



Università  
Ca' Foscari  
Venezia

Master's Degree  
in Comparative International Relations

Final Thesis

**Comparative analysis of media  
coverage of incorporation of Crimea  
by American and Russian media:  
between Russia and the West**

**Supervisor**

Prof. Duccio Basosi

**Assistant supervisor**

Prof. Stefano Petrunaro

**Graduand**

Yana Kondratova  
875263

**Academic Year**

2019 / 2020

## Abstract

*L'adesione della Crimea alla Russia nel 2014 ha suscitato accese polemiche a tutti i livelli della comunità internazionale, e particolarmente tra gli scienziati degli studi internazionali. Anzitutto, il caso della Crimea rappresenta l'interesse particolare dal punto di vista del diritto internazionale: le opinioni sono divise tra quelli che considerano l'adesione della Crimea un'annessione da parte della Russia e di conseguenza una severa violazione del diritto internazionale, e quelli che suppongono che nel marzo del 2014 la Crimea aveva esercitato un legittimo diritto di autodeterminazione attraverso un referendum mentre la seguente adesione alla Russia viene definita come secessione. Un altro motivo per cui la crisi in Crimea interessa gli specialisti delle relazioni internazionali è che l'adesione della Crimea alla Russia in effetti ha riportato la Russia e l'Occidente alle controversie che in molti aspetti ricordano la Guerra fredda del XX secolo. Una delle caratteristiche principali della ripresa competizione è la presenza di retorica ostile e la cosiddetta "contro-propaganda" nei media.*

*Questa tesi analizza come la crisi in Crimea è stata presentata nei media russi e in quelli americani nel contesto dello sviluppo delle relazioni tra la Russia e l'Occidente. I mezzi di informazione di massa politici svolgono le funzioni importanti in quanto essi hanno a disposizione degli strumenti per dirigere il modo di pensare delle larghe masse popolari. In questo modo i media diventano uno strumento efficace di propaganda. L'analisi della retorica e del linguaggio usati nei media aiuta ad interpretare meglio l'opinione pubblica promossa in vari paesi. Inoltre, nell'era digitale di oggi il ruolo dei media politici è diventato ancora più consolidato visto che essi possono essere consultati in qualsiasi posto del mondo a condizione che ci sia l'accesso all'internet.*

*Benché i media debbano servire come le fonti di informazione oggettive ed imparziali, in realtà i media politici sempre rappresentano interessi di certi cerchi politici ed economici, mentre i lettori non sempre hanno le conoscenze necessarie per individuare quali interessi sono promossi e non sempre possono distinguere i fatti oggettivi dalla propaganda. Allo stesso tempo la propaganda e il fenomeno della "news coverage" pregiudiziale non significano la diffusione delle informazioni falsi. Perciò il primo capitolo spiega alcuni termini fondamentali per questa tesi così come i media politici, la propaganda, pregiudizi nei media, i fenomeni delle "fake news" e guerre di*

*informazione; provvede le teorie principali dei media e alcuni strumenti teorici necessari per l'analisi ulteriore.*

*Oltretutto, per poter analizzare lo stato attuale dei media russi e quelli americani, è fondamentale anche comprendere alcune peculiarità del contesto storico e culturale dello sviluppo di stampa e libertà di stampa in due paesi. Dunque, nel primo capitolo viene brevemente ripassata la storia del giornalismo politico negli USA e nella Russia. In fine, si è stato concluso che il sistema politico-sociale di un paese ha un grande impatto sullo sviluppo del giornalismo politico: gli USA essendo una democrazia liberale, hanno stabilito il principio di libertà di stampa ancora nel secolo XVIII e tutto il processo di sviluppo del giornalismo politico americano era legato principalmente alle ragioni economiche e finanziarie; mentre lo stesso processo in Russia avveniva in linea con l'ideologia e sotto lo stretto controllo di stato, il che spiega che persino oggi il governo conduce la politica rigida sui media e ci sono tanti media di stato nella Russia che promuovono la posizione ufficiale.*

*Il secondo e il terzo capitolo si focalizzano esclusivamente su come la crisi in Crimea è stata riportata dai media russi e quelli americani con lo scopo di individuare se ci sono presenti dei segnali di contro-propaganda e se effettivamente la Russia e l'Occidente in un certo senso sono tornati alla rivalità che assomiglia la Guerra fredda. Per l'analisi comparata sono state scelte la rivista americana *The New York Times* e l'agenzia di stampa russa *RIA Novosti*. Anche se le due fonti non sono pienamente comparabili perché *The New York Times* è una rivista indipendente mentre la *RIA Novosti* è un'agenzia di stampa statale, tutte le due fonti sono considerate affidabili, hanno un grande numero di lettori e in larga misura condividono le posizioni ufficiali dei paesi di loro appartenenza, ciò ha permesso di fare delle conclusioni sulle differenze principali dei punti di vista sulla crisi in Crimea da parte della Russia e dell'Occidente.*

*La crisi in Crimea fa parte del conflitto in Ucraina del 2013-2014, ma nell'ambito di questa tesi ove possibile viene trattata separatamente. Tuttavia, gli eventi in Crimea del 2014 non sarebbero mai accaduti senza la crisi in Ucraina scoppiata a novembre del 2013. Per questo motivo, il secondo capitolo prima analizza la "news coverage" della fase latente del conflitto in Ucraina (ossia la decisione del presidente Yanukovych di rinunciare all'accordo di associazione tra l'Ucraina e l'UE a favore di una partnership più stretta con la Russia), per cogliere i sentimenti dei due media alla vigilia del conflitto e poi si passa all'analisi delle notizie sulla fase iniziale del tumulto in Crimea di febbraio*

*del 2014. Il terzo capitolo, invece, si focalizza sugli eventi in Crimea di marzo del 2014, la cui culminazione è stata l'eventuale adesione della Crimea alla Russia.*

*Nel corso di questa tesi si è stato concluso che entrambi i media analizzati hanno usato le tecniche di contro-propaganda e il linguaggio pregiudiziale nei confronti dei rispettivi paesi creando un'immagine negativa di "avversario" tra il loro pubblico. The New York Times essendo una rivista indipendente, utilizza più spesso un linguaggio informale, pubblica tanti articoli di opinione e ampiamente utilizza il cosiddetto "pregiudizio di affermazione". The New York Times apertamente ha reso la Russia responsabile per la crisi in Crimea e ha accusato il presidente russo Vladimir Putin di violazione del diritto internazionale ancora a novembre del 2013 prima che la Russia effettivamente adottasse qualsiasi misura al riguardo, il che conferma l'ipotesi che questa rivista americana non era imparziale nei confronti della Russia nella crisi in Crimea. La RIA Novosti, invece, rimane quasi sempre impersonale e utilizza il linguaggio formale, ciò rende difficile tracciare gli eventuali segnali di contro-propaganda negli articoli. Però, si è emerso che la RIA Novosti ha ampiamente utilizzato un altro tipo di pregiudizio dei media, ossia il "pregiudizio di visibilità", attirando l'attenzione del pubblico solo ai fatti che adattino all'ambito della posizione ufficiale della Russia. L'agenzia di stampa si è astenuta dalla critica aperta verso l'Occidente, sebbene abbia usato i "pregiudizi di affermazione" verso i paesi occidentali nelle citazioni di esperti e ufficiali pubblici.*

*Malgrado entrambi i media non possano essere considerati imparziali, è poco probabile che ci sia la guerra di informazione tra la Russia e gli USA. Riferendo in merito alla situazione in Crimea del 2014, entrambe le fonti hanno pubblicato essenzialmente le informazioni affidabili che in larga misura non contraddicono una all'altra. I due media, The New York Times e la RIA Novosti, semplicemente si sono focalizzati su diversi aspetti e argomenti della situazione, giustificando la propria opinione.*

*La conclusione di questa tesi afferma che la contro-propaganda e i pregiudizi nelle notizie politiche non sono sorprendenti nella situazione di rivalità continua tra la Russia e l'Occidente, ed inoltre fanno parte della strategia per "sconfiggere il nemico". Infatti, la Russia e l'Occidente percepiscono a vicenda come i rivali, mentre i media attivamente mantengono e promuovono questa visione tra i propri lettori. Tutto ciò allontana le parti dal compromesso ed impedisce ad utilizzare il potenziale congiunto per combattere le sfide globali e raggiungere la comprensione reciproca maggiore.*

## Table of contents

Introduction .....	5
Chapter I. Political mass media and freedom of expression in the USA and in Russia .	13
1. Mass media: functions, theories and its role in politics.....	13
2. The principle of freedom of expression and biased news coverage. The phenomena of fake news and information warfare .....	23
3. Establishment of political journalism and freedom of expression in the USA ...	35
4. Establishment of political journalism and freedom of expression in Russia.....	40
5. Conclusions on freedom of expression in the American and Russian mass media in the digital era .....	47
Chapter II. Media coverage of escalation of the Ukrainian crisis as a perspective for the analysis of changing relationships between Russia and the USA .....	52
1. News coverage of the failure of the Association agreement between the EU and Ukraine in the <i>New York Times</i> .....	52
2. The image of Russia in the <i>New York Times</i> on the brink of the Ukrainian crisis ...	59
3. News framing of the Association agreement between Ukraine and the EU in <i>RIA Novosti</i> .....	62
4. News coverage of the events in Crimea of the end of February 2014 by the <i>New York Times</i> .....	68
5. News coverage of the events in Crimea of the end of February 2014 by <i>RIA Novosti</i> .....	74
Chapter III. Incorporation of Crimea into Russia in the Russian and American mass media .....	83
1. The <i>New York Times</i> ' coverage of the strengthening of military presence in Crimea at the beginning of March 2014 and of the attitudes of the Crimean residents to it .....	83
2. <i>RIA Novosti</i> explains the Russian official position and the strengthening of the Russian military in Crimea.....	88
3. The <i>New York Times</i> reporting on the reactions of the world leaders to the Russian actions in Crimea .....	94
4. Reactions of the American and European leaders reported by <i>RIA Novosti</i> .....	98
5. News coverage of the referendum in Crimea by the <i>New York Times</i> .....	102
6. News coverage of the referendum in Crimea by <i>RIA Novosti</i> .....	107
Conclusion.....	114
Appendix 1. Mechanism of media information distortion .....	120
Bibliography .....	121

## Introduction

On 18 March 2014, two days after a contested referendum had been held in Crimea on whether to secede from Ukraine, Russia signed an agreement on the accession of Crimea into the Russian Federation as its constituent entity. This was preceded by almost four months of political crisis in Ukraine. A contradictory Association agreement that was supposed to be signed between Ukraine and the EU at the end of November 2013, led to a division between those who wanted Ukraine to be “a part of Europe” and those who, instead, supported strengthening of political relations with Russia, causing strong separatist movements and violent clashes throughout the country.<sup>1</sup> Tensions between Russia, Ukraine, and Europe did not arouse recently, and the Ukrainian crisis with the incorporation of Crimea into Russia became just a catalyst of an open confrontation.

The Russian actions caused heated discussions on all levels of the international community – among the world leaders, politicians, political scientists, business elites, ordinary citizens, and in the media. Even today, seven years after the events, it remains one of the most delicate and debated issues of modern international politics and international law. The essence of the dispute is simple: was it a severe violation of the fundamental principles of international law or a legitimate exercise of the right to self-determination?

On 27 March 2014, the UN General assembly adopted Resolution 68/262 on the Territorial integrity of Ukraine.<sup>2</sup> The resolution begins with the reference to Article 2 of the UN Charter on “refraining from threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State”, the Declaration on Principles of International Law of 1970, Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe of 1975 on “friendly relations and cooperation among states” and the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation of 31 May 1997 and states that the referendum held in Crimea on 16 March 2014 was not authorized by Ukraine and consequently had no validity. The Resolution called on all States and international organizations “not to recognize any alteration of the status of the

---

<sup>1</sup> “Ukraine: timeline of events”, *European Parliament Official website*, 29.04.2014, URL: [Ukraine: timeline of events | News | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20140429IPR00001) (accessed 23.03.2021).

<sup>2</sup> “Resolution 68/262 adopted by the General Assembly on 27 March 2014 on Territorial integrity of Ukraine”, *General Assembly of the United Nations*, 1.4.2014, URL: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/68/262> (accessed 18.03.21).

Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol”<sup>3</sup>. One hundred member-states of the United Nations supported the resolution, eleven members voted against, and fifty-eight abstained, with twenty-four members being absent. Those who voted in favour defined those events as either illegal annexation of Crimea, Russian aggression, or Russian occupation of Crimea. Those who abstained, for example, China and India, were explaining that the resolution does not take into consideration the historical context<sup>4</sup> and does not facilitate the crisis settlement but only delays a peaceful resolution. The UN members that voted against, which are Armenia, Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Nicaragua, North Korea, Russia, Sudan, Syria, Venezuela, Zimbabwe, were sharing the official position of Russia, claiming that Crimean people expressed their free will to join Russia through a democratic means - the referendum - and exercised their legitimate right for self-determination. In other words, there are two opinions: one side defines the events in Crimea of March 2014 an annexation, the other calls it a secession.

The majority of the western countries with the USA and other NATO-members in the first place, calls the events as an annexation. According to the norms of international law, annexation is a “violent accession of the determined territory by a state through occupation, usually with the use of military force”.<sup>5</sup> In such a way, annexation

---

<sup>3</sup> “General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region”, *The UN meeting coverages and press releases*, 27.03.2014, URL: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ga11493.doc.htm> (accessed 16.03.21).

<sup>4</sup> It is claimed that Russia and Crimea have long-standing cultural, economic, and political ties. Yet in 988 Rus’ Grand Prince Vladimir was baptized in the ancient city of Chersoneses (on the south-west coast of Crimea, in such a way launching a long process of Christianisation of Rus’, and even today Orthodox Christianity is a prevailing religion in Russia. Since 1783 Crimea was an integral part of the Russian Empire and then the USSR. In 1954 the Soviet leader Khrushchev formally transferred the Crimean administrative entity from the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic to the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, with both republics making part of the USSR. The reasons for this decision remain unclear. According to one of the versions, the transfer of Crimea was a “gift” on the occasion of the 300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Pereyaslav. After the dissolution of the USSR, Crimea remained a part of Ukraine with the status of an autonomous republic. Crimea still was of great strategic importance for Russia, providing it with access to the Black Sea. Under the agreement with Ukraine of 1994, Russia had there its naval military base. See: P.R. Magosci, *The Blessed Land: Crimea and the Crimean Tatars*, Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014; O. Figes, *The Crimean War: A History*, New York: Picador, 2010; M. Kozelsky, *Christianizing in the Russian Empire and Beyond*, De Kalb, IL.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010; V. Diulichiev, *Крым: история в очерках – XX век [Crimea: a history in the essays – the XX century]*, Simferopol, 2006; R. Grigo Suny, *The Soviet experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.

<sup>5</sup> See R. Hofmann, “Annexation”, *Oxford Public International Law*, 2020, URL: [Oxford Public International Law: Annexation \(ouplaw.com\)](https://www.oxplaw.com/) (accessed 16.03.21).

presupposes a military attack against a sovereign state, which empowers the attacked state to use force as a defense mean and to ask third countries for support. Military attack violates the principle of non-use of force in inter-state relations, and consequently, is a violation of international law. Western states argue that Russia deployed its military forces in Crimea and subsequently annexed the Crimean Peninsula violating the territorial integrity of Ukraine.

According to the opposite view, which is primarily represented by Russia and some countries that support it, the events in Crimea of March 2014 are defined as a secession. In international law, secession is a separation of determined territories from a state with the aim to create a new sovereign state or to join another sovereign state. It is considered legitimate when at least some conditions are respected, namely if the rights of a certain group cannot be fully implemented or are subjected to discrimination, when the territory was illegally incorporated into the state in the past or the group has a “valid claim on the territory”, the group unanimously agrees upon the separation in a plebiscite, possesses the statehood and potentially can be recognized by third states.<sup>6</sup> After the dismissal of President Yanukovych in Kiev in February 2014, a new government prohibited the use of the Russian language as the second state language in Ukraine, which was considered as discrimination of the Russian-speaking population and caused vast separatist movements in the pro-Russian Eastern regions of Ukraine and in Crimea, and consequently, it can be argued that the Crimeans did have a valid claim for the secession. Moreover, it is argued that Crimea held a referendum, which is a democratic means to express people’s free will, and the overwhelming majority of the electorate voted to secede from Ukraine. Russia admitted the fact that it had strengthened its military forces in Crimea in order to provide security of its compatriots on the territory after the change in government in Kiev (that Russia considered a state coup) and to create appropriate conditions for a secure referendum but the move did not violate the agreement with Ukraine on the Russian military base on the peninsula. After the referendum’s results, the Crimean local authorities declared the independence of Crimea, and only after that, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea made an official appeal to the Russian Federation to accept Crimea as its constituent entity.

---

<sup>6</sup> C. Welman, “The morality of secession”, in D. Harrison Doyle (ed), *Secession as an International Phenomenon: From America's Civil War to Contemporary Separatist Movements*, Athens, the University of Georgia press, 2010, pp. 19-36.



The concern, that some experts raise, is that the accession of Crimea occurred without casualties and consequently does not fully correspond to the definition of annexation. In April 2014, Reinhard Merkel, a German lawyer and a professor of Philosophy of law, wrote an interesting article on this respect in the newspaper “*Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*”.<sup>7</sup> In contrast to most of the European experts, he concluded that the Crimean separation from Ukraine and the referendum respected the norms of international law. The secession, as well as the referendum, violated the Ukrainian constitution, but this was not an issue of international law. The Ukrainian constitution has no jurisdiction over the territory of the Russian Federation, and Russia could agree to incorporate Crimea. The author noted that the Russian military presence outside its borders was a violation of international law, but this fact does not render the secession invalid, albeit it gives other states the right to take respective measures against Russia, for instance, such as sanctions. In other words, from the point of view of international law and the legitimacy of the above-mentioned events, different arguments can be applied in support of one or another party, and the dispute, probably, cannot be univocally solved. Moreover, some authors even note that the principle of territorial integrity and the right to self-determination, in general, contradict each other.<sup>8</sup> That is why this thesis will not judge on the legitimacy of those events.

The Crimean case is of particular scientific interest not only from the point of view of international law. Within the framework of this thesis, the Crimean crisis will be dealt with in a broader view in the context of relations between Russia and the West. The incorporation of Crimea into Russia shook the post-Cold War international order and resulted in a dramatic deterioration of relations between Russia and the West up to the formal isolation of Russia from the latter.<sup>9</sup> Such reconfigured system of relations can be compared to the confrontation during the Cold War.<sup>10</sup> Many even believe that with this

---

<sup>7</sup> R. Merkel, “Kühle Ironie der Geschichte”, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 08.04.2014, URL: [Die Krim und das Völkerrecht: Kühle Ironie der Geschichte - Debatten - FAZ](#) (accessed 16.03.21).

<sup>8</sup> See M. Janis, J. Noyes, *International Law. Cases and commentary*, 3rd ed. American casebook series, Thomson West, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> The majority of the UN members did not recognize Crimea as part of Russia and some of them imposed political and economic sanctions against Russia, including suspension of the Russian membership in the G8 and the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, visa restrictions, assets’ freezing, suspension of cooperation between certain state and private companies with the Russian ones, etc.

<sup>10</sup> This comparison, however, can be made only to a certain extent as despite tensions over Ukraine economic and political ties between Russia and the West were not suspended completely, and the sides continued to cooperate on various issues. See T. Casier, “Not on

move Russia attempted to outplay the results of the dissolution of the USSR, and that the dispute goes beyond the Ukrainian crisis. The two Russian historians of Crimea N.Starikov and D.Belyaev stress that Russia went out of the Cold War a fragmented and weakened state, while returning of Crimea means Russia's coming back to the great world politics and they argue that the EU and US sanctions are nothing other than the recognition of this fact.<sup>11</sup>

There are several features that resemble the confrontation of the Cold War. One of the most obvious is the division of the world into blocks. This time it is not based on the ideology, but instead, the frontline lays between those who accused Russia of violation of international law claiming that Russia should be put under economic and political pressure and those who supported Russia, recognizing incorporation of Crimea and continuing cooperating with Russia on a wide range of issues. Another feature of the renewed confrontation<sup>12</sup> between Russia and the West, that is key concept for this thesis, is that both sides started mutual "anti-propaganda", creating the image of the other side as "enemy" and discrediting the other side while trying to justify their own actions and official positions.

What strikes most is that the sensation of a new "Iron Curtain"<sup>13</sup> is present even on the level of common people. It is difficult to deny that the mass media played a major role in creating this perception. Therefore, the main goal of this thesis is to identify the differences in the news coverage of the crisis in Crimea by Russian and American media and to understand to what extent the hypothesis about the mutual anti-propaganda is viable. As far as this thesis deals with the Ukrainian crisis in the context of the legacy of the Cold War, the decision to compare Russian and American media is explained by the fact that Russia and the USA were the major players of the "game".

The linguistic analysis applied to social and political studies is not a new approach. Scholars of political science often use this method to analyze how discourse transforms

---

speaking terms, but business as usual: the ambiguous coexistence of conflict and cooperation in EU–Russia relations", *East European Politics*, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> N. Starikov, D. Belyaev, "Россия. Крым. История. [Russia. Crimea. History.]", СПб.: Питер, 2018, p.113.

<sup>12</sup> Relations between Russia and Western countries, probably, have never been easy and periods of a relative thaw were always changed with another round of confrontation. The Ukrainian crisis triggered the most severe tensions since the dissolution of the USSR.

<sup>13</sup> "The Sinews of Peace ('Iron Curtain Speech' of Churchill)", *Westminster College*, Fulton, Missouri, March 5, 1946, URL: [The Sinews of Peace \('Iron Curtain Speech'\) - The International Churchill Society \(winstonchurchill.org\)](http://www.winstonchurchill.org) (accessed 05.12.2020).

into practice, for example, through analysis of primary sources, official documents, or speeches of politicians.<sup>14</sup> Comparison of the news coverage, instead, can be interpreted in terms of the public opinion promoted in wide masses. In a new reality of a globalized world, mass media became a new actor of the world political processes as the Internet rendered them cross-border.

Nowadays, in the digital era, the role of mass media in politics is strong, particularly, in countries with no effective freedom of the press. That is why analyzing the news coverage, this work takes into consideration many aspects, such as freedom of expression in the two countries, mass media's political affiliation, history of political journalism in respective countries, and state policies towards the mass media in general. The first chapter of this thesis focuses on the mass media functions in politics and the current state of political journalism in Russia and the USA, providing theoretical instruments for further analysis.

For the news coverage comparison, I chose the *New York Times* as the example of the US news coverage of the incorporation of Crimea and *RIA Novosti* news agency as the example of Russian news coverage. The choice stems from the following factors: both sources daily report on a wide variety of issues from local news to international politics; both are among the largest news sources in the two countries with great outreach; both are considered pretty credible sources in respective countries even if sometimes they might be criticized by the readers; both can be easily accessed on the Internet and provide access to the archives of news with good navigation systems to sort out news (articles can be ranged by dates, sections, and hashtags). I was considering many other sources like the *Washington Post* and *Associated Press* in the USA or *ITAR-TASS* in Russia, but the ultimate decision was made primarily due to the user-friendly searching mechanisms as nowadays most of the people read news online and the fact that both sources to a major extent represent official positions of the two respective countries, allowing to make conclusions on the differences in views on the crisis in Crimea between Russia and the West.

The *New York Times* is an independent daily magazine, and at the time it was largely loyal to the Obama administration. It was founded in 1851 with a print circulation of 840,000 copies and more than 6 million subscribers. It got 130 Pulitzer Prizes – the

---

<sup>14</sup> I.B. Neumann, "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy", *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 31, 2002, pp. 627 – 651.

greatest number of prizes among the American media sources. Ad Fontes Inc., a company that ranks American news sources for bias and reliability, ranked it “neutral in terms of bias and as most reliable in terms of reliability”.<sup>15</sup> *RIA Novosti*, in turn, is one of the largest news agencies in the world, founded in 1929. It proclaims objectivity and freedom of political conjuncture as the main principles of its activity.<sup>16</sup> Still, *RIA Novosti* is a state-owned news agency as in 2013 it was transferred to governmental *Rossiia Segodnya* by the presidential decree,<sup>17</sup> and openly promotes the official state policy of Russia.

The second and the third chapters of this work deal with the news coverage of the crisis in Crimea by the American *New York Times* and Russian *RIA Novosti*, following the chronological order of the events. The incorporation of Crimea makes part of the Ukrainian crisis of 2013-2014, and if one asks why the conflict in Ukraine burst out at the end of 2013, the simplest answer would be that on 21 November 2013 Ukrainian President Yanukovich refused to sign the deal on the association with the EU in favor of the Eurasian Economic Union. The reasons for the conflict are more complicated in reality.<sup>18</sup> Nonetheless, precisely tensions over the association agreement triggered strong opposition among the Ukrainian population and led to violent clashes in Kiev, which then resulted in separatist movements in the Eastern regions of Donetsk and Luhansk and in Crimea, where the majority of the population was ethnic Russians. This thesis focuses on the events of February and March 2014 in Crimea, but since the incorporation would be impossible without the turmoil that gripped Ukraine some months before, the second chapter captures the sentiments in the mass media of the USA and Russia towards the latent stage of the Ukrainian crisis of the end of November 2013. For the aims of this thesis, we will omit the subsequent development of the situation in Ukraine and then move directly to the events in Crimea of February 2014. Continuing protests in Kiev made President Yanukovich flee, and a new pro-EU interim government was established. As

---

<sup>15</sup> “New York Times Bias and Reliability Overview”, *Ad Fontes Inc*, URL: <https://www.adfontesmedia.com/new-york-times-bias-and-reliability/> (accessed 11.12.2020).

<sup>16</sup> “История агентства МИА ‘Россия сегодня’ [History of the media group ‘Rossiya Segodnya’]”, *Rossiia Segodnya*, URL: [\(xn--c1acb12abdlkab1og.xn--p1ai\)](http://История_Агентства_|МИА_«Россия_сегодня»_(xn--c1acb12abdlkab1og.xn--p1ai)) (accessed 11.12.2020).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> See N. Rabotyazhev, E. Soloviyov, “Украинский кризис: между политикой идентичности и геополитикой [The Ukrainian crisis: between the identity policy and geopolitics]”, *Rossia i Novye gosudarstva Evrazii*, 3(36), 2017; L. Grinin, “Исторические и геополитические причины социально-политического кризиса на Украине [Historical and geopolitical reasons of social-political crisis in Ukraine]”, *Istoria e sovremennost*, 2(22), 2015.

will be detailed better in the chapters below, the dismissal of Viktor Yanukovich was perceived by many in Crimea as a coup and led to the radicalization of sentiments in the peninsula with an enhancement of the activity of the Russian public organizations and mobilization of a significant part of ethnic Russians in Crimea against the new leadership of Ukraine. On 26-27 February 2014, the main buildings of the Crimean local authorities were seized by unknown armed men, and the local government was dismissed. The new government of Crimea headed by the leader of the party “Russian Unity”, Sergey Aksyonov, declared non-recognition of the new leadership of Ukraine and on 1 March 2014, appealed to the leadership of Russia for “assistance in ensuring peace and tranquillity on the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea”.<sup>19</sup> The Federation Council of the Russian Federation satisfied the official appeal by President Putin for permission to use Russian troops on the territory of Ukraine to defend Russian civilians in Crimea. Finally, on 16 March 2014, Crimea held a referendum on secession from Ukraine to which the OSCE's and other international observers were invited (and many indeed came), and on 18 March 2014, the Russian authorities signed an accord on Crimea’s incorporation into Russia. The second chapter compares the news coverage of the events in Ukraine at the end of November when the Ukrainian conflict burst out and the events of February of 2014 in Crimea – the beginning of the active phase of the Crimean crisis. The third chapter focuses exclusively on the news coverage of the events in Crimea of March 2014, whose culmination was the formal incorporation of Crimea into Russia.

The conclusion to this thesis seeks to answer how the rhetoric of the two media sources towards the crisis in Crimea has changed since the end of November 2013 to the end of March 2014, what were the main differences in news coverage of the same events by American *New York Times* and Russian *RIA Novosti* and whether there can be found effective features of propaganda and bias towards Russia in the American media and towards the West in the Russian one.

---

<sup>19</sup> “Обращение Председателя Совета министров АРК Сергея Аксенова [The appeal of the head of the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea Sergey Aksyonov]”, *Official website of the Supreme Council of Crimea*, 1.03.2014, URL: [http://crimea.gov.ru/news/01\\_03\\_14](http://crimea.gov.ru/news/01_03_14) (accessed 9.02.2021).

## Chapter I. Political mass media and freedom of expression in the USA and in Russia

*“It sounds a dreadful thing to say, but these are things that don’t necessarily need to be true as long as they’re believed.”  
- Alexander Nix<sup>20</sup>*

### 1. Mass media: functions, theories and its role in politics

In this section, we should clarify some fundamental terms that are instrumental for this thesis. First, we should give a general definition of mass media, frame the meaning of this term that we will use within this research, define the functions of mass media and the role it plays in politics.

To start with, we should provide a general definition of the term “mass media”. The term covers a broad range of issues. Most of the academics have a common view on the mass media as “the means of communication such as printed press, radio, and television that reach large numbers of people in a short time”<sup>21</sup>. In other words, the mass media is mainly associated with technology. However, some authors associate the term with institutions that use those technologies to spread information among wide masses of people.<sup>22</sup> This definition is more suitable for the aims of this research as in this thesis, we will deal only with mass media that spread political information and political news, and we will consider them in the context of their impact on the society. At the same time, we will deal mainly with digital mass media. Given this preface hereafter the term mass media refers to the means of communication, with the digital ones in the first place, and to the institutions that use those means to spread political news among wide masses of people.

To analyze new mass media – the digital ones - first, we have to understand the main functioning principles of traditional mass communication. The term mass

---

<sup>20</sup> Quotation by ex-Cambridge Analytica CEO in Lapowsky, I. *Cambridge Analytica Execs Caught Discussing Extortion and Fake News*, Wired, 19 March 2018.

<sup>21</sup> The Oxford Lerner’s Dictionary. URL: <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/the-mass-media#:~:text=the%20mass%20media-,noun,influence%20large%20numbers%20of%20people> (Last accessed: 18.10.2020)

<sup>22</sup> See N. Luhmann, *The Reality of the Mass Media*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000.

communication widely used already at the beginning of the Renaissance,<sup>23</sup> immediately became an important political instrument, as it was capable to significantly influence people's way of thinking and in many aspects directed public opinion. In the XX century, this influence became even stronger amid the increase in literacy, in the number of mass media, and in its outreach. Monopolization in the sphere of mass communication intended as a concentration of control over the media in the hands of certain companies and business elites, pushed governments of more progressive countries to elaborate clear principles on the mass media as they used them to reach certain political goals. That is how appeared the necessity for a comprehensive understanding of mass media mechanisms.

First attempts to analyze mass media functioning were made in the mid-XX century. In 1948, Harold Lasswell, an American sociologist and psychologist who is famous for having elaborated a linear model of communication, also known as the "sender-receiver model", identified three main functions of mass communication: 1. surveillance (news coverage), 2. correlation (how choice and interpretation of news affect people's attitude to it) and 3. cultural transmission (educating norms, rules, and values).<sup>24</sup> Charles Wright, who also conducted a study on the sociology of mass communication, added entertainment as the fourth function.<sup>25</sup> This classification represents ideal functions of mass media that serve as a check on the government, but in practice they are not necessarily implemented.

The same year, in 1948, another American sociologist Robert K. Merton, together with Paul F. Lazarsfeld published a work "Mass communication, popular taste and organized social action"<sup>26</sup>, laying down the foundations for empirical research of mass communication. An original idea proposed by the authors is that the social functions of mass media could be latent or manifest. The first function they identified is status conferral on public issues, persons, and organizations. It means that news media can provide support to certain figures, informally legitimize or condemn certain policies and

---

<sup>23</sup> P.F. Lazarsfeld, R.K. Merton, "Mass communication, popular taste and organized social action", in Bryson L. *The communication of ideas*, Institute for Religious and Social Studies, New York, 1948, p.560

<sup>24</sup> H. Lasswell, "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society" in Lyman Bryson, ed., *The Communication of Ideas*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948.

<sup>25</sup> C.R. Wright, "Sociology of Mass Communications", *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 5, 1979, pp. 193-217.

<sup>26</sup> See P.F. Lazarsfeld, R.K. Merton, "Mass communication".

behaviours. The second function is the enforcement of social norms through public exposure. The third is a narcotizing dysfunction that means that instead of energizing the audience, mass media discourage organized action, serving certain interests. Merton urges to pay attention to the structure of mass media ownership and control: “Its salient characteristic stems from the fact that except for movies and books, it is not the magazine reader nor the radio listener nor, in large part, the reader of newspapers who supports the enterprise, but the advertiser”<sup>27</sup>. Among other social functions of mass media, Merton stresses social conformism, maintenance of social order and formation of popular taste that the author calls “propaganda for social objectives”. As we will see in the following pages, the mass media function of propaganda is of particular interest for this thesis as Russian and American mass media allegedly made use of this function covering the situation in Crimea of 2014. However, Merton notes that for propaganda to be efficient at least one of the three conditions should be respected: 1. Monopoly of mass media or absence of counter-propaganda (typical for authoritarian societies or during wartime); 2. Canalization of basic existing values of the society rather than creation of new values; 3. Propaganda combined with face-to-face contacts. Usually when mass media implement the function of propaganda more than one of these conditions is present.

The three authors formulated general functions that mass media might implement but did not mention the conditions and circumstances when certain mass media may opt for a certain strategy. It was done several years later, in 1956, when Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm conducted the first comparative analysis of mass media theories.<sup>28</sup> They link certain functions of media with different political systems and forms of government. Their work “Four Theories of the Press” remains the most cited among researchers in this field. The main conclusion was that different countries depending on their political systems could opt for different policies on mass media and imply different extent of the state control of it. The authors identified four normative theories of mass communication: 1. The authoritarian theory, 2. The libertarian theory - and two theories that derive from them – 3. The soviet communist theory and 4. The theory of Social responsibility. Each of the four theories corresponds to four different political systems.

---

<sup>27</sup> P.F. Lazarsfeld, R.K. Merton, “Mass communication”, p.566.

<sup>28</sup> See F. Siebert, T. Peterson, and W. Schramm, *Four theories of the press: the authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet communist concepts of what the press should be and do*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963.



The first theory, the Authoritarian theory of mass communication, is the oldest one. It appeared in late the Renaissance (XVI-XVII centuries), typical for monarchies, where the press was under the total control of the state and served the interests of the ruling classes. Within this theory, the press is subjected to preliminary censorship, journalists are not independent and any deviation from the official position is repressed. There is a monopoly right of state on mass media and truth is thought to be centered near national interests. Press functions are established from top-down. The theory describes mass media in dictator and repressive states and consequently is thought to be unapplicable to modern states. However, some non-authoritarian governments still imply certain elements of authoritarian theory in their mass media policies.<sup>29</sup>

From this theory of press derives the Soviet Communist theory. After the Revolution of 1917 Soviet mass communication was reformed and institutionalized in line with Marxism-Leninism. This theory describes mass communication in socialist countries. Since the working in the soviet view should own the power, mass media are under the control of the working-class organizations with the communist party in the first place. According to the Soviet ideology, its principles are out of the discussion and the criticism of government politics is prohibited. Being directly subjected to the public authorities, mass media implement an important positive function of socialization and promotion of the socialist ideology. There exists a determined model of the news coverage while personal interpretation of events is repressed. In other words, mass media according to a soviet communist theory of press are part of the state apparatus. Even if the USSR does not exist anymore, some characteristics of this theory are still applicable to the mass media in certain countries.<sup>30</sup>

The libertarian theory or the theory of free press routes in the European Enlightenment and arose as a counterweight to authoritarian theory. According to this theory, men are rational and able to discern between true and false evidence. Men are granted the right to search for the truth, which is not conceived anymore as a property of “few wise men”. Press is not an instrument of the government, but instead a check on state policies. Mass communication conceived as a free “marketplace” of information, is treated in compliance with the free market rules. Freedom of press is in a sense associated with private property on mass media and freedom from interference in the market.

---

<sup>29</sup> F. Siebert, T. Peterson, and W. Schramm, *Four theories*, pp. 9-38.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, pp.105-146.

However, free mass media still imply censorship, for instance, on slander, profanity, or false advertising.<sup>31</sup> Still today, this theory prevails in liberal societies. Freedom of press has been always considered the main characteristic of a liberal state, while freedom of speech is a useful instrument to express discontent struggling for other freedoms and rights. The debate on freedom of press still seems ambiguous. According to Pool de Sola, none of the liberal, legitimate governments would encourage freedom of press used to split the country and polarize the society.<sup>32</sup> An individual is granted a right to publish everything he or she wants but in compliance with other fundamental human rights. The debate on freedom of press and censorship is still underway, we will return to the issue later on.

