

THE BEAR IS BACK! FEAR THE BEAR!

PROPAGANDA AND REGIME SURVIVAL IN

PUTIN'S RUSSIA

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to assess the factors that contribute to the resilience of competitive authoritarian regimes. While most of the scholarly works concentrate primarily on electoral competition, state coercive capacity, manipulation of legislature and elite co-optation, this research focuses on state propaganda, arguing that this factor is an important source of popular appeal of competitive authoritarian governments, as well as, the factor which contributes to their survival. In order to test this assumption this study takes the case of Russian propaganda during the Ukrainian crisis of 2014 and narrows the scope down to how the Russian media frames the topic of economic sanctions implemented against Russia by the Western governments. This research also assesses whether any of these media frames resonated among the Russian public. Framing analysis of Russian TV news alongside of the qualitative content analysis of textual transcripts were utilized in order to extract major media frames employed by the Russian media to cover the topic of economic sanctions. Consequently, public resonance of media frames was measured by matching the results from content analysis to opinion polls conducted in Russia in relation to the topic of economic sanctions and social actors who were prominent in the TV coverage. The results demonstrate that the Russian media employed powerful frames with regards to the topic of economic sanctions and, most importantly, the majority of these frames resonated successfully among Russian people. This research, thus, raises troubling questions about the prospects for democratization not only in Putin's Russia but in other competitive authoritarian states where state propaganda is responsible for a large scale misinformation of ordinary citizens.

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Introduction: The Bear against the West

Since the beginning of 2014 Russia has been engaged in a diplomatic war against the West. Some of the poignant aspects of this war surged during the months of March and April that year when the US, the EU, as well as other Western governments and international organizations, compiled a list of sanctions against Russian individuals and businesses allegedly involved in the annexation of Crimea and destabilization in Eastern Ukraine. Although in the light of plummeting oil prices the extent of damage caused by the sanctions is not clear, many analysts argue that the sanctions have definitely weakened the Russian economy (Birnbaum 2015, Gros and Mustilli 2015). Interestingly, Putin's popularity had surged prior to the Crimean annexation and remained considerably high throughout 2014 and 2015. The majority of Russians consider him the most trusted leader in the country (Nardelli et al., 2015, Monaghan 2015). This situation is puzzling since the actions of the current Russian government have led to a considerable economic and political isolation of Russia. It is even more confounding given the fact that in the age of massive information dissemination, which makes it less difficult to monitor one's government, competitive authoritarian regimes, such as Putin's Russia, that are ridden by corruption and nepotism, enjoy considerable public support (Pomerantsev 2015, Guriev and Treisman 2015).

Scholars who analyze the factors that contribute to the survival of competitive authoritarian regimes usually focus on electoral processes, legislation, state coercive capacity and elite co-optation, citing these as the major areas exploited by illiberal governments to their own advantage (Brancati 2014, Gerschewski 2011, Magaloni and Kricheli 2010). Ordinary citizens and the reasons they might support competitive authoritarian governments rarely enter the picture. Gerschewski mentions popular support, which he calls "ideational, diffuse support" for competitive authoritarian governments, as one of the important factors contributing to the

regime survival in competitive authoritarianisms (2011, p.11). Yet, he acknowledges that current scholarship on competitive authoritarian regimes offers few tools for measuring this factor and, instead, he offers macroeconomic indexes as proxy indicators for public support for illiberal governments (2011, p.8). Magaloni and Kricheli also emphasize the importance of mass support for competitive authoritarian regimes and argue that “autocrats are interested in their own survival, but this motivation does not necessarily mean that they will opt to completely exclude the masses from the political process [...]” (2010, p.128). However, both authors view citizens as bargainers who, as a result of participating in an extensive patronage system, manage to receive rents from competitive authoritarian governments and, thus, decide to yield their support for them (2010, p.128). While all of the abovementioned arguments are undoubtedly important for understanding the resilience of competitive authoritarian governments, I would argue that this picture is incomplete. There is another crucial factor to which scholars have not paid sufficient attention, but which can contribute to our understanding of the popular appeal of competitive authoritarian regimes.

A growing body of research suggests that successful state-sponsored propaganda might be one of the factors contributing to public support for illiberal governments, such as competitive authoritarian regimes. By carefully manipulating public opinion, distorting information, diverting public attention from pressing issues, spreading conspiracy theories and fearmongering, competitive authoritarian governments have found relatively cheap and efficient means of securing public support (Reilly 2011, Lansberg-Rodríguez 2015, Guriev and Treisman 2015). In this research I will address this phenomenon by focusing primarily on the recent developments in the Russian propaganda. Since in the case of Russia this topic is incredibly broad and will have to encompass such factors as the massive Internet trolling administered by the Kremlin, as well as propaganda through foreign-owned and domestic media, I will narrow the scope to the TV coverage of economic sanctions, as it presents a unique

opportunity to see how the Russian government is coping with framing the economic crisis that was essentially brought about by the policies of the Kremlin itself. The literature on economic sanctions also suggests that the topic of sanctions provides a fertile ground for investigating the effects of propaganda and persuasion (Kaempfer and Lowenberg 2000, Selden 1999). This research will address the question of *how media framing of economic sanctions managed to divert public anger over the exacerbating economic crisis*. More specifically, I am interested in *what is in the frames*, and *whether the frames resonated within the audience*. This will be accomplished via the usage of framing analysis of TV news content which will show how the topic of economic sanctions, along with the actors involved in it, are presented to the Russian public. Consequently, public resonance will be measured by matching the results from content analysis to the opinion polls conducted in Russia in relation to the topic of economic sanctions and other issues that surged during the TV coverage of this topic. This research will also address a broader question of how, in the age of massive flow of communication and information, competitive authoritarian regimes not only survive the challenges posed to them by repeated legitimacy crises but also manage to garner public approval and support.

Russia is an example of a country where all of these questions can be addressed directly, especially in the light of the massive propaganda campaign unleashed during the Ukrainian crisis of 2014. Even though in the last couple of years Russia has been moving into a more authoritarian direction, since the collapse of the Soviet Union Russia had always been a paradigmatic case of a competitive authoritarian regime which despite numerous setbacks and economic downturns has managed not only to withstand considerable challenges but also to achieve significant public support (Levitsky and Way 2010, p.192). It is also a country that invests heavily in media propaganda, both at home and abroad, and, so far, has been successful in rallying the public around potentially controversial causes, such as the annexation of Crimea (Ostrovsky 2014, Nalbanov 2016). Hence, Russia is both a resilient competitive

authoritarianism and a regime that enjoys a considerable public support. Needless to say, heavy media framing is just one of the many tactics employed by the Russian government to deal with the crises, such as the current economic crisis, in order to stay in power. However, there is an evidence which indicates that media are a crucial factor in this strategy. In connection with the Ukrainian crisis of 2014 the Russian media has become inundated with loud, false or distorted claims in relation to the Crimean annexation and the crisis in Eastern Ukraine (Pomerantsev 2014a). Hence, a scholar who is interested in framing analysis will find plenty of room for detecting potentially successful frames and measuring their resonance. Analyzing Russian propaganda will also demonstrate a broader appeal of competitive authoritarian regimes, as the analysis will indicate what exactly the public finds attractive in propagandistic messages sent by these governments.

The results of my study will show how by vilifying external actors and stirring nationalist moods via media propaganda the Russian government has created a set of powerful narratives that resonated among the public. Most importantly, the results will demonstrate how, by framing the sanctions as Western, primarily American, indignation over Russia's supposedly renewed strength, the Russian media have managed to distract the public, completely distort the information about the sanctions and, thus, to a certain degree, helped the Kremlin to escape major public outcry over the current economic crisis.

This research will begin with the discussion of "Putin's Russia" where essential features of Putin's regime, such as its reliance on informal networks and media propaganda will be presented in details. This will be followed by a broader discussion on the role of propaganda in competitive authoritarian regimes where I will introduce the current literature on this increasingly important topic. Then, the study will focus specifically on the history of Russian media ownership to illustrate how, in the case of Russia, the media have become essentially a

government's mouthpiece. The study will then move towards empirical chapters where I will outline a step-by-step methodology of this research, namely, the framing analysis, the method of data selection and the qualitative content analysis of textual transcripts extracted for this study. I will then present the most important results of this study which will be followed by the conclusion where I will offer final remarks on the role of propaganda in Russia and other competitive authoritarian regimes.

Chapter 1. Autocrats and Propaganda: New Tools, Same Old Stories

In the first section of this chapter I will introduce a brief background to Putin's Russia to show the idiosyncrasies and peculiarities of Putin's rule and the changes that occurred in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This is done in order to demonstrate why Russia is a classic case of a competitive authoritarian regime where state propaganda has become an important tool utilized by the government in order to stay in power. I will then move to the second section of this chapter where I will introduce a broader discussion on the role of propaganda in autocratic regimes, as well as, a growing number of studies which argue that the resilience of illiberal governments can be explained by their reliance on state propaganda. I will then move towards a more specific case of propaganda in times of economic sanctions to show why this event can become a powerful trigger for state propaganda.

1.1. Putin's Russia and the "Success" of Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

In this section I will provide a historical background to Putin's Russia and demonstrate why Russia is a classic example of competitive authoritarian regime. I will conclude the section by showing how the 2011-12 mass protests against the regime, as well as the crisis in Ukraine in 2014, have triggered considerable changes in Russian politics and moved Russia from a stable competitive authoritarianism to a more authoritarian country, characterized by personalist style of rule that made Russia more repressive and even more prone to severe political crises. I will also demonstrate the role of media in molding public acceptance of these major changes, as

well as the broader role the media play in a complex web of informal networks that became an essential feature of contemporary Russia.

Levitsky and Way define competitive authoritarian regimes as “civilian regimes in which formal democratic institutions exist and are widely viewed as the primary means of gaining power, but in which incumbents’ abuse of the state places them at a significant advantage vis-à-vis their opponents” (2010, p.5). During Putin’s Presidency, at least until the early 2012, Russia had been a paradigmatic case of competitive authoritarianism because it represented a stable competitive authoritarianism where the incumbent had been in power for several consecutive elections cycles (Moriarty 2013, p.13). In the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse Russia had very limited state and party capacity but both were strengthened dramatically after Putin came to power in 2000 (Levistky and Way 2010, p.187). Putin’s policy of promoting nationalization of key industries combined with favorable oil prices had substantially improved the state of the Russian economy in the early 2000s (Sutela 2013, p.38). Putin also created the new party, “United Russia”, in 2001 and his heavy investments in the party had strengthened the intuitional capacities of the Russian state. He also consolidated 89 Russian provinces into only seven regional districts and, in addition to that, he limited the power of the upper legislative chamber. Putin asserted government control over the strategically important gas company Gazprom and he also weakened the influence of notable business tycoons, like Khodorkovsky. The number of barriers to new parties and political forces increased substantially, while NGOs and media outlets critical of the President were subjected to constant harassment and, oftentimes, prosecution. And although he served as Prime Minister during Dmitri Medvedev’s presidency from 2008 to 2012, there is little doubt that throughout this period and afterwards Putin maintained his status as the most powerful politician in Russia (Levistky and Way 2010, p.192, Moriarty 2013, p. 15, Sutela 2013, p.49). Until 2011, the competitive authoritarian regime in Russia functioned relatively smoothly. A

chess-like maneuver which made Dmitri Medvedev President and Vladimir Putin Prime Minister for the period of 2008-12 was seen as a notorious example of electoral rigging in competitive authoritarianism, where the succession does exist but is executed via unfair elections. Popular approval of both Putin and Medvedev is cited as one of the reasons why the transition from Putin to Medvedev in 2008 was relatively successful. Subsequently, until 2012, the competitive authoritarian regime in Putin's Russia was quite successful, with a number of electoral reforms passed by President Medvedev even expanding, albeit to a very small degree, the competition on electoral arena (Zimmerman 2016, p.8).

The relative "success" of Putin's Russia produced a model for other government to imitate. The standards of living rose sharply in the early 2000s, while the country experienced a successful economic recovery (Sutela 2013, p.38). Russia has become a "research laboratory in competitive authoritarian regime design, where new techniques are tested and developed, and students from other countries come to watch and learn" (Robertson 2009, p.547). But alongside of the economy that embarked on the road to recovery in the early 2000s, when he first came to power in 2000 Vladimir Putin had also inherited the so-called *sistema*, one of the key characteristics of modern Russia and a major impediment to country's democratization (Ledeneva 2013, p. 72).

Sistema refers to a specific system of governance that is based on a massive network of informal contacts and interactions. In Russia there is a significant gap between the way things are done on paper and the way they are executed in real life (Sakwa 2010, p.3). Ledeneva describes it as a "pre-modern" way of governing that requires an extensive network of informal institutions and practices (2013, p.3). In fact, the structure of governance and the administrative capacity of the Russian state depend heavily on informal networks and internal coordination mechanisms that are impossible to control fully. These networks are the essence of the *sistema*

where clans and kinships play a leading role in facilitating the distribution of resources within (Ledeneva 2013, p.33). Essentially, *sistema* is about helping your friends and hiring people in exchange for favors, such as loyalty (Ledeneva 2013, p.14). Almost everyone in the position of power and authority in Russia has to join the *sistema*. *Sistema* is not strictly hierarchical and even Vladimir Putin himself, albeit the most influential figure in these networks, does not exercise a full control over the *sistema* and cannot always avouch for the outcomes that it produces (Ledeneva 2013, p.35). Hence, the *sistema* in Russia makes it virtually impossible for anyone to follow written bureaucratic instructions in a straightforward and transparent way (Sakwa 2010, p.356). Paradoxically, this *sistema* manages to get many things done in Russia and, as Ledeneva argues, “it serves to glue society together, to distribute resources and to mobilize people; it contributes to both stability and change; and it ensures its own reproduction” (2013, p.249).

Sistema has its origins in the Soviet era. Constant shortage of goods and the rigidity of Soviet bureaucracy compelled the citizens to rely on personal networks of contact in order to procure necessary goods and services (Mattsson and Salmi 2013, p.94). When the Soviet Union collapsed, it was expected that the Party’s shady institutions would get replaced by the transparent democratic ones. But the new democratic institutions which appeared during Yeltsin’s years proved to be highly ineffective and very swiftly the informal networks came back. In today’s Russia, however, obtaining goods and services is no longer a problem. What is at stake now is the access to good jobs and safe investments and informal networks are crucial here. Certainly, the defective institutions of the Soviet era are partially to blame for this comeback but in post-socialist societies reliance on personal networks, argues Ledeneva, was the only way to cope with the defects of the free market (Ledeneva 2013, p.11).

Vladimir Putin has spectacularly adapted to the *sistema* and managed to utilize his own network of contacts in order to consolidate power and strengthen the vertical of power. Almost immediately after becoming President in 2000, he placed his people into the key positions of power (Shevtsova 2005, p.325). For instance, his envoys have substantially reduced the power of regional governors. Most notably, in the wake of the Beslan massacre in 2004, direct gubernatorial elections were eliminated and replaced by what might be called an appointment system in which Putin's envoys nominate the candidate endorsed by the President and who then gets a guaranteed confirmation in the regional legislature (Hale 2010, p.37). Competition, which is unavoidable in competitive authoritarian regimes, is under control due to Putin's contacts in the vast web of the *sistema*. The *sistema* also plays a role in shaping public opinion. As Roberston notes, the Putin administration has created an organizational infrastructure that can be relied upon to amass public support for the regime (2009, p.541). Quasi social movements such as "Idushchiye Vmeste" and "Nashi", both founded by people with close ties to the Kremlin, are used to mobilize the population to support the current government and to provide a counter-force to the Russian opposition (Robertson 2009, p. 542-43).

