 12)	84.80% (min. 66.67%; max. 100%; 18 observations) ⁵
<i>Vesti</i> on <i>RTR-Belarus</i>	8.56 (ranging from 6 to 12)	80.84% (min. 60.00%; max. 100%; 25 observations)
<i>Segodnya</i> on <i>NTV-Belarus</i>	7.75 (ranging from 5 to 10)	82.65% (min. 66.67%; max. 100%; 24 observations) ⁶
<i>Panorama</i> on <i>Belarus 1</i>	2.88 (ranging from 1 to 6)	20.75% (min. 5.9%; max. 50.00%; 25 observations)
<i>Nashi Novosti</i> on <i>ONT</i>	2.13 (ranging from 0 to 4)	23.25% (min. 0%; max. 66.67%; 24 observations) ⁷
<i>24 Chasa</i> on <i>STV</i>	1.36 (ranging from 0 to 5)	15.99% (min. 0%; max. 50.00%; 25 observations)

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the Bonferroni follow-up test showed statistically significant differences in mean when each of the Russian-made bulletins was compared against each of the Belarusian-made bulletins ($p < 0.001$ in all nine comparisons). Meanwhile, the differences in mean between the three Russian-made bulletins were not statistically significant (*Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya*; $p > 0.5$ in all comparisons); nor were the differences in mean between the three Belarusian-made bulletins (*Panorama*, *Nashi Novosti* and *24 Chasa*; $p > 0.5$ in all comparisons). Thus, the sample studied here indicates that *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* are very similar in the extent to which their reporting ‘features Russia’; likewise, *Panorama*, *Nashi Novosti* and *24 Chasa* ‘feature Russia’ to a similar extent in their news coverage. The difference between

⁵ Recordings were missed in the final sample week, from 1 to 5 November, and also on 20 September.

⁶ The recording for 6 September 2010 is missing.

⁷ The recording for 20 September 2010 is missing.

the Russian-made bulletins and the Belarusian-made bulletins is substantial. Even though the former are transmitted by Belarusian state-controlled channels, around 80 per cent of their stories still ‘feature Russia’, as they are compiled with Russian viewers in mind and are rarely modified for the Belarusian audience. When modifications are made, they take the form of redactions (reports unfavourable to the Belarusian president being edited out – more on this below) rather than additions to the original running order.

The hypothesis is strongly supported by the tabular comparison of story selection too. Table C5 (see Appendix 2) lists all the stories coded as ‘featuring Russia’ that were broadcast by one or more of the Belarusian-made bulletins during the five weeks of the sample.

Table C5 does not contain all the stories ‘featuring Russia’ which *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* ran during the sample period, as there were too many to list. The primary focus of story selection at all three Russian-made bulletins was the ruling tandem: the statements, meetings and other activities of Vladimir Putin and Dmitriy Medvedev received copious and entirely uncritical coverage. Reports airing criticism of Russian state policy were absent, while reports about social or economic problems in Russia were set within the context of the Russian authorities taking steps to improve matters. The same cannot be said of *Panorama*, *Nashi Novosti* and *24 Chasa*.

The three Belarusian-made bulletins all selected stories which, by the nature of the subject matter, drew attention to injustices, failings or errors on the part of the Russian state or problems with the political status quo in Russia. Naturally, all three of these bulletins gave generous attention to the criticisms of Russia voiced by Aleksandr Lukashenko during the sample period. However, their negativity towards Russia in story selection extended well beyond the negativity of Lukashenko’s statements and bilateral matters. *Nashi Novosti*, for example, was scathing about Russia’s domestic situation. On 27 August it reported a story from ‘authoritative German publication *Die Welt*’ about the career preferences of Russian youth, who increasingly want to become MPs or officials. The presenter said:

‘It is not only a stable income which attracts the young people... There is a more important reason – corruption... In today’s Russia this has acquired a horrific scale. According to the data of an association of lawyers and human rights activists, a sum equivalent to half the Russian GDP is spent on bribes.’

A lengthier and more emotive piece in a similar vein was broadcast by *Nashi Novosti* on 10 September. Correspondent Svetlana Karul'skaya reported from Moscow about a small group of villagers from Russia’s Kabarda-Balkar Republic who, in the presenter’s words, had been on hunger strike outside the Kremlin for several months, ‘awaiting a response from the Russian leadership to their request for their right to land to be defended.’ The correspondent explained that the local authorities were taking the villagers’ land away and giving it to oligarchs. She told viewers:

‘It appears nobody notices the elders, although they are passed every day by journalists of the federal channels filming the work of the State Duma and Kremlin protocol. So far only ordinary people are responding.’

On 3 November, *Nashi Novosti* informed its audience about the Russian Finance Ministry’s intention to raise the retirement age. The presenter introduced the report by saying:

‘The right to a deserved rest may soon become inaccessible to many citizens in Russia... Given the Russian life expectancy, only 40 per cent of men and 70 per cent of women will live long enough to draw a pension.’

A correspondent in Moscow then pulled no punches, telling viewers:

‘The deficit of the Russian pension fund is currently around a trillion roubles... Russians have started saying they are being invited to die at work... Pensions have remained at the level of one subsistence minimum instead of the promised three; the increase in the single social tax has brought nothing; the savings programme is not working.’

Nashi Novosti was not alone in highlighting the suffering of the Russian people at the hands of an incompetent and corrupt state; *Panorama* did likewise. On 23 September it ran a report on the poor harvest in Russia and subsequent food price inflation, in which the correspondent asserted that people were still awaiting a ‘more or less coherent’ policy response from the Kremlin. Then on 6 October *Panorama* announced:

‘The Russian government intends to economize on social projects. This concerns the ill, children, and pregnant women... The Russian government is counting on saving over 48 billion roubles at the expense of pregnant and ill people.’

Russian foreign policy was the subject of unflattering story selection as well. On 9 September, *Panorama* chose to report comments about the South Stream pipeline project made by Joschka Fischer, the German former politician who serves as an advisor to rival pipeline project Nabucco. Fischer was shown saying:

‘In this case it is not just a matter of gas for Russia, but of power in the region. The Russian government is doing everything to hinder the implementation of the Nabucco project... The Russian government should decouple their economic interests from their political ambitions.’

The same theme arose in the *Nashi Novosti* bulletin of 22 September, which reported ‘interference’ by Russia in talks between Minsk and Kiev about the transit of Venezuelan oil. The story was introduced as follows:

‘Three’s a crowd. Russia is starting to interfere in the energy projects of Belarus and Ukraine... Our eastern neighbours appear to be irritated by the fact that we can get oil – albeit from across the ocean – ourselves.’

Unlike *Panorama* and *Nashi Novosti*, *24 Chasa* ran no reports about the Kremlin’s role on the international stage or its domestic activity. However, it did pick a number of stories about Russian-

Belarusian bilateral matters which did not reflect well on Russia. For instance, on 24 August *24 Chasa* reported that more and more Russian citizens were moving to settle in Belarus. The presenter observed: ‘It is easy to explain their actions. It is more stable here and all conditions have been created for a calm and peaceful life.’ Individuals who had moved from Russia to Belarus were then shown saying: ‘Belarusian [food] products are better than the same ones in Russia,’ and ‘In Russia people have to rely only on themselves... there is no question of the state helping.’

Thus, denigration of the Russian state, its integrity and competence was a clearly identifiable trend in the story selection of *Panorama*, *Nashi Novosti* and *24 Chasa* during the sample period. Yet the same bulletins also selected numerous stories about beneficial and positive aspects of the Russia-Belarus relationship. Table C5 contains many stories referring to successful trade, for example, with Belarusian goods (including toys, trucks and a lot of food) being exported eastwards. Regional economic ties were emphasized: in the first sample week, *Panorama* ran a story on trade talks between the Belarusian Council of Ministers and Russia’s Lipetsk Region, saying that the two sides could ‘complement each other’ rather than compete. All the Belarusian-made bulletins covered Lukashenko’s meeting with the head of Russia’s Kursk Region; the *Nashi Novosti* correspondent described relations with Kursk Region as productive, while *Panorama*’s correspondent declared on 26 August:

‘Belarus and Kursk Region are linked by a long relationship of partnership and common interests in all areas. This convergence is an objective process, not subject to the political considerations of the moment.’

On 27 August, *24 Chasa* predicted that the volume of trade between Russia and Bryansk Region would soon double. Then on 8 October *Panorama* reported the news that Russia remained the most active foreign investor in Belarus, with joint ventures receiving over 3 billion US dollars since the start of the year. The correspondent said:

‘In the opinion of experts, the political misunderstanding – not even a conflict – should not confuse the cards of the trade partners or hinder economic development. The dry language of numbers is more eloquent than any words. Trade between Belarus and Russia has increased almost five-fold in the past 10 years, from 7 billion to over 34 billion dollars. Russia accounts for over 47 per cent of our country’s foreign trade.’

Political scientist Yuriy Tsarik was shown in the report saying that the development of the Customs Union would ‘certainly make progress’ and evolve into a single economic space, as this was ‘in the interests of both Belarus and Russia’.

Overall, therefore, the story selection of the six TV bulletins was in line with the hypothesis: Russia – particularly its authorities – unquestionably received more favourable coverage from *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* than from *Panorama*, *Nashi Novosti* and *24 Chasa*. However, criticism of the Russian state in the latter three bulletins was accompanied by some upbeat reporting about Russian-Belarusian relations. Echoing Lukashenko himself, news on the Belarusian state-controlled TV channels consistently depicted Russia as the natural partner of Belarus and close bilateral ties as desirable and advantageous.

There is further support for the hypothesis at the third stage of the content analysis – comparison of how the six TV bulletins covered the ‘information war’ between Moscow and Minsk. It must be noted that several reports on this topic were edited out of the Russian-made bulletins prior to transmission in Belarus.⁸ During the five sample weeks, *Vremya* and *Vesti* were prevented from disseminating any news at all about ‘information war’ developments to Belarusian terrestrial TV

⁸ Modified bulletins can be identified by comparing the recording made in Belarus with archived Russian bulletins available online, or with BBC Monitoring programme summaries. A shorter bulletin length and discrepancies in presenter continuity also indicate where reports have been cut out. Modification of Russian-made bulletins for Belarusian transmission was not particularly widespread or consistent. During the sample period *Vremya* was redacted at least three times (6 September; 4 October and 6 October). *Vesti* was apparently redacted twice (4 October and 6 October). Yet *Segodnya* was not redacted on 4 or 6 October, despite showing reports similar to those cut from the other bulletins. Moreover, *Vremya* went uncut on 23 September when it included a scathing commentary by Russian pundit Mikhail Leontyev about Lukashenko (whom he accused of blackmailing Russia).

viewers. Only *Segodnya* managed to escape the Belarusian censors a couple of times with its Russian perspective on the controversy. Belarusian-made *Panorama* and *Nashi Novosti* generated copious coverage of Russia’s ‘information attacks’ on Lukashenko; coverage on *24 Chasa* was relatively limited in scale. Unsurprisingly, there was a huge contrast between *Segodnya*’s account of the ‘information war’ and that of the Belarusian-made bulletins. Across the board there was a great deal of vitriolic mudslinging – all the bulletins were actively participating in the ‘information war’, not merely reporting it. Russian-made *Segodnya* was clearly on the opposing side of the barricade. The boxes below illustrate the difference between the three Belarusian-made bulletins on the one hand, and *Segodnya* on the other. They present the main news points relating to the ‘information war’ that were reported by each broadcaster during the sample weeks, followed by representative examples of opinions relating to the story that were expressed on air.

<i>Panorama</i>
Lukashenko says he does not intend to respond to mudslinging in the Russian media (26 August).
Russian journalists tour Belarus but certain Russian federal newspapers prevent their representatives from attending (26 August).
The Belarusian Presidential Administration is receiving ‘floods’ of letters in support of Lukashenko and his policy from Russian citizens (22 September).
Lukashenko’s news conference to Russian mass media is a great hit in the regions but prompts a video blog message from the Kremlin (4 October).
The Russian State Duma adopts a statement on Belarusian-Russian relations, although some MPs abstain from voting (6 October).
Lukashenko says Belarus should not engage in the information war with Russia (7 October).
Belarusian lawmakers adopt a statement calling on their Russian counterparts to help improve bilateral relations (7 October).

‘Everything that is happening is subjective; it is a personal conflict... This [*Krestnyy Batka* documentary] is a film about them... It is impossible to tear apart Russians and Belarusians.’

(Lukashenko, 26 August)

‘There is enormous demand in Russia for honest news about their neighbours... But readers of such federal media as *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*, *Izvestiya* and *Komsomolka* cannot find out about real Belarus.’ (correspondent, 26 August)

‘The ordinary people of Russia and Bryansk Region look at Belarus and its leadership with great affection...’ (journalist from *Bryanskiy Rabochyy* newspaper, 26 August)

‘One can conclude that the latest attempt to form a negative attitude towards Belarus in Russian society has failed yet again... The opinion of Moscow doesn’t mean the opinion of Russian citizens.’ (correspondent, 22 September)

‘Now we can say for sure that the Russian elites are motivated not only by hate, but by fear above all. A person with accurate information about the state of affairs in Belarus can compare his life with the life of his Slavic neighbours; this is what our authorities fear.’ (resident of Moscow Region whose letter was displayed on screen, 22 September)

‘The Belarusian president’s press conference to the Russian media has been a staggering success in the Russian provinces. In conditions of a deficit of objective information about our country, the articles and reports by regional journalists have been a genuine revelation.’ (presenter, 4 October)

‘At the top [of the Russian leadership] they have begun to worry – all efforts to discredit the allied country and its leadership have come to nothing and the information blockade has been broken. It’s no joke when one has to dash to the Kremlin at the weekend, on Sunday evening, to urgently record a video blog and then play it on all the federal channels...’ (correspondent, 4 October)

‘Russia wants to see satellites in its orbit, not allies or partners.’ (editor-in-chief of *Belaruskaya Dumka* magazine, 4 October)

‘We still want to build a Union State. We still want to intensify integration processes between our countries. We still place the centuries of history of our peoples and their future together higher than the current political situation...’ (Aleksey Ostrovskiy, chair of the Russian State Duma committee for CIS affairs, 6 October)

‘We should not get dragged into this fight under any circumstances. Only weak people answer mud with mud.’ (Lukashenko, 7 October)

‘There is cooperation between firms, regions and people, in other words, normal life is continuing, and these insults they will pass. You [Lukashenko] are behaving very correctly and in a dignified way...’ (head of Lukashenko’s ‘initiative group’, 7 October)

‘Both there and here we understand that we are fraternal peoples, and under no circumstances must we allow misunderstandings to arise between our peoples, certain serious disagreements, which might lead to undesired consequences.’ (Belarusian MP, 7 October)

Nashi Novosti

Lukashenko says he does not intend to respond to mudslinging in the Russian media (26 August).

Russian journalists tour Belarus but certain Russian federal newspapers prevent their representatives from attending (26 August).

Russian media attacks on Belarus backfire on Moscow (8 September).

Russia’s NTV cons Belarusian public figures into contributing to another TV provocation (21 September).

Medvedev posts video blog about Belarus (4 October).

The Belarusian Presidential Administration is receiving ‘floods’ of letters in support of

Lukashenko and his policy from Russian citizens (24 September).

Lukashenko says Belarus should not engage in the information war with Russia (7 October).

Belarusian lawmakers adopt a statement calling on their Russian counterparts to help improve bilateral relations (7 October).

‘Everything that is happening is subjective; it is a personal conflict... This [*Krestnyy Batka* documentary] is a film about them... It is impossible to tear apart Russians and Belarusians.’

(Lukashenko, 26 August)

‘Belarus today is a very popular country among the Russians. Some call it an information war; I call it free advertising... Visit any Russian internet forum and you will see that the stones thrown at Belarus all inevitably fall on Russian soil. They write about the horrors of the regime; readers in their comments recall vacations spent happily in Belarusian sanatoria and the cleanliness of Minsk streets. They sew funny suits for the Belarusians; the Russians try them on their own politicians, making the latter look even funnier...’ (commentator Aleksey Mikhhalchenko in *Kak yest* opinion slot, 8 September)

‘I have formed a wonderful impression of the Belarusian state, about its people and its successes... I wish people were treated the same way in our state, here in Russia, that the state flourished in the same way...’ (Afghan war veteran from Russia, 24 September)

‘The Belarusian leadership has always tried to form the image of an external enemy in the public consciousness. In the past the role was taken by America, Europe and the West as a whole. Now Russia has been declared one of the main enemies.’ (Medvedev, 4 October)

‘But who declared [Russia an enemy of Belarus] and where? ... It turns out that only the president of an eighth of the world’s surface declared it, although there was already more than enough slush and permafrost there.’ (commentator Aleksey Mikhhalchenko in *Kak yest* opinion slot, 4 October)

‘All these fights take place at the level of the highest echelon, not at the level of ordinary people. After all, oil and gas in Russia belong to the oligarchs, not the Russian people.’ (Belarusian MP Gennadiy Davydko, 4 October)

‘Belarus does a lot for Russia... If you start calculating what we have given you and you have given us, the account is not as simple as it seems to Dmitriy Anatolyevich [Medvedev].’ (Aleksandr Kazintsev, editor-in-chief of *Nash Sovremennik*, 4 October)

‘We should not get dragged into this fight under any circumstances. Only weak people answer mud with mud.’ (Lukashenko, 7 October)

‘There is cooperation between firms, regions and people, in other words, normal life is continuing, and these insults they will pass. You [Lukashenko] are behaving very correctly and in a dignified way...’ (head of Lukashenko’s ‘initiative group’, 7 October)

‘I am sure that time is the best doctor, as they say. Years will pass and we will remember this situation as a temporary, deliberately provoked misunderstanding which happened at a certain stage in the development of our countries.’ (Vladimir Zdanovich, Belarusian MP, 7 October)

24 Chasa

Lukashenko says he does not intend to respond to mudslinging in the Russian media (26 August).

Lukashenko says Belarus should not engage in the information war with Russia (7 October).

Belarusian lawmakers adopt a statement calling on their Russian counterparts to help improve bilateral relations (7 October).

‘There is no conflict between Russia and Belarus. Everything that is happening is subjective; it is a personal conflict...’ (Lukashenko, 26 August)

‘We should not get dragged into this fight under any circumstances. Only weak people answer

mud with mud...' (Lukashenko, 7 October)

'There is cooperation between firms, regions and people, in other words, normal life is continuing, and these insults they will pass. You are behaving very correctly and in a dignified way...' (head of Lukashenko's 'initiative group', 7 October)

Segodnya

Medvedev posts a video blog about Belarus (4 October).

The Russian Duma adopts a statement on Belarusian-Russian relations (6 October).

'I am deeply convinced that our country has always viewed and will always view the Belarusian nation as its closest neighbour. We are united by many centuries of history, shared culture, common joys and common sorrow... In his pronouncements, President Lukashenko oversteps by far not only diplomatic rules but even basic standards of human decency.' (Medvedev, 4 October)

'For the first time, the Russian leader publicly and harshly responded to the numerous attacks of Aleksandr Lukashenko... The Russian president essentially exposed Lukashenko's dishonesty and ugly political bargaining.' (presenter, 4 October)

'The provocative actions and words of the Belarusian president about Russia and the Russian leadership constitute the topic of Medvedev's latest blog – and that's despite the fact that we are in a Union State, and that our peoples are united by past, present and of course the future...

Russia and Belarus are strategic partners.' (correspondent, 4 October)

'One should not meddle with Russia and its political system, or give us advice about democracy. Because advice about democracy coming from Minsk is comic, to put it mildly.' (Russian political scientist Gleb Pavlovskiy, 6 October)

‘In every way he sabotages all the agreements that are reached, behaves despicably. Lukashenko, Lukashenko, that’s who he is. Dirty tricks every day.’ (Russian MP Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, 6 October)

The three Belarusian-made channels took an editorial line on this story that was almost identical. It was stressed consistently that:

- there is no quarrel between ordinary Russians and Belarusians, who are fraternal peoples and continue to work together;
- Russia’s media attacks on Belarus are backfiring and ordinary Russians disagree with their leaders;
- Russians admire Belarus and Belarus compares favourably to Russia.

Criticisms emanating from Moscow were not ignored. Instead, they were mocked or undermined. The mockery peaked in the two *Kak yest* (As it is) commentary slots shown by *Nashi Novosti*, in which presenter-commentator Aleksey Mikhilchenko delivered his sardonic views on the ‘information war’ in general and Medvedev’s video blog specifically. The primary tactic for undermining the Russian leadership’s attacks was to interview or quote the views of ‘ordinary’ Russians on Belarus. For instance, both *Panorama* and *Nashi Novosti* gave airtime to Russian citizens who had reportedly written to Lukashenko to voice their support for him; they also interviewed Russian MPs who had refused to back the State Duma’s statement on Belarus.

As for *Segodnya*, its coverage of the media war was marked by stinging criticism of Lukashenko alongside insistence that Russians and Belarusians are ‘fraternal nations’. In other words, it directly reflected the views contained in Medvedev’s video blog, around 40 per cent of which was shown as part of a *Segodnya* report on 4 October.⁹

⁹ This report can be viewed on NTV’s website at www.ntv.ru/video/206901/ (accessed 11 April 2013)

Thus, the final stage of the content analysis produces results which are fully in line with expectations and hypothesis H1. The three Belarusian-made broadcasters reiterated the views of Lukashenko in their extensive and highly subjective coverage. The only Russian-made bulletin which escaped Belarusian censorship, *Segodnya*, was equally subjective in reiterating the position of the Russian authorities.

There would appear to be nothing puzzling about the content variation found between *Panorama*, *Nashi Novosti* and *24 Chasa* on the one hand and *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* on the other. All six bulletins are effectively state-controlled and serve political ends in their reporting; the former answer to the Belarusian Presidential Administration, while the latter answer to the Kremlin. The main puzzle is why *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* continue to be broadcast on Belarusian state-owned channels even when their message (as demonstrated above) is at odds with the line taken by Belarusian state-controlled news providers. To shed light on this issue and other matters relating to foreign affairs coverage on Belarusian TV, six interviews were conducted in Minsk. The interviewees were a senior journalist from *Panorama*, programmes director at *ONT*, head of the news department at *ONT*, director-general of *NTV-Belarus*, director of news broadcasting at *STV* and first deputy director-general of *STV* (responsible for *RTR-Belarus*).

The interviews provide supplementary evidence, if any were needed, that the interests of the state shape reporting of international affairs at the three Belarusian-made bulletins. The *Panorama* journalist, for instance, acknowledged that the news broadcast on *Belarus 1* is coordinated with the Presidential Administration. She said:

‘We are a national channel and of course we have to defend the interests of the state... We carry the state position and convey it. So yes, it happens at the level of the Presidential Administration, of course, certain aspects are conveyed to us, which it would be desirable to report. And of course, we take them into account in our work.’
(Interviewee 29, 2012)

ONT's head of news said it was *Nashi Novosti*'s task to 'display the arguments of the Belarusian side' during periods of conflict in Russian-Belarusian relations. His comments made clear that the channel's leadership expect *Nashi Novosti* to respond to attacks on Minsk in the Russian media:

'We have always – in line with the recommendations of our leadership – it is necessary to respond to any 'made to order' [Russian] report or whatever you want to call it, let it be on their conscience. We try to respond with an objective picture... We have to react to their report.' (Interviewee 30, 2012)

Similarly, when asked about so-called information wars with Russia, *STV*'s director of news broadcasting remarked:

'In such situations, of course, it's probably a matter of honour to stand up for oneself, right? And of course we tried to respond to such things appropriately.' (Interviewee 32, 2012)

It is thus unsurprising that little variation was found in the editorial line towards Russia taken by *Panorama*, *Nashi Novosti* and *24 Chasa* during the 'information war' period: all three bulletins see their role as representing the views of the Belarusian state and responding to negative reports about Belarus in the Russian media.

Those interviewees with responsibility for scheduling were asked why Russian bulletins were not simply removed in their entirety from Belarusian television at times of tension to prevent mixed messages about Russia confusing the Belarusian audience. Several reasons were given. The programmes director at *ONT* pointed to the audience, saying:

'We never considered the possibility of removing the *Vremya* bulletin, because our viewer associates our schedule with a number of Russian-produced programmes, including *Vremya*. I think our viewer would be displeased if we took it off air.' (Interviewee 31, 2012)

She added that *Vremya* enjoyed a 36 per cent share of the audience in its prime-time slot, which is roughly the same as *Nashi Novosti* (i.e. viewers tend to watch the programmes back-to-back). She linked *Vremya*'s continuing popularity in Belarus to the common identity and close ties which she said were shared by Russians and Belarusians:

‘Taking into account the long Soviet past and friendly ties and relations – many people have relatives and friends living in Russia – so the majority see themselves as one country. They continue to think that way.’ (Interviewee 31, 2012)

At *STV* (which controls *RTR-Belarus*), the first deputy director-general suggested that objections from the Russian side would ensue should *Vesti* be removed from Belarusian airtime. He said:

‘First, it is written in our contract that we cannot interfere in that [*Vesti* broadcasts]. At particularly critical moments there were sometimes cases when reports appeared that we really didn't like... We replaced them, or rather we didn't replace them; we tried to cut out such reports. But firstly that spoilt the timing of the bulletin... And secondly there were complaints from our [Russian] partners. Then we decided not to do it. To the purely Russian [*Vesti*] news bulletins we attach our bulletins [10-minute *Novosti-Belarus* bulletins shown at 19.50 before the *Vesti* bulletin at 20.00]. They are scheduled together in order to resolve that issue, to provide a mix of information.’
 (Interviewee 33, 2012)

At *NTV-Belarus*, on the other hand, the director-general made clear that programmes would be removed from the schedule if they ‘contravened Belarusian legislation’, a fact which he said ‘the Russians understand’. He explained:

‘If a programme does not comply with or contravenes Belarusian legislation, it doesn't go on air. We monitor this in advance. It won't go on air if it contravenes Belarusian legislation... I don't see any point in removing reports that do not contravene

Belarusian legislation. So here, as I am appointed by the leadership [of state broadcasting company Belteleradiokompaniya], I rely on my instinct so to speak and also on the legislation that exists.’ (Interviewee 34, 2012)

Thus, news bulletins from Russia’s main state-controlled channels are broadcast in Belarus even at times of bilateral tension. Audience demand and contractual obligations to Russian partners are factors working against their removal from Belarusian TV schedules. If reports (or whole programmes) contravene Belarusian law – i.e. discredit the president – they are removed. Yet such redactions (which are quite rare) only concern critical reports about Belarus, they do not affect favourable reports about Russia and its leaders. Consequently – as found in the content analysis – Belarusian audiences watching *ONT*’s prime-time news hour during disputes between Moscow and Minsk can find themselves faced with extremely divergent depictions of Russia and its leadership: the rosy-eyed view on *Vremya* and extreme negativity on *Nashi Novosti*.

One other significant point which came to light in the interviews is that the Belarusian-made news bulletins have a symbiotic relationship with the Russian-made news bulletins. The content of the Russian bulletins is a factor that affects reporting by the Belarusian bulletins even when Moscow-Minsk relations are calm and there is no call for information ‘counterattacks’. This is particularly true of *Vremya* and *Nashi Novosti*. *ONT*’s head of news explained that the two bulletins are viewed as a single package and *Nashi Novosti* editors often try to avoid repeating topics already covered by their counterparts at *Vremya*. He said:

‘We don’t coordinate [news] directly with their editor but we watch what goes on air during the day. If there is overlap in topics, we make way for them sometimes and look at the 20.00 and 20.30 airtime as a kind of single news hour.’ (Interviewee 30, 2012)

International news with no Belarusian participation is a topic which *Nashi Novosti* commonly leaves for *Vremya* to report. The interviewee explained:

‘If *Pervyy Kanal* reports a story in its news and we understand that it will be a long report, then there is no sense for us to repeat it five minutes later with our journalist’s version... If it is an event, for example, I don’t know, a G8 or G20 [summit] in Moscow, and we know that a big pool of Kremlin journalists has got accreditation and they’ll report it from every angle, we don’t send our [correspondent] because there will be an enormous 10- or 8-minute report in the news that precedes us. At best we would repeat it, or worst of all, produce a report of poorer quality. So we don’t. Instead we concentrate more on domestic Belarusian events. For big events involving Russia or the CIS we have Moscow assistants, so to speak.’ (Interviewee 30, 2012)

International news involving the Belarusian leadership, however, is not left for *Vremya*; such news requires a different approach. The interviewee continued:

‘There is an exception, however. The Belarusian-Russian Union State, for example; or the Eurasian Economic Community, or the CSTO – a meeting where the head of state or the prime minister of our country are taking part. If President Lukashenko, for example, flies to Moscow then a [presidential] pool journalist who is accredited with him goes too... because it’s clear that a Russian, Kremlin journalist will report news from Russia’s position and here we need to look at these things from the position of the Belarusian state.’ (Interviewee 30, 2012)

There were indications that Belteleradiokompaniya (to which *Belarus 1* and *NTV-Belarus* belong) also relies on its Russian partner to provide coverage of international affairs. The director-general of *NTV-Belarus* observed:

‘Unfortunately, due to financial restrictions BelteleRadiokompaniya lacks so-called permanent foreign correspondents. Russia has far more of them... Our international news [on *Belarus 1*] mainly comes from the exchange – video news.’ (Interviewee 34, 2012)

He suggested that the Russian bulletins’ capacity to report extensively on foreign affairs might partly explain their continued popularity in Belarus.