In the 1940s arose the theory of social responsibility that represents a compromise between the necessity of governmental control of the media and freedom of press. Its emergence is attributed to the American Commission of Freedom of the Press of Chicago and Hutchins Commission. We will consider them more in detail in the third section of this chapter dedicated to the US mass media. The theory of mass media as a free market of information in a certain sense failed: small units of mass communication, representing different points of view cannot compete with big ones; consequently, big powerful units shaped information. It leads to the monopoly on mass communication, realizing the authoritarian theory of the press. According to the theory of social responsibility, mass media must take responsibility for objective and unbiased coverage. Media coverage should be based on the pluralism of opinions that have to be exercised within the legal framework and state institutions.<sup>33</sup> The two Ukrainian authors O. Romaniuk and I. Kovalenko, who further developed a conceptual understanding of this theory, defined social responsibility of mass media as “responsibility for their actions and their consequences in front of the society”.<sup>34</sup> The novelty of their approach is the division of social responsibility into legal and moral. Legal social responsibility is ensured by the legislation that envisages punitive sanctions in case of violations; while moral social responsibility implies public condemnation.

---

<sup>31</sup> F. Siebert, T. Peterson, and W. Schramm, *Four theories*, pp. 39-72.

<sup>32</sup> P. de Sola, “Newsmen and Statesmen — Adversaries or Cronies” in W. I. Rivers and N.J. Nyhan (eds), *Aspen Papers on Government and Media*, London, 1973.

<sup>33</sup> F. Siebert, T. Peterson, and W. Schramm, *Four theories*, pp. 73-104.

<sup>34</sup> O. Romaniuk, I. Kovalenko, “Social responsibility of the mass media: at attempt at conceptual justification”, *Visnik HDAK*, vol. 56, 2019, p. 185.

Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm described ideal models; in reality, states tend to combine different elements of these theories that sometimes seem even incompatible. Every state independently of its political system follows its own version of a normative theory compliant with the goals it wants to reach

There exist other two normative theories. One of them is the Development Media theory, according to which, instead of criticizing the government mass media should support it until the state reaches a certain level of political and economic development.<sup>35</sup> This theory is typical for developing countries that lack communication infrastructure and depend on the import of technology from developed countries. Since modern developing countries push for autonomy and cultural identity, mass media can play an important role in promoting these principles. Collective interests of economic development in this case prevail on individual interests.

The last normative theory – theory of democratic participation or participatory theory - appeared recently as a reaction to the existing theories of mass media. It is typical for developed liberal countries but borrowed some elements from development media theory. The main principle is the denial of commercialization and monopolization of private media as well as centralisation and bureaucratisation of mass communication institutions established in the implementation of social responsibility. In such a way, media participate in social development and democratic reforms. This theory is concerned with the right to search for truth providing interaction with other social units of the state. Mass media are thought to be plural, local, and de-institutionalized.<sup>36</sup> New technologies such as the Internet that reduce entry costs for small mass media units facilitate the spread of this theory.

It is important to stress that these theories were formulated for traditional and primarily public media, probably except for the last one. The key idea behind all these six normative theories is that governments have the decisive power in defining the rules of mass media functioning. In this case, we are talking about the so-called media politics. One of the definitions of this term was given by John Zaller (1999) who defined this term as “a system of politics in which individual politicians seek to gain office and to conduct politics while in office, through communication that reaches citizens through the mass

---

<sup>35</sup> L. Zemlyanova, *Зарубежная компаративистика в преддверии информационного общества [Foreign comparative studies on the eve of the information society]*, *Tolkoviy slovar terminov i koncepciy*, Moskva, 1999, p. 227.

<sup>36</sup> D. McQuail, *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*, L., 1987, p. 121.

media”.<sup>37</sup> The author distinguishes three main actors of media politics: 1. politicians, 2. Journalists, and 3. citizens. While interacting, each of them pursues their own goals. According to Zaller, politicians want to gain wider citizens’ consent through control of the mass media content; journalists want to gain the attention of a bigger audience at the same time remaining independent and reliable (until they are not corrupt or do not have personal interests); while citizens want to monitor politics and to be well informed about the real state of things. In this discourse, it is fundamental to define the relationships between the three actors that is complex, dynamic, and flux.

In such a way, mass communication plays the central role in the formation of the attitudes to politics among the readers. In 1991 Semetko, Blumler, Gurevitch, and Weaver developed the hypothesis on political communication systems. They defined political journalism as “the joint product of an interactive process involving political actors and media professionals (journalists)”.<sup>38</sup> This research focuses on political mass communication, but there are no concrete features to distinguish political journalism from journalism in general. McQuail who presented a comprehensive analysis of mass communication theory identifies three main functions of journalism: 1. To inform the public; 2. To act as a watchdog for those in power; 3. To provide a space, a forum for political discussion.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, political mass communication acts both as a room for political processes and as an actor.

It should be noted that all these theories of mass communication were elaborated before the wide use of the Internet. The rise of mobile technologies in the XXI century transformed the way people receive political news and resulted in the emergence of the so-called new mass media – the digital ones. New mass media are all the online forums and platforms that disseminate information: social networks, blogs, messaging apps, etc.<sup>40</sup> The high speed of dissemination of information together with easy accessibility to it proved to be a particularly powerful technique for politicians during election campaigns

---

<sup>37</sup> J. Zaller, *A theory of media politics: How the interests of politicians, journalists and citizens shape the news*, University of Chicago Press, 1999, p. 1-1.

<sup>38</sup> H. A. Semetko, J. G. Blumler, M. Gurevitch and D.H. Weaver, *The formation of campaign agendas: A comparative analysis of party and media roles in recent American and British elections*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1999, p. 3.

<sup>39</sup> See D. McQuail, *Media performance: Mass communication and the public interest*, London. UK: SAGE, 1992.

<sup>40</sup> R. Wei and L. Zhiming Xu. *New Media and Politics: A Synopsis of Theories, Issues, and Research*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication, May 2019.

and for political organizations and activists to mobilize masses of people. However, the spread of new media had both positive and negative effects on its role in politics.

Yet at the end of the 20th century a French postmodernist philosopher and sociologist, Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007), predicted one of the main philosophical questions of the current century: to what extent virtual reality can change our life? Baudrillard wrote several books on mass media communication and its transformation amid technological progress, introducing the concepts of “Simulacra and Simulation”<sup>41</sup> and “hyperreality”<sup>42</sup>. Notably, the author views the media as absolutely egalitarian; stressing that through mass media, the authorities create an illusion of freedom of choice and freedom of expression. The author is convinced that power and control remain the leitmotif of mass media functioning: “Those who own the media channels can influence and direct people opinions”<sup>43</sup>. The uniqueness of his studies is that even before such wide use of the Internet, Baudrillard noted the problem linked to the easy-accessibility to information: saturation of media space brings to the slipping away of important information and fading of the integral picture of media.<sup>44</sup> It became particularly acute nowadays amid the spread of the use of social networks as the way for mass communication.

Most of today’s media can be characterized as short-sighted: the fast spreading of the news allowed by digital technologies results in immediate news coverage and the rise of the “breaking news” section; the latest news always supersedes the old one. Nonetheless, high profile events that cause a wide public outcry have the so-called “transcending effect”. An illustrative example that can be invoked here is the coronavirus pandemic: from February 2020 until today, all the mass media of the world are focused primarily on this issue often overshadowing some other important events.

Apart from political reality, it is precisely the mass media who form the agenda in public opinion and identify (consciously or unconsciously) which events are more important than others. The view is shared by most of the researchers in this field, among whom there is E. Patterson, the author of a series of works on mass communication role in politics and, in particular, on the correlation between mass media and democracy. Patterson stresses: “There are always critical problems facing a nation and the world, but

---

<sup>41</sup> See J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and simulation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994.

<sup>42</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Passwords*. Verso: London. New York, 2003. - P.39.

<sup>43</sup> J. Baudrillard, *Simulacra and simulation*. - P.113

<sup>44</sup> See J. Baudrillard, *The ecstasy of communication*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia, 1988.

the emphasis they receive from the media depends on the degree to which they conform with the requirements of the daily news cycle”.<sup>45</sup> Shanto Iyengar in his book “Is anyone responsible?” (1991) also stresses the importance of thematic framing in news reporting as an efficient means of media’s influence on public opinion.<sup>46</sup> The way journalists frame the events pushes the audience to draw certain cause-and-effect relationships. Mass media control over the audience is translated into the distraction of attention from the things that “should” remain unnoticed and instead focus on the events that should be seen interpreting them in the light beneficial for those who use these techniques to reach certain objectives.

Another interesting conclusion that Patterson makes is that when a key event occurs journalists start reporting also on the past events linked to the issue in order to provide more material and details but in such a way giving a distorted impression of the current situation. The goal is to draw the attention of the audience. In political communication theory, it is called “agenda setting”<sup>47</sup>. Agenda setting is not a typical characteristic only of the new media, it is widely used by traditional mass media as well; however, digital algorithms of the Internet such as automatic notifications and advertisement makes agenda setting more effective for new mass media and increases the role of the media in the formation of the attitudes to certain issues among the population.

While Baudrillard refers mainly to radio and television, the more recent work “Like war: the weaponization of social media” by P.W.Singer and E.T. Brooking touches upon another important issue stressing the dangers embedded in new mass media.<sup>48</sup> The authors argue that nowadays such social media sources like Facebook or Twitter bypass conventional newspapers empowering literally everyone to be journalists and transmit information to a wide audience.<sup>49</sup> Therefore, another feature of new mass media is that non-professionals (literally everyone) can play the role of journalists. In such a way, the number of actors of political journalism expands, consequently transforming also

---

<sup>45</sup> T. Patterson, “Time and News: The Media's Limitations as an Instrument of Democracy”, *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Democracy and Time, 1998, p.57.

<sup>46</sup> See Sh. Iyengar, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991.

<sup>47</sup> M. McCombs, and D. Shaw, “The agenda-setting function of mass media”, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 1972, pp. 176–187.

<sup>48</sup> Hereafter “new mass media” refers to the latest mass communication technologies enabled by the Internet.

<sup>49</sup> P. Singer, E. Brooking, *LikeWar: The weaponization of social media*, Eamon Dolan Books, 2018, p. 51.

relationships between them. The audience can act as journalists entering in direct contact with politicians and professional journalists; politicians can act as journalists communicating directly with the audience (it is not a rare thing nowadays that politicians transmit their messages to the public via Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram).

Finally, the Internet empowered the new mass media to be transnational and cross-border, being restricted only by language barriers. But since English is silently recognized as the language of international communication, it significantly broadens possible political leverages that mass media may use and extents them to the international arena.

Thus, new mass media reshaped both mass communication itself and politics. A. Chadwick defines it as a “hybrid media system”.<sup>50</sup> Traditional rules of mass communication still coexist with new digital ones. Elimination of distinction between professional journalists and amateur writers and bloggers is an ambiguous issue. On the one hand, amateur writers and bloggers may provide insider information, but on the other – they are sometimes not competent to write on certain political issues, but given the freedom of expression have the right to share their thoughts with a wide audience, complicating the task for the readers to obtain objective and precise information. In case when governments try to prevent the spread of unverified information that undermines national security, governments are perceived as being feared of citizens’ reaction or trying to conceal important facts from the public. Censorship in such cases fuels rumours and speculations. Discussing politics became a delicate issue. Any inaccurate statement can cause a wide outcry and even wreck conflicts.

To summarize this section, mass media communication is a powerful and efficient instrument in achieving political goals. Its functions and strategies may differ from country to country depending on the political system of the state, on the government’s policies on mass media, and on cultural or historical peculiarities. In political mass communication, journalists play the role of mediators between politicians and citizens. Due to the means of agenda setting and thematic framing, they shape the citizens’ understanding of the world and politics and largely direct their opinions in order to achieve certain political goals. Its influence on politics became even stronger with the emergence of new digital mass media, which allowed non-professional journalists from the ordinary people to become actors of the political communication system.

---

<sup>50</sup> See A. Chadwick, *The hybrid media system: Politics and power*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017.

## **2. The principle of freedom of expression and biased news coverage. The phenomena of fake news and information warfare**

The previous section mentions some instruments that mass media may use to influence political process. This section deepens the understanding of the mechanisms available to the journalists to influence the politics, and try to detect how news content is actually shaped.

It is obvious that there exists a mutual interdependence between the three actors – the politicians, the journalists and the audience. Jesper Strömbäck and Adam Shehata, for instance, stress that politicians need journalists to get visibility; they want their message to reach wider audience to have a good image, while journalists need newsworthy information, but do not want to be used by the politicians.<sup>51</sup> Ideally, journalists should be independent and should not be accountable to the government or to the economic elites, but instead to be a check on the government assessing the authorities' functioning. Critical reporting, however, requires knowledge that “news-makers” not always possess. It leads to distortion and negative impact on the public opinion while the news media result in being less reliable sources.

Returning to the Zaller's model of media politics' actors, citizens should adhere to the hard news paradigm, but in practice, they more eagerly follow interpretative news. There even appeared a concept of the “infotainment” – a hybrid between information and entertainment.<sup>52</sup> The goal is to produce the content that is able to satisfy the audience, at the same time forming necessary perceptions towards certain events to achieve certain political goals. Erik Albæk, Arjen van Dalen, Nael Jebril, and Claes H. de Vreese in their book “*Political Journalism in Comparative Perspective*” presented an original comparative political communication research conducted in four European countries. They made a conclusion that infotainment effects of mass media on a society depend on the audience's type: its social status, low or high political interest, cultural background and beliefs. Furthermore, the four authors claim to have elaborated the “right” formula for political journalism, which is “a high degree of professionalism in journalism, a low

---

<sup>51</sup> J. Strömbäck, A. Shehata, “Political Journalism”, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*, September 2018.

<sup>52</sup> M. X. Delli Carpini, B.A. Williams, “Let us infotain you: Politics in the new media age”, in W. L. Bennett & R. M. Entman (Eds.), *Mediated politics: Communication in the future of democracy* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001, pp. 160–181.



degree of political parallelism, a strong public broadcasting system, and moderate degrees of commercialism and competition”.<sup>53</sup> In other words, political journalists have to be flexible, know well its audience and goals they need to achieve.

Thomas E. Patterson and Wolfgang Donsbagh conducted another interesting study based on the comparative analysis of political communication in western European countries. The subject of their research, however, was the partisanship of journalists. The main conclusion was that journalists’ political affiliation influenced news coverage in all the countries under the consideration but to different extent.<sup>54</sup> Yet in 1927 Willard Bleyer, the founder of the School of Journalism and Mass Communication of Wisconsin University, reasonably asked himself whether partisan coverage is a bad thing. Bleyer believes that political journalists have to educate the readers but biased coverage is a menace to democracy.<sup>55</sup> Recent works, however, agree that partisan news coverage is not a bad thing until it is not a falsification of news. For instance, Gerald Baldasty claims that party newspapers successfully implement the function of propaganda and stimulate democratic participation providing a greater number of voters in elections.<sup>56</sup>

It is not by accident that the two comparative studies cited above deal with the mass media in western European democracies. Mass media in democratic societies are thought to be more independent as freedom of expression is one the necessary circumstances for a proper democratic functioning. Freedom of opinion and expression is a fundamental human right and one of the main characteristics of democracy. The principle is guaranteed by international law and grants the right to hold opinions and the right to get impartial information. Art.19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948, states:

*Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.*<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>53</sup>E. Albæk, A. van Dalen, N. Jebril, C. de Vreese, *Political Journalism in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press, 2014, p. 170.

<sup>54</sup> T. Patterson, W. Donsbagh, “News decisions: Journalists as partisan actors”, *Political Communication*, 13:4, 1996. pp. 455-468.

<sup>55</sup> See W. Bleyer, *Main currents in the history of American journalism*, Cambridge, Mass, 1927.

<sup>56</sup> G.J. Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1992.

<sup>57</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948, URL: <https://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> (accessed 27.05.2020)

Amid the new mass media becoming more and more transnational and cross-border, it is important that freedom of expression is an international law principle; even it has no binding force and does not imply legal sanction for non-implementation. The principle is also incorporated in the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950. Apart from the rights, the convention also draws attention to the responsibilities that follow and lists a number of conditions when those rights might be restricted. Art. 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights states:

*The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.*<sup>58</sup>

A new impetus to the development of the international legislation on freedom of opinion and expression was given in the mid-1960s. Art. 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966 lays down the foundation of the principle of freedom of press that is of particular interest for this research:

1. *Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.*
2. *Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.*
3. *The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:*
  - (a) *For respect of the rights or reputations of others;*
  - (b) *For the protection of national security or of public order, or of public health or morals.*<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>58</sup> European Convention on Human Rights, 1950, URL: [https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention\\_Eng.pdf](https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_Eng.pdf) (accessed 10.09.2020)

<sup>59</sup> International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966, URL: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx> (accessed 27.05.2020)

These principles subsequently were evolved and incorporated in other international treaties (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights under Article 15(3), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination under Article 5(d)(vii) and (viii), Convention on the Rights of the Child under Article 12 and 13, International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families under Article 13) and regional ones (the American Convention on Human Rights under Article 13, European Convention on Human Rights under Article 10, African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights 1981 under Article 9, Arab Charter of Human Rights 2004 under Article 32) as well as in domestic laws.<sup>60</sup>

Marcus E. Howard from Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia, whose studies focus on the links between impartial and objective journalism and democracy, stresses: “Journalism—impartial and independent of political and economic interests—is indispensable to democratic societies”.<sup>61</sup> Looking at the map of 2020 World Press freedom Ranking<sup>62</sup>, designed by Reporters without Borders organization, we see that today the best situation with freedom of press is observed in Northern European countries – Norway, Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Netherlands, then follow other European countries. The worst situation is in the non-democratic countries such as North Korea, China, Iran, Afghanistan, etc. It proves the hypothesis that the respect for the freedom of expression and freedom of press is correlated with the level of democracy in a country. However, the USA – the longest-standing democracy in the world currently existing - is only on the 45<sup>th</sup> place out of 180, the situation is defined as “satisfactory”, but not “good”. We will try to understand the reasons of it in the third section of this chapter. Situation in Russia is described as “difficult”, it is placed on 149<sup>th</sup> position out of 180<sup>63</sup>, but still does not enter in the list of

---

<sup>60</sup> E. Howie, “Protecting the human right to freedom of expression in international law”, *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 20:1, 2018, pp. 12-15.

<sup>61</sup> M. Howard, *How journalists and the public shape our democracy*, Georgia Humanities, Atlanta, Georgia, 2019, p.10.

<sup>62</sup> “World Press freedom Ranking 2020”, *Reporters without Borders*, 2020, URL:<https://rsf.org/en/ranking> (accessed 15.09.2020)

<sup>63</sup> The Reporters without borders, a non-governmental organization, was allegedly involved in some quarrels in 2005 with accusations of being corrupt and receiving financial support from the US State Department. However, comparing the latest World Press freedom ranking of the Reporters without Borders with other global indexes on the freedom of press by the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), UNESCO and the Freedom House, no significant differences in respect to the considered countries was detected.

most-censored countries prepared by the non-profit Committee to Protect Journalists and in which there are such countries Belarus and some other.<sup>64</sup>

High level of freedom of expression and freedom of press does not mean unbiased and objective news coverage. On the contrary, if people are free to think and say whatever they want and having new digital technologies that allow them to transmit it to wide masses, it only encourages more rumours and biases. That is why there can be some legal limitations to the freedom of opinion and expression in order to protect public order and security and to prevent inappropriate immoral behaviour and other human rights' violations. Censorship is a legitimate instrument, for example, to prevent child pornography, incitement to terrorism, national, racial or religious discriminations, hostility, violence, war propaganda, hate speech, etc. The right to the freedom of opinion and expression just as any human right must be exercised without violation of other fundamental rights. In particular, the exercise of the right to freedom of expression should respect Art. 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950 "Right to respect for private and family life".

However, there are some impermissible restrictions, defined in the UN Human Rights Council resolution 12/16 on freedom of opinion and expression. In order to defend democratic principles, among such impermissible restrictions, there are "discussion of government policies and political debate; reporting on human rights, government activities and corruption in government; engaging in election campaigns, peaceful demonstrations or political activities, including for peace or democracy; and expression of opinion and dissent, religion or belief, including by persons belonging to minorities or vulnerable groups"<sup>65</sup>. As far as this thesis deals with the news coverage of the Crimean incorporation into Russian Federation by Russian and the US mass media, one of the key points that we should keep in mind is according to international law the state cannot restrict the freedom of opinion and expression when it concerns discussion of government policies. The fact that critics of government cannot be prohibited or censored does not guarantee objective and unbiased critics given the freedom of expression, while slander is a criminal act.

---

<sup>64</sup> "10 Most Censored Countries", *Committee to Protect Journalists*, 2019. URL: <https://cpj.org/reports/2019/09/10-most-censored-eritrea-north-korea-turkmenistan-journalist/> (accessed 15.09.2020)

<sup>65</sup> UN Human Rights Council resolution 12/16, 12 October 2009, URL: <https://www.rights-docs.org/doc/a-hrc-res-12-16/> (accessed 27.05.2020)

Thus, journalists do not have obligation to be objective and unbiased, but must act within the law. They can use such tricks as agenda setting and thematic framing, but the ultimate goal is to manage to persuade the audience of their trustworthiness. It might be challenging as different news agencies can put different emphases and focus on different facts covering the same event creating strong polarization in the society. People start losing faith in mass media as different news agencies often contradict each other even if they are sometimes the only sources of information available to the audience.

According to the Reporters without Borders' report of 2020, there is a crisis of trust with 57% of people polled think the media transmit "untrustworthy information"<sup>66</sup>. Many academics nowadays are talking about the crisis of mass media in general. Original function of mass media to inform the public is nowadays voiding, transforming mass media into pure instrument of politics. Probably, Baudrillard's egalitarian approach towards the media was right. At least, Adrian Shahbaz and Allie Funk from the Freedom House, the oldest American organization for promotion of liberal democracy in the world established in New York in 1941, agree: "While social media have at times served as a level playing field for civil discussion, they are now tilting dangerously toward illiberalism".<sup>67</sup>

Before we proceed with the practical news coverage analysis in the next chapters, we should make an important premise for this research: none of the modern mass media is impartial by definition (and probably they have never been). Nowadays' audience is spoiled with the abundance and easy-accessibility of information. People cannot be satisfied with plain facts; they want comments, opinions and analysis. That is how news coverage becomes expression of personal views. Even when there are no direct indicators to detect bias, anyway there are some. Every single text is always written by somebody with his or her personal beliefs, values and opinions, that are intentionally or unintentionally reflected.

The issue of biased coverage is one of the key issues for this thesis. It is important to clarify some definitions. First, we should distinguish several types of biased coverage.

---

<sup>66</sup> "2020 World Press Freedom Index: 'Entering a decisive decade for journalism, exacerbated by coronavirus'", *Rsf. Reporters without Borders*, 2020, URL: <https://rsf.org/en/2020-world-press-freedom-index-entering-decisive-decade-journalism-exacerbated-coronavirus> (accessed 15.07.2020)

<sup>67</sup> A. Shahbaz, A. Funk, "What was once a liberating technology has become a conduit for surveillance and electoral manipulation", *Freedom House*, 2018, URL: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2019/crisis-social-media> (accessed 16.09.2020)

Most of the studies on news coverage deal with the coverage of election campaigns. Nonetheless, the instruments used in those studies are applicable to other topics as well. Thus, D'Alessio and Allen identify three types of news bias: 1. Gatekeeping or agenda bias (intentional emphasis on certain events and protagonists in order to decrease the role of other events or figures); 2. Visibility bias (large amount of information and details on certain events and little on others); 3. Statement bias (tonality of coverage).<sup>68</sup>

Second, there are two levels of biased coverage - personal bias and organizational one. The first level of bias is inadvertent. R. Benson proved that personal attitude, educational background, working experience, political affiliation and personal interests of journalists have impact on the news selection and the language they use.<sup>69</sup> The audience tend to blame journalists and the mass media for the content they receive and perceive all the media as biased and partisan. That is true that journalists are responsible for what the readers are allowed to know. However, it is not only responsibility of the journalists. The second level of political bias is organizational influence. Political journalists might represent interests of political parties or single politicians, mass media owners, business elites, civil society or particular social groups and communities. The readers should always ask themselves on the impact that other actors of political process might have on journalists (Appendix 1).

This interdependence is often not obvious or even hidden. Almost the only thing available for citizens in order to detect this influence and to understand whose interests are promoted by certain mass media is to ask themselves on the ownership form of a mass media source. There are three ownership forms: 1. Public media or taxpayer funded, that more often represent official position of the state; 2. Private commercial media that depend on private investments and represent interests of business elites; 3. Civil society and non-profit media that are similar to public ones but represent the interests of certain civil society groups and activists.<sup>70</sup>

To summarize the above-said, news coverage is anyway biased, but biased coverage does not mean spreading untrustworthy or fake information. The bias serves to promote

---

<sup>68</sup> D. D'Alessio and M. Allen, "Media bias in presidential elections: A meta-analysis", *Journal of Communication*, 50(4), 2000, pp. 133–156.

<sup>69</sup> C. Reinemann and P. Baugut, "Political journalists as communicators: The impact of individual characteristics on their work", in C. Reinemann (ed.), *Handbook of Communication Science: Political Communication*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014, pp. 325–350.

<sup>70</sup> R. Benson, "Rethinking the sociology of media ownership", in L. Grindstaff (ed.), *Handbook of Cultural Sociology*, 2nd edition, Routledge, 2019, pp. 387-396.

certain interests to justify before the audience certain actions by persuasion and by forming the way people think. The news content shaping primarily depends on three factors. The first factor is government policies on mass media. The government defines the rules of mass media functioning even in progressive democracies where the freedom of press is fundamental principle. Yet an Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci wrote that pure democracy did not exist; it is always imposed by the government through respective legislation.<sup>71</sup> In parallel, it is exactly the state to determine positive or destructive potential of media. In such way the authorities can consciously influence the citizens' way of thinking and behaviour for the state interests and for the interests of civil society. The second factor is an economic one or commercialisation of mass media to gain a major profit. Finally, the third factor that shapes the news and define its bias is journalists' personal attitudes, journalistic norms and practices.

It is important to stress that biased coverage does not mean spreading of false news. Biased coverage is a legitimate instrument to present certain events in the light favourable for the goal pursued – the goal to win over the audience. Bias is not a lie, but making use of certain facts while consciously “forgetting” to mention other facts. Nonetheless, there also exists the so-called “right to truth”. The right to truth is a non-binding principle that is defined as a positive obligation for governments to disclose information and prevent the spread of falsified facts.<sup>72</sup> This principle exists along with the right to access information that was implicitly recognized by the international law under Human Rights Council Resolution 9/11 and under Principle 4 of Economic and Social Council's Commission on Human Rights report on the principles for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights.

However, since the right to truth is non-binding, it is impossible to enforce its implementation. If we presuppose that the right to truth is resultant to free news coverage, it cannot be enforced without violating with freedom. Whereas there are attempts to do so from abroad, it might be considered as interference into internal affairs, which a violation of international law. Appearance of new mass media on the Internet further complicates this task.

---

<sup>71</sup> A. Gramsci, *Pensare la democrazia. Antologia dai "Quaderni del carcere"*, a cura di Marcello Montanari, Einaudi, Torino, 1997.

<sup>72</sup> “Resolution 9/11. Right to the truth”, *Human Rights Council*, URL: [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A\\_HRC\\_RES\\_9\\_11.pdf](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_9_11.pdf) (accessed 15.11.2020)



Until recently there were not international legislation that regulates freedom of speech on the Internet. In 2012, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution 21/16 recognising freedom of expression on the Internet just like in any other mass media. It literally means that everyone can post whatever he or she wants, being restricted only by “self-censorship” and local legislation in force. Undoubtedly, it favours plurality of opinions with a positive impact on liberal democracy, but it significantly complicates the process of political mass communication. The authorities, however, still can introduce restrictions and censorship allowed by the international law. There is a detailed study conducted by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media, which is concerned with the freedom of expression on the Internet. In particular, it deals with legal provisions that various OSCE member-states impose to regulate the Internet content. The OSCE report concludes that in the USA, for example, the President can “authorize shutdown of critical computer systems in case of a national cyber emergency”, in Russia and Belarus the governments make the so-called “prohibited information lists”, access to which may be blocked, Turkey invokes the “broadest legal measures” to block allegedly harmful information, at the EU level there exist the so-called “voluntary blocking measures” that can be invoked in certain cases (for instance, to prevent the spread of child pornography).<sup>73</sup>

There are many concerns about “citizens journalism” on the Internet related to privacy and ethical issues. Apart from that, the paradox is that the phenomenon of new mass media is favourable for democracy as it facilitates citizens’ participation and collaboration; but at the same time, easy-accessibility to information and fast spread of news due to the Internet rendered the audience incapable to distinguish verified facts from personal opinions or suppositions. Social media and online newspapers became a strong instrument for disinformation. This strategy resulted in the rise of such a phenomenon as fake news.

There is no common agreement among the researchers on the definition of the term “fake news”. Many of them use it interchangeably with the terms “disinformation”, “misinformation” and “false news”. In order to distinguish the term “fake news” from other similar ones, Hunt Alcott of New York University and Matthew Gentzkow of

---

<sup>73</sup> Y. Akdeniz, “A study of legal provisions and practices related to freedom of expression, the free flow of information and media pluralism on the Internet in OSCE participating States”, *The OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media*, 2012, p. 266, URL: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/c/9/105522.pdf> (Accessed 16.09.2020)



Stanford University defined it as “news articles that are intentionally and verifiably false”<sup>74</sup>. Thus, reporters’ mistakes are not fake news when they occur without intention to mislead the readers. Propaganda also differs from fake news, as it does not intentionally fabricate news; it “uses a systematic process to encourage a particular response from the spread of information, ideas or rumours”.<sup>75</sup> While fake news itself is in fact allowed by freedom of expression. Propaganda and fake news presented as personal opinion are legitimate instruments of public influence in the nations that enjoy freedom of press and expression and the governments can do little to eliminate this phenomenon.

Easy accessibility of information due to the Internet provides wider choice of the sources for the audience to search for information, but there is no guarantee they will find reliable information. Fake news may spread very fast via retweets and reposts and it becomes impossible to trace which pieces of news are in fact fake and which are true. It became easier to direct people’s way of thinking due to these techniques but at the same time people become more suspicious about mass media. It led to the weakening of mass media position and their lesser influence on the public.

The last point that I would like to touch upon in this section and which is related to the rise of ICTs as an instrument in the world politics is the phenomenon of information warfare. With the information revolution, the use of ICTs proved to be effective and relatively cheap in military field. Nowadays, information is believed the fifth dimension of warfare along with land, sea, air and space (Aquilla and Borer, 2007; Brenner, 2008)<sup>76</sup>. Mariarosaria Taddeo from the University of Oxford, who conducted a comprehensive conceptual study of the phenomenon, provides the general definition of Information Warfare as “the use of ICTs with either offensive or defensive purpose to immediately intrude, disrupt, or control the opponent’s resources.”<sup>77</sup> Usually, the researchers identify three aspects of the use of ICTs in military: cyber-attacks, robotic weapons and

---

<sup>74</sup> H. Allcott, and M. Gentzkow, “Social media and fake news in the 2016 election”, *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 2017, p. 231.

<sup>75</sup> M. E. Howard, *How journalists and the public shape our democracy*, pp.26-27.

<sup>76</sup> See J. Arquilla, and D.A. Borer (Eds.), *Information strategy and warfare: A guide to theory and practice (contemporary security studies)*, New York: Routledge, 2007; S. W. Brenner, *Cyberthreats: The Emerging Fault Lines of the Nation State*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

<sup>77</sup> M. Taddeo, “Information Warfare: A Philosophical Perspective”, *Philosophy and Geography*, 25(1), 2011, p.109.

management of communication among fighting units.<sup>78</sup> However, ICTs conflicts may be not only military. Within this thesis, we will consider the term from a broader perspective in terms of control and power over the civil society. Thus, Russian political scientist A.V. Manoilo defines information warfare as “confrontation process between people’s communities aimed at reaching political, economic, military and other strategic goals by influencing civilians, authorities and/or armed forces of the opponent through the spread of selected and prepared information and materials while preventing such actions against its own side”<sup>79</sup>. I.N. Panarin stresses that the term in Russian language was borrowed from the vocabulary of the US military circles<sup>80</sup>, and in particular, from the US Joint Doctrine for Information Operations of 9 October 1998 which defines information warfare as “information operations conducted during time of crisis or conflict to achieve or promote specific objectives over a specific adversary or adversaries”<sup>81</sup>.

Despite the fact that initially the term “information warfare” appeared in the military circles and the word “warfare” sounds like something cruel, in this context “warfare” is used in a metaphoric sense. Information warfare does not imply violent military, partisan or intelligence actions on the territory; otherwise, it becomes a hybrid war. Nonetheless, an important characteristic of information warfare is transversality: the damage caused might not be only virtual, but also material.

Most of the academics cited before link the emergence of this phenomenon with the latest technological revolution. An American researcher, Brian C. Lewis, in his publication on information warfare notes that the term entered into daily lexicon only in post-Cold war era.<sup>82</sup> Russian political analysts like same I.N. Panarin as well as Sh.S. Suleimanova and E.A. Nazarova claim that the techniques of information warfare have been known and widely used since ancient times. Suleimanova and Nazarova stress that

---

<sup>78</sup> See M. Libicki, *What is Information Warfare?*, Washington, DC, USA: National Defense University Press, 1996.

<sup>79</sup> A. Manoilo, “Информационно-психологическая война: факторы, определяющие формат современного вооруженного конфликта [Information-psychological warfare: factors that determine a modern military conflict]”, *Киев: Материалы V Международной научно-практической конференции «Информационные технологии и безопасность»*, №8, 2005, pp. 73-80.

<sup>80</sup> I. Panarin, *СМИ, пропаганда и информационные войны [Mass media, propaganda and information warfare]*, М: Pokolenie, 2012, pp. 55-56.

<sup>81</sup> “Joint Doctrine for Information Operations”, *The US Defence Ministry*, 9 October 1998, p. I-11 URL: <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=3759> (accessed 15.07.2020).

<sup>82</sup> B.C. Lewis, “Information warfare”, *Federation of American Scientists*, 1997, URL: <https://fas.org/irp/eprint/snyder/infowarfare.htm> (accessed 15.07.2020).

the use of information warfare got a strong impulse to flourishing during the World War II in the form of Nazi propaganda.<sup>83</sup> The two scientists do not distinguish propaganda and information warfare while the two terms should be distinguished. Propaganda usually implies incitement to certain actions and behaviour whereas main goal of information warfare is control over the enemy's sources. The OSCE handbook on Propaganda and Freedom of Mass Media also notes that the term "propaganda" in the Anglophone world has a negative meaning, first of all, because it was usually used in the regard to the World War II. After the dissolution of the USSR, in Russian it was primarily used in a sense of soviet and communist propaganda, then this term acquired also new meanings and it started to be used also in positive sense, for example, "propaganda of healthy lifestyle" or even "propaganda of human rights".<sup>84</sup> The fact proves the importance of considering cultural and language peculiarities in cross-national research on news coverage. Journalists bear the responsibility of the choice of words and expressions. The wrong choice might sow further confusion and misunderstanding, particularly, when it deals with such delicate topics like the one of Crimea. That is why it is interesting to compare news coverage of such an event by American and Russian mass media.

To briefly sum up this section, all the news is almost always biased. Freedom of expression that is believed to be a fundamental characteristic of a democracy, probably, encourages further bias. The problem became acute with transmission of the principle to the Internet content. It should be kept in mind, however, that bias of tweets and posts on the social media written by non-professionals is a personal bias and an expression of personal opinions, while biased coverage of professional social media has the aim of political manipulation or propaganda. It is not a negative or illegal phenomenon, however. It is just an instrument of political influence. It is important to distinguish biased coverage from fake news. Biased coverage does not mean falsification of facts. Intentional and systematic biased coverage towards other states may be a manifestation of the phenomenon of information warfare. Within the framework of this thesis, we will use the term in a sense of competition and confrontation between the opponent mass media to

---

<sup>83</sup> See S. Suleymanova, E. Nazarova, *Информационные войны: история и современность [Information warfare: history and modernity]*, Moscow, 2017.

<sup>84</sup> "Propaganda and freedom of the media", *The OSCE Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media*, Vienna, 2015, pp.33-34, URL: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/3/203926.pdf> (accessed 13.05.2020).

win over the audience of the adversary characterized by hostile media, distortion of facts and creation of a negative image of the enemy.

### **3. Establishment of political journalism and freedom of expression in the USA**

To be able to proceed with analysis of contemporary mass media in the USA and in Russia, we should give a brief background on the establishment of political journalism in these states, that in many aspects determined the current state of political journalism in the two countries. In the previous section of this chapter, we concluded that political system of a country and its social regime might have a significant impact on the mass media. The USA is considered to be the longest-standing liberal democracy, while Russia had been a monarchy for a major part of its history (with tsars, imperators and then the USSR authoritarian regimes), but its constitution that entered into force in 1993 is said to be the most democratic one out of five constitutions in Russian history. It is even more interesting to compare to which extent nowadays the press is effectively free and impartial in the USA and in Russia.

Frederick S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (1956), who have already been cited in the first section of this chapter, stress that journalism itself appears only on a certain stage of development of capitalist relations, thus feudal societies did not need it. Appearance of journalism was a response to certain social needs and was often connected with certain historical events. In Europe, those processes date back to XVI-XVII centuries. On those stages' merchants were implementing the functions of journalism to inform ordinary people about what was happening in the world.

