

Lars Kabel
Svetlana Bodrunova
Asbjørn Slot Jørgensen
Anders Mård
Anja Aaheim Naper
Jonathan Nordström



Volume 1

Russia in Nordic News Media

Coverage of Nordic Countries in News Media of Russia



Nordic Council
of Ministers

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NJC

Olof Palmes Allé 11

DK-8200 Aarhus N.

www.njc.dk

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1.0

Introduction and background

BY LARS KABEL

The news coverage and media images of Russia and the Russian people presented by the Nordic media – its daily and online newspapers as well as television – crucially determine our perception of this vast country. To a great extent, this daily media coverage, with its media news and narratives, also defines our perception of Russians – the others – and thus colours the way we define our relationships and cooperation with our eastern neighbours.

When it comes to Russia, how the media portray “the others” gains particular importance, for, with the exception of Finland, few in the Nordic countries have personal relations with Russians, few spend holidays in Russia, still fewer master the Russian language, and cross-border trade is rare. The cultural and linguistic gap is wide, and our perception of Russia and the Russians is shaped primarily by the ongoing media coverage and the narratives this divide engenders. The same goes for how the Russians understand and cooperate with us.

Drawing primarily on media coverage in 2018, this study analyses how the leading daily and online newspapers as well as television news in the four Nordic countries – Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark – have covered the news and portrayed Russia and the Russians. It will discuss the consequences of the media images that emerged and suggest methods and editorial outlooks for creating new, different ones.

Again with a focus on 2018, the study will also take a look in the opposite direction, mapping the way that Russian news media, especially in north-western Russia, have covered the Nordic countries in recent years.

What news stories and narratives actually characterised the media coverage in the Nordic countries and Russia? What were the underlying editorial decisions for and against them? What were the perspectives and the narratives?

The current East-West relationship is another important point of reference for this report.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of Russia in 1991, relations between Russia, Europe and the USA showed signs of thawing. It was proclaimed that the Cold War had ended. International media houses from many countries sent television crews and correspondents to Russia to report from the previously highly controlled and restricted society. Foreign media groups were encouraged to establish a presence in Russia. Under Boris Yeltsin’s presidency in the 1990s, Russia toned down its political rhetoric towards the West, and tensions gradually eased. In many ways, this was seen as a sign of rapprochement. Russia took part in several important European joint committees – it was even hinted that, one day,

Russia would become a member of NATO. As we know, however, this is far from the reality.

During Vladimir Putin's first presidency, from 2000 to 2008, the soft rhetoric and efforts to intensify cooperation continued, but then slowed as conflicts escalated. Throughout the 2000s, most news media from all over the world left St Petersburg, Moscow and Russia, leaving a handful of foreign correspondents behind to follow the Kremlin and the Russian men in power close-up.

Now, in the 2010s, under Mr Putin's current second presidency, which he assumed in 2012, the political confrontations are further intensifying on all fronts – military, cultural and digital – especially towards the USA, the EU, Ukraine and NATO. Today, foreign media houses are only allowed to own 20 percent of a media group. Aggressive cyber activities originating in Russia (but also in the West) have escalated, their aim being to weaken the others' social order and influence the elections of political leaders. President Putin and the power elite in the Kremlin speak and act out of an orthodox patriotism that fuels conflicts with the outside world. The Russian men in power operate with meta-narratives that say Russia is surrounded by enemies and that all threats to the country and its people come from the West.

In 2014, Russia's annexation of the Crimea and the armed conflict in East Ukraine marked a historical nadir in the relationship between the East and the West. Sounds of the Cold War boomed once again.

A third key point of departure is the current foreign political situation in the Nordic and Baltic regions. The Scandinavian governments continue to support sanctions against Russia in the wake of the annexation of the Crimea, with no-one but Finnish politicians mentioning any thaw in relations. We are moving away from a burgeoning cooperation and friendship to greater tension and simmering hostility; at least, that is how commentators, military people and ministers in Denmark, Norway and Sweden depict the trend.