On the whole, reporting of domestic Russian issues is another matter left to the Russian channels. Topics which might be under-reported by *Vremya* – such as the anti-Kremlin opposition – are unlikely to attract much attention from *Nashi Novosti* according to *ONT*’s head of news:

‘If they are purely domestic Russian problems we leave it to the conscience of *Pervyy Kanal*... We consider those topics [the anti-Kremlin opposition] Russian domestic ones. They don’t particularly concern the interests of the Belarusian viewer.’
(Interviewee 30, 2012)

Similarly, the *Panorama* journalist stated:

‘Of course, our viewers can get the fullest picture of Russia directly from the Russian news. We understand that perfectly well. So if certain events happen in Russia, purely Russian domestic matters, in principle we don’t pay much attention to it unless it’s something big, for example a terrorist attack or an explosion.’ (Interviewee 29, 2012)

These comments are at odds with the content analysis results described earlier. During the sample period there were in fact quite a few reports on *Panorama* and *Nashi Novosti* about Russian domestic matters which highlighted Russian socio-political failings. The interview data suggests that such attention paid to Russian domestic problems during the ‘information war’ was exceptional and that the Belarusian bulletins would tend to talk less about Russian domestic matters when bilateral relations are calm. At all three of the Belarusian-made bulletins, interviewees stressed that

reports about Russia should normally have a Belarusian angle in order to be selected. For example, *STV*'s director of news broadcasting said:

‘If something interests us from the Russian news, as a rule it is something linked to Belarus – perhaps indirectly.’ (Interviewee 32, 2012)

While the head of *ONT*'s news department described the role of the channel's Moscow correspondent as follows:

‘Some 80 or 90 per cent of *Nashi Novosti* is composed of Belarusian topics... If there is a Belarusian connection somewhere – in Moscow, Poland, Ukraine, the Baltic states, somewhere abroad – and the word Belarus is mentioned, in other words the news is linked directly or indirectly to our country, then we pick it up. It could be some Belarusian exhibition in Moscow, or our delegation visiting, or an emergency involving our citizens or something else. In 90 per cent of cases we direct him [*Nashi Novosti*'s Moscow correspondent] exclusively towards the connection to our country.’ (Interviewee 30, 2012)

This section has thus revealed contradictory trends in the relationship between the Belarusian-made and Russian-made TV news bulletins. At times of tension between Moscow and Minsk they can be highly adversarial, as the content analysis demonstrated. Yet it is normal practice for editors at Belarusian bulletins like *Nashi Novosti* to defer to their Russian counterparts for coverage of certain kinds of news. As a rule, the Belarusian broadcasters see no need to provide their own account of developments on the international scene or in Russia which the Russian broadcasters have already covered; this allows them to focus their resources on stories which directly involve Belarus. Therefore, Russian state broadcasters are effectively the main interpreters of world and Russian domestic news for Belarusian TV viewers.

4.3 Daily newspapers: *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*

Only two daily newspapers are studied in this chapter: *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*. The former belongs to the Belarusian Presidential Administration; the latter belongs to the Russian publishing house *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and ultimately to Russian businessmen (see Chapter 2). Unlike its Ukrainian equivalent, *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* is run as a subsidiary rather than a franchise. According to the hypothesis, one would expect *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* to produce more extensive and more favourable coverage of Russia than *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*.

As in the case of the TV bulletins, the results of the quantitative content analysis, presented in Table 4.2, are in line with expectations.

Table 4.2: Proportion of stories in daily newspapers coded as ‘featuring Russia’

Newspaper	Mean number of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each issue	Mean % of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each issue
<i>Sovetskaya Belorussiya</i>	5.91 (ranging from 3 to 10)	19.60% (min. 8.3%; max. 32.0%; 23 observations)
<i>Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii</i>	7.17 (ranging from 3 to 14)	25.83% (min. 15.8%; max. 36.8%; 23 observations)

A two sample *t*-test shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the two newspapers at the 5 per cent level in the mean proportion of stories ‘featuring Russia’ per issue: $t(44) = -3.28$; $p = 0.002$. On average, the proportion of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* was about 6 percentage points higher than in *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*.

The hypothesis is also supported by patterns in the two dailies’ story selection. Table C6 (see Appendix 2) lists the stories ‘featuring Russia’ which they ran during the sample weeks.

The majority of stories in Table C6 were free from subjective remarks about Russia. In both newspapers, Russia frequently featured in reports and interviews as a banal place of business, travel or residence. References to Russia also came up repeatedly in historical articles about events and personalities from the Soviet or shared imperial past. In *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* Russia was often the setting for human interest or celebrity news, e.g. the birth of quadruplets in a Moscow hospital or a Russian billionaire seeking divorce.

However, *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* did run a number of stories highlighting activity by the Russian state that was presented as undemocratic, disingenuous, domineering or in other ways negative. On the international front, it picked up the news that Moscow had imposed restrictions on Moldovan wine imports, observing on 28 August:

‘Moscow says pesticides are the reason [for the wine restrictions] and they do not admit it was a political order, but few people believe these explanations after all the “trade wars” conducted by Russia in recent years.’

The same week it reported a dispute between Moscow and Vilnius over gas pipelines and EU gas market regulations. The article described half of Eastern Europe as battling Gazprom’s ‘one-sided’ contracts, and columnist Nina Romanova observed on 27 August:

‘... however much the Kremlin tries to facilitate the installation of ‘pro-Russian’ [political forces], in fact not a single national government will agree to Gazprom’s peonage [*kabala*].’

This view of Russia as a domineering regional actor also came across in an interview with Polish politician Witold Waszczykowski on 21 September and another with Polish political scientist Waldemar Kuczyński on 4 November. Another Pole, *Gazeta Wyborcza* editor Adam Michnik, contributed a column about the Valday discussion club on 6 October which described the Russian system as ‘soft, liberal authoritarianism’.

An interesting feature of *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*'s story selection was its practice of reprinting articles or comments about Russia from the foreign (including Russian) press which tended to focus on Russian failings. One report on 11 September began with the words:

‘The foreign media have criticised the actions of the Russian authorities following the bloody terrorist attack on the market square of Vladikavkaz... Observers recall the unhealed wounds of the Beslan tragedy and other September terrorist attacks, mulling the ineffectiveness of the current Kremlin strategy to pacify the Caucasus.’

On 24 September, the paper reprinted an article from Spain's *El Mundo* about the closure of bureaux de change in Moscow which spoke of profit being the ‘main motive for action’ in Moscow, the ‘scandalous exploits of wheeler-dealers’ and multiple examples in the history of Russian capitalism of people ‘investing their whole souls in fraud’. On 22 September there was an article from Poland's *Gazeta Wyborcza* titled ‘Baghdad on Prospekt Mira’, which was also critical of the Russian capital: it spoke of rubbish lying around in the streets and the impossibility of buying good meat because of a public health official ‘who, on orders from above, can find harmful substances in any goods imported from countries that have fallen out of grace with the Kremlin.’ Another unflattering article on 22 September came from Russian website *gazeta.ru*. Prompted by the withdrawal from circulation of Russian one-kopec coins, it described the kopec's demise as the ‘sad metaphorical result of the Putin decade’ which had been characterised by rising prices. ‘Such is Russian political life: as senseless as a kopec and as merciless as double-digit inflation,’ it concluded.

In fact, the Russian media served as the most frequent source of bad news from Russia in *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*. It has a column called *Dayzhest* (Digest) which provides a daily selection of material from Russian newspapers and websites. Topics which came up in this column during the sample weeks included the Russian authorities' failure to provide war veterans with housing; the deficit of buckwheat in Russia; high food prices (mentioned repeatedly); Russia's demographic

decline; high levels of corruption; high levels of inequality; and terrorism. On 10 September *Daydzhest* cited a study about Russia's backwardness, originally reported in Russia's *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*. The study's author was quoted declaring:

'We are not a developed country; we are dealing with various backward groups. These are real, big clans in law-enforcement, security and administrative structures, which do not intend to leave power.'

However, *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*'s most prominent and caustic story about the Russian political establishment was a front-page editorial published at the height of the 'information war' on 5 October, a few days after Medvedev had posted his video blog criticising Lukashenko. It mocked Putin and Medvedev for drinking milk together in front of TV cameras and ridiculed Russian television, remarking sarcastically:

'D.A. [Medvedev] and V.V. [Putin] are serious people, true statesmen, why would they fritter away precious time and play out flat spectacles? Personally I think Messrs Medvedev and Putin met by chance, sincerely rejoiced and in their own manly way raised a glass of milk each over a tasty snack. That's all. As for the TV people, it was a complete coincidence that they happened to be present and they cobbled together a highly artistic but impromptu TV report.'

Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii, meanwhile, ran no editorials at all during the sample period. Nor did it print opinion columns by in-house columnists, unlike *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, where page three was nearly always occupied by three separate opinion pieces. Personal opinions were sometimes expressed in interviews. However, the tabloid largely abstained from printing journalistic comment and analysis relating to political matters. There was certainly no mockery or editorial criticism of the Russian establishment in *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* of the kind

observed in *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*. There was no outright praise for the Russian establishment either.

Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii did select some stories which reflected poorly on Russia. Examples included a report about the extreme wealth of Russian officials and their families as calculated by *Forbes* magazine (25 August); the unpleasant experience of an Israeli woman in a Russian hospital (28 August); a discussion between users of the *Komsomolskaya Pravda* website about a Russian car replacement scheme where Russian-made cars were denigrated (7 September); and a small article about a Russian celebrity who decided to emigrate to Norway due to the repeated racist attacks experienced by her mixed-race son (10 September). One report – an interview with opposition-minded Russian rock musician Yuriy Shevchuk – briefly highlighted problems with Russia's political status quo, albeit alongside a warning against radical change. On 8 September Shevchuk was quoted as saying:

‘At the moment it's like the Middle Ages here [in Russia], when there is the *boyar*-prince class with flashing blue lights on their heads and there are the burden-bearing masses. A gulf divides people and it is growing... I feel the country splitting as an artist. But there is no desire for a new revolution. Because in revolutions extremists trash shops, like in Bishkek, they smash and kill.’

Yet such stories were few in number and mild in tone compared to the ‘bad news’ reports from Russia contained in *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*'s *Dayzhest* column. They did not point a finger of blame towards the Kremlin.

Given *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*'s apparent lack of inclination to print criticism of Russian policy and the Russian leadership, it is interesting to study its reporting of the ‘information war’ and Lukashenko's verbal attacks on Medvedev and Putin. The third stage of the content

analysis, which compares coverage of this topic in *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* and *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, demonstrates that the two dailies again differed in line with the hypothesis.

The boxes below present the main news points relating to the ‘information war’ that were reported by each daily newspaper during the sample weeks, followed by quotes illustrating the point(s) of view that were represented in print. The dailies ran far fewer reports about the ‘information war’ than the TV news bulletins: during the sample weeks there were just three articles in *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* and two in *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* which referred directly to Russian or Belarusian media attacks.

<i>Sovetskaya Belorussiya</i>
<p>Lukashenko says he does not intend to respond to mudslinging in the Russian media (27 August). Medvedev posts a video blog about Belarus (6 October).</p>
<p>‘The information campaign against Belarus which has today unfolded in the Moscow media is hitting the allied relationship between the countries, built up over the years...’ (<i>Sovetskaya Belorussiya</i> journalist, 27 August)</p> <p>‘There is no conflict and cannot be any conflict between Russian and Belarusian citizens...’ (Lukashenko, 27 August)</p> <p>‘It somehow seems that the [Russian] president’s advisors misled him a little by interpreting the spirit and sense of the Minsk news conference too freely, or to be more precise, too tendentiously. No wonder an emotional Medvedev dropped everything, turned on his equipment and recorded a video blog. Now lots of people are talking and writing about that blog. But a few days will pass, the waters will settle and a number of circumstances will become clearer... political misunderstandings between Minsk and Moscow always end positively...’ (<i>Sovetskaya Belorussiya</i> editor-in-chief, 6 October)</p>

Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii

Lukashenko says he does not intend to respond to mudslinging in the Russian media (27 August).

Medvedev posts a video blog about Belarus after Lukashenko gives a news conference to Russian journalists (5 October).

Lukashenko gives a news conference to Russian journalists (7 October).

‘There is absolutely no conflict between Russia and Belarus, there is absolutely no conflict and cannot be any conflict between Russians and Belarusians...’ (Lukashenko, 27 August)

‘It would be a catastrophe for Russia to lose Belarus. Not only on a political scale, but above all morally. It [Belarus] is the closest and most reliable nation for the Russians. In fact, they are one nation – Russians and Belarusians.’ (Lukashenko, 5 October)

‘Russia has always regarded and will regard the Belarusian people as its very closest neighbour... Proceeding precisely from this we have always helped the Belarusian people. Essentially from the moment the Soviet Union disintegrated – for almost 20 years – the scale of this support has been enormous, whatever they may say.’ (Medvedev, 5 October)

‘Forget the talk that I am preparing my sons or eldest son as a successor. This isn’t Russia, nobody is going to pass on power as inheritance... Medvedev knows him [Kolya, Lukashenko’s young son] and Putin knows him, they greeted each other, Putin even gave him a combat pistol (...) What has he done to anyone that they should start to attack him like that?’ (Lukashenko, 7 October)

The range of sources of opinion that were cited about the ‘information war’ was extremely limited in both newspapers. *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* printed only the views of its editor-in-chief, a journalist and Lukashenko. It carried no verbatim quotations from representatives of the Russian side.

Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii also devoted many column inches to the views of Lukashenko – on 7 October it printed an entire page of excerpts from Lukashenko’s 4.5-hour news

conference to Russian journalists that had taken place the previous week. Crucially, however, those excerpts were on the topics of ‘His children’, ‘The president’s working day’, ‘Alcohol’ and ‘Presidency’; Lukashenko’s harshest words about the Russian leadership were omitted. Unlike *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* did print some excerpts from Medvedev’s video blog. On 5 October it set out to ‘compare quotations from the two presidents’ under subheadings ‘The people’, ‘Relations at the top level’ and ‘Hopes for improvement’. The words of Lukashenko (from the press conference) and Medvedev (from the video blog) were alternated without any journalistic analysis whatsoever. The article was just accompanied by a photo of the two presidents together, smiling, captioned ‘Both Dmitriy Medvedev and Aleksandr Lukashenko are convinced that the relationship between the two countries has good prospects’.

Overall, the two dailies’ coverage of the ‘information war’ did not differ as radically as one might have imagined given that one belongs to the Belarusian Presidential Administration and the other to Russian businessmen who are loyal to the Kremlin. Both seemed inclined to play down tensions, assuring their readers that everything would soon be resolved and that Russia and Belarus remained natural allies. Rather than endorsing Medvedev’s criticisms of Lukashenko, *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* set out the statements made by each president side by side, without drawing any explicit conclusions at all. However, the dailies did behave in line with the hypothesis in that *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*, unlike *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, conveyed some of Medvedev words to readers and did not accuse him of being ‘emotional’ or ‘mised’.

To shed light on the content analysis findings, interviews were conducted in Minsk with two journalists who had worked at *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* for many years and a senior representative of *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*.

At *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, the tone of reporting about Russia would appear to be determined largely by a strict editorial chain of command that runs back to the Presidential Administration via an influential editor-in-chief. One interviewee described the system as follows:

‘In the political reporting of various international ties, the journalists do not have their own will. I will say it frankly, it all depends on the editors and the editor in turn is instructed by his bosses.’ (Interviewee 35, 2012)

Instructions from the Presidential Administration are received at weekly meetings, the interviewee said.

‘I never attended the meetings in the Presidential Administration. Usually the editor-in-chief goes there, or his first deputy. These meetings take place every Monday. And afterwards, each Monday, it becomes more or less clear what the tone of reporting about Russian-Belarusian relations is going to be.’ (Interviewee 35, 2012)

Meanwhile, journalists lower down the chain learn to look for guidance from their editors before writing their reports. The interviewee explained:

‘An experienced journalist who works there will ask the editors what tone to write in and what to write; whether comments are needed to say that it is good or bad. It all comes from above. Our attitude towards Russia on a given day always depends on the Presidential Administration.’ (Interviewee 35, 2012)

However, the editor-in-chief at *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* does not merely convey instructions from the Presidential Administration; his views also contribute to the shaping of editorial policy. When asked why the paper took a slightly less aggressive line than the Belarusian state TV news bulletins during the ‘information war’ with Russia, the interviewee said:

‘Symbolically, a newspaper is one person – the editor-in-chief. It is all very connected to his personality and his personal influence, the possibility of his personal influence on the Presidential Administration. To put it very simply, he doesn’t like the idea of being a reckless propagandist. The people who work on TV, responsible for ideology,

they are younger and they have less influence on the Presidential Administration. The editor of *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* is old and experienced.’ (Interviewee 35, 2012)

According to the interviewee, the influence of the editor-in-chief’s worldview is extended through his power over appointments:

‘I would say that the staff and journalists who work there, as they initially acquire experience in writing texts they also learn the editor-in-chief’s worldview. Those who cannot learn it and accept his worldview cannot work at the newspaper.’ (Interviewee 35, 2012)

At *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* the top editors undoubtedly help to shape content, but they do so in a different – less personal – way. The interviewee from *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* suggested that the editor-in-chief’s own views on Russia had ‘no influence at all’ on coverage and could be deeply at odds with views published, because:

‘Everything in the area of analysis and stance comes from experts. That’s the format of *Komsomolka*... There is a principle of several points of view. If Belarusian and Russian experts have such points of view, they will be represented in the article. [The task of the editor-in-chief] is to ensure the spectrum [of opinion] is adequate, that it is there.’ (Interviewee 37, 2012)

Furthermore, the editors at *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* try to avoid conflict with the Presidential Administration but they do not receive and follow presidential instructions in the same way as editors at *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*. The interviewee from *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* said:

‘With anything concerning the [Belarusian] state, we try not to enter into a conflict, particularly in legal terms. Anything relating to ideology we simply try to avoid. If there are some really important matters, we simply refer to them in a factual tone.

Here is one opinion, here is another. Here is one Russian quote, here is a Belarusian one.’ (Interviewee 37, 2012)

Echoing comments made by the editors of tabloids in Ukraine (see Chapter 3), the interviewee added:

‘I believe the reader is sufficiently intelligent to draw conclusions independently. He does not need our interpretation of banal things. He is capable of reading and judging.’
(Interviewee 37, 2012)

When reporting Russian domestic news, *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* relies entirely on material received from the Russian federal edition. Such news stories are selected by staff in Minsk according to their degree of interest to the Belarusian reader and reprinted with little or no amendment. The editorial team in Minsk produces articles about Russian-Belarusian relations, but the interviewee said such reporting was always ‘factual’ in tone, without overt editorializing.

The content sample supports the claim that *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* avoids analysis and commentary on Russia-related matters. This approach is surely safest from a political point of view. The interviewee also put it down to the tabloid’s mass audience, saying:

‘Our editorial policy states that we work above all in the interests of the reader, because the reader buys the paper every day and if we do not answer his questions he simply stops buying... Our task is to write about things that affect people. If we have a problem with oil and gas then we write about it. But the deep political subtext or game – well, that probably gets left to the analytical publications, so to speak, because we are an entirely mass-circulation publication.’ (Interviewee 37, 2012)

The interviewee was asked whether *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*’s status as a ‘Russian’ publication made reporting of Moscow-Minsk relations problematic, as readers and the authorities could suspect the paper of anti-Belarusian tendencies. Being considered ‘Russian’ does cause

difficulties at times, the interviewee acknowledged. Interestingly, however, it is reporting of Belarusian domestic issues – not bilateral relations - which cause the most tension:

‘Unfortunately, we are seen here as a Russian paper, not [just] a pro-Russian one. In official circles that is simply the norm. They think that if the capital [money] is Russian it means the content is also Russian. But as a rule, this concerns what we write about Belarus and not what we write about Russia. Any report of a social nature, about public utilities or something else, is seen through the prism of being written by a Russian paper. And since it’s Russian, that means it is [viewed by the authorities as] a critical article... In that sense it is much harder to write about what is happening here [in Belarus] than about Russian-Belarusian relations.’ (Interviewee 37, 2012)

The interviewee went on to say that journalists working for *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* were sometimes denied access to information because of the authorities’ suspicions. ‘Tangible problems’ arise, the interviewee said, when the paper’s reporters ‘are not accredited, not invited to press-conferences’ because the authorities fear they will ‘interpret Belarusian reality from an imperial Russian stance’ (Interviewee 37, 2012).

Yet according to the interviewee, the ‘information war’ caused no unusually big headaches for editors at *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*. The paper’s Moscow partners apparently made no attempt to promote a pro-Kremlin line on the story, allowing the editors in Minsk to largely ignore it. The interviewee said:

‘What happens in Russia – the fact that they made some political films [criticizing Lukashenko] – the reader, if he sees them on the internet or on TV, he can draw his own conclusions. We do not comment and we do not enter the dispute... All the more so as *Komsomolskaya Pravda*’s position was absolutely balanced. There were no special texts [from the Moscow edition] which diverged from a factual representation

of the events – there simply weren't any. So I didn't have to sit and think about whether to include them in the paper. In that sense it was probably harder for the TV channels [e.g. *NTV-Belarus*] which had to change around their schedule somehow. But *Komsomolka* doesn't get into political fights by virtue of its mass circulation.'

(Interviewee 37, 2012)

The interviewee insisted that the 'information war' had been a storm in a teacup and had not actually merited much coverage. Russian and Belarus are basically long-term allies, whatever games the politicians occasionally play, the interviewee argued. As a result, news coverage of Russian-Belarusian relations is not generally a problem for the paper. The interviewee explained:

'The [presidents' critical] statements, well, probably in a neighbourly way people read it and giggle... The reader doesn't see any serious conflict underlying it, because the countries are very closely linked... So it's hard for me to displease anyone when reporting Russian-Belarusian relations. It's not a problem at all, because our relations with Russia have always been more straightforward than Russian-Ukrainian relations. There simply isn't any deep conflict of values. There is a surface-layer of political clashes, and generally everyone knows that these will come to an end.' (Interviewee 37, 2012)

It is possible, of course, that the interviewee was unable to speak entirely openly about the pressures which *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* editors face at times of bilateral tensions. Yet overall it seems that the paper has a strategy of steering clear of controversy which seems to satisfy readers, partners in Moscow and officials in Minsk most of the time. According to the interviewee, *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* has always been a profitable business and remaining so is the top priority for the paper's owners. Making money – which would be impossible if the paper regularly offended the Belarusian authorities – is apparently more important to shareholders than defending the Kremlin in the face of Lukashenko's verbal attacks. The interviewee explained:

‘*Komsomolka* is a business project. However people judge it due to its name and shareholders, pro-Kremlin or whatever, it is still a business project. So the shareholders’ interest lies in having a profitable business in Belarus, which operates in a stable way, with a growing readership, so the capital increases. Between ourselves, nobody understands this in Belarus. They simply don’t understand it. Because the attitude towards media here is still the same as it was in the Soviet Union.’

(Interviewee 37, 2012)

As for ‘information war’ coverage at *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, it has already been made clear that the Presidential Administration set the paper’s editorial stance. The two interviewees at *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* were asked to comment specifically on their experience of reporting bilateral tensions in the second half of 2010. One interviewee described receiving a clear set of instructions from above:

‘I remember that the top management proposed that we should not hold back... That is, we could be forthright in expressing things. It was a period when tasks were even set to write more aggressively [*napisat pozhestche*]. Irony, sarcasm, a touch of scandal – it was all OK.’ (Interviewee 35, 2012)

The same interviewee continued:

‘I would sit and monitor the news. If a piece of news appeared in the Russian media which could be interpreted in various ways, interpreted from a critical point of view, that really suited us back then. Above all we were devoting attention to ways of showing that the Russian state was corrupt, that the [Russian state-controlled] media were not telling the truth, that they were manipulated. It was all necessary to demonstrate that those films [about Lukashenko] were a lie. In order to expose the mendacity of the Russian government and the Russian authorities, any topic could be

used – culture, sport, whatever. In other words, anything that could be scandalous was useful.’ (Interviewee 35, 2012)

It is interesting to note here that *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* journalists were effectively relying on Russian media sources to provide their ‘ammunition’ for the ‘information war’. As observed during the content analysis, stories from Russian websites which were not deferential to the Russian state were picked up and ‘amplified’ in Belarus by *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*. Thus, there was a cross-border flow of information from Russia to Belarus that was certainly not to the Kremlin’s liking or under its control.

This section has demonstrated a clear and straightforward causal process behind *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*’s coverage of Russia in general and the information war in particular. However, there is one paradox which should be mentioned. Once a week there is a free insert published with *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*. Titled *Soyuz*, it is the official publication of the Council of Ministers of the Union State of Russia and Belarus. In Russia it comes out with state-owned *Rossiyskaya Gazeta*. It is produced jointly by journalists from *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* and *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*. One interviewee described its content as focusing on ‘those processes in politics, economics, culture, science and sport which testify to the unifying tendencies of the Belarusian and Russian peoples’ (Interviewee 36, 2012). It aims to convey a ‘positive’ view of bilateral relations, the same interviewee added. Or in the words of the other interviewee, ‘every Thursday *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* shows how warm and wonderful relations between Russia and Belarus are’ (Interviewee 35, 2012).

Although its content is not studied here, *Soyuz* continued to be distributed with *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* in Minsk (and apparently with *Rossiyskaya Gazeta* in Moscow too) throughout the ‘information war’ period. Some of its positive stories about bilateral ties were written by the very same journalists who were simultaneously generating scathing criticism of Russia in *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*. As one interviewee explained:

‘If a person has professional experience then he or she already understands that a certain tone is required when asked to write for *Soyuz*, whereas if he or she is asked to write something else about Russia [for *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*], as a rule the editor who sets the task will explain what the tone needs to be.’ (Interviewee 35, 2012)

Asked how the journalists themselves perceived the information war, the same interviewee said ‘they perceive it how they are told to perceive it’. They appear to accept the paradoxical generation of conflicting messages as a necessary part of their job. One of the *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* interviewees, like the representative of *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*, stressed that ‘information wars’ were a passing phenomenon of little real significance whereas Russian-Belarusian relations would always be fundamentally sound (Interviewee 36, 2012). Therefore, the interviewee said, journalists did not take real offence at Russia’s information attacks. None of the journalists interviewed for this section voiced any concern that Russia might threaten Belarusian sovereignty.

4.4 Weekly newspapers: *Obozrevatel*, *BelGazeta*, *Svobodnyye Novosti Plyus*, *Belorusy i Rynok* and *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii*

Five weekly newspapers are studied in this chapter, of which two are owned by Russians. *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii*, like its parent publication in Russia, belongs to the PromSvyazCapital group which is controlled by Russian businessmen brothers Dmitriy and Aleksey Ananyev. *BelGazeta*’s ownership structure is not in the public domain but informed sources interviewed for this thesis said it belongs to the same group of Russian shareholders as *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*. *Obozrevatel* belongs to its founder and editor-in-chief, Belarusian businessman Sergey Atroshchenko, who owns a well-known clothing company. *Svobodnyye Novosti Plyus* (*SN Plyus*) and *Belorusy i Rynok* also belong to their editors-in-chief – Vladimir Zdanyuk and Vyacheslav Khodosovskiy respectively – who are career journalists. These

five newspapers are aimed at quite different readerships. *BelGazeta* and *Belorusy i Rynok* carry a lot of business news, targeting the Belarusian professional class. *Obozrevatel* and *SN Plyus* are both general socio-political publications. *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii* targets a mass readership with a mixture of political news, human interest stories, celebrity interviews and advice on domestic matters (home, garden, beauty etc.).

The hypothesis leads us to expect that coverage of Russia would be more extensive and favourable in *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii* and *BelGazeta* than in *Obozrevatel*, *SN Plyus* and *Belorusy i Rynok*.

The results of the quantitative content analysis for the weekly newspapers are presented in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Proportion of stories in weekly newspapers coded as ‘featuring Russia’

Newspaper	Mean number of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each issue	Mean % of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in each issue
<i>Obozrevatel</i>	7.4 (ranging from 4 to 12)	21.0% (min. 12.1%; max. 35.3%; 5 observations)
<i>BelGazeta</i>	15.4 (ranging from 12 to 18)	37.4% (min. 34.0%; max. 43.8%; 5 observations)
<i>SN Plyus</i>	8 (ranging from 6 to 11)	24.9% (min. 19.4%; max. 36.7%; 5 observations)
<i>Belorusy i Rynok</i>	14 (ranging from 13 to 15)	30.7% (min. 24.5%; max. 35.0%; 5 observations)
<i>AiF v Belorussii</i>	10.8 (ranging from 9 to 15)	15.5% (min. 11.1%; max. 21.4%; 5 observations)

The number of observations for the weekly newspapers is small – only five for each title – which hinders robust statistical analysis. Nevertheless, on the limited evidence available it appears that –

contrary to the hypothesis – *AiF v Belorussii* actually devoted the least attention to Russia of all the titles studied. Meanwhile, *BelGazeta* behaves fully in line with the hypothesis, devoting more attention to Russia than any other weekly, although *Belorusy i Rynok* was not far behind. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and the Bonferroni follow-up test shows that the difference in mean proportion of stories ‘featuring Russia’ was statistically significant at the 5 per cent level between *BelGazeta* and *SN Plyus* ($p = 0.033$); *BelGazeta* and *AiF v Belorussii* ($p < 0.000$); *BelGazeta* and *Obozrevatel* ($p = 0.003$); there was also a statistically significant difference in mean between *AiF v Belorussii* and *Belorusy i Rynok* ($p = 0.006$). Differences in mean between *Obozrevatel*, *SN Plyus* and *AiF v Belorussii* were not statistically significant; nor were differences between *BelGazeta* and *Belorusy i Rynok*. Thus, it is the two business-oriented publications which had the most to say about Russia judging by the measure used here.

There was no clear support for the hypothesis in the tabular comparison of story selection. Table C7 (see Appendix 2) lists the stories ‘featuring Russia’ which the five weeklies ran during the sample period. It is hard to argue that *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii* and *BelGazeta* selected stories that flattered Russia more than the stories published in *Obozrevatel*, *SN Plyus* and *Belorusy i Rynok*.

In the case of *AiF v Belorussii*, the majority of stories ‘featuring Russia’ were apolitical. However, the paper twice published full-page articles drawing attention to problems in the Russian political system. On 8 September it ran a piece by columnist Vyacheslav Kostikov about the ‘alienation’ of the Russian public from the Russian authorities, which began:

‘Reliant primarily on higher-level bureaucrats and satisfied with what is happening in the country, the authorities are trying to ruin the opposition. In essence the goal has been achieved: independent parties have been sidelined and dunce’s hats placed on their leaders’ heads. The words “democracy”, “democrat” and “human rights activist” have basically disappeared from the official dictionary... The people are told that life

is good and democracy isn't necessary if there is nanotechnology, good oil prices, Olympic Games, football World Cups and jolly television.'

The author then went on to speak out against this situation quite explicitly:

'The people hear this political chiming, but the conclusions they are drawing are not the ones which those at the top would like to see... The view is being voiced ever more insistently that the current system of government is not appropriate for the tasks of modernization.'

The same columnist picked up similar themes on 3 November, when he mentioned a report about the Russian middle class's 'deep disillusionment' with the current political system. He wrote:

'If one really got the urge, one could even criticise Putin and Medvedev. In response, you might get whacked with a baton... But the most worrying thing... is that the system of authority that has established itself in Russia is fruitless. It is not yet producing significant results.'

These two articles constituted the most forthright criticism of the Russian state in the *AiF v Belorussii* sample, but a sceptical attitude towards the Russian establishment could be seen elsewhere in the paper too. The words of Russian politicians and officials were gently mocked on a regular basis in the 'quotes of the week' column (which is also published by *AiF v Ukraine* and was discussed in Chapter 3). The following quote plus quip comes from the 25 August issue:

'A. Khloponin, deputy prime minister, presidential representative in the North Caucasus Federal District: "For some reason you (the people – Ed.) feel that state service is a land of honey, where there is something tasty, a flashing blue light, and shed-loads of money." – On the one hand, the bureaucrat's work is not all sugar. But on the other hand, people wouldn't stick there so much if it wasn't spread with something!'

