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Russian Influence on Ukrainian Media Discourse

1. Introduction

Ukrainian media discourse is actively discussed nowadays, and there are some of its key characteristics that are debated. Among them is the idea of significant Russian influence on Ukrainian media discourse. The aim of this research is to study this influence and its scope on the example of coverage of resonant for both Russia and Ukraine events by the popular Ukrainian media.

Discourse is a practice that constructs the social.[1] The term discourse is one of the most used terms nowadays, and as it often happens in similar situations it leads to the blurring of its boundaries and strict definitions. Mary Talbot describes media discourse as a multidisciplinary field that is researched from different perspectives, and, hence, it can be defined in different ways depending on the theoretical paradigm used by the researcher.[2] CARPENTIER/DE CLEEN (2007), while studying the application of discourse theory in media studies, defined, according to Torfing,[3] media discourses as the content of the discourses produced by the media. This approach to defining the phenomenon of media discourse is at the base of this research. Media are understood, according Foucault, as a system of dispersion of discourses. Media are not passive retransmitters of reality; instead they (re)construct it, creating certain messages.[4] It is important to study the content of these messages, the process of their creation as well as the sources of information used to create these messages.

2. The Structure of News Sources as a Possible Factor of Influence

The level of influence in social science is a variable that very often cannot be calculated properly. However, it is possible to make a suggestion about its existence. For example, „Promova", in its research of 2008 South Ossetia War TV coverage, made a conclusion that Ukrainian journalists used a lot Russian sources of information, and it led to domination of the Russian point of view and can be called one of the elements of Russian media discourse influence on Ukrainian media discourse.[5] Exploration of news sources is also used by Western scholars; for example, JANG 2006 studied news sources in order to conclude on the balance of war coverage. But, to the author's mind, it is not always

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[1]   Philips/Jørgensen 2000 as cited in CARPENTIER/DE CLEEN 2007

[2]   TALBOT (2007)

[3]   Torfing 1999, as cited in CARPENTIER/DE CLEEN 2007

[4]   As cited in CARPENTIER/DE CLEEN 2007

[5]   BRYNDZA/BEZVERCHA 2008

easy to define the source of certain information in the Ukrainian TV news. This special feature of Ukrainian TV news coverage was described in the Monitoring of news quality made in 2009 by „Telekritika" with media expert Igor Kulias. He presented it as a criterion of news quality and formulated it as „The source of each fact in the news program should be mentioned".[1]

It may seem surprising, but the sphere where the majority of media tend to indicate the sources of information in Ukraine is Internet. Of course, it is not true for all media, but at least the most popular of them such as Ukr.Net portal,[2] Ukrainska Pravda[3] or Korrespondent[4] are doing it. Their traffic can be checked at the rate of Bigmir[5], whose traffic counters are at the majority of Ukrainian websites.

For this research a Korrespondent portal[6] was chosen because it does not simply retransmit news as Ukr.Net portal, and also it does not concentrate basically on Ukrainian political life as it is on the main page of Ukrains'ka Pravda. Korrespondent is trying to cover all spheres of life in both Ukraine and world. It has its own correspondents, and, at the same time, it uses different news sources such as news agencies, newspapers, TV channels and so on. Moreover, in the rate of bigmir,[7] Korrespondent is at the first or second place among 1126 media.[8] There are some languages versions of this portal, but the Russian one is significantly more popular than others, so the Russian version of the portal was chosen for this research.

In the last few months there have been lots of events connected with both Ukraine and Russia, because with new Ukrainian president Victor Yanukovych the number of meetings with his Russian counterpart as well as of the meetings of the Russian prime minister with the Ukrainian one has increased greatly. However, one of the first meetings, and consequently the one that received the majority of coverage, was held in Kharkiv in April, where agreements on the Russian Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol were signed.

According to these documents, Ukraine received a discount in $100 per 1000 cubic meters of Russian natural gas in exchange for the prolongation of the Russian Black Fleet basing at the military base in Sevastopol, Crimea, Ukraine. It will stay there for next 25 years with the possibility of prolonging this period for 5 more years. The President and government call it a big success that can save Ukrainian industry due to low gas prices; however, opposition regards it as a betrayal of national interests. These agreements are unofficially called

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[1]   KULIAS 2009

[2]   www.ukr.net

[3]   www.pravda.com.ua

[4]   www.korrespondent.net

[5]   www.bigmir.net

[6]   www.korrespondent.net

[7]   http://top.bigmir.net/show/mass_media/

[8]   KULIAS 2009

„kharkivs'ki" and are still discussed in Ukraine and in Russia. No less attention was paid to the accompanied fights, egg-throwing and smoke bombs that accompanied the process of ratification. These no doubt resonant events that are important for both Ukraine and Russia were chosen for the present research.