Media are also an integral part of Putin's *sistema*. Both the media and the Internet are crucial for Putin's "managed democracy" since they play a role of levers that allow him to monitor and mold public opinion (Ledeneva 2013, p.81). Levitsky and Way also argue that control over the mainstream media is another crucial similarity between competitive authoritarian regimes. Independent TV channels, like the Russian TV Rain (*Dozhd'*/Дождь), do exist but they have a very limited coverage (Levitsky and Way 2010, p.8). Under Putin's leadership the Russian state has increased its stake in several strategic enterprises, including those in the media sector. In the upcoming chapters I will present more information about the state of Russian media ownership. It suffices to say at this point that complete domination over the media sector was not a primary goal of Putin's administration. Rather it was an outcome

produced by the logic of the *sistema* and, as Burrett argues, it was more of a necessity (2013). Putin needed to fully control the state media in order to adequately deal with the dysfunctional political system he inherited from Yeltsin (Burrett 2013, p.2). The media were used to mobilize voters and counter the pressure from political elites. In the wake of the elections in 2000, great public confidence in Putin, which was shaped to a great degree by the television, presented him with an opportunity to utilize this symbolic unity of the Russian people and to justify his attempt to push oligarchic elites out of the sphere of media ownership and other key areas of the Russian economy (Burrett 2013, p.6).

The media continue to play an important role in maintaining the status quo within Putin's Russia and his reliance on the informal networks of the *sistema* is crucial in this regard. However, in the last couple of years, from 2012 onwards more precisely, the atmosphere in the Russian media space has become much more hostile. The government has intensified the fight against a few remaining media outlets that provide unbiased or critical assessment of Kremlin's policies. Headquarters of non-state-owned TV Rain channel and media group RBC (*RBC/PBK*), both of whom have a fairly large audience of viewers and listeners, were subjected to raids and harassment from Russia's Federal Security Service in 2015 and 2016 ("FSB Raids" 2016, Ennis 2016). At the same time the Russian media have increased the campaign against the leaders of Russian opposition and became even more active and aggressive in framing them as "traitors" and "fifth columnists" (Yaffa 2014). As Gel'man argues, this was also a part of a broader change that took place in Russia in 2012 and was intensified during the Ukrainian crisis of 2014 (Gel'man 2015, p. 99).

Popular protests and mass demonstrations against the rigged parliamentary elections in 2011 and equally troublesome Presidential elections in 2012 that resulted in Putin getting reelected, became the most challenging events for the Kremlin. They had a potential to severely

undermine its internal structure. Fearing the possibility of losing power and a “color revolution” scenario in Russia Vladimir Putin decided to “tighten the screws” immediately after he assumed office in 2012 (Gel’man 2015, p.113). Several institutional changes aimed at curbing the freedom of speech, as well as, a range of other political and civic freedoms, had taken place in Russia. Attempts to establish new opposition parties were aborted right at the registration stage, while foreign NGOs became victims of a large scale witch-hunt (Amos 2016, Nougayrède 2016). And, while the public was initially critical of the Kremlin’s actions, the 2011-12 protests, along with broader calls for change and democratic reforms were erased and forgotten in the wake of the Crimean annexation in 2014. The Russian media have orchestrated a spectacular propaganda campaign that rallied many Russians around a nationalist cause while also frightening the population with the possibility of a Ukrainian style *coup d’état* in Russia. Russia has begun to move from a competitive authoritarian regime to a much more authoritarian country characterized by personalist and securitized regime whose decision making is more spontaneous and unpredictable (Gel’man 2015, p.115).

At this point in time, it is unclear as to what kind of scenario will unfold in Russia in the near future. Some scholars, by looking at economic indicators and the current state of affairs are predicting severe political and economic crises that might potentially fracture the current political system in Russia (Zubarevich 2015, Gudkov 2015). Other scholars predict that Russia will continue to adhere to the status quo and then gradually move towards a less authoritarian regime (Gel’man 2016, p.120). While nobody is able to clearly answer the question of what the future holds for Russia, what is unquestionable at the moment is the fact that public euphoria in the wake of the Crimean annexation “gave free rein to the Kremlin” to become even more aggressive and authoritarian in relation to every manifestation of dissent and criticism towards the government (Gel’man 2015, p. 100). The media are partially to blame for this outcome (Gel’man 2015, p. 101).

This chapter has demonstrated that Russia, at least until 2012, was a classic example of a competitive authoritarian regime that allowed some degree of contestation in the political sphere but where unfair rules of the game combined with the advantages of the incumbent prevented the opposition to advance their agenda. It is a regime where formal democratic institutions still exist and, yet, the majority of policies and decisions are made via a vast web of informal channels, the *sistema*. By relying on the workings of the *sistema* Vladimir Putin has managed to appoint his people to the key positions in many crucial industries in Russia, including those in the media sector. This development has drastically increased censorship in that area and gave the Russian government more opportunities and power to shape public opinion and public agenda. I will now turn to the broader discussion on the role of state-sponsored propaganda in competitive authoritarian regimes like Putin's Russia.

1.2. Propaganda and Survival of Competitive Authoritarian Regimes

In this section I will show that relying on propaganda in order to amass public support has become widespread in many competitive authoritarian regimes, not only in Putin's Russia. Scholars who study the resilience of these regimes are gradually shifting their attention to the phenomenon of modern propaganda, citing it as a potential source of popularity of autocrats. This section will demonstrate how, by manipulating public opinion and increasing spending on censorship and propaganda, the new authoritarian regimes manage to survive for surprisingly long periods of time. In particular, during economic downturns, the most precarious times for illiberal governments, state propaganda becomes a cost-effective tool that channels public anger from domestic to foreign actors and boosts the popularity of a current leader even as the standards of living keep falling (Guriev and Treisman 2015, p.5, Huang 2014, p.2, Pomerantsev 2015, p.2).

After the collapse of the Soviet Union democracy was hailed as the ultimate form of government. There was a widespread expectation that following the fate of the USSR, the rest of the authoritarian regimes would gradually crumble or transition to democracy. Twenty five years later it became clear that the expectations were too optimistic. Competitive authoritarian regimes not only managed to survive, but they proved to be very resilient and even appealing as forms of government (Reilly 2011, p.13). These governments have spectacularly adapted to globalized media and communication technologies of the 21st century, turning these into state propaganda tools (Pomerantsev 2015, p.1).

One might argue, as Reilly writes, why non-democratic or authoritarian regimes would even bother to use propaganda in order to control public opinion (2011, p.4). After all, if one were to look at the authoritarian regimes of the past, such as the Stalinist or the Nazi one, one would notice that brute coercion was at the core of the regime survival, even though propaganda was still a very important tool (Pomerantsev 2015, p.3, Guriev and Treisman 2015, p.1). However, some scholars argue that the nature of autocratic regimes has changed. Many authoritarian and illiberal regimes have prospered significantly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and they had to integrate their economies into the world markets. And, as the standards of living in competitive authoritarian states were improving, public demands for leadership accountability were increasing as well (Reilly 2011, p.11). This development has altered the range of tactics the leaders in competitive authoritarian regimes apply in order to ensure the survival of illiberal governments (Reilly 2011, p.2). Guriev and Treisman argue that, as opposed to the authoritarian regimes of the previous centuries, such as Franco's Spain or Stalin's Russia, contemporary authoritarian regimes are less "carnivorous" and are less likely to use brutal force to suppress public discontent (2015, p.2). Severe repression can radicalize the public, whereas concessions might eventually backfire. Hence, competitive authoritarian regimes have to look for other channels for survival, such as propaganda, a practice that works

quite impressively (Huang 2014, p.1). These regimes managed to successfully adapt to globalized media and sophisticated technologies of the 21st century (Reilly 2011, p.5, Pomerantsev 2015, p.2). They are less likely to use terror in order to extort complicity from the citizens and would rather try to manipulate their subjects' beliefs about the world in order to sustain the legitimacy of the current regime (Guriev and Treisman 2015, p.4). Moreover the nature of state-sponsored propaganda has changed dramatically. Leaders in competitive authoritarian regimes like Putin's Russia are no longer interested in "engineering the human soul" (Guriev and Treisman 2015, p.2, Pomerantsev 2015, p.2). While 20th century dictators like Hitler were concerned about altering the entire worldview and ideology of their citizens, the propagandists of the 21st century are less ambitious and are mostly engaged in vilifying foreign opponents and promoting anti-democratic or anti-Western rhetoric. As Huang argues, in China, state propaganda does poor job indoctrinating the citizens and, sometimes, is openly ridiculed. But despite these shortcomings, the messages of the government's strength and competence receive a substantial resonance among the Chinese people. Huang further writes that even the dullest and most laughable government propaganda can facilitate regime survival in times of crises (Huang 2014, p.1). Leaders in authoritarian and competitive authoritarian states invest heavily in maintaining their image of competent and powerful defenders of the country. As long as this image is preserved and unchallenged, competitive authoritarian regimes will likely remain in place. However, and this is another feature that differentiates authoritarian governments of today from those in the past, the leaders of competitive authoritarian governments have to ensure that the current standards of living do not go down since economic shocks can jeopardize "the popular legitimacy" of autocrats (Guriev and Treisman 2015, p.4).

Economic calamities are a type of events that are especially prone to propagandistic framing on behalf of competitive authoritarian governments (Reilly 2011, p.7). Leaders in these

illiberal states can ensure the survival of the regime as long as economic shocks are not too acute. During economic hardships, whether they were caused by state policies or came as a result of external shocks, it is essential for authoritarian leaders to invest heavily in propaganda in order to discourage the discontented citizenry from rebelling. This has to do with the unwritten arrangement that exists between the citizens and the leaders in illiberal regimes. Authoritarian leaders understand that since they cannot supply their citizens with ideal political institutions and arrangements, such as freedom of speech and fair elections, they should at the very least guarantee sufficiently high standards of living (Lansberg-Rodriguez 2015, p.6, Rawnsley 2015, p.23, Reilly 2011, p.5). Hence, competitive authoritarian regimes spend heavily on propaganda and censorship in times of economic and political crises. For instance, after the financial crisis of 2008 there has been an increase in efforts to silence the opposition in countries like Turkey, Russia and Hungary (Pomerantsev 2015, p.2, Fielding-Smith 2015, p.27, Orucoglu 2015, p.16). While the journalists with dissenting views are criminalized, the ones who are loyal to the regime usually receive generous benefits for promoting an optimistic picture of the current economic situation (Guriev and Treisman 2015, p.8). Propaganda in times of economic crises can also serve as a way to channel social grievances caused by economic difficulties, usually by blaming foreign powers for economic troubles in the country (Reilly 2011, p.7). Orucoglu cites the example of the 2013 wave of protests in Turkey that posed a considerable threat to Recep Tayip Erdogan's government (2015). She argues that the failure of protests partially lies in Erdogan's skillful use of state propaganda. By vilifying the protestors, spreading conspiracy theories and scapegoating Western countries, like the US and Great Britain, Erdogan's government has managed "to shape the narrative for the larger population, co-opt elites, convince audiences of his competence, and intimidate the opposition" (Orucoglu 2015, p.14).

This section has demonstrated the importance of propaganda in competitive authoritarian regimes, as well as, a growing number of studies made in this area. The discussion in this section has also shown that state propaganda comes into full force in times of political and economic crises and shocks. Economic sanctions against Russia, thus, provide a fertile ground for investigating the techniques and effects of state-sponsored propaganda and the ways in which it contributes to regime survival. I will now turn to the literature that specifically focuses on propaganda during economic sanctions. This section will shed more light on how the leaders in a country targeted by the sanctions cope with domestic challenges to their image.

1.3. Propaganda in Times of Crises: Economic Sanctions as Trigger for Propaganda

This section will focus specifically on the usage of propaganda during economic calamities and crises, such as economic sanctions. It will show how the leaders in the countries that are targeted by economic sanctions can use propaganda to channel public discontent into nationalist anger and rally the population around the leader. This will also demonstrate how economic sanctions, despite the fact that they are used to contain or deter the leaders in targeted countries, can radicalize both the leader and the population, thus achieving a totally opposite outcome from the one that was originally intended.

For many decades the literature on economic sanctions has been dominated by the pragmatic approaches, according to which the success of economic sanctions directly depends on economic hardships they cause in the target country. Economic sanctions, it was argued, directly affect the economy, and as they cause more and more economic damage, such as lower GDP or increase in prices for basic goods, the discontented public in the target country will put more pressure on the government to change its policies (De Jonge Oudraat 2010, p.105). That

was the reason why scholars who studied the effects of economic sanctions had always focused on the immediate obvious effects of economic sanctions. Some suggested that when assessing the effectiveness of economic sanctions, one had to look primarily at economic indicators (Hufbauer et al. 1991, p.43). While this assumption worked in theory, the reality has proved that many scholars have underestimated the power of nationalism.

The theory on the effects of economic sanctions has been recently updated, as scholars began to take into account more subtle outcomes of economic sanctions. Kaempfer and Lowenberg argue that, in addition to creating an economic damage, sanctions can provoke “pervasive political responses”, as a result of which, citizens in the targeted country will “rally around the flag” and increase their support for the current regime (2000, p.27). The rally-around-the-flag hypothesis was originally developed in 1973 by Richard Brody, a political scientist who used this hypothesis in order to explain the surprising support for the US President during the Gulf War. He argued that in the early stages of a crisis, the public will yield its support for conventional leadership. The elites, for fear of being ostracized or viewed as unpatriotic, will suppress their disagreement and support governmental policies. This rally-around-the-flag effect occurs partly as a result of emotional turmoil experienced by the crisis-stricken public, but mainly because of government’s tight grip on the media. The government will be managing the flow of information very carefully, while the media will have no other choice but to pander to the viewers and resort to the extensive usage of patriotic and nationalist symbols (Brody 1992, p.20). Hence, the leaders in the targeted country will attempt to rally the population around the nationalist cause and frame the country that implemented sanctions as a “common object of opprobrium” (Selden 1999, p.22). This symbiosis between the government and the press will eventually lead to a boost in the popularity of the current regime and the suppression of calls for political change (Blanchard and Ripsman 2008, p.375).

In his study on economic sanctions imposed on Rhodesia in the 1960s, John Galtung argues that if a government in the targeted country manages to take control over the state media and use the means of propaganda to divert public attention from the domestic actors to foreign ones, the legitimacy crisis caused by economic troubles can be easily avoided even if the sanctions damaged the domestic economy (1967, p.399). Moreover, public support for the national leader can be strengthened as the population rallies against the imagined enemy (Galtung 1967, p.409). Fidel Castro, for instance, used state propaganda to repeatedly blame the US government for Cuba's economic problems (Reisman and Stevick 1998, p.140).

Another example that can shed more light on the connection between economic sanctions and an increase in popularity of leaders comes from Iraq in the 1990s. In 1990, the US government had imposed economic sanctions against Iraq for Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. The sanctions had a major impact on the Iraqi economy, causing its main economic asset, oil exports, to fall rapidly. In addition to that, Iraq had been weary of the prolonged conflict with Iran and had accumulated an enormous foreign debt. While the Iraqi population was suffering under the sanctions, Saddam Hussein managed to fuel the growing resentment among the Iraqis by shifting the blame onto the US and its Western allies. He managed to turn public discontent into nationalist anger (Elliott and Hufbauer 1999, p.404). One of the methods he utilized in order to rally the population around the flag was media framing. Saddam Hussein's firm control over the media allowed the Iraqi government to frame the news and other sources of information. Furthermore, Hussein's ability to not only fully control the media but also suppress the opposition had increased the magnitude of the rally-around-the-flag effect. As a result, Hussein enjoyed a widespread popularity among the Iraqi people despite the deplorable state of the economy and the plummeting standards of living. In the end, sanctions did not play almost any role in bringing down the regime of Saddam Hussein (De Jonge Oudraat 2010, p.134).

This section has demonstrated how the subject of economic sanctions can be used by the leaders in the targeted countries to rally the population around the nationalist cause and, contrary to most expectations, increase the popularity of these leaders. This makes economic sanctions against Russian an interesting case study which can show the exact channels and ways in which the media can manipulate public opinion and avert public outcry over economic hardships. The ease with which the messages in the Russian media echo the rhetoric of the state can be explained by the patterns of media ownership in Russia and the connection between the owners of major media conglomerates and the Kremlin. I will now turn to a brief history of media ownership in Russia in order to show how the Russian government subsumed the entire media space and turned the media into another state tool that can be used to mobilize public support and shape public opinion.