Colonization of the North America by British Empire brought journalism to America. On this early stage (from the mid-XVII – mid-XVIII centuries), American press had a religious and colonial character and was heavily influenced by Britain. At those stages, nobody was talking about freedom of press. It was not even a pure journalism; it was separate pieces of news dedicated to certain topics that were published irregularly. The authors note significant impact of protestant reformation and humanitarian philosophy on the press in that period in England and in America.<sup>85</sup>

An American journalist and historian Christopher B. Daly divided the history of American political journalism into five major periods and most authors of the American

---

<sup>85</sup> See F. Siebert, T. Peterson, and W. Schramm, *Four theories*.

journalism agree with such periodization. The first period (1704-1832) is concerned with politization of news, the second one (1833-1900) is marked by commercialization, the third (1900-1960s) is identified as professionalization of journalism, the fourth period (1960s – mid-1990s) is defined by Daly as “conglomeration” of news and finally the fifth (started in the mid-1990s and lasts up today) is concerned with digitalisation of news.<sup>86</sup>

Actually, the first newspaper to be published in North America “*Publick Occurrences Both Foreign and Domestick*” appeared in Boston in 1690. It was immediately suppressed and its publisher Benjamin Harris was jailed. According to some sources it happened because Harris did not have license from the British Crown, according to others, it happened because of the coverage of “sex scandal in French royal family and allegations of malfeasants in the leadership of the Indian allies”<sup>87</sup>. Some authors see in that beginning of the American political journalism and the government’s attempts to suppress independent press.<sup>88</sup> Christopher B. Daly, however, starts his periodization from 1704, when John Campbell published the first legitimate newspaper in the USA, “*The Boston News-Letter*”. The US press of the first half of 18<sup>th</sup> century was characterised by scarcity in content and in number of newspapers’ copies. It was apolitical, reporting just some local news and some big issues occurring in the British colonies, often simply copied from the British newspapers. News reporting was considered an additional business for the publishers and not a real journalists’ craft. McKerns, a distinguished American journalism historian, notes: “Information often appeared in the form of advertising which was then, and still is, the lifeblood of American journalism”<sup>89</sup>.

By 1730s, newspapers became partisan and more political. First local reporters appeared and started to spread news in nearby communities. The US newspapers started circulating also in the colonies. By mid-XVIII century, fourteen weakly American newspapers got circulation in six most populated colonies. In 1729, “the Pennsylvania

---

<sup>86</sup> See Ch.B. Daly, *Covering America: A Narrative History of a Nation's Journalism*, University of Massachusetts Press, 2011, p. [7].

<sup>87</sup> M. Halsey Thomas, *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1729*, Vol.1. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> J. Hedgepeth Williams, “The Purposes of Journalism”, in W. David Sloan and L. Millikin Parcell (eds.), *American Journalism. History, principles, practices*, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2002, p. 12.

<sup>89</sup> J.P. McKerns, “The History of American Journalism”, *American Studies International*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1976, pp. 17-34.

Gazette” gets the biggest circulation in colonies and the highest income from advertising.<sup>90</sup> First critics of the American authorities appeared in 1735 in the New York Weekly Journal founded by John Piter Zenger. He was even brought to the court for, but then acquitted. McKerns believes that in such way there were laid down the foundations for the freedom of press that in 1791 were embodied in the First Amendment.

In the second half of the XVIII century due to deep political, social and economic changes in the American society, the interest of the audience towards newspapers increased significantly. Consequently, the number of newspapers also increased. Correspondents started reporting on the American Revolution and share opinions on the independence movement. By 1800 there were approximately two hundred weekly newspapers and 25 daily newspapers in the USA compared to eighty weekly and five daily newspapers in 1790 (while yet in 1760 there were just about 25 weekly newspapers). In 1840 those numbers reached 1100 for weekly and about 200 for daily newspapers.<sup>91</sup> Such an upsurge in number of newspapers was allowed by technological progress, on the one hand, and on the other – and more importantly – due to the First Amendment to the US Constitution that granted freedom of speech.

However, as we have already found out freedom of speech does not mean unbiased news coverage. There are many studies on the US political journalism of 19<sup>th</sup> century and all of them stress that newspapers of that time were “very partisan” and one-sided. James L. Baughman from the Centre for Journalism Ethics explains this phenomenon by simple economics: parties directly or through government printing contracts were subsidizing the newspapers. It implied an obligation to use certain language and ideology, promote stories that improve the image of the parties that financed them, while news that could undermine their image remained uncovered. Mark Wahlgren Summers reasonably said: “The truth was not suppressed. It was simply hard to get in any one place”.<sup>92</sup>

During the second period (1833-1900) of the American political journalism, news coverage became a professional business, with newspapers struggling for attention of the readers. The phenomenon of “yellow press” appeared. News coverage was presented in

---

<sup>90</sup> See M.R. Ember, E. Emery, N.L. Roberts, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media*, 8th ed, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996.

<sup>91</sup> See H. Rojas, and K. McGarr, *A (brief) History of American Journalism*, Wisconsin University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2017.

<sup>92</sup> M.W. Summers, *Press Gang: Newspapers & Politics, 1863-1878*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994, p. 56.

a form of entertainment with sensational and catchy headlines (the *New York World* newspaper) or instead informative straightforward stories (The *New York Times*). At the same time, newspapers became more affordable to the public. In 1830s, there appeared the so-called “penny” press – *New York Transcript*, *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, *Boston Daily Times*, *Baltimore Sun* and *New York Herald*.<sup>93</sup> Those newspapers were quite superficial in content and primarily dealt with police news and scandals, criticism of the state institutions and with other local social issues.

Critical literature on the US political journalism primarily focuses on political campaigns and mass media’s role in voters’ decision-making.<sup>94</sup> There is no critical literature on international news coverage in the USA of the XIX century, probably, because newspapers mainly dealt with local news at that time. Only by the end of the XIX century – beginning of the XX century, partisan affiliation of the US newspapers became less evident and political journalism became more objective. The explanation again lays in economics: the costs of publishing were rising and parties’ expenditures could not cover them anymore. Consequently, newspapers became more independent and neutral. Many authors note that it immediately affected the turnout at elections – it dropped. At the same time, the audience interest towards international agenda was growing, particularly on the eve of the World War I.

During the third period (1900-1960s) that is characterized by professionalization of journalism, big schools of journalism emerged in the USA. Mass media agencies became bigger. More attention was paid to the ideals of objectivity and independence of mass media. Notably, in that period the principle of freedom of expression was recognized by international law and incorporated in various international declarations and agreements, mentioned in the second section of this chapter.

The fourth period (1960s – mid-1990s) is characterised by the formation of giant news agencies and companies that were often managed by non-journalists. Daly defines this period as “conglomeration” of news. In this period, in the USA there appeared a lot

---

<sup>93</sup> J.D. Keeler, W. Brown and D. Tarpley “Ethics”, in W. David Sloan and L. Millikin Parcell (eds.) *American Journalism. History, principles, practices*, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2002, p. 46.

<sup>94</sup> See E. Emery, “Changing Role of the Mass Media in American Politics”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 427, 1996, pp. 84-94; M. Pfau, and R. Denton, “The Mass Media and American Politics: A Review Essay”, *The Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1989, pp. 173-186; D.C. Mutz, “The Great Divide: Campaign Media in the American Mind”, *Daedalus*, vol. 141, no. 4, 2012, pp. 83-97.

of critical literature on history of journalism and main mechanisms of its functioning.<sup>95</sup> In early 1950s, - when freedom of expression was a taboo in the UUSR under the reigning communism ideology - there already were heated debates on freedom of press in the USA. Reporters started investigating on government activities, organized crime and corruption scandals. A lot of critical literature compares the two “clubs” of Intellectuals and their views on the mass media - the Commission on Freedom of the Press founded in Chicago in 1947 and the New York intellectuals represented by the *Partisan Review*.<sup>96</sup> As it was noted, American authors writing on political journalism often focus on the economics behind. Both clubs also link development of mass media with economic and financial factors, but refer to different aspects of it. The Commission on Freedom of the Press or the Hutchins Commission argued that from the early XX century freedom of press in the USA was indirectly restricted as the rise in costs for publishing of newspapers made it affordable only for wealthy people and the press was freer at the times when the First Amendment had been just adopted. The New York intellectuals claimed that industrialization and urbanization that resulted in rise of literacy rate and wider expansion of mass culture in the USA represented huge opportunities for publishers to maximize their incomes, as by investing more they could expand their audience. This tendency to analyze American journalism through the prism of finance and economics continues up today.

---

<sup>95</sup> See Z. Chafee Jr., *Government and mass communications*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1947; B. Gary, “Communication research, the Rockefeller Foundation, and mobilization for the war on words, 1938–1944”, *Journal of Communication*, 46(3), 1996, p. 124–148; D. Macdonald, “Kulturbolschewismus is here”, *Partisan Review*, 8(6), 1941, pp. 442–451; F. L. Mott, “Review of A free and responsible press”, *Political Science Quarterly*, 62(3), 1947, pp. 441–443.

<sup>96</sup> See S. Bates, *Realigning journalism with democracy: The Hutchins Commission, its times, and ours*, Washington, DC: Annenberg Washington Program in Communications Policy Studies, 1995; M. A. Blanchard, “The Hutchins Commission, the press and the responsibility concept”, *Journalism Monographs*, 49, 1977; M. A. Blanchard, “Reclaiming freedom of the press: A Hutchins Commission dream or nightmare?”, *Communications Law and Policy*, 3, 1998, pp.371–387; J. Epstein, “Dwight Macdonald: Sunburned by ideas”, *New Criterion*, 20, 2001, pp. 25–33; E. Goffman and D. Morris (eds.), *The New York public intellectuals and beyond: Exploring liberal humanism, Jewish identity, and the American protest tradition*, West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2009; I. Howe, “The New York intellectuals: A chronicle and a critique”, *Commentary*, 46(4), 1968, pp. 29–51; T. Lewandowski, *Dwight Macdonald on culture: The happy warrior of the mind, reconsidered*, New York, NY: Peter Lang, 2013; A. M. Wald, *The New York intellectuals: The rise and decline of the anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987.



#### 4. Establishment of political journalism and freedom of expression in Russia

Political journalism in Russia initially was developing along different lines. Ideas, or it would be better to say “ideology”, has always prevailed on the logic of economics or ideals of human rights. Political journalism in Russia was born from the need to criticize politics. It was presented in a form of analysis and proposals for reforms; nonetheless, it always had to pass the test of censorship. The first newspaper in Russia, “*Vedomosti*”, appeared in 1703, more or less at the same time as first newspaper in the USA. However, on the early stages it was historians and philosophers – such as Karamzin, Radischev, Novikov, Fonvisin, Lomonosov - to play the role of journalists. In contrast to the USA, they covered not only internal affairs but also revolutionary events in Europe and America.<sup>97</sup> By the end of the XVIII century there appeared also a series of privately owned newspapers, but still they were mostly government-issue official magazines. Yet in 1803, Karamzin founded a magazine “*Vestnik Evropy*” (*Gazette of Europe*) with the section “Politics” covering and trying to analyse Napoleon’s policy. Generally, there has always been a great interest towards international agenda in Russia. Academics tended to conceptualize the role of Russia in international affairs and to define the place of Russia in the world history. The problem that was hindering development of journalism was a low literacy rate among the population. Abolition of serfdom in Russia did not occurred until 1861 and few people had access to education. In other words, all those newspapers were designated for very limited, aristocratic circles.<sup>98</sup>

Russian press got a new impetus to development in the first quarter of XIX century with growth of revolutionary ideas. Some newspapers, for example, almanac “*Polyarnaya Zvezda*” (*The polar star*) of two revolutionaries A.A. Bestuzhev and K.F. Ryleev (1823-1825), were translated in France, Germany and Poland. Journalism was not thought as a business like in the USA, but a platform for propaganda to push people to join revolutionaries. After the suppression of Decembrists’ uprising in 1825, a strict censorship was imposed.<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> See L.P. Gromova (ed.), *История русской журналистики XVIII – XIX веков [History of Russian journalism of the XVIII-XIX centuries]*, Spb., 2007.

<sup>98</sup> See D.D. Ivlev, *История русской журналистики XVIII – XX веков: В 3-х ч. [History of Russian journalism of the XVIII-XX centuries: in 3 vol.]*, Riga, 2000.

<sup>99</sup> See B.I. Esin, *История российской журналистики 1703-1917 [History of Russian journalism 1703-1917]*, M: Nauka, 2000.

Next stage of Russian press' development occurred in 1840s, but again reflected appearance of new ideological views and social movements – the so-called theory of Official Nationality “Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality” (represented by M.P. Pogodin, S.P. Schvyrev), slavyanofils (represented by I.V. Kirievskiy, P.V. Kirievskiy, K.S. Aksakov), westerners (represented by V.P. Botkin, T.N. Granovsky) and some philosophers like V.G. Belinsky and A.I. Gerzern.

In 1865, the first Russian law on press was adopted. It was liberal enough and cancelled preliminary censorship on the magazines. However, it was again imposed already in 1866 after assassination attempt on Tsar. Russian government returned to politics of strict censorship and closed two most progressive magazines “*Sovremennik*” (*The Contemporary*) and “*Russkoe slovo*” (*The Russian word*).<sup>100</sup>

Some positive dynamics in the development of Russian press was set in 1890s mostly due to industrial growth and technological progress. A lot of new newspapers and magazines were founded, religious and business newspapers appeared. Ideas of Official nationality were fading out whereas interest to Marxism and historical materialism was growing.<sup>101</sup> These tendencies were reflected in press. In the beginning of XX century there were forming new political parties who subsequently were founding their own newspapers to promote ideas of their parties.

Aspirations on significant development of Russian press in XX century were doomed to failure due to such crucial events in Russian history as first and second revolutions, two World wars, establishment of the USSR with dictator regimes of Stalin and his successors. A strong censorship up to restriction of freedom of expression was introduced.<sup>102</sup> Whereas development of western mass media in the second half of XX century mainly reflects the state of civil society, market requests and development of social thought, the development of mass media in the USSR at the same period was defined, instead, by political conditions and, in particular, by the ruling party.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>100</sup> See B.I. Esin, *История [History]*.

<sup>101</sup> See N.G. Patrusheva, *Цензор в государственной системе дореволюционной России (вторая половина XIX – начало XX века) [The censor in the state system of pre-revolutionary Russia (the second half of the XIX century – the beginning of the XX century)]*, Spb., 2011.

<sup>102</sup> See P.S. Reifman, *Цензура в дореволюционной, советской и постсоветской России: в 2 т. [Censorship in the pre-revolutionary, soviet and post-soviet Russia: in 2 vol.]*, М.: «Пробел-2000», 2017.

<sup>103</sup> See I.D. Fomicheva, *Социология СМИ [Sociology of mass media]*, М.: Moscow State University, 2013.

Critical literature on Russian mass media lacks any analysis on the period when Stalin was in power (1941-1953). In practice there were no mass media at all apart from institutional channels of information and, it is a commonly known fact, any alternative thought was openly persecuted and punished. Paradoxically exactly in this period, in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted, with the Art.19 on Freedom of expression. The USSR distanced itself from the Declaration's principals that were "uncomfortable" for Stalin.<sup>104</sup> It was exactly at that time, when authoritarian regime in Russia was flourishing and any opposition to the communist ideology and the USSR politics was toughly suppressed, in such way impeding the development of free journalism and mass media. In other words, in 40-60s of XX century when Europe was embracing these fundamental freedoms, Russia due to the historical circumstances still had not developed the culture of freedom of expression. Nonetheless, it is fair to emphasize that in 1973 Russia ratified the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966, while the USA did it only in 1992. It is an interesting fact that the USA has always promoted elaboration of legislation on human rights, but then has been reluctant to ratify it before allegedly "hostile" actors such as China, Russia or Iran don't ratify them.

Development of political journalism and freedom of expression in Russia represent a contradictory process. The period of the so-called Khrushchev thaw in Russia of early 1960s is characterized by certain liberalization of mass media and of political life in general, but always up to a certain point. For example, it was allowed to study and translate some works from the foreign literature (what was not allowed before), but only after the communist party's approval. In 1960 there was founded an Institute of Social Opinion as a department of the newspaper "*Komsomolskaya Pravda*" (*The Komsomol Truth*). There appeared new for Russia genres of journalism - scientific journalism, social-economic essays and sociology of mass media. However, in 1967 another step backwards was made with toughening of censorship and the Institute was closed. The 1970s are

---

<sup>104</sup> The USSR was among the initiators for elaboration of this document. However, the final draft was not satisfactory for the USSR not only because of Art.19. The USSR proposed to include the provision on supreme power of state on the rights of its citizens, but the proposal was obviously refused by western European democracies. During the voting on the final Declaration in the UN General Assembly, the soviet representative, Andrei Vyshinsky, was among few heads of delegations who abstained, even if he supported some individual provisions. See "Как принимали Всеобщую Декларацию прав человека [How the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted]", *The UN news*, 21.10.2015, URL: <https://news.un.org/ru/audio/2015/10/1030461> (Accessed 18.11.2020).

characterized by another wave of politics' toughening on mass media, many newspapers were transformed into organs of the Central Committee of the Communist party (by 1985, 60 newspapers out of 230 in total).<sup>105</sup>

The month of April 1985, when Gorbachev came to power, became an important milestone in the history of Russian journalism. Gorbachev changed the vector of the party's policy and launched the so-called "Perestroika". One of the main characteristics of that policy was "*glasnost*"<sup>106</sup> and adoption of a number of revolutionary laws on human right, multiparty system and free press (press served as a political instrument of the party until mid-80s). It obviously had positive impact on the freedom of expression in Russia. The number of newspapers increased significantly as well as the number of the copies circulating. There appeared a new type of newspapers – independent newspapers, unprecedented for the USSR ("*Nezavisimaya gazeta*", "*Kuranty*", "*Sovershenno secreto*"). Formally, journalists received the "permission" to criticize the government.<sup>107</sup>

For a major part of the XX century mass media in the USSR served as a reliable (for the soviet ideology) and homogeneous source of social-political information that helped soviet citizens to orient in the current situation in the country and abroad. Under the USSR, "news" was considered the voice of the communist party, often linked to criticism of the West and of capitalism in general. Role of the media consisted in explaining the soviet political programme of the party and in educating citizens' behaviour. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the removal of preliminary censorship, with the establishment of market relations that penetrated cultural, social and political spheres of life, mass media content and functions of mass communication also had to be changed. Decisive measures to establish free and pluralistic mass media and to provide effective "glasnost" (transparency) were needed, but Russian authorities had no experience in the sphere. It meant that Russian authorities had to provide conditions and respective legislation for a propriate functioning of mass media in a new reality. The authorities had to elaborate a new state policy on mass media and to provide effective implementation of freedom of mass media. Dissolution of the USSR in 1991 was

---

<sup>105</sup> I.V. Kuznetsov, *История отечественной журналистики 1917-2000 [History of Russian Journalism 1917-2000]*, Flinta, 2008, Chapter 6, URL: <http://evartist.narod.ru/text8/01.htm> (31.08.2020)

<sup>106</sup> Rus. "transparency, openness".

<sup>107</sup> I.V. Kuznetsov, *История [History]*, Chapter 7.

associated with many hopes regarding human rights and freedoms. In fact, Russia formally became a democratic state, but a long transition period was needed.<sup>108</sup>

In 1990s and 2000s despite severe economic crises, a huge progress was made in the field of democratization in Russia. In 1993 the most liberal constitution in Russian history entered into force: its Art. 29 granted freedom of expression and freedom of the mass media. In 1998 Russia ratified the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950 and began to readjust its legal system according to the Convention provisions. The legal framework for mass media functioning in Russia was established on the wave of democratization on 27 December 1991 by adopting a “Law on mass media”,<sup>109</sup> which is considered to be one of the most liberal laws on mass media. Since then, it was amended and supplemented by corresponding legislation on this regard. It stresses that the operation of a mass media can be stopped only upon the decision of its founders or upon a court decision in case of violation of the Russian legislation on elections and referenda. Amendment of the Law on mass media of 9 February 2009 granted the citizens a right to obtain reliable information on the activity of the organs of the state and local authorities, public organizations and public officials.

The paradox is in the fact that Russia adopted liberal democratic legislation in the sphere, but then did not fully abide by it. Tatyana Beschastna (2013) analyses a significant number of cases brought to the ECHR on alleged violations of Art.10 of the European Convention on Human Rights after the Russian courts had ruled the cases of criticism of the government were defamation.<sup>110</sup> In section II we stated that criticism of the government cannot be subjected to restriction of freedom of expression. We also stated that at the same time this freedom should be exercised without violation of other human rights, and among the reasons for legitimate restrictions of freedom of expression there is also protection of the reputation. Notably, there is such defamation law in the USA. Moreover, Marcus Howard, writing on how victims of fake news can defend themselves, also adds: “Anybody who has communicated the defamatory statement to someone else

---

<sup>108</sup> In practice, this transition period has not been completed yet; current authorities’ reluctance to let a new generation of politicians to come to power impedes this process.

<sup>109</sup> “Law of the Russian Federation ‘On Mass Media’ N 2124-1 of 27.12.1991 (amended on 01.03.2020), *Consultant*, URL: [http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_1511/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_1511/) (accessed 10.09.2020)

<sup>110</sup> T. Beschastna, “Freedom of expression in Russia as it relates to the criticism of the government”, *Emory International Law Review*, Vol. 27, 2013, p. 120.

can be held accountable, including the individuals who originated the defamatory statement as well as those who repeat it under what is called the republication rule”<sup>111</sup>.

An interesting point of view represented by Ya.N. Zasursky, who considers the development of Russian journalism in 1990s – early 2000s in terms of journalism and power.<sup>112</sup> The author claims that liberal reforms of 1990s promised deep changes in the sphere of mass media which were not state political organs any more, but in reality, only a slight casting happened. Russian mass media after the dissolution of the USSR started to represent interests of economic elites reflecting corrupted society.<sup>113</sup>

In brief, progress in development of freedom of press in Russia was fluctuating along its history: periods of relative liberalization were replaced by the periods of restrictions’ toughening. Recent years, unfortunately, are not signed with any breakthrough in the sphere. Moreover, new indirect restrictions on the freedom of expression were introduced on national security grounds: for instance, after Pussy Riot and Bolotnaya Square protests, huge fines were imposed on organizers for non-sanctioned by the government demonstrations; non-governmental organizations financed from abroad are recognized as “foreign agents” and the state security structures can block websites that are believed to undermine national security. Such measures instead undermine people’s credibility to the government and fuels social discontent with such policies. Searching to avoid damage of politicians’ image from abroad, they discredit themselves from inside. In other words, Russian journalism today is still heavily influenced by the USSR legacy of communist ideology. Compared to European democratic countries, Russian citizens are not educated fundamental principles of civil society and human rights. Civil activists, however, promote elaboration of new legislation on freedom on press and mass media. For instance, in 2009, 48 editors and leading journalists from 19 European countries elaborated and signed European Charter on Freedom of Press, among whom there were three Russian journalists (from *Chastniy Korrespondent* and *Novaya gazeta* newspapers). The Charter consists of 10 fundamental principles, aimed at “the freedom of press from government interference”, including

---

<sup>111</sup> M.E. Howard, *How journalists and the public shape our democracy*, Georgia Humanities. Atlanta, Georgia, 2019, p. 38.

<sup>112</sup> Ya.N. Zasursky, *Искушение свободой. Российская журналистика 1990-2004 [Temptation of freedom. Russian Journalism 1990-2004]*, М.: Издательство Московского университета, 2004, p. 125.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

impermissibility of censorship, protection of journalists from surveillance, non-interference of the state institutions with the freedom of journalists to access information, “free access to all national and foreign media and sources of information” and some others.<sup>114</sup>

Main achievement of the post-soviet period was at least “partial” ensuring of the freedom of speech in Russia, but still certain laws in force can be considered as indirect restrictions of this principle. For instance, independent mass media are taxed by the state, at the same time public structures are authorized to subsidize “socially important mass media”, and it is the state to define which mass media can be granted this status. According to V. Ivanov such policy impedes development of independent journalism in Russia.<sup>115</sup> Ivanov positively assess political decisions of the state authorities on expansion of citizens’ access to the information on public organizations and public officials, but stresses that the state should play a more active role in promoting independent newspapers and should provide appropriate conditions for that.<sup>116</sup>

In contrast to Russia, development of the freedom of press in the USA can be described as a linear process, except for single cases. The USA does not practice taxation of independent mass media. In fact, formally there are no state mass media in the USA, they are all privately-owned. It does not mean, however, that the US mass media are objective and free of bias (we have found out that pure impartiality just as pure democracy does not exist). Nevertheless, there are few complaints about lack of freedom of expression in the USA. Recent studies also note that in last years, particularly under the presidency of Donald Trump, American mass media (and it is not a feature of the US media, but a general trend all over the world) tend to be less objective and more biased, suffice it to remember fake news scandals. As a result of political manipulation some claim there is a notable decline in freedom of mass media in the USA. A research conducted by Knight Foundation in 2018 also reveals that “an average of 62% of the news the US adult see on television, read in newspapers or hear on the radio is biased” and “a higher 80% of the news they see on social media is biased”<sup>117</sup>.

---

<sup>114</sup> “European Charter on Freedom of Press”, *Press Freedom*, 29.05.2009, URL: <http://www.pressfreedom.eu/en/index.php> (accessed 10.09.2020).

<sup>115</sup> V. Ivanov, “State policy in the sphere of Mass Media”, *Politbook*, 3, 2015, p.157.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* P.176

<sup>117</sup> “Perceived accuracy and bias in the news media”, *Knight Foundation*, 2018, p. 3, URL: <https://knightfoundation.org/wp->

## **5. Conclusions on freedom of expression in the American and Russian mass media in the digital era**

All in all, journalism in the USA and in Russia was developing along different lines. The two states with two different political and social systems applied different conceptual and legal approaches to the mass media. The USA tend to use mechanisms of Libertarian theory of mass communication and the instruments of the theory of social responsibility according to Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm's classification. Russia instead has always tended to practice authoritarian measures on mass media, but recently there appeared also some features of participatory theory, that were promoted mainly due to the spread of the so-called new mass media. Development of press and mass media in Russia is a contradictory process, which is strongly associated with development of social thought. During the whole history of Russia, the state controlled the press and the mass media. The USA, being the longest-standing democracy in the world, instead, established the principle of freedom of expression and press as a fundamental human right yet in the XVIII century, and it was mainly exercised without serious complaints of its violation; whereas in Russia the principle of freedom of press was not established until the end of the XX century.

Critical literature on political journalism in the USA is mainly concerned with the role of mass media in the electoral process. The majority of the authors dealing with the history of the US political journalism focus on mass media economics. They even call mass media "a free marketplace of ideas", reflecting its capitalistic nature. They note that journalism in the USA from the very beginning was a big business and was concerned with commerce. Whereas in Russia, journalism was primarily associated with ideology for major part of XX century's history. In the last 20 years there appeared a huge bulk of critical literature on Russian journalism and mass media that are considered in the context of freedom of mass media and state power. The very fact that there are a lot of works in free access that criticize the authorities and their policies on mass media, however, proves that there is freedom of speech in Russia.

In the mid-1990s both countries entered a new stage of mass media and journalism – the period of digitalisation of news and transition of main news newspapers to the

---

[content/uploads/2020/03/KnightFoundation\\_AccuracyandBias\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.knightfoundation.org/content/uploads/2020/03/KnightFoundation_AccuracyandBias_Report_FINAL.pdf) (accessed 16.09.2020).



Internet. It significantly expanded the range of audience that can be reached and accelerated transmission of information.<sup>118</sup> Greater outreach may provide greater influence that mass media might have on the audience. That is why comparison of political news coverage in Russia and in the USA is also interesting. Despite easy accessibility of information due to the Internet, few people outside Russian-speaking countries have access to the information transmitted in Russia because of language barrier. The US sources allegedly have a benefit in this sense as much more people can read news in English than in Russian. Or it is better saying that it is more probable that the US mass media might have any influence on the Russian-speaking audience rather than the Russian media on the American one. Moreover, target audience that can be reached in such way are people who used to read the news on the Internet and who read it in English as well – in other words, it is pretty young and well-educated people, vulnerable to agitation and discontent with the authorities. Potentially, they can be a target audience for information warfare.

Unfortunately, the media agencies do not contribute to confidence building but instead enhance the polarization of views. My research into Russian online mass media platforms showed that only government-owned media sources have versions in English (in practice only news with certain international dimension is translated and obviously promote only Russian official position) while none of the Russian independent news agencies have an English version. It makes some think there is still no freedom of speech in Russia. It is unknown whether the fact is explained by those agencies' orientation to exclusively Russian-speaking audience or it became a subject of unjustified and illegal restriction of freedom of expression or traits of Development Media theory, considered in the first section of this chapter. A notable detail, however, is that under the Russian legislation, Russian mass media need to obtain permission from the government to be published abroad.<sup>119</sup>

Moreover, there are some evidences of the freedom of speech being violated unreasonably in Russia. The case of firing of Galina Timchenko, chief editor of an independent Russian media *Lenta.ru*, can be an illustrative example that allows us to draw such a conclusion. Timchenko had been working for *Lenta.ru* since its foundation in 1999

---

<sup>118</sup> W. J. Buxton, "The political economy of communications research", in R. E. Babe (ed.), *Information and communication in economics*, Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic, 2015, pp. 147–174.

<sup>119</sup> See V. Ivanov, "State policy".

and she became a chief editor in 2004. On 12 March 2014 (accidentally just four days before the referendum in Crimea on its “reunification” with Russia) she was fired after *Roskommadzor* (The Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media responsible for censorship in Russian media) had issued a warning to *Lenta.ru* for having published an interview with Andrei Tarasenko, one of the leaders of Ukrainian ultra-national organization *Right Sector*, with a hyperlink to an article of another leader of *Right Sector*, Dmitriy Yarosh, who is accused by the Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation of incitement to terrorism. Timchenko was replaced with Alexey Goreslavsky, a political journalist close to Kremlin (he remained in office of *Lenta.ru* chief editor until 2017 and from February 2018 he starts working directly for President’s Putin administration as a responsible for social projects). Restriction of freedom of press for national security reasons is legitimate under the International law, but it is doubted whether firing of the chief editor was a proportionate measure. The move was vigorously condemned and 70 staff-members of *Lenta.ru* signed a statement saying: “Firing of independent chief editor and appointment of a person directed by Kremlin violate the Russian law on mass media.<sup>120</sup> In last two years the space of free journalism in Russia has dramatically narrowed. Some editors are governed directly from Kremlin, others – through its curators, while the rest are just terrified of losing their jobs. A lot of independent media had to be closed in these days, many more will be closed in the nearest future”<sup>121</sup>. 39 out of 80 staff members of *Lenta.ru* resigned. Thereafter together with Galina Timchenko they founded a new independent online newspaper *Meduza*, which is based in Latvia – the EU member-state – to avoid such problems with censorship (this news agency has versions in Russian and English). We cannot conclude whether publishing of an interview with a Ukrainian ultra-national leader may undermine Russian public security since it is Russia recognized him as a terrorist, but probably jurists can answer whether the Timchenko’s firing was legal and in line with Russian civil or labour laws.

---

<sup>120</sup> “Law of the Russian Federation ‘On Mass Media’ N 2124-1 of 27.12.1991 (amended on 01.03.2020), *Consultant*, URL: [http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_1511/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_1511/) (accessed 10.09.2020).

<sup>121</sup> “Мамут сменил главного редактора Lenta.ru [Mamut replaced the editor-in-chief of Lenta.ru]”, *Rbc*, 12.03.2014 URL: <https://www.rbc.ru/society/12/03/2014/5704192f9a794761c0ce7c16> (accessed 12.09.2020).

Another illustrative example occurred in 2018, when Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) launched a judicial process against the messenger *Telegram* after its founder Pavel Durov's refusal to store and provide upon request users' correspondence in implementation of the Yarovaya law. Durov said that FSB requirements were violating Russian constitution's provision on privacy of correspondence. Despite that, access to *Telegram* in Russia was restricted and appeal to the Russian Supreme court was rejected causing mass protests for freedom of the Internet. In June 2020 Roskomnadzor lifted its ban on Telegram under condition that it cooperates with FSB to combat extremist incitement. It would be fair to note, however, that still today there a lot of channels on Russian modern politics in Telegram that openly criticize government<sup>122</sup> but only incitement to radical actions is prohibited which is in line with international law provisions on freedom of expression.

It seems an oxymoron, but on 12<sup>th</sup> March – the day of Timchenko's firing – the World Day against Cyber Censorship is celebrated. On this occasion, right on 12th March 2014, international non-profit and non-governmental organization Reporters without Borders published a report "*Enemies of the Internet*" listing a number of security structures and companies that endanger the freedom expression on the Internet in various countries of the world and providing some recommendations to prevent it. Russia's FSB was indicated among the "security agencies that have gone far beyond their core duties by censoring or spying on journalists and other information providers"<sup>123</sup>. It should be mentioned, however, that the report also criticized some western governments and companies. For instance, it criticized Military Programming Law adopted by France in December 2013 in circumvention of human rights groups' warnings – the law, that allows the French authorities to spy on phones and Internet communications, - and the US NSA for using the services of French company Vupen to exploit security flaws for spying. In other words, there is also evidence that the right to freedom of expression is restricted unjustifiably even in western democracies and democratic regime does not guarantee a full implementation of the principle of freedom of expression and press.

---

<sup>122</sup> Such channels on *Telegram* as *Архитектура власти* (@archvlasti), *Политджойстик* (@politjoystik), *Кстату* (@kstati\_p), *СерпомПО* (@SerpomPo), *Теория элит* (@theory\_elit), *Новый век* (@Wek\_ru), *Страна и народ* (@strana\_i\_narod), *Антискрепа* (@antiskrepa), *Малюта Скуратов* (@mskuratov).

<sup>123</sup> "Enemies of the Internet", *Reporters without borders report for freedom of information*, 2014, p. 5, URL: <https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/2014-rsf-rapport-enemies-of-the-internet.pdf> (accessed 15.09.2020).

Given the premise that historical background influences the current state of mass media in the two countries, the process of news digitalisation also proceeds differently in the USA and in Russia. The USA and other western European democracies with long history of freedom of press simply applied existing political, economic and social freedoms to the online platforms. Some authors, however, claim that the state have a total control over the actors on the Internet as it became easier to trace them. For example, De Gregorio argues that it is a mistake to extend “a liberal constitutional approach to online platforms”, as it cancels separation between private and public sectors, constituting “sovereign power of the state over online actors”.<sup>124</sup> It was mentioned that extension of freedom of expression to the Internet facilitated the spread of falsified and fake news. The case is slightly different in Russia as in 1990s, after the dissolution of the USSR, first, it had to develop the culture of freedom of expression and press in general and at the same elaborate the ways to apply it to the Internet. There are few works about contemporary political journalism in the USA and freedom of expression there because nothing particularly new happens in this field in the USA. While there are a lot works written on the Russian mass media that are considered in different aspects – new mass media, comparisons with the mass media of other European countries, etc. Democratization cannot occur in one night. What is more important, liberal laws cannot change the mind-set of people that for centuries had been living under the state control. That is the explanation of such a close attention of the researchers and academics both Russian and foreign to these current processes in Russia.

---

<sup>124</sup> G. De Gregorio, “From Constitutional Freedoms to the Power of the Platforms: Protecting Fundamental Rights Online in the Algorithmic Society”, *European Journal of Legal Studies*, Vol. II, No.2, 2019, pp.66-103.

## **Chapter II. Media coverage of escalation of the Ukrainian crisis as a perspective for the analysis of changing relationships between Russia and the USA**

### **1. News coverage of the failure of the Association agreement between the EU and Ukraine in the *New York Times***

This chapter compares news coverage of escalation of the conflict in Ukraine that consequently led to the incorporation of Crimea in Russia in order to identify mass media's role in formation of the attitudes to the situation among the people of respective countries – Russia and the USA. The first chapter stressed that the language, the rhetoric and the news framing used in political news coverage are the key in understanding how the media wants certain situations to be perceived by the audience. It explains why some countries impose state control on the media: they want certain situations to be covered in a determined way, that is presumed to be beneficial for their interests. This section primarily focuses on how the *New York Times* framed the issue of the signing of the Association deal between Ukraine and the EU some weeks before the agreement's failure.

The *New York Times* initially framed the Association deal with the EU as Ukraine's choice between Russia and the EU. Given its geographical position between Russia and Europe, strong polarization of the society, and relative weakness in political and economic terms,<sup>125</sup> Ukraine has always been a buffer zone for the geopolitical confrontation between its stronger neighbors finding itself in a dependent position of a “junior ally”.<sup>126</sup> The major part of the reports by the *New York Times* on the situation were not about the agreement itself but hypothesized the potential consequences of the agreement for the relationships between Russia, Ukraine, and the EU.

---

<sup>125</sup> After the dissolution of the USSR Ukraine became independent but profoundly polarized. This polarization was expressed in terms of religion, language, and political heterogeneity. State-building and the establishment of an independent national state and national identity in Ukraine were impeded by many historical, social, and political factors. See: L. Grinin, “Исторические и геополитические причины социально-политического кризиса на Украине” [Historical and geopolitical reasons of social-political crisis in Ukraine], *Istoriya i sovremennost*, №2(22), 2015.