The period under investigation starts on April 21 where the signing of agreements took place and ends on May 5, which is one week after the ratification of the agreement by the parliament. After this date the number of news items about the agreements dropped significantly: for example, on May 2 there were no articles on this topic at all, and on May 3 and May 4 there were 2 and 1 materials, respectively, and all of them were the translations of the material from the foreign press.

The signing of the agreements on the Russian Black Sea Fleet and their ratification had important political, economical and symbolical meaning for both countries. Lots of Russian experts do not conceal that to achieve a prolongation of Black Sea Fleet basing that should have ended in 2017 was a question of saving country's face. It can be explained by the fact that certain Russian politicians still declare that Ukraine should be part of Russia, while others say that the Crimean peninsula was illegally given to Ukraine in the Soviet time; very often Sevastopol is called „a city of Russian sailors and of Russian glory". Sevastopol is inhabited mostly by people who consider themselves Russian and whose welfare depends very much on Russian Black Sea Fleet.

That is why for Ukraine and for Russia these agreements had a very big symbolic and political meaning. Consequently, the way these agreements and their ratification were covered is very important, because these events were seen in a polar way by the Ukrainian government, Ukrainian opposition, Russian government, Western analysts etc.

3. Methodology

Content analysis was used for analysing the materials. All materials, despite their size or genre, that are in any way related to the signing and ratification of agreements between Russia and Ukraine and were posted at the website Korrespondent under the title „news" during the period of investigation were chosen for the analysis. Sources of information in all cases were indicated by the editors of Korrespondent after the material itself. All materials were found manually in the archive of Korrespondent that is available at its website. All articles for each day of the researched period were looked through in order to choose those that are related to the mentioned above topics. A search option at the website is available, but after the preliminary investigation it was found that different ways of indicating tags is used (such as „fleet", „Black Sea Fleet" or even „Russian Black Sea Fleet") in similar situations. That is why in order not to lose any material it was decided to perform searches manually. The period under investigation included April 21 – May 4 (14 days).

A priori coding, defined by STEMLER 2001 as the coding scheme with the categories established before the analysis starts, was used. Four categories were defined, they are: Conventionally Ukrainian media, Ukrainian media, Rus-

sian media, neither Russian nor Ukrainian media. „Conventionally Ukrainian media" in this research are such media that were founded in Russia but have local offices in Ukraine, such as offices of news agencies „Interfax", which is called „Interfax-Ukraine", and „RBC" which is called „RBC-Ukraine". Consequently, „conventionally Ukrainian newspapers" are such newspapers that are the Ukrainian editions (localised) of Russian newspapers. For example, „КоммерсантЪ-Украина" is the Ukrainian edition of „КоммерсантЪ". The „conventionally Ukrainian media" along with the „Ukrainian", „Russian" and „neither Russian nor Ukrainian media" are listed in the table 1.

Table 1:
Classification of the Media Sources

Conventionally Ukrainian media	Ukrainian media	Russian media	Neither Russian nor Ukrainian media
- „Interfax-Ukraine" (Интерфакс-Украина) - „RBC-Ukraine" (РБК-Украина) - „КоммерсантЪ-Украина"	- Korrespondent Portal (Корреспондент.net) - „Delo" (Дело) - „LIGABusinessInform" (ЛІГАБізнесІнформ) - Magazine „Correspondent" (Корреспондент) - „Obkom („Обком") - „Ukrainian News" (Українські новини) - UNIAN (УНИАН) - „Weekly mirror" (Зеркало недели) - ZAXID.net, - 5 channel (5 канал)	- „Interfax" (Интерфакс) - Lenta.ru - NEWSru.com - RIA „News" (РИА Новости) - „Ведомости" - Вести.ru - „Время новостей" - Известия - „КоммерсантЪ" - „Московский комсомолец" - „Независимая газета" - Росбалт - Российская газета - The Moscow Times	- Deutsche Welle - Global Post - Reuters - Rzeczpospolita - The Times - The Washington Post - The Globe And Mail

4. Results

The general amount of materials that were chosen for the analysis is 225. They were coded according the next coding system as shown in table 2. For the 1st and 3rd paragraphs, the general sum of all subparagraphs should be equal to the general amount of materials for the analysis – or 225. For the 2nd paragraph, it is less than the general amount of materials for the analysis or 225, because it deals only with narrow group of material such as material taken from newspapers and magazines. It was important to count them also in a separate way because they can show the analytical aspect of the media coverage that would be described more in the conclusions.