In Finland, the governmental, political and media rhetoric is more moderate. However, when Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump met in Helsinki for a brief summit in July 2018, the biggest Nordic daily, Helsinki Sanomat, welcomed them with 280 critical billboards in the city centre. In stark black and white they could read declarations such as: "Mr. President. Welcome to the land of free press" and "Putin shoots down Russia's largest news agency" in both Russian and English.

In May 2018, for the first time since the 1980s, the Swedish government went as far as to distribute a brochure to each of the country's 4.7 million households, setting out what actions Swedes should take "in case of crisis or war". Among other things, it recommended that they should gather food supplies and identify civil defence shelters in an intensified crisis. Although the brochure did not explicitly name Russia as the enemy, the Swedish minister of defence Peter Hultqvist did underline that intensified Russian aggression and a higher risk of a Russian invasion had spurred the brochure.

Until February 2019 the Danish government hesitated to approve the installation of the Nordstream II gas pipeline from Russia to Germany in Danish territorial waters on the seabed south of Bornholm. Danish government ministers like Foreign Minister Anders Samuelsen (Liberal Alliance) and Minister of Defence Claus Hjort Frederiksen (Venstre) took a tough line in the case of Russia, citing relations characterised by conflict and hostility. The Danish line was so tough that the Russian foreign ministry, through its ambassador in Copenhagen and ministerial spokesperson in Moscow, repeatedly called the statements inflammatory and Russo-phobic.

When it comes to security policy and military matters the points of conflict between Russia and the Nordic countries and NATO have also grown in number and magnitude in recent years. Denmark and Sweden, for instance, are increasing their defence budgets and purchasing new weapon systems, decisions quite obviously related to the Russian military. In 2017, NATO launched a major exercise in the Baltic Sea right when Russia was carrying out a major naval manoeuvre a few nautical miles away. And in January 2018, Danish NATO soldiers were sent to the Baltic State of Estonia close to the Russian border as a first line of defence against a possible Russian invasion of the Baltic countries.

In October 2018, 350 American NATO soldiers were stationed for a five-year training programme in the Tromsø area of northern Norway. They joined 350 other American NATO soldiers who had been stationed in Trondheim, central Norway, since January 2017.



Leopard 2 tanks during the Trident Junction military exercise in 2018 in Røros in Norway. The biggest NATO exercise since the end of the cold war with 50,000 soldiers from 31 countries. (Photo: Heiko Junge, Ritzau Scanpix)

The Nordic and Russian news media have plenty of military tensions, sharp political statements, cyber activities, reciprocal sanctions and factual events to cover, and producing trustworthy media coverage of the others entails lots of competent editorial decision-making. Editors, foreign correspondents and journalists in all the countries need to be keenly aware of which role they want to play as editors and media professionals. For what stories do they want to include in their media scene? What narratives and media images do they want to create? Where should they draw the line?

The aim of the studies, discussions and conclusions is to develop new factual knowledge on how Russia and the Nordic countries have respectively been covered, particularly in 2018. The object is to recommend methods for and editorial approaches to producing new, different coverage that will equip editorial offices and media professionals to make conscious and competent editorial decisions.

Another aim of the report is to provide politicians, experts, institutions, teachers and other active stakeholders in our societies with a better basis for discussing and acting in relation to Russia, the Russians and the media coverage of the others.

1.1 A TWO-VOLUME REPORT

The study is published in two volumes. The first part of the report is in English and entitled: *Russia in Nordic News Media. Coverage of Nordic Countries in News Media of Russia*. The report was written in English rather than a Nordic language to enable Russians, Finns speaking only Finnish and an international public to read it. Many potential readers in the Nordic countries also prefer to read in English.

Volume 1 sums up the results of our comprehensive mapping and analysis of the media coverage in 2018 in selected Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish and Danish news media. What was covered and how? What narratives and media images took form – deliberately and unconsciously? The country analyses in volume 1 are published as summaries of the four longer and more detailed country analyses in volume 2.