More scepticism towards the official narrative of Russian politics was apparent in the column *Kuram na smekh* (It's enough to make chickens laugh), which reported prices being fixed at a Saratov Region market in honour of a visit by Medvedev. Noting that the president had bought two bottles of *kvas* and some chewing gum, the columnist observed on 8 September:

‘Ah, Dmitriy Anatolyevich, you should have bought some buckwheat. You know, it went up in price five-fold after you left, according to local residents.’

Stories containing mockery or explicit criticism of the Russian state or its authorities were rare to non-existent in the other papers. *Obozrevatel* ran one report of note in this regard: a full-page article on 27 August about the political consequences of Russia's wildfires. In the article, pundit Boris Kagarlitskiy, opposition politician Boris Nemtsov and environmentalist Yevgeniy Shvarts all pointed to flaws in the Russian political system. Kagarlitskiy wrote:

‘The fires revealed the problem of the authorities in a catastrophic way... Whenever a problem arises, the ruling circles do not try to understand its causes or do something to resolve it. Rather, they brilliantly block any political consequences which the given problem might have had. In the long term the results of such government threaten to be disastrous...’

Nemtsov said the fires had demonstrated the ‘complete collapse of the power vertical’ in Russia which was ‘unable to provide safety and a normal life for our citizens.’ Otherwise, *Obozrevatel*'s selection of stories ‘featuring Russia’ was largely apolitical, focusing, for example, on celebrities from the world of sport and show business.

The majority of stories ‘featuring Russia’ in *SN Plyus* revolved around Belarusian socio-political or economic themes; there were no reports that dealt exclusively with Russian domestic affairs. Russia was briefly discussed in several interviews with Belarusian presidential candidates (Vladimir Neklyayev and Nikolay Statkevich), none of whom spoke out against ties with Moscow. The most

substantial analysis on Russia-related topics was written by regular *SN Plyus* columnist Valeriy Karbalevich. Karbalevich produced columns about the CSTO summit in Yerevan where Medvedev met Lukashenko; an attack on the Russian embassy in Minsk; the impact of the feud with Russia on the Belarusian presidential election; and the personality clash between the Russian and Belarusian leaders. Karbalevich described the background to these developments and speculation surrounding them; he offered his own interpretation of the key newsmakers' objectives and tactics. However, he managed to avoid value judgements and emotive evaluations of events.

Belorusy i Rynok was similarly oriented towards news affecting Belarus in its selection of stories 'featuring Russia' (the only domestic Russian news story to receive substantial coverage was the departure from office of Moscow mayor Yuriy Luzhkov). Trade with Russia was a particularly common theme. Sometimes the paper highlighted problematic elements of bilateral trade relations (e.g. the risk of domestic buckwheat shortages due to rising demand in Russia; Belarusian refineries suffering due to Russian oil duties) but it did so without pointing a finger of blame. A couple of times *Belorusy i Rynok* referred to Russia's 'imperial' intentions (23 August, p 4) or 'desire to dominate' (1 November, p 4) in the post-Soviet region. However, analysis of Russia's geopolitical manoeuvring occupied relatively little column space.

BelGazeta did not run any reports during the sample period that focused specifically on problems in Russia, nor did it pick stories which overtly drew attention to Russian achievements or strengths. A couple of contributors referred to Russia's democratic failings and corruption in the course of discussions on wider issues. Retired Russian colonel Vladimir Kvachkov, for example, was quoted saying on 1 November:

'Compared to the mess in Russia, with the orgy of liberal democracy which killed off almost all our own industry, agriculture, science and culture... Belarus is a blessed land.'

On 23 August Sergey Mitrokhin, chairman of the Yabloko political party, mentioned excessive bureaucracy, police brutality and court corruption when commenting for the paper on the troubles of Moscow mayor Yuriy Luzhkov. In the area of Russian domestic affairs *BelGazeta*'s story selection centred on the machinations and manoeuvring of Russia's political elite. On 6 September, for instance, it ran two full-page interviews about Putin's much-publicized road trip around the Russian Far East in a yellow Lada. One interview was with Russian journalist Andrey Kolesnikov; the other was with a man from Chita whose video of the extra Ladas in Putin's cortege had become an internet hit. Kolesnikov was generally sympathetic towards Putin, suggesting that the Russian premier's popularity had been boosted by the publicity stunt. The video-maker said he begrudged the amount of money spent on Putin's journey. Yet evaluation of Russia's leadership or political system was not the main point in any *BelGazeta* articles. Rather, events and developments involving Russia were generally scrutinized for their future implications – particularly for Belarus. Perhaps the most curious insight to emerge from comparing the weeklies' story selection was the stark contrast between the two Russian-owned papers – *BelGazeta* and *AiF v Belorussii* – in their reporting of Russian-Belarusian relations. In *BelGazeta*, bilateral ties, especially tensions and trade, were a dominant theme. Stories relating to the spat between Lukashenko and the Kremlin made *BelGazeta*'s front page in three of the five sample weeks and another front-page story was the visit to Minsk by Russian Communist Party leader Gennadiy Zyuganov. The sample editions of *AiF v Belorussii*, on the other hand, contained no articles at all that dealt specifically with the political or economic relationship between Russia and Belarus. In this respect *AiF v Belorussii* was unique among the weeklies considered here; the others all produced multiple articles about the ongoing quarrel between Moscow and Minsk.

The boxes below illustrate the coverage of the 'information war' generated by *Obozrevatel*, *BelGazeta*, *SN Plyus* and *Belorusy i Rynok* (there is no box for *AiF v Belorussii* due to its lack of

reporting on the feud). The boxes present the main news points reported by each newspaper during the sample weeks, followed by quotes illustrating the opinions that were represented in print.

<p><i>Obozrevatel</i></p>
<p>Lukashenko gives a news conference to Russian journalists (8 October).</p> <p>Medvedev posts a video blog about Belarus (8 October).</p> <p>The State Duma adopts a statement on Belarusian-Russian relations (8 October).</p>
<p>‘Relations are bad. If not worse.’ (Lukashenko, 8 October)</p> <p>‘In his statements, President Lukashenko goes far beyond the bounds of both diplomatic rules and elementary human decency.’ (Medvedev, 8 October)</p> <p>‘Certain forces in the West have an interest in [Russian-Belarusian] relations deteriorating.’ (Russian MP Aleksey Ostrovskiy, 8 October)</p> <p>‘<i>NTV</i>, which is famous for its offensive films about Aleksandr Lukashenko, has announced the showing of <i>Krestnyy Batka 4</i> this Friday, which will undoubtedly pour oil on the flames.’ (<i>Obozrevatel</i> journalist, 8 October)</p>

<p><i>BelGazeta</i></p>
<p>Russia threatens to publish a transcript of Lukashenko’s promise to recognise the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia (23 August).</p> <p>Lukashenko suggests Russia itself might be behind an attack on the Russian embassy in Minsk and voices fresh insults about Moscow (6 September).</p> <p>Lukashenko gives a news conference to Russian journalists (4 October).</p>
<p>‘Alas, the attempt at an information attack [by Minsk against Moscow] was not only blocked but backfired against the attackers...’ (deputy editor Viktor Martinovich, 23 August)</p>

‘The Belarusian leader rarely enters a rhetorical battle without a scenario for its development in his head and tactics – even various tactics – for his own behaviour – he’s good at that.’ (deputy editor Viktor Martinovich, 4 October)

‘The Belarusian leadership should show Russia it is willing to compromise – Russia’s support for Lukashenko’s candidacy has always been and remains an important factor. For its part, the Russian leadership should tone down its open criticism of Lukashenko in the media...’ (Aleksey Portanskiy from the Institute of Trade Policy of Russia’s Higher School of Economics, 23 August)

‘They [Russia’s leaders] are thieves who want to make me and my circle thieves just like they are, at least in the media...’ (Lukashenko, 6 September)

‘To engage in insults and judgements about what may have happened is permissible for lower level politicians and people in other areas such as journalists but certainly not for heads of state...’ (senior Russian MP Konstantin Kosachev, 6 September)

SN Plyus

Lukashenko gives a news conference to Russian journalists (6 October).

Medvedev posts a video blog about Belarus (6 October).

‘President Lukashenko goes beyond the bounds of diplomatic rules in his statements, but also elementary human decency...’ (Medvedev, 6 October)

‘[Medvedev’s video blog was] a rather accurate political statement about the situation in Belarus.’ (leader of the European Belarus civil campaign Andrey Sannikov, 6 October)

‘Our president [Lukashenko] said everything directly, honestly, openly, not hiding anything.’ (deputy chairman of the Belarusian House of Representatives Viktor Guminskiy, 6 October)

‘The great-power chauvinism which has been and remains present in all, even the smallest Russians, cannot admit that Belarus is an absolutely independent state.’ (chairman of the information policy commission of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union of Belarus and Russia Gennadiy Davydenko, 6 October)

‘To understand the current political moment, Lukashenko’s observation that the current dispute between Moscow and Minsk is a personal conflict is important. To a large extent this is indeed so. Besides political disagreements prompted by the objective logic of bilateral relations, the acuteness of the conflict is caused by personal contradictions between the presidents.’ (columnist Valeriy Karbalevich, 6 October)

Belorusy i Rynok

Moscow and Minsk trade accusations about who was behind an attack on the Russian embassy in Minsk (6 September).

Lukashenko gives a news conference to Russian journalists (4 October).

‘Maybe he [Lukashenko] organized it [the attack on the Russian embassy] himself, from his election campaign headquarters. He has decided to exacerbate relations with Russia to the full extent...’ (Russian MP Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, 6 September)

‘As for Russia’s hasty and accusatory reaction, I have also started to think about who profited from it [the attack on the Russian embassy]...’ (Lukashenko, 6 September)

‘In my view, this is not a conflict between Belarus and Russia but between Lukashenko on the one hand and Putin and Medvedev on the other.’ (German pundit Aleksandr Rar, 4 October)

None of these weekly papers took a stance that was strongly in support of one or other party in the dispute. *Obozrevatel* ran just two articles about the media war: one – a series of lengthy excerpts

from Lukashenko's news conference to Russian journalists; the other – a factual account of the rising tensions which referred to Medvedev's blog but only quoted one line from it. Both were in the 8 October issue. Editorial comment and opinion on the issue were absent. *BelGazeta*, *SN Plyus* and *Belorusy i Rynok* each reported diverse views on the controversy, publishing quotes from both Belarusian and Russian politicians. *SN Plyus* published a large section of Medvedev's blog attack verbatim on its front page. The rights and wrongs of the participants were rarely mentioned by any of these papers: their reports tended to focus on describing, explaining and forecasting developments without apportioning blame.

Six journalists were interviewed to shed light on the weekly newspapers' coverage of Russia: the editors-in-chief of *Belorusy i Rynok* and *SN Plyus*; a columnist from *SN Plyus*; an editor from *AiF v Belorussii*; an editor from *Obozrevatel* (who responded in writing) and a freelance contributor to *BelGazeta*.

As in the case of *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*, the reports which *AiF v Belorussii* publishes about Russian domestic matters are all written in Moscow but selected for publication by editors in Minsk. According to the editor interviewed, story selection for the Belarusian edition is not coordinated with colleagues in the Russian editorial office. 'They silently set out their articles and we silently receive them,' the interviewee said (Interviewee 38, 2012). Articles from Moscow are chosen on the basis of their 'relevance to the consumer'; prices and everyday life are priority topics, politics 'to a lesser extent'. Yet Vyacheslav Kostikov's columns about Russian politics (described in the content analysis above) are always selected because 'the people love him'. The interviewee explained:

'Kostikov is always rather predictable, always writes about the same topics, just changing the direction or perspective. The people love him. And it works out that in Russia he berates the Russians and they let him; he's their own, after all. He is not berating ours [authorities], so [changes tack]. But I have to say he is very popular... I

think there are better journalists, but the people love him, so we always run Kostikov, whatever happens.’ (Interviewee 38, 2012)

The mild criticism of Russia’s political system observed during the sample period would thus appear to be driven more by the preferences of *AiF v Belorussii*’s readership than by political positioning. According to the interviewee, Kostikov is known to be popular because his articles are well-read on the paper’s website; his columns also generate reader responses by phone and letter.

Although *AiF v Belorussii* journalists in Minsk do not write about Russian domestic matters, they can produce reports about Russian-Belarusian relations, the interviewee said. It is not the paper’s permanent policy to avoid writing about bilateral ties – and yet the content sample contained no articles on this topic at all. It appears that *AiF v Belorussii* was choosing not to report the tensions between Moscow and Minsk in attempt to avoid offending anyone. As the interviewee explained:

‘We didn’t always report [news about bilateral tensions], not always, because of the position we are in. Although we are a Belarusian paper to a large extent, we are still considered a Russian publication. And we can’t say the things a Belarusian newspaper can say because from us it would be considered [pro-Russian] propaganda... And Russia for its part would see it as Belarusian propaganda...’ (Interviewee 38, 2012)

During the ‘information war’ *AiF v Belorussii* was in an ‘extremely complicated position’. ‘Both sides were ours [*i te i te svoi*]’, the interviewee said; consequently the paper adopted a ‘centrist’ position.

Despite the care taken by editors to avoid controversy, *AiF v Belorussii* still runs into trouble sometimes, the interviewee added. Asked whether articles in the paper ever prompted the ire of the authorities in Russia or Belarus, the interviewee said:

‘It is a never-ending process. After the publication of each issue, someone always finds something that they don’t like. With Russia it’s simpler to resolve, the editor-in-

chief resolves it; he explains our situation. They don't really understand... Of course, on the Belarusian side it is eternally difficult.' (Interviewee 38, 2012)

The interviewee went on to describe experiencing personal discomfort during one Lukashenko news conference due to *AiF v Belorussii*'s Russian status:

'I was at a news conference with the president precisely at the time when [there were tensions] with Russia, they were talking about shutting down the Russian media here and so on. I sat opposite [Lukashenko] and all of it – all that negative that he said about Russia – was naturally poured onto me because I was [from] a Russian publication.' (Interviewee 38, 2012)

Tacit pressure from the Belarusian authorities undoubtedly affects the news reported by *AiF v Belorussii*, even when the story does not directly concern Belarus. During the interview it emerged that *AiF v Belorussii* generally avoided mentioning public or opposition protests in Russia, not out of deference to the Russian authorities, but because *Belarusian* officials would frown on such reports. The interviewee explained:

'To be honest, we even remove such articles [about opposition protests in Moscow]. This is linked to the policy of our state. Everything that could be considered a call to rally is forbidden here. And in order not to provoke [anyone], as a rule we simply report such news in very limited doses. If [*AiF* in] Moscow prints a column, we just print a brief line.' (Interviewee 38, 2012)

It thus appears that the views of Kremlin critics may sometimes go under-reported in *AiF v Belorussii* due to pressures of the Belarusian media environment and not because the paper's owners are loyal to the Russian leadership.

The content analysis revealed massive variation in the coverage of Russia generated by *AiF v Belorussii* and the other Russian-owned weekly under study, *BelGazeta*. It is regrettable that no

member of *BelGazeta*'s full-time editorial staff could be persuaded to participate in this research.

The freelance *BelGazeta* contributor who did consent to an interview was not in a position to answer all the questions posed. The interviewee acknowledged that Russia featured heavily in *BelGazeta*'s news coverage but could not explain why this was so:

'I can see that a lot is written [about Russia] in the paper, but I would not undertake to explain it. Although I don't know, it may be linked to the fact that a lot of the journalists have contacts in that area, with Russian counterparts. I don't know what the main explanation is.' (Interviewee 39, 2012)

It should be noted that Viktor Martinovich, the deputy editor of *BelGazeta*, is considered an expert on Russian-Belarusian relations; he is responsible for much of the paper's reporting on Russia-related matters and his personal influence may be one reason for the high level of attention which Russia receives.

The interviewee had not observed any consistent editorial stance towards Russia being enforced from above but suggested that a loose editorial line may be set from time to time. One instance when reports about Russia appeared to have been pitched in a certain tone was described as follows:

'The theme of the issue was the arrival of large numbers of Russians in Belarus. They gamble at casinos and relax here, it's cheap. It was during the [economic] crisis. They all came here, bought up everything... I wrote a report about what attracted Russians in Minsk, what they like about it here. But it turned out that I was insufficiently cynical, I wasn't hard enough on the Russians because I wasn't at the [editorial] planning meetings... I opened the paper and saw that the general tone of the issue was far more jocular, cynical and tough than what I had written.' (Interviewee 39, 2012)

Yet the interviewee's article was still printed, suggesting that the editorial line on this occasion, if there was one, was not particularly rigid.

Many questions remain about *BelGazeta* and the forces that shape its news coverage of Russia. It certainly behaves very differently to the other Russian-owned papers studied here. Unlike *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* and *AiF v Belorussii*, which avoid commenting on bilateral tensions, *BelGazeta* puts such tensions on the front page. Its analysis appears fairly balanced, with no obvious ‘pro-Russian’ slant observed during the sample period. It would be particularly interesting to know what influence, if any, the Russian owners exert on the paper’s operations and whether its editors feel pressured by the Belarusian authorities due to the paper’s Russian links. Unfortunately, however, these questions must for now remain unanswered.

The remaining weeklies – *Obozrevatel*, *SN Plyus* and *Belorusy i Rynok* – are each owned by their respective editors-in-chief, who clearly play a major role in determining the shape of their publications’ news content. *SN Plyus* is a small operation with few full-time staff. Its editor-in-chief Vasiliy Zdanyuk said:

‘Only I determine [the editorial policy] here. They [referring to the other members of staff in the room during the interview] agree. It’s all me, only my worldview. Whether that’s a bad thing or a good thing, that’s the way it is. It would be better if there were 10 people here who got together and worked out joint decisions. But since there aren’t 10 people, there’s only me, I have to do it. And the reader has to trust me or not trust me.’ (Interviewee 40, 2012)

The editor-in-chief at *Belorusy i Rynok*, Vyacheslav Khodosovski, pointed to his control over appointments when asked how his own views affected the work of his journalists. He said:

‘At our newspaper the situation is as follows: nobody who supports the [Belarusian] regime will come to work here, they wouldn’t work and we wouldn’t offer them a position at the paper. Our newspaper is an opposition newspaper. We are independent.’ (Interviewee 42, 2012)

The interviewee from *Obozrevatel* did not go into detail about the nature of Atroshchenko's general influence on editorial policy. Regarding Atroshchenko's views on Russia, however, the interviewee said:

'The editor-in-chief (he owns *Obozrevatel*) holds views about Russia which are traditional for the majority of Belarusians. He sees Russia as an important strategic partner. I don't think articles offending the honour and dignity of Russians would be published... Considered criticism in the context of Russian-Belarusian relations is present though.' (Interviewee 43, 2012)

For their part, Khodosovski, Zdanyuk and the *SN Plyus* columnist all made clear during their interviews that they favoured a European future for Belarus over further integration with Russia.

Khodosovski said:

'We [at *Belorusy i Rynok*] support a liberal economy, democracy and the values professed by most countries in the European Union... By integrating with Russia we are heading towards non-reform, towards a degrading country, a country which is falling apart, which flouts all democratic norms of the law.' (Interviewee 42, 2012)

He went on to mention Russia's desire to dominate the region and the threat this posed to Belarusian sovereignty. Zdanyuk, similarly, spoke of Putin's 'imperial thinking' and attempts to gradually gather an empire 'using twenty-first century methods'. The *SN Plyus* columnist said he considered further integration with Russia to be 'wrong and dangerous for the prospects of Belarusian statehood and Belarusian democracy' (Interviewee 41, 2012).

Both Khodosovski and Zdanyuk indicated that they tried to convey this wary view of Russia and preference for a Europe-oriented foreign policy to their readers. Zdanyuk said:

‘The Western vector of development, the European vector is preferable for our country, not the Eastern one. The future is here [in Europe/the West] and not there. And that’s the spirit in which we try to talk to our readers.’ (Interviewee 40, 2012)

Khodosovskiy, for his part, said:

‘As for [Russian] domestic political news, I think we report Russia’s issues in a way that tries to show that Russia isn’t a country whose political model we should seek to emulate.’ (Interviewee 42, 2012)

Yet it is interesting to note that the comments made by the interviewees from *SN Plyus* and *Belorusy i Rynok* were far more negative about Russia than any comments observed in those papers during the period studied. It seems that neither Zdanyuk nor Khodosovskiy favours a ‘crusading’ or proselytizing approach to news reporting and analysis. The content sample contained no evidence of either publication engaging in verbal attacks against the Russian state or its policies, nor were there explicit editorial calls for any particular course of action in relation to Russia. It is therefore not only the personal *political* opinions of the editors which shape the way Russia is discussed in print. Their views about journalism and the objectives they set for their newspapers are also crucial. When asked what role their newspapers had sought to play during the media war with Russia, Khodosovskiy and Zdanyuk said that explaining the causes and consequences of events had been their priority (a pattern observed in the content sample). Khodosovskiy put it as follows:

‘We tried to concentrate on the ultimatums and processes – Russia is making such and such complaints. And we tried to comment on the likely consequences – in the oil and gas sector, in petrochemicals, in the area of finance.’ (Interviewee 42, 2012)

He added:

‘It is not a question of whether or not to criticise anyone. That is not the newspaper’s concern; it is not what the newspaper does. The newspaper may give space to certain

opinions, including critical ones. But the main task of the newspaper, in my view, is to inform people and it should try to do so objectively.’ (Interviewee 42, 2012)

Zdanyuk, likewise, stated that *SN Plyus* had primarily attempted to ‘get to the bottom of events’ during the media war. He described the paper’s positioning as ‘centrist’, while the *SN Plyus* columnist said he saw his task during media wars as follows:

‘... to objectively assess the process under way. I try to be as impartial as possible, not to promote anyone, support anyone or berate anyone. Of course, it is impossible to be entirely objective – any expert has an element of subjectivity. But I try to be as objective as possible.’ (Interviewee 41, 2012)

Thus, although the general approach to news coverage at *SN Plyus* and *Belorusy i Rynok* is set by the editor-proprietors, neither paper is merely a vehicle for popularising particular views where the topic of Russia is concerned. At *SN Plyus*, Zdanyuk said his most experienced columnists chose their own topics and worked with little input from himself (the columnist interviewed confirmed this). Khodosovskiy, for his part, said he would defer to the views of his journalists on matters in which they specialized:

‘Everyone here specializes in a particular sector: someone is responsible for finance, someone else does the real sector, someone takes care of raw materials... The people who write about the economy and raw materials are much more up-to-date and know much more than me. So it is possible their views may not coincide with my own. We do not engage in propaganda!’ (Interviewee 42, 2012)

Finally, the absence of foreign policy lobbying in *SN Plyus* and *Belorusy i Rynok* may be partly due to the remote chances of such lobbying having an impact in Belarus or fundamentally altering the country’s relationship with Russia. Zdanyuk observed that Belarus had ‘nowhere to go’ from Russia

and its policies, while Khodosovski highlighted the huge dependence on Russia of the Belarusian economy, saying:

‘Russia is the main market for our goods; it is the main supplier of our resources and so on. The situation in Belarus today is such that without real economic relations with Russia our un-modernized and unreformed Belarusian economy cannot exist on its own.’ (Interviewee 42, 2012)

In this context, editorial laments about Russia infringing on Belarusian sovereignty are likely to be somewhat futile. As the *SN Plyus* columnist put it:

‘What is the point of discussing something that cannot be changed? What is the point of discussing the weather and whether or not it is good? It is the reality.’ (Interviewee 41, 2012)

Thus, for journalists at *SN Plyus* and *Belorusy i Rynok* Russia is above all the ‘main newsmaker’. These papers devote their limited resources to helping their readers follow and understand developments rather than agitating for a change of course.

4.5 Chapter summary and discussion

This chapter has shown how cross-border influence interacts with the constraints of an authoritarian political system and other factors to shape news coverage of Russia in Belarus. Hypothesis H1, that

a news provider with a shareholder or partner in Russia is likely to generate (a) more extensive and (b) more favourable coverage of Russia than market rivals because of its Russian connections

has been tested through comparisons of TV bulletins, daily newspapers and weekly newspapers.

Among the six news providers studied which have a shareholder or partner in Russia, five (*Vremya*,

Vesti, Segodnya, Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii and *BelGazeta*) behaved as predicted by part (a) of the hypothesis (although *BelGazeta*'s extensive coverage of Russia could be due more to its business orientation than its Russian shareholders). Four (*Vremya, Vesti, Segodnya*, and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*) behaved as predicted by part (b) of the hypothesis.

Analysis of the content sample exposed a stark and unsurprising difference in the news coverage devoted to Russia by *Panorama, Nashi Novosti* and *24 Chasa* on the one hand, and *Vremya, Vesti* and *Segodnya* on the other. All these TV bulletins are subject to heavy state influence: the former follow instructions from the Belarusian Presidential Administration while the latter are loyal to the Kremlin. During the sample period the Belarusian-made bulletins painted a rather bleak picture of life in Russia while acting as Lukashenko's mouthpiece and defender in his spat with the Russian leadership. Meanwhile, Putin and Medvedev dominated the Russian-made bulletins without ever being criticised. It is not difficult to explain why the bulletins varied in this way; the paradox lies in the fact that all six bulletins – despite their contradictory narratives about the Russian authorities – were carried by Belarusian state-owned broadcasters. Only rarely were the Russian-made bulletins redacted prior to broadcast in Belarus, with reports that would have been particularly critical of Lukashenko cut out. When asked why the Russian-made news bulletins were not dropped entirely from the schedule, the representatives of Belarusian television interviewed for this chapter pointed to audience expectations and contractual obligations to Russian partners. It also emerged that the producers of TV news in Minsk like to leave reporting of certain topics – particularly Russian domestic news and international stories with no Belarusian involvement – to their counterparts in Moscow. This allows them to save resources for coverage of news about Belarus.

News coverage of Russia in the daily newspapers was also found to vary in line with the hypothesis. Much like the Belarusian-made TV bulletins, *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* ran numerous stories during the sample period which highlighted social and economic problems in Russia; reports of that nature were largely absent from *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*. Yet there was no evidence of

Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii taking a stand to defend the Kremlin's position in its feud with Lukashenko. The Russian-owned tabloid was devoid of editorial comment. It published large excerpts from Lukashenko's statements on Russia alongside similar excerpts from Medvedev's statements on Belarus; a captioned photograph was used to suggest that bilateral tensions would soon blow over. Interview data indicated that the editors of *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* strive to avoid conflict with the Belarusian authorities, as maintaining a profitable business is the priority for the paper's shareholders. For their part, the editors of *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* are in weekly contact with the Belarusian authorities. The tone of reporting about Russia in *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* would appear to be determined by a strict editorial chain of command that runs back to the Presidential Administration via an influential editor-in-chief.

Among the weekly newspapers it was the business-oriented publications which paid most attention to Russia. Over 30 per cent of stories in *BelGazeta* and *Belorusy i Rynok* were found to 'feature Russia', reflecting the scale of Russia's importance to the Belarusian economy. In this respect *BelGazeta*, as a Russian-owned paper, behaved in line with part (a) of the hypothesis. Yet the other Russian-owned weekly under study, *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii*, had a relatively low proportion of stories 'featuring Russia'. Moreover, whereas *BelGazeta* put the tensions between Moscow and Minsk on its front page, *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii* failed to report any news at all about Russian-Belarusian relations during the five sample weeks. Interview data indicates that *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii* was avoiding bilateral tensions as a topic that might aggravate the Belarusian authorities; it is unclear why *BelGazeta* took such a different approach. It should be noted, however, that neither *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii* nor *BelGazeta*, nor indeed any of the other weekly newspapers were found to take a pronounced editorial stance on matters concerning Russia; there was no evidence of any lobbying for a particular course in foreign policy. It emerged during interviews that the editor-proprietors of *Belorusy i Rynok* and *Svobodnyye Novosti Plyus* are negatively disposed towards integration with Russia and perceive Moscow's regional influence as a

threat. Yet their policy when reporting news about Russia is to explain the causes and consequences of events rather than point fingers of blame. Thus, their views on good journalism shape the news content as much if not more than their personal political beliefs about Belarusian foreign policy.

Like the previous chapter on Ukraine, this study of Belarus contributes to our knowledge of post-Soviet journalism and post-Soviet politics by exposing how different factors interact to influence reporting of foreign affairs – a topic that has previously received very little attention. Once again, the view of Russian media as a Kremlin tool in neighbouring states is shown to be overly simplistic; it obscures diversity among media with Russian connections, as well as their vulnerability to constraints within their operating environment. Russian TV bulletins in Belarus disseminate pro-Kremlin narratives, but their scope for doing so is limited to a degree by state censorship. Russian newspapers are limited in the support they can offer to Kremlin positions by commercial considerations and pressure from Belarusian officials.

The fact that this chapter describes the Moscow-Minsk ‘information war’ is coincidental, not deliberate: the schedule for data collection was planned in 2009, long before anyone had heard of *Krestnyy Batka*. However, the ‘information war’ provides a strong indication that Russia’s regional media influence does not always fit within the framework of soft power. The *Krestnyy Batka* documentaries exerted a substantial impact on Russian-Belarusian relations, not because they ‘softly’ attracted a mass audience, but because they severely provoked the Belarusian president.

At this point it is worth recalling other instances of ‘information warfare’ involving Russia and its neighbours in the past decade. During the gas dispute between Moscow and Kiev in winter 2005–2006, reports in the Russian media about Ukraine siphoning gas from pipelines illegally were described as an ‘aggressive and targeted propaganda campaign’ (5 *Kanal TV*, 2006). The gas dispute of 2008–2009 was similarly accompanied by accusations of media aggression. Press secretary of the Ukrainian embassy in Moscow Oleg Voloshin was quoted as saying:

‘We believe it would be right for future Ukrainian-Russian dialogue to stop the information war as soon as possible, a war that provokes tension in our countries’ society and does nothing to promote the elimination of the problems in the energy area.’
 (UNIAN news agency, 2009b)

Throughout the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko reports on Russian television would sporadically cause a stir in Ukraine. One notable documentary shown on *Rossiya (RTR)* claimed that a CIA prison existed outside Kiev (*Rossiya TV*, 2006). Another documentary, titled *Oranzhevyye deti tretyego reykh* (Orange children of the Third Reich) suggested that the Orange revolution had been staged by second-generation Nazis with assistance from the USA; it was broadcast by *Pervyy Kanal* just before the run-off of the Ukrainian presidential election on 3 February 2010.¹⁰ In 2008 *Vremya* seized on a report (which originated in the Ukrainian press) about the sale of Hitler dolls in Kiev, embellishing the story with untrue claims that the doll had become a ‘hit’ among customers (*Pervyy Kanal*, 2008, *Deutsche Welle*, 2008). More recently, the reluctance of President Yanukovich to sign Ukraine up as a full Customs Union member is said to have prompted a Russian media offensive against him and his policies (Chervonenko, 2013, Ivzhenko, 2013).