Finally, 2 major groups of the results could be received. The first one covers in general all period under investigation (see column 1 in table 2). The second group covers in a separate way 4 days from the period under investigation, they are: 21st of April, 22nd of April, 27th of April and 28th of April (see columns 2a - 2d in table 2).

21st of April and 27th of April were chosen because these are the exact days of two key events the coverage of which is researched here; these events are the signing of the „kharkivs'ki" agreements between Russia and Ukraine and ratification of these agreements by Ukrainian parliament respectively. The author suggests that the greatest news coverage of these events was on those days. Whereas 22nd of April and 28th of April are the dates that are following the key events, and the author suggests that the greatest analytical media coverage of the key events was on those days. It can be also proved by the data: 22nd and 28th of April are the days with the biggest amount of material on the topic.

Table 2:
Results of the Investigation

	1	2a	2b	2c	2d
	Final results	April 21	April 22	April 27	April 28
1. Materials taken from Ukrainian or conventionally Ukrainian media:	166	14	24	35	13
- Materials taken from Russian media:	43	2	8	7	7
- Materials taken from Ukrainian or conventionally Ukrainian and Russian media:	5	2	-	3	-
- Materials taken from other than Russian or Ukrainian media:	11	-	1	-	3
2. Materials taken from the Russian newspapers and magazines:	27	-	7	2	5
- Materials taken from Ukrainian newspapers and magazines:	6	-	1	2	-
- Materials taken from neither Ukrainian nor Russian newspapers (magazines):	1	-	-	-	2
- Materials taken from conventionally Ukrainian newspapers and magazines:	8	-	-	-	-
3. Materials taken from media founded in Ukraine:	105	7	14	21	11
- Materials taken from conventionally Ukrainian media:	41	4	7	11	1
- Materials taken from Russian media:	42	2	7	7	7
- Materials taken from other than Russian or Ukrainian media:	11	-	1	-	3
- Materials taken from Ukrainian or conventionally Ukrainian and Russian media:	9	2	4	3	-
- Materials taken from Ukrainian and conventionally Ukrainian media:	17	3	-	3	1

5. Conclusions

Why was it necessary to divide Ukrainian and conventionally Ukrainian media? The latter have a very close relationship with main offices in Russia. It can be illustrated by the materials that are shared by all of them: there are the same materials on certain topics in Ukrainian editions and in Russian ones. This process of exchange can be mutual, and that is why when the events that concern both Russia and Ukraine are covered, the author can suggest that people who prepare media materials may align their materials with the requirements of both Russian and Ukrainian media markets. Under certain conditions it can influence the coverage in general. This suggestion should be researched deeper in order to be checked. That it why these media were not labelled as Russian ones and were in some cases (paragraph 1 of coding scheme, table 2) counted in the same group as Ukrainian ones: but it necessary to take into account that it is not yet clear whether they can be called Ukrainian media. In order to attract attention to this possible distortion the term „conventionally Ukrainian media" was used.

In general, for the two-week period, there were almost 74 % of materials prepared by the Ukrainian or conventionally Ukrainian media, 19 % of materials prepared by the Russian media, 2 % of materials with mixed Ukrainian-Russian sources, and 5 % of neither Ukrainian nor Russian sources. It is possible to say that in 21 % or one fifth of all cases Russian media were among the sources, and in the majority of these cases they were dominant. It can prove the existence of Russian influence on media coverage of chosen events at the Russian version of Korrespondent portal (that is one of the most popular in Ukraine). The number „one fifth" can seem even more significant if taken into account it is for media coverage of events that almost divided Ukraine, and dominant Russian position is supported only by part of Ukrainians.

If the situation with newspapers and magazines is looked at, then Russian media dominance will seem even more essential. Newspapers' and magazines' articles differ from general news materials by their more expressive language and analyticity. They usually bring experts' opinions to the audience and try to explain the importance and consequences of certain events. That is why newspapers and magazines are very important for analytic media coverage. In general, there were 12 % of articles from Russian newspapers and magazines, 3 % of articles from Ukrainian or conventionally Ukrainian newspapers and magazines, and 3.5 % of articles from neither Ukrainian nor Russian newspapers (magazines). Here the dominance of Russian origin information is obvious, and this dominance could seem even more momentous because it concerns analytical, not news, materials. So, again the events that almost divided Ukraine were analyzed at the Korrespondent portal mostly by Russian journalists. If to define the amount of material prepared only by the media founded in Ukraine, it will be even lower than half – about 47 %.

