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Russian TV: Contesting European Values

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Chapter 1. Introduction

This paper evaluates the strategies and techniques used by Russian television to challenge as well as to undermine popular support in European states for the core European political and social values – tolerance and democracy - in relation to the recent migration crisis in Europe.

I explore this as a case of state-controlled media in Russia conducting a well-financed campaign to misrepresent and discredit values in other states. This is done in subtle, as well as not so subtle ways, and it needs particular linguistic as well as journalistic skills to interpret the methods used. The issue of European values is also relevant for Russian internal domestic consumption, since Russia has had a centuries-long debate over whether the country should be seen as part of Europe or a part of ‘the East’.

Since the 19th century, Russian intellectuals were split between the ‘Westernisers’ and ‘Slavophiles’. Westernisers insisted that Russia was in its essence a European power, with its priorities and shared values in Europe, while Slavophiles believed in Russia’s special destiny, distinct from the West. The debate continues today, between the western or Eurasian destiny of Russia. With tensions in relations with the West rising, particularly after the annexation of Crimea and war in Ukraine, the demise of Europe and the rise of Asia are emphasized in Russian discourse.¹

The dominance of state-controlled media in Russia today raises questions whether the Russian media moved from an earlier and simpler criticism of ‘Western’ democracy and human rights agendas to more sophisticated efforts to disparage Western values and to influence underlying social and political attitudes in European states. In this paper I explore a possible effort in this media campaign to weaken the sense of community in the European Union, which is already subject to many contemporary pressures. I consider how messages presented by Russian TV regarding the European Union and individual European countries are modified for internal and external audiences.

Janis Sarts, director of NATO’s Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence, suggested in an interview with the *Observer* that Russia has a track record of funding extremist forces in Europe, and that he believed there was evidence of Russia agitating in Germany against Angela Merkel.² I assess if we are truly dealing with an

¹ Karaganov, S. ‘Eurasian Way out of European crisis’, *Global Affairs*, 8 June 2015, available at <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/pubcol/Eurasian-Way-Out-of-the-European-Crisis-17505>. Suslov, D. ‘Without a “Common Space”: A new Agenda for Russia-EU Relations’, *Global Affairs*, 1 July 2016, available at <http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/valday/Without-a-Common-Space-A-New-Agenda-for-Russia-EU-Relations-18257>

² Boffey, D. ‘Russia stoking refugee unrest in Germany to topple Merkel’, *The Observer*, 5 March 2016, available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/mar/05/russia-refugee-germany-angela-merkel-migration-vladimir-putin>

‘information war’,³ which is designed to demonstrate the inability of Western states to cope with the migration crisis, and whether the messages presented by Russian TV for external and internal audiences can be classed as propaganda.

I use the concepts of framing and content analysis to examine if there is indeed a difference in Russia’s portrayal of the migration crisis and tolerance toward migrants on Russia’s domestic (First Channel, FC) and international (Russia Today, RT) channels. This difference would be significant as it would suggest that specific agendas exist and are intended to influence foreign and domestic audiences. I explain the choice of channels for consideration in more detail in Chapter 2.

The time period for this study is chosen to reflect two significant events for the EU in 2016: the Brexit referendum in the UK on 23 June 2016 and the first official EU summit in Brussels after this vote on 20-21 October 2016. I choose these time periods as migration was one of the dominant issues in discussions during the Brexit referendum in the UK and during the first post-Brexit referendum EU summit. At these times conflicts of opinion about the free movement of people in Europe and what to do about the migration crisis were particularly stark. This made it easier and more worthwhile to explore this issue, which had greater impact on audiences both domestically and internationally. News bulletins were studied for two months around each of these two events (four weeks approximately on either side of the event), and reports about migrants were singled out for study. I only considered items about the European migration crisis in news bulletins on both channels. This is one of the limitations of this study, as I did not examine discussion or feature programmes, which could have revealed a different picture.

The importance of values

The topic of study is timely since in summer 2015 the EU summit in Brussels took a decision to promote ‘European values’. Human rights, respect for human life, peace and democracy score most highly as the most shared values in opinion polls in the EU conducted by the European Commission.⁴ I also consider tolerance as a ‘European value’, even if intolerance is on the rise among European states, since tolerance and respect for diversity are promoted as core values by the European Union.⁵

Standard Eurobarometer included in the list of values human rights, respect for human life, peace, democracy, individual freedom; the rule of law, equality; solidarity, support

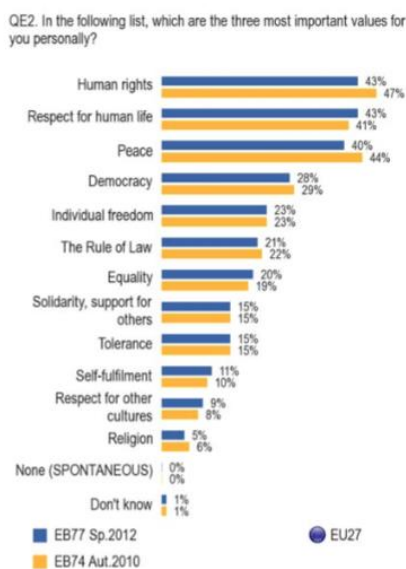
³ Torossian, R. ‘Russia is Winning Information War’, *The Observer*, 31 May 2016. Available at: <http://observer.com/2016/05/russia-is-winning-the-information-war/>

⁴ European Commission, *The Values of Europeans*, Standard Eurobarometer report 77, Spring 2012, available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb77/eb77_value_en.pdf

⁵ European Parliamentary Research Blog, *Promoting Tolerance in the EU*, available at: <https://epthinktank.eu/2015/11/16/promoting-tolerance-in-the-eu/>.

for others; tolerance; self-fulfilment; respect for other cultures and religion.⁶ (See Figure 1)

Figure 1: Values in the EU



Source: Most important issues in EU, Eurobarometer survey 77, 2012

A more recent survey of concerns for European citizens showed immigration as the main cause of concern across the EU as a whole. (See Figure 2) Close to half of Europeans see immigration as one of the two most important issues facing the EU (48%);⁷ however, this item has lost 10 percentage points since the previous survey of autumn 2015 (admittedly after a 20-point increase between spring and autumn 2015).⁸

The feeling that immigrants contribute a lot to their host country is shared by 49% of respondents, while 43% disagree. It has gained significant ground since the EB survey of spring 2008 and has even become the majority opinion in 12 Member States. It is particularly strong in Sweden (89%, of whom 40% ‘totally agree’), Luxembourg (77%) and Portugal (66%). And yet tolerance as a value scored only 15%.⁹ It is being tested in particular by the current migration crisis, and thus represents the soft underbelly of

⁶ European Commission, *The Values of Europeans*, Standard Eurobarometer report 77, Spring 2012. Available at http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb77/eb77_value_en.pdf

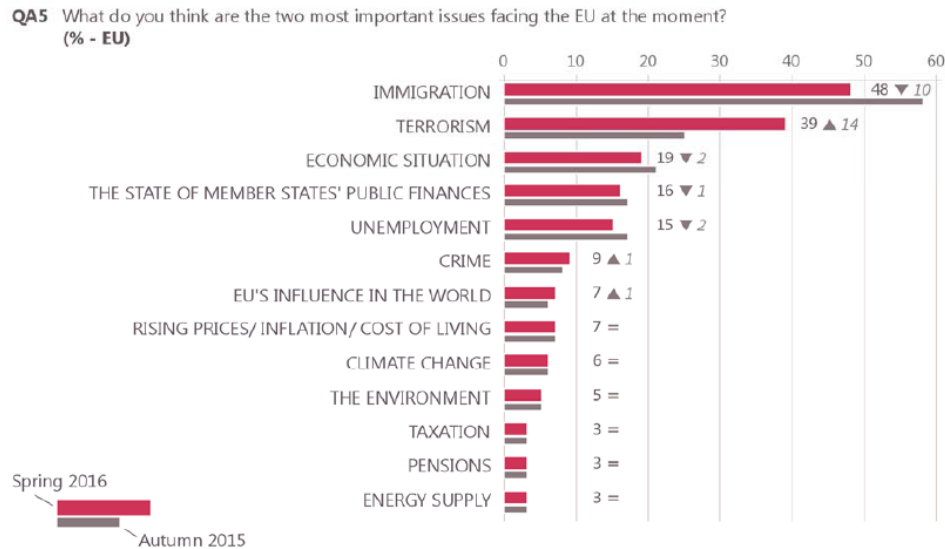
⁷ European Commission, *Life in the European Union*, Eurobarometer report, 31 May 2016, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/COMMFrontOffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/instruments/STANDARD/surveyKy/2130>

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

the European core value system. This low-salience value can be weakened more easily by external influences.

Figure 2: Main concerns of Europeans



Source: Eurobarometer survey 85, Spring 2016

The working hypothesis for this paper is that the Russian authorities use TV instrumentally as a non-coercive means of statecraft to project power. This is done through influencing domestic and international opinion to encourage conformity with dominant agendas of the Russian government **and question the values, which Europe puts forward as its own**. I seek to explain the difference between the messages about the European migration crisis conveyed by RT and First Channel by placing this in wider framework of variation between Russian domestic policy and foreign policy agendas and therefore strategies. More specifically the discourse and techniques to encourage domestic political consolidation and the themes considered effective for that goal vary notably from the TV messaging in foreign states which Moscow hopes will be effective in advancing certain core foreign policy objectives For the latter I investigate how far RT messages and techniques are aimed at undermining the legitimacy of political structures in European countries **and their values**, their authorities and politicians, and the legitimacy of the EU as an institution.

This paper addresses the strategies used by Russian TV channels by an examination of ‘framing’, i.e. the ideological packaging of news to promote or exclude specific interpretations. News items about the migration crisis in Europe are considered on the level of performativity - that is consideration of what a given utterance “does” rather

than what it “states”.¹⁰ I also explore the argument that the Russian authorities have discovered ways to leverage and subvert the openness of democracies by injecting disinformation into the global information space.¹¹

In Chapter 2 I place my study in a theoretical framework, building on the studies of framing and previous research on Russian television.

In Chapter 3 I consider the position of news items on migration in the news cast and the time allocated to cover migration issues in the news. I analyze the use of the dominant frame of the portrayal of migrants as a threat. I go beyond communication theories, which were created in the era of dominance of print journalism and thus concentrated on textual analysis. I consider visual and audio (i.e. non-verbal) mechanisms of constructing reality in Russian TV broadcasts, concentrating on the differences between those for international and domestic audiences.

In Chapter 4 I address a second frame present in news pieces about the migration crisis – chaos in Europe and the inability of the authorities (at various levels, from local to EU) to cope with it.

In Chapter 5 the third dominant frame is discussed, that of the Western authorities and societies demonstrating flaws in Western democracy.

In Chapter 6 I consider whether the use of dominant frames can be linked with propaganda.

¹⁰ Hutchings, S. and Tolz, V. *Nation, Ethnicity and Race on Russian Television*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2015.

¹¹ Pomerantsev P. and Weiss, M. ‘The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponises Information, Culture and Money’, *The Interpreter Magazine*: Institute of Modern Russia, 2015, available at <http://www.interpretermag.com/the-menace-of-unreality-how-the-kremlin-weaponizes-information-culture-and-money/>

Chapter 2. The Framing of issues on Russian TV

Framing, defined as ‘the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation’,¹² is particularly relevant for this study as it indicates deliberate selection, i.e. it can be linked to attempts to put across a certain message expedient to the Russian authorities. As Entman points out, ‘to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.’¹³

Entman suggests that framing should be combined with content analysis, which it enhances. ‘The major task of determining textual meaning should be to identify and describe frames; content analysis informed by a theory of framing would avoid treating all negative or positive terms or utterances as equally salient and influential.’¹⁴ Framing refers to the way that an argument is packaged (i.e. what the argument includes and what it leaves out), so as to make accessible and encourage a particular interpretation of a given issue.¹⁵

Framing has been studied in the context of media influence on voter behaviour, and in particular how frames can influence attitudes¹⁶ and voting choices.¹⁷

The process through which framing works, has been defined as priming. Frames introduce or raise the salience or apparent importance of certain ideas, activating schemas that encourage target audiences to think, feel, and decide in a particular way.¹⁸ Among the functions of framing is agenda setting, i.e. the definition of problems worthy of public and government attention.¹⁹ Entman uses the term ‘strategic’ to define framing, ‘to highlight the causes of problems, to encourage moral judgments (and associated affective responses), and to promote favoured policies. Priming, then, is a

¹² Entman, R. ‘Framing Bias. Media and the distribution of power’, *Journal of Communication*, No. 57, 2007, pp. 163-173.