A number of observations should be made about this kind of ‘information warfare’. First, it shows that Russian media content ‘exported’ to Ukraine and Belarus generates particular public and political resonance when it is about the Ukrainians and Belarusians themselves. *Krestnyy Batka* was about Lukashenko; *Oranzhevyye deti* about Yushchenko, and so on. Thus, the most visible impact of news flowing from Russia to neighbouring states has come not from sympathetic coverage of Russia, as envisaged by the soft power literature, but from negative coverage of people and events outside Russia.

¹⁰ *Oranzhevyye deti* can be viewed online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xg5K8TTJqc0 (accessed 21 April 2013)

Second, Russian ‘information attacks’ tend to spark a furore in Minsk and Kiev which is disproportionately large in relation to the number of Ukrainians or Belarusians who actually see the offending content when it is first broadcast (it almost always comes via TV rather than other media). As Chapter 5 shall explain, Russian TV channels do not have a particularly large audience share in Ukraine. The Belarusian authorities can censor ‘offensive’ material before it reaches the mass TV audience. Yet in both countries, awareness of Russian ‘information attacks’ is high because they become a news story in their own right; they are reported by domestic news providers, posted on YouTube and vocally criticized by politicians, journalists and other public figures. Thus, the scale of the Russian broadcasters’ impact within Ukraine and Belarus comes not so much from their own ‘power’ but from an amplification process involving other actors in the public sphere of each country.

In fact, Russian news does not even need to be deliberately exported by Russian broadcasters in order to resonate across borders. In March 2013 a local TV station in Russia’s Orenburg ran a report about Taras Shevchenko, in which the revered Ukrainian poet was described as a Russophobe and linked to Nazi propaganda. The report was only broadcast in the Orenburg region. Yet it was spotted by Ukrainians living in Russia and subsequently received widespread coverage in the Ukrainian media (Korrespondent, 2013, *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*, 2013, UNIAN news agency, 2013). This example highlights a third significant aspect of Russian ‘information attacks’ – they are not necessarily aimed at an international audience at all. Russia’s ‘weapons’ in ‘information wars’ with neighbouring states are TV broadcasters which are not capable of ‘precision strikes’. Viewers in Ukraine and Belarus see the same *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* bulletins as viewers in Russia do (unless censorship occurs in Belarus). This makes it impossible for the Russian authorities to isolate one target audience (the domestic one) from another (abroad). In some cases, the Kremlin may wish to discredit a foreign leader or government in the eyes of Russian citizens – this was one theory put forward to explain the *Krestnyy Batka* films (Sharyy,

2010). The fallout for bilateral relations must surely be anticipated, but it may be collateral damage rather than a primary objective.

Unfortunately, it tends to be impossible to identify the exact motives that lie behind *Krestnyy-Batka*-style ‘information attacks’ emanating from Russia. In addition to the Russian domestic audience dimension, observers often point to an element of personal revenge. For instance, Putin’s antipathy towards Lukashenko was cited as one reason for the mudslinging of 2010 (Medvedev, 2010a). Similarly, a Ukrainian pundit suggested that Russian television had set out to ‘publicly humiliate’ Yanukovich because Putin had failed to achieve acquiescence from Ukraine over the Customs Union (Chervonenko, 2013). If such speculation is accurate, Russian ‘information attacks’ may be reactive more than strategic; an expression of dissatisfaction without any greater purpose.

Given that the intentions underlying Russian information attacks are so obscure, it is also extremely difficult to judge whether they have succeeded or failed from the perspective of Russian foreign policy. If the aim of *Krestnyy Batka* was to influence Belarusian public opinion about Lukashenko, one could say that it worked. Despite the fact that the documentaries were not shown on *NTV-Belarus*, roughly half the Belarusian population were at least aware of the series by September 2010. By October (when it ended) around 40 per cent of respondents said they had personally watched one or more of the films (IISEPS, 2010c, IISEPS, 2010b). A September poll found that nearly half the people who had seen the films considered their content to be ‘the truth’ or ‘mainly the truth’ against roughly a quarter who considered it ‘untrue’ or ‘mainly untrue’; some 10 per cent of respondents said their opinion of Lukashenko had fallen as a result of the films (IISEPS, 2010c).

Yet as Chapter 5 shall argue, Belarusian public opinion has a limited impact on Belarusian politics. If Russia’s leadership was hoping to dislodge Lukashenko from power after weakening him through the media, that clearly failed to happen.

The concluding chapter of the thesis shall further discuss the inadequacy of soft power as a conceptual lens for understanding how news exports affect relations between Russia and its neighbours. But first, Chapter 5 shall contextualize the findings of Chapters 3 and 4 by looking at the consumption of pro-Kremlin news exports in Ukraine and Belarus, as well as the relationship between public sentiments and political decision-making in each country.

CHAPTER 5. MASS MEDIA AND REGIONAL POWER

5.1 Chapter topic and objectives

So far, this thesis has concentrated primarily on the production of news content: it has shown how Russian shareholders and partners affect reporting about Russia in conjunction with various other influences. In this chapter, attention turns from the production of news content to its consumption and to the likelihood of pro-Kremlin news exports boosting Russia's foreign policy success in the countries under study.

The first half of this chapter is devoted to research question Q3:

Q3. How do varying political and economic conditions affect the scope of the Russian authorities to communicate messages to mass audiences in Ukraine and Belarus?

As Chapters 3 and 4 demonstrated, the TV bulletins *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* export news to Ukraine and Belarus which has a consistent pro-Kremlin slant. They are tools of the Kremlin to a far greater extent than any of the newspapers studied, as their content is shaped by regular and direct instructions from the Russian authorities. Yet their utility as tools and their potential impact on public opinion abroad depend on their ability to secure an audience. Through comparative analysis and detailed process-tracing, this chapter explains how political and economic conditions impinge upon the delivery of pro-Kremlin news to TV viewers in Ukraine and Belarus. Findings from the previous two chapters are thus contextualized: Chapters 3 and 4 revealed the nature of news exported from Russia; this chapter sheds light on how widely such news is actually used. The argument presented here is that Ukraine and Belarus each present considerable but quite different challenges to Russian officials hoping to communicate with audiences abroad. In Ukraine, a relatively liberal legislative-regulatory framework facilitates the dissemination of pro-Kremlin messages, but strong TV competition makes it hard for pro-Kremlin broadcasters to capture

people's attention. In Belarus, media competition is less fierce so pro-Kremlin news bulletins enjoy a substantial audience share; the difficulty for the Russian authorities lies in overcoming efficient censorship on topics where Russian and Belarusian state news narratives clash.

The latter half of this chapter reflects on the political implications of Russian news exports by addressing research question Q4:

Q4. Is it likely that Russian news exports could contribute to the success of Russian foreign policy in Ukraine and Belarus as envisaged by the literature on soft power?

Chapters 1 and 2 demonstrated that the Russian authorities do have soft power ambitions associated with the media. The idea of the media being a source of soft power rests on the premise that media shape public sentiments which in turn influence policy-making. Unfortunately, it is not possible here to analyze the attitudinal response of Ukrainian and Belarusian audiences to Russian news exports – the necessary data is not available. However, it is possible to assess the relationship between public sentiments and foreign policy decision-making in each country. The strength of this relationship is tentatively probed in this chapter by looking at Russia's recent record of foreign policy achievements in Ukraine and Belarus alongside public opinion surveys and statements made by decision-makers in Minsk and Kiev. The chapter argues that foreign policy decisions in Belarus are largely unaffected by public sentiments due to the absence of democratic processes. This casts doubt on the likelihood of media exerting a soft power effect. In Ukraine, public sentiments can affect foreign policy decisions to some degree because elections offer voters a genuine choice. However, public opinion is far from being the only factor directing Ukraine's foreign policy course; there are issues in Russian-Ukrainian relations where public opinion has been ignored.

The chapter is structured as follows. Section 5.2 considers how laws, regulations and their level of enforcement affect dissemination of pro-Kremlin news broadcasts in the countries under study. Section 5.3 then explains the impact of economic variables (media competition and disposable

income) on the audience share of such broadcasts. Section 5.4 briefly discusses the relationship between public sentiments and foreign policy decisions in Belarus; Section 5.5 does likewise for Ukraine. The chapter's main points are summed up at the end in Section 5.6.

Section 5.2 Laws, regulations and broadcasting pro-Kremlin news

The Russian authorities' ability to get their preferred messages across to foreign audiences depends in part on laws, regulations and their enforcement in 'target' states. This section looks at the legislative and regulatory frameworks which govern the media in Ukraine and Belarus to show how they affect dissemination of pro-Kremlin TV news. Television is the main focus here because the previous chapters showed TV bulletins (*Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya*) rather than newspapers to be the main vehicles for the Russian authorities' preferred news narratives. The argument presented in this section is that the hegemonic political regime in Belarus has far greater legislative and regulatory power than the more liberal political regime in Ukraine to control what is conveyed by Russian news exporters, including those which serve Kremlin interests.

Ukraine actually protects the right of its citizens to watch foreign bulletins like *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya*. Having ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television, Ukraine is obliged to 'guarantee freedom of reception' and 'not restrict the retransmission on its territory of programme services which comply with the terms of the Convention' (European Convention on Transfrontier Television, 1989). Under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages Ukraine has to

'guarantee freedom of direct reception of radio and television broadcasts from neighbouring countries in a language used in identical or similar form to a regional or minority language, and not oppose the retransmission of radio and television

broadcasts from neighbouring countries in such a language.’ (European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, 1992)

Similar guarantees are made in Article 24 of Ukraine’s 2012 law On the Principles of the State Language Policy (*Zakon Ukrainy Pro zasady derzhavnoyi movnoyi polityky*, 2012).

Belarus, in contrast to Ukraine, is not a member of the Council of Europe. Accordingly, it has not signed up to the European Convention on Transfrontier Television or the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and is not subject to the provisions on cross-border transmissions contained in those documents. Minsk has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which states that everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression, including ‘freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers’ (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966). However, this commitment is not reflected in Belarus’s domestic legislation.

Stringent licensing and permit requirements are imposed on foreign broadcasters and publishers that wish to distribute their products in Belarus. Article 11 of the Belarusian law On the Mass Media states that any foreign mass media which distribute material in the Republic of Belarus ‘with alterations to form or content’ (i.e. adapted for the Belarusian market) must register with the Ministry of Information, a process that involves a large amount of paperwork (*Zakon Respubliki Belarus o sredstvakh massovoy informatsii*, 2008). Meanwhile, Article 17 of the same law states that foreign mass media can only be distributed in Belarus ‘without alterations to their form or content’ if they first receive permission from the Ministry of Information via procedures determined by the Council of Ministers. According to a related resolution, such permission may only be granted if the foreign media product in question does not contain

‘information and material detrimental to national security; aimed at the propaganda of war, violence, cruelty, extremist activity, the use and consumption of narcotics,

psychotropic, toxic and other stupefying substances for non-medical purposes; or containing information, the distribution of which is forbidden or access to which is limited in accordance with the legislative acts of the Republic of Belarus.’

(Postanovleniye Soveta Ministrov Respubliki Belarus, 2008)

In practice, this allows the state to ban the distribution of any foreign news provider that is not to its liking.

A further level of Belarusian state control on foreign broadcasters is provided by the regulation On Networks of Cable Television Distribution Systems. This regulation stipulates that cable operators must acquire the consent of the Ministry of Information for their ‘extended’ packages of channels, i.e. any channels beyond the state-determined ‘social package’ which by law must be provided to all subscribers. Point 9 of the regulation states:

‘To get consent for an extended package, the operator presents an application to the Ministry of Information, attaching copies of the contracts (agreements) with the rights-holders of TV channels to be distributed. The Ministry of Information considers the application within a month of its submission and, following its consideration, takes a decision about granting or withholding consent for the extended package.’

(Postanovleniye Soveta Ministrov Respubliki Belarus, 2003)

Even before they approach the Ministry of Information, Belarusian cable operators must first navigate their way past ideological departments and other regulatory bodies at the municipal and regional levels; a procedure described as ‘rather daunting’ (Belskaya, 2007). Moreover, any TV channel rebroadcast via cable must have mass media registration. Cable operators which fail to abide by the rules may have their permission to operate withdrawn.

Ukrainian cable operators enjoy much greater freedom than their Belarusian counterparts. The legal and regulatory requirements to which they are subject are relatively light. Companies (programme

service providers) that wish to transmit foreign broadcasts via cable are supposed to obtain licences from the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council (NTRBC) and the National Commission for Issues of Communications Regulation. Then, if they are transmitting broadcasts from a country that is not party to the European Convention on Transfrontier Television, Article 42 (2) of Ukraine's broadcasting law demands that they 'adapt' such broadcasts to the requirements of Ukrainian legislation. What this means in practice is that the original advertising on channels from Russia, which has not ratified the Convention (Council of Europe Treaty Office, 2013), must be replaced with Ukrainian advertising. Programme service providers must also include local terrestrial channels in all their subscription packages (*Rishennya pro zatverdzhennya Pravyly*, 2012); it follows that such channels must be given precedence over foreign channels in the cheapest subscription deals (called the 'universal programme service'). Extended subscription packages are unregulated; their composition is up to the operator.

Thus, the Belarusian authorities have more legislative and regulatory controls than their counterparts in Ukraine to manage the inflow of TV news from Russia. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Belarus no longer allows cable transmission of the domestic or standard international streams of Russia's main federal channels (*Pervyy Kanal*, *Rossiya 1*, *NTV*). Instead, these Russian channels cooperate with Belarusian state broadcasters, which show a large proportion of the Russian content on channels *ONT*, *RTR-Belarus* and *NTV-Belarus* – but can censor out undesirable material when necessary. Instances of such censorship were documented in Chapter 4. Ukraine has no such special arrangements so Ukrainian cable subscribers can receive the Russian federal channels uncensored. The state's capacity to enforce media laws and regulations is also greater in Belarus than Ukraine. This is linked to the fact that many Ukrainian cable providers operate within the 'grey' economy. According to Sergey Boyko, president of Ukraine's largest cable provider Volia, only 300 of the 700 cable TV companies in Ukraine had licences in 2010; many were operating 'basically as pirates, without paying the channels, taxes to the state, or the pension fund for their employees' (Boyko,

2010). He added that up to 40 per cent of the market was being served by 'grey' enterprises in some towns and cities. Smaller operators which have no license would appear to have little to lose by ignoring bans on the transmission of Russian channels if and when such bans are imposed. Belarus is quite a different story: Belarusian cable operators have little hope of lasting long without an official permit, or defying the will of the authorities with regard to the channels they carry. Reports of illegal or unlicensed rebroadcasting are few to non-existent. This is presumably facilitated by the relatively small number of cable companies which the authorities have to keep an eye on (131 in Belarus against some 700 in Ukraine in 2010). Speaking in early 2007, then Belarusian Deputy Information Minister Sergey Bulatskiy said that if TV piracy had not yet been totally eliminated, it definitely would be in the near future (Bulatskiy, 2007).

In this regard it is informative to compare Belarusian and Ukrainian efforts to stop cable broadcasts of certain Russian channels. It was announced in 2009 that Belarusian cable operators were collectively axing transmission of the international streams of *Pervyy Kanal*, *Rossiya 1*, *NTV*, *TV Tsent*r and *Ren TV* (Belapan news agency, 2009). According to official sources, this decision was taken by the cable operators themselves for commercial and legal reasons – although reports in the media suggested that the move was orchestrated by the authorities (Charter '97, 2009c). Wherever the decision originated, it was implemented in full and without challenge: the five Russian channels were no longer available on Belarusian cable networks from 1 April that year.

In Ukraine, the authorities made an attempt to pull the plug on Russian channels in 2008, when the NTRBC began a crackdown on foreign broadcasters which had failed to adapt their content sufficiently to meet legal requirements. Cable operators were instructed to drop the international streams of *Pervyy Kanal*, *Rossiya 1*, *TV Tsent*r and *Ren TV* for infringements that included broadcasting 'untrue' information (such as reports about the sale of Hitler dolls in Ukraine and the presence of CIA prisons outside Kiev); breach of copyright (such as broadcasting the Eurovision Song Contest to Ukraine when the right to do so was held by the Ukrainian National TV Company);

disregarding public morals; and advertising alcohol and tobacco (Ganzha, 2008, *5 Kanal TV*, 2008). Yet this ban, imposed from 1 November, was met with defiance in several Ukrainian regions, particularly the south and east. Donetsk city council described it as a manifestation of cultural genocide (Interfax-Ukraine news agency, 2008a); protesters in Simferopol even burned an effigy of the head of the NTRBC (*STB TV*, 2008). Some local authorities boycotted the ban, while in Sevastopol arrangements were made to bypass it by feeding Russian channels to residents via a collective satellite reception system (Interfax-Ukraine news agency, 2008b). Ultimately, one Russian channel did take steps to comply with Ukraine's demands: in June 2009, *Pervyy Kanal (ORT)* became the first foreign channel to officially register in Ukraine (ITAR-TASS news agency, 2009). As for *Rossiya 1* and *TV Tsentri*, the NTRBC lifted its ban on their retransmission in April 2010, saying it no longer had any comments about their level of adaption (Interfax-Ukraine news agency, 2010). This decision occurred not long after the NTRBC got a new chairman appointed by the recently elected president, Viktor Yanukovich.

Thus, Ukraine's defences against the unauthorized dissemination of Russian TV have proven weaker than those of Belarus, even though Ukraine has sought to protect its information sovereignty whereas Belarus has promised to construct a single information space with Russia.

Belarus has even taken steps to hinder reception of direct satellite broadcasts from abroad. It is impossible to legislate against foreign TV channels transmitting satellite signals over Belarusian territory. However, there is an article in the Belarusian Code of Administrative Violations that imposes a fine for the 'unauthorized installation of satellite or other antennas' on facades, balconies, loggias or roofs (*Kodeks Respubliki Belarus ob administrativnykh pravonarusheniyyakh*, 2003). There have been reports of residents in Minsk, Grodno and Brest receiving warnings from the municipal authorities about the use of 'illegal' satellite dishes (Charter '97, 2007b, Charter '97, 2007a, Charter '97, 2008, Charter '97, 2009b, Charter '97, 2009a). Officials commonly argue that the dishes are unsightly and their installation has to be agreed with city architecture or planning

directorates. Observers, on the other hand, note that the war on dishes coincided with the launch and development of *Belsat*, the Polish-funded Belarusian-language channel that broadcasts via the popular satellite systems Sirius and Astra (Charter '97, 2007b).

There used to be one respect in which the media legislation of Belarus was less of an obstacle to Russian broadcasters than the media legislation of Ukraine. Belarus has never had rules about the proportion of media content that must be produced locally or in the Belarusian language. Article 27 of the Belarusian law On Languages merely states:

‘In the Republic of Belarus, the languages of the mass media are Belarusian and (or) Russian, as well as the languages of other peoples, representatives of which live in the republic.’ (*Zakon Respubliki Belarus O yazykakh*, 1990)

For several years, Ukraine’s law On Television and Radio Broadcasting stipulated that all ‘nationwide’ broadcasters (those broadcasting to two thirds of the population in all Ukraine’s regions) should conduct at least 75 per cent of their daily airtime in Ukrainian. However, this requirement was lifted when the 2012 law On the Principles of the State Language Policy came into effect (*Zakon Ukrayiny Pro zasady derzhavnoyi movnoyi polityky*, 2012). The law On Television and Radio Broadcasting continues to state that no less than 50 per cent of daily content broadcast by a TV or radio organization must be of Ukrainian origin (*Zakon Ukrayiny Pro telebachennya i radiomovlennya*, 1994), but this rule does not apply to broadcasters based outside Ukraine so the transmission of Russian channels via cable is not affected.

Section 5.3 Incomes, competition and the audience share of pro-Kremlin broadcasters

In order to influence public opinion abroad, Russian broadcasters must not only navigate laws and regulations; they must also beat rival broadcasters in the battle for viewers. This section explains how two variables – disposable income levels and the extent of media competition – affect the

audience share of Russian news bulletins in Ukraine and Belarus. The argument here is as follows: for *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* the Ukrainian market economy constitutes a tougher environment in which to secure a high audience share than the heavily state-regulated economy of Belarus. In Ukraine, competition between TV channels is strong and access to Russian news is not subsidized. In Belarus, competition between TV channels is limited and state intervention ensures that even the poorest households can afford access to Russian news.

As described previously, *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* are broadcast in Belarus by *ONT*, *RTR-Belarus* and *NTV-Belarus*. These Belarusian state-owned channels are available for free terrestrially. They are also included in the ‘social’ cable package, determined by the state, which all cable providers are legally required to offer at a regulated tariff (*Postanovleniye Soveta Ministrov Respubliki Belarus*, 2003). The main cable provider in Minsk, MTIS, was charging less than a dollar per month for this basic service in 2013 (MTIS, 2013). Consequently, money is no obstacle for Belarusians who want to watch Russian news. In Ukraine, on the other hand, Russian channels are not broadcast terrestrially, nor are they included in the cheapest cable packages. This means that low household income has the potential to limit the Ukrainian viewing figures of Russian bulletins. Most Ukrainian households have a TV set, but people receive different channels depending on how much they pay and the means of reception they use. The following table shows the different ways a Ukrainian viewer may receive a TV signal, the number of channels that can be transmitted using each method, and the cost involved for the consumer in each case.

Table 5.1: Means of TV reception in Ukraine

Means of signal transmission	Number of channels	Cost (2010 estimates)
Traditional radio frequency (terrestrial) broadcasts direct to an individual or collective TV antenna.	Generally 4 to 8, depending on antenna and location. <i>Inter</i> , <i>1+1</i> and <i>UTI</i> have the widest terrestrial coverage.	Free, apart from the cost of the TV set.
Direct-To-Home (DTH) satellite broadcasts to an individual satellite dish.	The exact number of channels received depends on the type of dish installed. Several dozen Russian- and Ukrainian-language channels are available free-to-air. Subscription packages can include as many as 150 channels.	Free-to-air channels can be received without charge once the necessary equipment (dish and tuner) has been installed. A dish and tuner can be bought and installed for 100 US dollars upwards. Satellite TV subscription packages cost roughly 60–130 UAH per month.
Cable television, where terrestrial and/or satellite signals are received and processed by a ‘headend’ (a master reception facility) before being distributed over a cable network.	From around 20 to well over 100, depending on the provider and the package.	Monthly subscription charges range from 15 to 100 UAH; some providers charge a one-off connection fee; in the case of digital cable (the norm in Kiev, the exception elsewhere) consumers have to buy or rent a set-top box.

Internet Protocol Television (IPTV), the most recent arrival on the scene delivered via a high-speed internet connection.	From around 40 to over 100, depending on the provider and the package.	Purchasing a set-top box costs upwards of 100 US dollars but generally closer to 250 US dollars; subscription fees are roughly 60 UAH per month.
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The costs in Table 5.1 should be seen in the following context (all the data in this paragraph comes from the Ukrainian State Committee of Statistics website at ukrstat.gov.ua unless otherwise indicated). Ukraine’s average monthly wage in 2010 was roughly 2,240 UAH and its monthly state pension was around 850 UAH. People in Kiev were earning much more than their compatriots in other parts of the country, so at least eight Ukrainian provinces had an average monthly wage below 1,800 UAH (compared to over 3,400 UAH in the capital). The monthly subsistence *minimum* for 2010, as set by the Ukrainian government, was between 600 and 800 UAH (varying by demographic group). An average monthly consumer goods basket cost around 1,700 UAH per person (UNIAN news agency, 2009a). Considered together, these figures indicate that many Ukrainians had a very limited disposable income. At the end of 2009 it was estimated that 13 per cent of Ukrainian citizens were spending almost all (75–100 per cent) of their budget on food – a commonly used indicator of poverty (UNIAN news agency, 2009a).

If a family or individual is struggling to pay for food and clothes, they are likely to choose the cheapest available means of TV reception. So it is not surprising that some 9 million of Ukraine’s 17 million households were continuing to rely on free terrestrial television broadcasts in 2010 (Vakalyuk, 2010). These households had no access to Russian TV news. A 2008 survey found that over 50 per cent of Ukrainians could only get a clear signal for seven channels – *Inter*, *I+I*, *STB*, *ICTV*, *TRK Ukraina*, *Novyy*, and state-owned *UTI* (Interfax-Ukraine news agency, 2008c).

In order to watch Russian television, Ukrainians must either install a satellite dish or subscribe to cable. Cable is the most widespread means of television reception in Ukraine's major urban areas.¹ Ukrainian cable providers tend to include the big Russian channels in their mid-range packages (between basic and premium). For example, Volia, a company that dominates the market in Kiev, had around 40 channels in its cheapest package in 2010, but another 38 – including Russian ones – were included for a supplementary charge.

In rural areas, DTH satellite tends to be the only alternative to terrestrial TV reception because it is not profitable for private companies to lay cable in villages. DTH satellite has been rising in popularity: estimates for 2009 suggested that the number of Ukrainian families with a satellite dish had risen to 3 million (17 per cent) from fewer than a million in 2007 (Kharchenko, 2010, Vakalyuk, 2010). Most dishes are set up to receive free-to-air Russian and Ukrainian channels rather than subscription packages (Yurasov, 2010). *Vremya* and *Vesti* can both be viewed free-to-air although the signal of NTV (and its bulletin *Segodnya*) is encrypted.

As more Ukrainians get satellite dishes and cable, the proportion of households reliant on a terrestrial signal is declining. It fell by 18 per cent in 2008 and another 10 per cent in 2009 (Vakalyuk, 2010). This means that a growing number of Ukrainians have the option of watching Russian television news. Yet a viewer may have access to a programme without ever tuning in to it. Ukrainians with a satellite dish or cable subscription enjoy a considerable choice of channels that carry news and current affairs content. This competition and the strength of Ukraine's domestic broadcasters constrain the audience share of Russian TV news providers.

In 2010 there were over 600 TV stations registered in Ukraine, most of which were operating on a local or regional scale (National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council of Ukraine, 2010).

Only a minority had the financial capacity to maintain a fully-fledged news service. The main

¹ Establishing the exact number of cable subscribers is difficult because many cable providers operate in the 'grey' economy, but 2010 estimates from the Ukrainian State Committee of Statistics for 2010 were around 3.5 million (approximately 20 per cent of households).

competition to Russian TV news providers comes from the larger Ukrainian broadcasters with a nationwide reach, which are listed in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Ukraine’s main national TV news providers (all information relates to 2010)

Channel	News service	Since	Main owner in 2010
<i>Inter</i>	Flagship bulletin <i>Podrobnosti</i> shown weeknights at 8 pm; plus four short daytime bulletins; plus weekly roundup <i>Podrobnosti Nedeli</i> on Sunday evenings.	1996	Ukrainian politician and businessman Valeriy Khoroshkovskiy
<i>I+I</i>	Flagship bulletin <i>TSN</i> shown weeknights at 7:30 pm; plus several short daytime bulletins; plus weekly roundup <i>TSN. Tyzhden</i> on Sunday evenings.	1995	Ukrainian businessman Igor Kolomoyskiy
<i>STB</i>	Flagship bulletin <i>Vikna-Novini</i> shown weeknights at 10 pm; plus a shorter bulletin at 6 pm; no news at weekends.	1997	Ukrainian businessman Viktor Pinchuk
<i>Novyy</i>	Flagship bulletin <i>Reporter</i> shown weeknights at 7 pm; plus a couple of brief daytime bulletins; no news at weekends.	1998	Ukrainian businessman Viktor Pinchuk

<i>TRK Ukraina</i>	Flagship bulletin <i>Sobytiya</i> shown weeknights at 7 pm; plus two shorter daytime bulletins; plus weekly roundup <i>Sobytiya-Nedeli</i> on Sunday evenings.	2002	Ukrainian businessman and politician Rinat Akhmetov
<i>ICTV</i>	Flagship bulletin <i>Fakty</i> shown weeknights at 7 pm; plus several shorter daytime bulletins; plus weekly roundup <i>Fakty Tizhnya</i> on Sunday evenings.	1992	Ukrainian businessman Viktor Pinchuk
<i>UTI</i>	Flagship bulletin <i>Noviny</i> shown weeknights at 7 pm; plus analytical show <i>Pidsumki Dnya</i> shown weeknights at 9 pm; plus a couple of daytime bulletins; plus weekly roundup <i>Pidsumki Tizhnya</i> on Sunday evenings.	1950s	The Ukrainian state
<i>5 Kanal</i>	Dedicated news and current affairs channel with bulletins at least every hour.	2003	Ukrainian businessman Petr Poroshenko

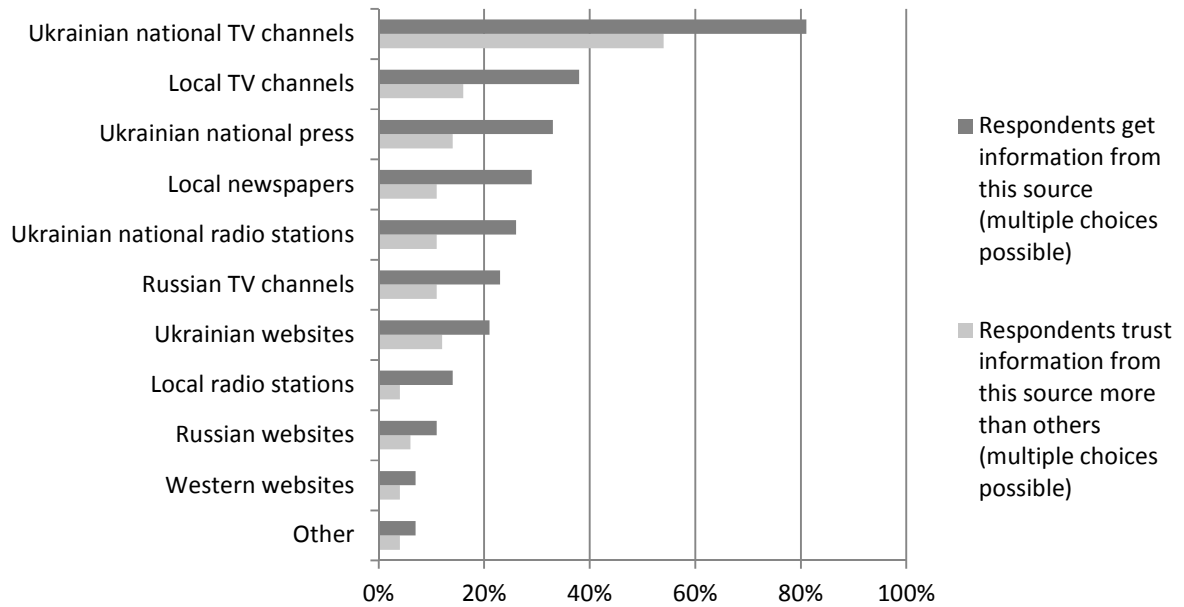
Some of the channels in Table 5.2 invest more than others in their news service – for example, *Inter*, *I+I*, *ICTV* and *UTI* have longer flagship bulletins (30 minutes or more) than *STB* and *Novyy* (15 to 20 minutes). Yet production standards are high for the most part and generally comparable to

standards at the Russian channels. Chapter 3 of this thesis made clear that *Inter* has its own extensive network of foreign correspondents; the same is true of *I+I*. Political bias may sometimes affect the quality of the Ukrainian news bulletins but they do strive to generate content that viewers find appealing – all except *UTI* are owned by oligarchs who do not want to see the political and economic value of their media assets decline due to low audience share. In contrast, *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* serve political ends before audience interests and face little compulsion to actively compete for viewers. Finally, the biggest advantage enjoyed by the Ukrainian bulletins over their Russian counterparts is the fact that their content is produced with the Ukrainian audience in mind. Surveys show the topic of Ukrainian domestic politics to be a top priority for Ukrainian news viewers (Broadcasting Board of Governors and InterMedia, 2011b, p 16).² *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* offer extremely limited coverage of Ukrainian affairs – their primary audience is in Russia so they naturally focus on Russian domestic matters.