<sup>126</sup> V. Dyadichenko, “Правобережная и левобережная Украина” [Right-bank and left-bank Ukraine], in В. Ронамареv (ed.), *История СССР с древнейших времен и до наших дней в 12 т.* [History of the USSR since ancient times to our days], Moscow, Nauka, 1967, vol. 3, pp. 615-620.

The association agreements with third countries are a wide-spread instrument of the EU geopolitics aimed at deepening cooperation between the parties, involving third countries into the sphere of the EU influence. By that time the EU had already concluded similar bilateral agreements with Turkey, some countries in the Western Balkans and in Southern Mediterranean.<sup>127</sup> The terms of such agreements differ, but usually regard political and economic areas of cooperation and aim at legislative approximation and deepening of political and economic ties between the signatories.

It should be stressed that the EU was among the first to establish formal relations with independent Ukraine after the USSR's collapse.<sup>128</sup> Yet in 1994 the two sides concluded the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). On the wave of the EU's enlargement on the East, Ukraine became part of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in 2005. The summit in Vilnius scheduled for the end of November 2013 was supposed to celebrate the EU-Ukraine Association agreement. The Association agreement was presumed to substitute previous accords. The draft document was more comprehensive, encompassing more areas for cooperation and gradual integration between the two parties. This reckless expression – “gradual integration” - became decisive in causing violent clashes after the refusal of the deal in November 2013: in Ukraine, the agreement was widely seen as the first step for Ukraine's membership in the EU in the future. Mass media were widely encouraging such aspirations. But not only the Ukrainian media are to blame. The American *New York Times*, for instance, also reported on 1 October 2013, that the agreement “would deepen <Ukraine's> integration with Europe”<sup>129</sup>, while another article published the same day concluded openly: “We look forward eagerly to Ukraine's first step toward E.U. membership”.<sup>130</sup>

---

<sup>127</sup> M. Maresceau, “Bilateral Agreements concluded by the European Community”, *Collected Courses of the Hague Academy of International Law*, vol. 309, 2004, pp. 311-422.

<sup>128</sup> See O. Pavlyuk, *The European Union and Ukraine: The Need for a New Vision. Policy Paper Based on the Study on the Current State and Prospects of Relations between the European Union and Ukraine*, Kyiv, EastWest Institute, 1999.

<sup>129</sup> S. Pifer, “Crunch Time for Kiev on Europe”, *New York Times*, 1.10.2013, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/11/opinion/crunch-time-for-kiev-on-europe.html?searchResultPosition=8> (accessed 8.01.2021).

<sup>130</sup> N. Ferguson and P. Barbieri, “Ukraine's Bumpy Road to Europe”, *New York Times*, 1.10.2013, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/02/opinion/ukraines-bumpy-road-to-europe.html?searchResultPosition=3> (accessed 8.01.2021).

The deal itself did not exclude the possibility for Ukrainian joining the EU in the future, but experts agree it is unlikely that the EU had such an intention.<sup>131</sup> The oldest EU-members argued that enlargements of 2004 and 2007 were “necessary”, while further enlargement on the East would weaken the union. Germany and France were reported to experience an “expansion fatigue”, but it was stressed that despite the crisis in the eurozone Ukraine was still very welcomed under the excuse of promotion of democratic principles and human rights in third countries. However, the Association deal with Ukraine was not that much about Ukraine. The *New York Times* directly called it “the ferocious tug-of-war between Russia and the European Union”<sup>132</sup>.

The daily magazine strongly affirmed that the only right decision would be a signing of this agreements. It stressed that the failure of the deal would mean “a significant defeat for Kiev and, personally for President Yanukovich”<sup>133</sup> and “the historic death embrace of a reborn Russian empire”<sup>134</sup>; the successful signing, on the contrary, would be the freeing from dependency on Russia. The *New York Times* also stressed that in case Ukraine chooses Europe, this move would be irreversible. In other words, at the beginning of November, the daily saw the conclusion of the Association Agreement as a pivot of Ukraine to the West and the cessation of relations with Russia.

Relations between Russia and Ukraine were not easy,<sup>135</sup> but despite all the existing controversies Russia and Ukraine had always had strong political, economic, and cultural ties, as Ukraine had been a part of Tsarist Russia, the Russian Empire, and then the

---

<sup>131</sup> O. Shumylo-Tapiola, “Why Does Ukraine Matter to the EU?”, *Carnegie Europe - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 13.04.2013, URL: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2013/04/16/why-does-ukraine-matter-to-eu-pub-51522> (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>132</sup> S. Schmemmann, “Waiting to See if Ukraine Tilts East or West”, *New York Times*, 16.11.2013, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/17/opinion/sunday/waiting-to-see-if-ukraine-tilts-east-or-west.html?searchResultPosition=5> (accessed 8.01.2021).

<sup>133</sup> S. Pifer, “Crunch”, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/11/opinion/crunch-time-for-kiiev-on-europe.html?searchResultPosition=8> (accessed 8.01.2021).

<sup>134</sup> N. Ferguson and P. Barbieri, “Ukraine’s Bumpy Road to Europe”, *New York Times*, 1.10.2013, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/02/opinion/ukraines-bumpy-road-to-europe.html?searchResultPosition=3> (accessed 8.01.2021).

<sup>135</sup> See V. Masnenko, “Мифологема «братских народов» как идеальная модель русско-украинских отношений в советской/российской историографии” [Mythologem of “brother nations” as ideal model of Russian-Ukrainian relations in soviet/Russian historiography], *Studia Historica Gedanensia*, vol. IX, 2018; V. Sidorov, “Украинский национализм: левый курс и правые колебания” [Ukrainian nationalism: left course and right swings], *Russkaya Planeta*, 9.11.2013, URL: <http://rusplt.ru/policy/ukrainskiy-natsionalizmleviy-kurs-i-pravyye-kolebaniya.html> (accessed: 9.01.2021).

USSR.<sup>136</sup> What is more important, Ukraine was strongly dependent on Russia economically, particularly, on gas and oil supplies.<sup>137</sup> In such a way, according to the *New York Times* the deal would facilitate ending of Ukraine's economic dependence on Russia. On 5 November 2013, the *New York Times* reported that Chevron signed an agreement with Ukraine "to develop oil and gas in western Ukraine",<sup>138</sup> stressing it would render Ukraine independent from the Russian supply of raw materials, but it was also stressed that the Ukrainian oligarchs were reluctant to it.

Indeed, Ukraine faced a challenging choice – on the one hand, there was an Association agreement with the EU, on the other - the Eurasian Economic Union, headed by Russia. The Eurasian Union founded in 2015, initially was designed as a counterweight to the EU, but in reality, did not prove to be competitive with Europe<sup>139</sup>. At first sight, partnership with Europe looked more attractive, but on closer scrutiny, it was not true. There was not even a common accord among the Ukrainian population on whether Ukraine should sign the agreement with Europe: according to the polls, about 40% of Ukraine's citizens were in favor of association with the EU, and about 40% were in favor of Eurasian Economic Union.<sup>140</sup>

The Association agreement with the EU contained some provisions that Ukraine could hardly accept. Among other conditions, it required Ukraine to conduct some liberal democratic and institutional reforms. The article with a catchy title "Ukraine's risky bet"

---

<sup>136</sup> See V. Stoyakin, "Как формировались границы Украины" [How the Ukrainian borders were forming], *Politicheskij Tehnolog*, 27.11.2013, URL: <http://stoyakin.org.ua/2013/11/kak-formirovalis-granicy-ukrainy/> (accessed 9.01.2021).

<sup>137</sup> Russian gas supplies to Ukraine are one of the main issues of divergence between the two countries. Ukraine had a big debt for gas supplies and insisted that the prices were unreasonably high. Still today, Russia depends on its raw materials' exports, which account for 50% of the Russian GDP. Russia had repeatedly warned Ukraine it would suspend gas supplies if Ukraine does not pay the debt. The US media on several occasions referred to these "threats" as Russian pressure on Ukraine to withdraw from negotiations on association with the EU. See: F. Umbach, "Конфликт вокруг газа между Россией, Украиной и ЕС: кто может оказаться в самом большом проигрыше?" [Conflict on gas between Russia, Ukraine and the EU: who might become the biggest loser?], *NATO Review*, 9.5.2014, URL: <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/ru/articles/2014/05/09/konflikt-vokrug-gaza-meyodu-rossiej-ukrainoj-i-es-kto-moyoet-okazat-sya-v-samom-bol-shom-proigrishe/index.html> (accessed 13.12.2020).

<sup>138</sup> R. Stanley Reed and A. Kramer, "Chevron and Ukraine Set Shale Gas Deal", *New York Times*, 5.11.2013, URL: [Chevron and Ukraine Set Shale Gas Deal - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/05/us/politics/chevron-ukraine-shale-gas-deal.html) (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>139</sup> M. Golam and M. Monowar, "Eurasian Economic Union: Evolution, challenges and possible future directions", *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 2018.

<sup>140</sup> "Poll: Ukrainian Public Split over EU, Customs Union Options," *Kyiv Post*, 26.11.2013.



published in the *New York Times* on 3 November 2013, argues that all these reforms were “designed to end the system of payoffs and patronage that benefits the president’s family and friends”,<sup>141</sup> in such way openly claiming that Ukraine was an undemocratic and corrupt country. The article starts with a pretty strong statement: “Ukraine is leaving Russia for Europe”,<sup>142</sup> but by the end of the article the statement does not sound convincing. It mentions some advantages of the partnership between Ukraine and Europe, but stresses they would not be immediate. In practice, the immediate consequence would be a protracted economic crisis. Free trade with Europe would be harmful to Ukraine as its goods would result uncompetitive compared to the European ones. Breaking up with Russia, Ukraine would lose much more than it would gain from the partnership with Europe. It was estimated that Ukraine would “lose at least \$3 billion per annum in trade with Russia”,<sup>143</sup> while saving only \$500 million annually on customs duties. Europe had probably underestimated Ukraine’s economic situation as it did not plan to provide Ukraine with substantial financial support: the EU offered only \$610 million for Ukraine to conduct institutional reforms once the agreement is signed. The article headlined “How the E.U. Pushed Ukraine East”, that was published later, in early December 2013, also notes some miscalculations the EU made in preparation of the agreement. The EU ignored the peculiarity of Ukraine’s politics which consists in its inseparability of politics from the cultural context. First, the terms of the agreement excluded the compatibility of the association with the EU and participation in the Eurasian Union, without taking into consideration strong economic and cultural ties between Russia and Ukraine. Second, the EU was stressing the necessity to embrace European values while undervaluing Ukraine’s Slavic identity. And third, the EU ignored Ukrainian religious values pushing too hard on the European liberal agenda, alien to Ukraine. The author of that article Nicolai N. Petro concludes: “Instead of approaching these negotiations as a partnership, the European Union behaved more like the owner of a country club”.<sup>144</sup> Nicolai N. Petro is one of few

---

<sup>141</sup> M. Trudolyubov, “Ukraine’s risky bet”, *New York Times*, 3.11.2013, URL: [Opinion | Ukraine's Risky Bet - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](#) (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> A. Tooze, *Crashed: how a decade of financial crises changed the world*, New York, Viking, 2018, p. 386.

<sup>144</sup> N. Petro, “How the E.U. Pushed Ukraine East”, *New York Times*, 3.12.2013. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/04/opinion/how-the-eu-pushed-ukraine-east.html?searchResultPosition=7> (accessed 14.12.2020).

American scholars<sup>145</sup>, who did not blame Russia for pressuring Ukraine to withdraw but instead talked about the EU's strategic errors.

Yet in mid-November 2013, the *New York Times* was positively assessing the chance to reach the agreement. The article published on 16 November 2013, firmly stated that the Ukrainian Parliament voted in favor of the Association Agreement.<sup>146</sup> Nonetheless, just one week later, Ukraine announced its decision to withdraw from the talks. The move followed the letter from the IMF received on 20 November 2013, which said the IMF could offer only a \$5 billion loan, and in exchange demanded significant budget cuts, 40% increase in heating and gas tariffs for the households, and 25% devaluation<sup>147</sup> - unacceptable conditions for an aid package to Ukraine. President Yanukovich was reported as saying that "he could not sign the agreements with Europe because of potential economic damage to eastern Ukraine"<sup>148</sup>.

While before the surprising announcement the *New York Times* was claiming that the deal was more a gesture of goodwill on the part of Europe than a mutually beneficial agreement, the rhetoric now slightly changed. The deal was called the EU's "most important foreign policy initiative" and "an ambitious effort to lock former Soviet republics on a trajectory of changes",<sup>149</sup> stressing that the European leaders remained disappointed with this decision.

According to the *New York Times*, the EU was offering Ukraine something concrete, while Russia was only threatening. That is not true. Russia, in turn, had an alternative plan for Ukraine: on 21 November 2013, President Putin offered Ukraine "a gas contract on concessionary terms and a \$15 billion loan"<sup>150</sup>, the only condition would be joining the Eurasian Economic Union, and Yanukovich accepted. As a consequence,

---

<sup>145</sup> Despite his name sounds Russian or Ukrainian, he is an American scholar born in 1958 in Germany who had even assisted President George Bush on policy on the USSR.

<sup>146</sup> S. Schmemmann, "Waiting to See if Ukraine Tilts East or West", *New York Times*, 16.11.2013, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/17/opinion/sunday/waiting-to-see-if-ukraine-tilts-east-or-west.html?searchResultPosition=5> (accessed 8.01.2021).

<sup>147</sup> "Press Release: Statement by IMF Mission to Ukraine", *IMF press release*, no. 13/419, 31.10.2013, URL: <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/14/01/49/pr13419> (accessed 9.01.2021).

<sup>148</sup> D. Herszenhorn, "Ukraine Blames I.M.F. for Halt to Agreements With Europe", *New York Times*, 22.11.2013, URL: [Ukraine Blames I.M.F. for Halt to Agreements With Europe - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/22/ukraine-blames-i.m.f.-for-halt-to-agreements-with-europe.html) (accessed 9.01.2021).

<sup>149</sup> D. Herszenhorn, "Facing Russian Threat, Ukraine Halts Plans for Deals with E.U.", *New York Times*, 21.11.2013, URL: [Facing Russian Threat, Ukraine Halts Plans for Deals with E.U. - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/21/facing-russian-threat-ukraine-halts-plans-for-deals-with-e.u.html) (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>150</sup> A. Tooze, *Crashed*, p. 386.

the *New York Times* depicted President Yanukovich as a “corrupt”, “cynic” and “unsavory” pro-Russian president and a “crafty double-dealer”, who was unpopular among the Ukrainian population and whose only hope to be re-elected in 2015 was signing the deal with the EU:

*If Mr. Yanukovich is to deliver a more prosperous future for Ukraine, and pacify its increasingly restless people, he needs to go to Vilnius committed to signing the European Union association agreement. Anything else is a betrayal of the hopes of a nation.*<sup>151</sup>

In the following weeks, the *New York Times* focused on covering protests in Kiev in support of the association with the EU, calling them “Ukraine’s battle for the future”.<sup>152</sup> Covering clashes, it was continuously stressing “excessive brutality of the police”,<sup>153</sup> posting photos of police riots in confirmation. It also stressed that “hundreds of thousands of protestors” were asking for President Yanukovich’s resignation, impeachment, and even imprisonment.<sup>154</sup> The Ukrainian former Interior minister Yuri V. Lutsenko described the events as a “revolution”<sup>155</sup>. As for the reactions that followed from the USA, the *New York Times* reported that the Secretary of State John Kerry “skipped a long-anticipated visit to Kiev”<sup>156</sup> in a sign of disappointment with Ukraine’s decision not to sign the agreement. The US authorities adopted a wait-and-see attitude and no significant efforts to facilitate the resolution of the crisis or to somehow interfere in it had been made at that time.

---

<sup>151</sup> R. Wolczuk, “Ukraine on the Brink”, *New York Times*, 27.11.2013, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/28/opinion/ukraine-on-the-brink.html?searchResultPosition=2> (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>152</sup> D. Herszenhorn and A. Kramer, “Ukraine Protests Persist as Bid to Oust Government Fails”, *New York Times*, 3.12.2020, URL: [Ukraine Protests Persist as Bid to Oust Government Fails - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/03/world/europe/ukraine-protests-persist-as-bid-to-oust-government-fails.html) (accessed 14.12.2020).

<sup>153</sup> D. Herszenhorn, “Ukrainians Back in Street to Support E.U. Accord”, *New York Times*, 28.11.2013, URL: [Ukrainians Back in Street to Support E.U. Accord - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/28/world/europe/ukrainians-back-in-street-to-support-e-u-accord.html) (accessed 14.12.2020).

<sup>154</sup> D. Herszenhorn, “Thousands Demand Resignation of Ukraine Leader”, *New York Times*, 1.12.2013, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/02/world/europe/thousands-of-protesters-in-ukraine-demand-leaders-resignation.html?searchResultPosition=6> (accessed 14.12.2020).

<sup>155</sup> “Vladimir Putin Clings to the Past”, *New York Times*, 19.11.2013, URL: [Opinion | Vladimir Putin Clings to the Past - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/19/world/europe/putin-clings-to-the-past.html) (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>156</sup> D. Herszenhorn and A. Kramer, “Ukraine Protests”.

## 2. The image of Russia in the New York Times on the brink of the Ukrainian crisis

In order to identify whether the rhetoric in the *New York Times* on Russia changed as the conflict was escalating and the turmoil gripped also Crimea, this section deals with the image of Russia in the *New York Times* during the early stage of the conflict.

Given a better situation with the freedom of press in the USA compared to the Russian one, the *New York Times* was free to openly criticize Russian politics on Ukraine. It should be emphasized that even before the incorporation of Crimea, the *New York Times* created a negative image of Russia as a state hostile to democratic principles, which was interfering in the internal affairs of other ex-soviet sovereign countries. Apart from Ukraine, the EU was negotiating similar association deals also with several other former Soviet republics - Armenia, Georgia, and Moldova. It is a common knowledge that Russia was reluctant to losing its ex-allies and tried to return them to its orbit agitating them to join the customs union created in 2010, which in 2015 became the Eurasian Economic Union. The *New York Times* took a harsh tone on Russia, claiming it was still tied to the Cold War principles of politics. It was continuously reporting on the Russian alleged threats of economic sanctions against Ukraine, arguing that previously it had already banned imports of Moldovan wine and blackmailed Armenia with military support in the territorial dispute with Azerbaijan. It was said Russia would ban gas imports and impose new customs inspections on imports from Ukraine in case it disobeys. The *New York Times* used very strong statements, arguing that Russia was “bullying” its neighbors, “whispering threats and gripping throats”<sup>157</sup> through severe economic sanctions, “bludgeoning former vassals into continued economic dependence”.<sup>158</sup> The article published on 11 November 2013, states that the threats of sanctions on the part of Russia led to Ukraine’s reluctance for the agreement: “While Ukraine seems to lean toward Europe, Gazprom has taken a hard line in demanding month-by-month payments <of loans>, which gave rise to the dispute”<sup>159</sup>. Russia had been reported as denying any

---

<sup>157</sup> D. Herszenhorn, “Russia Putting a Strong Arm on Neighbors”, *New York Times*, 22.10.2013, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/23/world/europe/russia-putting-a-strong-arm-on-neighbors.html?searchResultPosition=23> (accessed 9.01.2021).

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> A. Kramer, “Lawyer for Ukraine Opposition Leader Is Questioned”, *New York Times*, 11.11.2013, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/12/world/europe/lawyer-for-ukraine-opposition-leader-is-questioned.html?searchResultPosition=17> (accessed 13.12.2020).

pressure on its ex-allies and only warning them that association with Europe would lead to political unrest and severe economic crisis.

The closer was the summit, the harsher became the rhetoric in media. The *New York Times* said Russia was opposing Ukrainian Association with the EU and criticized the Eurasian Economic Union, saying it was “a coerced association with no standards of behavior except for fealty to Moscow”<sup>160</sup>.

Then the rhetoric shifted from the critics of the Russian policy of economic and political pressure to President Putin’s personality. The *New York Times* which on several occasions accused Russia of “bullying its former allies”, in its turn, was bullying Russian President Putin:

*Mr. Putin has become increasingly emotional in asserting that Ukraine belongs with Russia, and only with Russia. His pet international project is a Eurasian Union, which he depicts as a sort of eastern E.U. but Western critics view as an incipient Soviet reincarnation.*<sup>161</sup>

President Putin was accused of interference in internal affairs of ex-soviet republics, and even of nationalist sentiments.<sup>162</sup> Some three months before the events in Crimea, Russia had already been continuously accused of the violation of international law.<sup>163</sup>

It was curious to read the comments to an editorial article that was very hostile and even aggressive on the Russian President, to understand the readers’ attitudes to it. Surprisingly, opinions were divided into two categories. The first group was sharing the general tone of the article; approximately two-thirds of the readers that have commented on this article fit this category. There were comments like “<Putin is> an egomaniacal latter-day Joseph Stalin”, “Vladimir Putin, AKA ‘The Hulk’, has much to learn about

---

<sup>160</sup> “Ukraine Backs Down”, *New York Times*, 28.11.2013, URL: [Opinion | Ukraine Backs Down - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/28/opinion/ukraine-backs-down.html) (accessed 9.01.2021).

<sup>161</sup> A. Kramer, “Lawyer”, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/12/world/europe/lawyer-for-ukraine-opposition-leader-is-questioned.html?searchResultPosition=17> (accessed 13.12.2020).

<sup>162</sup> “Vladimir Putin Clings to the Past”, *New York Times*, 19.11.2013, URL: [Opinion | Vladimir Putin Clings to the Past - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/19/opinion/vladimir-putin-clings-to-the-past.html) (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>163</sup> It is a reference to the principle of non-interference into internal affairs of other countries. The principle is incorporated in the Article 2 of the UN Charter on “refraining from threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any State”, the Declaration on Principles of International Law of 1970, Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe of 1975 on “friendly relations and cooperation among states” and in particular respect to relations between Russia and Ukraine – in the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation of 31 May 1997.

*participation in geo-politics*”, “*Putin's harm to Russia is strangulation to make it fit the Cold War model in the 21st Century*”, “*Mr. Putin clings to the past of czarist Russia and he is the new czar*”, etc. The second group was in a sense defending Russia and blaming the *New York Times* for “dirty propaganda”: “*Russia is doing what it thinks it needs to, protecting its interest in the region*”, “*It is not that Putin is so wicked and brilliant, these helpless countries are begging for their domination*”, “*America and Europe develop relations with neighboring countries <...>. Why Russia cannot do the same?*”, “*<...>American regime wish to embroil Russia with friendly republics of ex-USSR, providing on these states political and economic pressure. Unfortunately, the West still lives in the epoch of the Cold War, seeking ‘resist Russia’*”, etc.<sup>164</sup>

Even when Yanukovych explained his decision to suspend negotiations with the EU with the agreement’s disadvantageous terms for Ukraine’s economy, the *New York Times* continued blaming Russia for the failure, arguing that it was Russian threats of trade sanctions to be decisive in Yanukovych’s decision.<sup>165</sup> The title of an article of 21 November 2013, “Facing Russian Threat, Ukraine Halts Plans for Deals with E.U.”<sup>166</sup> speaks for itself. It admitted that the deterioration of relations between Russia and Ukraine that would inevitably follow signing of the deal would certainly worsen the already severe economic situation in Ukraine, at the same times it quoted some representatives of the European Commission as saying that the decision was the result of a “brutal pressure” and “unjustified economic measures” on the part of Russia. Another article added that the “EU’s doors remained open to Ukraine”, the agreement was ready for signing “any time Mr. Yanukovych or his successor finds the courage to defy Russia”.<sup>167</sup>

To put it concisely, the *New York Times* presented the Association agreement between the EU and Ukraine in the light of confrontation between Russia and the West for the influence in Ukraine. It stressed that Russia represented an obstacle for Ukraine’s brighter future as part of Europe. Admitting that the economic weakness of Ukraine could complicate the implementation of the agreement and the economic situation could become even worse, still the responsibility for the failure of the deal was attributed to

---

<sup>164</sup>“Vladimir Putin”, URL: [Opinion | Vladimir Putin Clings to the Past - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/12/12/opinion/vladimir-putin-clings-to-the-past.html) (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>165</sup> D. Herszenhorn, “Facing Russian Threat, Ukraine Halts Plans for Deals with E.U.”, *New York Times*, 21.11.2013, URL: [Facing Russian Threat, Ukraine Halts Plans for Deals with E.U. - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/21/ukraine/ukraine-halts-plans-for-deals-with-e-u.html) (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> “Ukraine”, *New York Times*.



Russia, and in particular to its President Putin, who was depicted as a tyrant bent on enslaving former Soviet republic. That is an evident example that at the end of November 2013 the *New York Times* was conducting a propaganda against Russia. Later, in February 2014, when the Ukrainian crisis reached its peak it was admitted that Russia's role in deploying the crisis had been, probably, overestimated. An article of 23 February 2014, says: "During the months of standoffs in Kiev, Russia's actual role was much more modest than advertised by the international media or the rumor mill in Kiev".<sup>168</sup> If one thinks rationally, Russia was not interested in creating instability right on its borders. The crisis in Ukraine was unexpected even for the Russian political elites, therefore back at the time, Russia was weighing out options how to react to win over major benefits for its national interests.

### **3. News framing of the Association agreement between Ukraine and the EU in *RIA Novosti***

The two previous sections figured out that the *New York Times* framed the Association agreement between the EU and Ukraine as a confrontation between Russia and Europe, with a successful signing of the agreement being the only right option for Ukraine. In order to identify the differences in news framing of the initial stage of the Ukraine crisis by American and Russian mass media, this section focuses on the news framing by Russian *RIA Novosti*.

Being a state-owned agency, *RIA Novosti* could not use draconian rhetoric, strong statements or open propaganda as the *New York Times* did. It should be mentioned, that in general, reports by *RIA Novosti* are reserved, usually no opinions or judgements are given, and the authors of the articles are not even mentioned. The language used in the reports by *RIA Novosti* on the situation in Ukraine in November 2013 was more discreet, formal and neutral, compared to the independent *New York Times*.

During the stage that preceded the conflict, no evidence of anti-EU or anti-Ukraine propaganda was found. In November 2013 *RIA Novosti* was continuously reporting Mr. Putin's words, that Russia would respect any decision of Ukraine as "it is their internal

---

<sup>168</sup> D. Trenin, "Why Russia Won't Interfere", *New York Times*, 23.02.2014, URL: [Opinion | Why Russia Won't Interfere - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/23/opinion/why-russia-wont-interfere.html) (accessed 9.01.2021).

affairs”.<sup>169</sup> Emphasizing these words, *RIA Novosti* facilitated a good image of the Russian authorities, proving that it was not doing anything illegitimate and accusations of violations of international law in western media were unwarranted. Moreover, the news agency denied the bias that the Association agreement would inevitably lead to deterioration of relations between Russia and Ukraine. An article published on 10 November 2013, cited the words of the Ukrainian Prime Minister Azarov who had stated Ukraine would never allow confrontation with Russia in case of successful agreement with the EU.<sup>170</sup>

At the same time, *RIA Novosti* warned that agreement with the EU would result in loss of competitiveness of the Ukrainian goods and Ukraine should better join the Eurasian Economic Union. There was no mention that Russia was considering imposing any economic or political sanctions on Ukraine. It was only said that in case Ukraine signs the deal and joins the European free market, it will be treated as any other third country to defend the Russian market from the influx of European goods. There was no evidence in the Russian media of Russia threatening Ukraine with cutting off gas supplies in case it signs the deal, while there are a lot of references to it in the US media.

Another report stressed that Russia is not against “the sovereign choice of Ukraine on association with the EU”<sup>171</sup>, but would firmly oppose its joining NATO: “Economic union does not represent a threat for the Russian defense capability, while approximation of the military alliance’s infrastructure to the Russian border might be dangerous <for the Russian national security>”<sup>172</sup>. In fact, yet in 1997 NATO and Ukraine signed the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership, which article 15 states:

---

<sup>169</sup> “Москва не комментирует решение Киева по ассоциации с ЕС” [Moscow gives no comments on Ukraine’s decision on the Association with the EU], *RIA Novosti*, 21.11.2013, URL: <https://ria.ru/20131121/978757146.html> (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>170</sup> L. Lysenko, “Киев не допустит вражды с Россией, заявил премьер Украины” [Kiev will not let confrontation with Russia, the Ukrainian Premier said], *RIA Novosti*, 10.11.2013 URL: <https://ria.ru/20131110/975865517.html> (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>171</sup> “Путин: Россия не против суверенного выбора Украины по интеграции с ЕС” [Putin: Russia is not against the sovereign choice of Ukraine on association with the EU], *RIA Novosti*, 21.11.2013, URL: [Путин: Россия не против суверенного выбора Украины по интеграции с ЕС - РИА Новости, 21.11.2013 \(ria.ru\)](https://ria.ru/20131121/978757146.html) (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.



*NATO and Ukraine will develop a crisis consultative mechanism to consult together whenever Ukraine perceives a direct threat to its territorial integrity, political independence, or security.*<sup>173</sup>

This agreement together with the Ukrainian strategic course for “creating appropriate conditions for joining NATO”<sup>174</sup> and a new Association deal with the EU which also included provisions aimed at alignment of foreign policies<sup>175</sup> were perceived by Russia as a threat to its national security. The Russian major preoccupation about the Ukrainian Association with the EU was Ukraine’s potential rapprochement with NATO, that, according to the Russian officials, potentially could lead to the stationing of the NATO military bases in Ukraine and even in Crimea, where Russia had a military naval base under the agreement with Kiev that was renewed in 2010.<sup>176</sup>

The day when Ukraine rejected the draft agreement on association with the EU, *RIA Novosti* did not pay to it any particular attention. It was only reported that Russia welcomed the Ukrainian decision to develop cooperation with Russia and that Kremlin abstained from any comments on the decision to withdraw from the negotiations on the association with the EU.<sup>177</sup> In other words, the decision of the Ukrainian president, in contrast to the *New York Times* framing, was not presented as a victory of the Russian politics. One might hypothesize that it is again the consequence of *RIA Novosti* being government-owned; therefore, it could not openly use strong and vivid statements. That is why for curiosity, I also searched for reports on the events of November in Ukraine by an independent online newspaper *Meduza*, which was founded by Galina Timchenko in

---

<sup>173</sup> “Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Ukraine”, *NATO Official Texts*, 9 July 1997, URL: [NATO - Official text: Хартия Об Особом Партнерстве Между Организацией Североатлантического Договора И Украиной , 09-Jul.-1997](#) (accessed 11.12.2020).

<sup>174</sup> “Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 6 травня 2015 року "Про Стратегію національної безпеки України" [Ukrainian National Security strategy of 2015], URL: [Про рішення Ради національн... | від 26.05.2015 № 287/2015 \(rada.gov.ua\)](#) (accessed 11.12.2020).

<sup>175</sup> G. Van der Loo, P. Van Elsuwege and R. Petrov, “The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement: Assessment of an Innovative Legal Instrument”, *EUI Working Papers Law*, 13.09.2014, URL: <http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/32031> (accessed 11.12.2020).

<sup>176</sup> P. Pashkovsky, “Проблема Черноморского флота в Российско-Украинских отношениях (1991-2014): ретроспективный анализ” [The problem of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in the Russian-Ukrainian relations (1991-2014): a retrospective analysis], *Nauchnye vedomosti, Seria: Istorija i politologija*, vol. 46, № 2, 2019, p. 389.

<sup>177</sup> “Москва приветствует решение Украины развивать сотрудничество с Россией” [Moscow welcomes Ukraine’s decision to develop cooperation with Russia], *RIA Novosti*, 21.11.2013, URL: <https://ria.ru/20131121/978754249.html> (accessed 12.12.2020).

Latvia to avoid censorship imposed by Russia and whose case was considered in the first chapter. At least in the reports that can be found in open access today, seven years after the events, *Meduza* complied with its proclaimed goals of impartial news reporting: covering the initial stages of the conflict, it reported only bald facts abstaining from any opinions even if it probably had all the rights to criticize Russia after Timchenko's firing from *Lenta.ru*. In this case not imposing one's opinion means letting the audience draw conclusions.<sup>178</sup>

However, some weeks later even *RIA Novosti's* rhetoric on the West became stronger. Some reports hint that the agreement was much more beneficial for Europe and it was the EU to "beg" for the deal. *RIA Novosti* stated: "Despite a persistent plea from the EU, the US position and requests of the Ukrainian opposition, on 21 November 2013, the Ukrainian parliament rejected all the six draft agreements".<sup>179</sup> At the same time, the Ukrainian Foreign Minister confirmed that the course for European integration remains unalterable and has no alternative as "it complies with the Ukrainian citizens' will". He also added that at that moment neither Ukraine nor the EU was ready for the agreement given the divergence on trade terms and the position of Russia<sup>180</sup>. Given these circumstances, *RIA Novosti* defined the decision to postpone the agreement as "rational and wise", citing experts who were referring to the surveys that showed that the support for the association with the EU among the Ukrainian population was not unanimous. *RIA Novosti* also quoted President Putin's words that "Ukraine should decide on its own",<sup>181</sup> in such way relieving any responsibility from Russia for pressuring Ukraine.

Both *New York Times* and *RIA Novosti* stressed the importance of "Ukraine's sovereign choice". The principal difference in the framing of Ukraine's rejection of the Association agreement with the EU between the two mass media sources consists in a

---

<sup>178</sup> "Столкновения на киевском Майдане пять лет назад. Как это было" [Clashes on the Euromaidan five years ago: how it was], *Meduza*, 21.02.2019, URL: <https://meduza.io/feature/2019/02/21/stolknoveniya-na-Kyivskom-maydane-pyat-let-nazad-kak-eto-bylo> (accessed 13.12.2020).

<sup>179</sup> "Украина должна сама выбрать между ЕС и Россией, заявил Путин" [Ukraine should choose between the EU and Russia, Putin said], *RIA Novosti*, 23.11.2013, URL: [Украина должна сама выбрать между ЕС и Россией, заявил Путин - РИА Новости, 26.11.2013 \(ria.ru\)](http://ria.ru/ukraine/20131123/26112013-ria-novosti) (accessed 12.12.2020).

<sup>180</sup> "Глава украинского МИД: ни Украина, ни ЕС пока не готовы к ассоциации" [The Ukrainian Foreign Minister: neither Ukraine nor the EU are ready for association], *RIA Novosti*, 23.11.2013, URL: [Глава украинского МИД: ни Украина, ни ЕС пока не готовы к ассоциации - РИА Новости, 27.11.2013 \(ria.ru\)](http://ria.ru/ukraine/20131123/26112013-ria-novosti) (accessed 13.12.2020).

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

different interpretation of this expression. According to the American *New York Times*, Ukraine's withdrawal was the result of the Russian pressure on Ukraine and interference into its internal affairs preventing it from making a sovereign choice in favor of the association with the EU, while protests in Kiev that followed the decision were said to testify the nation's democratic will to stay with the EU. *RIA Novosti*, in turn, claimed that the decision to reject the deal was Ukraine's sovereign right itself.

Compared to the *New York Times*, *RIA Novosti* gave relatively little coverage to the protests in Kiev that followed Yanukovich's decision. *RIA Novosti* condemned the violence stressing that protesters were throwing stones and smoke bombs into police, but it was also justifying police actions as attempts to "calm down violent protesters".<sup>182</sup> This raised new criticism in the western media.

Instead of focusing on the mass clashes in Kiev at the end of November – beginning of December 2013, *RIA Novosti* focused on the reactions from the western countries. This can be seen as very cautious use of propaganda technique as the agency indirectly accused the West of being responsible for the protests in Ukraine. It reported that it was precisely the EU to politicize the Ukraine using it as an instrument of its geopolitics and this fact led to the violent protests in Kiev.<sup>183</sup> Finally, *RIA Novosti* published several articles on the petition launched on the website of the White House<sup>184</sup> for "peaceful overthrow of Ukraine's governments",<sup>185</sup> showing that the US was also indirectly involved in the issue. It was stressing that the petition called on the US authorities to "help Ukrainian people to peacefully overthrow the government, hold democratic elections, and penalize those who abuse power"<sup>186</sup>. *RIA Novosti* also emphasized that people who would like to vote have to register on the web-site but do not need to confirm their identity. The statement can be

---

<sup>182</sup>"Захват зданий и уличные бои с милицией – чем обернулся "евромайдан" в Киеве" [Seizure of buildings and street fighting with police – "Euromaidan" in Kiev], *RIA Novosti*, 1.12.2013, URL: [Захват зданий и уличные бои с милицией – чем обернулся "евромайдан" в Киеве - РИА Новости, 02.12.2013 \(ria.ru\)](http://ria.ru) (accessed 14.12.2020).

<sup>183</sup>"ЕС политизирует вопрос вокруг соглашения с Украиной" [The EU politicized the agreement with Ukraine], *RIA Novosti*, 27.11.2013, URL: [Пушков: ЕС политизирует вопрос вокруг соглашения с Украиной - РИА Новости, 01.03.2020 \(ria.ru\)](http://ria.ru) (accessed 14.12.2020).

<sup>184</sup> The White House should respond to the petitions that obtain more than one hundred thousand votes within thirty days, but do not have to implement their requirements.