Volume 1 also contains new studies of the news media coverage of the Nordic countries in Karelia, St Petersburg and Moscow – as seen by Russian editors and professors. It also includes an investigation of what subjects, events and narratives about the Nordic countries dominated the Russian news media in the 2010s, with focus on 2018.

The Russian media coverage was mapped in two ways: a small group from St Petersburg State University, headed by Professor Svetlane Bodrunova, Center for International Media Research, studied the factual media coverage of the Nordic countries in selected north-western Russian daily and online newspapers in May 2018 – the reflections and conclusions in this section are seen from a Russian perspective.

During three research trips to Russia in 2017 and 2018, Lars Kabel and John Frølich jointly mapped the general recent media coverage of the Nordic countries, a mapping based on 24 media visits and meetings/interviews with 30 Russian editors, 2 professors and a military commentator. Furthermore, conversations have been conducted with two diplomats from the Danish embassy in Moscow, Ambassador Thomas Winkler and First Secretary Peter Prehn-Olesen.

To put the Russian media coverage and its many actors into the proper context volume 1 contains a description of the Russian media system in its own right – as described by editors and professors. Finally, it includes a description of the much-debated Russian media control system and media manipulation, based on written European and oral Russian sources – seen from a Western perspective.

Volume 1 ends with some cross-report conclusions and perspectives, thus summing up our overall findings.

Volume 2 is entitled: *Rysslandsrapporteringen i svenska och finländska medier. Rusland i norske og danske nyhedsmedier 2018. Coverage of Nordic Countries in North-Western Media of Russia.*

Volume 2 is in Swedish, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish and English and contains a brief introduction as well as four Nordic country analyses based on case studies of the coverage of the presidential election in Russia in March 2018, the total coverage of Russia in May 2018 and various cases relevant in Norway, Sweden, Finland or Denmark. The media coverage in the Nordic countries comes from eight selected news media in each of the countries: four leading dailies with their own foreign editorial offices, two of the largest news sites and the two television news programmes with most viewers. Volume 2 contains tables with comparable data from the coding of the identified media coverage and an identification of patterns in the collected data. Volume 2 also includes the coding manual applied in all the countries.

Each country analysis is summed up through conclusions and perspectives. The cross-report summaries and points are found here in volume 1.

Volume 2 also contains the entire analysis of the coverage of the Nordic countries in May 2018 by selected north-western Russian media and news agencies, performed by a group of researchers from St Petersburg State University. It also offers conclusions and perspectives as seen and described by the research group.

The relevant news production units in all five countries were found in the national database of current media content. In Denmark, for example, the database is called Infomedia, Mediaarkivet in Sweden and Integrum in Russia.

The report is produced under the auspices of Nordic Journalist Center (NJC) in the period from early 2017 to the spring of 2019. The project is mainly funded by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The Council of Ministers' Secretariat emphasises that the work must be done in the Nordic languages whenever possible.

The Danish School of Media and Journalism has contributed working hours.

The research and interviews with the 30 editors and 3 academic experts at the 24 news media were made possible by director Anna Sharagradskaya and the interpreters Victoria Piankova and Olga Kravtsova, with the assistance of the

Danish embassy in Moscow and the Regional Press Institute, St Petersburg. Without their help we would never have succeeded in scheduling appointments and producing the material for our study.

During our visits and meetings in 2017 and 2018 in St Petersburg, Moscow, Petrazavodsk and Kondopoga in Karelia we encountered great Russian generosity and openness when it came to offering information and views and answering all kinds of questions. Without their accommodating attitude the contents of volume 1 would never have come into being.

1.2 METHODS AND AUTHORS

The analyses and conclusions in this report relate to recent Nordic research on the news media's coverage of Russia and to international research on media-created images of the others. The selected research will differ from country to country, and the main points will be summed up in the introduction of the individual country analyses and used in the conclusions.