Chapter 2. “Nostalgia, Malice, Paranoia and Lazy Humor”: Russian Media as State Propaganda Tool

The previous chapter has shown how media can be utilized by competitive authoritarian regimes to confuse the public and divert its attention from domestic culprits to imaginary foreign enemies. This can be accomplished only in the countries where the government either fully controls the content on media channels or has acquired a substantial part in the ownership of mainstream media channels. This section will zoom in on patterns of media ownership in Russia to show that this is the case in Putin’s Russia. It will show how, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the media, and television in particular, gradually turned into government’s mouthpiece while dissenting views in the media space were marginalized and can now be accessed only through the outlets that have a limited coverage. This chapter will then move towards the discussion of the nature of the Russian television to demonstrate the reasons why television and TV news, in particular, are powerful tools of state-propaganda that play a big role in molding public opinion in today’s Russia.

“What a powerful weapon Putin’s television is. How skillfully it combines nostalgia, malice, paranoia and lazy humor; how swiftly it both dulls the senses and raises your ire” Soviet-born American writer Gary Shteyngart writes in his acerbic piece on Russian television (2015). It appears as though the Kremlin’s tight grip on the media has come to be accepted as a piece of common knowledge. Furthermore, there is a common perception that the modern Russian state had originally started off with a free and truly democratic media and gradually, as Vladimir Putin had been assuming more power, the Russian media was subverted and fell under the complete influence of the government (Zassoursky 2002, p.157). In this section, I will argue that this perception is fallacious. True, nowadays the Russian media can hardly be called independent or free, as dissenting views are either marginalized, labelled “treacherous”

or excluded from the media discourse. But I will argue that the Russian media had never been truly free as their counterparts in Western Europe and North America. Russian television, in particular, which is the main subject of this research, had always had very close ties with political leaders of the country.

Since the early stages of glasnost and perestroika, mass media and Russian politicians were intimately connected. And although the media were relatively free at that time, Becker argues that this freedom was largely attributed to the “decay of the party apparatus and divisions within the regime” (2004, p.156). The USSR’s latest General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev was the first Soviet politician who understood the power of mass media. It is argued that Gorbachev used television as a means of creating a unique image that allowed him to appeal directly to the Soviet citizens and avoid the intricacies of party hierarchy (Raskin 2002, p.93). In the final years of Gorbachev’s administration and in the early years of Yeltsin’s presidency, the Russian media were truly independent and had no political affiliation with the country’s leadership. This short period of independence, however, was largely attributed to a chaotic political environment of the early 1990s. The weak political authority, combined with economic disasters that plagued Russia at that time, created a free atmosphere for the Russian media (Vartanova 2002, p.30).

However, the first seeds of the alliance between the Russian media and the government were sown in as early as in 1992. As Becker argues, one should be cautious not to romanticize the state of the Russian media under Boris Yeltsin who never hesitated to use his power to harass media outlets that were supportive of the Russian opposition (Becker 2004, p.147). Moreover, at the height of the Russian economic crisis in 1992, a system of subsidies was created which allowed media outlets to receive financial assistance from the government. Only those media outlets that provided a favorable coverage of Boris Yeltsin could receive those

funds, whereas those who opposed him were deprived of finances (Beumers et al., 2008, p.125). Despite these subsidies, however, the government did not exercise full control over the media and the press. Moreover, with the launching of the First Chechen War in 1994, Boris Yeltsin had lost trust and sympathy of both the media and the majority of Russian citizens. Russian media freely criticized the President for what everyone considered to be a senseless and reckless war. Interestingly, several years later the Second Chechen War would produce an opposite effect and unite both the citizens and the media behind the President. This time it would be Vladimir Putin (Raskin 2002, p.97).

On the eve of the 1996 Presidential elections, it was becoming apparent that the incumbent Boris Yeltsin was likely to lose the race. Yeltsin's main rival Gennady Zyuganov from the Communist Party was attracting a far larger number of potential voters, partly as a result of Yeltsin's unpopular war in Chechnya, but also due to the depressed state of the Russian economy. In order to save Yeltsin's crumbling political campaign it was decided, for the first time in modern Russian history, to hire public relations consultants from abroad and to use the modern advertising techniques. A team of American political data specialists and public relations officers was assembled to assist Yeltsin's campaign. By relying on public opinion polls and heavily promoting the negative image of his rivals, Yeltsin, with the help of his new team, managed to win the elections (Kramer 1996). Media and, television in particular, proved to be crucial links in this campaign, largely due to Yeltsin's close ties with the owners of major media conglomerates. This campaign had a far-reaching implication. It became clear that the media are a crucial element the Russian government needed to get full control of. In order to accomplish this goal, however, the Russian government would have to compete with influential businessmen (Zassoursky 2002, p.168).

As it was mentioned previously, since its inception, the modern Russian state had always had close ties with institutions that disseminate information in the country. In 1992, Boris Yeltsin managed to obtain ownership rights over the second channel and appointed his close allies on the channel's Board of Directors. Two years earlier, the company *VGTRK* was formed and it assumed control over a large number of Russian TV channels. Although *VGTRK* was, to a great extent, a state-owned enterprise, the state had to compete with influential Russian oligarchs (Zassoursky 2008, p.34). In 1994, the first channel *ORT* became a joint-stock company, with Boris Yeltsin as its chairperson and businessman Boris Berezovsky as a member of the board. Berezovsky, in turn, was the key figure who controlled the channel's information policy. Furthermore, by 1996 Berezovsky managed to build a massive media empire that exercised control over many TV channels and several newspapers (Burrett 2008, p.71). Another media magnate, Vladimir Gusinsky, also emerged in the mid-1990s. Gusinsky's business enterprise *Most Financial Group* controlled the *NTV* channel, the newspaper *Segodnya* and the radio *Ekho Moskvy*. By the mid-1990s, Gusinsky and Berezovsky were just as influential in the media sphere as were some of the leading Russian politicians (Dunn 2008, p.42).

The balance of power in the world of media ownership was drastically altered when Vladimir Putin emerged on the political landscape in the late 1990s. While the media outlets controlled by Berezovsky and Gusinsky provided a favorable coverage of Putin during the elections, both oligarchs turned out to be unreliable. In the aftermath of the sinking of the *Kursk* submarine, almost all TV channels were highly critical of Putin's handling of the disaster. Consequently, the negative coverage affected Putin's ratings. Russian President came to an understanding that media and, most importantly television, were a key to political success in Russia, a country where citizens get most of their political information from TV news (Burrett 2008, p.73). Russian legal system was Putin's main weapon against the media magnates like

Berezovsky and Gusinsky, both of whom had increased the anti-Putin rhetoric in the first years of his rule. Additionally, the fact that virtually all oligarchs who emerged in the late 1990s had acquired their wealth via illegal channels also played in Putin's favor as it made it easier to prosecute them (Becker 2004, p.152). Eventually, both oligarchs faced criminal charges and, subsequently, fled the country leaving their business empires behind. The shares in their media holding companies were redistributed, and in the end, Russia emerged with four major media holding companies: *VGTRK*, *Perviy Kanal*, *Profmedia* and *Gazprom Media*. Today, each one of them is, either directly or indirectly, controlled by the Russian state. Furthermore, TV channels controlled through these companies are the channels that have the most widespread coverage in Russia (Dunn 2008, p.44). Thus, during Vladimir Putin's first presidential term, the state had gradually absorbed the Russian media.

In the subsequent years of his rule, Vladimir Putin has perfected the means of political communication. The appointments of major media owners are made according to the logic of *sistema* with men and women loyal to the President getting the biggest rewards (Becker 2004, p.149). Vladislav Surkov, Putin's current personal advisor, would regularly meet with the heads of television channels when he served as Deputy Prime-Minister. Surkov would routinely give instructions on what to show on the television, how to frame the image of President and many other topics (Pomerantsev 2014b). With regards to the crisis in Ukraine, for example, the Kremlin has engaged in a massive disinformation campaign in order to promote support for the policies of the Russian government. Television was a key instrument. The term *Novorossiya*, for instance, was borrowed from the history of the Tsarist Russia and has been introduced into the current political discourse largely through television. News segments and TV specials would frequently feature the flag and the territory of this non-existent entity and, gradually, *Novorossiya* became a real object and a subject of political discussions. However, the Kremlin does not simply engage in disinformation akin to that of the Soviet era. From the noise created

by online Kremlin-paid trolls to the TV specials featuring the discussions on whether the CIA is plotting against Russia, the Kremlin government “reinvents reality, creating mass hallucinations that then translate into political action” (Pomerantsev 2014a). Thus, most of the information that is being disseminated through TV channels comes in highly distorted forms. In fact, the role of television and its power in Russia deserve special attention and in the remaining part of the chapter I will discuss the peculiarities of television and TV viewership in Putin’s Russia.

The main purpose of television in the Soviet Union was to strengthen party ideology and facilitate the survival of Communist regime. However, the power of television was always somewhat limited. In the late 1980s, during late socialism, the number of households who owned a television set was quite small, compared to other developed countries at that time. And, in addition to this, the number of channels was also limited. Although there were five channels, only two of them could reach wider audiences before perestroika (MacFadyen 2011). Nowadays the majority of Russian households possess a TV set and the number of TV channels has increased dramatically (Vartanova 2011, p.125). On the other hand, television in Putin’s Russia is largely de-politicized, lacks coherent ideology and is at the same time subjected to heavy media censorship (Burrett 2013, p.9). As it will be demonstrated shortly, this state of affairs plays in favor of the ruling government, making television a powerful tool for controlling public opinion.

After perestroika, several colossal changes have taken place in Russia with regards to TV viewership in Russia. In the early years of its transition Russia has turned from “a reading nation” into “a watching nation” (Rostoks 2008, p.11). By 1993 newspaper readership fell by 10 times as compared to the readership during late Soviet Union. Television, on the other hand, became more popular among the Russians, and by 1999 almost 95 percent of the Russian

population became regular TV viewers (Rostoks 2008, p.13). As television began to penetrate deeper into the Russian society, TV news became the main sources of information (Mickiewicz 2008, p.21). At the same time, television became less ideological, a feature that distinguishes Soviet television from that in Putin's Russia. Television in Putin's Russia is largely dominated by entertainment with little focus on political affairs. This change was in part intentional but it can also be attributed to the logic of free market that drives both the production and the consumption of TV content in Russia (Becker 2004, p.157, Burrett 2013, p.14). Although, with the growing influence of the state, the range of topics discussed on the Russian TV news had narrowed significantly, in the mid-2000s, TV news were still some of the most popular programs in Russia (Mickiewicz 2008, p.64). And even nowadays as well, despite the variety of options, Russians are avid consumers of TV news content that comes primarily from state-controlled channels (Burrett 2013, p.10).

Some scholars argue that the power of Russian television will gradually diminish as the Internet will provide alternative channels for information gathering and public mobilization (Strukov 2008, p.208). Indeed, the Internet penetration rate in Russia has increased dramatically in the early 2000s (Nocetti 2015, p.112). But this still is an optimistic scenario. Russian government has comfortably adapted to the Internet era by employing a massive army of Internet trolls who made it extremely difficult for the lay audience to coordinate in the Internet space (Subbotovska 2015). This strategy has successfully worked out in China and it is likely to be effective in Putin's Russia (Beumers et al. 2008, p.10). Moreover, the Internet, largely due to TV propaganda, is being framed as another foreign tool that is used to undermine Russia and that needs to be censored and monitored. As a result, many Russian are mistrustful with regards to the news published online (Nisbet and Mikati 2015). Yet, other scholars argue that despite the army of trolls the Russian government will have to counter the information from the Russian branches of BBC, euronews and CNN that offer the public an alternative

view of events (Beumers et al. 2008, p.8). Russian state television has adapted to this challenge as well by skillfully framing even the most controversial issues. Beumers and his team of scholars cite the 2006 British coverage of Aleksandr Litvinenko's murder as an example of a successful media framing. While providing certain details that were shown in the British press the Russian sources had twisted the narrative and gradually began to emphasize other historic incidents of diplomatic tension between Russia and Great Britain. Eventually, British investigation of Litvinenko's murder acquired a form of just another example of British arrogance and presumptuousness (Beumers et al. 2008, p.8).

In today's Russia TV news remain important determinants of public opinion. The majority of Russians (94 percent) rely on TV news as their main source of information (Trudolyubov 2015). Newspaper market is very weak and has a low penetration rate (Etkind 2015). Not surprisingly, Russian television and news, in particular, have been used as strategic propaganda tools ever since the escalation of the Ukrainian crisis in 2014. In the mainstream Russian TV news the Maidan protesters, as well as the current government in Ukraine, are routinely framed as ultranationalists, right-wing extremists and, sometimes, even as fascists (Semenova 2015). Russian celebrities sympathetic towards Ukraine are shamed and vilified in the news, while Vladimir Putin is portrayed as a powerful defender of the interests of ethnic Russians abroad. While some argue that the strength of this propaganda is slowly but steadily waning, others claim that Putin's propaganda during the crisis in Ukraine has had a powerful resonance within the Russian population (Ennis 2014). Nearly 76 percent of Russians relied primarily on the TV news from state-owned media channels, such as the 1st Channel (*Previy Kanal*), for their news about Ukraine and Crimea (Ray and Esipova 2014). Almost half of them argued that their sources of information were highly reliable. Such high degree of trust can be observed among the old but also among the younger generation ("50 percent" 2014, Ray and

Esipova 2014). This state of affairs plays in favor of the current Russian government, since there is a heavy framing on state TV channels.

This chapter has shown how competition in the Russian media space had gradually diminished with the advent of Vladimir Putin and how Russian television became an important tool for dissemination of state propaganda. It has also demonstrated how, in the case of the Ukrainian crisis of 2014, Russian television employed powerful media frames to shape the public perception of this conflict. In the upcoming sections I will outline a step-by-step model of research methodology employed in this study in order to show how I extracted media frames that were used by the Russian newsmakers in the TV coverage of economic sanctions.

Chapter 3. Research Methodology

In this chapter I will discuss the concept of framing analysis and the debate surrounding the ways to measure and extract media frames. This will be followed by a detailed research design where I will show how I collected my data, namely, textual transcripts extracted from TV news that cover economic sanctions. I will also show how I tried to avoid a potential bias with regards to case selection of TV programs by picking news episodes that had the highest ratings and, hence, a higher chance of being viewed by a larger audience of Russian citizens. I will then introduce the specific method employed for the analysis of the text, namely, qualitative content analysis.

3.1. Framing Analysis

Framing analysis has always presented a conceptual challenge for scholars working in the field of communications studies. Despite the fact that the analysis enjoys a widespread popularity in many branches of social sciences, including political science, the success of framing analysis is “both a blessing and a curse” (Hertog and McLeod 2001, p.47). This analysis can be applied to many forms of political communication. At the same time, framing analysis does not have a coherent set of rules. This frequently creates many problems for the researchers. The reason why framing analysis can be very problematic has to do with the fact that, unlike physical events, social events do not really speak for themselves. This aspect opens a vast room for subjective interpretation on the part of a researcher who analyzes frames. Even the standard definition of framing, which was first developed by Erving Goffman, a pioneer in framing studies, has been criticized for being too vague and abstract for an empirical study. In Goffman’s interpretation “frames are principles of organization which govern events – at least

social ones – and our subjective involvement in them” (1986, p.10-11). Scheufele and Iyengar argue that this definition, as well as a myriad of other “oblique definitions” of framing, have created a vast confusion which resulted in frequent conflation of framing with priming, agenda setting, biased narratives and other forms of communication (2011, p.5).

With regards to framing analysis and its position in social sciences, Scheufele and Iyengar distinguish two schools of thought. On the one hand, there is a group of researchers who view framing analysis as an extension of the agenda-setting theory (Scheufele and Iyengar 2011). Max McCombs, the pioneer of the agenda-setting theory, argued that framing should be viewed as a second dimension of the agenda setting. The core idea of the agenda-setting theory lies in the assumption that policymakers who compete against each other will attempt to increase the salience of a certain issue. Once they decide to do so, they will engage in framing, or second level agenda-setting, and transmit the salience of an issue from the media to the public (McCombs and Ghanem 2001, p.84). However, Scheufele and Iyengar disagree with McCombs. They belong to the second school of thought, which argues that framing analysis is not concerned with *what* is present in the message but, rather, with *how* the message is presented in public discourse (Scheufele and Iyengar 2011, p.24). Thus, framing is “a more sophisticated concept” (Tankard 2001, p. 96). Framing implies that a certain issue or an individual will not only be presented favorably or unfavorably (as in the case of agenda-setting), it also assumes the complexity of the relationships between the elements presented in the frame. These relationships are organized by a communicator who addresses the message, and the researcher who studies frames will look into and elaborate on these relationships (Tankard 2001, p.99).