<sup>185</sup>На сайте Белого дома голосуют за "мирное свержение" кабинета Украины [Voting for "peaceful overthrow of Ukraine's government"], *RIA Novosti*, 27.11.2013, URL: [На сайте Белого дома голосуют за "мирное свержение" кабинета Украины - РИА Новости, 29.11.2013 \(ria.ru\)](http://ria.ru) (accessed 14.12.2020).

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

interpreted that such petitions can become an object of possible frauds. In the article with the provocative title “Robbed by Europe, or why Kiev turned to Moscow”, *RIA Novosti* cited an expert Mikhail Rostovsky who commenting on the petition called it an “anecdote” while the decision of Ukraine to suspend the negotiations on the agreement was the Kremlin’s victory and the victory of President Yanukovich.

It can be also noted that the *New York Times* and *RIA Novosti* were promoting quite the opposite images of President Yanukovich in their reports. The *New York Times* presented him as Kremlin’s puppet, whereas *RIA Novosti*, albeit criticizing Ukraine’s intention for integration with Europe, stressed Yanukovich was an independent and mature politician, who acted in the interests of his country:

*Viktor Yanukovich is not a politician that is prone to succumb to pressure and ‘dance to someone else’s tune’; he defends his own interests first of all. We should not blame the EU for deliberately disadvantageous terms of the agreement that would mean deterioration of the economic crisis in Ukraine. The world politics still lay on the market principle ‘to sell at a higher price and buy at a cheaper one’. It was Ukraine to make a ‘fetish’ out of the idea of integration with Europe and the EU used it. If Ukraine wants to join Europe, it should pay a high price.<sup>187</sup>*

Amid the escalation of tensions in Ukraine, *RIA Novosti*’s tone on the EU became stronger in statements even if it was not coming directly from the news agency but through quotations of experts, that were openly accusing the West of pressuring Ukraine to sign the agreement that was not beneficial for Kiev. At the end of November, there also appeared first shreds of evidence that *RIA Novosti* was accusing the USA of pressuring Ukraine to conclude the deal. In another report on the US petition,<sup>188</sup> it quoted the Chairman of the State Duma Committee on the Commonwealth of Independent States Leonid Slutsky saying the USA was conducting the policy of subordination of other countries through the EU, continuing the line of the unipolar world.<sup>189</sup>

---

<sup>187</sup> “Ограбление Европой, или Почему Киев развернулся к Москве” [Robbed by Europe, or why Kiev turned to Moscow], *RIA Novosti*, 27.11.2013, URL: [Ограбление Европой, или Почему Киев развернулся к Москве - РИА Новости, 01.03.2020 \(ria.ru\)](http://ria.ru) (accessed 14.12.2020).

<sup>188</sup> The *New York Times* did not report on the petition on the White House website to support the protestors in the peaceful ousting of President Yanukovich and the Ukrainian government.

<sup>189</sup> “Петиция США является давлением на Украину, считает глава комитета ГД” [The US petition pressures Ukraine], *RIA Novosti*, 27.11.2013, URL: [Петиция США является давлением на Украину, считает глава комитета ГД - РИА Новости, 01.03.2020 \(ria.ru\)](http://ria.ru) (accessed 14.12.2020).

The previous section concluded that the US involvement in the conflict in Ukraine was limited to verbal warnings on Russia, but according to the reports by *RIA Novosti*, the West was pushing Ukraine to sign a disadvantageous agreement, cheating on Ukraine in order to knock it out of the Russian influence. It once again proves the hypothesis that in the Russian view, the Ukrainian crisis was not a regional conflict, but was directly connected with the disputes between Russia, the USA, and the EU.

#### **4. News coverage of the events in Crimea of the end of February 2014 by the *New York Times***

This thesis does not aim at analyzing the events in Kiev after the end of November 2013 and the civil war in the Eastern regions of Ukraine. For the aims of this thesis, I would just mention the following facts. Protests in Kiev that started in November 2013 continued in December and led to the seizure of the state buildings. In January 2014 President Yanukovich approved a law that proclaimed protestors extremists. In February 2014 as the violence escalated, President Yanukovich and the major part of the Cabinet fled to an undisclosed location and then to Moscow for personal safety reasons. The move was considered as President's resignation and a temporal parliament was established in Ukraine. Yanukovich called on the nation not to recognize new authorities claiming he had not resigned. At the same time, pro-Russian protests had begun in Eastern regions of Ukraine with claims of autonomy and in Crimea with pledges to join Russia.<sup>190</sup> We will omit all these details and move to the events in Crimea.

For a major part of February 2014, the *New York Times* still was focused on the protests in Kiev. First references to the situation in Crimea are traced back to 23 February 2014. The *New York Times* published a video report on clashes of pro-Russian demonstrators with the supporters of the association with the EU.<sup>191</sup>

Reports by the *New York Times* on the situation in Crimea of the end of February 2014 contain a contradiction which confirms it was using anti-propaganda techniques towards Russia. Even before any direct participation of Russia to the Ukrainian crisis, it

---

<sup>190</sup>D. Trenin, "The Ukraine crisis and renewal of imperialist confrontation", *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 15.10.2014, URL: <https://carnegie.ru/2014/10/15/ru-pub-56935> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>191</sup> "Fears of pro-Russian separatism in Ukraine's Crimea", *New York Times*, 26.02.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/multimedia/100000002730594/fears-of-pro-russian-separatism-in-ukraines-crimea.html?searchResultPosition=24> (accessed 20.12.2020).

was already repeatedly accused of interference into the Ukrainian internal affairs. At the same time the daily affirmed its confidence that Russia would not take any direct measures on the conflict resolution and nothing fatal was foreseen, in this case accusations of Russian aggressive policy in Ukraine seem to have no foundations. It was, however, said that pro-Russian protesters called on Crimea to secede from Ukraine,<sup>192</sup> while the US National Security Adviser Susan Rice was quoted as saying that “it was not of interest of Ukraine, or Russia, or Europe, or of the United States to see the country split”.<sup>193</sup> Another article published the same day also strongly affirmed that Russia was unlikely to intervene or “annex <Ukraine’s> southern and eastern parts”<sup>194</sup> as a deployment of a civil war on the Russian borders would undermine its security. It was the first time that the *New York Times* referred to Russia’s alleged plans to “annex” parts of the Ukrainian sovereign state. In this context, a military exercise on the Russian western border announced by President Putin was a surprise.<sup>195</sup> The *New York Times*, however, abstained from any strong rhetoric on this regard, and its language was reserved. It quoted Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu who explained the move as “the need to test the Russian armed forces’ readiness to respond to a ‘crisis situation’”<sup>196</sup>. The expression “crisis situation” did not explicitly refer to Ukraine’s conflict, but Russia made clear it was ready to use force in case the Ukrainian crisis spirals out of control.<sup>197</sup> The crisis

---

<sup>192</sup> Crimea is one of the most delicate issues in the relations between Russia and Ukraine. Both countries claim to have legitimate historic rights on the peninsula, but given Crimea’s complex multi-ethnic and multicultural composition, historians reasonably argue that no nation can legitimately claim to be autochthonous on those territories. According to the population census of 2014, ethnic Russians constituted 65,4% of the total population in Crimea, Ukrainians – 15,1%, Crimean Tatars – 10,2%, while the Russian language was recognized as native by 84% of the peninsula’s total population (source: Russian census of Crimea: Nationality Results. March 19, 2014. URL: [Russian Census of Crimea: Nationality Results | eurasianstudies \(archive.org\)](http://www.eurasianstudies.org/2014/02/24/russian-census-of-crimea-nationality-results) (accessed 10.01.2021)). See also Ferrari A., “La Crimea nell’Impero Russo. Un mosaico di popoli e culture”, in A. Ferrari, E. Pupulin (eds.), *La Crimea tra Russia, Italia e Impero Ottomano*, 1 ed., Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, Digital Publishing, 2017.

<sup>193</sup> “Fears”, *New York Times*.

<sup>194</sup> D. Trenin, “Why Russia Won’t Interfere”, *New York Times*, 23.02.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/24/opinion/why-russia-wont-interfere.html?searchResultPosition=2> (accessed 09.01.2021).

<sup>195</sup> A. Higgins and S. Lee Myers, “As Putin Orders Drills in Crimea, Protesters’ Clash Shows Region’s Divide”, *New York Times*, 26.02.2014. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/world/europe/russia.html?searchResultPosition=9> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Russia had already used force in another conflict on the ex-USSR territory – in Georgia in August 2008. At that time Russian President Medvedev explained the decision with his



risked shifting to the international military conflict. The US reaction promised to be harsh and the move would definitely lead to the confrontation between Russia and the USA. The US Secretary of State John Kerry commenting on the exercises, noted: “It would cost them <Russians> hugely in the world, where they are trying to assert a sort of greater legitimacy with respect to their diplomacy”.<sup>198</sup>

In all these reports the *New York Times* was sending a clear message that the Russian vision of international politics still adhered to the realist paradigm of international relations, which in practice was true. Many authors note that the Soviet mentality has not yet been overcome and the perception of the West as an enemy is still present among the Russian high-level officials. Jack L. Snyder in his book “The Soviet Strategic Culture” introduces the term of *homo sovieticus* arguing that the Russian decision-makers’ way of thinking is distorted with the socialist ideology and in certain situations, the USA cannot expect Russia to behave in the same way as it would act given its historical course and cultural peculiarities.<sup>199</sup>

The pivotal events that determined Crimea’s approximation with Russia occurred on 26-27 February 2014. On 26 February 2014 peaceful demonstrations between pro-Russian supporters of Crimea’s secession and Muslim Crimean Tatars who supported Ukraine’s Association with the EU led to the bloody clashes.<sup>200</sup> The *New York Times* widely used the gatekeeping bias, linking violence with Russian military exercises on its Western borders. While the Russian population of Crimea was strongly supporting Russia’s intervention up to the annexation, the major oppositions were precisely the

---

obligation under the Russian Constitution to defend the lives and dignity of the Russian citizens wherever they are. In theory, the same reasoning could be applied to the Ukraine crisis as a large number of Russian or Russian-speaking population lives on the Ukrainian territory. See “Заявление Президента РФ Д. Медведева в связи с ситуацией в Южной Осетии 8 августа 2008 года” [The Russian President D. Medvedev Statement on the situation in South Ossetia. August 8, 2008], *Official website of the Russian President*, 8.09.2008, URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205027.shtml> (accessed 09.01.2021).

<sup>198</sup> A. Higgins and S. Erlanger, “Gunmen Seize Government Buildings in Crimea”, *New York Times*, 27.02.2014. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/world/europe/crimea-ukraine.html?searchResultPosition=4> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>199</sup> J.L. Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, RAND, Santa Monica, CA, 1977.

<sup>200</sup> The Crimean Tatars suffered persecution under the Stalin regime and strongly opposed Crimea’s joining Russia. See A. Fisher, *The Crimean Tatars*, Stanford, CA.: Hoover Institution Press, 1978.

Crimean Tatars who saw Russians as enslavers wishing to reborn the USSR.<sup>201</sup> An article published on February 26, 2014, was headlined “As Putin Orders Drills in Crimea, Protesters’ Clash Shows Region’s Divide”.<sup>202</sup> Local people were reported to have noticed a strengthening of the Russian military presence on the peninsula.

Understanding the Crimean past is crucial for the understanding of the events occurring in the aforementioned period. An expert on Crimea Victor Zaborsky reasonably noted that the peninsula was “an arena for the duel between Kiev and Moscow on political, economic, military and territorial disputes”.<sup>203</sup> Due to its unique strategic position, Russia was ready to defend it even with military means given the instability in Ukraine and the ouster of President Yanukovich.<sup>204</sup>

The turmoil in Crimea reached its peak on 27 February 2014, when unknown armed men seized the headquarters of the Crimean local government,<sup>205</sup> raising major concerns about its secession. The *New York Times* published a video from the security cameras showing the moment of the takeover.<sup>206</sup> It showed professional well-armed militants peacefully entering the Crimean Supreme Council building unopposed. Their uniforms did not have any identification marks and it was unclear who they were. At the moment nobody neither in Washington and Kiev nor among the demonstrators in Simferopol knew for sure who were those gunmen. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu denied any

---

<sup>201</sup> See “Crimean Tatars: Repatriation and Conflict prevention”, *Open Society Institute*, New York, 1996, p.71.

<sup>202</sup> “As Putin Orders Drills in Crimea, Protesters’ Clash Shows Region’s Divide”, *New York Times*, 26.02.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/world/europe/russia.html?searchResultPosition=3> (accessed 09.01.2021).

<sup>203</sup> D. Herszenhorn, “Crimea’s Bloody Past Is a Key to Its Present”, *New York Times*, 27.02.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/world/europe/crimeas-bloody-past-is-a-key-to-its-present.html?searchResultPosition=33> (accessed 13.01.2021).

<sup>204</sup> Crimea for Russia is a matter of strong security concerns. It provides Russia with access to the Black Sea and then to the Mediterranean. The Crimean Peninsula and, in particular, the city of Sevastopol, is the location of the Russian Black Sea fleet base, which provides military security of the south and south-western Russian borders. The same security concerns led to its annexation in the XVIII century. Since then, the peninsula has served as the main stronghold of the Russian south-western borders. See N. Kent, *Crimea: A History*, Hurst & Company, London, 2016.

<sup>205</sup> Crimea had the status of the autonomous republic in Ukraine with Verknovna Rada or the Supreme Council of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea being its supreme representative body. The special status of Crimea had been enshrined in the Ukrainian Constitution of 1996.

<sup>206</sup> “CCTV Shows Crimean Parliament Takeover”, *New York Times*, 28.02.2014. URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/world/europe/10000002742154/cctv-shows-crimean-parliament-takeover.html?searchResultPosition=6> (accessed 22.12.2020).



links between the planned military exercises and the events in Simferopol. The *New York Times*, however, expressed no doubts that those mysterious gunmen were the Russian military forces, calling the events in Crimea of 27 February 2014, a coup:

*Masked men with guns seized government buildings in the capital of Ukraine's Crimea region on Thursday, barricading themselves inside and raising the Russian flag after mysterious overnight raids that appeared to be the work of militant Russian nationalists who want this volatile Black Sea region ruled from Moscow.*<sup>207</sup>

These events led to mass pro-Russian protests that grabbed all the peninsula with calls for joining Russia. De facto Ukraine did not control Crimea anymore. The *New York Times* stressed that the local police, which was still nominally subordinated to the Ukrainian Interior Ministry undertook little or no effort to deter the demonstrators.<sup>208</sup> In these circumstances, the Simferopol mayor, appointed from Kiev, had to resign as well as the Regional Parliament. The new Parliament of Crimea was established headed by the leader of the party “*Russkoe edinstvo*” (eng. “Russian unity”).

The same day the legislators in Crimea decided to hold a referendum on the Crimean independence from Ukraine, which was preliminarily scheduled on 25 May 2014. The calls for the referendum raised new ambiguous polemics in the *New York Times*. On the one hand, it was evident that if the referendum was held, the majority would vote in favor of the secession. Even those who would prefer Crimea's remaining part of Ukraine did not support the interim government in Kiev, defining it as nationalist and even fascist.<sup>209</sup> Such overwhelming support to secede is explained by the Crimean people's frustration with Kiev's policy in the region. The peninsula had great potential as a recreation locality,<sup>210</sup> but its infrastructure remained backward and did not change significantly since the times of the USSR. Kiev on several occasions was accused of not investing enough in the development of the region.<sup>211</sup> The excuse of the referendum

---

<sup>207</sup> “CCTV”, *New York Times*.

<sup>208</sup> A. Higgins, “Grab for Power in Crimea Raises Secession Threat”, *New York Times*, 27.02.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/world/europe/ukraine-tensions.html?searchResultPosition=8> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> See P. Magosci, *This Blessed Land. Crimea and the Crimean Tatars*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014.

<sup>211</sup> See M. Grigoriev, O. Kovitidi, *Крым: история возвращения [Crimea: the history of return]*, Moscow, Kulikovo Pole, 2014.

would be a good one for Russia to incorporate the peninsula claiming that referendum is a democratic expression of the peoples' right to self-determination and the western democracies who always stand on their values could not oppose. On the other hand, according to the *New York Times* Russia apparently played an important role in deploying the turmoil and any interference automatically was defined as undemocratic and illegitimate. Asserting that Russia was in any case somehow involved, it reported that journalists were not allowed to attend the legislative session that decided on the referendum, but it was said that "the Russian news media somehow obtained detailed information unavailable to even Crimean reporters".<sup>212</sup> Covering these crucial events for the Crimean crisis, the *New York Times* seemed more cautious in statements compared to the news coverage of Yanukovich's rejection of the Association agreement with the EU. It can be concluded that even if the daily magazine was accusing Russia of interference into Ukraine's internal affairs before the aforementioned events, it did not expect Russia to effectively intervene.

Notably, the *New York Times* published few reports on the events of the end-February 2014, primarily focusing on the clashes between the population of Crimea. The West was waiting for what was coming next, and its reaction was limited to verbal warnings on Russia to stay aside, while no official comments were given from the Russian officials apart from the Russian President's spokesman Dmitry Peskov who said: "We're not interfering. We're standing on this position".<sup>213</sup> The *New York Times* explicitly accused Russia of undermining the stability in the Crimean region comparing the situation with the scenarios of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, that seceded from Georgia:

*the Kremlin's hand is seen in many of the most disturbing turns in the unfolding situation, including the visits by Russian lawmakers; reports of handing out Russian passports to Crimea's citizens, as happened in Georgia's breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia; and the mysterious seizure of the Parliament building in Crimea.*<sup>214</sup>

---

<sup>212</sup> A. Higgins, "Grab", *New York Times*.

<sup>213</sup> S. Lee Myers, "Growing Crisis in Its Backyard Snares Russia", *New York Times*, 27.02.2014, URL: [Growing Crisis in Its Backyard Snares Russia - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/world/europe/growing-crisis-in-its-backyard-snares-russia.html) (accessed 14.01.2021).

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

At the end of February 2014, the *New York Times* reported that Russia was preparing annexation. It accused the Russian forces of “capturing the regional Parliament and the headquarters of the regional government, <...> of seizing other targets, including vital communications hubs, as well as blocked unspecified Ukrainian military assets.”<sup>215</sup> President Obama, in turn, called on the Kremlin to respect Ukraine’s sovereignty as there were noticed “unusual military movements over Crimea that were evidence that a military intervention was underway”.<sup>216</sup> That is a serious accusation that could lead to the mutual hatred on the level of common people and even an open confrontation. Ukraine’s acting President Turchynov also confirmed that “they <Russians> were provoking us <Ukraine> into military conflict. They began annexation of territory”<sup>217</sup>.

As far as this thesis seeks to be as intellectually honest as possible, it is unlikely that Russia played any significant role in incitement the pledges in Crimea to secede from Ukraine or to join Russia. However, the unfolding situation was beneficial for Russia to change geopolitical balances in the region.<sup>218</sup>

## **5. News coverage of the events in Crimea of the end of February 2014 by *RIA Novosti***

The first evidence of the turmoil in Crimea appeared in *RIA Novosti* a little bit earlier than in the *New York Times*. The news agency made wide use of the gatekeeping bias. It stated that the Crimean local authorities were considering the possibility to secede from Ukraine yet on 20 February 2014, but there were no comments on the accusations of Russia being involved in it or alleged plans to incorporate Crimea into Russia. The agency published a report quoting the Speaker of the Crimean Supreme Council as saying that Crimea would raise the issue of secession from Ukraine in case of ousting of the

---

<sup>215</sup> D.Herszenhorn, M. Landler and A. Smale, “With Military Moves Seen in Ukraine, Obama Warns Russia”, *New York Times*, 28.02.2014, URL: [With Military Moves Seen in Ukraine, Obama Warns Russia - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](http://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/28/us/politics/obama-warns-russia-ukraine.html) (accessed 23.12.2020).

<sup>216</sup> D.Herszenhorn, M. Landler and A. Smale, “With Military”, *New York Times*.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Many western analysts see certain nostalgia on the part of the Russian authorities for the times of the USSR. To prove it they often cite the words of President Putin during the address to the Federal Assembly, when Putin referred to the dissolution of the USSR as “a major geopolitical disaster of the 20th century”. Ukrainian politicians also believe that since the mid-2000s Russia has been carrying out the policy of revenge aimed at the gradual restoration of its influence in the international arena. See J. Berryman, “Geopolitics and Russian Foreign Policy”, *International Politics*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2012, pp. 531.

“legitimate authorities” in Kiev.<sup>219</sup> The statement was immediately refuted, quoting the head of the Crimean Supreme Council who warned that given instability, politicians should be more careful in statements and that Crimea remains an integral part of Ukraine.<sup>220</sup>

It is interesting to note how *RIA Novosti* changed the news framing while covering pro-European protests in Kiev in November 2013 and the clashes in Crimea at the end of February 2014. It has already been concluded that *RIA Novosti* took part of President Yanukovich condemning pro-European protestors and arguing that it was a sovereign choice of Ukraine to withdraw from the negotiations with the EU while the people should accept this choice. The main leitmotif of the coverage of the events in Crimea, on the contrary, was precisely the protests with pledges not to recognize a new parliament in Kiev. Whereas according to the *New York Times* one of the triggers for the protests in Crimea was the Russian military exercises ordered by Mr. Putin some days before the clashes began, Russian *RIA Novosti* named as the main reason for the protests the provocative Ukrainian Rada vote on February 23, to abolish a language law of July 2012, which permitted the official use of two languages – Ukrainian and Russian - in regions where Russian-speaking people accounted for more than 10% of the population.<sup>221</sup> The decision of the Ukrainian Rada formally recognized the Ukrainian language as the only official language of Ukraine. According to *RIA Novosti*, it was perceived as an oppression of the Russian people in Ukraine, triggering an escalation of violence.

Albeit this section is not supposed to analyze how *RIA Novosti* covered the change of the authorities in Ukraine in February 2014, it is worth mentioning as it is crucial for the understanding of the news framing of the situation in Crimea of the end of February 2014. *RIA Novosti* called it an illegitimate coup d'état and it was reported that President Yanukovich was forced to leave Ukraine under the threat of physical harm, while a new language law was called a usurpation of powers by Verkhovna Rada, which gives additional valid claims for Crimea to secede. In the reports on this regard there can be

---

<sup>219</sup> “Автономная Республика Крым” [Autonomous republic of Crimea], *RIA Novosti*, 20.02.2014. URL: <https://ria.ru/20140220/996063548.html> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>220</sup> “Могилев: Крым - часть Украины, политикам нужно быть осмотрительнее” [Mogilev: Crimea is a part of Ukraine; politicians should be more circumspect], *RIA Novosti*, 21.12.2014. URL: <https://ria.ru/20140221/996120336.html> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>221</sup> Закон «Про засади державної мовної політики» № 5029-VI [The Ukrainian Constitutional law on language policies], *Відомості Верховної Ради (ВВР)*, 2013, URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5029-17> (21.12.2020).

found some traits of open anti-western propaganda with the reference to the US involvement into the alleged illegal ousting of President Yanukovych. The article of February 26, headlined “The coup in Ukraine: is there an American trace?”, stated that there is no evidence that the USA was directly involved in the process of forceful and unconstitutional change of power, but it was stressed there was evidence the US actively supported this process. It was suggested that these two phenomena are not identical, but equivalent with some differences in nuances.<sup>222</sup> No concrete details were provided, however, which can be seen as a statement bias. A notable detail is that this article was among the few published by the news agency where the author was indicated; it was an invited expert Mikhail Rostovskiy. In such a way the responsibility for these words was not attributed to the news agency, but to a certain person, in other words, the agency formally cannot be accused of direct propaganda. The author of that article expressed his confidence that Washington had persuaded Ukraine to change power in the scenario of a violent coup d'état.<sup>223</sup>

Some weeks after, in order to make this hypothesis seem unbiased and objective, the news agency quoted opinions of the former European and American officials who were sharing this point of view. Ex-President of the Czech Republic Vaclav Klaus was quoted as stating that the United States and the European Union were largely responsible for what was happening in Ukraine, and it was they who had to contribute to the conflict resolution.<sup>224</sup> He compared the Ukrainian crisis with the crisis in ex-Yugoslavia: “People in Ukraine do not deserve to have their country played with. That reminds me of Yugoslavia 20 years ago. There a tragic bloody conflict was provoked from the outside. And I am afraid that something similar is starting now in Ukraine”.<sup>225</sup> Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder was reported by *RIA Novosti* as stating that the European Union, whose policy towards Ukraine, in his opinion, was initially wrong, was

---

<sup>222</sup> M. Rostovskiy, “Перевоорот на Украине: есть ли американский след? [The coup in Ukraine: is there an American trace?]”, *RIA Novosti*, 26.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140226/997047114.html> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> “Экс-президент Чехии: США и ЕС спровоцировали ситуацию на Украине [The ex-President of the Czech Republic: the USA and the EU provoked the crisis in Ukraine]”, *RIA Novosti*, 6.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140306/998500613.html> (accessed 12.02.2021).

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

responsible for the situation in Crimea.<sup>226</sup> He explained that the European Commission made “a mistake at the very beginning” when it proposed to Ukraine to conclude an association agreement with the “either-or” slogan. He said: “I ask myself if it was right to put such a culturally divided country like Ukraine before an alternative choice: an association with the EU or a customs agreement with Russia”.<sup>227</sup> Lawrence Wilkerson, the Ex-Head of the Office of former US Secretary of State Colin Power, was reported as stating that “the naïve actions of the United States contributed to the cause of the current Ukrainian crisis. President Putin in this situation is not perfect, but I perfectly understand his actions”.<sup>228</sup> He also was reported to state that in the place of the President of the Russian Federation, he would have done the same, and those who called it unpredictable – “either a fool or a liar”.<sup>229</sup>

Covering the protests, *RIA Novosti* again used gatekeeping and also visibility biases, demonstrating mass support for secession among the population of Crimea. In contrast to the *New York Times*, the support for secession was said to be unanimous. Even though it had not mentioned the plans for the Crimean incorporation yet, it was made clear that in case Crimea held the referendum, Russia would recognize its results. The news agency quoted an expert, political scientist Sergey Chernyahovsky, who called the appeals to hold the referendum as legitimate, stating that “it was up to the population to decide, and the majority of it asked either secession or joining Russia”.<sup>230</sup> Another Russian official, the Chairman of the Russian State Duma Committee on the International

---

<sup>226</sup> “Экс-канцлер ФРГ Шредер назвал ошибочной политику Евросоюза на Украине [Former German Chancellor Schroeder called the EU policy in Ukraine wrong]”, *RIA Novosti*, 9.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140309/998819378.html> (accessed 12.02.2021).

<sup>227</sup> “Экс-канцлер ФРГ Шредер назвал ошибочной политику Евросоюза на Украине [Former German Chancellor Schroeder called the EU policy in Ukraine wrong]”, *RIA Novosti*, 9.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140309/998819378.html> (accessed 12.02.2021).

<sup>228</sup> “Экс-чиновник госдепа: кризис на Украине вызван действиями США [The ex-official of the US State Department: the crisis in Ukraine was caused by the ES actions]”, *RIA Novosti*, 12.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140312/999215056.html> (accessed 12.02.2021).

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> “Население Крыма настроено на отделение, считает эксперт” [According to the expert, the Crimean population wants secession from Ukraine], *RIA Novosti*, 26.02.2014, URL: [Население Крыма настроено на отделение, считает эксперт - РИА Новости, 26.02.2014 \(ria.ru\)](https://ria.ru/20140226/999215056.html) (accessed 20.12.2020).

Affairs, Alexey Pushkov, also confirmed that it is the right of Crimea to hold the referendum on self-determination.<sup>231</sup>

Asserting the legitimacy of the referendum, the Russian media at the same time repeatedly tried to discredit the Ukrainian opposition, this time through open anti-propaganda means. *RIA Novosti* almost never uses statement bias, but this time it did. It is an important detail which testifies that the news agency was intentionally disseminating discord and even hatred between Russian-speaking population and the new authorities in Ukraine. For instance, *RIA Novosti* defined the main opposition party “*Svoboda*” as “nationalist”, accusing it of calls for overthrowing the constitutional order in Ukraine and for “the massacre of the Ukrainian officials”.<sup>232</sup> It also stressed that there were no supporters of this party in the eastern regions (Donetsk and Luhansk) and southern regions (Crimea). The supporters of the opposition were mainly referred to as nationalists or “*Banderites*” (comes from Stepan Bandera<sup>233</sup>), while pro-Russian forces were called “*opolchenchy*” (literally those who are defending). This small detail that might seem insignificant at first sight, in practice contained a strong message for the Russian readers. The common memory of World War II in Russia is particularly strong and “emotionally charged”,<sup>234</sup> and any reference to those times faces strong neglect. Such references played a fundamental role in creating the perception of the severe political crisis in Ukraine among the Russian population as in the Russian view such sentiments posed an existential threat to the nation. Presentation of the supporters of the opposition as nationalists and “*Banderites*” incited hatred between the two nations and provoked further violence.

The news agency very cautiously used propaganda techniques by discrediting those who potentially might not support the referendum in Crimea. Given existing tensions with the Crimean Tatars, *RIA Novosti* not only did not try to facilitate mutual understanding but instead deepened the split depicting them as vandals, following the report published

---

<sup>231</sup> “Пушков: Крым имеет право на референдум о самоопределении” [Pushkov: Crimea has the right to hold the referendum on the self-determination], *RIA Novosti*, 28.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140228/997457928.html> (accessed 22.12.2020).

<sup>232</sup> “Президиум Верховного совета Крыма просит запретить партию ‘Свобода’” [The presidium of the Crimean Supreme Council asks to ban the party ‘Svoboda’], *RIA Novosti*, 17.01.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140117/989812339.html> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>233</sup> The leader of the far-right Organization of the Ukrainian Nationalists during the World War II.

<sup>234</sup> See E. Gaufman, *Memory, media and securitization: Russian media framing of the Ukrainian crisis*. Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society. Vol.1, No.1. 2015.



on 24 February, which stated that demonstrators among the Crimean Tatars destroyed the monument to Lenin in a sign of rebellion against Russia.<sup>235</sup>

As far as the Crimean authorities were still continuing to execute the orders of the new Parliament at the moment,<sup>236</sup> *RIA Novosti* continued to dramatize the situation in Crimea, reporting that Crimea faced a political and economic crisis, with “dollar exchange rate raising and lines for pasta”,<sup>237</sup> while “scuffles” continued, and dozens were injured<sup>238</sup>. Such a framing of the situation promoted a unanimous consent among the readers of *RIA Novosti* that their compatriots in Crimea needed help. There were held mass demonstrations in Moscow in support of Crimea<sup>239</sup> and moto rallies in the Eastern and Southern regions of Ukraine<sup>240</sup> in support of the referendum, while certain regions of Russia were reported to have prepared humanitarian aid for Crimea.

*RIA Novosti* dedicated to the coverage of the situation in Crimea much more space than the *New York Times*. It is another evidence of the visibility bias which stresses a greater importance of the issue for Russia. On February 27 alone, the day of the seizure of the local authorities’ building, *RIA Novosti* published 33 articles regarding the events in Crimea. Surprisingly, there was no mention of mysterious gunmen that had occupied the Regional parliament building. *RIA Novosti* continued insisting that the Russian authorities were not openly involved in those events. According to the news agency, it was the demonstrators to have seized the building. It is difficult to answer whether the agency was intentionally spreading unverified information; but it is more probable that

---

<sup>235</sup> “Впервые с начала протестов в Крыму снесен памятник Ленину” [For the first time since protests in Crimea, a monument to Lenin was destroyed], *RIA Novosti*, 24.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140224/996658900.html> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>236</sup> “Власти Крыма будут выполнять решения Верховной рады, заявил премьер” [The Crimean Premier said the authorities will comply with the new Ukrainian Parliament], *RIA Novosti*, 23.02.2020, URL: [Власти Крыма будут выполнять решения Верховной рады, заявил премьер - РИА Новости, 23.02.2014 \(ria.ru\)](https://ria.ru/20140223/996658900.html) (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>237</sup> “Политический кризис в Крыму: с долларами плохо, за макаронами очередь [Political crisis in Crimea: lack of dollars, lines for pasta]”, *RIA Novosti*, 22.12.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140222/996361320.html> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>238</sup> “Потасовка произошла у здания парламента Крыма [Scuffle in front of the Crimean Supreme Council building]”, *RIA Novosti*, 21.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140221/996259921.html> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>239</sup> “Еще одна акция в поддержку жителей Крыма пройдет в Москве 1 марта” [Another manifestation in support of the Crimean people will take place in Moscow on March 1, 2014], *RIA Novosti*, 28.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140228/997525331.html> (accessed 22.12.2020).

<sup>240</sup> “Байкеры ‘Ночные волки’ проведут автопробег по востоку Украины и Крым” [Bikers of the motoclub ‘Night Wolves’ will rally in the Eastern regions of Ukraine and in Crimea], *RIA Novosti*, 28.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140228/997534062.html> (accessed 22.12.2020).



nobody in fact possessed true and verified information on this regard at that moment. The agency reported that the demonstrators were storming the regional Parliament building holding posters with slogans “Crimea is for peace! Crimea is for the referendum”.<sup>241</sup> It also stated that they were asking for the referendum on the Crimean “state belonging”,<sup>242</sup> choosing a neutral expression and calling it neither the referendum on the secession from Ukraine nor on joining Russia.

Whereas *New York Times* defined calls for the referendum as propaganda, *RIA Novosti* called it a sovereign will of the Crimean people under the principle of democracy and which is in line with international law. Later that day, *RIA Novosti* with the reference to *Sevastopolskaya Gazeta*, reported:

*As a result of the unconstitutional seizure of power by radical nationalists in Ukraine, peace, and tranquillity in Crimea are under threat. Bloody clashes that caused casualties are the consequence of the political extremism and violence that plagued the country. Ukraine is sliding towards chaos, anarchy, and economic catastrophe. In these circumstances, the Supreme Council of the autonomous republic of Crimea as the highest representative body takes the responsibility for the future of the peninsula. According to the fundamental canons of democracy, the Crimean Parliament sees the exercise of direct popular democracy as the only right way out. Holding a referendum will allow the Crimean people to decide their future on their own, without external interference.*<sup>243</sup>

While the *New York Times* was trying to find the evidence of the Russian involvement in the events, *RIA Novosti* was denying any links between the Russian authorities and the afore-mentioned events. Initially, it was even stated that if the referendum was to be held, it would not aim at secession from Ukraine, but instead at the strengthening of the regional Council’s authority and more financial independence on

---

<sup>241</sup> “Жители Крыма прорвали оцепление и подошли к зданию парламента” [Crimean locals broke through the police line and storm the Regional Parliament building], *RIA Novosti*, 27.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140227/997336460.html> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>242</sup> “Митингующие требуют назначить референдум о принадлежности Крыма” [The demonstrators ask to set the date for the referendum on the Crimean state belonging], *RIA Novosti*, 27.02.2014. URL: <https://ria.ru/20140227/997341337.html> (accessed 20.12.2020).

<sup>243</sup> “Парламент Крыма инициирует проведение референдума о статусе автономии” [The Crimean Parliament decides to hold a referendum on its autonomous status], *RIA Novosti*, 27.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140227/997353768.html> (accessed 20.12.2020).

Kiev.<sup>244</sup> *RIA Novosti* was also denying all the accusations of “suspicious military activity” on the peninsula. It was stressed on several occasions that the Russian military forces were present in Crimea under the agreement of 2010 on the Russian Black Sea fleet, but they did not receive any special orders that day and did not leave the base.<sup>245</sup>

A new whorl of the crisis escalation in Crimea occurred right in the beginning of March 2014. Given continuing violence in Crimea, on 1 March 2014, the speaker of the Federation Council of Russia Valentina Matvienko was quoted as saying that the West made no effort to prevent the crisis in Ukraine while Russia should not “remain indifferent when the lives of Russian people in Crimea are under threat”.<sup>246</sup> During that session, she made a sensational appeal to the Russian President Putin to consider the use of the Russian military forces on the territory of Ukraine under Article 102 of the Russian Constitution, and the same day Mr. Putin made a corresponding request to the Russian Federation Council. That day *RIA Novosti* published several articles showing that different political parties in Russia were supporting the move, with numerous politicians calling on the Russian President to take measures to defend Russian people in Crimea.<sup>247</sup> The conflict risked to shift to the war between Russia and Ukraine, but the events of March 2014 will be considered more in detail in the next chapter.

All in all, at the end of February 2014, reporting on the crisis in Crimea, *RIA Novosti* used the same bias and propaganda techniques as the *New York Times* did, but in contrast to the American daily magazine, the Russian news agency did it covertly. It widely used gatekeeping and statement biases focusing on the alleged illegitimacy of the new

---

<sup>244</sup> “Референдум в Крыму не предполагает его выхода из Украины, считают в СФ” [The referendum in Crimea does not entail exit from Ukraine], *RIA Novosti*, 28.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140228/997456499.html> (accessed 22.12.2020).

<sup>245</sup> “Штаб ЧФ: военнослужащие не покидали мест постоянной дислокации в Крыму” [The Russian Black Sea Fleet Headquarters: military personnel in Crimea did not leave the base], *RIA Novosti*, 28.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140228/997503781.html> (accessed 22.12.2020).