¹³ Entman, R. ‘Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm’, *Journal of Communication* 43(4), 1993, pp. 51-58.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Entman, R., 2007; See also Gross, K. and D’Ambrosio, L. ‘Framing Emotional Response’, *Political Psychology*, 2004, Vol.25(1), pp.1-29; Fryberg, S., Stephens, N., Covarrubias, R., Markus, H., Carter, E., Laiduc, G., Salido, A. ‘How the Media Frames the Immigration Debate: The Critical Role of Location and Politics’, *Analyses Of Social Issues And Public Policy*, Dec. 2012, Vol.12(1), pp. 96-112.

¹⁶ Domke, D., ‘The Press, Race Relations and Social Change’, *Journal of Communication*, 2001, Vol.51(2), pp.317-344; McLeod D. and Detenber, B., ‘Framing effects of television news coverage of social protest’, *Journal of Communication*, 1999, Vol.49(3), pp.3-23.

¹⁷ Iyengar, S., Kinder, D., Peters, M. and Krosnick, J. ‘The evening news and presidential evaluations’, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1984, Vol.46(4), pp.778-787.

¹⁸ Gross, K. and D’Ambrosio L., *Op. cit.*; Kim, S.-H., Scheufele, D. and Shanahan, J. ‘Think about it This Way: Attribute Agenda-Setting Function of the Press and the Public’s Evaluation of a Local Issue’, *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, March 2002, Vol.79 (1), pp.7-25.

¹⁹ Robert Entman, 2007, *Op.cit.*

name for the goal, the intended effect, of strategic actors' framing activities.²⁰

Framing and agenda setting have been scrutinised by a number of researchers in the context of the media and elections.²¹ Since the material of Russian TV broadcasts aims to present Russia in a positive light, to convey the Russian perspective on world events (in the case of RT), or to influence audiences domestically, there is a certain similarity in the intent of these broadcasts with partisan news during election campaigns.

While analyzing how Russian TV frames the migration crisis in Europe and contests tolerance towards migrants, it is beneficial to look at the process of communication as part of a three-part model: intent - content - audience. The intent in the model would be the desire of the Russian authorities to convey certain kinds of messages and to create a certain reality for different audiences.

The intent in this model can be partially understood through analysis of political discourse, which contains messages disparaging European states' ability to cope with the migration crisis. The issue of migration and of the appropriate means to tackle migration is one of the core comparisons the Russian authorities make between their own policies and those of the West. Migration is an issue of concern also to the Russian authorities. In more recent statements, President Putin has warned that Russia could be confronted with a crisis not dissimilar to the migration crisis in Europe. "We witness the serious consequences of a practically uncontrollable stream of migrants from the Middle East, North Africa and Afghanistan. Here is the peak of crime, national and religions conflicts and social tension"²², Putin claimed at a Security Council meeting in March 2016.

Earlier in September 2015, at a press conference with journalists, he blamed the EU and the US for the migration crisis affecting Europe, 'I warned repeatedly of large scale problems, if Russia's "so-called Western partners" continue to carry out erroneous policies especially in Muslim regions of the world.'²³ Putin linked the migration crisis in Europe not just with attempts to solve the demographic crisis, through inferior means in his opinion, but also with attempts to spread democracy in the Middle East.²⁴ Thus the inability or ineptitude of the authorities in European countries allow the Russian government to disparage democratic efforts abroad. Putin called on Western governments instead to join the Russian fight with terrorism and extremism, warning

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ McCombs, M. 'A Look at Agenda-setting: Past, Present and Future', *Journalism Studies*, November 2005, Vol.6 (4), p.543-557.

²² President Putin's meeting with the press, 4 September 2014, available at <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50234>

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Nougayarede, N. 'Putin's Long Game has Been Revealed, and the Omens are Bad for Europe', *The Guardian*, 18 March 2016. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/18/putin-long-game-omens-europe-russia>

that ‘if we act separately and argue between ourselves about quasi-democratic principles and procedures on some territories, this would lead us to an even worse dead end.’²⁵

Although this message is clear and the superiority of Russian policy is implied, it is important to keep in mind nuances and even contradictions in this Russian state-driven media output, since many Russians feel themselves as European and are not opposed to the values criticized in their media.²⁶

The intent of the media messages on First Channel is defined by the Russian government’s media policy and by the attitudes of journalists. During the last term of Putin’s rule, the Russian domestic media came under almost total government control and RT, although formally part of an NGO, is financed by the state. The intent is thus also defined by government priorities. But these priorities in the domestic and international arenas are different, and this could be one of the explanations for the difference in coverage. The intent part of the model also links it with the issue of propaganda and deliberate influence of audiences discussed in chapter 6 of this paper.

The content of the two channels under consideration here, RT and First Channel, is also determined by the media environment, which includes regulation, ownership and journalistic norms. As Oates point out, ‘this content ...in turn is presented to an audience’. The audience then reacts to the material, showing varying degrees of attention, interest, comprehension, trust and reaction.²⁷ These three elements of the model - intent, content and audience - facilitate ‘decoding television content ... not only the word but also the images, the framing, the representation style and even the tone of the announcer can be important’.²⁸

Previous research on the Russian media relevant to this study indicate similarities between the current Russian media environment and that in the USSR. One of the similarities is that of the attitudes of journalists. According to Oates, ‘Russian media now would seem to have more in common with the Soviet regime than a Westernized media system. There appears to be neither a sense of social responsibility nor libertarianism; rather the media are deployed in support of the causes of those who support and fund them.’²⁹ The attitudes of Russian journalists to their work also influence the first part of this model, the intent. Research on the attitudes of Russian journalists, although conducted a decade ago, showed that ‘a vast majority see their

²⁵ President Putin’s meeting with the press, 4 September 2014; <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/news/50234>

²⁶ Neumann, I., *Russia and the Idea of Europe: a Study in Identity and International Relations*, London, 1995; See also Headley, J. ‘Is Russia Out of Step with European Norms? Assessing Russia’s Relationship to European Identity, Values and Norms Through the Issue of Self-Determination’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, May 2012, Vol. 64 (3), pp. 427-447.

²⁷ Oates, S. *Television, Democracy and Elections in Russia*, London: Routledge, 2006, p. 7.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 16

main aim not as serving society or revealing the truth, but as expressing the views of their paymaster'.³⁰ Apart from providing entertainment, domestically Russian television has become a tool for the inculcation of the population as it was in the Soviet Union. The essential goal is the same (as in Soviet times): 'both the Russian authorities and Russian journalists accept that the media should be players in the political game, rather than society at large.'³¹

In another study, significant for the analysis of the domestic media environment in Russia, Tina Burrett concludes that 'the autonomy of the non-state-owned television media in Russia has been undermined by four significant factors: a lack of public condemnation of the state's encroachment on media autonomy; divisions within the Russian journalistic community over accommodation with President Putin; the failure of Russia's major opposition parties to oppose Putin's policy toward the media; and the dependence of Russia's business elites on good relations with the state, and in particular with the presidential administration.'³²

The importance of TV in this political game is linked to the fact that, as opinion polls suggest, Russians still get most of their news from television despite the prevalence of the internet, which they access mostly to connect with people rather than for news. The trust in TV news continues to be high. The Levada Centre reports that 56% (October 2016 data; a decline from 61% in July 2016) of Russians would trust TV as a source of news, while 37 % would trust internet publications.³³

TV news brings not just news, but some solace also. According to research done in Russia with focus groups, 'many Russian viewers appear to like state-run television, primarily because it does not tell the complete truth about the problems facing Russian society. Many Russian viewers prefer that television presents them with a positive image of their country, so that Russia can begin to rebuild from the economic and political chaos of the past decade.'³⁴ As Oates points out, 'many Russian viewers said that they seek solace and comfort from television in times of national crisis, especially after terrorist attacks in Russia.'³⁵ Studying Russian TV pre-election coverage, Oates found that the news programme on state run First Channel is 'particularly biased, devoting inordinately large amounts of coverage to those already in power, as well as

³⁰ Pasti, S., 'Two Generations of Russian journalists', *European Journal of Communication*, Jan. 2005, Vol. 20 (1), pp.89-115.

³¹ Oates, S., *Op.cit.*, p.19.

³² Tina Burrett, 'The End of Independent television?' In: Beumers, B., Hutchings, S. and Rulyova, N. *The Post-Soviet Russian Media: Conflicting Signals*. London and New York: Routledge, 2009, pp. 71-86.

³³ Levada Centre poll, 18 November 2016, 'Russians believe TV less'. Available at <http://www.levada.ru/2016/11/18/rossiyane-stali-menshe-doveryat-televideniyu/>

³⁴ Oates, S., 2006, *Television, Democracy and Elections in Russia*, London: Routledge, 2006, p. 17.

³⁵ Oates, S. 'Framing Fear: Findings from a Study of Election News and Terrorist Threat in Russia', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 2, March 2006, 281 – 290.

those deemed friendly to the Kremlin's interests. Those who challenge the Kremlin are either ignored or denigrated by unfair reporting, rumour and innuendo'.³⁶

Previous study of ethnicity, race and nationhood focused on Russian internal state-aligned channels.³⁷ The authors approach Russian TV as a 'consensus management tool', and this indicates how Russian TV's approaches to ethnicity relate to attempts by the leadership to 'forge a sense of belonging' among its citizens.³⁸ However, it is important to see this goal as not entirely benign. We need to question the kind of sense of belonging that is being forged.

In any case, the way Russian TV portrays the European migration crisis facilitates the forging of a Russian identity understood as distinct from the identity of European countries, on the one hand, and from the 'ethnic other',³⁹ i.e. migrants, on the other hand. Some 20% of the Russian population is composed of Muslims, and Islam is one of the main officially recognized religions in Russia. Yet Muslim refugees are repeatedly perceived as 'the other'. Considering the portrayal of the migration crisis by the domestic First Channel, it is important to consider Russia's own challenges in integrating ethnic minorities and its reliance on the workforce of former Soviet republics.

Russian TV Channels Considered

In this paper I explore how RT and the most popular Russian TV channel, Pervyi Kanal, First Channel (FC), frame their reports on the migration crisis in Europe. The differences in and between the news broadcasts by these two channels are explored and explained.

The First Channel is one of the oldest TV channels in Russia, founded in 1955. 51% of its shares belong to the state, the rest to private investors. It is the most popular TV channel in Russia.⁴⁰ FC's viewing figures in Russia reach over 20 million per week. It also is available on subscription abroad,⁴¹ but its main audiences are domestic.

RT was established in 2005, initially as an English language international news broadcaster. Later it started broadcasting on cable and satellite throughout Europe, Africa, the US and parts of Asia, as well as the former Soviet Union and Russia. It broadcasts in English, Spanish and Arabic with web sites in French and German. It is ostensibly run by a non-profit organisation 'TV Novosti', which however gets its

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Hutchings, S. and Tolz, V. *Nation, Ethnicity and Race on Russian Television*, 2015.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁰ Channel 1 website is available at <http://www.1tv.ru/about/channel>

⁴¹ International Channel 1 website is available at <http://www.1tv.com/about>

funding from the state. RT claims 70 million viewers a week in the UK⁴². However, these extremely high figures cannot be confirmed and appear greatly exaggerated. The Broadcasters' Audience Research Board, the industry body that measures television ratings in the UK, reports that the RT's weekly reach in the UK is 744,000.⁴³ In 2016 the spending on RT constituted US\$239m.⁴⁴

The significant spending on RT has been interpreted as evidence of 'the increasing importance the Kremlin attaches to its international media operations.'⁴⁵ In 2015 it accounted for 34% of total central government media spending, compared to 25% in the previous year.⁴⁶ Researchers indicate a certain contradiction in RT's identity. 'On one hand, Russia Today is supposed to compete with Xinhua and Al Jazeera,' said Masha Lipman, an analyst with the Moscow Carnegie Center. "On the other hand, it has to show a positive image of Russia, and, if you're competing with Al Jazeera, this second function gets in the way." In other words, to compete in the global news arena, even against outlets with a clear point of view, you need to be taken seriously.⁴⁷

It has been claimed that Russia is conducting a thoroughly ideological campaign through its media.⁴⁸ However, this campaign is more nuanced than the war of ideologies during the Cold War.⁴⁹ From the beginnings of the RT channel in 2005, when the Russian information security doctrine set the objective of promoting a new image of Russia abroad,⁵⁰ it became instead an attempt to show that Russia is not the only flawed state: the West's flaws, it claimed, are even worse.⁵¹ The media regulating body Ofcom has reprimanded RT during the last two years over a variety of issues: the coverage of Ukraine and Syria, fracking and most recently the claims of Kurdish genocide in Turkey.⁵² In total, since RT started broadcasting in the UK, Ofcom recorded breaches by RT of UK broadcasting rules 14 times.⁵³

⁴² 'RT Watched by 70 mln Viewers Weekly, Half of Them Weekly – Ipsos survey', RT report 10 March 2016. Available at: <https://www.rt.com/news/335123-rt-viewership-ipsos-study/>

⁴³ Broadcasters' Audience Research Board (BARB) Weekly viewing figures, week October 31 – November 6 2016, available at <http://www.barb.co.uk/viewing-data/weekly-viewing-summary/>

⁴⁴ RT watched by 70 mln viewers weekly, half of them weekly – Ipsos survey', RT report 10 March 2016. Available at: <https://www.rt.com/news/335123-rt-viewership-ipsos-study/>

⁴⁵ Ennis, S. 'Russia in 'Information War' with the West to Win Hearts and Minds, *BBC News*, 16 Sept. 2016. Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34248178>

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Quoted in Ioffe, J. 'What is Russia Today? A Kremlin Propaganda Outlet Has an Identity Crisis', *Columbia Journalism Review* 49 (2010), 3, 44-49.