Furthermore, every frame package features certain objects, as well as, specific characteristics attributed to these objects. Framing analysis will investigate the language

employed in the creation of these characteristics. On the most basic level the language can be descriptive, featuring such “innocent” elements as age, marital status or origins. However, the language can be more complex and dramatic (McCombs and Ghanem 2001). A great deal of symbolism will be featured in the frame with numerous keywords, metaphors and catchphrases employed to describe events and people (Tankard 2001). This leads to another important attribute of framing – symbols employed in the frame will have a cultural resonance. Hertog and McLeod argue that frames should be viewed as cultural rather than cognitive phenomenon. There is a certain list of “privileged narratives, metaphors and myths” that will be present in every powerful frame and a researcher’s task is to detect them (2001, p.142). In addition to this, every frame features a set of characters (individuals, countries, organizations, etc.) and outlines the relationships among these characters. The overall narrative that emerges as a result of framing can potentially have a significant cultural resonance. Hence, the key elements that a researcher needs to seek in a frame are the following: the characters, the relationships between them and the narrative (presumably cultural) behind the frame. Additionally, testing whether the frame has had a resonance among the public it was directed at is the next step of framing analysis (Scheufele and Iyengar 2011, p.14). An effective frame that resonates among the people contains messages, narratives or themes that strike a cord and appeal to people’s emotions and anxieties (Ettema 2005, p. 133). In order to test whether my frame has resonated, after conducting the content analysis of the news I will turn to the recent social surveys conducted in Russia in connection with the themes I have extracted.

This study, then, will take a form of the analysis of social surveys in conjunction with qualitative content analysis of TV news material. This approach is frequently used in the studies of news frames (Brewer and Gross 2009, p.176). Analyzing the ways in which the Russian media frames economic sanctions against Russia, as well as, assessing their effect on the Russian citizens could have taken many different forms, such as experimental research. In fact,

as Kinder argues, the large bulk of studies investigating framing effects is based on laboratory experiments (2007). In these settings, researchers very often create artificial conditions and directly measures the effects of framing on the participants. It appears that the experimental method is more objective and less biased. However, such studies have many shortcomings and their results can be very misleading (Kinder 2007, p.157).

Kinder implores the scholars of communications studies to reconsider popular tools for conducting media framing research and to stop “already with the experiments” (2007, p.157). The experiments that study the effects of news framing, he argues, blur the crucial distinction between the production and consumption of news. During these experiments participants are usually asked to watch or read selected news segments and then answer the questions about the information they received. But is this the way news consumption works in real life? Kinder argues that the studies which rely on experiments ignore the fact that most of the time the audience is very inattentive and preoccupied with private life. Despite the abundance of news and information channels on TV and the Internet, the audience will most likely miss the majority of news frames directed at them. Hence, experimental studies of news framing might exaggerate the power of frames that are under the analysis (Kinder 2007). Moreover, as Fairclough argues, social science researchers who are attempting to present casual effects between discourses and audience’s reaction to them have to bear in mind the fact that this causality will not be mechanical (2003, p.8). It would be highly erroneous to claim that certain features of texts or speeches directly affect and produce specific patterns of thinking and behavior among people. Framing effects occur, as Fairclough continues, in people’s heads and there is no way of assessing these processes. “Texts can have causal effects without them necessarily being regular effects, because many other factors in the context determine whether particular texts actually have such effects [...]” – Fairclough concludes (2003, p.8).

This research, then, took a form of the analysis of framing effects in natural settings. This type of study involves qualitative content analysis of several frames alongside of correlational surveys. After establishing a frame or a set of frames researchers combine patterns found in the surveys and use them as proxy measures “for naturally occurring frame exposure” (Brewer and Gross 2009, p. 171). In my study, there were no treatment or control groups, and it will provide only an indirect evidence for the effect of framing. Lawyers would call it a “circumstantial evidence”. Although, this kind of analysis will have more difficulties establishing causal connections between the frames and their effects on the audience, the research of this kind is much more helpful in explaining what happens in the real world outside of the lab and, thus, will have a much higher external validity. I will now provide more details with regards to the method and the design of this study.

3.2. Research Design

Since TV news was the main subject of this research, I have watched the segments of Russian TV news from the period of March, 2014 to September, 2015. On 6th of March, 2014, the US President Barack Obama ordered the sanctions against Russian individuals and businesses who were considered to be responsible for military intervention in Ukraine. Later the same month, the EU and Canada also introduced the first round of sanctions against Russia (“How Far” 2014). Hence, the 6th of March, 2014 was a suitable starting point. I assumed that the Russian media started framing the issue of economic sanctions at that time. Choosing the endpoint of the timeline was more problematic because the sanctions against Russia have not been lifted yet. The justification for September 2015 as the endpoint comes partially from the theory of this research. The rally-around-the-flag hypothesis states that the leaders will attempt to rally the population around a nationalist cause in the early stages of a crisis (Allen 2008). Moreover,

the rally-around-the-flag effect is a short-term phenomenon that is unlikely to be sustainable in the long run (Galtung 1967). I assumed that the month of September 2015 ends the early stage of the crisis caused by the economic sanctions. Furthermore, that month French President Francois Hollande announced that the situation in Ukraine was gradually stabilizing and that there was a fair prospect for lifting the sanctions (“Ukraine Conflict” 2015). In addition to this, after September 2015 no additional sanctions have been introduced (“Timeline” 2016). I do not expect the framing to stop in September, but I do assume that the magnitude of TV news framing of this event had decreased by that time.

The “plethora” of Russian TV news programs presents a challenge as to which news programs to choose for the study. This obstacle will be overcome with the help of the services provided by TNS Global, an international research agency that provides information on the most popular TV programs in a given country. The webpage of the Russian branch of the company, *tns-global.ru*, features a tool for the researchers who are looking for the most popular TV programs in Russia. In order to access this tool, one will have to click on the *Services* (*Услуги*) section, then on the *Media-research* (*Медиа исследования*) section and, finally, on the *Television* (*Телевидение*) section. Afterwards, one will have to click on the *Data on Audience* (*Данные по аудитории*) section that features a filtering tool. This tool can show the most popular programs that were viewed in Russia in a given week. It also sorts out TV programs according to the region and the genre a researcher is interested in. Two regions are available for my research: *Russia* (*Россия*) and *Moscow* (*Москва*). For this study, I chose the former, as it captures a far larger segment of TV viewers in Russia. After choosing the region, a researcher can select a week by clicking on *Week* (*Неделя*). Finally, after clicking on *Type* (*Тип*) and *Leading programs* (*Программы-лидеры по жанрам*), a selection of TV genres will be offered, such as news, talk shows, children’s programs, etc. The subject of this study is TV news and I chose informational-analytical programs (*информационно-аналитические*

передачу). Informational-analytical programs are TV news reports that provide a general overview of the most important (from a TV channel's perspective) news of the week. Throughout the week news makers monitor the most notable and popular events, and at the end of the week they compile several extended news reports that last about ten to fifteen minutes each (Gostrova 2006). In other words, informational-analytical programs are a compressed version of the most popular news segments of the week.

For each week, from March 6th, 2014 until September 30th, 2015 I have extracted the most popular informational-analytical programs that had been aired on the Russian television. TNS Global shows the top ten most popular programs of a given week, and I chose the programs that had the highest ratings. After I extracted the title of the program I searched for its' content online. Most of the programs are stored either on YouTube or on the webpages of respective TV channels. After accessing the TV segment, I listened to the section of the program that covers economic sanctions. As I had been listening to the segment, I was translating and transcribing it at the same time. Hence, the data gathered for this research took a form of a written text. At the end of the paper I attached the appendix (Appendix 2) that provides information about the titles of the TV programs and the online sources where I accessed them. There are too many programs that I have watched and, hence, in the Appendix 2 I included only those that directly covered the topic of economic sanctions. Each segment has its own label. I used an uppercase *S* letter followed by the number I assigned to each segment. This was done in order to have a convenient method of referencing to the programs in the *Analysis* section of this research. For example, if a news segment labelled as *S15* is mentioned in the paper, one can get an access to this segment by looking it up on the Appendix page. There, one will find the title of the program, the week during which it was aired and the online source where the program is stored. Furthermore, if I mention a certain phrase, for instance, "The Washington threatens to implement more sanctions" and write *S16/20:34* next

to it, this means that the phrase was mentioned in the segment labelled *S16*, and one can hear that phrase on the 20th minute and 34th second of the video. This, however, will *not* indicate a precise place of the phrase because English and Russian have very different sentence structures and a one-to-one translation of the text from the former to latter is impossible. Rather, the number will indicate the location quite loosely but the reader would still have a chance to trace the location of a specific phrase. Since the data extracted during the process was essentially a written text, I employed the method of qualitative content analysis in order to assess the ways in which the sanctions against Russia were framed in the news. I will now turn to a more detailed discussion on qualitative content analysis and will demonstrate how I applied it in this research.

3.3. Method: Qualitative Content Analysis

Qualitative content analysis is primarily used for the analysis of textual data (Halperin and Heath 2012, p.318). What lies at the heart of this analysis is an attempt to discover hidden meanings, themes and patterns in the text. While quantitative content analysis is applied mostly for the purpose of counting words or extracting objective information from the text, qualitative content analysis helps to clarify the patterns that are latent in the text (Zhang and Wildemuth 2009, p.222). Hence, this analysis requires a specific focus on the characteristics of language employed in the communication, as well as, the context in which these messages are being delivered (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, p.1277). Qualitative content analysis involves breaking down a large body of text into a number of categories that have similar meanings (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, p.1279). Usually this is accomplished via coding either sentences, words or entire paragraphs of the given text. These different codes are generated either inductively or deductively and are then assembled and analyzed in greater detail in order to discover patterns

or themes (Mayring 2014, p.7). And although the approach in which the codes are generated might seem quite subjective at first, qualitative researchers have made substantial improvements in avoiding this issue (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, p.1279).

One of the ways in which this can be accomplished is by developing “a project-specific plan of analysis that will guide you through analysis of your data and lead to answering your research question” (Hennink et al. 2010, p.234). When it comes to qualitative data it is very easy to lose track and digress into areas that are not related to the main research question. Researchers might decide to explore some other topics simply because data present an opportunity to do so. That is why, regardless of whether the analysis is conducted inductively or deductively, it is essential for researchers to always develop a plan of analysis in strict accordance with the research question and assumptions that are developed prior to the analysis (Hennink 2010, p.235). The research question that operated the mechanics of my study addresses the ways in which the sanctions are framed in the TV news. Hence, economic sanctions imposed on Russia were the primary units of analysis in the text. In addition to this, according to the main assumptions generated by my research questions, the Russian media has probably vilified external actors and stirred nationalist moods in order to avoid public outcry over the economic damage caused by the sanctions. Thus, in addition to economic sanctions, specific social actors that were frequently mentioned in the TV news were additional units of analysis in this research. Including the analysis of social actors was consistent with the framework suggested by Norman Fairclough. He argues that when it comes to discursive representation of social events, three main elements will be present: participants, processes and circumstances. Participants are usually social actors that take part in the events. Processes describe the dynamics of the relationships between the participants, while circumstances are the settings social actors find themselves in (Fairclough 2000). To summarize, the units of

analysis defined for this research were economic sanctions and social actors that were prominent in the news coverage of economic sanctions.

Now that the coding units are established, it is important to outline the steps I took in order to generate the codes for these units (Zhang and Wildemuth 2009, p.235). Halperin and Heath write that “coding involves the identification of passages of text and applying labels to them that indicate they are examples of some thematic idea (2012, p.323).” Coding can be conducted either deductively, with specific codes generated prior to the analysis, or inductively, with the researcher allowing data “to speak for itself” (Hennink et al. 2010, p.230). In either case, a researcher will, once again, have to rely on the main research question in order to find an appropriate place to begin the analysis and start generating codes (Hennik et al. 2010, p.235). As it was shown above, economic sanctions against Russia and the social actors involved in this event were the primary units of analysis, since both were related to the main research question of this study. These signaled to me the location in the text where I generated my codes. And although one might expect Western actors who imposed the sanctions on Russia to be portrayed negatively, all the codes in this analysis were generated inductively since I did not have a prior knowledge of how exactly each social actor and sanctions themselves would be framed in the news.

After detecting the location of a particular unit of analysis, I generated the codes on the basis of a theme or a pattern expressed in the text surrounding it (Hsieh and Shannon 2005, p.1280). With regards to the social actors in the frame, Fairclough would refer to these codes as attributes that characterize actors in the text (2000, p. 233). I looked specifically at how social actors were presented in the data, especially the tone in the description of them. As Zhang and Wildemuth argue, a theme surrounding the unit of analysis is usually expressed “in a single word, a phrase, a sentence” or perhaps, the entire paragraph (2009, p.242). Mayring writes that

it will be up to researchers to decide how many elements in the text are sufficient to constitute a theme and, subsequently, a code (2014, p.52). Thus, I was generating the codes via an open coding system where I detected the unit of analysis first and then coded the theme, such as, for example, the attributes of a given social actor, on the basis of words, sentences or catchphrases surrounding it. And following the suggestion of Halperin and Heath, every time I coded a phrase or a paragraph, I instantly compared it to other segments of the text that were coded in a similar way (2012, p.322). Eventually, when the large portion of the text was coded I began assembling and merging the codes on the basis of their similarities (Hennink et al. 2011, p.259).

Once the codes were assigned and assembled, I started looking for patterns that were relevant to my research question and assumptions. Halperin and Heath write that this can either take the form of the description of the units of analysis or relationships between them (2011, p.326). In Appendix 3 I present a condensed version of this step of the research. This appendix features every social actor as a separate unit of analysis. It shows the number of the segment, the various codes generated in each segment with regards to the specific unit of analysis (e.g. social actor Ukraine), as well as, additional notes that briefly clarify the context in which some codes were generated. The coding and the subsequent analysis of economic sanctions themselves was executed in a similar fashion and the condensed version of this part of the analysis is also presented in Appendix 3. Halperin and Heath write that this way of combining and sorting out the “families” of codes can be very beneficial for a coherent and concise representation of content analysis (2012, p.326).

Finally, when presenting the results in Appendix 3, I relied on quotes and short catchphrases to justify the reasons for generating certain codes. Furthermore, apart from the results presented in Appendix 3, I have written what Mayring calls, an “explication” of the final results in the upcoming section of this research (2014, p.89). Hennink and her team of

researchers refer to a similar technique as a “thick description” of the analysis (2011, p.239). Mayring writes that while in the early stages of content analysis researchers are primarily concerned with the reduction of textual material for the purpose of generating codes and finding patterns among them, “the tendency of explication is exactly the reverse” (2014, p.89). Researchers will collect several parts of the text and then provide an extensive explanation and comments on a particular family of codes (Mayring 2014: 89). This step can take a form of a narrative, and “a coherent narrative or argument that takes the reader through the key issues and outlines the core message of the research findings” is the most crucial aspect of qualitative content analysis (Hennink et al. 2011, p.276). This will be the “big picture” or the main story that has been extracted from the data (Hennink et al. 2011, p.248). Thus, in the next chapter, I will provide a thick description of the analysis conducted with regards to each unit of analysis. These will include social actors featured prominently in the news, as well as, the economic sanctions themselves.

Chapter 4. Analysis

The majority of TV programs that devoted long sections covering economic sanctions were aired in the weeks immediately after the first round of sanctions. Each program I have transcribed devoted a special section on the economic sanctions, and I have ignored the programs that mentioned the sanctions cursorily. A more detailed analysis of the texts will be presented in this chapter. This section comprises the “thick description” of the content analysis that has been conducted in this study.

4.1. Framing of the Social Actors: Arrogant Hegemons, Pawns, Allies, Lost Brothers and the Bear

Before proceeding with a detailed discussion of the actors presented in the news frames, a particular observation that occurred during the analysis stage needs to be noted. When discussing the economic sanctions Russian TV news frequently evoke the term “the West” and “Western sanctions”. This led me to assume that “the West” is, therefore, one of the actors in the news frame. However, references to the West and its attributes were unclear. In some episodes “the West” included both Europe and the USA (S1, S2), but in other episodes, Europe was featured separately with “the West” standing primarily for the US (S6, S10). In Appendix 3, one will find detailed attributes of the West, as a social actor in the frame but for the purpose of this research, I decided to break “the West” down into two separate actors – Europe and the US. Both actors have been analyzed separately since there is a great deal of ambiguity in the Russian news as to what exactly “the West” stands for. I will leave this question open.