<sup>246</sup> “Матвиенко: РФ не может быть безучастной при угрозе жизням россиян” [Matvienko: Russia cannot remain indifferent when the lives of the Russian people are under threat], *RIA Novosti*, 1.03.2014. URL: [Матвиенко: РФ не может быть безучастной при угрозе жизням россиян - РИА Новости, 01.03.2020 \(ria.ru\)](https://ria.ru/20140301/997503781.html) (accessed 14.01.2021).

<sup>247</sup> “Эсеры: президент РФ имеет право защитить соотечественников в Крыму” [The socialist party: the Russian President has the right to defend the compatriots in Crimea], *RIA Novosti*, 1.03.2014. URL: [Эсеры: президент РФ имеет право защитить соотечественников в Крыму - РИА Новости, 01.03.2014 \(ria.ru\)](https://ria.ru/20140301/997503781.html); “ЛДПР: Россия должна оказать Крыму ‘любую возможную помощь’” [The Liberal Democratic Party: Russia has to render ‘any possible support’ to Crimea], *RIA Novosti*, 1.03.2014. URL: [ЛДПР: Россия должна оказать Крыму "любую возможную помощь" - РИА Новости, 01.03.2014 \(ria.ru\)](https://ria.ru/20140301/997503781.html) (accessed 05.01.2021).

authorities in Kiev and stressing that the referendum in Crimea would be a democratic mean to break up with Ukraine. The features of anti-western propaganda could be found in the quotations of the Russian officials and political experts who saw the western hand in the change of power in Ukraine and in a new anti-Russian political course that the new Ukrainian authorities took at the end of February 2014.

### Chapter III. Incorporation of Crimea into Russia in the Russian and American mass media

#### 1. The *New York Times*' coverage of the strengthening of military presence in Crimea at the beginning of March 2014 and of the attitudes of the Crimean residents to it

In early March 2014, the *New York Times* was repeatedly stressing that Russia in violation of international law deployed its military forces in Crimea. This is another example of gatekeeping bias. This is true that Russia increased its military presence on the peninsula after President Putin received the approval from the Federation Council to use the Russian Armed Forces on the territory of Ukraine on 1 March 2014,<sup>248</sup> but it never exceeded the limit of allowed 25 000 Russian military troops in Crimea set by the Agreement with Ukraine of 2010, and formally Russia was not violating international norms. The *New York Times* focusing on the increasing presence of the Russian military in Crimea almost never mentioned the agreement with Ukraine on this regard.

Moreover, even when the military personnel had no insignia, it was referred to as “the Russian military’s seizure of Crimea”.<sup>249</sup> The *New York Times* clearly stated that the armed soldiers were the Russian military troops, even when it was unclear:

*“Scores of armed men believed to be Russian soldiers and hundreds of supporters had massed at street corners and blocked roads”;*<sup>250</sup> *“10 Russian troop trucks crammed with soldiers, five armored vehicles mounted with machine guns, a communications can, and three military ambulances”;*<sup>251</sup> *“Ukrainian troops in the peninsula being bottled up in their bases, surrounded by heavily armed soldiers without insignia. <...> hundreds of soldiers in unmarked uniforms, with masks, helmets and goggles surrounded*

---

<sup>248</sup> “Владимир Путин внёс обращение в Совет Федерации [Vladimir Putin made an appeal to the Federation Council]”, *Official website of the Russian President*, 1.03.2014, URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20353> (accessed 3.02.2021).

<sup>249</sup> S. Erlanger and A. Kramer, “Ukraine Finds Its Forces Are ill Equipped to Take Crimea Back From Russia”, *New York Times*, 1.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/02/world/europe/ukraine-finds-its-forces-are-ill-equipped-to-take-crimea-back-from-russia.html?searchResultPosition=18> (accessed 3.02.2021).

<sup>250</sup> A. Higgins, “Amid More Signs of Russian Force in Crimea, Delight Mixes With Dismay”, *New York Times*, 1.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/02/world/europe/tensions-rise-in-crimean-capital-as-armed-men-continue-to-take-up-posts.html?searchResultPosition=16> (accessed 3.02.2021).

<sup>251</sup> A. Higgins, “Amid More Signs”.

*a Ukrainian marine and infantry base, using vehicles with Russian plates”;*<sup>252</sup>  
*“Ukrainian’s small naval fleet had been boxed in by Russian warships”;*<sup>253</sup>  
*“heavily armed men come and go, mostly in masks and in uniforms shorn of  
all markings”;*<sup>254</sup> *“None of the heavy armed soldiers had insignia on their  
green combat uniforms”;*<sup>255</sup> *“many of the vehicles transporting soldiers on  
the peninsula have Russian military license plates”.*<sup>256</sup>

In confirmation of these facts the *New York Times* was referring to the Ukrainian government, which also did not mention the agreement of the Russian military base in Crimea and had accused the Russian forces of a major escalation in military pressure over control of the Crimean Peninsula. The article of 3 March 2014, cited “the besieged Kiev government said that the Russians had deployed 16,000 troops in the region over the past week and had demanded that Ukrainian forces there surrender within hours or face armed assault”.<sup>257</sup> As a confirmation of the suspicions of the Russian intervention, the *New York Times* published interviews with witnesses of the military occupation by the Russian military troops.

However, for the sake of objectivity, it should be noted that the *New York Times* remained unbiased covering different opinions of the locals on this issue. It showed to its readers that the opinions on the Russian military intervention of the local population of Crimea were strongly divided based on their ethnicity, with the Russian population in Crimea even supporting the alleged Russian occupation. It was reported that the majority of ethnic Russians were in great favor of Crimea to go back under Russian protection. Several articles give illustrations of certain scenes of the local supporters of the Russian

---

<sup>252</sup> S. Erlanger, “Ukrainian Government Rushes to Dampen Secessionist Sentiment”, *New York Times*, 2.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/03/world/europe/ukraine.html?searchResultPosition=34> (accessed 3.02.2021).

<sup>253</sup> S. Erlanger and A. Kramer, “Ukraine”.

<sup>254</sup> A. Higgins and A. Smale, “In Crimea’s Phantom War, Armed Men Face Unseen Foe”, *New York Times*, 2.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/03/world/europe/in-crimeas-phantom-war-armed-men-face-unseen-foe.html?action=click&module=RelatedCoverage&pgtype=Article&region=Footer> (accessed 3.02.2021).

<sup>255</sup> A. Higgins, “Amid More Signs”.

<sup>256</sup> D. M. Herszenhorn, “Crimean Premier Says Ukrainian Military Units Have Started to Surrender”, *New York Times*, 4.02.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/05/world/europe/crimea-ukraine-russia.html?searchResultPosition=24> (accessed 3.02.2021).

<sup>257</sup> P. Baker, “Top Russians Face Sanctions by U.S. for Crimea Crisis”, *New York Times*, 3.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/world/europe/top-russians-face-sanctions-by-us-for-crimea-crisis.html?searchResultPosition=14> (accessed 3.02.2021).

military presence who refused to accept the change of the Ukrainian government defining it as fascist and even linking the coup with indirect US interference into the Ukrainian affairs.<sup>258</sup>

Surprisingly, the daily widely used quotations preserving strong critics of the new Ukrainian government by some locals who also were supposing that the West was involved in the change of power in Kiev, and the *New York Times* remained objective in judgements. It cited an ethnic Russian resident of a town close to Sevastopol, Iina Kulikova, who said she had hoped for the Russian Parliament to authorize the use of military force in Ukraine, of which Crimea has been a part since 1954, and that Russia was the only guarantor of their security.<sup>259</sup> She admitted that she had not heard any complaints because she did not know anybody who supported the “Nazi gangster regime”, which she and many other ethnic Russians living in Crimea, as well as the Kremlin, believe in the Ukrainian capital, after the flight of the country’s elected president, Viktor Yanukovich.<sup>260</sup> Another quoted Simferopol resident, Anatoliy Dekusarov, who attended a gathering in support of the Russian soldiers, stated that he felt safer having the Russian soldiers deployed and that he was standing for independence and their freedom.<sup>261</sup> The *New York Times* also quoted his opinion that the interim government in Kiev was conspiring with the United States; he openly said that “Kiev sold Ukraine to America and Yatsenyuk sold Crimea to Obama”.<sup>262</sup> The same article gives an illustration of the locals protesting against the new government in Ukraine, with a slogan “Against the Lying Mass Media” referred to “the Ukrainian news media in Kiev that was reporting on so-called pro-Russia extremists in Crimea”.<sup>263</sup> The opposite opinion is primarily represented by local Crimean Tatars. The article published on March 3, describes hostility and tense atmosphere between pro-Russians and Crimean Tatars, who are reported to be frustrated with President Putin’s decision to “grab their country”.<sup>264</sup>

---

<sup>258</sup> A. Smale, “Frayed Nerves in Crimea as Rumors of War Spread”, *New York Times*, 3.03.2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/world/europe/in-crimea-talk-turns-to-war-but-no-fighting-is-seen.html?searchResultPosition=12> (accessed 3.02.2021).

<sup>259</sup> A. Higgins, “Amid More Signs”.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> D. M. Herszenhorn, “Crimean Premier”.

<sup>262</sup> Ibid.

<sup>263</sup> Ibid.

<sup>264</sup> A. Smale, “Frayed “.

As for the referendum on the Crimean succession, the *New York Times* showed that the opinions of the locals were also decidedly mixed, with ethnic Russians supporting the referendum and the Muslim Tatars decisively opposing it. In the article “Crimea Approves a Secession Vote as Tensions Rise” of March 6, the authors quote two opposite opinions of the Crimeans on the referendum, one by a woman Natasha Malachuk who states that “We’re already Russian”, and a Tatar Bilal Kuzi-Emin who claimed that “it’s completely illegitimate”.<sup>265</sup> Apart from the differences in opinions based on ethnicity, the *New York Times* also tried to detect differences based on the age of respondents, claiming that young generation was not unanimously willing to join Russia as some hoped to be a part of Europe one day, while older people would prefer be a part of Russia. A young man Pavel said: “The Russians are our brothers. We’re together. We are not Ukraine”<sup>266</sup>. A middle-aged woman stated: “We heard about it and we are really worried, very upset, because our people, the Crimean Tatars, are for Ukraine”<sup>267</sup>. Another young man Nikita Senchenko expressed his view as “We’re essentially being imposed upon and dragged into the EU. This does not satisfy us as a society. We are not Europe, we are free people”.<sup>268</sup> A middle-aged Vitaly Gurkov answering whether he would prefer Crimea to remain a part of Ukraine said: “As a part of Ukraine? No, totally no. Because Ukraine has no future with these illegitimate politicians.”<sup>269</sup> A young woman confirmed that she “hopes we are still in Ukraine, I hope Crimea will be in Ukraine because I hope we will be in Europe”.<sup>270</sup> In other words, three out of five of the interviewees were favoring joining the Russian Federation, and two were against it.

It can be noted that at the beginning of March 2014 the *New York Times* abstained from strong statements and took a wait-and-see attitude towards the situation. It remained unbiased covering the Russian citizens wide support of the military presence in Crimea up to annexation. A video headlined “Russians rally in Moscow to support annexation of Crimea” showed activists who called for peace and annexation of the southern Crimean

---

<sup>265</sup> D. M. Herszenhorn, M. R. Gordon and A. J. Rubin, “Crimea Approves a Secession Vote as Tensions Rise”, *New York Times*, 3.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/07/world/europe/ukraine-sanctions.html?searchResultPosition=9> (accessed 3.02.2021).

<sup>266</sup> Ibid.

<sup>267</sup> Ibid.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.



region and cited one of them who had called the new Ukrainian government illegitimate: “Terrorists took over power in Kiev and denounced the legitime president, the president is on the run and the country is ruled by terrorists”.<sup>271</sup> In the same video, the journalist continued by saying that protestors also showed their support to President Putin asked the parliament “to have troops ready to defend ethnic Russians in the mainly Russian-speaking Crimea”<sup>272</sup>.

To put it concisely, covering the situation in Crimea at the beginning of March 2014, the *New York Times* focused on the concentration of military forces on the peninsula, clearly accusing Russia of the military intervention. It should be stressed, however, that there were no hostilities as such and no victims. The *New York Times* was objective enough in covering different opinions on the unfolding situation among the population of Crimea and quoting even those who supported the Russian military interference. Commenting on the referendum, some people were quoted as refuting the idea of the illegitimacy of such actions and saying that they were entitled to self-determination and to decide whether they should be a part of Russia, Ukraine, or their own independent country.<sup>273</sup> Moreover, in several articles, the *New York Times* tried to explain such differences in views giving a historical perspective. In a video “Ukraine-Russia Ties, Explained”, Alexander Motyl, Political Science Professor at Rutgers University, in the simplest words explained the reasons for the hostility of the Crimean Tatars towards Russia and provided a brief history of the Russian-Ukrainian relations over Crimea.<sup>274</sup> Finally, it was presumed that strong ties with Russia along with the demographic factors determined the whole political course of Ukraine during those years, which explained Russia’s deployment of the military forces in Crimea once the pro-Russian President in Ukraine was ousted. The opinion article written by Ruslan Pukhov and published in the *New York Times* on 4 March 2014, confirmed the idea that

*from the disintegration of the Soviet Union onward, Crimea, with its traditional separatist leanings, was always a destabilizing factor. It served as*

---

<sup>271</sup> “Russians rally in Moscow to support annexation of Crimea”, *New York Times*, 3.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/multimedia/100000002759752/russians-rally-in-moscow-to-support-annexation-of-crimea.html?searchResultPosition=38> (accessed 3.02.2021).

<sup>272</sup> “Russians rally”, *New York Times*.

<sup>273</sup> D. M. Herszenhorn, M. R. Gordon and A. J. Rubin, “Crimea Approves”.

<sup>274</sup>N. Sneider, “2 Choices in Crimea Referendum, but Neither Is ‘No’”, *New York Times*, 14.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/15/world/europe/crimea-vote-does-not-offer-choice-of-status-quo.html?searchResultPosition=8> (accessed 3.02.2021).



*a direct avenue of Russian pressure on Ukraine, and also guaranteed almost a million “pro-Russian” votes in Ukrainian elections, ensuring the dominance of the “pro-Russian eastern half of the country over nationalist western half.”<sup>275</sup>*

## **2. RIA Novosti explains the Russian official position and the strengthening of the Russian military in Crimea**

All the reports of the beginning of March 2014 by *RIA Novosti* were aimed at refuting the accusations of the illegitimacy of the Russian actions in Crimea and promoting the official position of Russia among its audience.

The main point on several occasions asserted by *RIA Novosti* was that Russia was acting within the norms of international law and in absolute respect to the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The increase in the Russian military forces in Crimea was explained as a guarantee of the rights of the Russian-speaking and the entire population of Crimea preventing them from the expansionism of the illegitimate authorities in Kiev. It was stressed that the Russian military was not making war in Crimea and it will remain there for the period required to restore a calm situation.<sup>276</sup>

The main argument to justify possible intervention was that the new government in Kiev was illegitimate and was violating the rights of the Russians in Ukraine. The news agency continued anti-Ukrainian propaganda using statement bias through quotations of political experts who had been claiming that the new Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine wanted to build a nationalist state:

*The so-called ‘government of winners’ includes outright chauvinists, extremists who want to build a nationalist state – in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in the center of Europe, a Ukrainian nationalist State... This is a drama, this is a tragedy for our brotherly, close to us Ukraine.*<sup>277</sup>

---

<sup>275</sup> R. Pukhov, “What Putin Really Wants”, *New York Times*, 4.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/05/opinion/what-putin-really-wants.html?searchResultPosition=22> (accessed 3.02.2021).

<sup>276</sup> “Политолог: российский контингент может обеспечить мир на Украине [The Russian contingent is able to secure peace in Ukraine, a political scientist said]”, *RIA Novosti*, 1.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140301/997710416.html> (accessed 7.02.2021).

<sup>277</sup> “Замглавы МИД РФ: в правительство “победителей” Украины вошли шовинисты [The Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia: chauvinists entered the government of ‘winners’ in Ukraine]”, *RIA Novosti*, 2.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140302/997794760.html> (accessed 7.02.2021).

*RIA Novosti* almost always remains impersonal and in general adheres to hard news paradigm, while the message and any judgement are expressed in the form of quotations. However, it can be noticed that quotations seem one-sided and repetitive and usually only the statements which are in line with the official Russian position are covered, while other views are either omitted or presented as known to be false, searching to persuade the audience that only official Russian position was acceptable. For instance, as for the accusations of deploying military forces, *RIA Novosti* cited the words of the Russian Deputy Defence Minister Anatoly Antonov who once again confirmed that the Russian Black Sea Fleet did not pose any threat to Ukraine and it was based on the territory of Ukraine in strict accordance with the current Russian-Ukrainian agreements, so as its locations, the number of personnel and the number of weapons.<sup>278</sup> In its report “The Status of the Black Sea Fleet” *RIA Novosti* in detail explained the provisions of the accords with Ukraine on the Russian fleet in Crimea. In particular, it mentioned three Accords signed by the governments of Russia and Ukraine in 1997, set the land, water areas, bays infrastructure facilities in Crimea which could be used by the Russian fleet till 2017 with possible extension.<sup>279</sup> Moreover, *RIA Novosti* listed all the Russian naval facilities deployed in Ukraine affirming that it was unclassified information and Russia was not trying to hide its military presence. In particular, it confirmed that there were 31 test centers, the Guards airfield, as well as high-frequency communication point in Yalta and Sudak and the Crimean military sanatorium, Sevastopolskaya bay with berths for mooring more than 30 warships, Karantinnaya bay with a brigade of the Black Sea Fleet missile boats and a diving range, Kazachya bay with the marine brigade, South Bay.<sup>280</sup> According to the agreements with Ukraine, Russia also received the main arsenal of ammunition, the Black Sea missile base, as well as a landing range, a test center in Feodosia, two airfields, altogether more than a thousand facilities in Crimea.<sup>281</sup> Moreover, Russia could have in Ukraine no more than twenty-five thousand personnel, no more than 24 artillery systems,

---

<sup>278</sup> “Минобороны РФ: Черноморский флот не несет угрозы ситуации на Украине [The Russian Defense ministry: the Russian Black Sea Fleet did not pose any threat to Ukraine]”, *RIA Novosti*, 27.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140227/997402725.html> (accessed 07.02.2021).

<sup>279</sup> “Статус Черноморского флота РФ [The Status of the Black Sea Fleet]”, *RIA Novosti*, 27.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140227/997365649.html> (accessed 7.02.2021).

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Ibid.

132 armored vehicles, and 22 aircrafts.<sup>282</sup> At the same time, it was reported that according to the Kremlin administration the Russian Federation could not disregard the appeal of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Crimea Sergey Aksyonov to the Russian President to assist in ensuring peace and tranquility on the territory of the autonomous republic. The appeal of President Putin to the Federation Council to use of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea was presented by *RIA Novosti* as a legitimate right in line with the Russian constitution and even an obligation of the Russian President to act in the interests of the compatriots in Crimea.<sup>283</sup>

The one-sided coverage continued in the reports of the opinions of the Russian and Foreign officials on the situation. *RIA Novosti* published a number of articles showing unanimous support for this decision among the senior officials. The Speaker of the Federation Council of the Russian Federation Valentina Matvienko was reported to state: “Our group of senators, who visited Crimea, for their part informed our colleagues on the situation in Crimea, in particular, in Sevastopol. Today it is already a real threat to the safety and life of Russian citizens living in Ukraine, in the Black Sea Fleet, which is stationed there in accordance with an international treaty. Of course, Russia cannot be indifferent”.<sup>284</sup> Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov was reported to note the need to support compatriots at a difficult moment associated with the tragic events in Ukraine, where an anti-constitutional coup took place, accompanied by a massive attack on fundamental human rights and freedoms, the need to support their right to protect their traditions, customs and way of life from the encroachments of nationalists.<sup>285</sup> Surprisingly, according to *RIA Novosti* there were even some deputies in the Ukrainian Parliament who were positively assessing the possibility to deploy a major Russian military contingent in Crimea. In this regard, the news agency quoted the deputy of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine Vadim Kolesnichenko who stated that the very fact that the

---

<sup>282</sup> “Статус Черноморского флота РФ [The Status of the Black Sea Fleet]”, *RIA Novosti*, 27.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140227/997365649.html> (accessed 7.02.2021).

<sup>283</sup> “Политолог: российский контингент может обеспечить мир на Украине [The Russian contingent is able to secure peace in Ukraine, a political scientist said]”, *RIA Novosti*, 1.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140301/997710416.html> (accessed 7.02.2021).

<sup>284</sup> “Матвиенко: РФ не может быть безучастной при угрозе жизням россиян [Matvienko: Russia cannot remain indifferent when lives of our compatriots are under the threat]”, *RIA Novosti*, 1.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140301/997681219.html> (accessed 7.02.2021).

<sup>285</sup> “МИД РФ: соотечественникам нужна защита от посягательств националистов [The Russian Foreign Ministry: the compatriots need to be protected from the nationalists]”, *RIA Novosti*, 12.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140312/999223580.html> (accessed 7.02.2021).

Federation Council had allowed the use of Russian armed forces in Crimea until the social and political situation normalized would be a signal for those who have seized power in Ukraine.<sup>286</sup> He was reported to state “I would like this <the approval of the Federation Council to deploy the troops> to be a stabilizing factor for ‘hot heads’ in Kiev, because they decided to practice double standards”.<sup>287</sup>

In such way, the decision to strengthen the Russian military presence in Crimea was explained by the necessity to defend the Russian people who used their legitimate right by asking to interfere, which according to the Russian Constitution was enabling the President to do that. *RIA Novosti* used the technique of agenda bias as a huge bulk of reports of that time, in fact, was dedicated to describing alleged people’s suffering and pledges to interfere. *RIA Novosti* reported that the Federal Migration Service of the Russian Federation had noted a sharp increase in applications from the Ukrainian citizens with a request to grant them asylum in Russia, as well as Russian citizenship.<sup>288</sup> As the Head of the Citizenship Department of the Federal Migration Service of Russia was reported to comment that “in the last two weeks of February 2014, about 143 thousand people had already applied. People were confused, scared, and emotionally depressed. There is a large number of appeals from law enforcement officers of Ukraine, state bodies of this state, who, fearing reprisals against radical groups, ask for asylum”.<sup>289</sup> The same information was given by the Deputy Speaker of the Federation Council Yevgeny Bushmin at an extraordinary meeting of the upper house of the Parliament covered by *RIA Novosti*. According to the Border Service, since the beginning of the events, 143,000 have already left the territory of Ukraine for the Russian Federation.<sup>290</sup>

Moreover, *RIA Novosti* showed that people in Russia not only did not condemn the actions of the Russian military in Crimea but showed wide support to it and sympathy for the people in Crimea and in Ukraine. People in Russia were reported to have started to

---

<sup>286</sup> *RIA Novosti* in its posts and articles pays much attention to the fact of ousting President Yanukovich, that was referred to as an illegitimate coup d’etat.

<sup>287</sup> “Депутат Украины: согласие использовать войска РФ - позитивный фактор [The deputy of Ukraine: Russia’s approval to use force is a positive factor]”, *RIA Novosti*, 27.02.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140301/997709202.html> (accessed 7.02.2021).

<sup>288</sup> “Число обращений от граждан Украины к РФ об убежище резко выросло [Number of appeals on asylum in Russian from the Ukrainian citizens surged]”, *RIA Novosti*, 1.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140301/997701757.html> (accessed 7.02.2021).

<sup>289</sup> Ibid.

<sup>290</sup> “Более 140 тысяч граждан уехали из Украины в Россию, заявил сенатор [More than 140 thousands of people left Ukraine for Russia, a Senator said]”, *RIA Novosti*, 1.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140301/997697055.html> (accessed 7.02.2021).

collect humanitarian aid for residents of Ukraine in a number of Russian regions. A special reception point for humanitarian aid was created in Astrakhan where people could donate essential goods, warm clothes, and food.<sup>291</sup> The Head of Dagestan, a constituent entity of the Russian Federation, was reported to support the initiatives of Russian President Putin to support the compatriots and to be ready to send the Crimeans not only material assistance but also to receive them in Dagestan.<sup>292</sup> Another example of support was that the all-Russian public organization “Russian Union of Rescuers” and the portal “Volunteer” began collecting funds for the residents of Crimea. The news agency quotes the vice-speaker of the Federation Council Yury Vorobyov that Russian regions were actively involved in providing help to the Crimeans, such as the capital of Russia – a collection point for humanitarian aid was also open in Moscow.<sup>293</sup> *RIA Novosti* reported on March 5 that the authorities of Mordova (a constituent entity of the Russian Federation) began collecting funds to help residents of Crimea, and also announced their readiness to host citizens of Ukraine. The head of Mordova Vladimir Volkov is reported by *RIA Novosti* to state that “the peoples of Russia and Ukraine are fraternal peoples! At present, over 3 thousand ethnic Ukrainians live in the republic. We cannot calmly observe what is happening in Ukraine. First of all, the civilian population is suffering, the most defenseless citizens – old people, women, children. We have to lend a helping hand to them”.<sup>294</sup> Moreover, Volkov said that the republic was ready to accept in the region all victims of extremism and political terror in Ukraine.<sup>295</sup> On March 9, *RIA Novosti* reported that several trucks brought humanitarian aid such as food, clothing, tents, and various equipment to Ukraine from Volgograd.<sup>296</sup> The collection of humanitarian aid to the

---

<sup>291</sup> “Пункт сбора гуманитарной помощи жителям Украины создан в Астрахани [A special reception point for humanitarian aid to the Ukrainians was created in Astrakhan]”, *RIA Novosti*, 3.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140303/997960228.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

<sup>292</sup> “Власти Дагестана готовы оказать помощь Крыму [Dagestan authorities are ready to render aid to Crimea]”, *RIA Novosti*, 3.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140303/997962772.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

<sup>293</sup> “Спасатели начали сбор средств в помощь жителям Крыма [Rescuers started fund raising to help Crimeans]”, *RIA Novosti*, 4.03.2014, URL: <https://sn.ria.ru/20140304/998110875.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

<sup>294</sup> “Мордовия окажет поддержку жителям Крыма [Mordova supports Crimeans]”, *RIA Novosti*, 5.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140305/998301106.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>296</sup> “Волгоград отправил в Крым 30 тонн гуманитарной помощи [Volgograd sent 30 tonnes of humanitarian aid to Crimea]”, *RIA Novosti*, 9.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140309/998788903.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

residents of Crimea is reported to start in Saint Petersburg.<sup>297</sup> Russians also showed their support for the Crimeans by organizing rallies. For example on March 4, *RIA Novosti* reported about 5 thousand people gathered at a rally in support of Crimea in Volgograd under slogans “Ukraine without fascism”, “Peace to the people of Ukraine”, “Crimea, we are with you”.<sup>298</sup> Another rally was organized in Taganrog as reported by *RIA Novosti* on March 5, which was attended by 1100 people.<sup>299</sup> In Kursk 10 000 people went out on March 5, to an evening rally in support of compatriots living Ukraine as reported by *RIA Novosti*.<sup>300</sup> On March 9, *RIA Novosti* reported that 1500 people in Saint Petersburg came to the rally in support of the people in Ukraine.<sup>301</sup> On the same day, 10 thousand people took part in a rally in support of the people in Ukraine in Maikop.<sup>302</sup> Altogether about 30 thousand people in Russian cities, such as Vladivostok, Izhevsk, Orenburg, Yaroslavl, Murmansk took part only in one day in rallies in support of the Russian-speaking population of Ukraine.<sup>303</sup> One day before the referendum, on March 15, *RIA Novosti* reported that about 45 000 people took part in rallies in support of Crimea in various

---

<sup>297</sup> “Сбор помощи жителям Крыма начнется в Петербурге [Preparation of humanitarian aid to Crimeans starts in Saint Petersburg]”, *RIA Novosti*, 9.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140309/998779186.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

<sup>298</sup> “Митинг в поддержку Крыма собрал в Волгограде около 5 тысяч человек [Five thousand people gathered at a rally in Volgograd to support Crimea]”, *RIA Novosti*, 4.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140304/998142463.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

<sup>299</sup> “Более тысячи человек пришли поддержать жителей Украины в Таганроге [More than a thousand people gathered in Taganrod to support people in Ukraine]”, *RIA Novosti*, 5.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140305/998307471.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

<sup>300</sup> “МВД: около 10 тысяч человек пришли поддержать жителей Украины в Курске [The Russian Interior Ministry: about 10 thousand people gathered in Kursk to support people in Ukraine]”, *RIA Novosti*, 5.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140305/998307204.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

<sup>301</sup> “Полторы тысячи петербуржцев вышли на митинг в поддержку народа Украины [A rally in Saint Petersburg to support people in Ukraine]”, *RIA Novosti*, 9.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140309/998802553.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

<sup>302</sup> “Около 10 тысяч человек пришли на митинг в поддержку Украины в Майкопе [About ten thousand people gathered in Maikop to support Ukraine]”, *RIA Novosti*, 9.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140309/998787050.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

<sup>303</sup> “Митинги в поддержку русскоязычных на Украине собрали почти 30 тыс чел [Manifestations in support of the Russian-speaking people in Ukraine account for almost thirty thousand people]”, *RIA Novosti*, 11.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140311/999059654.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).



regions of Russia, the rallies were held in Moscow, Kaliningrad, Cheboksary, Tambov, and Tula.<sup>304</sup>

All in all, *RIA Novosti* widely used gatekeeping bias strategy promoting the official Russian position and denying accusations of violating the Ukrainian territorial integrity. It was admitted that Russia had a limited military contingent in Crimea, but stressing that it was absolutely in line with international law. It was also stressed that Russia could not ignore pledges for protection from its compatriots in Ukraine and particularly in Crimea. Moreover, some elements of statement bias can also be found in respect to the new government in Ukraine which was defined as nationalist and illegitimate. Moreover, referring to the new authorities *RIA Novosti* more often uses the phrase “Kiev government” or “government in Kiev”, emphasizing that Russia did not recognize it as a new Ukrainian government. The news agency uses statement bias only through quotations of officials and interviewees. As *RIA Novosti* reported on 3 March 2014, according to the member of the Public Chamber Vladislav Grib, the residents of Crimea also considered the Kiev government illegitimate and were waiting for a referendum on the status of the Autonomous Republic. One detail that contradicts the *New York Times* was that according to *RIA Novosti*'s reports of the beginning of March 2014, the Crimean Tatar diaspora was also said to be in favor of the referendum. Vladislav Grib was reported as saying: “We arrived in Crimea this morning, have already met with representatives of the Crimean government, self-defense units, businessmen, the Tatar diaspora, with student and youth organizations. Everyone supports the idea of the referendum”.<sup>305</sup>

### **3. The *New York Times* reporting on the reactions of the world leaders to the Russian actions in Crimea**

It has been mentioned that the crisis in Crimea turned out to be not simply a regional conflict but an international one, causing rigorous polemics among the international community. Despite being objective in covering the views of the locals on

---

<sup>304</sup> “Около 45 тысяч человек митинговали в поддержку Крыма в регионах России [About forty-five people manifested in support of Crimea in the Russian regions]”, *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140315/999646145.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

<sup>305</sup> “Член ОП РФ: жители Крыма считают киевскую власть нелегитимной [A member of the Russian Public Chamber: residents of Crimea consider the Kiev authorities illegitimate]”, *RIA Novosti*, 3.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140303/997978750.html> (accessed 8.02.2021).

the alleged Russian military interference in Crimea, the *New York Times*' rhetoric remained clearly anti-Russian while covering reactions of the world leaders on the Russian actions in Crimea.

There can be found numerous evidences of statement and agenda biases as the daily notably focused on the strong condemnatory reactions of the US and the EU authorities. President Obama was reported as accusing Russia of a "breach of international law" and the military intervention, calling it a "clear violation" of Ukrainian sovereignty<sup>306</sup>. He was also reported to urge President Putin to withdraw his forces back to the Russian bases in Crimea and to stop "any interference" in other parts of Ukraine.<sup>307</sup> Moreover, it was stressed that President Obama expressed the opinions of all the US allies. In a video published on 4 March 2014, President Obama once again stated that "from the perspective of the European Union, the United States, allies like Canada and Japan, allies and partners around the world there is a strong belief that Russia's actions are violating the international law, <...> everybody recognizes that although Russia has legitimate interests in what happens in the neighbouring state, that does not give it the right to use force".<sup>308</sup> Prime Minister of Great Britain David Cameron added that "there can be no excuse for outside military intervention" in Ukraine<sup>309</sup>.

It was made clear that apart from declarative condemnation, the West would apply concrete restrictive measures to punish Russia, but it was also added that Russia in any case would not step back. Such a representation contributed to the hostile image of Russia in the western media as an aggressive and expansionist country. The article with a catchy title "Making Russia Pay? It's Not So Simple" argued that in case of military intervention in Ukraine, Russia would pay "high costs", at the same time President Obama was quoted as saying that "recent history has shown that when it considers its interests at stake, Russia has been willing to pay the price".<sup>310</sup> The Obama administration was reported to suspend

---

<sup>306</sup> A. Smale and S. Erlanger, "Ukraine Mobilizes Reserve Troops, Threatening War", *New York Times*, 1.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/02/world/europe/ukraine.html?searchResultPosition=19> (accessed 5.02.2021).

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

<sup>308</sup> "Obama Responds to Putin's Comments", *New York Times*, 4.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/world/europe/10000002749275/obama-responds-to-putins-comments.html?searchResultPosition=25> (accessed 5.02.2021).

<sup>309</sup> A. Smale and S. Erlanger, "Ukraine".

<sup>310</sup> P. Baker, "Making Russia Pay? It's Not So Simple", *New York Times*, 1.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/02/world/europe/russia-to-pay-not-so-simple.html?searchResultPosition=113> (accessed 5.02.2021).



military ties with Russia, including exercises, port visits, and meetings, and also was planning to impose sanctions on high-level Russian officials involved in the military occupation of Crimea.<sup>311</sup> The same article also mentions the European leaders suspending unrelated talks with Moscow and halting arms sales.<sup>312</sup> The *New York Times* also reflected on other suggested measures towards Russia such as exclusion from the Group of 8, selective sanctions, travel bans, and political isolation.<sup>313</sup>

The official Russian position was covered by the *New York Times* in the form of the comments from President Putin and was immediately refused by the daily. On 4 March 2014, during the news conference aimed at both international and domestic audience Mr. Putin for the first time publicly shared an official Russian version of the crisis in Crimea defending Russia from the fury of the global criticism and denying all the accusation. He fiercely challenged the view of events in Ukraine that had been presented by European and American leaders, whom he accused not only of abetting but orchestrating an “unconstitutional coup” in Ukraine.<sup>314</sup> According to President Putin, Russia had to enhance the defense of the military facilities because he was constantly receiving threats and information about the armed nationalists moving it.<sup>315</sup> It can be noted that the *New York Times* paid relatively little attention to Putin’s arguments and decisively rejected them calling it a “propaganda campaign”.<sup>316</sup> It was stressed that such information was unfounded to the Western reporters, pointing out that such a version was fundamentally at odds with the view held by most officials in the United States, Europe, and Ukraine.<sup>317</sup> The author of the article contributed to the negative image of Mr. Putin portraying him as “displaying flashes of sardonic wit, anger and palpable disdain”, especially toward the Americans and the Europeans, and also toward the leaders of Ukraine, and as a person who is unable to govern itself and who made assertions on the situation in Crimea that were clearly not true.<sup>318</sup>

---

<sup>311</sup> P. Baker, “Top Russians”.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> “A Rational Response to Ukraine’s Crisis”, *New York Times*, 4.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/05/opinion/a-rational-response-to-ukraines-crisis.html?searchResultPosition=29> (accessed 5.02.2021).

<sup>314</sup> S. Lee Myers, “Putin, Flashing Disdain, Defends Action in Crimea”, *New York Times*, 4.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/05/world/europe/putin-flashing-disdain-defends-action-in-crimea.html?searchResultPosition=11> (accessed 5.02.2021).

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> A. Smale and S. Erlanger, “Ukraine”.

<sup>317</sup> S. Lee Myers, “Putin”.

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

At that point mutual accusations of propaganda reached the peak. Another argument invoked by President Putin to justify Russian actions was quoted by the *New York Times* as the statement of the Kremlin describing the phone call between President Obama and President Putin issued on March 7. According to Mr. Putin, the new government in Kiev lacked a national mandate and consequently imposed “absolutely illegitimate decisions” on the eastern and southeastern regions of the country, and Russia cannot ignore calls for help and acts appropriately in accordance with international law.<sup>319</sup> During the UN Security Council emergency meeting, Sir Mark Kyall Grant was reported to have called Russia’s justifications bogus, while the envoy from Lithuania, Raimonda Murmokaite, told the Council it “resurrects the memory of darkest pages of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”.<sup>320</sup> Russian Foreign minister Sergey Lavrov during the meeting with Secretary of State John Kerry, in turn, noted there was propaganda in the foreign media saying: “There are many one-sided, half-hysterical evaluation in the media. It is impossible to work honestly under the threat of ultimatums and sanctions”.<sup>321</sup> He also added that “the sanctions imposed by the U.S. would inevitably backfire on the United States itself”.<sup>322</sup> According to the *New York Times*, Moscow gave no indication of backing down, suggesting that it would reciprocate with measures seizing American property in Russia.<sup>323</sup> It became clear that neither of the states was going to make any concessions.