⁴⁸ Pomerantsev, P. and Weiss, M. *Op.cit.*

⁴⁹ Legvold, R. *Return to Cold War*, Cambridge: Polity, 2016.

⁵⁰ Yablokov, I. 'Conspiracy Theories as a Russian Public Diplomacy Tool: The Case of Russia Today (RT)' *Politics*, 2015, Vol. 35(3-4), pp. 301-315.

⁵¹ Ostrovsky, A. 'What's in the News: Dealing with the Russian 'Pariah'. Series What's in the news. A public discussion at Oxford University, 20 October 2016.

⁵² *Ofcom Broadcast Bulletin*, Issue 288, 21 September 2015. Available at: https://www.ofcom.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/50507/issue_288.pdf

⁵³ UK Parliament Report, *UK Policy Towards Russia*, 28 February 2017, available at https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcaff/120/12008.htm#_idT_extAnchor057

The Editor in Chief of RT Margarita Simonyan defined the task of RT as to give ‘Russia a new voice of its own, which would tell about the country to people who do not speak Russian’ and to reflect the Russian position on world events⁵⁴. In her later statements she became more specific and stressed (although denying that she is ‘a bureaucrat’) that RT ‘is financed by the state and aims at projecting the state’s position abroad.’⁵⁵ This study concentrates on this second part of RT’s remit. I consider whether there may be an intention to influence European policy towards migrants or undermine the values of tolerance, democracy and the rule of law. In November 2016 the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning Russian propaganda.⁵⁶ However in the recent Parliamentary hearing RT and the Russian state news organisation Sputnik representatives insisted that they provide fact-based analysis.⁵⁷ Is this really the case, or are we being unfair on Russian media outlets?

The intent in the case of RT is to portray Russia and to express Russian views on the world.⁵⁸ It has become customary to link RT with soft power.⁵⁹ However numerous problems with the term ‘soft power’ have been pointed out, including the lack of any tangible criteria to describe it.⁶⁰ Instead it is justified to place RT in the context of Russia’s other efforts to co-opt Western public opinion. Annual Valdai Club meetings and the establishment of ‘Russky mir’ centres in the UK are among those efforts. ‘Russky mir’ centres have been established throughout the world not only to promote Russian language and culture, but also to promote a certain view of the world⁶¹, based on traditional values mixed with elements of nostalgia for the Soviet ideology. According to the witness evidence provided to the July 2016 UK Defence Committee report on Russia,⁶² ‘the fundamental and overall objective of Russia’s media offensive

⁵⁴ Simonyan, M. ‘I am not a PR manager of my country. Interview.’ *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 25 September 2008., available at <http://www.mk.ru/editions/daily/article/2008/09/25/21356-margarita-simonyan-ya-ne-piarmenedzher-stranyi.html>

⁵⁵ Margarita Simonyan’s interview with *Ekho Moskvy*, 20 January 2016. Available at: <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/personalno/1697080-echo/>

⁵⁶ European Parliament, *Resolution of 23 November 2016 on EU Strategic Communication to Counteract Propaganda against it by Third Parties*, available at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2016-0441+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>

⁵⁷ UK Parliamentary report, United Kingdom’s relations with Russia, 28 February 2017, available at https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmcaff/120/12008.htm#_idTextAnchor059

⁵⁸ Simonyan, M. ‘I am Not a PR Manager of My country. Interview’, *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, 25 September 2008.

⁵⁹ Feklyunina, V. ‘Soft Power and Identity: Russia, Ukraine and the ‘Russian world(s)’’, *European Journal of International Relations*, 24 September 2015.

⁶⁰ Feklyunina, V. ‘Russia’s International Images and Its Energy Policy. An unreliable supplier?’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, 01 May 2012, Vol.64 (3), p.449-469.

⁶¹ Socor, V. ‘Putin Inflates “Russian World”, Claims Protections Rights’, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 2 July 2014; available at <https://jamestown.org/program/putin-inflates-russian-world-identity-claims-protection-rights/>

⁶² *Russia: Implications for UK Defense and Security*, The House of Commons, 5 July 2016; available at <https://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmdfence/107/107.pdf>

in Europe is not only to justify current Russian government priorities or provide a positive gloss on Russian activities – otherwise the established and expected priorities of any state-funded propaganda machine – but, rather, to assist in a broader Russian objective: to undermine the strategic status quo established in Europe at the end of the Cold War.’⁶³

The connection between the Russian media and broader objectives establishes a link between the Russian media and power. Tina Burrett quotes Foucault, who contends that the study of power should not be concerned with power in its central location, but with the mechanisms through which it operates (Foucault 1986, 232), and indicates that TV is one of the mechanisms through which power operates.⁶⁴ Russian TV, funded by the state or those loyal to the state, is used to exert power, however soft or hard, both internally and externally. Television remains a powerful information tool today. Even in the digital age, where more and more people consume news through their mobiles and the internet, despite a decline in numbers TV remains a significant source of news globally.⁶⁵ RT has a significant presence not just as a TV channel, but is also prominent in digital space, particularly on YouTube.⁶⁶

RT operates in the international media space, and positions itself as an alternative to Anglo-Saxon channels.⁶⁷ While internally “Television tends to favour those already in power”⁶⁸, internationally RT appeals to both right and left wing sectors of the population.

There are only a few studies of RT published. In one of them, Nils Borchers scrutinized the portrayal of Russian-Baltic relations in the RT TV show *Spotlight*.⁶⁹ He considers RT as a tool for Russian mediated public diplomacy, and claims that ‘RT tries to become an influential actor in public debates, thus to influence the public opinion and eventually the decision making of democratic governments and some transnational institutions like the European Union or the Council of Europe’. Ultimately, according

⁶³ Nemmo, B. and Eyal, J. ‘Russian Information Warfare – Airbrushing Reality’, written evidence to the UK Parliament Defense Committee report, July 2016, available at <http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/defence-committee/russia-implications-for-uk-defence-and-security/written/30408.html>.

⁶⁴ Borchers, N. ‘Do You Really Think Russia Should Pay Up for That? How the Russia-Based TV Channel RT Constructs Russian-Baltic Relations’, *Javnost, The Public Journal of the European Institute for Communication and Culture*, 01 January 2011, Vol.18(4), p. 89-106.

⁶⁵ Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, *Digital News Report 2016*, available at <http://digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2016/overview-key-findings-2016/>

⁶⁶ The reliability of multi-billion viewership figures on YouTube are questionable. McArthy, R., ‘How Russia Today Reached One Billion Users on YouTube’, 4 June 2013, available at <https://www.journalism.co.uk/news/how-russia-today-reached-one-billion-views-on-youtube/s2/a553152/>

⁶⁷ Vesti FM, Interview with Margarita Simonyan, 2 June 2016, available at http://radiovesti.ru/article/show/article_id/197980

⁶⁸ Oates, 2006, *Television, Democracy and Elections in Russia*, p. 192.

⁶⁹ Borchers, N. *Op.cit.*

to the author, this may contribute to the achievement of Russian foreign policy objectives.⁷⁰

Borchers singles out several RT strategies of constructing reality, which are relevant for this study. Among them is ‘the claim of the factuality of assertions’. They are presented as true descriptions of how the world is. This is usually done by stating contingent interpretations simply as facts.⁷¹ An example of such contingent interpretation as fact, in my study, would be drawing conclusions about Western societies as chaotic (see below) and undemocratic based on reports about the migration crisis. Borschers also considered how the credibility of certain assertions is either enhanced or reduced in RT coverage. For example, ‘visual images and eye-witnesses could be employed to either enhance or undermine credibility, including what seems like scientific facts and eye-witnesses’.⁷² Borschers also discusses ways of guiding a conversation to suit the constructed reality.

Ilya Yablokov focused on conspiracy theories in RT coverage and how they are utilised by RT in its attempt to attract both left-wing and right-wing global audiences. It is not his technique of analysis that is of value for this study, but a more general approach. Yablokov argues that the conspiratorial component of RT broadcasting has been a powerful tool to construct Russia’s image as a leader of global resistance to US dominance.⁷³

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Yablokov, I. ‘Conspiracy Theories as a Russian Public Diplomacy Tool: The Case of *Russia Today (RT)*’, *Politics*, 2015 vol. 35(3-4), pp. 301–315.

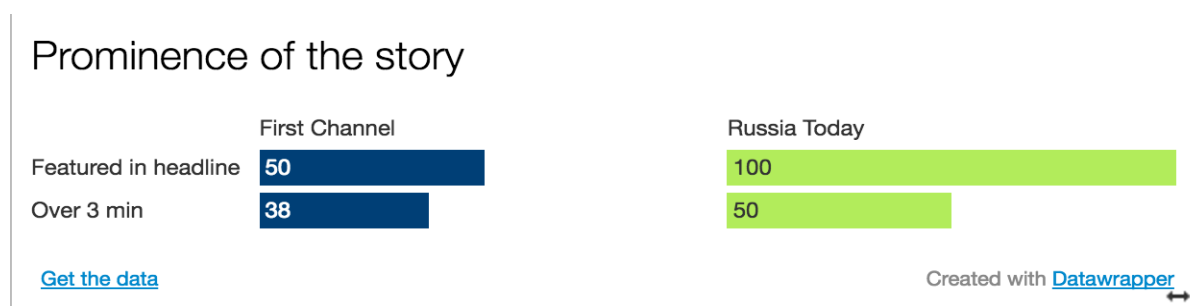
Chapter 3. The prominence of migration stories. Frame 1: Migrants as a threat.

I used content analysis in this study mainly to ascertain the presence of three frames in the news bulletins: migrants as a threat; the migration crisis as leading to chaos or lack of control; and flaws in democracy/corruption. The choice of these three frames become apparent on even a cursory examination of news bulletins containing reports about migration crisis in Europe. Coding allowed me to draw conclusions about the degree to which this was the case (see coding sheet in Appendix). I singled out 22 TV news reports on two channels, which deal with the migration crisis in Europe. To assess coder reliability, these reports were independently coded by a second coder. The coding results matched in 83% of the data analysed.

The three frames correlate with a number of values that score highly in the Eurobarometer polls. The presentation of migrants as a threat, for example, contravenes human rights, tolerance, solidarity and support to others, and respect for other cultures. The frame depicting flaws in democracy and corruption contradicts democracy as a value in Europe, as well as human rights and the rule of law. The presentation of the migration crisis as leading to chaos and migrants as undermining order does not directly link to any of the values listed by Eurobarometer. I will consider if the emphasis on order as opposed to the values seen as significant in EU countries, could represent a claim for an alternative value which has become central to the Russian authorities.

Stories about the migration crisis in Europe found their way into the news bulletin headlines (thus reflecting their significance) in half of the news bulletins on FC, while on RT they always featured in the headlines (see Figure 3). The length of the pieces reflected their significance too. Approximately half of the news reports on the European migration crisis were more than three minutes long on RT, while 38% of these news reports were of that length on FC.

Figure 3.