In this context, the relatively low audience share of Russian TV news bulletins in Ukraine is not surprising. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 show the extent to which various sources of information were used and trusted by Ukrainians in late 2010. Some 23 per cent of survey respondents said they got information from Russian TV channels, against 81 per cent who used Ukrainian national TV channels. Some 11 per cent of respondents expressed trust in the Russian channels, against 54 per cent who trusted the Ukrainian channels. Ukrainian national newspapers and radio stations were used and trusted among a greater number of people than Russian television; so were local television and the local press.

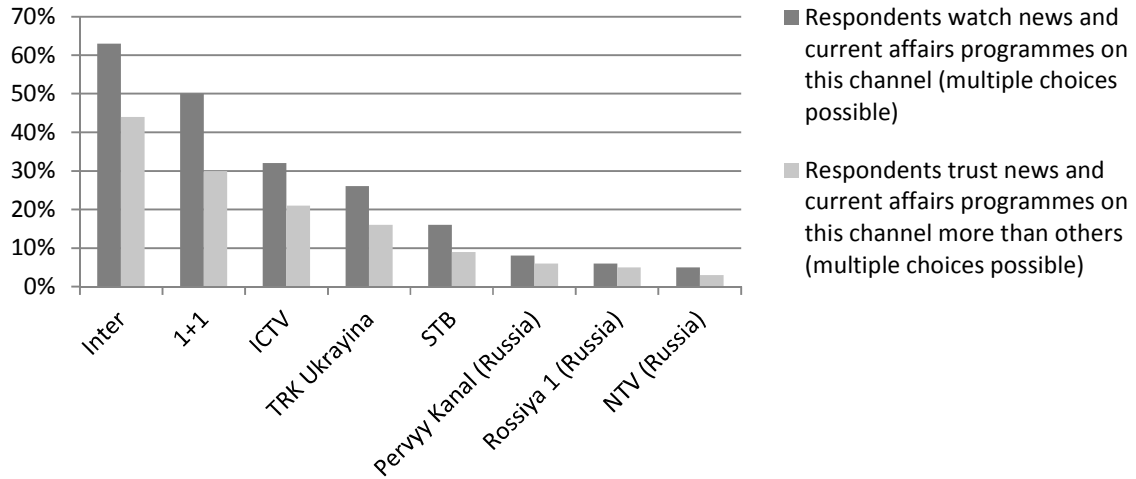
² See also survey data from Eurasian Monitor, available at www.eurasiamonitor.org/rus/research/event-219.html (accessed 7 March 2013)

Figure 5.1: Ukrainian attitudes towards various information sources (Research & Branding Group, 2010a)



None of the three main Russian channels are particularly popular sources of news in Ukraine: in 2010, 8 per cent of survey respondents said they watched news and current affairs on *Pervyy Kanal*, while the figures for *Rossiya 1* and *NTV* were 6 and 5 per cent respectively. In contrast, *Inter*'s news and current affairs output was watched by almost two thirds of survey participants (Research & Branding Group, 2010a). Another survey from 2011 found that 12 per cent of Ukrainians named Russia's *Pervyy Kanal* among their top three sources of information, against 60 per cent who named Ukrainian channel *I+I* and 58 per cent who named *Inter* (Broadcasting Board of Governors and InterMedia, 2011b, p 17).

Figure 5.2: Ukrainian attitudes towards selected TV news providers (Research & Branding Group, 2010a)



In Belarus, competition for viewers is far less of a problem for *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya*. Belarus in 2010 had 77 registered TV stations (Belarusian Ministry of Information, 2010), but only a handful of channels carrying national and international news. The main ones – *Belarus 1*, *ONT*, *STV*, *RTR-Belarus* and *NTV-Belarus* – have been described in the previous chapters of this thesis. All are state-owned; strong independent commercial channels have no hope of emerging in the country’s hegemonic political environment. Three serve as platforms for Russian news programmes, so should be considered partners of the Russian news providers rather than competitors. The only other significant TV news providers in Belarus are *Belsat*, a Polish-funded satellite channel that broadcasts in the Belarusian language; pan-European channel *Euronews*; and the CIS channel *Mir* which is largely Russian-funded (more information about *Mir* can be found in Chapter 2). No Belarusian-made news bulletins can match *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* in terms of resources. Producers of *ONT*’s flagship bulletin *Nashi Novosti* actually avoid reporting certain international stories when they know *Vremya* will provide coverage (see Chapter 4).

In this uncompetitive environment, *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* have successfully secured a substantial share of the Belarusian news audience. Precise audience figures for the individual news

bulletins are not available, but Table 5.3 presents the findings of a Broadcasting Board of Governors survey from 2011 which asked respondents to name their top three sources of information.

Table 5.3: Leading sources of information in Belarus (Broadcasting Board of Governors and InterMedia, 2011a)

Channel	Proportion of respondents who listed source among their top three
<i>ONT</i>	63 per cent
<i>NTV-Belarus</i>	45 per cent
<i>Belarus-1</i>	34 per cent
<i>RTR-Belarus</i>	30 per cent
<i>Euronews</i>	13 per cent
<i>Lad (Belarus-2)</i>	6 per cent
<i>STV</i>	5 per cent
<i>Mir</i>	0.2 per cent

ONT, which broadcasts *Vremya* and alongside its own bulletin *Nashi Novosti* as a single news hour, ranked highest with 63 per cent of respondents naming it among their top three information sources. *NTV-Belarus*, which broadcasts *Segodnya*, was named by 45 per cent of respondents, while 30 per cent named *RTR-Belarus*, the platform for *Vesti*.

Thus, political and economic conditions within ‘target’ states have a clear bearing upon the Russian authorities’ scope for communicating messages to foreign audiences. Previously, Chapters 3 and 4 revealed the vulnerability of some ‘Russian’ news providers to constraints within Ukraine and Belarus by showing how local political pressure and commercial considerations affected the decisions of journalists and editors. This chapter has gone a step further, explaining how factors within the local environment affect not just the production of news content at certain ‘Russian’ news providers, but the consumption of Russian news exports as well.

The remaining sections of this chapter shall examine the likelihood of Russian news exports facilitating Russian foreign policy success in Ukraine and Belarus as envisaged by the literature on ‘soft power’.

Section 5.4 Public sentiments and foreign policy decisions in Belarus

In the literature, the association between mass media and soft power is largely based on the premise that public sentiments affect policy-making after the media have influenced public sentiments. This section briefly discusses the plausibility of this premise with regard to Russian-Belarusian relations. It considers three major Russian foreign policy goals in Belarus – Russian acquisition of Belarusian industrial assets; regional integration through associations like the Customs Union; and Belarusian recognition of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as sovereign states – looking for correlation between public attitudes and political outcomes. In cases where Russian objectives have been achieved, official statements are examined for evidence of what motivated Belarusian compliance. The argument made here is that public sentiments have little opportunity to feed into foreign policy decisions made in Minsk.

A major aim in Russia’s recent policy towards Belarus has been Russian acquisition of valuable Belarusian industrial assets such as gas transportation company Beltransgaz and the fertilizer plant Belaruskali. Tables 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6 display IISEPS survey data relating to the sale of assets to Russian investors.

Table 5.4: Responses to survey question ‘Russia has expressed the desire to acquire major Belarusian firms such as Beltransgaz, MAZ, Belaruskali and others. How do you regard these plans?’ (IISEPS, 2011b)

They should not be sold under any circumstances	36.5 per cent
They should not be sold to the Russians	19.7 per cent
They could be sold to the Russians for a good price	19.9 per cent

Belarus has no choice, they will have to be sold for the price offered	16.4 per cent
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Table 5.5: Responses to survey question ‘At the end of last year [2011] the Belarusian government sold its share in the gas transit firm Beltransgaz, which now entirely belongs to the Russian gas company Gazprom. How do you assess this decision?’ (IISEPS, 2012)

Negatively, Beltransgaz should not have been sold	43.3 per cent
Negatively, but Belarus had no choice	29.9 per cent
Positively	10.0 per cent
Hard to say/no answer	16.3 per cent

Table 5.6: Responses to survey question ‘Negotiations have been going on for some time about the sale of Belaruskali, the Belarusian plant for extracting potassium salts, to a Russian investor. How do you regard the possible sale deal?’ (IISEPS, 2012)

Negatively, Belaruskali must not be sold at any price	58.7 per cent
Positively, but only if a very high price is paid	17.5 per cent
Positively	7.6 per cent
Hard to say/no answer	16.2 per cent

In each case, an absolute majority of survey respondents viewed Russian acquisition of Belarusian assets negatively. Lukashenko has similarly expressed reluctance to see the most valuable Belarusian enterprises pass into Russian hands. In 2008, for example, he described the Russian business elite as wanting to ‘grab’ Belarus like a ‘tasty morsel in the centre of Europe’, to which he had (in his words) ‘said no’ (Belarusian First TV Channel, 2008). Yet the record shows that Belarus allows asset sales to Russian investors when the price is high enough, or when it is backed into a corner economically. In November 2011 Gazprom purchased a second 50 per cent stake in Beltransgaz, having bought the first 50 per cent in 2007. Commenting on the deal, Lukashenko said he had been ‘guided by economic and financial interests’ (Belarusian radio, 2011). In July 2011, when Belarus was experiencing a serious economic crisis, Belarusian Prime Minister Mikhail

Myasnikovich told his Russian counterpart Putin that Minsk was prepared to sell off seven of the most valuable Belarusian enterprises (Gerasimov, 2011). Public sentiments appear to play little role in decisions about the sale of assets – economic considerations are far more important.

Another central objective of Russian policy towards Belarus has been regional integration through organizations like the Customs Union. IISEPS survey results relating to Russian-Belarusian integration are presented in Tables 5.7 and 5.8.

Table 5.7: Responses to survey question ‘Some people believe that Belarus should reduce its level of integration with Russia and withdraw from certain integration structures. What do you think?’ (IISEPS, 2010a)

Integration with Russia should be made closer than it is currently	30.9 per cent
Withdrawing from integration structures with Russia is unnecessary; the level of integration should remain as it is	39.6 per cent
The level of integration with Russia should be reduced	13.9 per cent
Hard to say/no answer	15.6 per cent

Table 5.8: Responses to survey question ‘The presidents of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan recently signed a declaration of Eurasian economic integration in Moscow. The Belarusian authorities believe the new association will “become the key regional player, which will help settle relations with the leading global economic structures”, but the opposition believe that “Belarusian participation in Eurasian integration will negatively affect prospects of integration in the global economic and political space”. What is your view?’ (IISEPS, 2011a)

I regard it positively	33.2 per cent
I regard it with indifference	38.2 per cent
I regard it negatively	13.6 per cent
Hard to say/no answer	15.0 per cent

The survey data suggests that Belarusian citizens tend to be either keen or indifferent about integration with Russia and only rarely opposed. Economic integration between Russia and Belarus has been deepening in recent years and one might argue that positive public opinion has been a facilitating factor. However, if one analyzes official Belarusian discourse, public sentiments again

appear to be less influential than Russian economic ‘sticks and carrots’ in driving the process forward. From the moment plans for a Customs Union were first agreed in 2007 it was clear that Belarusian interest in participating was linked to the promise of favourable energy prices (Khodasevich, 2007). When Russia raised the customs duty on crude oil supplies to Belarus in January 2010, Belarusian officials began to say that the Customs Union might actually be pointless (Belapan news agency, 2010e, Belapan news agency, 2010b, Belapan news agency, 2010d). In June 2010 Belarus appeared to ‘drag its feet’ over ratification of the Customs Union Code in an attempt to force Moscow into cutting the aforementioned oil duties (Belapan news agency, 2010a). President Aleksandr Lukashenko even issued an ultimatum to the Russian leadership, stating:

‘To advance in the formation of the Customs Union and sign all documents, it is necessary to abolish all customs duties... The main principle is that if equal conditions are not in place, the Customs Union is out of the question.’ (Belapan news agency, 2010c)

Minsk did ultimately ratify the Customs Union Code on Russian terms (without the reduction of oil duties) on 3 July (Interfax news agency, 2010a), but only after Moscow had insisted on immediate repayment of a large gas debt; a demand that was interpreted as Russian economic blackmail by both state and independent media in Belarus (BBC Monitoring, 2010). Thus, the economic forces behind Belarusian decisions on integration are clear for all to see, while any influence from public opinion seems negligible in comparison.

Moscow has been urging Minsk to recognize the sovereignty of Abkhazia and South Ossetia for several years. Tables 5.9, 5.10 and 5.11 show the results of IISEPS opinion polls about this issue.

Table 5.9: Responses to survey question ‘Which solution to the problem of Abkhazia and South Ossetia do you consider best?’ (IISEPS, 2008)

Granting them independence and international recognition of sovereignty	63.2 per cent
Joining them to Russia	16.7 per cent

Returning them to Georgian control	5 per cent
Hard to say/no answer	15.1 per cent

Table 5.10: Responses to survey question ‘Do you think Belarus should follow Russia in recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia?’ (IISEPS, 2009d)

Yes, their independence should be recognized	44.6 per cent
No, their independence should not be recognized	7.7 per cent
I do not care	37.1 per cent
Hard to say/no answer	10.6 per cent

Table 5.11: Responses to survey question ‘Do you think Belarus should follow Russia in recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia?’ (IISEPS, 2009b)

The independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia should be recognized	46.8 per cent
The independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia should not be recognized	12.0 per cent
I do not care	28.8 per cent

The idea that Minsk should follow Moscow’s example in acknowledging the two republics’ independence enjoys support among the Belarusian population. By refusing to recognize their sovereignty, Lukashenko has thus not only defied Russian pressure but gone against domestic public opinion as well.

The evidence in this section is admittedly limited but generally points to a weak link between public sentiments and foreign policy decision-making in Belarus. If soft power were measured purely in terms of affinity, Russian reserves of soft power in Belarus would be substantial indeed. In September 2009 IISEPS asked respondents about their ‘general attitude towards Russia’; over 70 per cent said it was ‘very good’ or ‘mainly good’ while just 6 per cent said it was ‘mainly bad’ or ‘very bad’; some 21 per cent were indifferent (IISEPS, 2009c). Polls have consistently found that Russian leaders Vladimir Putin and Dmitriy Medvedev are held in high regard by a majority of

respondents (IISEPS, 2009a, IISEPS, 2011c). Around 70 per cent of Belarusians believe that Russia's influence in the world is 'mainly positive' (IISEPS, 2011d). Yet despite these warm feelings towards their big eastern neighbour, Belarusians remain opposed to certain Russian policy ambitions, such as Russian acquisition of strategic industrial assets. Meanwhile, the Belarusian leadership's decision-making in relation to Russia appears to be driven by economic considerations more than regard for popular preferences. When he first came to power, Lukashenko's popularity was based in part on his support for a close relationship with Russia (Karbalevich, 2010, Leshchenko, 2008). However, the absence of democratic elections since 1994 and the repression of opposition campaigning mean that Belarusian citizens today have no real mechanism for influencing decisions taken by their president on any matter, including foreign policy. This raises doubts about whether the mass media in Belarus could function as a source of soft power in the manner described in the literature. Russian-made TV news might shape sentiments about Russia and its policies among the Belarusian public, but the likelihood of such sentiments subsequently influencing the choices made by Lukashenko seems low.

Section 5.5 Public sentiments and foreign policy decisions in Ukraine

This section briefly considers the relationship between public sentiments and decision-making with regard to two Russian objectives in Ukraine: prolonging the lease of the Black Sea Fleet's base in Sevastopol (achieved in April 2010) and securing Ukrainian participation in the Customs Union (not yet achieved).

Viktor Yanukovich was democratically elected as Ukrainian president in January–February 2010 on a platform that included improving ties with Russia.³ Prior to the election, he made it quite clear that

³ The OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights concluded that Ukraine's 2010 presidential election had been 'transparent and offered voters a genuine choice between candidates representing diverse political views'; see OSCE website, available at www.osce.org/odihr/elections/ukraine/67015 (accessed 15 April 2013).

he would consider extending the Russian Black Sea Fleet’s stay in Crimea if Russia agreed to pay more in return (*Inter TV*, 2010). Opinion polls from 2010 suggest that his policy on the Fleet had the approval of most Ukrainians, as Tables 5.12 and 5.13 illustrate.

Table 5.12: Responses to survey question ‘What should Ukraine decide regarding the Russian Black Sea Fleet staying in Sevastopol after 2017?’ (Research & Branding Group, 2010b)

Extend the Black Sea Fleet’s stay in Sevastopol without any conditions	18 per cent
Extend the Black Sea Fleet’s stay in Sevastopol, presenting Russia with a number of economic conditions that are beneficial to Ukraine	43 per cent
Demand that Russia withdraw the Black Sea Fleet from Sevastopol in 2017	22 per cent
Other/ hard to say	17 per cent

Table 5.13: Attitudes towards the signing of the Kharkov ‘gas-for-fleet’ accords recorded during a survey in April 2010 (Research & Branding Group, 2011)

Generally positive	58 per cent
Generally negative	26 per cent
Indifferent	8 per cent
Know nothing about it/ hard to say	8 per cent

The fact that elections in Ukraine are reasonably free and fair means that – unlike in Belarus – there is a mechanism through which public sentiments can exert an impact on policy-making. In the case of the Black Sea Fleet decision, one can trace a causal link between popular desire to reduce tensions with Russia, the election of Yanukovich as president and the signing of the ‘gas-for-fleet’ accords.

In the case of Customs Union membership, however, the link between public opinion and foreign policy decision-making appears to break down. Survey data from 2012 and 2013 suggests that a relative majority of Ukrainians would like their country to join the Customs Union (see Tables 5.14 and 5.15).

Table 5.14: Responses to the survey question ‘Would you like Ukraine to sign a treaty this year on joining the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan?’ (IFAK Institut, 2013)

	All Ukraine	South and East	West and Centre
Yes	50 per cent	62 per cent	35 per cent
No	26 per cent	19 per cent	35 per cent
Hard to say	24 per cent	19 per cent	30 per cent

Table 5.15: Responses to survey question ‘Do you think Ukraine should join the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan?’ (Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2012)

	All Ukraine	West	Centre	South	East
Yes	40.3	16.3	32.6	54.4	55.7
No	36.7	62.8	37.8	22.0	26.6
Hard to say	23.0	20.9	29.6	23.6	17.6

Table 5.16: Responses to survey question ‘Which integration path should Ukraine take?’ Only one choice allowed (Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation, 2012)

	Oct 2011	Feb 2012	Aug 2012	Dec 2012
Join the EU	43.7	38.6	36.1	42.4
Join the Customs Union	30.5	29.7	39.1	32.1
Join neither the EU nor the Customs Union	9.3	11.7	9.9	10.5
Hard to say	16.4	20.0	14.9	15.0

Public support depends to some extent on how the issue is framed: when presented with a choice between alternative integration pathways, a relative majority of Ukrainians have tended to prefer the European direction over the Russian one (see Table 5.16). Nevertheless, the prospect of Customs Union membership undoubtedly has public backing in Ukraine’s southern and eastern regions,

where Yanukovich's voter base is centred. A 2012 survey by the Ilko Kucheriv Democratic Initiatives Foundation found that almost 70 per cent of Party of Regions supporters favoured the idea of Ukraine joining the Customs Union (*Zerkalo Nedeli*, 2012). The president therefore has a clear mandate to pursue Customs Union membership – yet to date he has consistently resisted this option in the face of strong Russian pressure. In this instance public opinion does not appear to have made much impression on Ukraine's course.

The evidence discussed above, although very limited, is sufficient to demonstrate that public sentiments are not irrelevant to foreign policy decisions in Ukraine. Democratic elections offer a channel for public opinion to influence policy which does not exist in authoritarian Belarus. Consequently, the notion of pro-Kremlin media working as a source of soft power in Ukraine to sway political outcomes via public opinion is not implausible. However, public sentiments are obviously not the only factor involved; when elite economic interests are at stake, public preferences may be immaterial.

Section 5.6 Chapter summary

Recent perspectives on soft power have been criticized for focusing too much on the source and not enough on the receiver in distinct social and political contexts (Rawnsley, 2012, p 130). This chapter has sought to move away from a one-directional, agent-centric view of cross-border media influence. It has highlighted factors which affect the scope of the Russian authorities to communicate messages via the media to audiences within Ukraine and Belarus. It has also discussed the plausibility of public sentiments influencing Ukrainian and Belarusian foreign policy decisions in the manner envisaged by the soft power literature.

Ukraine and Belarus have very different political and economic systems, so different obstacles to Russia's opinion-shaping ambitions exist in each country. In Ukraine, the audience share of Russian

TV news bulletins is constrained by strong competition from domestic broadcasters and the fact that many people with low disposable incomes do not have access to satellite and cable. Consequently, the scope for pro-Kremlin broadcasters to influence public attitudes extends only to a minority of the population. In Belarus, access to Russian TV content is subsidized and domestic broadcasters cooperate with their Russian counterparts rather than competing for viewers. A majority of Belarusians are thus exposed to Russian TV news and its pro-Kremlin narratives. In Belarus, however, an effective system of legislative and regulatory control restricts the range of topics and views which can be reported, so the authorities can block messages which they do not like. Russian news bulletins have been censored before broadcast in Belarus on multiple occasions; something which could not happen in Ukraine, where the legislative-regulatory framework protects the right of citizens to watch foreign TV programmes.

The contrasting political systems of Ukraine and Belarus also have implications for the likelihood of public sentiments feeding into foreign policy decisions. In the literature, the association between soft power and the mass media is largely based on the premise that public sentiments sway political decision-making after the media have shaped public sentiments. It has been argued here that this premise is flawed in relation to Belarusian foreign policy, as the public have no effective mechanisms through which to influence President Lukashenko's choices. Lukashenko has paid no heed to public views on whether the sovereignty of South Ossetia and Abkhazia should be recognized; his decisions about Customs Union membership and the sale of industrial assets to Russian investors appear to have been driven mainly by economic considerations. In Ukraine, public sentiments can affect foreign policy decisions to some degree thanks to the genuine choice offered to voters at elections. There are, however, major issues in Russian-Ukrainian relations where public opinion has been ignored; Ukraine's rejection of Customs Union membership is one example.

This chapter has highlighted certain problems in viewing Russian news exports through the prism of soft power. The conclusion of the thesis shall discuss, *inter alia*, the need for an alternative framework to better capture the nature of Russian media influence in Ukraine and Belarus.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

6.1 Main findings and arguments

This research has revealed complexities which have previously been overlooked in discussions about Russian media influence in the post-Soviet republics. It has found support for the hypothesis that a news provider with a shareholder or partner in Russia is likely to generate (a) more extensive and (b) more favourable coverage of Russia than market rivals because of its Russian connections. At the same time, the thesis has shown considerable variation to exist in the reporting behaviour of Russian news exporters, many of which are vulnerable to constraints within their operating environment. The thesis has argued that mass media are unlikely to have significant soft power impact in Belarus, where public sentiments are prevented from feeding into foreign policy decisions by the absence of democratic processes. It has suggested that an alternative conceptual framework is needed to capture the impact of Russia's news exports to Ukraine and Belarus; this shall be discussed further in the following pages.

Russian participation in the media environments of Ukraine and Belarus can be traced to government action, commercial incentives and the Soviet legacy. Successive Russian governments have placed considerable importance on being able to communicate news to citizens abroad. Yet as Chapter 2 demonstrated, initiatives aimed at securing a 'single information space' in the CIS have tended to fall flat when driven purely by politics; the channel *Mir* being a prime example. Russia's most important news exporters do not owe their transnational profile to policy-makers. Rather, Russian newspapers and TV broadcasters have extended their operations across the CIS in search of profit or in response to demand from consumers and business partners. In a sense, they did not expand internationally at all. Many were formerly popular Soviet news providers. When the collapse of the USSR made them Russian, they found ways to retain viewers and readers in the

newly independent states. Chapter 2 highlighted seven Russian news providers which have a significant presence in Ukraine, Belarus or both countries: the state-controlled broadcasters *Pervyy Kanal*, VGTRK and NTV with their news bulletins *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya*; the tabloids *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and *Argumenty i Fakty*; and the broadsheets *Izvestiya* and *Kommersant*. These media export news from Russia in a variety of ways. Some have entered into partnerships or franchising agreements with third parties. In doing so, they have surrendered a degree of control over the content which is published or broadcast in their name.

In Chapters 3 and 4, content samples from 'Russian' news providers which operate in Ukraine and Belarus were studied and compared against content samples from rival Russian-language news providers without any particular link to Moscow. The observed patterns in content were explained by interviewing media professionals from the countries under study. Among the 12 news providers with a Russian shareholder or partner that were included in the analysis,¹ eight were found to behave in line with part (a) of the hypothesis: their coverage of Russia was more extensive than that of comparable news providers without a Russian shareholder or partner. Nine of them were found to produce coverage of Russia that was in some respect more favourable – or at least less critical – than that of the market rivals against which they were compared, as predicted by part (b) of the hypothesis. In one case – Ukraine's *Podrobnosti* news bulletin – interview evidence indicated that the observed conformity with the hypothesis was attributable to factors other than the presence of a Russian shareholder. Yet overall, support for the hypothesis was substantial, particularly in relation to TV news.

Vremya, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* were shown to report on Russia far more extensively and favourably than all the news bulletins against which they were compared. As expected, they were dominated by entirely uncritical reporting of the daily activity of President Dmitriy Medvedev and Prime Minister Vladimir Putin. *Izvestiya v Ukraine* behaved quite similarly; its story selection was highly Russia-

¹ *Vremya* is counted twice – once in Ukraine and once in Belarus.

centric and sympathetic towards Russia's political establishment. Among the other newspapers, reporting was not always tendentious but the presence of a Russian shareholder or partner was generally found to moderate criticism of Russia to some degree. *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* had almost nothing to say about Russian domestic matters but it reported Patriarch Kirill's visit to Ukraine with a clear slant, playing down anti-Russian protests. *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* did not take a clear stand in defence of the Russian authorities during the Moscow-Minsk 'information war', but it was still far less negative about Russia and its leaders than *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*, the other Belarusian daily studied. *Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine* and *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii* were not found to pay more attention to Russia than the other weeklies. Nor did they give Russia markedly more favourable editorial treatment than the papers against which they were compared. In fact, their content at times reflected a degree of scepticism and mild dissatisfaction with Russia's political establishment. However, interview evidence suggested that their editors did feel somewhat restricted by the expectations of colleagues in Moscow. At the business daily *Kommersant-Ukraina*, influence from Moscow was found to affect content too, but it was a different kind of influence to that observed at the other 'Russian' papers. The main constraint imposed from Moscow on *Kommersant-Ukraina* journalists is that they should not express their own opinions in print (by being impartial, the *Kommersant* publishing house hopes to fill a niche in the Ukrainian market). *Kommersant-Ukraina* did not avoid writing about Russia's democratic deficit, but it did so in a very matter-of-fact way, without obvious editorializing of the kind seen in other publications, particularly *Den*. In Belarus, *BelGazeta* generated copious political news reporting about Russia without taking a clear editorial line. Unfortunately, the precise nature of Russian shareholder influence on *BelGazeta*'s content remains unknown as no-one from the paper's full-time editorial staff could be interviewed.

Despite the strength of H1, Chapters 3 and 4 revealed considerable diversity in coverage of Russia among the 12 news providers with a shareholder or partner in Russia. They are not all merely tools

of the Kremlin; a more nuanced view is required to reflect the various forces which interact to shape their reporting. Chapter 3 revealed audience expectations to be an important explanatory factor among the tabloids in Ukraine. Mass-circulation papers there tend to avoid forthright editorializing on Russia (and indeed other topics) due to the broad spectrum of opinions held by readers. Editors at *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* and *Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine* have to find a balance which offends neither their colleagues in Moscow, nor people who buy the paper in different parts of the country. Chapter 4 highlighted the restrictive political climate as a significant constraint on reporting at *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii* and *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii*. Editors do their best to stay on the right side of the Belarusian authorities, which view them with suspicion due to their Russian capital.

At *Podrobnosti*, the presence of a minority Russian shareholder appears to have little impact on content, but *Inter*'s links to the Ukrainian authorities almost certainly shape reporting of Russian-Ukrainian relations. The scale of resources available at *Inter* is also important; *Podrobnosti*'s relatively extensive reporting about Russia is at least partly explained by its ability to afford a correspondent in Moscow. In Belarus, the content of *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* is vulnerable to occasional censorship by Belarusian officials because all three bulletins are carried by Belarusian state-owned channels.

The thesis also generated some interesting findings about the coverage of Russia produced by news providers without a shareholder or partner in Russia. Interviews indicated that news about Russia with no Ukrainian angle is not an area where wealthy Ukrainian media owners without formal editorial responsibilities intervene directly to shape what gets written. Prominent tycoons Akhmetov (*Segodnya*, *Sobytiya*), Pinchuk (*Fakty*), Gayduk (*Kommentarii*), Kolomoyskiy (*Izvestiya v Ukraine*, *Stolichnyye Novosti*) and Khoroshkovskiy (*Podrobnosti*) do not appear to impose tight constraints on what journalists can say about Russian domestic politics. An interesting discovery in Belarus concerned the symbiosis that exists between certain Russian and Belarusian TV news bulletins.