On the basis of the analyzed articles in the *New York Times*, it can be concluded that on the eve of the de-facto incorporation of Crimea into Russia this daily magazine used gatekeeping or agenda bias and statement bias according to the categorization of the bias’s types of D’Alessio and Allen mentioned in the first chapter. The daily magazine intentionally emphasized the increased Russian military presence on the peninsula, downplaying the fact that the Russian military forces had already been in Crimea even before under the agreement with Ukraine on the Russian military base on the peninsula. Finally, it kept on discrediting President Putin, sometimes using slang and offensive statements further decreasing his authority among the readers.

---

<sup>319</sup> D. M. Herszenhorn, M. R. Gordon and A. J. Rubin, “Crimea Approves”.

<sup>320</sup> S. Erlanger and D. M. Herszenhorn, “Kiev Cites Campaign of Pressure by Russia”, *New York Times*, 3.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/world/europe/ukraine.html?searchResultPosition=28> (accessed 5.02.2021).

<sup>321</sup> D. M. Herszenhorn, M. R. Gordon and A. J. Rubin, “Crimea Approves”.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

#### 4. Reactions of the American and European leaders reported by *RIA Novosti*

*RIA Novosti* also covered the reactions of the western countries' leaders but in a quite reserved and formal way as always. According to *RIA Novosti*, the USA and the EU unanimously condemned Russia for its actions in Crimea and threatened Russia with sanctions. It is interesting, however, how the news agency framed the situation: reporting on the reactions of the world leaders that accused Russia of violating international law, it immediately was covering the suffering of Russian people in Ukraine allegedly caused by the actions of new Ukrainian authorities, in such way justifying the deployment of the military and at the same time discrediting the European leaders whose accusations within such a framework did not seem reasonable, while Russia seemed to try to help its compatriots whose lives were under threat.

There is a huge bulk of articles reporting on the reactions of the western leaders to the actions of Russia in Crimea, that can be summed up in two main points: the West called all the actions of Russia in Crimea illegitimate and was going to impose sanctions against Russia that would regard not only the Russian economy in general and the high-level officials but ordinary citizens too. For example, on 3 March 2014, the news agency reported that the European Union threatened Russia to suspend negotiations on the visa regime and economic agreements if Russia did not take measures to “de-escalate the situation” in Ukraine.<sup>324</sup> The US Senate also was reported to consider imposing sanctions against Russian banks, calling on the administration to freeze the assets of the Russian state institutions and private investors and introducing visa restrictions for Russian citizens.<sup>325</sup> The Chairman of the subcommittee on European Affairs in the Senate, Chris Murphy invited the EU to join such sanctions against Russia stating that unilateral US sanctions against Russia would not have much effect without proportional actions on the part of the EU.<sup>326</sup>

During the latent stage of the Ukrainian crisis, *RIA Novosti* was more cautious in the critics of the West; by the end of February 2014, however, anti-western critic became

---

<sup>324</sup> “ЕС пригрозил РФ приостановкой переговоров по визам и новому соглашению [The EU threatened Russia to suspend negotiations on visas and new accord]”, *RIA Novosti*, 3.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140303/997984226.html> (accessed 11.02.2021).

<sup>325</sup> “США рассматривают санкции против России [The USA considers sanctions against Russia]”, *RIA Novosti*, 3.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140303/997979051.html> (accessed 11.02.2021).

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

more evident. The US authorities were presented as hypocritical and even arrogant questioning the very idea of Russian citizens being threatened in Crimea. *RIA Novosti* reported that the White House spokesman Jay Carney expressed the position of President Barack Obama, Secretary of State John Kerry, and the US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power that actions of the Russian military were in response to an “imaginary threat” and that there was no reliable evidence of violence against ethnic Russians in eastern Ukraine and Crimea.<sup>327</sup> After President Putin held his press conference on March 4, Barack Obama was reported by *RIA Novosti* to note that Russian actions in Crimea would undermine its image on the international arena: “President Putin probably has a different set of lawyers. Maybe he has a different set of interpretations. But I do not think that this can fool anyone. Countries close to Russia have deep concerns and suspicions about such interference in affairs, this will push many countries away from Russia.”<sup>328</sup> Mr. Obama also mentioned that it was necessary to allow international observers throughout Ukraine, including Crimea, to ensure that the rights of all residents of Ukraine, including ethnic Russians, are respected.<sup>329</sup>

Russia had been often an object of accusations on the part of the West of not respecting human rights. In response, *RIA Novosti* reported the Head of the State Duma’s International Affairs Committee Aleksey Pushkov to state that Members of the European Parliament did not have data on many cases of human rights violations by Ukraine including what happened in Maidan, the activities of the Right Sector, and how people were attacked and threatened.<sup>330</sup> French President Francois Hollande, in turn, was reported by *RIA Novosti* to accept even the Russian military presence on the Crimean peninsula but any attempt to separate Crimea from Ukraine was an unacceptable violation of the principles of international law.<sup>331</sup> He was quoted by the news agency as saying:

---

<sup>327</sup> “Белый дом считает, что русским на Украине ничто не угрожает [The White House: Russians are safe in Ukraine]”, *RIA Novosti*, 4.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140304/998162029.html> (accessed 11.02.2021).

<sup>328</sup> “Обама прокомментировал высказывания Путина по Украине [Obama commented Putin’s statements on Ukraine]”, *RIA Novosti*, 4.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140304/998156375.html> (accessed 11.02.2021).

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> “РФ представит списки пострадавших на Украине, о которых не знают в ЕС [Russia is to provide lists of victims in Ukraine, that the UE did not know about]”, *RIA Novosti*, 12.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140312/999224702.html> (accessed 11.02.2021).

<sup>331</sup> “Олланд считает нарушением международного права попытки отделения Крыма [Hollande thinks Crimea’s attempt to succeed is a violation of international law]”, *RIA Novosti*, 6.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140306/998507335.html> (accessed 11.02.2021).

*Ukraine is Ukraine, all of Ukraine. You can endow territories with special rights, there can be broad autonomy, there can be the deployment of military bases, which exist under the 1994 treaty. All this is completely understandable, accepted and even desirable, including by the new authorities of Ukraine. But it is unacceptable to question the territorial integrity of Ukraine.*<sup>332</sup>

The West made clear it would not recognize Crimea as a part of Russia made in case of positive exit of the referendum. *RIA Novosti* demonstrated a wise use of gatekeeping bias and it is difficult to even trace it. The news agency dedicated several articles to why the West would consider the incorporation of Crimea illegitimate and what measures it would apply to punish Russia quoting different European and American officials,<sup>333</sup> but within a selective news framing all the European arguments seemed to be biased and unjust towards the situation, causing a strong wave of patriotism among the readers. According to *RIA Novosti*, the reactions of the West were exaggerated and were “whipping up hysteria around Ukraine on an international scale”.<sup>334</sup> The Former US Ambassador to Moscow Michael McFaul made a serious statement that Russian-US relations were entering a new period reminiscent of the Cold War:

---

<sup>332</sup> “Олланд считает нарушением международного права попытки отделения Крыма [Hollande thinks Crimea’s attempt to succeed is a violation of international law]”, *RIA Novosti*, 6.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140306/998507335.html> (accessed 11.02.2021).

<sup>333</sup> See “Кэмерон: Британия не отказалась от идеи ввести санкции против россиян [Cameron: Britain did not refute the idea to impose sanctions against Russians]”, *RIA Novosti*, 6.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140306/998507018.html> (accessed 11.02.2021); “ЕС считает решение парламента Крыма о референдуме незаконным [The EU considers the Crimean Parliament decision on the referendum illegitimate]”, *RIA Novosti*, 6.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140306/998502658.html> (accessed 11.02.2021); “США не намерены признавать результаты референдума в Крыму [The USA is not going to recognize the referendum in Crimea]”, *RIA Novosti*, 10.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140310/998907833.html> (accessed 11.02.2021); “США грозят РФ ‘очень серьезными шагами’ по итогам референдума в Крыму [The USA threatens Russia with ‘serious measures’ after the referendum]”, *RIA Novosti*, 13.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140313/999382579.html> (accessed 11.02.2021); “Референдум в Крыму нелегитимен, считает МИД Италии [The referendum in Crimea is illegitimate, the Italian Foreign Ministry says]”, *RIA Novosti*, 16.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140316/999740066.html> (accessed 11.02.2021).

<sup>334</sup> “МИД РФ: проект резолюции СБ ООН не имел под собой никаких оснований [The Russian Foreign Ministry: the draft resolution of the UN Security Council had no foundations]”, *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140315/999642966.html> (accessed 12.02.2021).

*The saddest thing is that in their efforts to isolate the Russian regime, many Russians outside the government will also feel the effects of isolation. My only hope is that this dark period will not last as long as the Cold War.*<sup>335</sup>

To sum up, on the eve of the referendum in Crimea *RIA Novosti* continued promoting the Russian official position denying all the accusations by the European leaders of Russia's illegitimate moves. It remained unbiased covering strong negative reaction of the USA and the EU on the up-coming referendum, but clever news framing made them seem unfair. It used statement bias only through quotations of experts and high-level officials. News framing was carefully elaborated in a way that the West seemed unreasonably assaulting Russia. It contributed to creation of a hostile attitude among the audience towards the western powers. The readers were persuaded that Russia was acting legitimately and the readers were supporting the Russian official position despite all the threats of severe sanctions that would follow. As foreign powers got engaged in developing sanctions aimed at Russia for the events in Crimea, it was made clear that the damage from possible sanctions in connection with the situation around Ukraine would be mutual, since in the modern world everything is interconnected and states depend on each other.<sup>336</sup> In other words, threats of sanctions proved to be inefficient to prevent from holding the referendum. Nowadays experts note that the problems in relations between Russia and the West existed much before the 2014 and, probably, the sanctions were not that much a response to the Russian actions in Crimea as a culmination of the crisis in relations between Russia and the European countries; nevertheless, it is noted that the consequences of the measures undertaken by the European countries against Russia turned out to be more severe than expected.<sup>337</sup>

---

<sup>335</sup> “Макфол: Россия и США входят в период, напоминающий ‘холодную войну’ [McFaul: Russia and the USA are entering the period reminiscent of the Cold War]”, *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140315/999653058.html> (accessed 11.02.2021).

<sup>336</sup> “ЕС обсудит возможные меры РФ в ответ на санкции Евросоюза [The EU is to discuss the Russian possible measure in response to the EU sanctions]”, *RIA Novosti*, 13.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140313/999351724.html> (accessed 12.02.2021).

<sup>337</sup> А. Kortunov, “Гибралтарский сценарий для проблемы Крыма [The Gibraltar scenario for the issue of Crimea]”, *Russian International Affairs Council*, 19.03.2019, URL: <https://russiancouncil.ru/analytcs-and-comments/interview/krym-napominaet-gibraltar-kotoryy-segodnya-stal-chastyu-velikobritanii/> (accessed 12.02.2021).



## 5. News coverage of the referendum in Crimea by the *New York Times*

From 6 March 2014, the referendum becomes the main topic for the news coverage on the situation in Crimea by the *New York Times*. However, the main message of the reports on the referendum was that Russia was going to annex Crimea, while referendum was just an excuse to justify the annexation in front of the international community. Moreover, the magazine gave the responsibility to the Ukrainian authorities that had not done enough to prevent it, and instead had to use its military forces to battle out Crimea. According to the *New York Times*, the preparation for the referendum on independence from Ukraine became possible after most of the Ukrainian military units on the Crimean Peninsula surrendered and pledged allegiance to the pro-Russian government,<sup>338</sup> although such statements on the surrender of the Ukrainian military units were denied by the Ukrainian Defense Ministry.<sup>339</sup> On 7 March 2014, the *New York Times* published an article with a bold title “For First Time, Kremlin Signals it is Prepared to Annex Crimea”, where the daily reported that after the visit of a delegation from Crimea’s regional assembly paid to Russia’s parliamentary leaders, the decision was made to support a vote to break away from Ukraine scheduled for March 16.<sup>340</sup> Even though the Russian authorities gave no reference to the annexation as such, the *New York Times* sent a misleading message interpreting “the support for the vote” as annexation. Moreover, the article unfolded the confrontation between Russia and the United States on Crimea. Once again, the topic of sanctions against Russia was raised. As the *New York Times* reported, Moscow gave no indication of backing down, suggesting that it would reciprocate with measures seizing American property in Russia. It became clear that neither of the states was to make any concessions.

The *New York Times* was coherent and objective in explaining why the referendum was illegal and contrary to the Ukrainian constitution, which was equated to

---

<sup>338</sup> D. M. Herszenhorn, “Crimean Premier Says Ukrainian Military Units Have Started to Surrender”, *New York Times*, 4.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/05/world/europe/crimea-ukraine-russia.html?searchResultPosition=24> (accessed 16.02.2021).

<sup>339</sup> Ibid.

<sup>340</sup> S.L. Myers, D. M. Herszenhorn and R. Gladstone, “For First Time, Kremlin Signals It Is Prepared to Annex Crimea”, *New York Times*, 7.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/08/world/europe/ukraine.html?searchResultPosition=6> (accessed 16.02.2021).

the violation of international law. Apart from the arguments that had already been mentioned in the previous sections, the daily magazine noted that the very formulation of options that could be voted at the referendum was wrong. The article headlined “2 Choices in Crimea Referendum, but Neither Is ‘No’” stated that the referendum did not provide the option for Crimea to remain a part of Ukraine as people could vote only to join Russia or become an independent state.<sup>341</sup>

To support the point of view that Russia was bearing a major responsibility for the crisis in Crimea in violation of international law, the *New York Times* drew parallels with other similar historic precedents. The situation was compared to the previous actions of Moscow’s Cold War interventions in Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Afghanistan in 1979 as after appeals for “fraternal assistance” from embattled local allies, Russia’s troop mobilization in Crimea followed a request for help from Crimea’s new pro-Moscow prime minister, Sergei Aksyonov.<sup>342</sup> The author of the article “For Crimea, Secession Is Only as Good as Recognition” brings the comparison of the situation in Crimea to Kosovo, when it declared independence from Serbia in 2008 with the strong support of the U.S., while Russia being an ally of Serbia insisted that such declaration of independence was a reckless breach of international law.<sup>343</sup> As Dan Bilefsky stressed Crimea was voting whether to leave Ukraine and join Russia, and Russia invoked Kosovo to justify the vote, and now it was the United States and European Union that insisted on Russian and Crimean officials were breaking the international law.<sup>344</sup> To understand who was right in this thorny legal question, the author of the article brought the opinion of James Ker-Lindsay, an expert on secession at the London School of Economics, who stated that from the point of view of Ukraine, the referendum contradicted the country’s Constitution, “but constitutional constraints on territorial independence are not necessarily sufficient to hold a country together”,<sup>345</sup> and finally the legitimacy would depend on the number of countries that would recognize it. The author of the article mentions that Russian and Crimean officials to justify Crimea’s pursuit of independence from Ukraine, referred to a seminal ruling by the International Court of Justice in July

---

<sup>341</sup> N. Sneider, “2 Choices in Crimea Referendum, but Neither Is ‘No’”, *New York Times*, 14.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/15/world/europe/crimea-vote-does-not-offer-choice-of-status-quo.html?searchResultPosition=8> (accessed 16.02.2021).

<sup>342</sup> A. Higgins, “Amid More Signs”.

<sup>343</sup> S.L. Myers, D. M. Herszenhorn and R. Gladstone, “For First Time”.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.



2010, in which the United Nation's highest court ruled that Kosovo's declaration of independence from Serbia did not violate international law. At the same time, according to Mr. Ker-Lindsay, even if the court had not found Kosovo's declaration to be illegal, the ruling did not necessarily confer legitimacy on the state of Kosovo, as while a lot of countries have recognized Kosovo as a sovereign nation, the United Nation and several European countries have not. Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany claimed that "analogies between the West's actions in Kosovo and Russian actions in Crimea were shameful",<sup>346</sup> and that "the situation from the Kosovo time was in no way comparable to what was happening in Ukraine".<sup>347</sup> The author explained that Kosovo declared independence in the aftermath of a brutal ethnic war with Serbia, while Crimeans were asked to vote on independence amid a Russian-backed military intervention, almost no one outside Moscow argued that the ethnic Russian population in Crimea had been subjected to state-sanctioned repression from Kiev, and this was a big difference. Mr. Ker-Lindsay points out that "the more blood you have shed, the better chances you have of your nation being accepted internationally."<sup>348</sup> The above-cited Andrey Kortunov, however, refuted the comparison between Kosovo and Crimea, arguing that Kosovo was an unrecognized state while Crimea was joining another state - Russia; instead, he compared Crimea with Gibraltar which was now part of Great Britain, but once belonged to Spain.<sup>349</sup>

Covering the preparations for the referendum, it accused Russia of propaganda, which according to the *New York Times*, almost violently forcing the Crimeans to vote to leave Ukraine. The article depicted forceful changes made by the new pro-Russian government of Crimea, strong pro-secession propaganda in the local media, and political and social pressure. For example, it is reported that the television transmission center in the capital of Crimea was taken over, Ukrainian networks were removed from the air and replaced with Russian state-controlled channels, the civilian airline flights to and from Kiev were blocked, and thickets of signs declaring "Together with Russia" were spouted along roadways.<sup>350</sup> It was also reported that anyone who might have publicly opposed

---

<sup>346</sup> S.L. Myers, D. M. Herszenhorn and R. Gladstone, "For First Time".

<sup>347</sup> Ibid.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> A. Kortunov, "Гибралтарский сценарий [The Gibraltarian scenario]".

<sup>350</sup> C. J. Chivers, P. Reevell, "Russia Moves Swiftly to Stifle Dissent Ahead of Secession Vote", *New York Times*, 14.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/15/world/europe/pressure->

secession was marginalized and discouraged, and pro-Ukrainian activists had been flowing out of Crimea.<sup>351</sup>

It was stressed that any international attempts to prevent holding a referendum in Crimea failed. For instance, the UN Security Council resolution was vetoed by Russia. In the reports on this regard, almost no features of biased coverage were detected. The *New York Times* reported that no one expected the resolution, which prompted plenty of high-voltage speeches in the Council, to pass and that sanctions were likely to be tightened or expanded by the United States and the European Union.<sup>352</sup> The reaction of Ukraine was summed up in a video published on March 14, where Arseniy Yatsenyuk, the Ukrainian Interim Prime Minister said: “Crimea was, is and will be an integral part of Ukraine”.<sup>353</sup>

Despite all the warnings, the referendum was held on March 16, and the voters overwhelmingly chose to join Russia, President Putin signed a decree on March 17 recognizing Crimea as a sovereign state.<sup>354</sup> The *New York Times* referred to the events in Crimea of March 2014 either annexation or secession equating the two terms.<sup>355</sup> In respect to the Crimean case, the daily magazine defined both annexation and secession as wrongful and often interchangeable. After the referendum results, the *New York Times*’ coverage focused on three points: reactions of ordinary citizens, condemnatory reactions of the international community, and further demonization of President Putin.

Covering people’s reactions, the magazine remained objective and unbiased. A number of videos published on the website of the *New York Times* showed that the Crimeans and Russians welcomed the referendum’s results recognizing it as legal. In the video of 17 March 2014, a young man said: “I think this is the right decision, it is a

---

[and-intimidation-sweep-crimea-ahead-of-secession-vote.html?searchResultPosition=10](#) (accessed 21.02.2021).

<sup>351</sup> Ibid.

<sup>352</sup> S. Sengupta, “Russia Vetoes U.N. Resolution on Crimea”, *New York Times*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/16/world/europe/russia-vetoes-un-resolution-on-crimea.html?searchResultPosition=5> (accessed 21.02.2021).

<sup>353</sup> N. Sneider, “2 Choices in Crimea Referendum, but Neither Is ‘No’”, *New York Times*, 14.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/15/world/europe/crimea-vote-does-not-offer-choice-of-status-quo.html?searchResultPosition=8> (accessed 16.02.2021).

<sup>354</sup> “Moscow resident on Crimea”, *New York Times*, 17.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/multimedia/100000002773570/it-is-a-reunion-we-are-one-nation-moscow-resident-on-crimea.html?searchResultPosition=1> (accessed 21.02.2021).

<sup>355</sup> The principle of self-determination can take the form of secession if the rights of the seceding group are not adequately fulfilled by the state and the group had developed a sustained level of social and political organization. See A. Catala, “Secession and Annexation: The Case of Crimea”, *German Law Journal*, 16(3), 2015, pp. 581-607.

reunion, we are one nation, our fathers and grandfathers went to war together”.<sup>356</sup> A woman was shown saying: “It is legal, I support Putin, I am for reuniting Russian borders and reunion of the Russian people”.<sup>357</sup> Another video published on March 18, at first showed people in Crimea with Russian flags celebrating the referendum. Two women commented: “We are very proud of our president Putin”.<sup>358</sup> Immediately a very different scene in Kiev was shown: people were bringing flowers to Maidan in remembrance of dozens killed in late February in Ukraine. A Kiev resident said: “Vladimir Putin turned out a simple swindler, a dodger. Having approved the referendum under the barrels of guns, I think he shamed himself before the whole world. I think the whole world will end relations with him”.<sup>359</sup> The video showed the two opposite reactions and, in the end, concluded that the Western countries were too cautious with Russia and their declarative condemnations did not contain Russia’s illegitimate actions.

Right after the results of the referendum were made public, the *New York Times*’ rhetoric on Russia did not change significantly as if the results of the referendum were not sensational. In a usual condemnatory manner, the magazine covered the immediate reaction of denouncing the referendum of the world leaders that was quiet the same as before the referendum and regarded a non-recognition of the referendum and threats with possible measures against Russia. However, there was a warning the price for Crimea was yet to come.<sup>360</sup> A new concern that arouse and seemed to preoccupy the West was that Russia could perform a similar takeover in Southeast Ukraine. The conclusion that had been made was that the East had to be more aware of the complexities and passions that were still present in the former Soviet expanse.

Several opinion articles that followed dealt directly with the figure of Mr. Putin. In portraying the Russian President as an aggressor and an authoritarian leader, there also was nothing new. The Editorial Board of the *New York Times* argued that the Russian violation of the Ukrainian territory would trigger more painful sanctions by the Western states, which would isolate Russia and diminish its place in the world. It was mentioned that the problem of President Putin consisted in his authoritarian rule and imperial

---

<sup>356</sup> “Moscow resident”, *New York Times*.

<sup>357</sup> Ibid.

<sup>358</sup> “Celebrations in Crimea; concerns in Kiev”, *New York Times*, 18.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/multimedia/10000002775426/celebrations-in-crimea-concerns-in-kiev.html?searchResultPosition=4> (accessed 21.02.2021).

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

illusions, dismissing the reasons for his actions in Crimea, such as “that he was restoring Crimea to its rightful ruler”, “that he was protecting Russians from Ukrainian fascists”, “that he was resisting Western efforts to drive Russia into a corner”.<sup>361</sup>

To sum up this section, covering the referendum in Crimea, the *New York Times* accused Russia of the shameless propaganda among the Crimeans and of violent forcing people to vote to leave Ukraine. The referendum was called invalid and the following incorporation of Crimea into Russia was defined as annexation, the Russian invasion, or aggression. Even when it was referred to as secession, it was still defined as illegitimate. All the responsibility for the decision to accept Crimea into Russia was attributed personally to Russian President Putin, and the *New York Times* continued demonizing his figure using intrinsic informal language. The daily magazine also noted that the western countries did not do enough to prevent those events as just condemnatory rhetoric and threats of sanctions did not work. It was also added that, probably, the United States and its European allies did not have much leverage against Russia, especially when Europeans are addicted to and reliant upon Russian gas, which adds to their trepidation about antagonizing Moscow. In particular, some articles criticized President Obama on his inaction on the matter.<sup>362</sup> This small comment that might seem insignificant on first sight, but instead, it confirms that the USA is still perceived as “a global policeman”.<sup>363</sup> It also confirms this thesis’s initial hypothesis that the Crimean crisis is not a regional conflict, otherwise it should have been solved locally between Russia and Ukraine. Instead, it has important international dimension as it has altered the whole international relations’ system.

## **6. News coverage of the referendum in Crimea by *RIA Novosti***

News coverage of the referendum in Crimea by *RIA Novosti* was more detailed compared to the *New York Times*. The Russian news agency provided a lot of information regarding the procedure and the organization of the referendum, which facilitates the

---

<sup>361</sup> “Celebrations”, *New York Times*.

<sup>362</sup> C. M. Blow, “Crimea and Punishment”, *New York Times*, 26.03.2014, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/27/opinion/blow-crimea-and-punishment.html?searchResultPosition=2> (accessed 23.02.2021).

<sup>363</sup> G. Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First century*, Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2007, p. 158.

confidence-building among the audience. According to *RIA Novosti*, 1,515 million of Crimea's residents and 305 thousand residents of Sevastopol were in lists for voting, and there were 1205 polling stations in Crimea, and 192 in Sevastopol.<sup>364</sup>

The general tone remained quite the same as the agency continued insisting on the legitimacy of all what was happening in Crimea, carefully using the gatekeeping bias technique. On the eve of the referendum, literally every report contained a repetition that the referendum was legitimate either through quotations of the high-level officials or references to the international law documents. For instance, it was often referring to the international law principle of self-determination, in particular, citing the UN Charter and the decision of the UN International Court of Justice of 22 July 2010 on Kosovo. On March 15, the day before the referendum, *RIA Novosti* quoted the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov who told the US Secretary of State John Kerry by phone that the referendum in Crimea was fully consistent with the UN Charter, and its results would become the starting point in determining the future of the peninsula.<sup>365</sup> *RIA Novosti* also reported President Putin as informing the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that holding a referendum in Crimea fully complies with the international law and the UN Charter.<sup>366</sup> Whereas the *New York Times* covered only condemnatory statements about the referendum stressing its illegitimacy, *RIA Novosti*, albeit also covering general condemnatory sentiments of the European officials, tried to find positive assessments as well. Bela Kovacs, a member of the European Parliament from Hungary, said at a press conference in Simferopol that the Crimean people, like all other peoples, had the right to express their opinion and that she believed that referendum was a legal and democratic way to determine their future".<sup>367</sup>

All the reports of that time in one way or another were trying to provide the readers with the evidence that the referendum was prepared in line with the democratic principles. The central argument was the presence of international observers. The Head of the

---

<sup>364</sup> "Референдум о статусе Крыма [The referendum on the status of Crimea]", *RIA Novosti*, 16.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140316/999688779.html> (accessed 1.03.2021).

<sup>365</sup> "Референдум в Крыму полностью соответствует уставу ООН, заявил Лавров [Lavrov: The referendum in Crimea is totally in line with the UN charter]", *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140315/999654261.html> (accessed 1.03.2021).

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.

<sup>367</sup> "Референдум в Крыму абсолютно законен, считает депутат Европарламента [The referendum in Crimea is absolutely legal, a member of the European Parliament said]", *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140315/999645712.html> (accessed 1.03.2021).

Commission of the Supreme Council of Crimea for the referendum Mikhail Malyshev confirmed that accreditation for the referendum was granted to 135 observers from 23 countries, including Latvia, Poland, the USA, Israel, China, Mongolia, and members of the European Parliament.<sup>368</sup> In confirmation of the observers' opinions, it was specified that international experts from Europe worked in Crimea at the expense of the European Union and that they did not receive any "external money" for their mission,<sup>369</sup> which excluded bribes and corruption. According to *RIA Novosti*, all the interviewed observers unanimously confirmed there were no frauds. The statement was proved with numerous citations of the international observers' impressions about the level of preparation of the referendum and the environment in Crimea, in such a way lifting the responsibility for the statements from the agency. On 15 March 2014, an expert from Poland, Mateusz Piskorski, director of the European Centre for Geopolitical Analysis, one of the coordinators of the European Observatory for Democracy and Elections, who came to Simferopol as an international observer, was reported as saying:

*We have already visited a number of polling stations today to observe the preparations for the referendum. We can rest assured that everything was pretty well prepared in those polling stations that we visited in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Crimea.*<sup>370</sup>

The expert also stated that he was in contact with other fifty-four observers from different countries within the framework of short-term monitoring and his opinion was formed taking into account different points of view.<sup>371</sup>

It can be seen that quotations are a popular technique used by *RIA Novosti* to increase the confidence and reliability among the readers. Through quotations of other observers, the news agency denied accusations of Russia violently pressuring the Crimean citizens to vote on joining Russia, to which the *New York Times* was repeatedly referring.

---

<sup>368</sup> "Европейский наблюдатель о Крыме перед референдумом: на улицах праздник [People are celebrating, a European observer said before the referendum]", *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140315/999646570.html> (accessed 1.03.2021).

<sup>369</sup> "Эксперт: крымским военным препятствуют голосовать на референдуме [An expert: the Crimean military personnel is impeded from voting on the referendum]", *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140315/999649603.html> (accessed 1.03.2021).

<sup>370</sup> "Эксперт отметил высокий уровень подготовки референдума в Крыму [An expert noted a high level of preparation of the Crimean referendum]", *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140315/999649843.html> (accessed 1.03.2021).

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

It should be also stressed that among the reports by *RIA Novosti* no callings to vote to join Russia were found. The Deputy Speaker of the Serbian Parliament<sup>372</sup>, Nenad Popovic, who also arrived in Crimea as an international observer of the referendum, was quoted as saying:

*Everything you need to hold a referendum exists. My colleagues and I travelled to several polling stations and talked with election commissions. We talked with the representatives of civil society, the press, national minorities. Citizens are not under pressure; they are ready to freely express their will tomorrow. I watched television: most of the channels really campaign for the referendum, but I turned on the ART channel, it broadcasts a completely different point of view. So, people have the opportunity to choose, and they hear different points of view.*<sup>373</sup>

Mateusz Piskorski also added that Kiev authorities prevented the servicemen of the Ukrainian units in Crimea from taking part in the vote, although many of them were residents of Crimea.<sup>374</sup>

The process of voting itself was reported to respect all the necessary requirements. A member of the European Parliament Johan Stadler, said he did not notice any “onslaught from anyone in any polling station” and reassured he had seen no manipulations.<sup>375</sup> Russian observers from the Public Chamber of Russia and the Federation Council also confirmed not to have recorded serious violations.<sup>376</sup>

In the introduction it was mentioned that the term annexation presupposes violence and the use of force. The situation in Crimea on the day of the referendum, instead, was calm. An observer from Belgium, executive director of the European Russian Alliance,

---

<sup>372</sup> Serbia is known to be a friendly to Russia country and its strategic ally as Russia supported Serbia in the conflict on Kosovo.

<sup>373</sup> “Вице-спикер парламента Србије: притисци на изабратели у Криму не постоје [The Deputy Speaker of the Serbian Parliament: the constituents in Crimea are not pressured]”, *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140315/999649170.html> (accessed 1.03.2021).

<sup>374</sup> “Експерт: кримским војним препрекују гласати на референдуму [An expert: the Crimean military personnel is impeded from voting on the referendum]”, *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140315/999649603.html> (accessed 1.03.2021).

<sup>375</sup> “Наблюдатель: референдум в Крыму соответствует международным стандартам [An observer: the referendum in Crimea meets the international standards]”, *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140316/999740432.html> (accessed 1.03.2021).

<sup>376</sup> “Наблюдатели ОП и СФ России не нашли нарушений на референдуме в Крыму [observers from the Public Chamber of Russia and the Federation Council did not notice any violations at the referendum]”, *RIA Novosti*, 16.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140316/999734454.html> (accessed 1.03.2021).



Sergey Petrosov, confirmed it and described the situation before the popular vote in Crimea even as “festive”:

*Today we walk the streets, we communicate with people, we watch how Crimea is preparing for the referendum, and this causes only positive emotions because there is just a holiday on the streets, people are very friendly, there are many Russian flags, everyone is in a very good mood.*<sup>377</sup>

On 16 March 2014 at 23:33 *RIA Novosti* reported that according to the exit poll, which was conducted by the Crimean Republican Institute of Political and Sociological Research, about 93 % of those who took part in the referendum voted for the accession of the autonomous republic of Crimea to Russia.<sup>378</sup> Such a high percentage of those who spoke out in favour of the annexation of Crimea to Russia was explained by discriminative actions of the new Ukrainian authorities towards the Russian-speaking population.<sup>379</sup> It was said the Kiev authorities “did everything to make the situation like this: they both limited electricity in Crimea and froze funding, which led to such a result of the vote”.<sup>380</sup> It was stressed that even a significant percentage of the Crimean Tatars who usually were said to be hostile towards Russia also voted to join Russia. Lenur Usmanov, a representative of the Crimean Tatar community in Sevastopol was reported as stating that more than 50 % of the Crimean Tatars of Sevastopol came to the polling stations and that most of them were in favour of joining Russia.<sup>381</sup>

On 17 March 2014, the day after the referendum, President Putin signed a decree, according to which the Republic of Crimea was recognized as an independent state, taking into account the will of its people expressed on the referendum. This decree came into force the day of its signing. According to the representative of the State Duma in the

---

<sup>377</sup> “Европейский наблюдатель о Крыме перед референдумом: на улицах праздник [People are celebrating, a European observer said before the referendum]”, *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140315/999646570.html> (accessed 1.03.2021).

<sup>378</sup> “Эксперт: итоги референдума в Крыму дают РФ аргументы в споре с Западом [An expert: the referendum’s results give Russia additional arguments in the dispute with the West]”, *RIA Novosti*, 16.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140316/999738914.html> (accessed 2.03.2021).

<sup>379</sup> “Политолог связал итоги референдума в Крыму с действиями новых властей [A political scientist linked the results of the referendum in Crimea with the actions of the Ukrainian authorities]”, *RIA Novosti*, 16.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140316/999733504.html> (accessed 2.03.2021).

<sup>380</sup> Ibid.

<sup>381</sup> “Более 50% крымских татар Севастополя приняли участие в референдуме [More than 50% of the Crimean Tatars of Sevastopol took part in the referendum]”, *RIA Novosti*, 16.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140316/999737267.html> (accessed 2.03.2021).



Constitutional Court of Russia, Dmitry Vyatkin, this decree on the recognition of Crimea as an independent state opened up an opportunity to include the republic in Russia.<sup>382</sup>

It was argued that incorporation of Crimea occurred upon an official agreement with independent Crimea and consequently cannot be recognized as annexation. The Agreement on the accession of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation was signed on 18 March 2014.<sup>383</sup> The document stresses that the agreement was the expression of the free will of the Crimean people. The same day President Putin addressed the State Duma, Federation Council, and representatives of the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol.<sup>384</sup> The address with a simple language sums up the official position of Russia on Crimea which was fully shared by *RIA Novosti*. First of all, the President stressed once again that Russia recognized the legitimacy of the referendum held in Crimea on 16 March 2014, emphasizing that “more than 82 percent of the electorate took part in it and over 93 percent of them spoke out in favour of reuniting with Russia”.<sup>385</sup>

*RIA Novosti* never referred to the afore-mentioned events as annexation; it instead used such expressions as “reunification”, “Crimea’s joining Russia”, “Crimea’s returning to Russia”. In the address, Mr. Putin made a major emphasis on the common historical legacy of Russia and Crimea and ethnic composition of the peninsula with the majority being ethnic Russians as the main arguments.<sup>386</sup> Another argument was dubious legality of the decision to transfer Crimea to Ukraine in 1954 by that the Communist Party leader Nikita Khrushchev, which according to President Putin was violating the Constitution in force back at that time as no referendum was held, but under the soviet regime, nobody

---

<sup>382</sup> “Признание независимости позволит Крыму войти в состав России [Recognizing Crimea’s independence allows Crimea to join Russia]”, *RIA Novosti*, 16.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140317/999913316.html> (accessed 2.03.2021).

<sup>383</sup> “Договор между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Крым о принятии в Российскую Федерацию Республики Крым и образовании в составе Российской Федерации новых субъектов [Agreement on the accession of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation]”, *Official website of the Russian President*, 18.03.2014, URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20605> (accessed 2.03.2021).

<sup>384</sup> “Address by President of the Russian Federation”, *Official website of the Russian President*, 18.03.2014, URL: <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20603> (accessed 2.03.2021).

<sup>385</sup> “Address”.

<sup>386</sup> Out of 2.2 million population of Crimea there are almost 1.5 million Russians (65,2%), 350,000 Ukrainians (16%) who consider Russian their native language, and about 290,000–300,000 Crimean Tatars (12,6%), who, as the referendum has shown, also lean towards Russia”, there are also 2,3% of population that are Tatars. 1% is Belarussian, 0,5% is Armenian and 2,4% of other nationalities. See: “Население Крыма и Севастополя: численность, национальный состав [Population of Crimea and Sevastopol: national composition]”, *Statdata*, 13.09.2019, URL: <http://www.statdata.ru/naselenie-krima-i-sevastopolya> (accessed 2.03.2021).

objected to it. Moreover, Russia and Ukraine were parts of one state – the USSR, - and boundaries between republics in the USSR were a simple formality, but with the USSR dissolution it became a problem as millions of Russians found themselves outside the territory of the Russian Federations and many families were separated. In the address, President Putin took a tough tone towards the Ukrainian authorities indicating several political mistakes they had made in the managing of the Ukrainian territory and that led to such a decision of the Crimean people. He stressed that in 2013 alone 3 million Ukrainians fled to Russia, where their incomes “totalled over \$20 billion, which is about 12% of Ukraine’s GDP”.<sup>387</sup>

It can be noted that after the referendum anti-western propaganda in the Russian media was strengthened. Along with gatekeeping bias, *RIA Novosti* started to use more eagerly the statement bias as well, and finally directly stated that the USA and its European allies were “orchestrating” an alleged “state coup” in Ukraine trying to deter Russia. A member of the Russian International Affairs Council, editor-in-chief of *Rossiya* magazine, Fedor Lukyanov, was reported by *RIA Novosti* as saying that the results of the referendum on the status of Crimea give Moscow additional moral arguments in its dispute with the West.<sup>388</sup> In the aftermath, President Putin openly said that the European countries were officially supporting the Ukrainian opposition and participated in the training of the Ukrainian military forces. Finally, he said that “it was the USA to be the real ‘puppet master’ of the state coup in Ukraine of 2014”.<sup>389</sup> There is no credible evidence of this fact, but it became evident that Russia and the West returned to the misunderstanding and mutual anti-propaganda of the XX century.