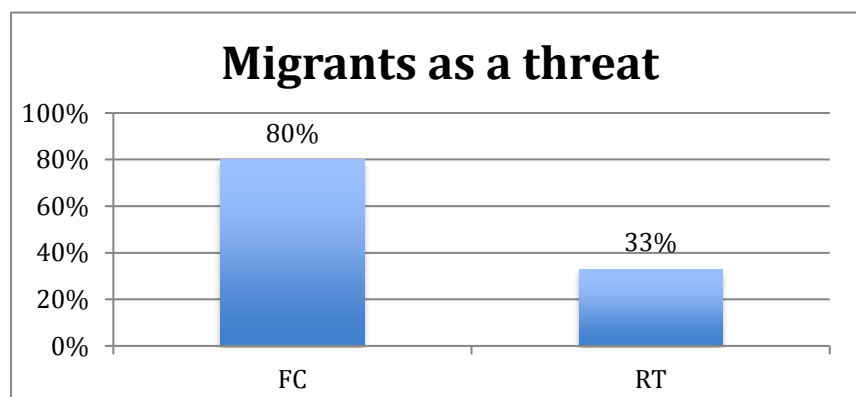


This difference in prominence can be explained by the differing demands and interests

of the audiences. For the international audiences of RT, the migration crisis in Europe is of more immediate concern. It has become a testing period for European governments, often revealing difficulties and shortcomings. Russia openly supports examples of both right-wing and left-wing parties in Europe. As Schwarz points out, ‘In Germany, for instance, Russia has cozied up not only to the far-right AfD party, but also to the extreme left wing party, Die Linke.’⁷⁴ Russia’s support for Marine Le Pen’s Front National is well reported. Thus it is not surprising that Russian state-sponsored TV channels highlight the migration issue to consolidate the claims of the right-wing electorate about the inability of incumbent regimes to cope with the crisis. On the domestic channel FC, however, these stories are less prominent: the crisis in Europe is less relevant for the Russian audience.

The portrayal of migrants as a threat validates the Russian governments’ decision not to allow refugees from Syria into the country⁷⁵. The occurrence of this frame in FC reports is much more frequent, in 80% of the sample, while RT news reports contained this frame only in 33% of the sample. (See Figure 4)

Figure 4.

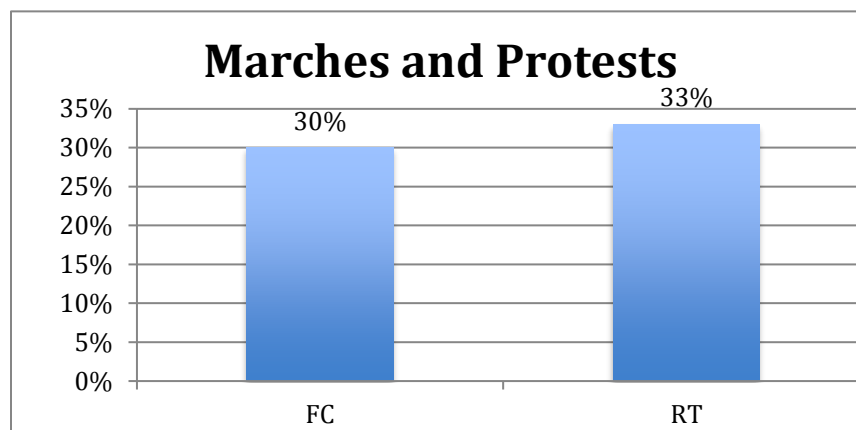


Migrants’ presence in Europe is linked by Russian TV to the destruction of social cohesion. The migration crisis is portrayed by both channels as leading to marches and protest. 30% of FC reports on the migration crisis highlighted such protests, while for RT this figure was 33%. (See Figure 5)

⁷⁴ Schwarz, Y. ‘Putin’s Throwback Propaganda Playbook’, *Columbia Journalism Review*, 18 January 2017; available at http://www.cjr.org/special_report/putin_russia_propaganda_trump.php

⁷⁵ ‘Russia: Failing to do Fair Share to Help Syrian Refugees’, *Human Rights Watch press release*, 14 September 2016, available at <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/09/14/russia-failing-do-fair-share-help-syrian-refugees>

Figure 5.



For RT the message of migrants presenting a threat is toned down, but still it plays on anxieties about immigration. This also fosters underlying populist attitudes in Europe (from France to Austria and Italy) towards Middle Eastern migrants. However, RT's audiences (as compared to FC's Russian audiences) are more mixed, and this TV channel operates in a different regulatory environment.

This frame of migrants as a threat is present in Western media reports, especially in right-wing publications, and migrants are also presented as 'the threatening other' by the Western media. And this is a tendency, which existed before the current crisis⁷⁶ and continues today⁷⁷. A report by the Ethical Journalism network is probably the most comprehensive account of the problems in covering migration issues throughout the world.⁷⁸

The reports containing this frame on Russian television employ certain techniques, which may give us an insight into the 'intent'. They frequently contain generalizations about the character of the Western authorities. To draw an example, on 11 October 2016 the 15:00 FC news bulletin focused on an anti-migrant protest. 'The reason for the mass demonstration was the detainment of a Syrian, who.... was planning a terrorist act in Berlin airport Tegel.' It tells us that 'Germans called Angela Merkel a betrayer

⁷⁶ Giacomella, G. *Media and migrations*, Reuters Institute Journalist Fellow paper, 2010, available at <http://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/publication/media-and-migrations>

⁷⁷ Sumuvuori et al, *Op.cit.* See also Berry, M., Garcia-Blanco, I., Moore, K., 'Press Coverage of the Refugee and Migrant Crisis in the EU: A Content Analysis of Five European Countries', *Report by Cardiff University for UN HCR*, December 2015, available at http://www.media-diversity.org/en/additional-files/UNHCR_Cardiff_University_Report_on_EU_Press_Migrants_Coverage_201415.pdf
See also: *Migration crisis' in the media: Making or Reflecting a Crisis?* LSE Media project, POLIS, 2016; available at <http://www.lse.ac.uk/media@lse/research/Media-and-Migration/MM-POLIS16.pdf>

⁷⁸ *Moving Stories. International Review of how Media Covers Migration*, Ethical Journalism Network report, available at <http://ethicaljournalismnetwork.org/moving-stories-international-review-of-how-media-cover-migration>

of German interests'. This is a short report, which demonstrates a pattern, repeated again and again in the bulletins studied here - of taking an incident involving a migrant, and then drawing a conclusion, usually negative, about an incumbent government, here that of Angela Merkel.

In common with some right-wing Western media, migrants are portrayed visually often as congregating in the dark or as dark hooded figures, as on the 9am news bulletin from the FC report of 24.10.16 (see images below). The imagery of migrants as dirty, dark, promiscuous and linked with disorder fits with this perceived threat of 'the other'.

Examples of migrants' portrayal



Source: FC news bulletin 17:00, 24.10.2016

A similar portrayal of the threat from migrants can be found in a number of RT bulletins. For example, on October 22 2016 , RT's 12 (midday) news bulletin contained a typical

portrayal of migrants, where piles of rubbish are shown several times, in an aerial view at the start of the piece, followed by further pictures of discarded rubbish and personal belongings.

Besides the use of generalisations, one of the main features of the migration crisis coverage is the multiple use of the same message in one report, through the introduction to the piece in the studio, in the correspondent's script, in the language of interviewees and the graphics. Repetition of the same message has been singled out as one of the main features of modern Russian propaganda.⁷⁹ 'When people are less interested in a topic, they are more likely to accept familiarity brought about by repetition as an indicator that the information (repeated to the point of familiarity) is correct.'⁸⁰

To give an example, on 11 June 2016, 12 days before the Brexit vote, in its 12am bulletin RT headlines one of its pieces in the news bulletin, referring to refugee efforts to reach the UK, as 'Refugees risk their lives crossing in small boats raising the fear of a repeat of the refugee situation in the Mediterranean where thousands have died.' This theme of the threat and vulnerability of the British coast is reinforced several times in the report. It contains a clip of the President of the Calais coastguard, Bernard Barron. 'It is starting to become very similar to the situation to that in the Mediterranean, Greece or Italy, it is beginning to be repeated in the Channel,' he says. This is an obvious exaggeration, as the number of those trying to cross the English Channel is nowhere near the tens of thousands that have crossed the Mediterranean. A similar exaggeration is used in the line under the picture, 'Smugglers channel', reinforcing the image of threat and vulnerability. The same message is repeated later in another line, 'Migrants try to reach the UK in boats, raise concerns over border vulnerability'.

The impression in this news piece is that Britain is on high alert watching for illegal migrants, with the correspondent claiming that 'more than two thousand volunteers just like them are watching from 51 specially equipped stations around the UK coast'. However in an almost comical turn, the migrants who are interviewed are not those mostly involved in the current migration crisis. They are Albanians, as we learn from the report, 'This month 18 illegal migrants from Albania were rescued from a dingy off the Kent coast. It sparked concerns that the UK coastline is vulnerable to smugglers looking for new ways to get to Britain.'

And the visual images are of a beach, dog walkers and a runner, all peaceful settings to facilitate the referential strata of the message about vulnerability. To compare, an emphasis on vulnerability was also present in the Sky News report aired at the same

⁷⁹ Paul, C., Matthews, M. 'The Russian Firehose of Falsehood' Propaganda Model', *RAND Corporation Report*, 2016; available at http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE198/RAND_PE198.pdf
⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

time⁸¹. However, the concern in the Sky report is not about the numbers and scale of the refugees crossing the Channel, but with a possible repeat of the tragedies in the Mediterranean, i.e. with people crossing in unseaworthy vessels. And it is clear from the report on Sky News that the numbers involved are four people from Iran and a handful of Albanians.

The migration crisis has been portrayed as a threat deserving a military response. In the 12am news bulletin on 24 June, RT ran a headlined report on ‘the EU preparing naval forces to intercept migrants.’ The presenter in the studio, introducing the piece, states that ‘EU naval forces are preparing for possible combat in order to stem the flow of human trafficking from Libya’.

There is some correlation between such portrayal of migrants as a threat in FC bulletins with an earlier study of the portrayal of Russian internal migrants. Tolz and Harding examined the coverage of migration on Russian TV in 2012 and 2013. They discovered anti-Islamic, anti-immigrant rhetoric, which they ascribe to public intellectuals and television personalities, rather than the Kremlin⁸². This in their view was against President Putin’s rhetoric of inclusivity about migrants. They conclude that ‘in the first eighteen months of Putin’s third presidency, contrary to what one would expect, a greater responsibility than before for the ideological directions of the regime was ceded to prominent media figures’.⁸³

Apart from the destruction of social cohesion and the proliferation of protests, the two main types of threat associated with migrants in FC broadcasts are terrorism and sexual assaults, which are portrayed as resulting from migrants’ alleged promiscuity. The link between migrants and the theme of sexual harassment has been detected also in Western print media. These themes in the Western media were combined with human stories of migrants and suffering at home.⁸⁴

The theme of promiscuity and disorderly behaviour by migrants is more prominent in FC coverage than in RT. It was present in approximately 60% of news items on FC, and in 25% of RT coverage of the migration crisis. (See Figure 6)

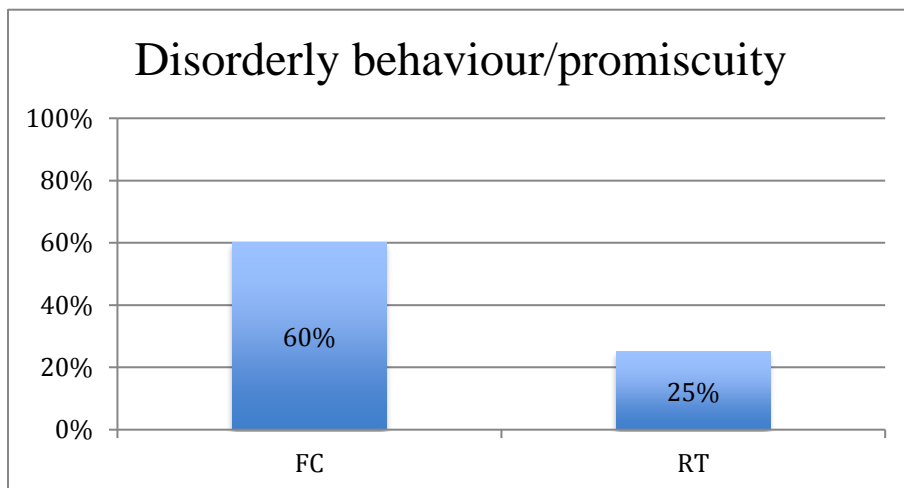
⁸¹ ‘Fears Over Migrants Crossing Channel by Boat’, *Sky News Report*, 29 May 2016, available at <http://news.sky.com/story/fears-over-migrants-crossing-channel-by-boat-10298026>

⁸² Tolz, V. and Harding, S.-A. ‘From “Compatriots” to “Aliens”: The Changing Coverage of Migration on Russian Television’, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 74, Issue 3 July 2015, pp. 452–477