In 2016, Lars Kabel and NJC published the report *Danske mediers dækning af Rusland* (Danish media's coverage of Russia). This analysis was also supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers. The methods and the coding book from this almost three-year-old study form the basis for the entire Nordic analysis and provided inspiration for the group at St Petersburg State University during their work on a coding book to map the north-western Russian coverage. During the process, in the spring of 2018, however, we adjusted the coding categories on the basis of some beta tests we performed with selected articles from all the countries.

At the end of 2016, *Danske mediers dækning af Rusland* prompted the Nordic Council of Ministers to commission Lars Kabel and NJC to conduct a broader comparative study in all five countries.

Each country report can be read independently. The two volumes of the joint report are written by six different authors from five different countries in four languages. This means that although every effort has been made to use the same terminology and the same definitions, as well as the same coding book, there may nonetheless be differences. We have, however, tried to limit these differences through academic dialogue, standardization and review, but some may still occur. And maybe in fact it does not matter much.

The six researchers/authors are:

Lars Kabel – project leader – Denmark

Svetlana Bodrunova – Russia

Asbjørn Slot Jørgensen – Denmark

Anders Mård – Finland

Anja Aaheim Naper – Norway

Jonathan Nordström – Sweden

John Frølich has provided important input and critical reading for Volume 1.

1.3 **RUSSIAN MEDIA VISITS AND INTERVIEWEES**

When we started work on the reports two or three years ago, we had limited knowledge and experience of Russia and Russian society, with the exception of Finnish Anders Mård, who lives and works as a foreign correspondent and journalist in St Petersburg. To prepare ourselves for the job and collect current information and quotations, Lars Kabel and the head of NJC, John Frølich, made three research trips to Russia in 2017 and 2018, during which we got in contact with Anders Mård and Svetlane Bodrunova and brought them on board. The aim was to gain a deeper understanding of the Russian media system in its own right, of the way Russian editors describe and explain their media coverage, and of the actual Russian media coverage of the Nordic countries.

Our efforts have focused on finding and interviewing editors engaged in various types of Russian media with differing journalistic practices. The content types are defined in the report *Truth vs Truth* from NJC, for example.

- “Patriotic. Patriotic-ranked items are opinionated or slanted in such a way that the reader will be influenced to believe in the official Russian position;
- Independent. Independent-ranked items give either several different views on the subject or critical analysis of the official Russian position;
- Factual. Factual articles concentrate on information, without deeper analysis and opinionated content” (Dixelius, Merkina, Zundert, 2017: 15).

The result was 24 visits to news media, interviews with 30 Russian editors, 2 professors and a military commentator, as well as conversations with Ambassador Thomas Winkler and First Secretary Peter Prehn-Olesen from the Danish embassy in Moscow.

The media visited and the Russians interviewed are:

Karelia – Kondopoga and Petrozavodsk in May 2018

1. Julia Shevchuk, journalist and commentator. Galina Shvetsova, executive secretary. *Novaja Kondopoga*. Local weekly, print publication.
2. Anna Yarovaya, editor. Gleb Yarovoy, journalist. *7x7 Karelia – Horizontal Russia*. Web media with news, centred on an NGO and receives funding from abroad.
3. Natalja Zakharchuk, editor-in-chief. *Stolitsa na Onego*. Popular privately owned news-oriented online newspaper.
4. Aleksey Makarov, manager, Andrey Rayev, editor-in-chief. Valantina Makarichina, leading editor. *Sampo TV – 360 grader*. Large start-up regional TV station with website.
5. Valery Potashov, editor-in-chief. *Chernika*. Online magazine.
6. Natalia Meshkova, editor. *Lyceum*. Online magazine.
7. Ivan Gusev, editor-in-chief. *Karelskaya Gubernia*. Popular private daily and news website.
8. Maksim Tikhonov, editor. *TVR-Panorama*. Private regional TV and radio station and website.