---

<sup>387</sup> “Address”.

<sup>388</sup> “Эксперт: итоги референдума в Крыму дают РФ аргументы в споре с Западом [An expert: the referendum’s results give Russia additional arguments in the dispute with the West]”, *RIA Novosti*, 16.03.2014, URL: <https://ria.ru/20140316/999738914.html> (accessed 2.03.2021).

<sup>389</sup> “Путин: реальными ‘кукловодами’ событий на Украине год назад были США [Putin: the USA was the real ‘puppet master’ of the state coup in Ukraine one year ago]”, *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2015, URL: [Путин: реальными "кукловодами" событий на Украине год назад были США - РИА Новости, 02.03.2020 \(ria.ru\)](https://ria.ru/20150315/1503202001.html) (accessed 2.03.2021).

## Conclusion

Nowadays amid a wide spread of digital technologies that rendered mass media even easier to access, political mass media sources can be considered an important actor of politics. In theory, mass media should serve as a reliable and unbiased source of information for its readers; in practice, however, they act as a strong and efficient instrument of political propaganda, forming and directing the people's way of thinking and attitude to determined political issues.

Political mass media play the role of mediators between politicians and the readers. The readers do not always possess the necessary information such as whose interests determined sources represent and what aims they pursue. This circumstance makes it almost impossible for the readers to filter the information they receive and distinguish true facts from open propaganda. Moreover, even today, when the principle of freedom of expression and press embodied in numerous international declarations and conventions seemed to triumph over political arbitrariness, mass media still are not effectively free. Apart from the fact that some countries still continue to control the mass media through taxation of independent privately-owned mass media and censorship politics, most of the political media are directly accountable to the official authorities or business elites, representing their interests and promoting their positions to get wider support of the audience.

The first chapter concluded that biased coverage, as well as propaganda, are not necessarily negative phenomena, but full-fledged, legitimate, and efficient instruments of politics. Within this research, the word "propaganda" was used in a sense defined by the professor of communication Michael J. Sproule as "a massive orchestration of attractive conclusions packaged to conceal both their persuasive purpose and lack of sound supporting reasons to win over the public for special interests".<sup>390</sup> Sometimes bias and propaganda in news coverage can be easily detected and distinguished from fake or false information, for example, in case of statement bias. It becomes more complicated when at first sight a source uses only formal language and does not express its attitude to a situation explicitly. In such cases, appropriate thematic framing and clever selection of news may be interpreted as bias as it also aims at winning over the major audience and at

---

<sup>390</sup> M.J. Sproule, *Channels of Propaganda*, Bloomington, EDINFO Press, 1994, p.8.

persuading them to adhere to certain positions. Framing events the way beneficial for certain actors performs the propaganda functions just as the hostile rhetoric does. Explicitly hostile rhetoric does not always successfully reach this goal as the careful public in the digital era became more suspicious of the news amid the latest fake news scandals while appropriate thematic framing implements the propaganda functions in a more “elegant” way and the readers are unlikely to understand they became the objects of it.

In this context comparison of the news coverage of the incorporation of Crimea on the example of the American and Russian mass media represent an interesting case study as both the USA and Russia were on several occasions accused of mutual propaganda. For the aims of this work, the Ukrainian crisis was oversimplified and regarded primarily from the international perspective in the context of geopolitical confrontation between Russia and the West.<sup>391</sup> This thesis analyzed how the two chosen mass media sources covered the incorporation of Crimea, which brought the sides to the disputes that are seen as the continuing Cold War.

The sources chosen for the comparison – the *News York Times* was chosen as an example of the American coverage and *RIA Novosti* as an example of the Russian coverage –are not entirely comparable as the *News York Times* is an independent daily magazine with a lot of analytical and opinion articles<sup>392</sup> while *RIA Novosti* is a governmental news agency which adheres to hard news paradigm, uses only formal, reserved language and almost always remains impersonal. As the first chapter revealed, these peculiarities of the two sources are explained by differences in history of the Russian and American political journalism development as Russia still tends to practice more authoritarian measures on mass media while the US policies corresponds more to the Libertarian theory of mass media according to Fred Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm’s classification. However imperfect, such choice can be justified on the grounds that that both sources are traditionally close (though in different ways) to their

---

<sup>391</sup> Tensions between Russia and the West were not a reason for the crisis in Ukraine but accelerated its unfolding. The underlying reasons of the conflict are deep internal political problems in Ukraine. See: K. Darden, “Как спасти Украину? [How to save Ukraine?]”, *Rossia v globalnoy politike*, vol.12, March-April 2014, p. 140.

<sup>392</sup> There are no state-owned political mass media sources in the USA that would allow a more symmetrical comparison.

countries' respective political establishments and have a very broad public, which allowed to make broader conclusions on the relations between Russia and the USA.

It was concluded that both sources widely used all the three types of bias in the reports – the gatekeeping bias, the visibility bias, and the statement bias, and it can be confirmed that both sources used propaganda techniques with respect to the other side.

Yet on the eve of the Ukrainian crisis the two mass media sources framed the situation differently. Both sources were repeatedly stressing the importance of Ukraine's sovereignty. However, for the *New York Times* it meant Ukraine's rapprochement with Europe at expense of breaking up friendly relations with Russia, while *RIA Novosti* intended with sovereignty, Ukrainian remaining in the Russian orbit of influence and not attempting to European "provocations". In the Russian media a possible Ukrainian rapprochement with the Europe was interpreted as a direct threat to the Russian national security as the move was widely seen by the Russian political circles as the first step towards Ukraine's membership in NATO, which would mean having a NATO military base right on the Russian border. It was just a hypothesis but it also explains the Russian decisive actions on Crimea.

From the very beginning, the *New York Times* gave all the responsibility for the unfolding of the conflict in Ukraine to Russia, starting from the failure of the Association agreement with the EU to the escalation of violence in Crimea that resulted in the holding of the referendum on secession. Yet in November 2013, much before Russia undertook any concrete measures on the crisis, the American *New York Times* openly accused Russia of the violation of international law and interference into Ukrainian internal affairs creating a negative image of Russia among its audience, often exaggerating with that, which is an evident example of propaganda and biased coverage. Russian *RIA Novosti* maintained formal, reserved rhetoric insisting on the legitimacy of the referendum, which was assisted by international observers, and the following incorporation of Crimea.

Throughout the development of the situation, general rhetoric of the two sources did not change significantly and often sounded repetitive. Since the beginning of March 2014, there was noted an increase in the number of reports per day both by Russian and American media, in particular, the number of opinion articles increased, rendering the coverage slightly more biased.

The news coverage of the *New York Times* was characterized by statement bias towards Russia and, in particular, in respect to Russian President Putin. The daily

magazine used informal language and hostile rhetoric creating a negative image of the Russian President who was referred to as a tyrant, aggressor, and authoritarian leader. Such a representation facilitated a hostile attitude towards Russia among the American audience, deepening contradictions, and tensions between the two countries. *RIA Novosti*, instead, was very cautious with words, that it is even difficult to find any obvious bias. Evidence of statement bias in *RIA Novosti* was expressed only in quotations of officials and experts and was referring primarily to the Ukrainian new authorities. However, as the crisis was developing and the West took a harsh tone on Russia, even *RIA Novosti* introduced the statement bias in respect to the western countries, arguing that they facilitated the state coup in Ukraine.

In such a way, it can be concluded that both mass media were biased towards the respective countries. At the same time, neither of the two sources used explicitly fake or false news, and in major part, they do not contradict each other but just focus on different aspects of the situation. This is an illustrative example of how appropriate thematic framing became a propaganda technique. The *New York Times* was stressing the fact of the Russian military presence in Crimea as the main evidence that the aforementioned events should be defined as an annexation; while *RIA Novosti* was focusing on the referendum to prove the legitimacy of the Crimean secession. Even when admitting the presence of the Russian military on the peninsula, it was claimed that it did not violate the international agreement with Ukraine. Moreover, it was stressed that the military was not conducting any military operations and was present there just for security reasons, and consequently cannot be considered military intervention.

Despite accusations of the Russian state mass media conducting propaganda and actively agitating the Crimeans to vote to join Russia, in *RIA Novosti* no evidence of the propaganda of the vote was found. It should be emphasized, however, that the *New York Times* was objective enough in confirming that the majority of people in Crimea effectively supported separation from Ukraine and wanted to be a part of the Russian Federation.

At least on the basis of the analyzed sources, it is unlikely that the information warfare took place as the two sources' target audience is local people of the two states. It should be also mentioned that the target audience of the state-owned media in Russia is primarily elderly people, while a younger generation usually uses a wider range of sources including foreign ones and not always support the official position. Right after the afore-

mentioned events in Crimea, however, there was noticed a strong increase in patriotism among the Russian elder population with a popular slogan “Крым – наш! [Crimea is ours!]”, which once again allows us to conclude that careful news framing proves to be an efficient instrument of propaganda, given the fact that the state-owned mass media sources never intentionally spread fake or false news.

One year after the described events, the documentary with the title “*Крым. Путь на Родину* [Crimea. The way to the homeland]” was released in Russia. The title reflects the idea that Crimea finally returned to its rightful place and justice was done, and this was a quite widespread opinion in Russia. The documentary was based on interviews with President Putin who explained some details of the Crimean incorporation. In particular, he said that the Russian military was deployed in Crimea to provide security of the civilians and was not supposed to make war. In the aftermath, exactly for this fact, the Russian military personnel in Crimea were called “*polite people*”.<sup>393</sup> This can be defined as another example of statement bias. Mr. Putin also admitted that “in case the events on the peninsula were developing unfavourably, Russia would be ready to mobilize its nuclear forces”.<sup>394</sup> This bold statement sounds unreal, as it would lead to a fatal result for all the sides, but at the same time reveals the high importance of the issue for Russia and confirms the fact that the Ukrainian crisis goes much beyond the regional conflict.

In a situation of confrontation, biased coverage and propaganda are not surprising, it makes part of the strategy to “defeat the enemy”. From the news analysis, it became evident that it is true that Russia and the West still perceive each other as enemies. But the question is: does the “enemy” really exist, or is the threat imaginary?

The end of the Cold War seemed to mark a new era of international relations free of ideological and cultural biases, providing the actors with many opportunities for reconfiguration and improvement of relations. Russia demonstrated its readiness to carry out democratic reforms and to align its views with the European liberal ones. This evidence was reflected yet in Gorbachev’s motto “Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals”.<sup>395</sup> In 2000 during the meeting between the Russian President and the President of

---

<sup>393</sup> “‘Путь на Родину’ - Путин раскрыл подробности воссоединения Крыма с РФ [‘The way to the homeland’ – Putin revealed details of the reunification of Crimea with Russia]”, *RIA Novosti*, 15.03.2015, URL: ["Путь на Родину" - Путин раскрыл подробности воссоединения Крыма с РФ - РИА Новости, 02.03.2020 \(ria.ru\)](https://ria.ru/20150315/putin-krim-15032015001.html) (accessed 2.03.2021).

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> М. Gorbachev, *Жизнь и реформы [Life and reforms]*, Part III, Moskva, “Novosti”, 1995, pp. 70-74.

the United States in Moscow, President Putin said he saw “Russia's future as a European nation” and even proposed Russia’s joining NATO, an organization that once served to deter the USSR.<sup>396</sup> Although President Clinton did not decline the proposal explicitly it never happened,<sup>397</sup> and quite early a relative thaw in relations changed with a new period of tensions. Europe refused to accept Russia to its identity: probably, Russia was a European country, but not for the Europeans. It means that the sides are reluctant to cooperate on an equal footing and there is always an element of competitiveness in the relations between the sides. This circumstance does not allow the sides to unleash the potential and unite their forces for combatting current global challenges. Unfortunately, Russia still perceives NATO as a hostile organization, while the West claims that Russia has great geopolitical ambitions with the desire to return its influence in the world, and the mass media eagerly maintain and sometimes even worsen such representations that prevent the sides from realigning their views and from overcoming their misunderstandings.

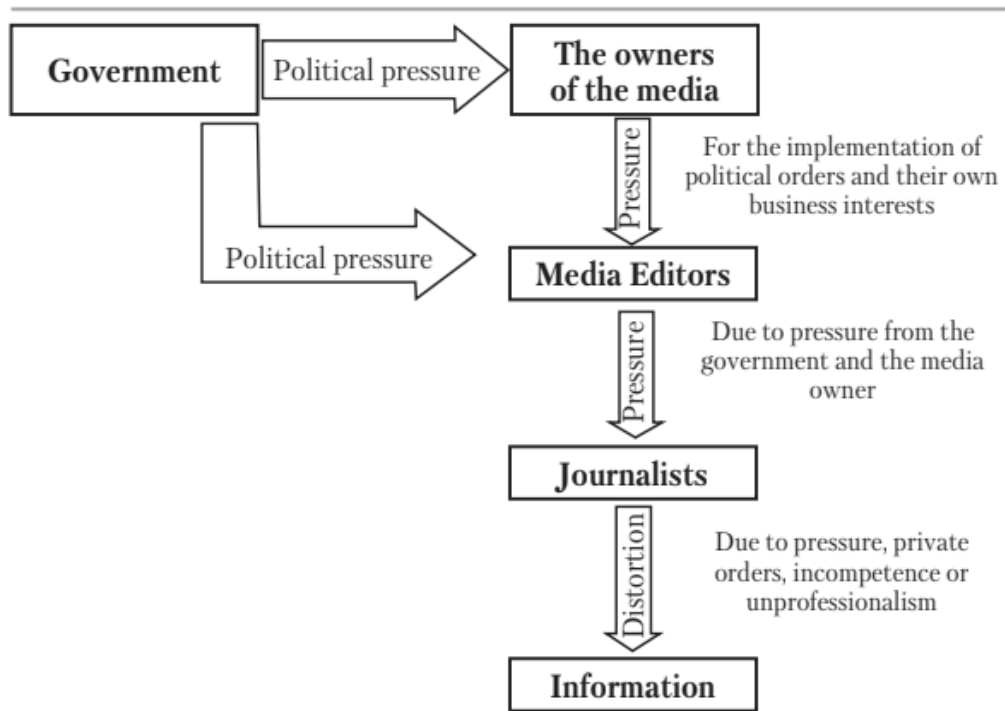
---

<sup>396</sup> P.Tyler, “Clinton and Putin meet in Kremlin with wide agenda”, *The New York Times*. 04.06.2000, URL: <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/04/world/clinton-and-putin-meet-at-kremlin-with-wide-agenda.html> (accessed 29.11.2020).

<sup>397</sup> Initially, under the Washington Treaty of 1949, NATO was created to deter the USSR, whereas after the Soviet collapse the alliance had to redraw its strategic goals. Since the 2000s, the USA and Russia were cooperating within the framework of NATO on a wide spectrum of issues: fight against drug trafficking, counter-terrorism, fight against piracy, use of airspace, and within NATO program “Science for peace and security”. Despite all these positive signs, “friendship” between Russia and NATO did not consolidate. Major disagreements regarded the anti-missile system in Europe and NATO enlargement on the East that were perceived by Russia as a national security threat. After the incorporation of Crimea in March 2014, all the cooperation programs were suspended. See M. Kuchinskaya, “Россия–НАТО: пройдена ли ‘точка невозврата’?” [Russia-NATO: the point of no return? Problems of national strategy], *Problemy nazionalnoy strategii*, No. 2 (35), 2016, pp. 89-107.



## Appendix 1. Mechanism of media information distortion



Source: Romaniuk O.I., Kovalenko I.P. *Social responsibility of the mass media: at attempt at conceptual justification*. Вісник ХДАК. Випуск 56. 2019 – Р. 189

## Bibliography

### Books and journal articles:

Akdeniz Yaman, "A study of legal provisions and practices related to freedom of expression, the free flow of information and media pluralism on the Internet in OSCE participating States", *The OSCE Representative on Freedom of Media*, 2012

Albæk Erik, Dalen Arjen van, Jebril Nael, de Vreese Claes, *Political Journalism in Comparative Perspective*. Cambridge University Press, 2014

Allcott Hunt, and Gentzkow Matthew, "Social media and fake news in the 2016 election", *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 31(2), 2017

Arquilla John, and Borer Douglas A. (Eds.), *Information strategy and warfare: A guide to theory and practice (contemporary security studies)*, New York: Routledge, 2007

Arrighi Giovanni, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First century*, Brooklyn, NY: Verso, 2007

Baldasty Gerald, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century*, University of Wisconsin Press, 1992

Babe Robert (ed.), *Information and communication in economics*, Boston, MA: Kluwer Academic, 2015

Bates Stephen, *Realigning journalism with democracy: The Hutchins Commission, its times, and ours*, Washington, DC: Annenberg Washington Program in Communications Policy Studies, 1995

Baudrillard Jean, *Passwords*. Verso: London. New York, 2003

Baudrillard Jean, *Simulacra and simulation*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994

Baudrillard Jean, *The ecstasy of communication*. Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia, 1988

Berryman John, "Geopolitics and Russian Foreign Policy", *International Politics*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2012

Beschastna Tatyana, "Freedom of expression in Russia as it relates to the criticism of the government", *Emory International Law Review*, Vol. 27, 2013

Blanchard Margaret, "Reclaiming freedom of the press: A Hutchins Commission dream or nightmare?", *Communications Law and Policy*, 3, 1998

Blanchard Margaret, "The Hutchins Commission, the press and the responsibility concept", *Journalism Monographs*, 49, 1977

Bleyer Willard G., *Main currents in the history of American journalism*, Cambridge, Mass, 1927

Brenner Susan W., *Cyberthreats: The Emerging Fault Lines of the Nation State*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2008

Catala Amandine, "Secession and Annexation: The Case of Crimea", *German Law Journal*, 16(3), 2015

- Casier Tom, “Not on speaking terms, but business as usual: the ambiguous coexistence of conflict and cooperation in EU–Russia relations”, *East European Politics*, 2020
- Chadwick Andrew, *The hybrid media system: Politics and power*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2017
- Chafee Zechariah Jr., *Government and mass communications*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1947
- D’Alessio Dave, and Allen Mike, “Media bias in presidential elections: A meta-analysis”, *Journal of Communication*, 50(4), 2000
- Daly Christopher B., *Covering America: A Narrative History of a Nation's Journalism*, University of Massachusetts Press, 2011
- Darden Keith, “Как спасти Украину? [How to save Ukraine?]”, *Rossia v globalnoy politike*, vol.12, March-April 2014
- David Sloan Wilson, Millikin Parcell Lisa (eds.), *American Journalism. History, principles, practices*, McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2002
- De Gregorio Giovanni, “From Constitutional Freedoms to the Power of the Platforms: Protecting Fundamental Rights Online in the Algorithmic Society”, *European Journal of Legal Studies*, Vol. II, No.2, 2019
- Delli Carpini Michael, Williams B.A., “Let us infotain you: Politics in the new media age”, in W. L. Bennett & R. M. Entman (Eds.), *Mediated politics: Communication in the future of democracy* Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001
- Didier Brice, “The Ukraine crisis or the revival of the Grand Chessboard’s geopolitics: Euro-Atlantic response to Russia’s assault”, *Open Diplomacy*, 24.07.2017, URL: [The Ukraine crisis or the revival of the Grand Chessboard’s geopolitics: Euro-Atlantic response to Russia’s assault - Eurasie Amériques Europe \(open-diplomacy.eu\)](http://open-diplomacy.eu)
- Diulichev Valerii, Крым: история в очерках – XX век [Crimea: in the essays – the XX century], Simferopol, 2006
- Ember Melvin, Emery Edwin, Roberts Nancy, *The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media*, 8th ed, Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996
- Emery Edwin, “Changing Role of the Mass Media in American Politics”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 427, 1996
- Epstein Joseph, “Dwight Macdonald: Sunburned by ideas”, *New Criterion*, 20, 2001
- Esin Boris, *История российской журналистики 1703-1917 [History of Russian journalism 1703-1917]*, М: Nauka, 2000
- Ferrari Aldo, Pupulin Elena (eds.), *La Crimea tra Russia, Italia e Impero Ottomano*, 1 ed., Venezia: Edizioni Ca’ Foscari, Digital Publishing, 2017
- Figes Orlando, *The Crimean War: A History*, New York: Picador, 2010
- Fisher Alan, *The Crimean Tatars*, Standford, CA.: Hoover Institution Press, 1978.
- Fomicheva Irina, *Социология СМИ [Sociology of mass media]*, М.: Moscow State University, 2013
- Gary Brett, “Communication research, the Rockefeller Foundation, and mobilization for the war on words, 1938–1944”, *Journal of Communication*, 46(3), 1996

- Gaufman Elizaveta, *Memory, media and securitization: Russian media framing of the Ukrainian crisis*. *Journal of Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics and Society*. Vol.1, No.1. 2015
- Golam Mostafa, and Monowar Mahmood, “Eurasian Economic Union: Evolution, challenges and possible future directions”, *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 2018
- Gorbachev Michail, *Жизнь и реформы [Life and reforms]*, Moskva, “Novosti”, 1995
- Grigoriev Maksim, Kovitidi Olga, *Крым: история возвращения [Crimea: the history of return]*, Moscow, Kulikovo Pole, 2014
- Grigo Suny Ronald, *The Soviet experiment: Russia, the USSR, and the Successor States*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1998
- Grinin Leonid, “Исторические и геополитические причины социально-политического кризиса на Украине [Historical and geopolitical reasons of social-political crisis in Ukraine]”, *Istoria e sovremennost*, 2(22), 2015
- Gromova Ludmila (ed.), *История русской журналистики XVIII – XIX веков [History of Russian journalism of the XVIII-XIX centuries]*, Spb., 2007
- Howard Marcus, *How journalists and the public shape our democracy*, Georgia Humanities. Atlanta, Georgia, 2019
- Howard Lawrence A., “The Historical, Legal, and Political Contexts of the Russian Annexation of Crimea”, *New English Review*, March 2015
- Howe Irving, “The New York intellectuals: A chronicle and a critique”, *Commentary*, 46(4), 1968
- Howie Emily, “Protecting the human right to freedom of expression in international law”, *International Journal of Speech-Language Pathology*, 20:1, 2018
- Ivanov Vladimir, “State policy in the sphere of Mass Media”, *Politbook*, 3, 2015
- Ivlev Dmitriy, *История русской журналистики XVIII – XX веков: В 3-х ч. [History of Russian journalism of the XVIII-XX centuries: in 3 vol.]*, Riga, 2000
- Iyengar Shanto, *Is Anyone Responsible? How Television Frames Political Issues*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991
- Janis Mark, Noyes John, *International Law. Cases and commentary*, 3rd ed. American casebook series, Thomson West, 2006
- Kent Neil, *Crimea: A History*, Hurst & Company, London, 2016
- Kortunov Andrey, “Гибралтарский сценарий для проблемы Крыма [The Gibraltarian scenario for the issue of Crimea]”, *Russian International Affairs Council*, 19.03.2019
- Kozelsky Mara, *Christianizing in the Russian Empire and Beyond*, De Kalb, IL.: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010
- Kuchinskaya Marina, “Россия–НАТО: пройдена ли ‘точка невозврата’?” [Russia-NATO: the point of no return? Problems of national strategy], *Problemy nazionalnoy strategii*, No. 2 (35), 2016
- Kuznetsov Ivan, *История отечественной журналистики 1917-2000 [History of Russian Journalism 1917-2000]*, Flinta, 2008

- Lasswell Harold, "The Structure and Function of Communication in Society" in Lyman Bryson, ed., *The Communication of Ideas*, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948
- Lazarsfeld Paul, Merton Robert, "Mass communication, popular taste and organized social action", in Bryson L. *The communication of ideas*, Institute for Religious and Social Studies, New York, 1948
- Lewis Brian, "Information warfare", *Federation of American Scientists*, 1997
- Libicki Martin, *What is Information Warfare?*, Washington, DC, USA: National Defense University Press, 1996
- Luhmann Niklas, *The Reality of the Mass Media*, Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000
- Magosci Paul Robert, *The Blessed Land: Crimea and the Crimean Tatars*, Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2014
- Macdonald Dwight, "Kulturbolschewismus is here", *Partisan Review*, 8(6), 1941
- Maresceau Marc, "Bilateral Agreements concluded by the European Community", *Collected Courses of the Hague Academy of International Law*, vol. 309, 2004
- Masnenko Vitaliy, "Мифологема «братских народов» как идеальная модель русско-украинских отношений в советской/российской историографии" [Mythologem of "brother nations" as ideal model of Russian-Ukrainian relations in soviet/Russian historiography], *Studia Historica Gedanensia*, vol. IX, 2018
- McCombs Maxwell, and Shaw Donald, "The agenda-setting function of mass media", *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 36(2), 1972
- McKerns Joseph Patrick, "The History of American Journalism", *American Studies International*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1976
- McQuail Denis, *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*, L., 1987
- Merkel Reinhard, "Kühle Ironie der Geschichte", *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 08.04.2014
- Mott, "Review of A free and responsible press", *Political Science Quarterly*, 62(3), 1947
- Mutz Diana, "The Great Divide: Campaign Media in the American Mind", *Daedalus*, vol. 141, no. 4, 2012
- Neumann Iver B., "Returning Practice to the Linguistic Turn: The Case of Diplomacy", *Millennium - Journal of International Studies*, 31, 2002
- Panarin Igor, *СМИ, пропаганда и информационные войны [Mass media, propaganda and information warfare]*, М:Pokolenie, 2012
- Patrusheva Natalia, *Цензор в государственной системе дореволюционной России (вторая половина XIX – начало XX века) [The censor in the state system of pre-revolutionary Russia (the second half of the XIX century – the beginning of the XX century)]*, Spb., 2011
- Patterson Thomas, Donsbagh Kurt W., "News decisions: Journalists as partisan actors", *Political Communication*, 13:4, 1996

Patterson Thomas, "Time and News: The Media's Limitations as an Instrument of Democracy", *International Political Science Review*, Vol. 19, No. 1, Democracy and Time, 1998

Pashkovsky Petr, "Проблема Черноморского флота в Российско-Украинских отношениях (1991-2014): ретроспективный анализ" [The problem of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in the Russian-Ukrainian relations (1991-2014): a retrospective analysis], *Nauchnye vedomosti, Seria: Istorija i politologija*, vol. 46, № 2, 2019

Pavlyuk Oleksandr, *The European Union and Ukraine: The Need for a New Vision. Policy Paper Based on the Study on the Current State and Prospects of Relations between the European Union and Ukraine*, Kyiv, EastWest Institute, 1999

Pfau Michael, and Denton Robert, "The Mass Media and American Politics: A Review Essay", *The Western Political Quarterly*, vol. 42, no. 1, 1989

Ponamarev Boris (ed.), *История СССР с древнейших времен и до наших дней. [History of the USSR since ancient times to our days]*, Moscow, Nauka, 1967

Rabotyazhev Nikolai, Soloviyov Eduard, "Украинский кризис: между политикой идентичности и геополитикой [The Ukrainian crisis: between the identity policy and geopolitics]", *Rossia i Novye gosudarstva Evrazii*, 3(36), 2017

Reifman Pavel, *Цензура в дореволюционной, советской и постсоветской России: в 2 т. [Censorship in the pre-revolutionary, soviet and post-soviet Russia: in 2 vol.]*, М.: «Пробел-2000», 2017

Reinemann Carsten (ed.), *Handbook of Communication Science: Political Communication*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014

Rojas Hernando, and McGarr Kathryn, *A (brief) History of American Journalism*, Wisconsin University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2017

Romaniuk Aleksandr, Kovalenko Irina, "Social responsibility of the mass media: at attempt at conceptual justification", *Visnik HDAK*, vol. 56, 2019

Semetko Holli A., Blumler Joy G., Gurevitch Michael, and Weaver David H., *The formation of campaign agendas: A comparative analysis of party and media roles in recent American and British elections*, Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1999

Shumylo-Tapiola Olga, "Why Does Ukraine Matter to the EU?", *Carnegie Europe - Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 13.04.2013, URL: <https://carnegieeurope.eu/2013/04/16/why-does-ukraine-matter-to-eu-pub-51522>

Sidorov Vadim, "Украинский национализм: левый курс и правые колебания" [Ukrainian nationalism: left course and right swings], *Russkaya Planeta*, 9.11.2013

Siebert Fred S., Peterson Theodore, and Schramm Wilbur, *Four theories of the press: the authoritarian, libertarian, social responsibility, and Soviet communist concepts of what the press should be and do*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1963

"The Sinews of Peace ('Iron Curtain Speech' of Churchill)", *Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri*, March 5, 1946, URL: [The Sinews of Peace \('Iron Curtain Speech'\) - The International Churchill Society \(winstonchurchill.org\)](http://www.winstonchurchill.org)

Singer Peter Warren, Brooking Emerson, *LikeWar: The weaponization of social media*, Eamon Dolan Books, 2018

- Snyder Jack L., *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations*, RAND, Santa Monica, CA, 1977
- Sola Pool, “Newsmen and Statesmen — Adversaries or Cronies” in W. I. Rivers and N.J. Nyhan (eds), *Aspen Papers on Government and Media*, London, 1973
- Sproule Michael J., *Channels of Propaganda*, Bloomington, EDINFO Press, 1994
- Starikov Nikolai, Belyaev Dmitriy, “Россия. Крым. История. [Russia. Crimea. History.]”, СПб.: Питер, 2018
- Stoyakin Vasilii, “Как формировались границы Украины” [How the Ukrainian borders were forming], *Politicheskiiy Tehnolog*, 27.11.2013
- Strömbäck Jesper, Shehata Adam, “Political Journalism”, *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication*, September 2018
- Suleymanova Shukran, Nazarova Ekaterina, *Информационные войны: история и современность [Information warfare: history and modernity]*, Moscow, 2017
- Taddeo Mariarosaria, “Information Warfare: A Philosophical Perspective”, *Philosophy and Geography*, 25(1), 2011
- Tooze Adam, *Crashed: how a decade of financial crises changed the world*, New York, Viking, 2018
- Trenin Dmitriy, “The Ukraine crisis and renewal of imperialist confrontation”, *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 15.10.2014, URL: <https://carnegie.ru/2014/10/15/ru-pub-56935>
- Umbach Frank, “Конфликт вокруг газа между Россией, Украиной и ЕС: кто может оказаться в самом большом проигрыше?” [Conflict on gas between Russia, Ukraine and the EU: who might become the biggest loser?], *NATO Review*, 9.5.2014
- Van der Loo Guillaume, Van Elsuwege Peter, and Petrov Roman, “The EU-Ukraine Association Agreement: Assessment of an Innovative Legal Instrument”, *EUI Working Papers Law*, 13.09.2014
- Wald Alan M., *The New York intellectuals: The rise and decline of the anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s*, Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987
- Wei Ran and Zhiming Larry Xu. *New Media and Politics: A Synopsis of Theories, Issues, and Research*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication, May 2019
- Welman Christopher, “The morality of secession”, in D. Harrison Doyle (ed), *Secession as an International Phenomenon: From America's Civil War to Contemporary Separatist Movements*, Athens, the University of Georgia press, 2010
- Wright Charles, “Sociology of Mass Communications”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 5, 1979
- Zaller John, *A theory of media politics: How the interests of politicians, journalists and citizens shape the news*, University of Chicago Press, 1999
- Zasursky Yasen, *Искушение свободой. Российская журналистика 1990-2004 [Temptation of freedom. Russian Journalism 1990-2004]*, М.: Издательство Московского университета, 2004
- Zemlyanova Lidia, *Зарубежная компаративистика в преддверии информационного общества [Foreign comparative studies on the eve of the information society]*, *Tolkoviyy slovar terminov i koncepciy*, Moskva, 1999

## Official documents and reports:

Committee to Protect Journalists, “10 Most Censored Countries”, 2019. URL: <https://cpj.org/reports/2019/09/10-most-censored-eritrea-north-korea-turkmenistan-journalist/>

Declaration on Principles of International Law of 1970

European Convention on Human Rights, 1950

European Parliament, “Ukraine: timeline of events”, 29.04.2014, URL: [Ukraine: timeline of events | News | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20140429IPR10000/ukraine-timeline-of-events)

General Assembly of the United Nations, “Resolution 68/262 adopted by the General Assembly on 27 March 2014 on Territorial integrity of Ukraine”, 1.4.2014, URL: <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/68/262>

Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe of 1975

Human Rights Council, “Resolution 9/11. Right to the truth”, URL: [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A\\_HRC\\_RES\\_9\\_11.pdf](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_9_11.pdf)

IMF press release, “Press Release: Statement by IMF Mission to Ukraine”, no. 13/419, 31.10.2013, URL: <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2015/09/14/01/49/pr13419>

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, 1966

“Law of the Russian Federation ‘On Mass Media’ N 2124-1 of 27.12.1991 (amended on 01.03.2020), *Consultant*, URL: [http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons\\_doc\\_LAW\\_1511/](http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_1511/)

NATO Official Texts, “Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Ukraine”, 9 July 1997

Official website of the Russian President, “Заявление Президента РФ Д. Медведева в связи с ситуацией в Южной Осетии 8 августа 2008 года” [The Russian President D. Medvedev Statement on the situation in South Ossetia. August 8, 2008], 8.09.2008, URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/text/appears/2008/08/205027.shtml>

Official website of the Russian President, “Владимир Путин внёс обращение в Совет Федерации [Vladimir Putin made an appeal to the Federation Council]”, *Official website of the Russian President*, 1.03.2014, URL: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20353>

Official website of the Russian President, “Договор между Российской Федерацией и Республикой Крым о принятии в Российскую Федерацию Республики Крым и образовании в составе Российской Федерации новых субъектов [Agreement on the accession of the Republic of Crimea to the Russian Federation]”, *Official website of the Russian President*, 18.03.2014, URL: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/20605>

OSCE Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, “Propaganda and freedom of the media”, Vienna, 2015, pp.33-34, URL: <https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/b/3/203926.pdf>



Press Freedom, “European Charter on Freedom of Press”, 29.05.2009, URL: <http://www.pressfreedom.eu/en/index.php>

Reporters without Borders, “2020 World Press Freedom Index: ‘Entering a decisive decade for journalism, exacerbated by coronavirus’”, 2020, URL: <https://rsf.org/en/2020-world-press-freedom-index-entering-decisive-decade-journalism-exacerbated-coronavirus>

Russian census of Crimea: Nationality Results, March 19, 2014, URL: [Russian Census of Crimea: Nationality Results | eurasianstudies \(archive.org\)](http://eurasianstudies.org/2014/03/19/russian-census-of-crimea-nationality-results/)

Statdata, “Население Крыма и Севастополя: численность, национальный состав [Population of Crimea and Sevastopol: national composition]”, 13.09.2019, URL: <http://www.statdata.ru/naselenie-krima-i-sevastopolya>

Supreme Council of Crimea, “Обращение Председателя Совета министров АРК Сергея Аксенова [The appeal of the head of the Council of Ministers of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea Sergey Aksyonov]”, 1.03.2014, URL: [http://crimea.gov.ru/news/01\\_03\\_14](http://crimea.gov.ru/news/01_03_14)

Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Partnership between Ukraine and the Russian Federation of 31 May 1997

Verkhovna Rada Ukrainy, “Про рішення Ради національної безпеки і оборони України від 6 травня 2015 року "Про Стратегію національної безпеки України" [Ukrainian National Security strategy of 2015], URL: [Про рішення Ради національн... | Від 26.05.2015 № 287/2015 \(rada.gov.ua\)](http://rada.gov.ua/ua/2015/05/26/287-2015)

UN Human Rights Council resolution 12/16 on freedom of opinion and expression, 12 October 2009, URL: <https://www.right-docs.org/doc/a-hrc-res-12-16/>

Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948

UN meeting coverages and press releases, “General Assembly Adopts Resolution Calling upon States Not to Recognize Changes in Status of Crimea Region”, 27.03.2014, URL: <https://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ga11493.doc.htm>

US Defence Ministry, “Joint Doctrine for Information Operations”, 9 October 1998, p. I-11 URL: <https://www.hsdl.org/?abstract&did=3759>

Vedomosti Verkhovna Rada, “Закон ‘Про засади державної мовної політики’ № 5029-VI [The Ukrainian Constitutional law on language policies]”, 2013, URL: [https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5029-17](http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/5029-17)

### **Newspapers and magazines:**

*Meduza*

*New York Times*

*RIA Novosti*

*Sevastopolskaya Gazeta*