⁸³ *Ibid.*

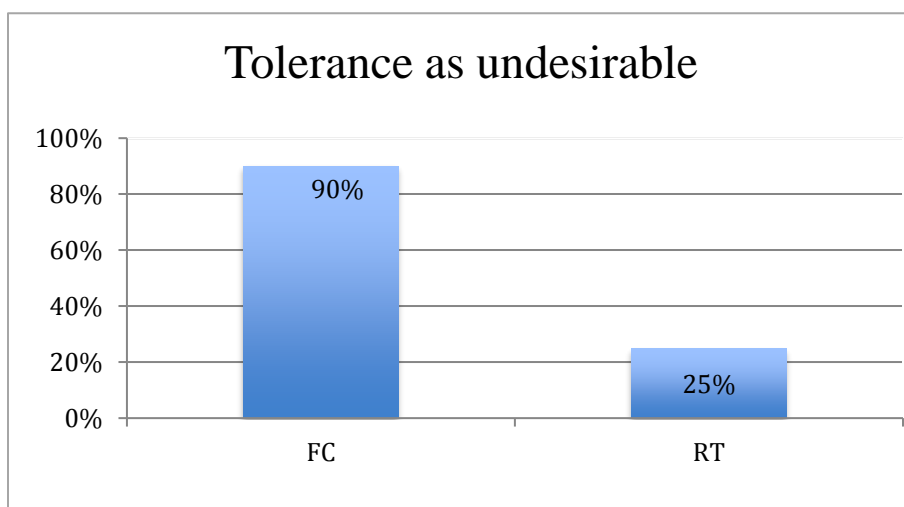
⁸⁴ Sumuvuori, J., Vähäsöyrinki, A., Eerolainen, T., Lindvall, J., Pasternak, R., Mirja Syrjäälä, M. and Talvela, A., ‘Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Press Coverage 2016’, *Finnish Institute Report*, April 2016; available at http://finnishinstitute.cdn.coucouapp.com/media/W1siZiIsIjIwMTYvMDgvMjUvMDkvMzgvMTgvZDMyZWU5OWItNWQ2YS00ODU2LWI1NDEtYzBiYjE4ZmFiYTBlL1JlZnVnZWVzX2FuZF9hc3lscW1fc2Vla2Vyc19pbl9wcmVzc19jb3ZlcmFnZS5wZGYiXV0/Refugees_and_asylum_seekers_in_press_coverage.pdf?sha=7c2adfb5e4c57

Figure 6.



The portrayal of the threats arising from the presence of migrants in Europe correlates somewhat with the portrayal of whether it is desirable to tolerate them. In 90% of the reports under consideration on FC the implication is that tolerance towards migrants is undesirable. These reports often imply that the Western authorities are unable to deal with the migration crisis and exhibit what is portrayed as excessive tolerance. In the case of RT, tolerance of migrants was portrayed as undesirable in 25% of cases. (See Figure 7) Such a difference from the domestic channel and what appears to be a higher degree of tolerance for RT can partly be explained by the media regulatory environment in which RT operates, where the instigation of intolerance could be contravening the law of European states.

Figure 7.



Since the frame of migrants as a threat is present in the Western media, what is specifically Russian in the presentation of this frame? The explanations for the presence

of this frame are Russia-specific. This frame can be used to justify Russia's policy towards refugees from Syria and the wider Middle East. Portraying these kinds of migrants from the Middle East as threatening (as opposed to Russia's 'own' migrants from other states in the former Soviet Union) helps Russia to resist pressure from the West to accept them.⁸⁵ This also reflects public opinion in Russia, where more than half of the population, according to a BBC Global Scan poll, 'strongly disapprove' of Russia accepting Middle Eastern refugees/migrants.⁸⁶

Russian politicians have consistently resorted to a 'civilizational' discourse, promoting the idea of a unique Russian civilization.⁸⁷ The portrayal of migrants as belonging to a different civilization, as the other, comfortably coincides with Russia's claims about its civilizational distinctiveness. Moreover, the portrayal of Middle Eastern migrants as threatening helps to justify Russia's policy in Syria. Its aim is often depicted as keeping threats from approaching Russian borders, as resisting the threatening 'other' from outside Russia. The Russian Ambassador in London stressed that combating terrorism was the main aim of Russia's campaign in Syria.⁸⁸ The Syrian campaign is couched by Russian Orthodox Church as a holy duty.⁸⁹ It should be noted, however, that similar justifications of military action abroad, aimed to avert threats from abroad, have been used previously by Western powers in relation to the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, and more recently by France after the Paris bombings.

The non-CIS migrants are perceived to be 'non-civilised'. Such a portrayal of migrants for Russian audiences appeals to racist and xenophobic attitudes linked to broader civilizational narratives of 'them and us'. The Russian authorities have been presenting the notion of 'us', as people comprising 'Russkiy mir', the Russian world. These are Russian speakers from the former Soviet bloc, who are seen as sharing the same dominant values found in Russia. To promote this notion, the Kremlin has funded the establishment of numerous Russkiy mir centres in Western and other states. Migrants from the non-Orthodox, non-CIS countries are represented as 'the other'.

This frame of migrants as a threat gives Russian channels a tool to generalise about the ineptitude of the Western authorities in dealing with migration. It is present on the

⁸⁵ Klikushin, M., 'When Putin Speaks of Middle Eastern Migrants, He Thinks about Criminal Paedophiles', *Observer*, 11 February 2016, available at <http://observer.com/2016/11/when-putin-speaks-of-middle-east-migrants-he-thinks-about-criminal-paedophiles/>

⁸⁶ 'How come Russians don't want to accept Middle Eastern refugees/migrants in Russia', quora.com, available at <https://www.quora.com/How-come-Russians-don't-want-to-accept-Middle-Eastern-refugees-migrants-in-Russia>

⁸⁷ Linde, F., 'The Civilizational Turn in Russian Political Discourse', *Russian Review*, vol. 75, issue 4, October 2016, pp. 604-625.

⁸⁸ Yakovenko, A., 'Russia Went to Syria to Fight Terrorists. And it is Succeeding', *The Guardian*, 16 October 2016; available at <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/oct/15/syria-russian-ambassador-aleppo-isis>

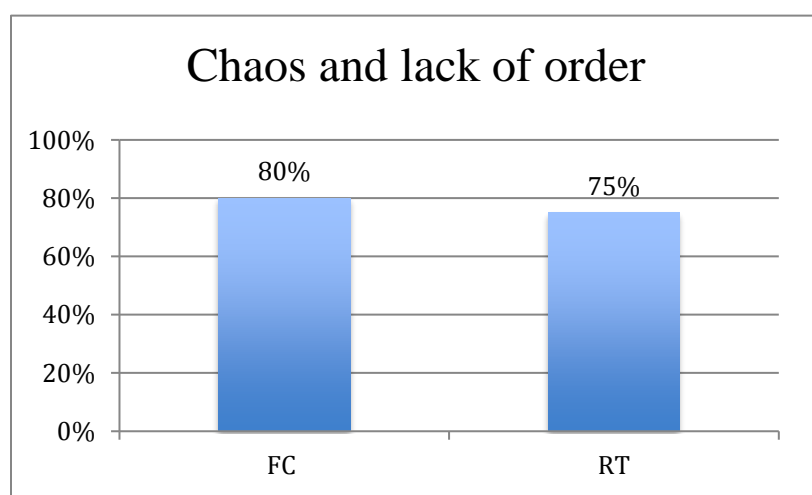
⁸⁹ 'В РПЦ называли священным долгом борьбу с террористами в Сирии', ('Russian Orthodox Church Called the Fight with Terrorists a Holy Duty'), RBC news, 7 October 2015, available at <http://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/56150eff9a7947b9ff31b9e7>

Russian channels without in-depth human stories about the plight of individual migrants or alternative views defending the actions of the Western authorities.

Chapter 4. Frame 2: The Migration Crisis as Leading to Chaos/ Lack of Control

The second frame I considered can be defined as containing the image of Europe as a place of chaos. Order as a value is greatly prized in Russia; historically it has been placed higher than justice.⁹⁰ As MacFarlane rightly pointed out, ‘Russian perspectives on order and justice are deeply rooted in the geographical situation of the country and Russia's historical difficulty in consolidating the state and in defending it against external threat. The Russian answer to these challenges has been to insist on the primacy of order over justice domestically.’⁹¹ The frame of migrants as causing chaos and revealing a lack of control acquires particular significance in this situation. This frame was present in approximately 80% of the reports on the migration crisis aired by FC, while RT’s coverage contained this frame in 75% of news pieces about migration. (See Figure 8)

Figure 8.



There are two types of explanation for this frame of chaos and disorder, one domestic and the other international. Domestically President Putin appeals to the fear of chaos in Russia associated (in the official narrative and now widely accepted) with Yeltsin’s presidency in the 1990s. This frame allows him to consolidate Russia’s authoritarian domestic political structure under his leadership, since it portrays the Western authorities as weak, ineffective and unable to deal with the crisis. ‘Provoking inter-ethnic and social tensions’ is listed as one of the military threats facing Russia in the Russian military doctrine adopted in December 2014.⁹² Therefore, keeping order is presented as one of the key priorities of the regime.

⁹⁰ MacFarlane, N. ‘Russian Perspectives on Order and Justice’, in Foot, R., Gaddis J.L. and Hurrell, A., eds., *Order and Justice in International Relations*, Oxford: OUP, 2003, pp. 176-206.

⁹¹ *Op.cit.*, pp. 205-206.

⁹² Russian Military Doctrine, December 2014, available at <http://rusemb.org.uk/press/2029>

Internationally, this frame also promotes the image of incumbent European leaders and governments as ineffectual and indecisive. An emphasis on chaos undermines a positive image of these leaders and parties in individual countries, and by default supports the 'alternative' across the political spectrum from right-wing to left-wing. The EU is also portrayed as a weak, ineffective and potentially fragmenting structure. On October 22, the mid-day (12:00) RT bulletin headlined the following news item: 'As Brussels gives itself a pat on the back for reducing migrant numbers, Greece still struggles to maintain overcrowded refugee camps. The mayor of Lesbos tells us that they are still waiting for EU help'. Further on in the bulletin the reporter claims, 'tens of thousands of migrants are waiting in Greece as the migration authorities still decide their fate. So far other EU member states took less than six thousand under relocation schemes'.

The mayor of Lesbos is interviewed, directing criticism at the EU: 'So far we have not seen enough help from Europe', he says. The criticism of the EU is emphasised by the line at the bottom of the page, 'Assistance from Brussels. We are still waiting to see anything significant'. Graphics are used effectively to emphasise the same message, the chaos resulting from the migration crisis:

'Newcomers now directed to 5 islands;

Island Maximum capacity 7,450;

Total presence: 14,000 plus'

This is a justified criticism, and other international channels contained similar criticisms of EU inefficiency. However, these reports are different, since no attempt is made to present an alternative point of view, or to pursue due impartiality.

This is one of the few bulletins where migrants are given a voice. Wassim Omar, a migrant from Syria, says: 'In Syria, you know – when you die, you die just one time. But you will die among your family. But here we turn into nothing. We don't know what will happen to us.' This is one of the few examples of a compassionate view of migrants, emphasising the human tragedy and inability of the EU authorities to respond to that.

In the later bulletin, on the same date (22 October 2016), at 17:00 there are more images and voices of migrants, a child and a woman saying 'I cry and I pray for my God'. A protest by migrants is shown and children are depicted chanting, while a man chants through a loudspeaker 'we are refugees'; another man says, 'we are just like in jail'. In this later bulletin, the criticism of the EU is expanded: 'This burden (on Greece) would have been eased if other EU countries took another six thousand each. In reality though, six thousand were relocated in total'. And the Mayor of Lesbos reiterates, at the end of the bulletin, 'EU policy does not help either Lesbos nor (sic) Europe'.

Chaos and an inability to cope by individual governments and the EU is emphasised by the mocking music used by RT from time to time when they speak of EU structures. This music with a tango beat is used occasionally to facilitate the mocking and critical

tone of portraying EU. This was the case in the RT news bulletin, for example, on 24 June which covered Brexit and stated that ‘the European commission asked not to use the word Brexit’.