Finally, there are data for 4 separate days from the period under investigation (see table 3). The part of materials prepared by the Ukrainian or conventionally

Ukrainian media is about 74 % (that is general amount for the whole researched period) ± up to 4 %.

The only exception is 28th of April, the day following the ratification of „kharkivs'ki" agreements by Ukrainian parliament, because the part of materials prepared by the Ukrainian or conventionally Ukrainian media on that day is lower – 57 %. It can be explained by higher percentage of materials from Russian or mixed Russian and Ukrainian sources – 30 % (earlier it was about 22 % or 24 %), as well as bigger part of materials from neither Ukrainian nor Russian media – 9 % (on previous chosen dates there were no such materials).

28th of April can also be presented as the final day of the process of elaboration mentioned above agreements between Russia and Ukraine. It was the first day after the agreements became fact: they were ratified by both parliaments. Thus, the analytical materials published on the portal on that day characterised in general the process of signing and ratifying these documents. That is why it is extremely important that on that day there was higher percentage of materials from neither Ukrainian nor Russian media, but also it is easy to notice that the part of materials from Russian and mixed Russian and Ukrainian sources is also bigger.

Table 3:
Distribution of Sources, in Percent

Date (April)	Ukrainian Media + Conventionally Ukrainian Media	Russian or Russian + Ukrainian Media	Neither Russian nor Ukrainian media	Russian Newspapers/ Magazines	Ukrainian Newspapers/ Magazines	Neither Russian nor Ukrainian Newspapers/ Magazines	Only Ukrainian founded media
21st	77 %	22 %	-	-	-	-	39 %
22nd	73 %	24 %	3 %	21 %	3 %	-	42 %
27th	78 %	22 %	-	4 %	4 %	-	47 %
28th	57 %	30 %	13 %	22 %	-	9 %	48 %

The results of this research prove that there is certain influence of Russian media on Ukrainian media discourse, since we have noticed that Russian media form a significant part of this discourse. It is much more difficult to define the strength of this influence.

Is one fifth of material prepared by Russian media in total amount of them too much or enough? Ukraine has common borders with other countries, not only with Russia. Not only in Russia are there media in Russian language; Russian exists also in Belarus and Moldova, both of which also have common borders with Ukraine and a common history, at least in the Soviet time; but their influence on Ukrainian media discourse can hardly be compared with the Russian one. Recently, Ukraine again declared its intention to integrate into European Union; however, the number of foreign (neither Russian nor Ukrainian media)

media materials cannot be compared with Russian media influence. The author can suggest that except mentioned above factors, there is probably an intention in Russia to have influence on Ukrainian media discourse. The best way to oppose it is to develop national media not only for news production, but also for providing analytics of high quality.

6. Possible Reasons of Russian Influence

Ukraine gained its independence in 1991 after the Soviet Union collapse. However, after almost 70 years of being part of the USSR, strong ties in different spheres with other post-Soviet republics remain. This is a consequence of the Soviet era approach when ties, connections and inter-dependence between republics were deepened, very often even in an artificial way. It could have been clearly seen on the examples of industry functioning, but the same approach was used in the social sphere. As a result, after the Soviet Union collapse, it took a lot of time and effort to establish the Ukrainian media system. During the USSR period, Moscow was considered to be the centre of all kinds' production, whereas other capitals of Soviet republics had a status of provincial ones. The researcher of Ukrainian media system Alla Shorina points at the vacuum in certain media segments that previously was filled in by Russian production-studios that were and probably are more influential and developed than their Ukrainian counterparts.[1] SHORINA 2007 concludes that this process was most obvious in television production. Such a situation can be regarded as one of the factors that make general Russian cultural influence stronger in Ukraine.

Ukraine has faced a serious lack of resources. First of all, it was a lack of necessary equipment as well as lack of human resources. Recently, it has been a very popular situation where young Ukrainian media professionals migrate to Moscow because of bigger amount of possibilities there. However, it is worth mentioning that in recent years one more direction of brain drain has appeared: so called Western countries.

Similar process took part both in television and press. There are lots of Russian newspapers that are available in Ukraine especially in Eastern parts. Also certain Russian newspapers created special Ukrainian editions such as „Komsomol'skaya Pravda in Ukraine" („Комсомольская правда в Украине"), „Arguments and facts" („Аргументы и факты") etc. The majority of them have been familiar to the Ukrainian audience since the Soviet time, and that has helped them to be popular.