When selecting news stories about Russia and the world, the Belarusian producers at *Nashi Novosti* bear in mind what their Russian counterparts are reporting. On occasion they may take steps to refute or counteract information in the Russian-made bulletins, but more often their aim is simply to avoid duplication. They like to leave reporting of certain topics – particularly Russian domestic news and international stories with no Belarusian involvement – to their counterparts in Moscow because this allows them to save resources for news about Belarus.

The Russian authorities aspire to use news exports to communicate messages to large foreign audiences and thereby influence public attitudes abroad. This thesis has argued that their scope for achieving this aim depends on political and economic conditions in the ‘target’ state, because such conditions affect how widely Russian TV broadcasts are consumed. Chapter 5 explained how the audience share of *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* is constrained in Ukraine by strong competition from domestic broadcasters and the fact that many people with low disposable incomes do not have access to satellite and cable. Pro-Kremlin broadcasters reach only a minority of the Ukrainian population: one poll suggested that fewer than 25 per cent of Ukrainians use Russian TV channels as a source of information. In Belarus, the Russian authorities’ opinion-shaping ambitions face a different hurdle. Access to Russian TV content is subsidized and domestic broadcasters constitute weak competition, so the proportion of Belarusians exposed to pro-Kremlin news narratives is high. However, an effective system of legislative and regulatory control restricts the range of topics and views which can be reported in Belarus. The scope of the Russian authorities to communicate messages via *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* is therefore limited not in terms of audience share but in terms of subject matter.

Chapter 5 also addressed the question of whether Russian news exports might contribute to Russian foreign policy success in the manner envisaged by the literature on soft power. The association between media and soft power is largely based on the premise that media shape public sentiments which in turn influence policy-making. It was not possible in this thesis to analyze the attitudinal

response of Ukrainian and Belarusian audiences to Russian news exports. Instead, the relationship between public sentiments and foreign policy decisions in Ukraine and Belarus was tentatively explored. Chapter 5 argued that foreign policy decisions in Belarus are largely unaffected by public sentiments due to the absence of democratic processes. This casts doubt on the media's potential to exert a soft power effect. In Ukraine, it was argued that public sentiments can affect foreign policy decisions to some degree because elections offer voters a genuine choice. However, public opinion is far from being the only factor directing Ukraine's foreign policy course; there are issues in Russian-Ukrainian relations where the balance of public opinion has been ignored.

There are other problems, too, in viewing Russia's transnational media activity through the conceptual prism of soft power. At times, pro-Kremlin Russian news exporters certainly play a high-profile part in Moscow's relations with Minsk and Kiev. However, their most visible impact in recent years has come from their role in so-called information wars. Chapter 4 described the information war which broke out between Moscow and Minsk in 2010, as well as similar instances from the past decade. During such information wars, bilateral relations are affected by Russian news exports to Ukraine and Belarus in a way which is immediate and easy to trace; it is not the gradual, long-term influence outlined in the literature on soft power. Rather than sympathetic coverage of Russia facilitating compliance with Russian goals, as envisaged by the soft power literature, we have seen critical coverage of Ukraine and Belarus generating heated negative reactions among the public and elites in both the latter countries. The precise objectives of Russian 'information attacks' on Ukraine and Belarus are difficult to discern but they are certainly a million miles from the 'soft power' approach of building a benign and positive national image over time. The Russian authorities appear to pay little heed to Russia's own reputation when they participate in 'information wars'. If they did, they might notice that Russian TV hatchet jobs discredit not only their intended victims but also Russia itself. Each time a film like *Oranzhevyye deti* is broadcast fresh complaints appear in the Ukrainian media about Russian imperialism, aggression and

undesirability as a partner. In Belarus, the negative reaction is even more vigorous. Thus, the significance of pro-Kremlin Russian news exporters for regional political dynamics may lie at least as much in their capacity to provoke as their capacity to ‘softly’ attract and persuade a mass audience.

Therefore, rather than viewing Russian cross-border media influence through the prism of soft power, we could use the metaphor of a Soviet-era communal apartment with very thin walls. Whenever Russia talks about its neighbours it tends to be overheard. The neighbours inevitably react: they try to block off the noise next door; they bang on the pipes in protest; they shout back. They are far from indifferent to what is said; they have an ear to the wall so insults cannot pass unnoticed even when Russia keeps its voice down. Sometimes Russia undoubtedly wants the insults to be heard. Yet the thin walls are of questionable benefit to Russia. To date there is little evidence to suggest that Russia’s audibility has made its life within the apartment any easier – quite the reverse.

6.2 Questions for future research

There are many questions relating to cross-border news flows in the former Soviet Union which this thesis has not been able to address. In light of the discussion above, it would be interesting to know more about the various ways in which Ukrainian and Belarusian audiences – both ordinary citizens and elites – react to Russian news exports. This would allow firmer conclusions to be drawn as to whether or not Russian ‘information attacks’ on its neighbours are effective or counterproductive. In Ukraine, research into Russian media influence at the sub-national level would be valuable. The Russian media have a much higher profile in Crimea than in the country as a whole; their political impact on the peninsula may be substantial but it has not yet been studied in any depth. Finally, this thesis has focused only television and the press, which are likely to decline in importance as more and more news consumers move online. National borders are even more porous on the internet than

they are among the traditional media. Future research could shed light on how the Russian authorities have adapted to the rise of new media in their attempts to shape the views of foreign citizens.

APPENDIX 1. CODING FRAME

The following coding frame was used in the quantitative content analysis conducted for Chapter 3 on Ukraine and Chapter 4 on Belarus.

Rules for counting number of stories per issue/bulletin

1. In newspapers each *main* headline counts as one story. If there are smaller items or ‘boxes’ that relate to the main headline, they are NOT counted separately.
2. News ‘shorts’, or news ‘in brief’, count as one story; so do letters pages or sections. Captioned photographs count as separate items if they are not accompanied by a related item.
3. NOT COUNTED are articles in sports sections, sport articles on back pages or articles purely about sports results; pull-out TV guides; theatre/film listings; currency or stock exchange tables; horoscopes; anecdotes; crosswords; weather forecasts; back-page recipes; children’s games; official announcements by authorities/police; photos of half-dressed women; any kind of advertisement marked as such; open letters; any item that can be completely covered by a credit card; any item that does not contain a single full sentence.

Criteria for identifying stories ‘featuring Russia’

In order to be coded as ‘featuring Russia’, the story must contain at least *three instances* of keywords from the following list:

- Россия, русский, российский (NOT counted if it refers to the Russian language or an entity that is not actually based in Russia, e.g. Crimea’s Русский Блок)
- Abbreviations of the words above, e.g. РФ, Росстат

- A Russian place name (including streets, squares, famous landmarks) or a derived adjective or abbreviation thereof, e.g. Москва, Московский, МГУ (NOT counted if it refers to a place or entity that is not actually based in Russia, e.g. Kiev's Московская Площадь)
- Газпром
- The name of a Russian public figure, excluding purely cultural, literary or sporting celebrities (only people from Russia's post-1991 public life are counted – NOT public figures who were active only prior to the collapse of the USSR)
- СНГ, ЕврАзЭС, Таможенный Союз, ОДКБ, ШОС, Союзное Государство
- россиянин (россияне)

Additionally, TV reports are coded as 'featuring Russia' if they contain one instance of a keyword (printed on screen or spoken) together with footage filmed in post-1991 Russia.

General coding questions

- A. What is the ITEM ID number? (Unique number assigned sequentially)
- B. To which week of the sample does the item belong?
- C. To which day of the sample does the item belong?
- D. Is the item a TV report or a newspaper article?
- E. Which news provider does the item come from?
- F. What is the item's position in the running order (for TV bulletins); on which page is the item's first headline?
- G. Is the item small, medium or large? (small – presenter-read or less than ¼-page; medium – ¼-page to ½-page; large – correspondent report or over ½-page)

APPENDIX 2. STORY COMPARISON TABLES

Table C1: Comparison of stories ‘featuring Russia’ reported by *Podrobnosti*, *Sobytiya* and *Vremya*, 31 May – 24 September 2010¹

Week	Story	<i>Podrobnosti</i>	<i>Sobytiya</i>	<i>Vremya</i>
31 May – 4 June	Russian opposition stages ‘Strategy 31’ protest calling for freedom of assembly	Correspondent report	Presenter-read, over video	No report
	One man dies in blast at ferroalloys plant in Novokuznetsk, Russia	Presenter-read, over video	No report	No report
	Russian poet Andrey Voznesenskiy dies	Multiple reports	No report	Multiple reports
	A simulated journey to Mars starts in Russia	Correspondent report	Correspondent report	Correspondent report
	Russia changes tax rules for labour migrants	Correspondent report	No report	No report
	Russia-EU summit takes place in Rostov-na-Donu	Presenter-read, over video	No report	Multiple reports
	Data from Polish presidential plane crash published	Presenter-read, over video	No report	Multiple reports
	Ukraine passes draft law on principles of foreign and domestic policy at first reading	Correspondent report	Reported but no Russia reference	Correspondent report
	Ukraine, Russia to set up joint venture in aircraft manufacturing	Correspondent report	No report	No report
	Russian theatre puts on show in Kiev	Correspondent report	No report	No report
Ukraine mulls Russia-style tax on luxuries	Correspondent report	No report	No report	
14-18 June	Anniversary of Tu-104 passenger jet’s first test flight	Correspondent report	No report	No report
	Moscow film festival opens	Correspondent report	No report	Correspondent report

¹ This table lists all the stories coded as ‘featuring Russia’ that were broadcast by either *Podrobnosti* or *Sobytiya* (or both) during the five weeks of the sample. It also shows whether these stories appeared on *Vremya*. However, it does not list all the *Vremya* stories ‘featuring Russia’ that were broadcast during the sample period due to lack of space.

	Canadian model becomes presenter on Chechen TV	No report	Correspondent report	No report
	Lugansk train manufacturer sold to Russian firm	Correspondent report	No report	No report
12--16 July	Historic icons discovered under layer of plaster in Moscow Kremlin	Correspondent report	No report	No report
	Suspected terrorists apprehended in Dagestan	Presenter-read, over video	No report	Multiple reports
	Russia suffers from high temperatures and wildfires	Multiple reports	No report	Multiple reports
	Moscow has a unique museum of old Soviet monuments	Correspondent report	No report	No report
	Fire destroys Moscow's Grabar art restoration centre, killing two firemen	Presenter-read, over video	No report	Multiple reports
	Medvedev meets German chancellor in Yekaterinburg	Multiple reports	No report	Correspondent report
	35 th anniversary of first joint US-Soviet space project	Correspondent report	No report	No report
	More data from Polish presidential plane crash published	No report	Presenter-read, over video	No report
	Russia lifts restrictions on Ukrainian dairy produce	Correspondent report	No report	No report
	Ukraine eases restrictions on dubbing of Russian films	Correspondent report	No report	No report
Anniversary of Ukraine's independence declaration remembered	Correspondent report	Reported but no Russia reference	No report	
26--30 July	Russia suffers from high temperatures and wildfires	Multiple reports	Multiple reports	Multiple reports
	Russia commemorates adoption of Christianity in Rus	Correspondent report	No report	Correspondent report
	Anniversary of the death of Soviet bard Vladimir Vysotskiy	Correspondent report	No report	No report
	Regatta takes place in Moscow Region	Correspondent report	No report	No report
	Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus visits Ukraine	Multiple reports	Multiple reports	Correspondent report

20–24 September	Russian scuba divers ride bicycles in Lake Baykal	Presenter-read, over video	No report	No report
	Austrian-style children’s home opens in Russia	Correspondent report	No report	No report
	Russian village elects black man as head	Correspondent report	No report	No report
	Russian scientist invents pill to stop aging	No report	Correspondent report	No report
	Millennium Goals summit takes place in New York	Multiple reports	Reported but no Russia reference	No report
	Ukraine joins European Energy Community	Correspondent report	No report	No report
	Ukraine hosts beauty show for disabled women	No report	Correspondent report	No report

Table C2: Comparison of stories ‘featuring Russia’ reported by *Segodnya*, *Fakty i Kommentarii* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine*, 31 May – 25 September 2010²

Week	Story	<i>Segodnya</i>	<i>Fakty</i>	<i>KP v Ukraine</i>
31 May – 5 June	Data from Polish presidential plane crash published	✓	✓	✓
	Russian poet Andrey Voznesenskiy dies	✓	✓	✓
	A simulated journey to Mars starts in Russia	✓		
	<i>Forbes</i> magazine publishes list of billionaires who are in prison	✓		
	Musician challenges Putin; Russian opposition stages protest	✓		
	Russian octogenarian becomes a father	✓		
	Russia declares day to mark the adoption of Christianity in Rus		✓	
	International Space Station crew lands in Kazakhstan		✓	
	Expensive jeep stolen in Moscow		✓	
	Tyre of Putin’s official car bursts		✓	

² This table lists all the stories from *Segodnya*, *Fakty i Kommentarii* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine* which were coded as ‘featuring Russia’, excluding reports and features about show business and celebrities; tourism and history. The show business, historical and tourism stories are omitted here for reasons of space.

	US couple want compensation for 'poor quality' adopted Russian child			✓
	Lion mauls child at zoo in Russia's Tambov			✓
	Football manager wants to sue Russia			✓
	A member of the former Russian imperial household dies			✓
	Gazprom and Ukraine's Naftogaz consider joint venture	✓		
	Various interests seek ownership of Ukrainian industrial plants	✓	✓	
	Orthodox Church leader fails to back Kiev Patriarchate	✓		
	Yanukovich reaches his 100 th day as Ukrainian president	✓		✓
	Ukraine passes draft law on principles of foreign and domestic policy at first reading	✓		
	Russia and Ukraine to celebrate Navy Day together	✓		
	Dispute erupts over veteran's Hero of Ukraine award	✓		
	Moscow mayor allowed into Ukraine again	✓		
	Columnist mulls idea of splitting eastern and western Ukraine	✓		
	Russia places order with Ukrainian shipbuilder		✓	
	Russian film flops at Ukrainian film festival		✓	
	Facilities improving at Kiev station		✓	
	Russian theatre puts on show in Kiev		✓	
	Murder trial starts in Kiev		✓	
	Experts comment on the results of Ukrainian foreign policy		✓	
	Experts comment on the approach of the Ukrainian authorities			✓
	Con artists deceive Ukrainian pensioners			✓
14-19 June	Violence breaks out in Kyrgyzstan	✓	✓	✓
	Garden with real guillotine opens in St Petersburg	✓		
	Moscow issues cultural advice to visiting foreigners	✓		
	Russia asks Belarus to settle gas debt	✓	✓	

Police catch gang of ‘partisans’ targeting law-enforcers in Russia	✓		✓
Poland prepares for election	✓		
Spanish police arrest criminals from former USSR		✓	
Moscow film festival opens	✓	✓	
Strong winds cause destruction in Moscow		✓	
Moscow mayor’s wife ranks among world’s richest women		✓	
Russian spacecraft sets off for International Space Station		✓	
Interview with Georgian foreign minister		✓	
Man in Russia’s Volgograd shoots his wife			✓
Thieves in Russia steal awards from Yuriy Gagarin’s mentor			✓
Scientists in Russia synthesise new chemical element			✓
Columnist criticises ‘professional Ukrainians’ (nationalists)	✓		
Ukrainian film wins Russian film competition	✓	✓	
Clothes cost more in Kiev than in other capital cities	✓		
Ukrainian VIPs buy expensive art at auction	✓		
Russia and Ukraine agree on high-speed rail link	✓		
Interview with Ukrainian foreign minister	✓		
Lugansk train manufacturer sold to Russian firm	✓		✓
Wife of former Ukrainian president celebrates her birthday		✓	
Yuliya Timoshenko criticizes court ruling on gas dispute			✓
Russian criminal caught in Odessa			✓
Interview with Ukrainian ‘social psychologist’			✓
Former head of Naftogaz faces travel ban			✓
Ukrainian prime minister reaches 100 th day in office			✓
Business representatives from Moscow and Kiev meet			✓

12-17 July	Russian spies exposed in the USA	✓	✓	✓
	Moscow parents name their children Radost and Ognoslav	✓		
	Ukrainian criminal arrested in Moscow	✓		
	More data from Polish presidential plane crash published	✓	✓	
	Russia and other countries suffer in high temperatures	✓	✓	
	Moscow-Simferopol flight suffers technical problems	✓		✓
	Poll reveals countries where people are happiest	✓		
	Fire destroys Moscow's Grabar art restoration centre		✓	
	Suspected terrorists apprehended in Dagestan		✓	
	Network of 'sex maniacs' discovered in Russia's Orenburg			✓
	Russian octogenarian becomes a father			✓
	Patriarch Kirill to receive honorary doctorate			✓
	Interview with pundit on likelihood of civil war in the USA			✓
	Feature on where heads of state go on holiday			✓
	Presidents of CIS states gather for Yanukovich's birthday	✓	✓	✓
	Yanukovich reaches six months as Ukrainian president	✓		
	'Geopolitical war' taking place in Ukrainian church	✓		
	Yanukovich signs law on Ukraine's non-bloc status	✓		
	Anniversary of Ukraine's independence declaration	✓	✓	
	Memorial erected to Soviet war hero		✓	
	Foreign businessman attacked in Kiev		✓	
	Odessa film festival begins		✓	
	Driver from Dnepropetrovsk wins jackpot		✓	
	CSTO plans to promote itself in Ukraine		✓	
	Russia and Ukraine abolish reciprocal political 'blacklists'			✓
	Patriarch Kirill prepares to visit Ukraine			✓
Descendents of Russian imperial officers visit Ukraine			✓	

	Interview with Belarusian ambassador to Ukraine			✓
	Russian, Ukrainian politicians take part in sports competition			✓
26-31 July	Putin sings with Russian spies expelled from the USA	✓	✓	
	Man suspected of businessman's murder is located in Tatarstan	✓		
	Russia spends large sums on scientific tenders	✓		
	Man hijacks plane at Moscow airport	✓		
	Russian woman caught taking gun parts from USA to Moscow	✓	✓	
	Russian spies exposed in the Czech Republic	✓		✓
	Controversy over photo of Russian and Italian leaders	✓		
	Russia suffers in high temperatures	✓	✓	
	Russian oligarchs seek election	✓		
	More developments around Polish presidential plane crash	✓		
	Big fight involving Chechens occurs at Russian children's camp		✓	
	Police solve murder of cash collectors in Moscow		✓	
	Octogenarian weightlifter competes in Russia		✓	
	Scandalous sect exposed in Russia's Orenburg			✓
	London court rules against Russian oligarch Boris Berezovskiy			✓
	Group of Satanists convicted in Russia			✓
	Fraudsters take millions from Moscow businessman			✓
	Couple in Perm get married after 50 years apart			✓
	Putin takes part in Sevastopol motorbike show	✓	✓	✓
	Patriarch Kirill visits Ukraine	✓	✓	✓
Repairs start at Kiev hippodrome	✓			
Blast damages Ukrainian church	✓			
Kiev Patriarchate of Orthodox Church faces hard times	✓			

	Ukraine to get image re-vamp	✓		
	Russia denies entry to Ukrainian rights activist		✓	✓
	Ukrainian MP criticises court ruling on gas dispute		✓	
	Fire in Moscow-Yevpatoriya train		✓	
	Russian film wins at Odessa film festival		✓	✓
	Train tickets may be sold online in Ukraine, like in Russia		✓	
	Crimean rescuers save stranded Russians		✓	
	Senior Russian officers defend former Ukrainian official		✓	
	Russia and Ukraine to celebrate Navy Day together			✓
	Historical re-enactment takes place in Crimea			✓
	Russian MP comments on being banned from entering Ukraine			✓
	Ukraine seeks to modernize gas pipelines with EU and Russia			✓
	Monument to poet erected in Lugansk			✓
	20–25 September	Moscow mayor Yuriy Luzhkov comes under media pressure	✓	✓
Poland does not extradite Chechen envoy to Russia		✓		
Report ranks Russia as sixth most influential power		✓		
Sports competition for MPs takes place in Moscow		✓		
New map of national stereotypes published		✓		
Latest iPhone selling well in Russia		✓		
Interview with former Ukrainian president's press secretary		✓		
Feature on how people live in Russian provinces		✓		
Putin's cousin gets top bank job		✓		
Road to Russian east coast complete		✓		
Russia ditches one- and five-kopec coins			✓	
Illegal racing car hits pedestrians in Moscow			✓	
Fighter jet crashes in Maritime Territory			✓	

Soviet putsch leader dies		✓	
Nationalists claim murder of taxi driver in Russia		✓	
Interview with Georgian president		✓	
Passenger train leaves Moscow for Nice		✓	
Shuttle fails to undock from ISS		✓	
Large theft from safe box in Moscow		✓	
Frank Sinatra's old house goes up for sale in USA		✓	
Criminal kingpin injured in Moscow			✓
Feature on life in Armenia			✓
Russian man manages to relocate chance acquaintance			✓
Attempt made to retrieve crashed Russian plane			✓
French exhibition opens in Moscow			✓
Astronauts mark anniversary of Tolstoy's death			✓
Medvedev and Yanukovich take part in motor rally	✓	✓	✓
Millennium Goals summit takes place in New York	✓		
Interview with leader of Ukrainian journalist union	✓		
Columnist reflects on problems in Ukrainian textbooks	✓		
Interview with press secretary of former Ukrainian president	✓		
Columnist reflects on the identity divide among Ukrainians	✓		
Interview with investor from Kharkov		✓	
Kiev hosts conference on nuclear industry		✓	
Ukrainian pensioner manages to fight off burglars		✓	
Ukrainian MP describes his trip to China		✓	
Feature on Ukrainians working on Russian oil fields			✓
Feature on issue of domestic violence			✓
Statistics show lots of Ukrainians work in Moscow			✓
Economic crisis brewing in Ukraine's Sumi region			✓

Table C3: Comparison of stories ‘featuring Russia’ reported by *Den*, *Kommersant-Ukraina* and *Izvestiya v Ukraine*, 31 May – 25 September 2010³

Week	Story	<i>Den</i>	<i>Kommersant - Ukraina</i>	<i>Izvestiya v Ukraine</i>
31 May – 5 June	Election takes place in the Czech Republic	✓		✓
	Russian rock musician challenges Putin	✓		
	Russian opposition stages ‘Strategy 31’ protest	✓	✓	
	Moscow reacts to trial of Estonian war veteran	✓		
	Russian poet Andrey Voznesenskiy dies	✓	✓	✓
	Moldova seeks to ban Soviet symbols; interview with Moldovan analyst	✓		
	Russia-EU summit takes place in Rostov-na-Donu	✓		✓
	Russian minister calls for political competition; interview with analyst	✓		
	Lithuania declares Russia was aggressor in war against Georgia	✓		
	Data from Polish presidential plane crash published	✓		✓
	Turkmenistan starts building pipeline without Russia		✓	
	Art exhibition takes place in Moscow		✓	
	Bank suspected of moving funds for former Kyrgyz leadership		✓	
	Various interests seek ownership of Ukrainian industrial plants	✓	✓	
	Yanukovich reaches his 100 th day as Ukrainian president	✓		✓
Ukraine passes law on principles of foreign and domestic policy at first reading	✓			
Interview with Polish newspaper editor and former dissident	✓			

³ This table lists all the stories from *Den* and *Kommersant-Ukraina* which were coded as ‘featuring Russia’ excluding some purely historical features, interviews with celebrities, film reviews and readers’ letters. The table also lists all the *Izvestiya v Ukraine* stories which had a Ukrainian angle or which appeared in another of the broadsheets. However, for reasons of space the table does not list of all the *Izvestiya v Ukraine* stories without a Ukraine angle which appeared in no other paper. Instead, selected examples of such stories are given in italics.

Columnist reflects on disadvantages of cheap Russian gas	✓		
Historian comments on joint Russian-Ukrainian textbook	✓		
Columnist comments on draft concept for history teaching	✓		
Columnist comments on Party of Regions' approach in Sevastopol	✓		
Interview with Ukrainian MP about ties with Russia	✓		
Ukrainian play takes part in Russian theatre festival	✓		
Experts comment on idea of building bridge across Kerch Straits	✓		
Academic comments on the meaning of the 'Russian idea'	✓		
Interview with head of Ukrainian Security Service		✓	
Orthodox Church leader fails to back Kiev Patriarchate		✓	
Ukrainian manufacturer gets Russian orders		✓	
Ukrainian airlines turn attention to the east		✓	
Ukrainian agency develops credit rating for CIS states		✓	
Ukraine's nuclear reactors to use Russian fuel		✓	
Ukraine sees USA as counter-espionage priority		✓	
Moscow stock exchange buys stake in Ukrainian exchange		✓	
Ukrainian psychiatrist recalls treatment of prisoners			✓
Interview with Azeri diaspora leader in Ukraine			✓
Our Ukraine may support Party of Regions			✓
<i>Russian domestic stories included, inter alia: Russian teachers could be liable for teenagers' crimes; Russia registers record GDP growth and falling inflation; fraudsters cheat orphans in Tatarstan; Russia to test Bulava missile in autumn; Russia plans new housing and utilities reforms; drug addict suspected of killing Russian veterans; certain types of Nestle coffee banned in Russia</i>			✓
<i>International stories included, inter alia: Protests take place in Greece; BP struggling after oil spill; Poles may invest in Baltic nuclear power plant; Paris remembers Soviet dancer</i>			✓

14–19 June	Violence breaks out in Kyrgyzstan	✓	✓	✓
	Book festival takes place in Moscow	✓		✓
	Boats seek to break blockade of Gaza	✓		
	Russia asks Belarus to settle gas debt	✓	✓	
	Japan to compensate former PoWs held in USSR	✓		
	Russian opposition publishes report on Putin		✓	
	Russian art auctioned in London		✓	
	Moscow film festival opens		✓	✓
	Russian envoy talks about Ukrainian-Russian ties	✓	✓	✓
	French pundit interviewed about Russia's policy	✓		
	Ukraine eases restrictions on dubbing of Russian films	✓		
	Columnist mulls prospects for Ukraine's development	✓		
	Interview with business leader about agriculture	✓		
	Ukraine receives loans from IMF, Russia	✓	✓	
	Psychologist interviewed about Ukrainian national character	✓		
	Interview with Canadian MP of Ukrainian descent	✓		
	Yanukovich reaches his 100 th day as Ukrainian president	✓		
	Russian theatre puts on show in Kiev	✓		
	Fire festival held in Kiev	✓		
	Russia and Ukraine agree on high-speed rail link	✓		
	Interview with historian about Holodomor and Katyn massacre	✓		
	Interview with leader of Ukrainian women's protest group	✓		
	Recalling a Ukrainian psychologist and pedagogue	✓		
	Kiev theatre moves to new location	✓		
Recalling the mutiny on battleship Potemkin	✓			
Stockholm court rules on gas trader dispute (reaction)		✓	✓	

	Lugansk train manufacturer sold to Russian firm		✓	
	Ukrainian MPs mull change to cable TV rules		✓	✓
	Interview with Ukraine's deputy premier about the IMF, loans		✓	
	Church proposes alternative to military service for unfit men		✓	
	Russia and Ukraine to set up aircraft joint venture		✓	
	Ukraine wants to change direction of oil pipeline flow		✓	
	Ukraine tackles grey market internet providers		✓	
	Ukraine's top prosecutor speaks about high-profile cases		✓	
	Ukrainian film wins Russian film competition			✓
	Russian minister announces changes to Black Sea Fleet			✓
	Ukraine receives Russian loan			✓
	<i>Russian domestic stories included, inter alia: Russian minister calls for more patriotic education; Russian court sentences organizer of illegal gambling; new film released in Russia; Russian government extends car scrapping scheme; Moscow university develops nanotechnology</i>			✓
	<i>International stories included, inter alia: Afghan drugs threaten Russian national security; Latvian town wants closer ties with Russia; Yuriy Gagarin remembered in UK</i>			✓
12-17 July	Russian art exhibition organizers found guilty	✓		✓
	Problems in Russian Communist Party	✓		
	Neo-Nazis on trial in Russia	✓		
	Medvedev meets Russian diplomats	✓		
	Medvedev asks Germans to help modernize Russia	✓		
	Interview with Poland's Jaroslaw Kaczynski	✓		
	Details about Russian spies exposed in the USA		✓	✓
	Moldovan court rejects plan to commemorate Occupation Day		✓	
	Hungarian airline starts repaying loan to Russian bank		✓	

Georgian satellite TV channel loses lawsuit		✓	
Gazprom invites German firm to join South Stream pipeline project		✓	
Russian state agency increases stake in AvtoVAZ car-maker		✓	
Presidents of CIS states gather for Yanukovich's birthday	✓	✓	✓
Former deputy head of Naftogaz detained	✓		
Photo exhibition opens in Kiev	✓		
Interview with British political scientist Andrew Wilson	✓		
Interview with Ukrainian politician Konstantin Bondarenko	✓		
Crimea increasingly popular among tourists	✓		
Festival of Russian and Ukrainian music takes place	✓		
Recalling Soviet-era exhibition of Ukrainian art	✓		
Monument to Stalin erected in Ukraine	✓		
Den runs summer journalism camp	✓		
Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski	✓		
Ukrainian film wins Russian film competition	✓		✓
Columnist looks at politicians and advertising	✓		
Recalling Ukraine's independence declaration	✓		
Patriarch Kirill preparing to visit Ukraine	✓		
Monument to Pushkin unveiled in Ukraine	✓		
Columnist mulls social stereotypes in Ukraine	✓		
Ukrainian travel agent collapses		✓	
Ukrainian MPs pass law to liberate gas market		✓	
Moscow court overturns lawsuit against Ukraine		✓	
Ukrainian fertilizer manufacturers struggling		✓	
Yanukovich signs law on Ukraine's non-bloc status		✓	✓

	CSTO plans to promote itself in Ukraine		✓	
	Churches make rival claims on Ukrainian cathedral		✓	
	Naftogaz gets majority on Ukratnafta board		✓	
	Ukrainian designers devote collections to Mickey Mouse			✓
	Interview with Ukrainian pundit about Ukraine's non-bloc status			✓
	<i>Russian domestic stories included, inter alia: Changes to rules concerning Russian traffic police; rock concert takes place near Tver; Russian citizens to get individual electronic cards; Bashkortostan president about to step down; Moscow suffers influx of bedbugs</i>			✓
	<i>International stories included, inter alia: USA wants to expel BP; UN reacts to sinking of South Korean ship; Russian base in Kyrgyzstan may expand</i>			✓
26–31 July	Interview with Russian opposition figure Boris Nemtsov	✓		
	German politician reflects on Russia's gas policy	✓		
	Russian and Italian presidents in photo controversy	✓		
	Nationalists sentenced in Russia	✓		
	Pro-Kremlin youth camp takes place in Russia	✓		
	Iranian president takes offence at Medvedev		✓	✓
	Gazprom initiates export limits		✓	
	Slovakia may not take part in Asia-Europe railway		✓	
	BP sells assets, makes changes after oil spill		✓	✓
	Russia refuses to extradite businessman to Serbia		✓	
	Russian investment firm buys internet projects		✓	
	Russian spy uncovered in the Czech Republic		✓	✓
	Russian district court bans YouTube access		✓	✓
	Russian and US firms discuss aircraft assembly		✓	
	Adidas in dispute with Russian sportswear retailer		✓	
TNK-BP buys assets in Venezuela		✓		