The similarity of figures for the presence of this frame in both RT and FC can be explained by the fact that from the point of view of Russian authorities order becomes a value in itself, both internally and internationally. Internally it signifies social cohesion under a strong leader (i.e. Putin), unifying Russia as a nation. This is particularly important message for Russian authorities to project in a period of more frequent protests. Internationally the image of chaos, as opposed to order, allows Moscow to question the effectiveness of incumbent governments. The aim of maintaining order is also present in Russian official calls for international cooperation in fighting terrorism, which represents one of the few remaining avenues of cooperation with the West.⁹³

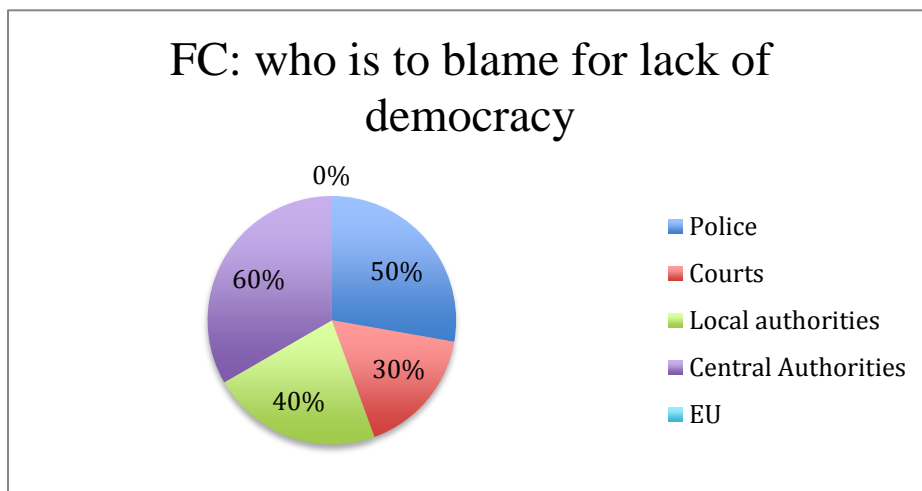
Chapter 5. Flaws in Democracy/corruption

⁹³ ‘Putin says sanctions harming fight against terrorism, hopes Germany attack will bring West closer’, RT, 22 December 2016; available at <https://www.rt.com/news/371184-putin-berlin-terrorism-sanctions/>

The data for both channels for the frame ‘Flaws in democracy/corruption’ is very similar – half of the reports on both channels contain this frame. However, the blame for this state of affairs is allocated differently.

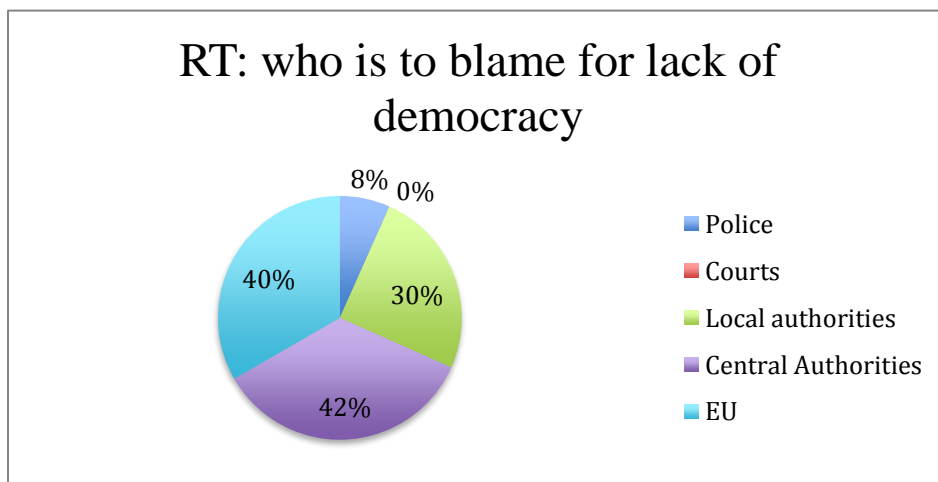
Among the ‘culprits’, FC reports containing criticism of Western democratic practices singled out allegedly corrupt police (50% of the reports containing this frame); the judiciary (30%); the central government (60%) and local authorities (40%), while criticism of the European Union as an institution for the violation of democracy was absent. (See Figure 9)

Figure 9.



In the case of RT reports on the migration crisis, criticism was levelled at the local authorities, central government and the EU.

Figure 10.



RT reports direct their criticism for the violation of democracy against central

governments (42%), the EU (40%), local authorities (30%), while being more cautious with their accusations against the courts (none in this sample), and the police (8%). (See Figure 10)

This frame often accompanies the discourse of the Russian authorities about ‘so-called Western democracy’. Western democracy has been disparaged by many Russian politicians. It is presented as dominated by the corrupt interests of politicians, wealthy individuals and big business in general. Instead Russia offers the notion of ‘sovereign democracy’⁹⁴, a country-specific type of democracy. This term has been interpreted as a way of challenging European values and approaches to foreign policy.⁹⁵

On the international level, Russia has been contesting the tenets of international law, particularly after the annexation of Crimea and Russian involvement in the Ukrainian conflict.⁹⁶ The EU’s pressure on Russia over human rights is presented as disingenuous, self-serving window dressing.

The West itself is portrayed as breaking international law and violating democratic principles. In the 12am news bulletin on 24 June 2016, RT ran a news piece about EU forces which were reportedly contemplating military operations (to destroy people traffickers) in Libyan territorial waters: ‘for the moment this naval operation is confined to international waters, intelligence gathering or the use of submarines’. ‘But the initial plan is much wider in scope’, warns the correspondent. ‘It involves capturing and even destroying the Libyan people traffickers **even** in Libyan waters or Libyan coastal waters’ (author’s emphasis). The illegality of potential EU actions is pointed out. ‘That scope of operation will require UN Security Council agreement. Obviously the EU does not have that yet. Just like it does not have the permission of the Libyan government’, says the correspondent, while the picture shows migrants behind cage-like barbed wire. The line under the image reinforces this message of breaking the law: ‘Libyan official says military will target trespassing foreign ships’.

In the FC report about alleged sexual harassment in Germany from the 1 June 2016 (21:00 news bulletin), we hear that those detained were fingerprinted and ‘now can escape justice’.

Multiple repetitions of the same message, a device which I noted elsewhere, occur here. A clip from an interview with the head of the German police trade union indicates the inadequacy of the German legal system: ‘According to our laws, they could not be held on remand, and I don’t think this is right.’ Then the correspondent tells us that the

⁹⁴ Casula, P., *Sovereign Democracy, Populism, and Depoliticization in Russia, Problems of Post-communism*, 2013 vol. 60, no. 3 pp. 3 -15.

⁹⁵ Averre, D. ‘Sovereign Democracy’ and Russia’s Relations with the European Union’, *Demokratizatsiya*, 2007, No. 15, no. 2: 173–90.

⁹⁶ Allison, R. ‘Russia and the post-2014 International Legal Order: Revisionism and Realpolitik’, *International Affairs*, 2017 vol. 93, no. 3, pp. 519-43.

police had referred this instance to higher authorities, but allegedly a police commissioner received a telephone call from his superior telling him to cross out the word 'rape' from the notes of the case. 'When the commissioner complained about the tone of the conversation, the caller replied, 'This is the wish of the ministry. I am just relaying it'. The implications here are that the police and the ministry are subverting the course of justice and the country's authorities are complicit or unable to cope. The report ends, 'The case of sexual harassment in Cologne has fallen apart in court. And the deputies of the Bundestag have not been able to come to agreement about how to increase the punishment for sexual crimes so that those who harass women are unable to escape justice.'

To illustrate the difference between the domestic FC and RT in presenting this frame, a comparison can be drawn between this report on FC with the report on the same subject on RT on 1 June 2016. RT's piece contains a reinforcement of the same message by text and words, as it shows migrants in the dark as threatening and causing chaos. However if we compare this with FC, FC contains an allegation of corruption by the police and the ministry. In the FC report an unnamed representative of the ministry allegedly phoned to instruct the police to cross out the word 'rape' in the report. The FC report also underlines a flaw in German legislation, which allegedly prevented the detainment of the asylum seekers. The report on the assaults on FC presents this occurrence not just in the context of the Cologne attacks on New Year's Eve, but also another alleged 14 assaults just in May 2016 (according to FC). FC, unlike RT, presents the possibility that the authorities tried to conceal the scale of the assaults. FC also proceeds to talk about sexual assaults in swimming pools, allegedly carried out by migrants. RT ends its report with youths drinking in the foreground, while FC finishes with implied criticism of the Bundestag. Its members, in the words of the reporter, 'were unable to come to an agreement on how to increase the responsibility for sexual crimes, so that those who offend women in the future are unable to escape punishment'.

Such a presentation of the West as corrupt in the FC bulletins can be interpreted as instrumental, especially for Russian domestic purposes. Russia scores very low on corruption indexes, 131 out of 176 in the Transparency International 2016 Corruption Perception Index.⁹⁷ It is expedient then to give the impression that state structures in the West are corrupt, and maintained by a form of corrupt law and order. The impression is given that all this talk about Western values is empty; they are no better than Russia which they criticise, in fact they are just as bad, or even worse.

Within this frame, prominence is given to right-wing parties with an extreme immigration agenda. An example is the RT news bulletin at 17:00 on 20 June (three days before the Brexit vote), in the headline, which highlights the election of the 'anti-establishment Eurosceptic Five Star movement candidate' Virginia Raggi as the first

⁹⁷ Corruption Perception Index by Country, 2016; available at <https://www.transparency.org/country/RUS>

female mayor of Rome. The structure of this news piece appears very erratic. It starts with a report on the victory of the right-wing politician, then moves to an interview with the comedian and founder of the Five Star movement, Beppe Grillo (with the subtitle WIND of CHANGE):

‘We need to reinvent Europe. We have lost the idea of who we are’. Then suddenly within the same piece, the topic switches to the coastguard and a reporter in Calais, interviewing a former Afghan interpreter, Hamid. The correspondent asserts that that migrants ‘flood other towns’, and then shows Albanians in Dieppe and interviews an Albanian man, Bayram. A charity worker tells the reporter that ‘twenty thousand meals have already been provided’, underlining the expense and scale of charitable activity, while graphics show ‘camps [for refugees] spreading all over’. This juxtaposition of the victory of the new mayor, the discourse on winds of change in Europe and the need to re-invent it, and the expense of looking after migrants, can lead the viewer to the conclusion that new parties, like the Five Star movement, are a reasonable alternative to cope with the current situation.

An interesting case study is when RT reports the criticism of the right-wing. On 8 October 2016 (17:00 bulletin) RT reported that ‘a German far-right leader comes under fire after comparing migrants to piles of compost’ (this is preceded in the same bulletin by a report about a bomb attack planned by a 22-year old Syrian national in Germany). The politician in question is Frauke Petry, of the AFD (Alternative for Germany). RT does not avoid criticism of Petry and the cover of the Spiegel magazine is shown, calling the politician a spreader of hate. However, mocking music is used when showing mainstream politicians rather than the right-wing politicians. A protest is also shown with demands to ‘secure the border, secure home’, which is part of the right-wing agenda. The Justice Minister Heiko Maas is quoted calling AFD ‘rhetorical arsonists’. However, the image on the screen shows headlines on websites stressing the growing influence of AFD. Later in the report, the voiceover claims that the ‘party has been gaining momentum, and even defeated Chancellor Merkel in last week’s elections in her home region’. Performativity, i.e. what the message does rather than what it says or shows, can be identified here – with the image supporting the right-wing agenda, while the accompanying words appear to be critical of it.

Although ostensibly critical of the right-wing leader, the report provides a platform for another AFD member, Bjorn Hocke, who implies that the birth rate among refugees is a problem. A platform is then given to a representative of the AFD, Frank Christian Hansel, a Berlin MP. He denied that his party leader has made such comparisons. The line of questioning by the presenter is quite indicative here. The presenter says, ‘voters could interpret this as inciting and turn voters away from the party’. The presenter then appears as not so much questioning the racist attitudes of the politician, but querying the possible reaction of the voters. Hansel then denies that this is the effect, and is given a chance to present his party in a positive light: ‘The vast majority of people are turning away from Christian Democracy due to its wrong policy. People understand what AFD is concerned about, and we are climbing in the polls’. The presenter, however, comes

back to the question of interpretation of the comments, rather than challenging their essence: ‘Do you think such comments could be misinterpreted, isn’t it dangerous for a leader to say things like this?’, he asks. This brings Hansel to acknowledge that his leader should not have said this, while not acknowledging the insult or the core prejudice of the statement. He says, ‘We are sometimes in a defensive situation and probably (author’s emphasis) say things which are not the best things to do (sic)’. An alternative opinion and criticism of the right-wing politician is presented here only by reference to print publications.