However, in last 10 years this tendency has changed. As SHORINA 2007 indicated, a demand for national-oriented product appeared. It can be illustrated in the example of TV-shows that became very popular in the whole world. Among the most viewed shows in Ukraine are those that are made by Ukrainian production companies and studios with Ukrainian anchors and participants. In most cases, they do not have original Ukrainian formats, but they are adapted and

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[1]   SHORINA 2007

produced by local professionals. All these aspects can be united in the *professional factor* that causes Russian influence on the Ukrainian media system and on the Ukrainian media discourse as well.

SHORINA 2007 also pointed out at one more factor that facilitates the penetration of Russian influence in Ukrainian media system. It is a tendency to regard foreign and Russian as well media practitioners and their products as of higher quality than Ukrainian ones. SHORINA 2007 illustrated it on example of political talk-show „Freedom of speech" („Свобода слова", ICTV) with invited Russian anchor Savik Shuster that had extraordinary success, whereas before similar shows existed in Ukraine but with local anchors (such as „This is what I think" („Я так думаю"), „1+1"). This factor of Russian influence can be seen as *underestimation of local media products*.

A very important factor that makes Russian influence on Ukraine stronger is the long common history, and, as a result, *cultural interdependence and interconnectivity*. It is obvious in the majority of spheres.

There is also a strong political influence of Russia that is fully reflected in media. On the one hand, media use certain news selection criteria among which relevance and proximity of country that is covered are among the most important. In 1965 Norwegian scholars Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge published one of the most influential and possibly the first of such level researches that deal with news criteria. Relevance as well as connection to elite nations were mentioned in their „Structuring and selecting news".[1] According to these criteria, Russia should be one of the most covered nations in Ukrainian news. Later on the base of Galtung and Ruge research, new theories emerged whose authors tried to generalise or even to narrow their criteria. However, this classification is still considered to be a classical model; it does not always correspond to the present reality but serves as a benchmark for the further research. New approaches were developed, but all of them still include news selection criteria that can explain the great media attention to Russia in Ukraine.

For example, GOLAN 2006 defined, among others, such factors as „cultural affinity and the international location of nations within the hierarchy of nations or the world system", as well as proximity, or physical distance. All of them can be applied in order to explain great presence of Russia in different discourses in Ukraine. WU 2003 was even more exact in placing geographical distance and population of country among the most important factors of news selection. In reality it is even sometimes difficult to define whether news about Russia is local or international. Finally, *wide media coverage of Russia* makes its influence more obvious.

One more very important reason that makes all the above-mentioned factors more powerful is the number of people in Ukraine that consider themselves to be Russian. The last population census was held in Ukraine in 2001. According

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[1] Galtung/Ruge 1965 as cited in HARCUP/O'NEILL 2001)

to the data published by the State Committee of Statistics,[1] 17.3 % of Ukrainian citizens said that they were Russians, whereas 77.8 % of Ukrainian citizens defined their nationality as Ukrainian. The State Committee of Statistics also provided data on number of people who consider the Russian language as well as Ukrainian as their mother tongue.[2] 67.5 % of Ukrainian population consider Ukrainian as their native language, and 29.6 % of Ukrainian population regard Russian as native language. It means that almost one fifth of Ukrainian citizens should be interested in information about Russia, since they regard it as their motherland, and even more, almost one third of the Ukrainian population perceive the Russian language as their mother tongue. This also can reinforce Russian influence or at least create a friendly environment for its penetration. This factor can be defined as *national structure and language composition* of Ukraine.

Finally, one more factor is *the linguistic affinity of Russia and Ukraine*. In the majority of cases, people who speak Ukrainian can understand Russian and vice versa. It makes access to other country's media easy, and leads to bigger attention to them. It can often result in the exchange of information or even in informational dominance when one country relies a lot on the information from another country. In case of contradictive resonant events, it can lead to the distortion of media coverage.

7. Limitations and Delimitations

This research has certain limitations and delimitations. First of all, the same scheme of study should be applied to the researching of media coverage of events that do not have direct connections to Russia or Ukraine, preferably in some foreign country that is not a part of the so called Russia's sphere of interests. Also, there is a necessity to study the coverage of events in a country that is close to both Russia and Ukraine (such as Belarus, for example). And, finally, it is important to use this approach to study events that can be called internal for Ukraine. In total all these results can give us a general picture of Russian media presence in the structure of news sources in Ukraine. However, even present research indicates that there is certainly influence, which nevertheless should be further explored.

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