Patriarch Kirill visits Ukraine	✓	✓	✓
Putin takes part in Sevastopol motorbike show	✓	✓	✓
Columnist reflects on Russia-Ukraine relations	✓		✓
Pundit comments on Russia-Ukraine relations	✓		
Interview with Ukrainian businessman	✓		
Ukrainian firm supplies parts to Russia	✓		
Ukrainian gas market law enters into force	✓		
Russian radio station creates website for Ukraine	✓		
Gas transit discussed at forum in Odessa	✓		
Interview with Belarusian nuclear expert	✓		
Russian film wins at Ukrainian film festival	✓		
Ukrainian church attacked	✓	✓	
Survey of Russian and European investment in Ukraine	✓		
Interview with Ukrainian political consultant	✓		
Ukrainian premier discusses energy matters with EU	✓		✓
Interview with Ukrainian sculptor	✓		
Ukrainian historians express concern about ties with Russia	✓		
Ukraine discusses debt settlement with gas trader		✓	
Ukrainian court issues ruling in gas trader dispute		✓	
New details of Gazprom's role in Stockholm court case		✓	
CIS countries prepare treaty on free trade		✓	✓
Ukrainian plant assembles cars for Russia's AvtoVAZ		✓	
Lugansk train manufacturer sold to Russian firm		✓	
Struggle for control of Ukrainian industrial plant		✓	
Interview with head of Moscow stock exchange		✓	
Ukrainian ministry seeks pipeline reconstruction		✓	

	Russia to cease using parts from Ukrainian plant		✓	
	Ukrainian conglomerate gets Russian loan		✓	
	Interview with European commissioner on gas issues		✓	
	Russian retailer to open shops in Ukraine		✓	
	Imported buckwheat to appear on Ukrainian shelves			✓
	EU official comments on Ukrainian pipelines			✓
	Chief editor comments on situation in Ukrainian politics			✓
	<i>Russian domestic stories included, inter alia: Miner dies in Kemerovo Region; fire at Russian children's home; unusual heat affects Russian economy; increasing numbers of Russian politicians use Twitter; Russia increases gold reserves; Russians face high mobile phone roaming charges</i>			✓
	<i>International stories included, inter alia: Chinese toxic waste threatens Russian river; Slovenia commemorates Russian PoWs; dual national from France wants to serve in Russian army; Russian company to drill for oil on Cuba</i>			✓
20–25 September	Interview with former Polish foreign minister about Russia	✓		
	Japanese and Chinese boats clash in disputed waters	✓		
	<i>Washington Post</i> mulls USA's approach to human rights in Russia	✓		
	Economist reflects on state of Russia's economy	✓		
	US envoy comments on Russia-NATO ties	✓		
	Polish pundits reflect on non-extradition of Chechen envoy	✓		
	Belarusian president visits linen manufacturers	✓		
	NATO chief upbeat about ties with Russia	✓		
	Unrest and violence in Tajikistan		✓	✓
	Court rules Moldova must hold elections		✓	
	Russian film hits cinema screens		✓	
	EU introduces new gas market rules		✓	
	Dispute over chocolate brand in Russia		✓	

Medvedev and Yanukovich take part in motor rally	✓	✓	✓
Academic comments on Holodomor, Russia-Ukraine ties	✓		
Student protest of 1990s mulls Ukraine's independence	✓		
International theatre festival takes place in Yalta	✓		
Columnist wonders who will pay for Ukraine's reforms	✓		
Academics debate Ukraine's national identity	✓		
Russia and Ukraine discuss plan for Kerch Straits bridge	✓		
Odessa theatre festival takes place	✓		
Discussions about 'Russian world' held in Ukrainian city	✓		
Yanukovich visits USA for Millennium Goals summit	✓		
Ukraine borrows idea of national projects from Russia	✓		
Ukrainian wrestler competes in Moscow	✓		
Ukrainian art to be displayed in Moscow		✓	
Russia and Ukraine fail to agree on oil transit		✓	
Ukraine faces lower gas price rise than expected		✓	
Lukoil wants to sell oil to China instead of Ukraine		✓	
Board member of Ukrainian stock exchange interviewed		✓	
Russian, Ukrainian book retailers merge		✓	
Privat Group challenges sale of Lugansk firm to Russians		✓	
Russian film hits cinema screens		✓	
Yanukovich plans more trips east and west			✓
Ukraine and Russia to set up aircraft joint venture			✓
Ukraine to export electricity to Russia			✓
Ukrainian team takes part in motor rally			✓
Russian pilots train at special facility in Crimea			✓
Ukraine to hold investment forum for CIS countries			✓

	<i>Russian domestic stories included, inter alia: Russian universities fail to make it into world ranking; Izvestiya photo correspondent produces album of Medvedev photos; poll shows 81 per cent of Russians are satisfied with life; sunflower oil rises in price in Russia; Russia launches probe into buckwheat suppliers</i>			✓
	<i>International stories included, inter alia: Cyprus stages concert ahead of Medvedev's visit; Russian minister talks about supplying gas to China; Russian shipbuilder signs contract with Venezuela; education ministers of SCO countries meet in Russia</i>			✓

Table C4: Comparison of stories ‘featuring Russia’ reported by *Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine*, 2000, *Stolichnyye Novosti*, *Kommentarii* and *Zerkalo Nedeli*, 31 May – 25 September 2010⁴

Week	Story	<i>AiF v Ukraine</i>	2000	SN	<i>Kommen-tarii</i>	ZN
31 May – 5 June	Quotes of the week	✓	M			
	French businesswoman grows roses in Russian provinces	✓	M			
	How Soviet scientists cross-bred people and animals	✓	M			
	Feature on Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev	✓	M			
	Feature on the first flight attendants	✓	M			
	Columnist reflects on relations between Russia and NATO		M	✓		
	Signs that Russia may be plotting revolution in Georgia		M	✓		
	Polish election campaign		M			✓
	Interview with Russian film director		M			✓
	Yanukovich reaches his 100 th day as Ukrainian president	✓	M		✓	
	Orthodox Church leader fails to back Kiev Patriarchate	✓	M			
	Pundits comment on state of Russia-Ukraine relations	✓	M			

⁴ The letter ‘M’ in the tables signifies a missing issue.

Comparison of banned activities around the world	✓	M			
Russian singer gives concert in Kiev	✓	M			
Volume of Ukraine's imports and exports rises	✓	M			
Ukrainian pensioner pressured out of property		M	✓		
Ukrainian politicians comment on relations with Russia		M	✓		
US auditors conduct probe into Timoshenko administration		M	✓		
MPs debate law on Ukraine's foreign and domestic policy principles		M		✓	✓
Columnist reflects on Russian-Ukrainian relations		M		✓	
Columnist describes state of affairs in Ukrainian arms industry		M		✓	
Columnist describes state of affairs in Ukrainian energy sector		M		✓	
Russian firms seek to build alliances with Ukrainian rivals		M		✓	
Columnist looks at ideology in Ukrainian education		M		✓	
Yanukovich favours Moscow Patriarchate of Orthodox Church		M		✓	
Ukrainian pundit reflects on results of Ukraine's foreign policy		M		✓	
Russian bank signs contract with Ukrainian bank		M		✓	
Russia and Ukraine postpone signing of oil transit deal		M			✓
Feature on a Soviet-era Ukrainian nationalist		M			✓
Discussion of the future of Ukraine's gambling industry		M			✓
Interview with Russian film director		M			✓
Interview with senior EU official		M			✓
Interview with Iranian ambassador to Ukraine		M			✓

	Experts discuss Yanukovich's economic reform plans		M			✓
14-19 June	Quotes of the week	✓	M			
	Interview with Russian government chef	✓	M			
	Interview with Russian actor	✓	M			
	Russian police catch 'partisans' targeting law-enforcers	✓	M			
	Russian ombudsman talks of paedophile lobby in State Duma	✓	M			
	Feature on a pre-revolutionary publisher in Russia		M		✓	
	Violence erupts in Kyrgyzstan		M			✓
	Lugansk train manufacturer sold to Russian firm	✓	M		✓	✓
	Ukrainian villages develop their own businesses	✓	M			
	Feature on problem of stray dogs	✓	M			
	Interview with Ukrainian MP from the Our Ukraine party		M	✓		
	Columnist comments on Yanukovich team's approach		M	✓		
	Ukraine and Russia to set up aircraft joint venture		M	✓		
	Ukrainian MP complains Russian fleet is polluting Crimea		M	✓		
	Ukrainian MP suggests giving Western Ukraine to Poland		M	✓		
	Feature on people who left Ukraine to become famous		M		✓	
	Ukrainian grain traders in conflict with government		M		✓	
	Russia and Ukraine clash over Central Asian gas		M		✓	
	Pundits comment on capitalism in the former Soviet Union		M		✓	
	Stockholm court rules on gas trader dispute (reaction)		M			✓
Interview with Crimean premier about Crimea		M			✓	

	Ukraine's new tax law comes into force		M			✓
	Columnist reflects on relations between Ukraine and Georgia		M			✓
	Feature on Stalin's modernization of Ukraine		M			✓
	Ukrainian premier visits Luxembourg		M			✓
	Interview with representative of Ukrainian gas company		M			✓
	Columnist comments on Ukrainian GDP growth		M			✓
	Interview with Russian TV journalist Yevgeniy Kiselev		M			✓
	Soviet-era film director dies		M			✓
	Columnist reflects on Ukraine's ethnic, linguistic divisions		M			✓
	Columnist reflects on support for Russian fleet in Sevastopol		M			✓
	Feature on the start of World War II		M			✓
12-17 July	China is beating Russia on global arms market	M			✓	
	USA seeks to strengthen its presence in Central Asia	M			✓	
	Belarus approaches election in difficult economic situation	M				✓
	US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visits Ukraine	M	✓	✓		
	Interview with Russian MP Konstantin Zatulin	M	✓			
	Ukrainian priest responds to monastery controversy	M	✓			
	Gas price in Ukraine keeps rising	M	✓			
	Humorous review of week in politics	M	✓			
	Ukrainian diplomat comments on ties with the USA	M	✓			
	Oxford analysts comment on Russian-Ukrainian gas deal	M	✓			
	Russian parliament discusses compatriots abroad	M	✓			
	Latest statistics on gas transit	M	✓			

Readers' letters and responses	M	✓			
Woody Allen visits Ukraine	M	✓			
Feature on music in Odessa	M	✓			
Feature on philosopher from Kiev	M	✓			
Book reviews	M	✓			✓
Where to go on holiday	M	✓			
Ukrainian MPs comment on Ukraine's geopolitical situation	M		✓		
Pundit comments on Ukraine not joining Customs Union	M		✓		
Russia and abolishes political 'blacklists' of Ukrainians	M		✓		
Ukrainian firms sell arms to Africa	M			✓	
Columnist reflects on results of Ukrainian political season	M				✓
Ukrainian MP speaks out against joining CSTO	M				✓
Report on Ukraine's human trafficking problem	M				✓
Ukrainian foreign minister comments on recent foreign policy	M				✓
Columnist discusses fictional duel from book	M				✓
Report on development of 'e-money'	M				✓
Ukrainian Railways wants changes to freight wagons system	M				✓
Columnist comments on Gazprom and Ukrainian gas transit	M				✓
Ukrainian plant increases pipe production	M				✓
Ukrainian region faces problems with radio reception	M				✓
Feature on pre-Soviet history of Ukrainian elite	M				✓
Ukraine turns to foreigners for big PR projects	M				✓
Film festival ends in Czech Republic	M				✓

26-31 July	Quotes of the week	✓	M			M
	Putin comments on exposure of spies in USA	✓	M			M
	Interview with writer on consumerism and the Russian soul	✓	M			M
	Data from Polish presidential plane crash published	✓	M			M
	Russian schoolboy in USA creates website	✓	M			M
	Readers describe what happiness means to them	✓	M			M
	Russian scientist explains value of studying Mars	✓	M			M
	Interview with Russian actress, photos of her home	✓	M			M
	Interview with French actress	✓	M			M
	Champagne celebrates its 'birthday'	✓	M			M
	Militants attack power station in Russian North Caucasus		M	✓		M
	Talks on Karabakh settlement fail to make progress		M	✓		M
	Columnist reflects on Georgian breakaway republics		M	✓		M
	Columnist reflects on weak Russian economic statistics		M		✓	M
	Putin takes part in Sevastopol motorbike show	✓	M			M
	Feature on objects associated with world leaders	✓	M			M
	Interview with Ukrainian premier	✓	M			M
	Interview with directors at Odessa film festival	✓	M			M
	Patriarch Kirill visits Ukraine		M	✓		M
	Yanukovich reaches sixth month as president		M	✓		M
	Ukrainian consumers face gas price rise		M	✓		M
	Columnist describes Party of Regions' 'political model'		M	✓		M
Ukraine receives loans from IMF and Russia		M	✓		M	
Donetsk governor wants to legalise dual citizenship		M	✓		M	

	Feature on the mayor of Donetsk		M		✓	M
20-25 September	Quotes of the week	✓				
	Interview with Russian actor	✓				
	Moscow mayor Yuriy Luzhkov comes under media pressure	✓		✓		
	Russian MP comments on Georgian lawsuit over war	✓				
	Feature on 19 th Century Russian general	✓				
	Feature on Soviet corruption scandal involving caviar	✓				
	Feature on fate of German PoWs in World War II	✓				
	Interview with Russian musician, photos of his home	✓				
	Poland does not extradite Chechen envoy to Russia			✓		
	Filmmaker makes documentary about Russian politics			✓		
	Feature on 19 th Century Russian count				✓	
	Georgian ambassador describes economic reforms in Georgia					✓
	Columnist describes conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia					✓
	Medvedev and Yanukovich take part in motor rally	✓		✓		
	Ukrainian deputy minister answers environmental questions	✓				
	Feature on democratic failures in post-Soviet states	✓				
	EU adopts new energy security rules		✓			
	Ukrainian warship suffers accident		✓			
	Interview with Ukrainian specialist about e-government		✓			
	Columnists debate idea of Russian empire		✓			
Readers' letters and comments		✓				

Publishers' forum takes place in Lvov		✓			✓
Ukraine at risk from past nuclear tests		✓			
Feature on Missile Troops in Ukraine		✓			
Columnist reflects on Ukrainian nationalism, related issues		✓			
Columnist reflects on Ukrainian politics, relations with Russia		✓			
Analyst says Gazprom could go bust within a decade			✓		
Columnist reflects on Ukrainian authorities copying Russia				✓	
Ukraine implements agreement on decommissioning missiles				✓	
Oligarch says he may sell stake in Ukrainian firm to Gazprom				✓	
Ukrainian MPs remove amber from list of precious stones				✓	
Party of Regions not keen to make Sevastopol a hero city				✓	
Columnist discusses Ukrainian economic development				✓	
Local elections to take place in Ukraine					✓
Poll reveals Russian and Ukrainian views on democracy					✓
Ukraine's Supreme Court considers gas trader dispute					✓
Feature on Russian poetry inspired by Crimea					✓
Draft law on languages introduced in Ukrainian parliament					✓

Table C5: Comparison of stories ‘featuring Russia’ reported by *Panorama*, *Nashi Novosti*, *24 Chasa*, *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya*, 23 August – 5 November 2010⁵

Week	Story	<i>Pan.</i>	<i>N.N.</i>	<i>24.C.</i>	<i>V-ya</i>	<i>Vesti</i>	<i>Seg.</i>
23–27 August	St Petersburg suffers major power cut	✓	✓				
	Belarusian Council of ministers discusses trade with Russia’s Lipetsk Region	✓					
	Thailand to extradite suspected Russian arms dealer to USA	✓			✓	✓	✓
	Belarusian GDP growing twice as fast as Russian GDP	✓					
	Belarusian leaders meet head of Russia’s Kursk Region	✓	✓	✓			
	Russian journalists tour Belarus but some withdraw	✓	✓				
	Belarusian air defence troops hold drill in Russia	✓	✓				
	Oil smugglers jailed in Belarus	✓					
	Belarus signs trade deal with Russia’s Bryansk Region	✓		✓			
	Belarusian food exports rise after hot weather elsewhere		✓	✓			
	Belarus exports hi-tech dumper truck to Russia		✓				
	Customs Union interior ministers hold meeting		✓				
	Belarus develops new trolleybus for export		✓				
	Gazprom threatens Lithuania with pipeline lawsuit		✓				
	Belarus modernizes Druzhba pipeline to counter Russian ‘bypass’ pipelines		✓				
	<i>Die Welt</i> says corrupt state service attracts Russian youth		✓				
	Belarusian toymakers export goods to Russia				✓		
	More and more Russians move to live in Belarus				✓		

⁵ This table lists all the stories coded as ‘featuring Russia’ that were broadcast by *Panorama*, *Nashi Novosti* or *24 Chasa* during the five weeks of the sample. It also shows whether these stories appeared on *Vremya*, *Vesti* or *Segodnya*. However, it does not list all the *Vremya*, *Vesti* and *Segodnya* stories ‘featuring Russia’ that were broadcast during the sample period for reasons of space.

	Belarusian park declared best in CIS			✓			
	Lukashenko criticizes his government for economic failings			✓			
Week	Story	<i>Pan.</i>	<i>N.N.</i>	<i>24.C.</i>	<i>V-ya</i>	<i>Vesti</i>	<i>Seg.</i>
6–10 September	Consumer confidence higher in Belarus than all other CIS states (and lowest in Russia)	✓					
	Suspects detained for throwing explosives at Russian embassy	✓					
	Russia's Public Chamber proposes food rationing cards (millions of Russian children malnourished)	✓					
	Belarusian firm produces bathtubs (replacing imported Russian ones)	✓					
	Driver in Russia's Yekaterinburg knocks over nine pedestrians	✓			✓		
	Russia continues to suffer from heat and fires	✓			✓	✓	✓
	World food prices fluctuate (Russian authorities tackle profiteering)	✓				✓	
	Russian-Belarusian organization finds fragments of old geodesic observatories	✓					
	Lukashenko meets representatives of film industry (mentions need to export to Russia)	✓	✓	✓			
	Monitors check customs procedures on Belarus-Russian border	✓					
	Police seize heroin on Belarusian-Russian border	✓					
	Suicide bomb hits Russia's Vladikavkaz	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
	Joschka Fischer says South Stream is not in Europe's interests	✓					
	Delegation from Arkhangelsk visits Minsk	✓					
	German chancellor visits Lithuania, discusses energy issues		✓				
CIS economic court hears Belarusian lawsuit against Russia		✓	✓				
Elders from Kabarda-Balkar village picket Kremlin for land rights		✓					

	Premiere of 'Minsk, I love you' takes place		✓				
	Russian media attacks on Belarus backfire on Moscow		✓				
	Rumours surround death of Belarusian journalist		✓				
	Citizens receive awards for Minsk city day			✓			
Week	Story	Pan.	N.N.	24.C.	V-ya	Vesti	Seg.
20–24 September	Russian Duma considers abolishing 1, 5 kopeck coins	✓					✓
	Actors from Perm win prize at Belarusian theatre festival	✓					
	Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan almost agree documents for the Single Economic Space	✓					
	CSTO defence ministers meet in Moscow and agree on peacekeeping force	✓					
	Russia continues to suffer from heat and fires	✓			✓	✓	✓
	Europe passes draft law limiting reliance on Russian gas	✓					
	Russian media attacks on Belarus backfire on Moscow	✓	✓				
	Russian consumers suffer from inflation, poor harvest	✓			✓	✓	✓
	Belarusian Emergencies Ministry conducts drill	✓	✓				
	Belarusian series wins award at Yalta festival	✓					
	Russia's Sergey Lebedev to head CIS monitoring of Belarusian election	✓		✓			
	Belarus building supercomputer for use with Russia	✓					
	Russia, Poland fail to reach agreement on gas supplies		✓				
	Russia's NTV cons Belarusian singer into attending anti-Belarusian studio discussion programme		✓				
Russia interferes in Belarusian-Ukrainian oil transit talks		✓					

	Lukashenko discusses sugar beet production (including exports to Russia)		✓	✓			
	Russian internet users suffer from trolling		✓				
	Pinsk Flotilla marks 300th anniversary		✓				
	Belarus marks Day of the Customs Official			✓			
	Lukashenko wishes Moscow mayor happy birthday			✓			
	Lukashenko addresses Belarusian students at Management Academy			✓			
Week	Story	<i>Pan.</i>	<i>N.N.</i>	<i>24.C.</i>	<i>V-ya</i>	<i>Vesti</i>	<i>Seg.</i>
4-8 October	Lukashenko's news conference is a hit in Russian regions / Medvedev posts video blog about Belarus	✓	✓				✓
	Russia and Belarus sign deal to move customs controls to Union State border	✓	✓	✓			
	Chief CIS election observer says Minsk-Moscow tensions won't hamper work	✓	✓	✓			
	Russian Duma issues statement on Russian-Belarusian relations	✓					✓
	Finance Minister Kudrin says battle against corruption is Russia's biggest evil	✓					
	IMF raises forecast for Belarusian economic growth	✓					
	Conductor Yuriy Bashmet visits Minsk from Moscow	✓	✓	✓			
	Lukashenko discusses election and Russia with head of his initiative group	✓	✓	✓			
	Belarusian MPs issue statement on Belarusian-Russian ties	✓	✓	✓			
	Lukashenko orders good storage of potatoes (some potatoes exported to Russia's Kazan)	✓	✓	✓			
	Lukashenko speaks to Chinese media	✓	✓	✓			
	Russia remains largest foreign investor in Belarus	✓					
Union State secretary awards medals to Belarusian broadcasting staff	✓						

	Russian ballet tour visits Minsk	✓					
	Baseball stadium for children opens in Brest (Russian teams visit)	✓					
	Talks on tackling human trafficking take place in Minsk		✓				
	Belarusian KGB busts drug-smuggling ring		✓				
	Transport and logistics forum takes place in Minsk		✓				
	Lukashenko visits Belarusian-Chinese company producing microwaves		✓	✓			
	CIS court gives Belarus and Russia time to resolve dispute		✓	✓			
	Belarusian premier discusses plans for Union State meeting in Moscow		✓	✓			
	Belarusian basketball team returns home after beating Russians			✓			
	Autumn session of Belarusian parliament begins			✓			
	Belarusian clothing manufacturers update their patterns			✓			
	Belarusian construction company competes successfully in Russia			✓			
Week	Story	<i>Pan.</i>	<i>N.N.</i>	<i>24.C.</i>	<i>V-ya</i>	<i>Vesti</i>	<i>Seg.</i>
1-5 November	European Commission complains about Russian-Polish gas deal	✓					
	Controls at the Russian-Belarusian border are being further relaxed	✓					
	Fake Russian banknotes circulate in Belarus	✓					
	Japan recalls envoy to Russia due to Kuril Islands dispute	✓				✓	✓
	Belarusian cabinet discusses plan to develop transit potential	✓					
	Eurasian Development Bank agrees to finance power plant in Belarus	✓					
	Russian politician Viktor Chernomyrdin dies in Moscow	✓		✓		✓	✓

	Majority of Russians want rapprochement with Belarus	✓					
	Belarusian writer Yakub Kolas was born 128 years ago	✓	✓				
	World Bank rates Belarus higher than Russia for doing business	✓					
	Marches take place in Moscow on Day of Unity	✓				✓	✓
	Belarusian metallurgy plant starts using Venezuelan iron	✓					
	Minsk hosts international 'unifight' championship	✓					
	Belarusian footwear industry suffers leather shortage	✓					
	Odessa-Brody pipeline to bring Venezuelan oil to Belarus		✓				
	Debtors in Russia have their driving licences taken away		✓				
	Greenpeace finds source of river pollution in St Petersburg		✓				
	District electoral commissions set up in Belarus		✓				
	Russian Finance Ministry wants to raise pension age		✓				
	Belarusian-Russian film to premiere at festival		✓	✓			
	Lukashenko hands out state awards (including to Kremlin Cup tennis player)		✓	✓			
	Belarus now makes herbal medicines instead of importing from Russia			✓			

Table C6: Comparison of stories 'featuring Russia' reported by *Sovetskaya Belorussiya* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii*, 23 August – 5 November 2010

Week	Story	SB	KP v B
23-27 August	Long queues form at Belarusian-Ukrainian border	✓	
	Russian press digest	✓	
	Interview with US diplomat in Belarus	✓	

Customs Union's Custom Code is now in force	✓	
Customs Union officials meet	✓	
Belarusian publisher attends Moscow book fair	✓	
This day in history	✓	
Former Russian intelligence officer cleared of attempted murder		✓
Belarus to become chair of CSTO from December		✓
Russian villagers ask Belarusian fire-fighters to stay		✓
Death toll of Russian mining accident rises to 68		✓
Cable to blame for St Petersburg blackout		✓
Kindergarten with billiards tables opens in Russia's Kazan		✓
International fireworks festival takes place near Minsk		✓
Private collector buys painting by <i>Komsomolka</i> journalist		✓
Anniversary of Russian songwriter's death		✓
Belarus seeks to develop tourism (Russian tourists come to escape smog)	✓	
Russian hacker arrested in France	✓	
Lorries smuggling scrap metal caught on their way to Russia	✓	
Feature on Brest airport (which has regular flights to Russia)	✓	
Belarusian agricultural academy celebrates anniversary	✓	
Monument to actor erected in Russia's Sochi	✓	
Belarus to avoid buckwheat shortage, unlike Russia		✓
<i>Forbes</i> magazine publishes 'rich list' showing wealth of Russian MPs, officials		✓
Young gymnast attempts suicide in Moscow		✓
Thailand to extradite suspected Russian arms dealer to USA		✓
Feature on history of Belarus's Kupalovski theatre		✓
Interview with Georgian film director		✓
Interview with U2's Bono		✓

Russian TV show gets new presenter		✓
Interview with Belarusian officials about migration	✓	
Feature on the operations of Belarusneft oil company in Russia	✓	
Feature about Russian musician	✓	
Russia gets inflatable tanks and other ‘things that surprised us’		✓
Young girl lays claim to Russian performer’s jewels		✓
Hooligans in Minsk stole dresses from sunbathing women		✓
Interview with Soviet-era film director		✓
Russian supermodel divorces English lord		✓
Recalling the wildfires of 1938 and 2010		✓
Men on dating websites exaggerate their height		✓
Readers send in amusing photos		✓
Criminals in Customs Union join forces, conduct trade in grey economy	✓	
Lukashenko wishes happy birthday to head of Moscow State University	✓	
Lukashenko meets the head of Kursk Region	✓	✓
Vilnius and Moscow argue over gas pipelines and EU gas market rules	✓	
Interview with Belarusian musician	✓	
Belarusian condensed milk factory involved in shady dealings with Russia	✓	
Oil product smugglers go on trial (including one Russian)	✓	
Feature reflecting on the death of literary heroes	✓	
Spy Anna Chapman stays in Moscow hotel for unknown reason		✓
Wife in Yekaterinburg throws out fridge containing husband’s money		✓
Giant boy in Volgograd sleeps for four days		✓
Interview with biographer of Russian writer		✓
Russians build 3D cinema which doesn’t require special glasses		✓
New season begins on Belarusian TV (including on <i>Mir</i> TV)		✓

	Russia restricts Moldovan wine imports	✓	
	Interview with Ukrainian singer	✓	
	Israeli woman describes her experience in a Russian hospital		✓
	Belarus wants to join Russian car replacement scheme		✓
	Policemen from Russia's North Caucasus shown dancing in internet clip		✓
	Biker shot near Russia's Lake Baykal		✓
	Russian policeman spotted with ring tattoo		✓
Week	Story	<i>SB</i>	<i>KP v B</i>
6-10 September	Moldova holds referendum on changing its constitution	✓	
	Knife fight breaks out in Moscow nightclub	✓	
	CIS court meets to consider Russian duty on oil	✓	✓
	Digest of Russian press	✓	
	Feature on historical collections that were removed from Belarus	✓	
	Suspects arrested in Minsk after attack on Russian embassy		✓
	Accounts of terror attack in Russia's Dagestan		✓
	Russian academic steals historical documents		✓
	Russian official who threw out charity donations for fire victims defends herself		✓
	Feature about early explorer of northern Russia		✓
	Belarusians discuss Russian car replacement scheme online		✓
	Interview with Russian musicians		✓
	Lukashenko discusses potato exports (urges more sales to Russia)	✓	
	Comment on who rules Russia and the Medvedev-Putin relationship	✓	
	Feature about Belarusian poet	✓	
	Feature about Polish film	✓	
	Muscovites filmed behaving like thugs in provincial hotel		✓
	Belarusian finance minister says wages will not fall (debt to Russia being repaid)		✓

Buckwheat will soon return to shops in Russia and Belarus		✓
Son of Russian businessman escapes conviction after dangerous driving		✓
Russian singer attends Khimki forest protest		✓
UK's <i>Daily Mail</i> reports monster in Russian lake		✓
Interview with Russian rock musician Yuriy Shevchuk		✓
Moscow biofitness champion talks about exercise		✓
Eurovision winner gets new trophy after breaking first one		✓
Filming of Russian TV show nears completion		✓
Shortage of buckwheat continues in Russia and Belarus	✓	
Russia investigates Tu-154 emergency landing	✓	
Russian MPs are targeted by thieves	✓	
Shopping online proves to be convenient	✓	
Feature about Belarusian psychologist	✓	
Aleksey Kudrin becomes head of Arts faculty and other 'things that surprised us'		✓
Feature about Wrangel Island in Russian North East		✓
Russian celebrities open restaurants		✓
Russia's Vladikavkaz hit by terror attack	✓	
Comment on theft of icon in Moscow	✓	
Dubai sheikh builds yacht which is longer than Russian oligarch's yacht	✓	
Feature on time capsules around the world	✓	
Feature about Aleksandr Nevskiy	✓	
Interview with Russian TV doctor		✓
Interview with wives of pilots who carried out emergency landing		✓
Russian celebrity with black son moves to Norway to escape racism		✓
Feature about Soviet interior minister Nikolay Shchelokov		✓
Moscow mayor Luzhkov expresses condolences after Vladikavkaz terror attack	✓	