This report then goes to another presenter, who tells us (in support of frame 2) about clashes that erupted in Thessaloniki in Greece during an anti-refugee protest, with pictures of police, people running and police kicking people (the line under the picture emphasises frame 2 – ‘pro and anti-refugee protest’). As is typical of other RT reports, the report unexpectedly moves to a different region, telling us about another anti-refugee protest on the island of Dios and about a large fire in an anti-refugee camp in the early hours of Saturday morning.

Although related to the phenomenon of fake news, the frames discussed above should not be categorised as fake news. They present a much more subtle agenda than just fake claims. They are less detectable, while they selectively and expediently present information and facts.

There is no pure disinformation in these reports, it is more about presenting information selectively. For example, FC reported on 26 October 2016 about the alleged acquittal of a rapist, a migrant from Afghanistan, in Austria. This allows the presenter in the studio to ask ‘Where does European tolerance lead?’, and to conclude by indicating the immorality of western society in its institutions: ‘the court in Austria referred the case to the Higher Court... Immoral? Possibly’. We are dealing here with the omission of information bordering on misinformation. The report gave an impression that the rapist was acquitted and freed. However, it transpired after an investigation by Deutsche Welle that only one of the two accusations was dropped by the court, and the defendant, remained behind bars.⁹⁸ On 31 October 2016 Putin quoted this story as an example of unacceptable tolerance towards migrants. In a spiral of misinformation on 3 November 2016, the Daily Mail reported Putin’s quote and the Austrian case as if they were correct.

This story has the typical characteristics of generalising from one incident. It presents a map from the internet, which allegedly covers crimes by migrants not in Austria but in Germany, and interviews of migrants in Holland (or Belgium) are pulled from YouTube. This creates an impression that rapes and acquittals of rapists occur in more

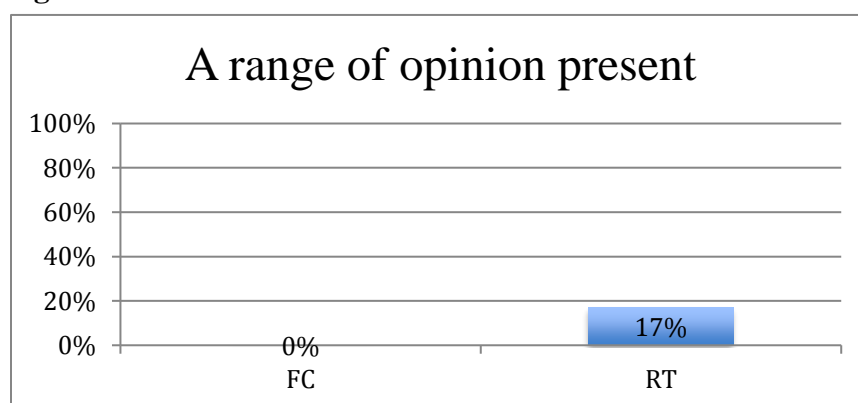
⁹⁸ Koval, I., ‘How a Refugee Accused of Rape was ‘Acquitted’ only by First Channel’, *Deutsche Welle*, 27 November 2016; available at <http://www.dw.com/ru/как-беженца-обвиняемого-в-австрий-визнасиловании-оправдал-только-первый-канал/a-36176549>

than one country in Europe, again using the message on a referential level rather than presenting an outright direct lie.

Selecting information is part of any journalist's work. However there is no attempt made in these broadcasts to present an alternative point of view. We are dealing with presentation of an opinion (i.e. the Western authorities are not tough enough on migrants) as fact.⁹⁹ So, whose opinion is this? In 60 % of FC bulletins we hear local residents, a quarter of whom are victims of alleged attacks from migrants. RT relies more on local politicians, who are given a voice in approximately 40% of the sample. The police are interviewed in 20% of FC reports, and occasionally charity workers. Migrants (named or unnamed) spoke in 40% of the reports on FC, while on RT 17% of reports contained voices of migrants.

There was no range of opinion presented on FC, while the figures for RT were higher, i.e. 17% of the reports offered some diversity.

Figure 11.



RT's relatively positive performance in this respect is due to the different regulatory environment and media culture and audience expectations; western audiences expect a wider range of opinion.

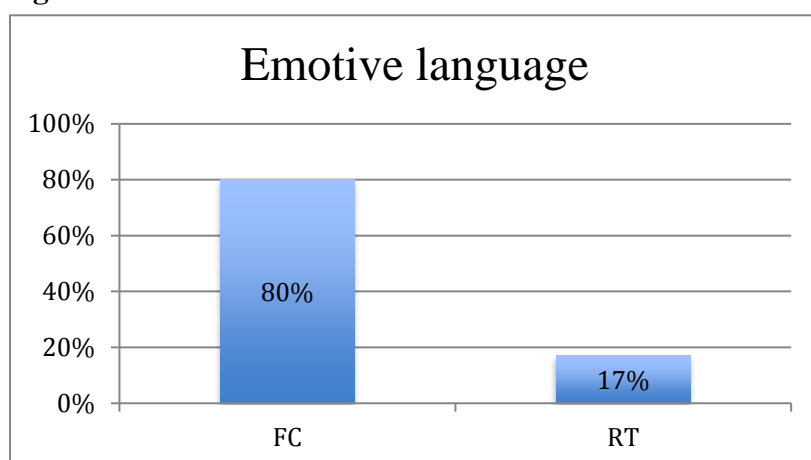
The language of RT reports is also more restrained, for the same reason. 80% of reports on the migration crisis in Europe on FC contained emotive language, while only 17% of RT were characterised by such language. (See Figure 12)

Emotion and judgement is revealed through the language used. For example, in the 9pm bulletin on 1 June, reporting on the case of sexual harassment, the reporter tells us that 'all of this leads to deep disappointment. The first case against sexual harassment in Cologne was thrown out of court.' The emotion is not just disappointment, but 'deep disappointment'. It is universalised by the fact that it is not quite clear who experiences this emotion – the correspondent or (all or some) German citizens. On 26 November 2016 in its 1pm bulletin, while breaking news about the fire in 'the notorious' Calais

⁹⁹ On presenting opinion as fact, see also Borschers, N., *Op. Cit.*

camp, RT's anchor tells us 'we continue showing you these shocking live pictures coming out of the migrant camp in Calais'. The correspondent Harry Fear tells us that 'the lack of speed and apparent lack of willingness to tackle some of these crises in the camp is epitomised by the slow response tonight. Of course the French authorities and British authorities have been leaving it to aid groups, charities and random volunteers to do much of the ground work, taking care of humanitarian concerns for years. Perhaps it should not really surprise us that they came and arrived so late to the game to deal with this massive fire.' In this example the emotive condemnatory tone is created by the implied judgement about deliberate neglect by the authorities and also through the use of adjectives like 'notorious' and 'massive'.

Figure 12.



The selective use of information can be demonstrated in RT's report on 13 October 2016 (a week before the first post-Brexit EU summit). RT carried a piece headlined: 'A damning report claims thousands of migrants, including children, are being trafficked to the UK'; while the British police are failing to tackle modern day slavery in the country, it adds. The piece tells us about 'criminal gangs operating across Europe, Africa and the Middle East', while showing migrants, one yawning, the other washing under the tap.

As in other reports, the same message is put across by the correspondent and interviewees and is strengthened by text and image working together to emphasise it. An MP talks about migrants engaging in prostitution. While the correspondent speaks of gangsters, prostitution and people being exploited, the image shows people at a Muslim prayer. This could of course be just sloppy editing rather than an implied link between prostitution and Muslim migrants.

The policies of Western countries are questioned. 'Some EU countries adopted an open-door policy', the reporter says. Figures displayed reinforce this message, 'Almost 5,000 kids are missing in Italy, another 1,000 in Sweden, a quarter of the arrivals into the EU in 2015 were minors'. Music is used here effectively to create a

mood, ‘smugglers and traffickers exploit youngsters for sex work and slavery’, while showing images of children.

Indeed a report was published in October 2016 by the office of the Anti-Slavery Commissioner¹⁰⁰, but its conclusions were only tenuously linked to the current migration crisis in Europe. The report concluded that Nigerian women, rather than Middle Eastern refugees of the current crisis, are the most likely victims of such trafficking. This case presents a more classic example of misinformation, bringing it into the realm of what is understood as propaganda.

¹⁰⁰ UK Government Publication, *Antislavery Commissioner Report*, October 2016, available <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/independent-anti-slavery-commissioner-annual-report-2016>

Chapter 6. Frames and propaganda

Does the dominance of the three frames in the Russian TV narrative on migration also testify to their nature as propaganda? Traditionally propaganda has been defined as ‘a deliberate and systematic attempt to shape perception, manipulate conditions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.’¹⁰¹

As Marcel H. Van Herpen points out, propaganda should not be equated with lying: ‘it is an entirely erroneous conviction that propaganda consists only of lies and falsehood. In fact it operates with many different kind of truths – from the outright lie, the half-truth to the truth out of context.’¹⁰² The frames discussed above fit more into the ‘half-truths’ and the ‘facts out of context’ categories. The last two examples (about the rape and child prostitution) perhaps are closest to lies and misinformation, but in the majority of examples in this work we are dealing with truths out of context or the presentation of one particular view. However, the use of frames is effective from the propagandistic point of view, if we see the aim of propaganda not necessarily as to change people’s beliefs. It is more about ‘reinforcing existing trends and beliefs; to sharpen and focus them.’¹⁰³ The frames then carry out such a propagandistic function in their appeal to already existing beliefs of types of far right-wing and left-wing audiences in Europe, and audiences already conditioned (in Russia) to mistrust the West.

Reinforcing beliefs and prejudices by placing facts out of context is of course a regular feature of the tabloid press in the West, and also of the ‘news with views’ presented by the Fox News and Telesur channels.¹⁰⁴ From that point of view Russian television channels are no different in principle, though they adopt a more extreme version of the practice. The difference is perhaps in the media environment in which FC operates within Russia, where very few players present a view different to the official narrative. Traditional propaganda usually excludes the alternative points of view, presenting just one particular ideology.¹⁰⁵ In this respect RT and FC are closer to propaganda, as they do not routinely attempt to present genuinely alternative views. No interviewees in any of the news reports selected here from either channel attempted to give a positive view or neutral view of Western authorities or structures. Even when the impetus of the news report was an outrageous statement by a German right-wing politician, all criticism was presented in quotations on screen, while the interviewees all shared the view of the politician criticised.

¹⁰¹ Jowett, G. and O’Donnell, V. *Propaganda and Persuasion*, Sage: Los Angeles and London, 5 edition, 2012, p. 289.

¹⁰² Welch, D. *Nazi Propaganda: the Power and Limitation*, Routledge: London, 2014, p. 2.
Van Herpen, M. *Putin’s Propaganda Machine. Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy*, Boulder, New York and London: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016, pp. 1-2.

¹⁰³ Welch, D., *Op. Cit.*

¹⁰⁴ Painter, J. *Counter-Hegemonic News: A Case Study of Al-Jazeera English and Telesur*, RISJ, 2008.

¹⁰⁵ Jowett, G. and O’Donnell V, *Op.Cit.*, p. 291.

Propaganda implies a certain political intent in the three-part model intent-content-audience. It is the consistency with which the content of the two channels' news reports about the migration crisis in Europe brings audiences to concentrate on issues of threat, chaos and Western democratic flaws that draws them into the realm of propaganda, showing political intent. How can we decipher political intent behind the Russian channels? Literature on changing attitudes through propaganda suggests that 'it is difficult in general for a communication to reach people who are not already in favour of the views it presents'.¹⁰⁶ Intent behind the messages on Russian television could then be formulated as appealing to pre-existing prejudices about migration and doubts about democratic processes in the West, particularly about EU procedures. But the criticism of the West could also be linked to the notion of status, which Russia seeks to uphold in the wider international system. Russia's attempts to compensate for its loss of status after the breakup of the Soviet state and the Warsaw Pact¹⁰⁷ can explain the presence of frame 3 in television broadcasts.

RT's audience is aware of the propagandistic nature of its message,¹⁰⁸ but this does not necessarily reduce its impact on audiences. Even when it is obvious that a message is propaganda, people do not necessarily reject it as a lie. As Jowett and O'Donnell indicated, 'knowledge that communication is propagandistic does not necessarily neutralize reaction to it, especially when a message produces resonance in an audience'.¹⁰⁹

The framing of messages on FC provides confirmation to the view that domestic TV 'has become once again a very effective tool for oppression and authoritarianism'.¹¹⁰ Oates concluded that Russians 'see themselves as media subjects, without the rights of either media citizens or media consumers. As a result, they find a plethora of voices in the media an ominous sign of dissent and weakness among the elite. It is not political choice, but political chaos, that they perceive and fear. They prefer the façade to the messy reality of political divisiveness.'¹¹¹ This may be rooted in wider attitudes to the state in Russia; it should represent solidarity not express or enable pluralism, as the latter is associated with disorder, conflicting views and possible fragmentation. The wars in Chechnya, terrorism and so-called 'Colour Revolutions' have all been used to drum home this narrative about what kind of state is good for Russians and what is dangerous for them.