4.1.1. Social Actor 1 – the US

News Segment	Attributes of the actor (Codes)	Notes
S1	Global hegemon, “supposedly exceptional”, “think they are always right”, hypocritical (“apply double standards”), instructs others;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “supposedly exceptional”- the US are described as a hegemon who insists on its “mythological exceptionality”;
S8	Put pressure, blackmail other countries, a materialistic country, feel indignant and sore, unprofessional and reckless foreign policy, de facto rule over Ukraine,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Materialistic country – the US leaders are only interested in money; • Feel indignant and sore - Many experts think that what is happening around the crisis in Ukraine reminds everyone the fathom pain the US experience as a result of them losing power over the whole world

Table 1. Coding of the Actor, USA

Table 1 shows an excerpt from my analysis of the attributes of the US that were presented in the Russian TV news. The US is one of the key characters present virtually in every news program that covers economic sanctions. Unsurprisingly, the image of the US is overwhelmingly negative. I have extracted two major families of codes, or themes, surrounding the attributes of the US as an actor – “arrogant hegemon” and “bad influence on Europe”.

Within the framework of “arrogant hegemon” the US are often referred to as “arrogant” (*dumayut oni luchshe vseh*) and “conceited” (*privykli delat tolko to chto oni hotyat*) (S1, S3, S4, S6, S7, S8). In these segments, such attributes as arrogance, excessive self-confidence and conceit are recurring constantly. Throughout the segment *S1*, for instance, one can find derogatory references to American exceptionalism. In this segment, after mentioning the first round of sanctions against Russia, the news reporter says: “The US think they can violate international laws because, supposedly, the US are always right; this attitude is a part of their mentality, of their DNA structure” (21:30).¹ One can also hear, at the end of the segment *S8*, the attributes that characterize the US as an overly confident hegemonic power: “The US has

¹ США считают, что могут нарушать международные законы, потому что, якобы, они всегда правы. Такое поведение является частью их менталитета, структуры их ДНК.

always thought they have an exclusive right to dictate other nations what is good and what is bad (1:00:02)”.² Interestingly, President Obama, perhaps in juxtaposition to Putin, is framed as a weak politician who is highly disliked in his own country (S6/20:00, S2/50:00). Furthermore, the US are portrayed as a hegemon who is gradually losing its superpower status; the status, as the Russian TV news describe, the US inherited in the immediate aftermath of the Soviet collapse (S6/21:40, S2/55:20). Moreover, the news anchors further argue that the US, perhaps, are a very powerful country but they are impotent when it comes to dealing with Russia. According to the narrative presented in the segments S2, S3, S10, S12, and S18 Russia is the only country that dared to challenge the world order where the US was the only superpower. For instance, in the segment S3/(1:15:00), the reporter states: “Americans are still recovering after a system of world order established by them after the end of the Cold War has suffered a severe blow from Moscow”.³ Hence, economic sanctions against Russia are merely a desperate reaction of Americans who are “losing their power over the entire world” (S8/1:02:00).

As a “bad influence on Europe” the US are characterized as a nettlesome actor who keeps meddling into Russian-European affairs. The US are portrayed as a bully who puts pressure on European countries, as well, as international organizations and multinational corporations, in order to increase the number of sanctions against Russia (S3, S12, S15, S18 and S19). Americans, the narrative goes, are trying very hard to isolate Europe from Russia by “erecting a wall of puppet-regimes in Eastern Europe” (S6/19:20), whereas the current crisis in Ukraine is just another conflict the US are trying to “ignite on European soil” (S6/20:30). We further hear that the actions of the US government were directly, or indirectly, responsible for “almost every major war in Europe” (S13/1:12:14). Furthermore, the Russian news state

² США всегда думали, что они имеют исключительное право диктовать другим странам, что такое хорошо и что такое плохо. Только тот у кого есть проблемы с самооценкой будет о себе такого вот мнения.

³ Американцы все еще в шоке после того как система мирового порядка выстроенная ими после окончания Холодной Войны рухнула.

that the US government officials frequently summon European diplomats and policymakers and instruct them on policies that would “satisfy Washington’s interests” (S8/57:20). Here, Europe is very passive with regards to its own policy on economic sanctions against Russia because it is the US who are constantly trying to persuade Europe to impose more sanctions (S13/1:12:09). And this narrative usually concludes with a remark that Americans have a very bad influence on Europe. By pushing Europe towards implementing more sanctions against Russia, the US will bring nothing but thousands of “unjustly suffering” European workers (S17/7:00).

Both frameworks are very negative and one would undoubtedly expect the attitudes of Russians towards the US to be highly antagonistic. What is also notable is that the characteristics attributed to the US make it the main scapegoat with regards to the sanctions. Even though in reality the US have implemented a much smaller number of sanctions against Russia than the EU did (“Timeline” 2016), the US are portrayed as the main force behind the sanctions.

4.1.2. Social Actor 2 – Russia (“The Bear is Back!”)

Russia is another key character whose attributes are mentioned in every news segment that covers economic sanctions. There are two principle themes that surround Russia’s role in this economic war. One of them is what I labelled as “Russia Is Back!”, or “The Bear Is Back!” theme that stresses Russia’s renewed strength and readiness to assert itself after a decade of economic and political chaos in the 1990s. Another theme involves Russia’s historical and economic ties with Europe and I labelled this narrative as “Russia is too important for Europe”. This narrative primarily emphasizes Russia’s strategic importance for Europe, especially with regards to energy security. Both themes, “Russia is back” and “Russia is too important for Europe” can be traced in almost every episode. Sometimes, the episode would open with the

former theme and conclude with several remarks regarding Russia's strategic importance for Europe. In other instances, the segment would begin with the discussion of Russia-Europe relationships, emphasizing the necessity for the EU to cooperate with Russia. Then, the TV segment would conclude with the discussion on Russia's comeback to the status of world superpower. In both scenarios the themes were used interchangeably and were prominent in almost every segment.

News Segment	Attributes of the actor (Codes)	Notes
S1	Important for Europe, a tough country, determined, strong, "back in the game"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "important for Europe" – some of the biggest businesses in Germany belong to Russian investors; • "determined" – Russia chooses her own path; • "strong" – Russia will not let anyone interfere in her domestic affairs; • "back in the game" – Russia is a superpower again
S3	Eager to bring peace, "impotent no longer",	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "eager to bring peace" – Russia is doing everything possible to resolve the crisis in Ukraine; • "impotent no longer" – Russia is impotent no longer, and the West will have to take her interests into account;

Table 2. Coding of the Actor, Russia

The "Russia is Back" narrative becomes apparent from the very first TV news reports on economic sanctions. "'Russia is Back!' Says the headline of the British newspaper *The Guardian*. It clearly suggests bewilderment mixed with anxiety that caught the entire Western media, [...]" – the news anchor says at the beginning of the first segment, S1.⁴ Before continuing with the discussion of sanctions themselves, the narrative in this segment initially emphasizes Russia's renewed strength by including such catchphrases as "from now on we choose our own path" and "Russia is back in the game". "From now on Russia will be a tough country that pursues its own foreign policy, even if our actions do not coincide with the

⁴ Заголовок британской газеты Гардиан кричит "Россия вновь на арене!" Этот заголовок явно служит показателем того что вся Западная пресса пришла в ужас.

instructions from the West” (S1/16:24).⁵ Then the narrative continues that Russia is no longer a loser of the Cold War and those days when Russia was weak and impotent, that “era of monotonous retreats,” is over (S1/17:00). For the first time in many years, Russia has managed to challenge the rules of the game set by the Western powers after the collapse of the Soviet Union (S1/24:30). In the next segment, S2, we hear about the deftness of Russian intelligence units whose cunning capabilities surpass even the famed American CIA (S2/52:30). In S3, we hear that, perhaps, the US still are a powerful player in international politics but Russia is an ultimate superpower in her near abroad and, as the narrative in S4 and S2 suggests, Russia “is ready to defend her interests” there (S4/59:14) because that is what “a regional superpower” (S2/58:16) is supposed to do. Moreover, Russia is “strong and independent once again” (S12/1:15:14) and “sets her own terms of discussion” (S6/17:19). Hence, Russia, once again, has become “an important player in world politics” (S4/58:14), something “the West might have forgotten” (S5/45:20) but will ultimately have to deal with. “We are talking about Russia here; it is a mighty land” (S12/1:17:15).⁶

Another narrative, which runs alongside with “Russia is back!” theme, emphasizes Russia’s importance for Europe. With regards to the sanctions, the EU, as the narrative goes, stands to lose a lot and will ultimately harm its own businesses in the economic war against Russia. In S1/16:50 we hear that some of the biggest businesses in Germany belong to Russian investors. Russia is a major supplier of gas to Europe (S6/34:00) and almost 75 percent of the total investment made by Europeans goes to Russia (S8/21:40). European businesses are suffering big losses as a result of sanctions and will lose even more (S9/19:42). Moreover, the Russian market is the main destination for Europe’s exports (S17/5:26). However, there is an additional caveat in this narrative. Russia is important for Europe not only as an economic

⁵ Россия теперь выбирает позицию страны, у которой своя внешняя политика, даже если эта позиция не совпадает с мнением Запада.

⁶ Мы говорим о России, о серьезной державе.

partner, ties between Europe and Russia are much deeper. When it comes to the choice between Russia and the US, Europe will choose Russia because the two have deep historical ties (S6/28:00, S15/30:00). Europe and Russia are connected by historical, cultural and social ties (S7/45:12). By implementing sanctions against Russia, Europe is trying to isolate a country that played a prominent role in European history. This is a “futile task” as “there will be no stability in Europe without Russia” (S11/1:25:00). Sanctions against Russia will, in the end, prove to be counter-productive for both Europe and Russia because “there is no Europe without Russia” (S1/29:12). ⁷

What emerges from these two parallel narratives is the claim that Russia is not only back in the game, it also occupies a crucial geopolitical position which makes it an important strategic partner for Europe. One would expect this narrative to boost Russian people’s confidence in their government, despite the fact that the Russian economy has suffered greatly as a result of sanctions, much more so than the European economy (“Economic Impact” 2014).

4.1.3. Social Actor 3 – “The Weak and Indecisive” Europe

News Segment	Attributes of the actor	Notes
S7	Is in danger, needs Russia for energy security, has cultural ties with Russia, disunited,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “is in danger” – the European unity is about to get torn apart; • “has cultural ties with Russia” – Russian and European interests coincide not only in economic area but cultural too; • “disunited” – with regards to the sanctions against Russia;
S8	Ambiguous, manipulated by the US, too reluctant to implement sanctions, pressured by Americans, tries to resist American influence, is in precarious position, blackmailed by Americans,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “ambiguous” - On the one hand, Europeans, support the decision of Americans to extend the number of sanctions but, on the other hand, insist on excluding many individuals and entities from the sanctions; • “pressured by Americans” – pressured to implement sanctions against Russia; • “tries to resist American influence” – German government and businesses are trying to renegotiate the question of sanctions as they understand that there will be negative consequences for Russian economy;

Table 3. Coding of the Actor, Europe

⁷ Без России? Куда Европе без России?

In the news that cover economic sanctions Europe is framed primarily as a weak actor subjected to the pressure from the US and who is too hesitant to implement drastic measures against Russia. The attributes that I have extracted with regards to Europe can be collected under the label of “weak and indecisive”.

Interestingly, despite Europe’s active involvement in implementing sanctions against Russia, its attributes are virtually absent in the first segment (S1). Instead, the segment is devoted entirely to the discussion of Russia’s renewed strength and its confrontation with the US. Europe emerges only in the second segment, S2, where one can hear that the EU is very indecisive and cannot make a coherent, unified decision with regards to the sanctions (43:00). A nearly identical discussion also takes place in S7 where one can hear that the EU is “about to be torn apart” since there seems to be no clear agreement among its members as to whether implement more sanctions against Russia (S7/36:06). In S3, the news anchor argues that the question of sanctions polarizes Europe because many EU states do not want to break their ties with Russia (S3/1:10:57) and, as the narrative continues in S5, many in Europe understand that the EU “will always be tied to Russia” (S5/32:12). Hence, given this polarization, it is not surprising that Europe is so “hesitant” and “indecisive” when it comes to the sanctions; the EU does not want to spoil its relations with Russia (S6/28:03). European dependence on the Russian market and, especially, Russian gas, are cited as some of the reasons why the disagreement has taken place (S4, S8, S6, S11).

But in addition to being indecisive, Europe is also framed as a weak actor, who exercises very little power with regards to its own economic policy and has almost entirely fell under the influence of the US. Europe, the narrative goes, “has lost her respect” and is no longer capable of opposing the US influence (S6/15:18). European policymakers exercise no power in their decision-making even with regards to the conflict in Eastern Ukraine since they

“blindly follow” the directions from America (S6/21:25). In fact, “soft-bodied (*m’agkoteliye*) Europeans” (S13/1:12:13) have become “victims of American influence” (S13/ 14:42) despite their attempts to resist it (S8/43:20). This narrative concludes that Europe will be the biggest loser in the economic war against Russia because, of all the actors involved in it, the EU will suffer the most (S6, S8, S11, S17).

The attributes extracted present a complicated picture. As opposed to the US, whose image is clearly negative, Europe is shown as a passive entity who nevertheless continues its “stubborn and silly” sanctions against Russia (S15/24:11). Cultural and historic ties between Europe and Russia are emphasized repeatedly. This makes it unclear as to what kind of attitude Russians would have towards Europe who, on the one hand, actively implements sanctions but, on the other hand, did not choose this strategy on its own. I would expect Russians to feel ambivalent towards Europe.

4.1.4. Social Actor 4 – Ukraine, “the Lost Brother”

Surprisingly, despite the fact that Ukraine is at the epicenter of the sanctions war between Russia and the West, when it came to the TV coverage of economic sanctions, Ukraine faded into the background and was rarely a central actor in the theme. Ukraine, as a social actor, was mentioned regularly in the TV news that covered sanctions but always cursorily, with the US and Europe featured much more prominently. As a result, there were much fewer attributes extracted in connection with Ukraine. One can notice this trend simply by glancing at Appendix 3. Given the dearth of attributes mentioned in connection with Ukraine, as well as the general lack of prominence of Ukraine in the news that cover economic sanctions, this section will be very short. Subsequent analysis shows that there are two major themes associated with Ukraine, a “failed state” and “Russia’s brother nation”.

From the early segments Ukraine is characterized as a “pawn of the West” (S1/27:00) that has been “nearly destroyed” (S2/55:00) by its new masters, the USA and NATO. According to this narrative NATO has attempted to drag Ukraine under its sphere of influence but failed to do so and has now nearly ruined the entire country (S2, S3). As a result of this, Ukraine has turned into an “unstable country” (S6/25:14, S8/1:11:10), a “house on fire” (S10/1:14:04) that “has lost trust of other countries” (S5/16:37) and can no longer repay its debts (S7/40:12). While this theme has been the major theme surrounding Ukraine, there were two segments in which Ukraine was also characterized as Russia’s brother nation (S5/35:16), a fact which makes it so difficult for Russia to observe “the tragedy unfolding in the country that was once” Russia’s “brotherly nation (*bratskiy narod*)” (S13/1:10:02).

Just as in the case of Europe, there is some ambiguity with regards to the narrative surrounding Ukraine’s involvement in the economic sanctions against Russia. Ukraine is shown as a country that has been lost to the West but at the same time a brotherly nation that has deep emotional and historical connections with Russia. There was only one segment, S9, in which Ukraine was characterized as Russophobic country that is ruled by a fascist junta but, overall, the image of Ukraine is blurry and incoherent, with positive and negative attributes mentioned interchangeably throughout the segments. One would, once again, expect Russian to feel ambivalent towards Ukraine.