	Russia and Belarus have problem with fake diplomas	✓	
	Foreign press criticizes Russia's response to Vladikavkaz terror attack	✓	
	Interview with actors and artists who teach students	✓	
	Interview with Belarusian TV professionals	✓	
	Tourists die from eating poisonous fish in Russia's Far East		✓
	Security guard saved lives in Vladikavkaz bomb attack		✓
	50,000 people attend mosque in Moscow		✓
	Director complains about Russian film		✓
Week	Story	SB	KP v B
20-24 September	Lukashenko wishes Moscow mayor Luzhkov a happy birthday	✓	
	Comment on Tajik forces coming under attack and Russia's role in Central Asia	✓	
	Interview with Belarusian academic about the image of Belarus	✓	
	Polish politician comments on Russian-Polish relations	✓	
	Belarusians send aid to victims of fire in Russia	✓	
	Theatre from Russia's Perm wins prize in Belarus	✓	
	Skeletons from 1912 found in Russian Arctic	✓	
	Digest of Russian press	✓	
	Russian aerodrome worker saved lives in case of Tu-154 emergency landing		✓
	America pays Belarus to send Soviet-era nuclear waste to Russia		✓
	Traffic police in Russia's Perm impose fine on governor		✓
	Internet generates funny English translations of Russian names		✓
	Feature on what foreigners think of Belarus		✓
	Former officials recall how Soviet leaders interacted with the public		✓
	Interview with Russian actor		✓
	Belarusian version of Russian show opens in Minsk		✓
Artist's great-granddaughter visits Belarus	✓		

Russia withdraws kopeck coins from circulation	✓	
Gazeta.ru comment on media campaign against Moscow mayor Luzhkov	✓	
Polish newspaper comments on life in Moscow	✓	
Anecdotes about cash cards	✓	
Woman tells story of how her husband left her	✓	
Russia suffers wave of criminal violence	✓	
News from show business: accident occurs during filming near Moscow	✓	
Feature about Russian lady who could 'see' with her skin	✓	
Belarus may follow Russia in banning certain old cars		✓
Man uses fake money to pay for taxi (similar cases in Russia)		✓
Ukraine refuses to pay compensation for shooting down Russian airliner		✓
'Hooligans' attack police cars in St Petersburg		✓
Reconstruction of homes for fire victims continues in Russia		✓
Interview with Russian musician		✓
Russian edition of French fashion magazine gets new editor		✓
Another sentence passed in case of illegal fuel imports from Russia	✓	
Lukashenko visits sugar production plant	✓	
World Expo takes place in Shanghai	✓	
Musicians recall touring the USSR in 1981	✓	
Perm police impose fine on governor and other 'things that surprised us'		✓
Feature on Soviet-era actor/director		✓
Historical feature about a Belarusian artist		✓
Interview with TV script-writer		✓
Celebrities have shotgun wedding in Moscow		✓
Feature about the River Don in Russia		✓
Lukashenko inspects sugar beet production	✓	
Russia orders closure of bureaux de change (reprinted from <i>El Mundo</i>)	✓	

	Fathers cannot remove children from Russia without mothers' permission	✓	
	Kyrgyzstan extends lease of US base	✓	
	Russian professional fighter seeks asylum in Norway	✓	
	Belarusian Customs Committee develops new rules for imports	✓	
	Interview with man who traded cars illegally in early 1990s	✓	
	Russian ambassador says gas price for Belarus may be 10 per cent higher in 2010		✓
	Relatives of Russian engineers killed in Indonesia say it was murder		✓
	Frogs in Russia's Sochi may be moved due to Olympics		✓
	Stickers with quotes from Hitler appear on public transport in Russia's Perm		✓
	Russia gives Poland material relating to Katyn massacre		✓
	Actors almost die in Russian road accident		✓
	Naked women demonstrators stage protests in Ukraine and Russia		✓
	Man who lost legs in accident wants to serve in Russian army		✓
	Belarusian celebrities face competition from Russian rivals		✓
	Philosophers comment on Solzhenitsyn's ideas for Russia and a Russian Union	✓	
	Belarusians illegally export scrap metal to Russia	✓	
	Russian oligarchs buy up castles in Europe	✓	
	Single father wins right to 'mother's benefit' payment in Russia		✓
	Russian tennis player becomes US citizen		✓
	Poland complains that wreck of presidential plane is left without guard in Russia		✓
	Widow of Soviet writer dies in USA		✓
Week	Story	SB	KP v B
	Comment about Medvedev and Putin drinking milk together for TV	✓	
	Digest of Russian press	✓	

4-8 October	Lion attacks trainer in Ukraine (similar attacks in Russia recalled)	✓	
	Interview with Catholic priest (who previously worked in Russia)	✓	
	Kyrgyzstan to elect a new parliament	✓	
	Russian minister cancels trip to Kyrgyzstan	✓	
	Belarusian rail freight company performs well	✓	
	Russian sailor dies while saving ship and crew from explosion		✓
	Medvedev posts video blog about Belarus	✓	✓
	Lukashenko gives news conference to Russian journalists	✓	✓
	Belarusian budget deficit to rise due to oil dispute with Russia		✓
	Recalling the Russian constitutional crisis of 1993		✓
	Dismissed Moscow mayor Luzhkov gives interview to Russian magazine		✓
	Nobel Prize for Medicine awarded to man who developed IVF		✓
	Policemen steal money from ATM in Russia's Chelyabinsk		✓
	Russian archives to provide access to Politburo documents		✓
	Blind monkey undergoes surgery in Russia's Novosibirsk		✓
	Interview with owner of major Belarusian web portal		✓
	Interview with Armenian actor		✓
	Literary editor reflects on life of Russian poet		✓
	New play contains joke about former Moscow mayor		✓
	Pensioner appears on Russian TV show		✓
	Comment about the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe	✓	
	Editor of Polish newspaper comments on Russia's Valday discussion club	✓	
	Russian fashion designer visits Minsk	✓	✓
Interview with Russian author	✓		
Belarusian plumbing firm is doing well	✓		
Russian actor's family and wife dispute inheritance		✓	

	Physicists of Russian origin win Nobel Prize		✓
	Russian girl accused of fraud in USA		✓
	Hoax caller from Minsk prompts grounding of Russian planes		✓
	Baby dies after premature labour on Moscow-Groznyy flight		✓
	Widow and mistress compete for inheritance of deceased actor-governor		✓
	Economist comments on modernization in Russia and Belarus	✓	
	Comment about shooting of crime boss in Moscow	✓	
	Comment from <i>New York Times</i> about Russia's accession to WTO	✓	
	Election observers from CIS receive accreditation from Belarus	✓	
	Survey of scientists about inventions which the world needs	✓	
	Scientists and officials discuss climate, including drought in Russia	✓	
	Musician recalls evenings in Russia's Sochi	✓	
	Russia releases its first 3D film	✓	
	A hoax grounds Russian planes and other 'things that surprised us'		✓
	Recalling a car crash which killed senior Belarusian Communist in 1980		✓
	Comment on dismissal of Moscow mayor Luzhkov		✓
	Nature column describes meeting with wild bear		✓
	Man from Russia's Khabarovsk finds his lost sister		✓
Week	Story	SB	KP v B
1-5 November	Comment on rise of Belarus in prosperity index (higher than Russia)	✓	
	Digest of Russian press	✓	
	Interview with Russian singer	✓	
	Criminals storm hospital in Russia's Yekaterinburg to free crime boss		✓
	Russian spy Anna Chapman to get her own TV show		✓
	US company suspected of bribing Russian officials		✓
	Feature on what happened to big Soviet-era construction projects		✓
	Belarus joins the Bologna process of educational reform		✓

Interviews with students who came to Belarus to study		✓
Children of Jehovah's Witnesses die in Russia because of stance on transfusions		✓
Muslim fashion week takes place in Russia's Kazan		✓
Girl from Kentucky wins Miss World competition		✓
Celebrity charity fundraiser takes place in Moscow		✓
Passenger planes no longer fly from Mogilev in Belarus	✓	
Stealing domain names becomes big business	✓	
Journalist in St Petersburg commits fraud	✓	
Comment on Medvedev's visit to Kuril Islands and Japan's reaction	✓	
Feature about public figure from the Russian Empire in the 1890s	✓	
Belarusian census results published (showing fall in the number of Russians)		✓
Tickets for new Moscow-Minsk train to cost 1.5 million Belarusian roubles		✓
Criminals steal tarmac from roads in Moscow Region		✓
Teenager in Siberia survives flight in aircraft chassis		✓
Thieves caught in Moscow		✓
Russian billionaire seeks divorce		✓
Polar bear runs into road in Eastern Siberia		✓
Krasnodar prison official commits suicide after running over pedestrian		✓
Quadruplets born in Moscow hospital		✓
Actress from Russian TV show meets man with same name as actor		✓
Additional trains to run between Minsk and Russian cities	✓	
Interview with Polish political scientist about Russia and regional relations	✓	
Belarusian musician turns 75	✓	
Feature on Soviet-era actor	✓	
Two sisters live separated by Belarusian-Lithuanian border	✓	

	Russian rouble might finally get its own symbol		✓
	Former director of Beauty School moves to Prague with Russian boyfriend		✓
	Feature on what former Junior Eurovision participants are doing now		✓
	Feature on events in pre-revolutionary Bykhov, Belarus		✓
	Feature about Russian writer Lev Tolstoy		✓
	Comment on NATO secretary-general's visit to Moscow	✓	
	Russian diplomat and politician Viktor Chernomyrdin dies	✓	✓
	Belarusian clothes manufacturers update their patterns	✓	
	Celebrities arrive in Minsk for film festival	✓	✓
	Archaeological finds discovered beneath Moscow square		✓
	Ill child abandoned after being born to surrogate mother in Moscow		✓
	Feature on the Bolshevik revolution		✓
	Interview with Russian celebrity Kseniya Sobchak		✓
	Belarus imports too much leather	✓	
	Interview with Georgian actor-singer	✓	
	Man sentenced in Russia for illegally detaining drug addicts	✓	
	Feature about Belarusian rock band	✓	
	Boy in Russia's Izhevsk commits suicide		✓
	Shopper shoots supermarket guard in Moscow		✓
	British Labour Party leader discovers aunt in Moscow		✓
	Reflections about what makes a good husband		✓

Table C7: Comparison of stories 'featuring Russia' reported by *Obozrevatel*, *BelGazeta*, *Svobodnyye Novosti Plyus*, *Belorusy i Rynok* and *Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii*, 23 August – 5 November 2010

Week	Story	<i>Ob.</i>	<i>BelG.</i>	<i>SN P.</i>	<i>BiR</i>	<i>AiF-B</i>
	Interview with Russian TV star	✓				

23-27 August	Fires in Russia have political consequences	✓				
	Things people are talking about: blackout in St Petersburg, etc	✓				
	Anniversary of first Soviet nuclear test	✓				
	Song about combine harvester workers becomes internet hit	✓				
	Russians are keen to buy second-hand cars from Belarus	✓	✓			
	Pensioner goes on cycle journey (travels through Russia)	✓				
	Women's hockey team begins competing in Belarus	✓				
	Tensions felt at CSTO summit in Yerevan		✓	✓	✓	
	Comment(s) on spat between Belarus and Russia		✓			
	Comment on political situation in Belarus		✓		✓	
	Interview with Russian politician about Moscow mayor		✓			
	Problems arise in project to import Venezuelan oil to Belarus		✓		✓	
	Russia imports Belarusian potatoes (and other news in brief)		✓			
	Ukraine restricts imports of Belarusian sugar		✓			
	Russia's Lukoil may build chicken factory in Belarus		✓			
	Interview with official from Belarusian Finance Ministry		✓			
	Interview with senior Belarusian traffic inspector about driving		✓			
	Interview with Belarusian presidential candidate Neklyayev			✓		
	Climate change affects Belarus and Russia			✓		✓
	Interview with anthropologist about origins of Belarusians			✓		
	Dentist in Vitebsk targets Russian customers			✓		
	Interview with winegrower (born in Russia)			✓		
	Interview with head of Belarusian musical ensemble			✓		
	Belarusian harvest is lower than previous year				✓	
Belarus to chair CSTO for one year				✓		
Problems with ratification of Belarus-Ukraine border treaty				✓		

	Launch of Russian-built power station begins in Iran				✓	
	Interview with financial consultant				✓	
	Belarus offers to provide transit for Kazakh electricity				✓	
	Russian demand for Belarusian food rises				✓	
	Interview about trends in the real estate market				✓	
	Events in the global economy: Russian worried by inflation				✓	
	Book festival takes place in Minsk and other cultural news				✓	
	Russian internet infrastructure improves and other tech news				✓	
	Will gubernatorial elections return in Russia?					✓
	Quotes of the week (from Russian politicians)					✓
	Interview with Russian rock star					✓
	Video clip based on stereotypes causes offence in Ukraine					✓
	Feature comparing Russian émigré communities at different times					✓
	Interview with Russian composer					✓
	Russian doctor explains how to tackle virus					✓
	Interview with Russian celebrity					✓
Week	Story	Ob.	BelG.	SN P.	BiR	AiF-B
6–10 September	Russian oligarch dates supermodel	✓				
	Medvedev digs up potatoes and news of other presidents	✓				
	Feature on fashionable dog breeds (Putin has a Labrador)	✓				
	Interview with theatre artistic director	✓				
	Information war continues between Minsk and Moscow		✓		✓	
	Belarusian premier could run for president backed by Moscow		✓			
	Comment on Russian leadership and Khimki forest protests		✓			
	Anarchists blamed for attack on Russian embassy		✓	✓		

Tajik man paints over road markings in Novosibirsk		✓			
Putin takes spare Ladas on drive through Russian Far East		✓			
Lukashenko visits an oil refinery		✓		✓	
Russia and Belarus disagree over joint currency		✓			
Belarus does not have enough buckwheat to export		✓		✓	
Putin announces rise in car import duty		✓			
Gazprom announces gas price rises for Belarus, Ukraine and Moldova		✓	✓	✓	
Plans to reform Belarusian economy		✓			
Feature on Belarusians who work in Russia		✓			
Feature on problems faced by prisoners upon release		✓			
Interview with Russian rock singer		✓			
Book reviews (including 'History of the Problems of the Russian People')		✓			
Comment on attack on Russian embassy in Minsk			✓		
Russian radio interviews presidential candidate Neklyayev			✓		
Interview with psychologist about mental illness in Belarus			✓		
Prices and wages set to rise in Belarus			✓		
Belarusians transfer less money from Russia than other CIS people			✓		
Interview with Russian actor			✓		
Customs Union to prevent further 'milk wars' with Russia				✓	
Customs Union to boost smuggling from China				✓	
Russian and Belarusian opposition forces meet in Moscow				✓	
Lukashenko says Venezuelan oil is helping Belarus				✓	
Belarusian economy is struggling				✓	
Changes in Russian potassium market affect sale of Belarusian firm				✓	
Regulations of Customs Union explained				✓	

	Belarusian exporter uses court in Russia over VAT payments				✓	
	Exchange rates fluctuate				✓	
	Events in the global economy: Russian citizens must be insured				✓	
	Prices rising in Russia, what about Belarus?					✓
	Could Customs Union cause influx of outdated technology?					✓
	Quotes of the week (from Russian politicians)					✓
	Interview with film star					✓
	Interview with Russian scientist about forest fires					✓
	Polls show people and authorities alienated in Russia					✓
	Prices fixed for Medvedev visit to shop and other funny stories					✓
	Feature about Russian lorry driver					✓
	Russian citizen in Belarus enquires about loans					✓
Week	Story	Ob.	BelG.	SN P.	BiR	AiF-B
20–24 September	Head of Russian weather agency expects cold winter	✓				
	Interview with Belarusian presidential candidate Neklyayev	✓				
	Interview with Belarusian presidential candidate Tereshchenko	✓				
	300 th anniversary of Pinsk flotilla (forerunner of Russian navy)	✓				
	Russian actor marks 65 th birthday	✓				
	TV channel launches new show (with participants from Russia)	✓				
	Presenter leaves Russian TV channel, other showbiz news	✓				
	Lukashenko addresses trade unions		✓			
	Comment on Belarusian election campaign		✓	✓	✓	
	Date of Belarusian presidential election announced		✓		✓	
	Comparison of Belarusian presidential candidates		✓			

Comment on Customs Union and new customs regulations		✓		✓	
Belarus helps Russia fill potato deficit		✓			
Belarus has negative balance of trade		✓			
Belarus wants more duty-free Russian oil		✓		✓	
Comment on need to attract investors to Belarus		✓			
Media campaign against Moscow mayor continues		✓			✓
Water filter promoted by Russian designer		✓			
Book reviews (including book about Russian history)		✓			
Economic problems likely after Belarusian election			✓		
Belarusian poet calls for national language strategy			✓		
National debt of Belarus is rising			✓		
Interview with Belarusian presidential candidate Statkevich			✓		
Belarusian food production falls, hampering exports to Russia			✓		
Manifesto of Belarusian presidential candidate Neklyayev			✓		
Interview with historian about Belarusian architecture			✓		
Belarus may sell military planes to private Dutch company				✓	
Official announces costs of building nuclear power plant in Belarus				✓	
Customs duties on cars to remain the same				✓	
Belarusian industrial exports to Russia may rise due to food deficit				✓	
Belarusian state still controls most of Belarusian banking sector				✓	
Belarus amends its tax code				✓	
International company opens office in Belarus				✓	
Bank enables depositors to get EU residence permits				✓	
Events in the global economy: Russian rouble falls sharply				✓	
Quotes of the week (from Russian politicians)					✓

	Interview with Russian theatre director					✓
	Feature on corruption scandal from early 1980s					✓
	Feature on authoritarian leaders in CIS countries					✓
	Documents show Allies left POWs starving in World War II					✓
	Paintball competition takes place in Vitebsk					✓
	Reader recalls his team of colleagues and a trip to Moscow					✓
	Belarusian TV channel launches new show based on Russian one					✓
	Viruses cause tiredness					✓
	Man from Madagascar marries Russian woman and becomes priest					✓
	Women gets back a bag she left on a Russian train					✓
	Interview with descendent of Trubetskoy family					✓
Week	Story	Ob.	BelG.	SN P.	BiR	AiF-B
4-8 October	Lukashenko gives news conference to Russian media	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Medvedev posts video blog about Belarus	✓		✓		
	Things people are talking about: Moscow mayor etc.	✓			✓	
	TV debate expected in Belarusian election campaign	✓				
	Interview with Belarusian gymnast who won medal in Moscow	✓				
	Belarusian fashion week takes place; Russian designer visits	✓				
	Interview with Russian pop singers	✓				
	Belarus struggles to find money for wage rises	✓				
	Feature on 'transhumanism'	✓				
	Feature on cryonics	✓				
	Russian TV series not filmed in Minsk and other showbiz news	✓				
Russian musician gets married	✓					

Minsk construction projects in doubt after Moscow mayor sacked		✓			
Comment on dismissal of Moscow mayor Luzhkov		✓		✓	✓
Comment on Belarusian election campaign		✓			
Comment about nationalist opposition in Belarus		✓			
Belarus complains about WTO rules		✓			
Russian retailer wants stores in Belarus and other business news		✓			
Russia cuts import duty on certain vehicles		✓			
Russia nears completion of Baltic pipeline		✓			
Comment on Russia-Belarus media war		✓	✓	✓	
Feature about motor racing		✓			
Advice on choosing motor oil		✓			
Moscow organ duet performs in Minsk		✓			
Book reviews (including book about Russian history)		✓			
Interview with Belarusian presidential candidate Neklyayev			✓		
Belarusian poet comments on wealth and Moscow mayor Luzhkov			✓		
Interview with Belarusian presidential candidate Mikhalevich			✓		
Lukashenko rejects rumours of currency devaluation			✓	✓	
2011 is full of economic uncertainty			✓		
Belarusian mushrooms are in demand after wildfires			✓		
Rights activists invited to accompany conscripts in Russia			✓		
Interview with acupuncture practitioner			✓		
Soviet-era actor recalled by his friend			✓		
Moscow is top destination for Belarusian exports				✓	
Belarusian transport congress to open soon				✓	
Gazprom names 2011 gas price for Belarus				✓	

	Russian car industry rules could cause Customs Union tension				✓	
	Belarusian presidential candidates on ties with EU, Russia				✓	
	Russia, Kazakhstan opt to conduct separate talks with WTO				✓	
	Protests take place across Europe				✓	
	Germany now dominates Europe				✓	
	Quotes of the week (from Russian politicians)					✓
	Russia cuts teachers and their pay in rural areas					✓
	Oligarchs share similar facial features					✓
	Interview with Belarusian theatre director					✓
	Interview with Russian TV actor					✓
	Feature on Russian poet Sergey Yesenin					✓
	Russian ballet visits Minsk					✓
	Feature on possible Russian location of lost gold					✓
Week	Story					
1-5 November	EU offers Minsk money in exchange for fair elections	✓				
	Things people are talking about: Chernomyrdin dies, etc.	✓				
	Discoveries of fake Russian roubles increase in Belarus	✓				
	Interview with Russian-born composer	✓				
	Russian actor marks 50 th birthday	✓				
	Magazine publishes erotic photos of Russian spy	✓				
	Russian Communist leader meets Lukashenko		✓			
	Russian-Belarusian border to get 11 checkpoints		✓			
	Tax amnesty proposed in Belarus		✓			
	Interview with Russian former military intelligence colonel		✓			
	Lukashenko asks Venezuela for oil discount		✓			
	Belarus wants to join WTO as part of Customs Union		✓			

Russia and Ukraine initial deal on oil transit		✓			
Belarus plans to borrow money from Russia and EU		✓		✓	
Belarusian ministry answers questions from <i>BelGazeta</i>		✓			
International audit firm issues warning about Belarusian statistics		✓			
Comment calls for economic reform in Belarus		✓			
Interview with Belarusian presidential candidate Romanchuk		✓			
Belarus introduces new theatre prize		✓			
Interview with Ukrainian band		✓			
Book reviews (including book about Belarusian history)		✓			
Comment about greedy officials (mentions Luzhkov)			✓		
Lithuanian newspaper publishes interview with Lukashenko			✓		
Comment on changes in Belarus and ties with Russia			✓		
Water from Lake Baykal helps against hangovers and other news			✓		
Belarusian presidential candidate Neklyayev on foreign policy			✓		
Experts list public services which could be cut to economize			✓		
Deal on Single Economic Space may be signed in November				✓	
Comment on the Union State of Russia and Belarus				✓	
Report on impact of Chinese loans and investment in Belarus				✓	
Customs Union marks its first 100 days of operation				✓	
Eastern Partnership projects announced in Sofia				✓	
Customs Union to unify train cargo tariffs				✓	
Customs Union conference reveals members' different approaches				✓	
Customs Union impacts on vehicle transit fees				✓	
Belarusian logistics firm offers services				✓	
Russia fights financial crime and other business news				✓	

Interview with Belarusian film director				✓	
Minsk international film festival to take place soon				✓	
Quotes of the week (from Russian politicians)					✓
Interview with actor					✓
Russian middle class disappointed with political system					✓
Dissenters March takes place in Moscow and other news in brief					✓
Businessman explains success of Vietnam					✓
Russian political figure comments on MPs' sex habits					✓
Belarusian bank has great prospects					✓
Belarusian town is nominated for cultural capital of the CIS					✓
Russia proposes draft stem-cell programme					✓
Minsk businessman says legendary ' <i>bogatyř</i> ' was Belarusian					✓

REFERENCES

List of interviewees

Interviewee number	Name, position / description (if anonymized)	Date of interview
Interviewee 1	Representative (anonymous) of <i>Russkiy Mir's</i> directorate for regional programmes, Russia	10 March 2011
Interviewee 2	Tatyana Mityusova, head of the project to publish <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda</i> abroad, Russia	15 February 2011
Interviewee 3	Igor Nikiforov, editor for work with <i>Argumenty i Fakty</i> regional supplements, Russia	22 March 2011
Interviewee 4	Sergey Kalinin, deputy editor for work with <i>Argumenty i Fakty</i> regional supplements, Russia	22 March 2011
Interviewee 5	Vladimir Mamontov, president of the editorial office of <i>Izvestiya</i> , Russia	23 March 2011
Interviewee 6	Pavel Filenkov, commercial director of the Kommersant publishing house, Russia	12 April 2011
Interviewee 7	Ashot Yegisheyevich Dzhazoyan, secretary-general of the International Confederation of Journalist Unions (<i>Mezhdunarodnaya Konfederatsiya Zhurnalisticheskikh Soyuzov</i>), Russia	16 February 2011

Interviewee 8	Alan Kasayev, director of the main directorate for CIS and Baltic states at RIA Novosti, Russia	17 February 2011
Interviewee 9	Andrey Bysritskiy, deputy director-general of VGTRK in charge of <i>Golos Rossii</i> radio, Russia	27 February 2011
Interviewee 10	Veniamin Trubachev, Moscow correspondent at <i>Inter</i> , Ukraine	14 September 2011
Interviewee 11	Igor Zolotarevskiy, director of the information broadcasting department at <i>Inter</i> , Ukraine	28 September 2011
Interviewee 12	Vadim Mekertychev, deputy director of the information broadcasting department at <i>Inter</i> , Ukraine	28 September 2011
Interviewee 13	Lera Sorochan, chief editor of morning news bulletins at <i>Inter</i> , Ukraine	28 September 2011
Interviewee 14	Olga Musafirova, former special correspondent at <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine</i> , Ukraine	27 September 2011
Interviewee 15	Igor Kozlov, international news columnist at <i>Fakty i Kommentarii</i> , Ukraine	3 October 2011
Interviewee 16	Irina Kotsina, editor of the politics section at <i>Fakty i Kommentarii</i> , Ukraine	3 October 2011

Interviewee 17	Irina Kovalchuk, editor of international news at <i>Segodnya</i> , Ukraine	30 September 2011
Interviewee 18	Oles Buzina, columnist at <i>Segodnya</i> , Ukraine	30 September 2011
Interviewee 19	Yuriy Raykhel, journalist at <i>Den</i> , Ukraine	27 September 2011
Interviewee 20	Vyacheslav Stareychenko, first deputy editor-in-chief at <i>Izvestiya v Ukraine</i> , Ukraine	4 October 2011
Interviewee 21	Andrey Yukhimenko, deputy editor at <i>Kommersant-Ukraina</i> , Ukraine	4 October 2011
Interviewee 22	Svetlana Gollands, deputy editor-in-chief at <i>Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine</i>	29 September 2011
Interviewee 23	Oleksiy (Aleksey) Kaftan, editor of the international politics section at <i>Kommentarii</i> , Ukraine	3 October 2011
Interviewee 24	Sergey Kovtunenکو, columnist at <i>Stolichnyye Novosti</i> , Ukraine	4 October 2011
Interviewee 25	Volodymyr (Vladimir) Kravchenko, political columnist at <i>Zerkalo Nedeli</i> , Ukraine	5 October 2011
Interviewee 26	Antonina Tsimbalyuk, Moscow correspondent at <i>2000</i> , Ukraine	15 September 2011

Interviewee 27	Roman Tsimbalyuk, head of the Moscow bureau of UNIAN news agency, Ukraine	15 September 2011
Interviewee 28	Viktoriya Syumar, managing director of the Institute of Mass Information, Ukraine	21 December 2011
Interviewee 29	Irina Yakovleva, special correspondent at <i>Belarus 1</i> , Belarus	10 October 2012
Interviewee 30	Ruslan Poddubskiy, head of the news department at <i>ONT</i> , Belarus	22 October 2012
Interviewee 31	Olga Yakimenko, programmes director at <i>ONT</i> , Belarus	22 October 2012
Interviewee 32	Igor Poznyak, director of the directorate of news broadcasting at <i>STV</i> , Belarus	24 October 2012
Interviewee 33	Viktor Dudko, first deputy director of <i>STV</i> responsible for <i>RTR-Belarus</i> , Belarus	24 October 2012
Interviewee 34	Sergey Bulatskiy, main director at <i>NTV-Belarus</i> , Belarus	18 October 2012
Interviewee 35	Anonymous journalist with experience working at <i>Sovetskaya Belorussiya</i> , Belarus	15 October 2012
Interviewee 36	Vladimir Bibikov, journalist at <i>Sovetskaya Belorussiya</i> and its <i>Soyuz</i> insert, Belarus	25 October 2012

Interviewee 37	Galina Malishevskaya, general director of BelKP Press (publisher of <i>Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii</i>), Belarus	27 October 2012
Interviewee 38	Margarita Delorentis Polezhayeva, deputy editor-in-chief at <i>Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii</i> , Belarus	16 October 2012
Interviewee 39	Tatyana Zamirovskaya, freelance correspondent and music columnist at <i>BelGazeta</i> , Belarus	19 October 2012
Interviewee 40	Vasilij Zdanyuk, editor-in-chief at <i>Svobodnyye Novosti Plyus</i> , Belarus	12 October 2012
Interviewee 41	Valeriy Karbalevich, columnist at <i>Svobodnyye Novosti Plyus</i> , Belarus	17 October 2012
Interviewee 42	Vyacheslav Khodosovskiy, editor-in-chief at <i>Belorusy i Rynok</i> , Belarus	24 October 2012
Interviewee 43	Olga Tarasevich, deputy editor-in-chief at <i>Obozrevatel</i> , Belarus	22 October 2012
Interviewee 44	Viktor Malishevskiy, freelance journalist, blogger and media consultant, Belarus	19 October 2012

Interviewee 45	Eduard Melnikov, professor at the European Humanities University, producer at <i>Belsat</i> and member of the council of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAZh), Belarus	9 October 2012
Interviewee 46	Yanina Melnikova, head of <i>mediakritika.by</i> and member of the council of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAZh), Belarus	15 October 2012

List of TV news bulletins and newspapers used in content analysis

Ukraine

Argumenty i Fakty v Ukraine

Den

Fakty i Kommentarii

Izvestiya v Ukraine

Kommentarii

Kommersant-Ukraina

Komsomolskaya Pravda v Ukraine

Podrobnosti on Inter

Segodnya

Sobytiya on TRK Ukraina

Stolichnyye Novosti

Vremya on Pervyy Kanal

Zerkalo Nedeli

2000

Belarus

Argumenty i Fakty v Belorussii

BelGazeta

Belorusy i Rynok

Komsomolskaya Pravda v Belorussii

Nashi Novosti on ONT

Obozrevatel

Panorama on Belarus 1

Segodnya on NTV-Belarus

Sovetskaya Belorussiya

Svobodnyye Novosti Plyus

Vesti on RTR-Belarus

Vremya on ONT

24 Chasa on STV

Laws, treaties, international agreements and other legal documents

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