¹⁰⁶ Cooper, E and Johoba, 'The Evasion of Propaganda; How Prejudiced People Respond to Anti-Prejudice Propaganda', in Baines, P.R and O'Shaughnessy, N.J., *Propaganda, Vol. 2. Psychological and Sociological Underpinnings of Propaganda*, London: Sage, 2013, pp. 43-52.

¹⁰⁷ Troitsky, M. 'Status in Russian foreign policy' Talk at St Antony's College, Oxford University, 30 January 2017.

¹⁰⁸ Patin, K., 'Why has a Kremlin-Controlled News Become a Hit in the West', *Coda*, 31 January 2017, available at <https://codastory.com/disinformation-crisis/information-war/honest-about-lying>

¹⁰⁹ Jowett, G. and O'Donnell V., *Op.cit.*, p. 366.

¹¹⁰ Oates, S, 2006, *Television, Democracy and Elections in Russia*, p. 20.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

Conclusions

Both RT and FC used the migration crisis in Europe to formulate a central message: the ineptitude of incumbent European governments. As we have seen, three main frames are used for the portrayal of the crisis: 1. migrants as a threat, 2. the migration crisis as leading to chaos and protests, and 3. the crisis as revealing the ineptitude and weaknesses of the authorities, as well as revealing flaws in the democratic systems of either individual European countries or the EU as a whole.

The three dominant frames are created at textual, visual and audio levels. The same message is reinforced several times in the reports, and is presented by the correspondent and by contributors, not allowing for a diversity of opinion. Both visual and textual elements are involved in creating the frames, while music is also occasionally used to evoke emotions scorning the incumbent authorities.

The frame of migrants as a threat was more prevalent in FC reports (in 80%), compared to 33% of the RT reports. The frame of chaos and a lack of order occurred almost as frequently on RT (75%) as on FC (80% of reports). It highlights the inability of European governments to deal with the migration crisis, while emphasising the perceived advantages of the Russian political setting with its emphasis on order. The frame of lack of democracy and corruption was present in equal measure on FC and RT, but the reason for this state of affairs is portrayed differently. FC singled out the police and central authorities (the government) as the major culprits, while RT blames the EU and incumbent governments.

The variation in the messaging between the Russian media aimed at domestic and foreign audiences, as previously proposed, is explained by the priorities attached by the Russian state respectively to the domestic and international arenas. The frames on chaos and a corresponding lack of order span the domestic/foreign divide and reinforce Russian state narratives in both contexts. The ability of the authorities to preserve stability (as interpreted by Moscow) is seen as an over-riding priority both internally and externally. The inability of European authorities to sustain order is portrayed as part of their overall ineptitude.

Thus order emerges as a primary value in Russian TV reports. The two other dominant frames, of migrants as a threat and the migration crisis as revealing a threat to democracy serve to contest and disparage tolerance, democracy, respect for the rule of law and human rights.

Both channels made generalisations about the inability of the Western authorities to deal with difficulties or about democratic flaws. The reports' structure meanders from one topic to another, linking events in different countries, and drawing non-existent links between, for example, the migration crisis and prostitution.

In its critique of Europe's democratic flaws, First Channel levelled its criticism mainly at the allegedly corrupt police, the judiciary, the central government and local authorities. RT reports aim their allegations about undemocratic practices at central governments, the EU and local authorities, while being more cautious with their accusations against the courts and the police.

There was rarely pure disinformation in most of the reports; rather the information was presented selectively, with some exaggerations. For domestic audiences a different narrative about migration is created, mindful of Russia's own migration concerns, and takes into account increased hostility to Europe in a period of economic sanctions and counter-sanctions.

There are differences between RT and FC with respect to the media environment, the media audience and their habits. Russian audiences exist in a highly regulated media environment with restricted access to alternative views in the media, while the European audiences of RT have a variety of media sources on migration to which they can turn. 17% of RT bulletins presented some variety of opinion, while there was little attempt at such reporting for domestic audiences. The explanation here lies not just in the different regulatory environment, which requires more balanced reporting for RT, but also in audience expectations of impartiality.

If the term 'information war' is correct, then FC fights this war more vigorously on the home front. FC, compared to RT, is more biased in the prevalence of the frame of migrants as a threat, whom it blames for the chaos in Europe, and in its portrayal of tolerance to migrants.

The consistency with which the three frames are employed and conclusions drawn about Western countries and their authorities suggest that RT plays a role in the projection of Russian power abroad. It constitutes a means of influencing the external environment in ways desirable to the Russian state.

Domestically, Russian TV (FC as a prime example here) becomes part of the relationship between the state and society. The authorities present a message about the importance of strong statehood for stability. This is consistent with a paradigm which places emphasis on state consolidation rather than one which regards the state as the custodian of the people's rights.

The differences between FC and RT in the coverage of the issues indicate a degree of organisation and control over the media in order to modify the message for international and domestic audiences. Russian television is used as an instrument of domestic and foreign statecraft, as it facilitates a challenge to the incumbent authorities in the West and disseminates a message about the advantages and strength of the Russian regime.

In the reports about the migration crisis in Europe there is also a conceptual dimension; they reveal contested concepts of tolerance, as well as statehood and legitimate political order. In practical policy terms this is expressed in bandwagoning with the likes of presidents Erdogan and Assad, and in forming connections with parties and individuals representing right-wing populism in Europe, particularly in Poland, Hungary, Italy and France.

The three dominant frames do not imply direct and straightforward disinformation. It is not fake news, it is rather a selective presentation of facts, or the presentation of opinion as fact. The techniques that allow reinforcement of these frames have some commonalities with propaganda messaging, in their repetitive quality, in the lack of a variety of opinion and in their emotive style. FC reports contained emotive language more frequently, in 80% of cases, while RT was much more restrained and only 17% of its reports contained such language. Such difference is explained by the different media and regulatory environment in which RT operates.

The differences in the presence of the three frames in FC and RT coverage can be explained by the fact that internally the Russian coverage of the migration crisis reflects anti-European attitudes as well as concerns about migration to Russia itself from CIS states, which is considered as important for the Russian economy yet is viewed as a challenge to Russian social cohesion. In the external arena RT broadcasts seek to appeal both to right wing and populist audiences in Europe and this affects their coverage of the migration crisis in Europe.

TV channels, which present ‘news with views’, such as Telesur, Fox News or Al-Jazeera, have operated for several decades now. What distinguishes RT and FC from other partisan players in the media space is the consistency with which the three main frames discussed in this paper are employed and the narrow range of voices presented by these two Russian channels. The prevalence of frame 2, of chaos in Europe, can be interpreted as a way to persuade the viewer that Russian ‘stability’ provided by President Putin’s regime is preferable. Thus in the domestic arena, the messages conveyed aim to foster a positive image of the domestic power structures and to bolster their political legitimacy. Externally, portraying the European authorities as inadequate, corrupt and unable to cope with migration serves to bolster certain right-wing and left-wing forces in Europe and possibly creates opportunities to advance Russian foreign policy ambitions.

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Appendix: Coding Sheet

The numbers below in bold refer to the columns on the sample Excel sheet.

There are additional notes of clarification at the end of the coding sheet.

Two Russian TV channels: First Channel (largest domestic audiences) and RT News (international broadcaster)

The search words are 'migrants' and 'Europe'.

The basic unit of analysis is a story told in a news broadcast.

I investigate two two-month periods around the Brexit referendum in the UK (23 June 2016), as migration and attitudes to migrants were such an important influence on how people voted and one of the main issues in the campaign. I then take another sample of two months around the first official post-Brexit referendum EU summit, 20-21 October 2016.

-
- 1. Name of Channel (First Channel or RT)**
 - 2. Time of broadcast. Date and local time(xx/xx/16)**
 - 3. Total length of news broadcast (in minutes)**

 - 4. How prominent was the migration crisis in Europe as a topic of the news bulletin**

0. Not a topic
1. Minor topic
2. One of the main topics
3. The only mentioned topic

PART ONE (formats)

- 5. Did it feature as one of the headlines at the top of the programme?**

No 0

Yes 1

- 6. If yes, did the news report last**
 1. Less than 30 sec - short
 2. From 30 sec to 1 ½ min – medium
 3. Story 1 ½ min to 3 min - long
 4. More than 3 min – Extra long

7. Where was the story placed

1. First story
 2. Second story
 3. Third story
 4. Fourth story
 5. Fifth Story
 10. More than ninth story
- Code as 1-10

PART TWO (Content)

8. Frame 1. Migrants as a threat

8a Does this frame appear in the first five sentences of the story?

0 No 1 Yes.

8b How salient is this theme?

0. Not important at all
1. It is just mentioned
2. It is one of the main themes
3. It is the only theme

8c Negative images used to portray migrants as a threat/not deserving tolerance

1. Dirt
No 0 Yes 1
2. Darkness
No 0 Yes 1
2. Idleness
No 0 Yes 1
3. Disorderly behaviour/promiscuity
No 0 Yes 1

8d. Is tolerance to migrants portrayed by the correspondent or a presenter as

0. non-desirable
1. desirable
2. neither

9. Frame 2. Lack of order in the country as a result of migration

9a. Is the migration issue linked to the lack of order in Europe?

0. No
1. Yes

9b. If yes, how prominent is the theme of chaos in the piece?

0. Minor topic
1. One of the main topics
2. The only mentioned topic

9c. Does the theme appear in the headline or in the first five sentences?

- 0 No
- 1 Yes

9d. Who is to blame for the lack of order?

da. local authorities

0 No 1 Yes

db. central authorities

0 No 1 Yes

dd police

0 No 1 Yes

de EU as a whole

0 No 1 Yes

df migrants

0 No 1 Yes

10. Frame 3. Lack of democracy in Europe/corruption as revealed by the migration issue

10a Does the migration issue reveal flaws in democracy (inadequacy, weakness of institutions, corruption) in Europe?

0. No

1. Yes

10b. If yes, how prominent this theme in the news item?

0. Minor topic

1. One of the main topics

2. The only mentioned topic

10c. Does the theme appear in the headline or in the first five sentences

0 No

1 Yes

10d Is the police represented as corrupt?

0 No 1 yes

10e. Are courts/judicial system represented as inadequate?

0 No 1 Yes

10f. Are local authorities represented as not doing enough/weak?

0 No 1 Yes

10g. Are central authorities represented as not doing enough /weak

0 No 1 Yes

11. Other relevant themes

What wider elements of the migration crisis were included in the content?

11a. Terrorism linked to migration

Is the link between migrants and terrorist acts drawn?

0 No 1 Yes

11b. Protests, rallies, marches

Are migrants seen as causing protests and marches

0 No 1 Yes

PART THREE (Voices)

By 'voices' I mean people who are quoted either directly or indirectly. This includes voices of unnamed migrants

12. Which voices appeared as interviewees in any part of the story?

a. Representative of local or central government 0 No... 1 Yes...

b. Local resident 0 No.... 1 Yes....

c. Right-wing politician 0 No 1. Yes

d. Left-wing politician 0 No 1. Yes

e. centre politician 0 No 1. Yes

policeman 0 No 1. Yes

f. border force/ coast guard representative 0 No 1. Yes

g. migrant 0 No 1 Yes

If yes - ga migrant named 0 No 1 Yes

gb migrant unnamed 0 No 1 Yes

For each category, please add number of such voices in brackets

13. Was more than one interviewee presented to give an opinion?

0. no

1. yes

14. If there were more than one interviewee, was a sufficient variety of opinions presented?

(by 'sufficient variety' I mean – were the opinions different enough from each other to represent diverging points of view?)

0. no

1. yes

15. Was there an opinion (in the news item) supportive of Western government policy towards migrants?

0 no.

1 yes

16. Was there an opinion (in the news item) compassionate towards migrants?

0 no

1 yes

17. Roughly what percentage of the report do voices negative about migrants represent?

1. 0-10% 2. 10-50% 3. 50-80% 4.80-100%

18 . Did the ‘voices’ come from the following sources?(other than interviewees)

- a. Local TV 0 No 1 Yes
- b. You Tube video 0 No 1 Yes
- c. internet sites 0 No 1 Yes
- d. government/agency report 0 No 1 Yes

19. Emotive language

Is it used?

- 0. No
- 1. Yes

20. Is music used to create a mood?