4.1.4. Social Actor 5 – China

It has to be noted that China was another actor featured in the news that cover economic sanctions. This actor, however, is not central to the narrative surrounding the sanctions, since it has been mentioned only in six out of seventeen episodes analyzed in this research. However, it can be said that China plays a reassuring role in the picture painted by the Russian media. China is always featured as Russia’s reliable alternative, a “plan B” in case the relationships

with the West do not improve. Hence, the main attribute of China is that of a “reliable partner”. China has “backed up” Russia and refused to vote on the UN resolution in connection with the annexation of Crimea (S1/20:32). It is a “great ally” (S8/1:13:00), a “trusted investment partner” (S11/1:25:00) who “will always be available” (S15/30:02). And, since the Western sanctions are “pushing Russia into China’s embrace” (S8/1:13:03), the friendship between the two countries is growing “at an unprecedentedly fast pace” (S4/1:00:03). One can firmly expect Russians to have a favorable attitude towards China.

4.2. The Main Frame: Economic Sanctions as “Western/American Indignation”

Economic sanctions are the main theme that unites all the social actors discussed in the previous sections of this chapter. There are several themes that have been extracted during the analysis that will show how the sanctions are framed as “Western/American indignation”.

The main theme that has been extracted contains the narrative according to which Western sanctions against Russia are simply an excuse to meddle into Russia’s strategic interests in her near abroad. The US, as “an arrogant hegemon”, “simply cannot stay calm” and feel indignant over the fact that they cannot control the events unfolding in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine (S3/1:12:34). Sometimes, however, the Russian news use the word “West” instead of America, which, as it has been mentioned earlier, makes it difficult to assess as to whom Russian media refer to when they use the term “West”. Economic sanctions, the narrative goes, are a “sign of the West being offended” (S2/50:01). This shows that the West “refuses to acknowledge the choice made by Crimeans” (S1/17:00). Sanctions are “a mere formality”, a desperate measure of the West who is trying to “save its face” (S2/49:48). However, given the fact that Europe is framed as a weak and indecisive actor, as well as, the segments S6, S8, S10,

S13, S16, S17 which contain clear references to the US being the driving force behind the sanctions, I conclude that “Western” sanctions are also framed as “American” sanctions. Furthermore, according to this narrative, “after their fiasco in Georgia and now in Crimea”, the US simply do not want to admit that they are no longer the only superpower (S3/1:16:12). In fact, Americans are using the sanctions to weaken Russia (S6/22:30). “Americans simply want us to stay quiet and keep our mouth shut”⁸ – the news anchor argues in one of the segments (S8/1:11:28). The narrative concludes that Americans are using the sanctions in order to “isolate Russia” and were expecting Russia to remain passive (16/5:13). However, “no economic sanctions will accomplish this goal” because, from now on, Russia is not going to abandon its own interests (S8/59:28). This analysis leads to the conclusion that the economic sanctions against Russia are framed as “Western/American indignation” over the new, stronger Russia. Given a great degree of ambiguity with regards to the usage of the word “West”, I will label the main frame as “Western/American indignation”, since the West and America are used interchangeably in the Russian news.

Furthermore, in order to assuage the worries of their audience, Russian newsmakers argue that the threat of damage from economic sanctions “is not substantial” (S1/20:00) and the sanctions “will have no real impact on the Russian economy” (S8/1:15:02). According to this narrative, Russian people have managed to survive far worse disasters and “it is in our tradition to always find the ways out of difficult situations” (S8/1:15:00). Moreover, it is the “weak and indecisive” Europe who would suffer the most in this economic war. Very often newsmakers would include personal stories of farmers, fishermen and other ordinary workers from the EU who have suffered as a result of the Western sanctions against Russia. The Baltic countries along with Slovakia, Bulgaria, Norway, Slovenia, Italy and Greece are some of the EU member

⁸Американцы просто хотят чтоб Россия убралась восвояси и молчала в тряпочку.

states that, according to the Russian news, have suffered massive financial losses due to the sanctions (S4,S9,S13 and S17). Hence, while “the weak and indecisive” Europe will experience a significant economic damage, Russia will actually benefit from the sanctions. Economic sanctions will not isolate Russia but, in fact, will make the Russian economy “open to many other potential investors” (S11/34:00). Here, the framing of China as Russia’s “trusted ally” and investor complements the overall narrative. Moreover, the sanctions have opened “certain niches” in the Russian market for domestic producers (S14/17:21). And the final outcome of the sanctions would be Russia’s complete “economic independence (S15/24:32).

This analysis shows that economic sanctions against Russia are primarily framed as “Western/American indignation” that will only benefit Russia in the long run. With the narrative of Russia becoming once again an important actor in international affairs, this indignation is presented as a Western response to Russia’s renewed strength, her comeback to the status of world superpower. With a “weak” Europe and “failed” Ukraine passively following the instructions from the US, the sanctions are presented as an indignant response on behalf of the Westerners, particularly Americans, a sigh of them “losing power over the world” (S8/1:12:13). This attack on Russia, the narrative concludes, will have no real impact either on the Russian economy or the Russian society in general. And, as it has been shown above, this conclusion is stretched even further with the emphasis on the fact that the sanctions might actually strengthen the Russian economy.

Some of the results from this stage of the analysis are not very surprising while others are quite puzzling. The fact that the US are vilified on the Russian TV is not unexpected. The US government is routinely demonized in the wide range of Russian news and not only those that cover economic sanctions against Russia (Baysha 2010). What is surprising, however, is the fact that the US are portrayed as the sole initiator of economic sanctions, while Europe is

framed as a reluctant participant in this economic war. This picture contradicts the reality because, in fact, the EU has implemented a far bigger number of sanctions against Russia than the US (“Timeline” 2015). Moreover, the ambiguous attitude towards Europe in this narrative is also puzzling. Russian TV newsmakers rarely resist from framing Europe in negative terms, often showing it as a decadent continent ridden by cold-heartedly bureaucrats and beseeched by depraved liberals (Irisova 2015, Fidler 2013). Interestingly, in the TV news that cover economic sanctions, Russian newsmakers frame Europe in far more sympathetic terms. It is also interesting how Ukraine faded in the background in this narrative. Despite the fact that Russia is punished with the sanctions precisely for the Crimean annexation and destabilization in Eastern Ukraine, Russian newsmakers persistently hide this fact, stressing the confrontation between Russia and the West as the only reason why the sanctions were implemented in the first place.

Now that the main frame, along with the thick description of primary units of analysis, have been extracted, I will now turn to the test which will confirm whether the themes and narratives found in the overall framing of economic sanctions have resonated among the Russian people.

4.3. Matching the Results with Opinion Polls

With regards to the polling data used throughout this study, as well as the data on Putin’s popularity, one might have a legitimate concern about reliability. After all, Russia is a country that has quite low scores when it comes to indexes of freedom of the press and media and adequate measurements of public opinion might be something a researcher would have misgivings about. However, Levada Center, a polling center whose surveys will be utilized in this study, has always been considered one of the most reliable polling centers in Russia.

Timothy Frye and his group of researchers have assessed the reliability of Levada polls, in particularly, the ones that measure Putin's popularity. They concluded that there is very little (if any) evidence to suggest that Levada polls are biased (Frye et al. 2015). Although Frye and his team did not measure the reliability of polling data I will be working with, their results suggest that I can rely on Levada Center.

This research has taken a form of a qualitative content analysis of TV news in conjunction with social surveys. I will now present several social surveys conducted in Russia which can show whether any of the themes and frames resonated among the Russian public. At first, I will present the results from the opinion polls that show the attitudes of Russian people towards the actors analyzed in this research, namely, the US, the EU, Ukraine and China. Next, I will turn to the social surveys that measure Russian people's perceptions about their own country since Russia is another social actor analyzed in this study. Finally, I will turn to the social surveys where Russians were specifically asked about their views on the current Western sanctions against Russia. At the end of this section I will provide a conclusion about the overall results and argue that the main themes that recur in the news about economic sanctions have resonated among the Russian people. Most importantly, framing economic sanctions as "Western/American indignation" that will have no real impact on the Russian economy had a successful resonance, as suggested by the literature on economic sanctions.

Every month, Levada Center conducts social surveys and measures the attitudes of Russian people towards many issues. Each survey includes 1,600 Russian adults from 48 regions of Russia. The margin of error in these surveys does not exceed 3.4 percent ("Omnibus" 2016). I am focusing specifically on the results from the questions about the social actors that I have analyzed in my research ("Otnosheniye k Stranam" 2016). The overwhelming majority of people surveyed hold unfavorable views of the US. As it can be seen from Table 4, there has

been a sharp increase in the number of people who dislike the US. I am including the year 2012 for the sake of comparison. In 2012 about 30 percent of Russian people held unfavorable views of the US. At the end of 2014 the number had skyrocketed to 80 percent. This result is consistent with my findings which show that the US are portrayed not only as an aggressive superpower but also as the main initiator of economic sanctions. As it was mentioned earlier, the US are vilified in many other TV news and shows and such a sharp increase in negative attitudes towards the US cannot be explained by vilification of America *only* in the TV news that cover economic sanctions. However, my results show consistency among the Russian newsmakers who frame the US as a common object of opprobrium. The fact that the US are framed as the main, if not the only, force behind the sanctions provides at least a partial explanation for anti-American sentiments among the Russians. This finding signals the first confirmation of the occurrence of the rally-around-the-flag effect in Russia as suggested by the literature on economic sanctions.

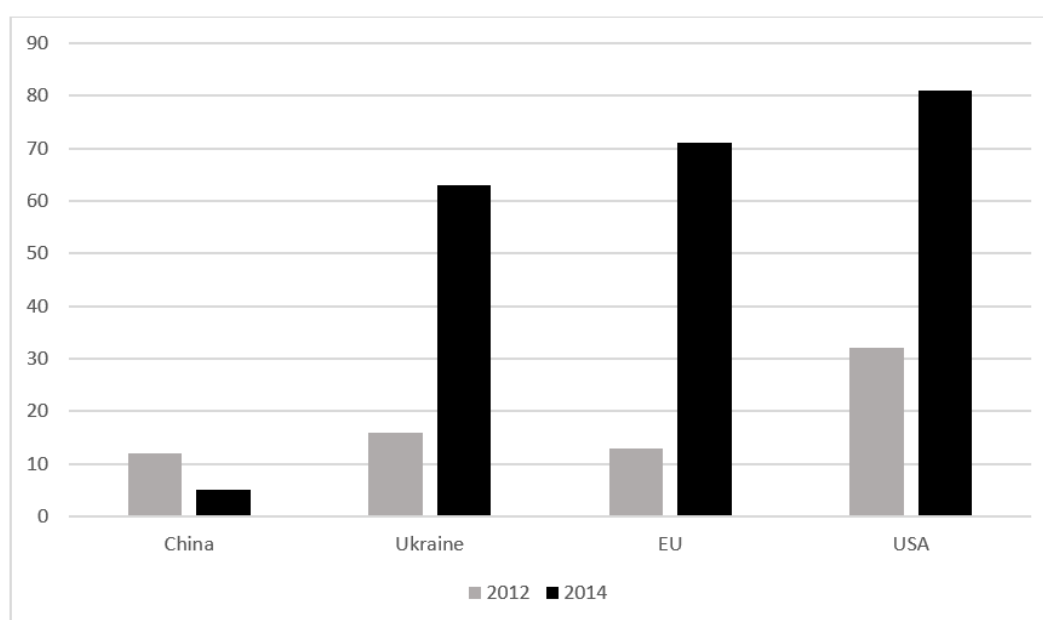


Table 4. The Percentage of Russian Citizens with Negative Attitudes towards the Given Countries. Source: Levada Center

The attitudes towards China, on the other hand, have improved. About 12 percent of Russians viewed China unfavorably in 2012. The number has dropped to about 5 at the end of 2014 (See Table 4). In the news that cover economic sanctions, China was often framed as Russia's reliable partner. Hence, the favorable framing of China has also resonated among the Russian people.

With regards to the EU and Ukraine, the results from the surveys clearly show that negative attitudes towards both have increased substantially. In 2012, only 15 percent of Russians viewed Ukraine unfavorably whereas in 2014 the number jumped up to about 60. Only 12 percent of Russians held unfavorably views of the EU in 2012 and in 2014 the percentage increased to almost 70. The results from my findings show a great degree of ambiguity when it comes to the coverage of both the EU and Ukraine. Although the former is framed as one of the actors behind the sanctions while the latter is occasionally framed as an unstable country ruled by Russophobes, the image of both is not strictly negative. The "weak and indecisive" Europe is also framed as a victim of US imperial ambitions, whereas the "failed" Ukraine is framed as "a brotherly nation" that has succumbed to foreign pressure. Hence, there has to be an additional factor or a number of factors, other than the TV coverage of economic sanctions, which can explain the negative attitudes of Russian people towards the EU and Ukraine. Other TV programs and shows might have featured both the EU and Ukraine more prominently and in much more negative light. At this point, it is hard to confirm as to whether the specific framing of the EU and Ukraine in the news that cover economic sanctions resonated among the Russians. However, the increase in negative attitudes towards both can be explained by a lack of positive coverage of both entities and the fact that neither entity is framed as a country friendly to Russia.

With regards to how the Russians perceive their own country I am including the results from the polls that measure the indexes of national well-being (“Polozheniye Del v Strane” 2016). These polls show the degree of economic optimism of Russians, as well as their assessment of national wellbeing and presidential rule. Table 5 provides the percentage of people who rate each of these aspects. I am including the results that came at the end of 2012 and the mid-2015 for the sake of comparison.

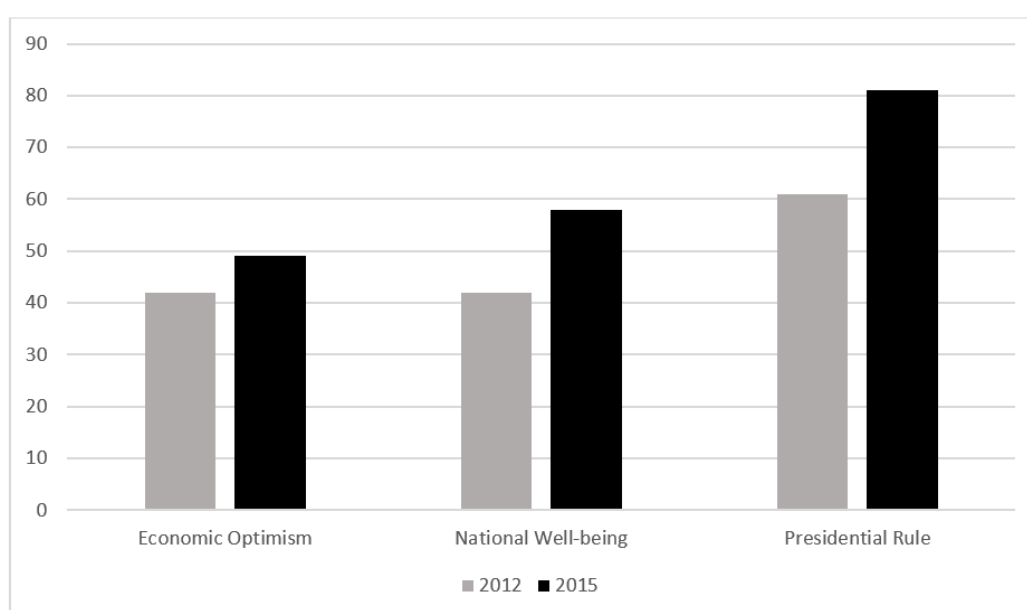


Table 5. The Percentage of Russian Citizens Who Gave Positive Assessment of Economy, National Well-being and Presidential Rule Respectively. Source: Levada Center

These results show that despite the worsening economic outlook, as well as Russia’s deteriorating relationship with Western countries, Russian people rate the performance of their country’s economy favorably, with nearly half of the respondents feeling optimistic about it. Almost 60 percent of people have a positive assessment of the national well-being, while 80 percent view presidential rule favorably.

Findings in my research can partially explain the results from these surveys. In the TV news segments that have been analyzed here, Russia has been framed as a decisive country that came back to the world's affairs and is once again an important superpower. Perhaps, given the repeated bombardment with these images of Russia's renewed strength, it is not surprising that, contrary to the situation in reality, the messages of Russia becoming strong again appear to be very persuasive to ordinary Russians. Hence, I conclude that the narratives coming from the TV news that cover economic sanctions had resonated among the Russian people.

Finally, at the end of June, 2015, Levada Center conducted a survey which measured the attitudes and opinions of Russian people towards economic sanctions ("Sankciyi i Kontrasankciyi" 2015).

Response	Percentage
To weaken and humiliate Russia	66
To restore the geopolitical balance which has been disrupted by Russia's annexation of Crimea	21
To stop war and bloodshed in Eastern Ukraine	5
Cannot answer	8

Table 6. The Percentage of Russian Citizens Who Gave the Answers to the Following Question: "In Your Opinion, What are the Main Reasons Why Western Countries Have Implemented Sanctions against Russia?"
Source: Levada Center.

The results from the surveys match the findings from this study and clearly show that the main frame, "Western/American indignation", has resonated successfully. When they were asked about the main aim pursued by the Western countries with regards to the sanctions, 66 percent of the respondents replied that the sanctions are used primarily "to weaken and humiliate" Russia. Only 5 percent of people surveyed answered that the sanctions against

Russia were implemented in order to stop the bloodshed in Eastern Ukraine. About 20 percent of people said that the sanctions were used in order to restore a geopolitical balance that Russia disturbed by annexing Crimea in 2014. As it has been shown previously, throughout the segments that cover economic sanctions, the narrative emphasizes the fact that Western countries, and the US, in particular, are indignant about Russia's renewed strength and use sanctions "to keep Russia quiet"(S4/1:03:00). In fact, in one of the episodes, the news anchor uses exactly the same words which were found in the surveys, when he says that the US use sanctions "to weaken" Russia (S6/125:14). This shows that framing the sanctions as Western attempt to weaken Russia and push it back to the status of a weak country had a significant resonance among the Russian people. Unfortunately, the wording of the questions made it difficult to assess whom the Russians had in mind when they used the word "the West". That is the reason why I keep the label of the frame as "Western/American indignation". However, one can claim, with a fair degree of certainty, that Russian people view the US as the main culprit and perceive the sanctions as a predominantly American attempt to humiliate their country. In addition to these responses, 70 percent of people thought that Russia should completely ignore the sanctions and continue to pursue her own interests, while nearly 60 percent said that they are not bothered by the impact of the sanctions ("Sankciyi i Kontrasankciyi: Vliyaniye na Ekonomiku i Obespokoyennost'" 2015). All of these responses correspond to the messages I found in the frame. Overall, I conclude that the TV news frames found in this research had a powerful resonance among the Russian people.

Conclusion

This research attempted to answer the questions of how the Russian media frames the topic of economic sanctions and whether any of the frames, either those of actors involved in the issue or the sanctions themselves, resonated among the Russian population. The results have shown that the framing of economic sanctions that comes from the Russian news has, to a large degree, resonated successfully. Negative framing of the US, EU and Ukraine found some resonance among the Russian public, although it is somewhat difficult to establish the direct causal relationship. The degree to which the EU and Ukraine are vilified in the Russian news that cover economic sanctions was found to be smaller than that of the US. Perhaps, that could be the reason why there are more Russians who hold unfavorable views of the US than those who dislike the EU and Ukraine. But, as it has been shown, all three actors, are viewed unfavorably by the majority of Russians which might be explained by them being framed negatively in other news programs, TV shows and the rest of the Russian media. While it is unclear as to whether the framing of these actors in the news that cover economic sanctions is directly related to the perceptions Russian people have about them, some other results are quite astonishing.

With regards to the way the Russian audience perceives economic sanctions implemented by Western governments the polls show that the majority of Russians think that the West is trying “to humiliate and weaken” their country. This is a nearly one-to-one match to what has been found in this paper. Russian newsmakers frame economic sanctions against Russia as “Western/American indignation” over Russia being strong again. The narrative in the frames suggests that the West, and the US in particular, is resentful towards Russia’s comeback to the status of world’s superpower and, hence, has implemented sanctions “to keep Russia quiet” and “to weaken” Russia. This appears to be the most successful narrative and I

would strongly argue that there is a relationship between the framing of economic sanctions and Russian people's perception of them.

All of the abovementioned results show that the Russian media has been instrumental in vilifying foreign actors and has managed to divert public anger from the Russian government to a "common object of opprobrium" in the face of the US and, occasionally, Europe and Ukraine. In addition to this, Russian media have stirred nationalist views by constantly appealing to Russia's comeback to the status of world superpower. These messages resonated among the public and one can argue that this specific TV news framing of economic sanctions is one of the several reasons why there has been little public outrage in Russia over the deplorable state of the country's economy. The successful resonance also shows that the majority of Russian citizens remain astonishingly misinformed about the actual reasons why the sanctions were implemented against their country. Although, it is unclear at this point how long the effects of the resonance will last, what is clear is that the frames indeed had a resonance.

Broadly speaking, the case of Russian propaganda demonstrates that competitive authoritarian governments that invest heavily in media propaganda can indeed get a sizable return on their investment in the form of a strong resonance of the frames they create. My results complement the arguments of scholars who are calling for more attention to the way propaganda is employed nowadays to garner support for illiberal governments (Reilly 2011, Pomerantsev 2015). It also shows that scholars of competitive authoritarianism, in addition to focusing on electoral processes, manipulation of legislature, strong coercive capacity of the state, as well as, elite cooptation and other areas where competitive authoritarian governments gain unfair advantage, should also include the usage of state propaganda when analyzing the resilience of competitive authoritarianism. As this research has demonstrated, this factor does

play a role in cultivating popular support for competitive authoritarian regimes, thus contributing to the survival of illiberal governments. After all, how can there be any democratic change in competitive authoritarian countries when the majority of the population supports the current regime and sees little, if any reason, to change the current state of affairs.

Finally, the findings in this research also raise troubling questions about democratic prospects in Russia. Scholars who have been studying Russia for years find it extremely difficult, at this point, to predict the direction Russia will choose in the future. As it was mentioned previously, some argue that the euphoria around Crimean annexation will be short-lived and soon the regime will experience a paralysis, brought about by, among other things, the current economic crisis. And even though some of the media frames in connection with the current confrontation between Russia and the West have resonated, it would be extremely difficult for the Russian government to control public opinion in the long run. On the other hand, scholars who focus on propaganda and survival of competitive authoritarianism argue that the effect of propaganda can be long and persistent. Perhaps, in the case of Russia, only time will tell...

Appendix 1: Remarks on Data and Translation

The news transcripts utilized for this study have been translated from Russian into English and I have to acknowledge that some portion of the original meaning of the messages might have been lost in translation. Russian writer Vladimir Nabokov, who in his mid-fifties had to switch from writing in Russian to writing in English, lamented numerous difficulties he encountered translating Russian books into English. “Take tenses – Nabokov writes in his semi-autobiographical novel *Invitation to a Beheading*! – how different their elaborate and strict minuet in English from the free and fluid interplay between the present and the past in their Russian counterpart” ([1974] 1990: 104). This gulf separating sentence structures in English and Russian might have had an impact on the quality of translations used in this study. However, I tried to retain the original meaning as much as it was possible.

During the first stage of my research I have collected approximately 27, 000 words worth of text. I have watched popular informational-analytical programs that had been aired on the Russian television between 6th of March, 2014 and 4th of October, 2015. There are 81 weeks between these two dates and I have watched 81 programs, respectively. Economic sanctions against Russia were extensively covered in 17 programs. Even though some other news segments mentioned economic sanctions, it was done cursorily and the sanctions were not the main focus of those reports. Hence, I discarded those segments. These 17 programs were translated and transcribed by me. Although the number of programs that have been transcribed for further analysis might appear small relative to the entire sample of programs I have watched, I would like to stress the fact that this result does not mean that Russian media paid insufficient amount of attention to economic sanctions against Russia. The result is due to the fact that I have collected the most popular weekly programs. It is possible that the less popular programs that have nevertheless been watched by many Russian citizens feature segments on economic sanctions. And, it is also possible that the sanctions were covered to some extent throughout the week. However, given my method of selection via TNS Global webpage, I assumed my sample is representative enough.

Appendix 2. The List of TV News Programs

Segment Title	Program Title	Week	Link
S1	Vremya (Время)	Mar.17/Mar.23 2014	http://doc-filmik.info/news/voskresnoe_vremja_2014/2014-08-31-4696
S2	Vremya (Время)	Mar.24/Mar30 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UJUXh6oEEK4&list=PLJoBIDTJ0aTXYqzLqy3EZuPkvi8_-zH7&index=56
S3	Vremya (Время)	Mar.31/Apr.6 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3BxH2Bac3rE&index=55&list=PLJoBIDTJ0aTXYqzLqy3EZuPkvi8_-zH7
S4	Vremya (Время)	Apr.14/Apr.20 2014	http://tv-news-online.com/voskresnoe-vremya-s-iradoy-zeynalovoy-20-04-2014/
S5	Vremya (Время)	May 19/ May 25, 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1dBkdxgtpE
S6	Vremya (Время)	Jun. 2/Jun. 8 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79qRnmkUvLA
S7	Vremya (Время)	Jun. 23/Jun 29 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wjPZyCaukY
S8	Vremya (Время)	Jul. 14/Jul. 20 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_oIFwod3ppQ
S9	Novosti Новости. Главное	Aug. 4/Aug 10 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnOIKiy6SsI
S10	Vremya (Время)	Aug. 25/Aug. 31, 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7zaUnh7tBE
S11	Vremya (Время)	Sep. 15/Sep.21, 2014	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4Wqy6gYdto

S12	Vremya (Время)	Jan. 12/Jan 18, 2015	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dV0-YyygLyg
S13	Vremya (Время)	Mar. 16/Mar. 22, 2015	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrlsRbiLjRU
S14	Vremya (Время)	May 25/May 31, 2015	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XskeNdI_5A0
S15	Vremya (Время)	Jun. 22/Jun.28	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gCp3tt-kr3s
S16	Vesti (Вести ГЕОэкономи ка)	July 13/July 19	http://www.vesti.ru/videos/show/vid/650864/cid/3121/
S17	Akcenty (Акценты Недели)	Aug.3/Aug.9	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACyJXW-xsdY

Appendix 3: Snapshot of Coding Process

Social Actor 1: the West

News Segment	Attributes of the actor	Notes
S1	threatening, bewildered and worried, pressuring, astonished, desperate to stop Russia's increasing prominence, stubborn, disrespectful,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “The West is threatening to implement new sanctions and refuses to acknowledge the choice made by Crimeans”; • Pressure from the West has been building up for years;
S2	“sunk into a puddle of muddle”, tries to save its face, surprised, hypocrite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “tries to save its face” – the West is using sanctions as a mere formality, just to save its face; • Surprised – by the agility of Russian intelligence service • Hypocrite – with regards to Kosovo's independence, endorsed Kosovo independence but not the Crimean one;
S3	Warmonger	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warmonger – The West is thinking that if Russia takes Crimea, we will drag Ukraine into war
S4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
S5		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
S6	Divided	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The US pressures for more sanctions, France and Germany oppose because their businesses will suffer tremendously (Soyuz Nesoglasnyh)
S7, S8, S9,		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
S10	Hypocrite, indignant over Russia's behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The West has double standards; •

Social Actor 2: the USA

News Segment	Attributes of the actor	Notes
S1	Global hegemon, “supposedly exceptional”, “think they are always right”, hypocritical (applies double standards), instructor; double standards, warmonger, instructs other countries,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “supposedly exceptional”- the US is described as a hegemon that insists on its “mythological exceptionality”;
S2	Alienator, clueless, schemer, incompetent, feeds Europe with empty promises, a country with a weak President,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “alienator” – the US tries to alienate Europe from Russia; • “clueless” – US intelligence was unable to predict Russia's moves; spent 500 billion dollars on intelligence and yet unable to do anything • “Feeds Europe with empty promises” – the US proposes to Europe its unrealistic plan of liquid gas supply;

S3	Scaremonger, a warring nation, cheap rhetoric, schemer,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The US tries to scare Russia and uses NATO to satisfy its urges to make wars; • Cheap rhetoric – keeps threatening but won't do much as sanctions are counterproductive; • Schemer – the American solution to the situation in Ukraine has already been made;
S4	Hypocrite, conceited,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hypocrite – interfered militarily in Yugoslavia, Iraq and Lybia but keeps rebuking Russia; • “conceited” – American always do whatever they want with no regard to other countries;
S5	Imminent threat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “imminent threat” – American missile defense systems are all over Europe;
S6	“tries to boost its score”, pressures Europe, uses sanctions to make Russia behave as the US wants, mistreats the EU (Nuland's pejorative remarks about EU) , wants to divide Russia and Europe; has a weak President, meddling, a destabilizing factor, Europe's puppeteer,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “tries to boost its score” – Obama is using Crimea and sanctions to boost his score at home • It tries to isolate Europe from Russia by building a wall of puppet-regimes in Eastern Europe and unstable zones like those in Ukraine. • “meddling” – actively works with European bureaucrats to undermine Russia; • “a destabilizing factor” – the US government intentionally ignites conflicts on European soil; • “Europe's puppeteer” – think it has exclusive rights over Europe;
S7	Always interfere,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “always interfere” – “Vladimir Putin is not surprised that Americans interfere again”.
S8	Puts pressure, blackmails other countries, a materialistic country, feels indignant and sore, unprofessional and reckless foreign policy, de facto rules over Ukraine,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blackmails - You hear about US summoning European ambassadors and blackmailing them into complying with Washington's interests. • Materialistic country – the US leaders are only interested in money; • Feels indignant and sore - Many experts think that what is happening around the crisis in Ukraine reminds everyone the fathom pain the US experiencing as a result of its losing power over the whole world
S9		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
S10	Schemer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “schemer” – tries to persuade other countries (Singapore, South Korea) to impose sanctions against Russia;
S11		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
S12		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
S13	Meddling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meddling (1) – actively persuades EU countries to impose sanctions against Russia; • Meddling (2) – the US is directly or indirectly responsible for major wars in Europe;
S14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
S15		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
S16	Schemer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schemer – actively tries to isolate Russia, to dictate directions to Russia;
S17	Bad influence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bad influence – because of the US sanctions and the pressure it put on EU countries, some workers have suffered unjustly;

Social Actor 3: Russia

News Segment	Attributes of the actor	Notes
S1	Important for Europe, a tough country, determined, strong, “back in the game”, decisive, “has to withstand the pressure”, challenged the system, simply responds to Western provocation, no longer a loser of the Cold War, is ready to withstand any pressure,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “important for Europe” – some of the biggest businesses in German belong to Russian investors; • “determined” – Russia chooses her own path; • “strong” – Russia will not let anyone interfere in her domestic affairs; • “back in the game” – Russia is a superpower again, after years of post-Cold war weakness; • “challenged the system of Western rules of the game”;
S2	Regional superpower, challenger, clever and cunning, managed to outpace American intelligence services, capable of brave retaliation, resilient,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “challenger” – Russia has challenged the West; • “clever” – Russian military personnel managed to outwit US intelligence; • “capable of brave retaliation” – “in case Russia gets expelled from SWIFT it (Russia) will retaliate with the demolition of the world order”;
S3	Eager to bring peace, “impotent no longer”, stronger than Americans in her own region (near abroad), a superpower like the US, speaks for herself,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “eager to bring peace” – Russia is doing everything possible to resolve crisis in Ukraine; • “impotent no longer” – Russia is no longer a weak country (like it used to be after the collapse of the USSR) and the West will have to take her interests into account;
S4	Defends her own interests, a significant player in world politics;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “defends her own interests” – with regards to Crimean annexation, Russia simply defends her own interests; •
S5	Ready to retaliate for sanctions, “meek no longer”, has close ties with Europe, is in the process of rapid modernization, a place for lucrative investments, open for cooperation,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “meek no longer” – Russia does not agree to stay meek;
S6	Too important for Europe (strategically), Russia sets its own terms of discussion, “a mighty land”, makes firm decisions, more important for Europe than the US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “too important for Europe”- Europe gets the third of its gas supplies from Russia; • “sets her own terms of discussion” – Russia will not compromise her interests to return to the G8 club; • “more important for Europe” – the ties between Europe and Russia are much stronger than those between Europe and the US;
S7	Too important for European energy security, has a strong, respectable President, has strong ties with Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “has strong ties with Europe” – Russian ties with Europe are not confined to economic ties only but include cultural and social one as well;
S8	peacebuilder, protects her own interests, Europe’s major investment partner, great navigator, resilient, united,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “peacebuilder” – Russia does everything possible to stop the conflict in Eastern Ukraine; • “Europe’s major investment partner” - 75 percent of the total investment made by European companies is made in Russia; • “great navigator” – hostile economic policies from the West push Russia into China’s embrace; • “resilient” – it is one of the traditions of Russian people to always find ways out of difficult situations; • “united” – Russian society will unite in the face of economic threats;
S9	Important for Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “important for Europe” – European businesses are losing a lot as a result of sanctions;
S10	Peacebuilder, provider of humanitarian aid, resilient, will profit from sanctions,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “peacebuilder” – with regards to the crisis in Eastern Ukraine Russia has drafted a resolution that would require a unilateral ceasefire; • “humanitarian aid” – Russia has provided a substantial humanitarian aid for Eastern Ukraine;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “resilient” – Russia does not follow Western rules of conduct; • “will profit from the sanctions” – Russian domestic market got a boost;
S11	Self-sustainable, impossible to isolate, important for Europe,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “self-sustainable” – Russia is large enough to sustain herself; • “impossible to isolate” – Russia is a great part of Eurasian continent that would be impossible to isolate from world politics; • “important for Europe” – there will be no stability in Europe without Russia;
S12	Strong and independent, ultimate winner, self-sustainable, has great opportunities,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “strong and independent” – Russia will not play by anybody’s rules; • “ultimate winner” – Russia can emerge as a winner from this situation (sanctions); Russia has everything she needs for success; • “self-sustainable” – Russia is the leading exporter of grain and will stay one in the long run; • “has great opportunities” – Russia should use sanctions as an opportunity to utilize her vast resources;
S13	A potent force in Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “a potent force in Europe” – Russian-German alliance would be powerful and will challenge American interests in Europe;
S14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
S15	Peacebuilder, important for Europe, will be a winner in the end,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “peacebuilder” – Russia prefers a diplomatic solution to the problem of increasing economic sanctions against her; • “important for Europe” – Russia has historical connection with Europe; Europe will lose in the sanctions war against Russia; • “will be a winner in the end” – Russian people will have enough strength to acquire true economic independence;
S16	Maneuverer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “maneuverer” – Russia strategically maneuvers in a hostile economic climate and manages to win;
S17	Self-sustainable, important for Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “self-sustainable” – we have enough fish in our Far East; • “important for Europe” – Russian market is Europe’s large export market;

Social Actor 3 – Europe

News Segment	Attributes of the actor	Notes
S1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
S2	Lacks unity, schemer, indecisive,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “lacks unity” – Europe is sharply divided with regards to the sanctions; • “schemer” – some EU countries together with the US are scheming against Russia by using the sanctions; • “indecisive” – is divided with regards to sanctions;
S3	At the risk of disunity, needs Russia,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “at the risk of disunity” – Europe is about to get divided because the questions of economic sanctions against Russia is polarizing; • “needs Russia” – Europe does not want to break its ties with Russia;
S4	Indecisive, will suffer great losses, untrustworthy,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “indecisive” – does not know how to go about the question of sanctions; • “will suffer great losses” – some EU states will suffer tremendously as a result of sanctions against Russia;

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “untrustworthy” – Putin’s account of an incident that involved him and the Danish Prime Minister which revealed the fact that some Europeans cannot be trusted;
S5	Will always be tied to Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “will always be tied to Russia” – historical and economic ties between Russia and the EU will always be strong;
S6	Wants to avoid confrontation with Russia, cautious, is in danger, tightly integrated with Russian economy, unable to make its own decisions, lost its respect, has no voice when it comes to the crisis in Eastern Ukraine, cannot exist without Russia, hesitant, dependent on Russian energy resources, stripped of independent decision making, hosts American puppet-regimes,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “cautious” – European sanctions against Russia are just an illusion; European policymakers do not want to spoil relations with Russia; • “is in danger” – Europe imports a large amount of gas from Russia and sanctions against Russia would have bad consequences for European energy sector; • “lost its respect” – last time Europe looked respectfully was when German Chancellor Schroder and France’s Jacques Chirac were brave enough to go against the US aggression in Iraq. • “has no voice when it comes to the crisis in Eastern Ukraine” – there is no independence in European decision-making, everything depends on the view of the US; • “cannot exist without Russia” – Europe and Russia cannot exist without each other, it is impossible; • “hesitant” – the EU is very cautious and hesitant with regards to sanctions;
S7	Is in danger, needs Russia for energy security, has cultural ties with Russia, disunited,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “is in danger” – the European unity is about to get torn apart; • “has cultural ties with Russia” – Russian and European interests coincide not only in economic area but cultural too; • “disunited” – with regards to sanctions against Russia;
S8	Ambiguous, manipulated by the US, too reluctant to implement sanctions, pressured by Americans, tries to resist American influence, is in precarious position, blackmailed by Americans,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “ambiguous” - Europeans on the one hand support the decision of Americans to extend the number of sanctions but on the other hand insist on excluding many individuals and entities from the sanctions; • “pressured by Americans” – pressured to implement sanctions against Russia; • “tries to resist American influence” – German government and businesses are trying to renegotiate the question of sanctions as they understand that there will be negative consequences for Russian economy; • “is in precarious position” – 75 percent of all investments made by European companies are directed towards Russia;
S9		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
S10	Wants to eliminate Putin, pressures other countries,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “wants to eliminate Putin” – Obama and his European allies are trying to get rid of Putin through Russian oligarchs; • “pressures other countries” – like Serbia and Turkey to implement sanctions against Russia;
S11	Depends on Russia, needs Russia for stability (with regards to the crisis in Ukraine)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “depends on Russia” – Europe benefits from Russian human capital;
S12		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
S13	Is in danger, soft (myagkoteliye Evropeicy), a victim of American influence, is a failing project,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “is in danger” – European debt crisis endangers the continent; • “a victim of American influence” – almost every major war in Europe was precipitated due to American interference;
S14		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

S15	Drama queen, stubborn (and silly), is in deep economic crisis, is a big loser in economic war with Russia, will be bitterly disappointed, a hierarchical institution,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “drama queen” – European (izobrazhayut jertvu) pretend like they are victims of Russian aggression; “stubborn (and silly)” – stubbornly insists on sanctions without realizing how detrimental those would be for European economy; “will be bitterly disappointed” – Europeans will lose their main trading partner (Russia), and will remain divided; “a hierarchical institution” – most European countries are forced to follow the directions from Brussels;
S16		•
S17	Suffers from sanctions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “suffers from sanctions” – Russia suffers as a result of sanctions and so do some European entrepreneurs;

Social Actor 4: Ukraine

News Segment	Attributes of the actor	Notes
S1	Pawn of the West	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “pawn of the West” – crisis in Ukraine is West’s excuse to confront Russia;
S2	A country nearly destroyed, a manipulated country,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “a country nearly destroyed” – NATO was trying to get into Ukraine and did not manage that, and now it (NATO) has destroyed this country;
S3	Dragged under the influence of NATO, whimsical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “whimsical” – has an unreliable, manipulative government;
S4		•
S5	Lost trust of other countries, lives off Russian gas, unstable, a brotherly nation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “lost trust of other countries” – Ukraine faces problems due to mistrustful attitude of other countries in the world; “a brotherly nation” – Obama has misjudged the depth of Russia’s feelings towards Ukraine;
S6	Is in catastrophe, stripped of independent decision-making, an unstable zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “an unstable zone” – the US tries to isolate Europe from Russia by building a wall of puppet-regimes in Eastern Europe and unstable zones like those in Ukraine;
S7	Cannot pay its debts, hoards Russian gas illegally,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “cannot pay its debts” – nevertheless Naftogas of Ukraine is not settling its debts;
S8	Unstable country, a country with no government (puppet), hosts extreme Right who are very hostile towards Russia, is historically bound to Russia, Russia’s brother-country, on the brink of bankruptcy,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “unstable country” – Ukraine has been struggling to find a firm ground for almost 23 years; “a country with no government” – Ukraine has lost its own government and is being ruled by foreign powers;
S9	Russophobe, fascist,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Russophobe” – has blacklisted Russian celebrities, an “idiotic” move; “fascist” – fascist junta rules over Ukraine;
S10	“house on fire”, reluctant to negotiate peace,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “house on fire” – Ukraine has urgent problems it cannot resolve (“iz izby goryat vse igly”);

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “reluctant to negotiate peace” – Poroshenko’s peace deal was bound not to work because Ukrainian government is too stubborn;
S11		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S12		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S13	“brother-nation”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “brother-nation” – Russia witnesses a horrible tragedy unfolding in a country that was once a brotherly nation to ours;
S14		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S15		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S16		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S17		<ul style="list-style-type: none">

Social Actor 5: China

News Segment	Attributes of the actor	Notes
S1		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S2	Has backed up Russia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “has backed up Russia” – China has refused to vote on the UN resolution that condemns Russia’s annexation of Crimea
S3		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S4	Has warm relationship with Russia (a growing friendship), a partner, will be significant in partnership with Russia,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “a growing friendship” – with regards to our relationships with People’s Republic of China they are developing quite successfully and are at the unprecedentedly high level; “a partner” – but the fact that we will try to widen our partnership with China is absolutely clear;
S5		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S6		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S7		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S8	Russia’s reliable option, will embrace Russia, a great ally,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Russia’s reliable option” - . Now, the Chinese once again have a chance not only to sign a gas deal but also an oil deal of the century with Russia. For the US, whose economy so much depends in financial markets this would produce a major blow; “will embrace Russia” - sanctions are pushing Russia into China’s embrace; “a great ally” - Russia-China alliance can destabilize American economy;
S9		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S10		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S11	Trusted investment partner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “trusted investment partner” - Our respected partners from China became our major consumers of gas in one day (while other actors like Germany were trying to get this deal in vain);
S12		<ul style="list-style-type: none">
S13		<ul style="list-style-type: none">

S14		•
S15	A partner that will always be available	• “a partner that will always be available” - Lets, keep China and India by our side for a while;
S16	NMD	•
S17	Partner	• “partner” - China has shared with us its fruit merchandise;

The Main Event: Economic Sanctions against Russia

News Segment	Attributes of the event	Notes
S1	Western indignation, counterproductive, a sign of brutal power, meaningless,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By threatening to implement economic sanctions the West shows its refusal to acknowledge the choice by Crimeans; • Tough times for the West are coming as a result of sanctions; • The West keeps insisting on the sanctions but Russia will not let anyone to approach her with the language of brutal power; • The threat of sanctions will prove to be meaningless;
S2	A sign of them being offended, a mere formality, a stupid idea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All these (sanctions) are a sign of the West being offended; • Sanctions are a mere formality; the West uses them just to save the face, to conceal its weakness in relation to the processes in Ukraine and Eastern Europe in general; • And a former Chancellor of Federal Republic of Germany Helmut Schmitt has called them (sanctions) a stupid idea;
S3	Implementation of sanctions shows that Americans are indignant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After their fiasco in Georgia and now in Crimea, the USA simply cannot stay calm and have to keep the warring spirit;
S4	Hurt other countries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the meanwhile EU budget commission has already calculated that the economies of Baltic countries, Slovakia and Bulgaria will suffer great losses as a result of sanctions against Russia;
S5	Had no real impact on Russia; Will hurt Americans themselves, do not cause any concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As President has said, as of now, Western sanctions had not real impact on Russian economy; • Visa and MasterCard issued more than 100 million cards in Russia and after the above-mentioned laws were passed both companies burst into panic; • It seems like no one here cares about notorious sanctions;
S6	American initiative, will not hurt Russia, American initiative, something Europe is reluctant to do, American tool to weaken both Europe and Russia,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Americans keep insisting on more and harsher sanctions/ President Obama kept persuading other leaders to impose more sanctions; • The only sanctions that will definitely hurt the Russian economy would be those imposed in import of Russian gas; • The US is using sanctions against banks as one of the tools to pressure other countries, to force those countries do what the US wants. There could be a connection here; • Something Europe is reluctant to do/ And Obama's demands which can be labelled as “let's not wait any longer and punish them more” appear as though it is the only; • Hence, Washington's to-do list can be summarized here in the following way: “Build a firm wall between Russia and Europe by using sanctions to weaken both [...]”
S7	Bad and useless idea, no one will benefit from them	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanctions against Russia is a very bad and useless idea; • I am certain that no one will benefit from sanctions. Sanctions are never beneficial to begin with. No one ever wins here;
S8	American initiative, stubborn and stupid idea; American initiative; suicidal for Europe; American initiative, will hurt Europe, ineffectual,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This week the US has activated another list of sanctions/ America's so-called sectoral sanctions will reduce Russia's GDP by 1 percent as a result of a closure of several long term projects and investments; • For example, in many languages the word “donkey” can be used to describe someone very stubborn but in Russian language the name of

	mean nothing, economic sanctions are Obama's sanctions, will not harm Russia, American initiative to show Russia its place,	<p>this sweet little animal can be use to describe someone very stupid. The words "sanctions against Russian" have acquired a similar connotation;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perhaps, something will be given to the EU and this potential gain is something the US is using to entice Europe into implementing the notorious economic sanctions; • The EU, it has to be noted, is doing everything it can to stay away from these sanctions because these sanctions will be suicidal for Europe. • Washington insists on more sanctions and this is the reasoning Americans used in order to convince their NATO allies in Europe; • Sanctions against Russia is the same as sanctions against Europe; • The threat of harming Russian economy with the help of sanctions is unsubstantiated, Kremlin says; • Economic losses is only a part of detrimental consequences which will follow Obama's sanctions. There are also geopolitical changes that will alter the balance of power not in US' favor; • Sanctions will not become fatal for Russian economy. It is our national tradition to always find ways out of difficult situations; • Americans are saying: "We will implement sanctions against Russia so that it will change its policies in relation to Ukraine." They want Russia to abandon its interests in Ukraine [...].No sanctions coming from them will accomplish this goal.
S9	Already hurt Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fisherman from Norway also had to fire all of his employees. His name is Geyer Sulhaut. He refused to give an interview. He is not in the mood. He lost his profits as a result of Russian counter-sanctions against the EU;
S10	American initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the meanwhile American emissaries went to open Eastern front trying to persuade China, Singapore and South Korea to impose sanctions against Russia;
S11	Will lead to destabilization in the world, will lead to no success;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Prime Minister said that Moscow will not only prevent economic isolation that these sanctions are trying to provoke but will also leave Russian economy open. Those who impose sanctions should get prepared for very dangerous consequences for their countries. Sanctions wars always lead to global destabilization especially in the light of recent economic sanctions; • European sanctions against Russia: "I doubt that in the end we will be able to say that these (sanctions) were successful;
S12	"We will view the sanctions as a challenge"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We take sanctions as a challenge. We have the best, latest equipment, technology and materials. We should not just sit and wait somewhere, expecting them to put boundaries on us;
S13	Are harmful for Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • She (Victoria Nuland) made visits to Slovenia, Italy and Greece. These are the countries that are not happy about sanctions against Russia;
S14	Brought problems <i>as well as</i> opportunities;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanctions and low oil prices, as well as weakening of the ruble, all of this has another side. Sanctions, for example, have made certain business niches vacant for our local producers;
S15	"Everybody is suffering from the sanctions", "dumbness"; will bring positive changes to the Russian market	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a result, everyone is talking about abiding by the Minsk agreement and everybody is suffering from sanctions; • All of that happened when we finally started to see the light at the end of the tunnel. But no, this (dubina) blunderbuss, cudgel, called sanctions has appeared and we have lost the opportunity to get an access to a huge Russian market [...] • The positive effect of the sanctions, for example, increasing economic independence of Russia will surprise many analysts;

S16	American initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While the US is trying to isolate Russia by using tough sanctions, Moscow continues developing scenarios that would ruin those plans. While the West was expecting Russia to make concessions, the country has created a platform for economic independence [...];
S17	Are hurting Europe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (A farmer talking) It is all the fault of the US and EU. They came up with the sanctions against Russia but Russia was our biggest market. And, now, our government tells us to look for other markets but why should I be looking for it?

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