St Petersburg in June 2017

1. Ivan Kurilla, professor. European University at St Petersburg.
2. Diana Kachalova, editor-in-chief. *St Petersburg branch of Novaya Gazeta*. Independent oppositional national daily and website.
3. Nikolay Bultin, editor and reporter. *NTV Petersburg and North-West*. Large publicly owned regional TV station and website.
4. Andrey Radin, editor-in-chief and manager. *LOT Channel 100*. Head of Leningradsky Region Media Committee. The most widely distributed TV channel in the St Petersburg region, publicly owned by the region.
5. Fedor Gavrolov, editor-in-chief. *RBK – daily regional branches from Vladivostok to Kaliningrad*. Syndicated daily news and business newspaper with websites throughout Russia.
6. Sergei Baluev, editor-in-chief. *812'online*. Independent critical news-based magazine in print and online.
7. Alexander Gorskov, editor-in-chief and founder of AZHUR investigative agency. *Fontanka*. Private independent internet-based media house with a number of journalistic and cultural activities. Well-known for critical investigative journalism.
8. Yana Prussakova, editor. *Fontanka.fi*. News site in Russian about Finland and Finland-Russia relations. Targeted at readers of Russian in Finland and Russia.
9. Vitaly Dymarsky, editor-in-chief. *Echo Moskvyy*. Independent critical radio station with head office in Moscow and local editorial offices in the major Russian cities, including St Petersburg. Editorially famous for their free thinking and critical angles. Gazprom Media owns 66 percent of the shares, private investors own the rest.
10. Maxim Vasiukov, editor-in-chief and owner. *Delovoy Petersburg*. Private news-based business and finance media, published as a print daily and an online newspaper.
11. Anders Mård, foreign correspondent for Finnish YLE and journalist. One of the participants in this project.

Moscow in October 2017

1. Petr Fedorov, director of RTR, foreign affairs. Member of the EBU executive board. Dmitry Kulistikov, deputy editor-in-chief, *Russia-24*. Alexey Perevoshchikov, deputy director. *Russia Television and Radio – VGTRK*. The national Russian public service station providing radio and television on many channels and websites, including *Rossiya-1*. *Russia-24* is a 24/7 news channel. *VGTRK* is published in more than 50 languages across Russia.
2. Andrey Surzhansky, head of European countries, International Information, editorial desk. *ITAR-TASS*. The classic state-owned news bureau.
3. Dmitriy Gornostaev, foreign editor, *RIA Novosti*. Russia's new state-owned international news bureau, *Rossija Segodna*, established in 2014. The bureau builds on the former international news bureau from the Soviet era and still uses the old name. The bureau also runs the web-based multimedia platform Sputnik.
4. Maxim Dodonov, deputy director general of News Broadcasting. Arkady Ukrainsky, military producer. *ZVEZDA*. Public patriotic radio, television and online channel covering Russian military topics exclusively.
5. Ivan Konovalov – leading military commentator and TV journalist. Works for *ZVEZDA*, among others.
6. Anna Kachkaeva, professor. Faculty of Communication, Media and Design. Higher School of Economics in Moscow.
7. Andrey Lipsky, deputy editor. *Novaya Gazeta*. Independent oppositional national daily and website. Famous for critical investigative journalism.
8. Galina Dudina, journalist, foreign policy department. *Kommersant*. Serious independent news and business centred daily and online newspaper.
9. Kiril Kharatyan, deputy editor-in-chief. *Vedomosti*. An independent news-centred private business daily and online newspaper.

All interviews were recorded and then transcribed/reproduced. The quotations and conclusions are direct reproductions of the interviewees' statements.

2.0

The coverage of the Nordic countries since 2012 – as seen by Russian editors and professors

BY LARS KABEL

Russian society and its media system are enormous with thousands of old and new media and media platforms – analogue, digital and social. In north-western Russia alone, there are hundreds of different media and numerous media types.

The magnitude and complexity of the Russian media system make it impossible to paint a fully comprehensive picture of the news media, how they prioritise their coverage and the potential consequences. We see, for instance, a difference between the system-friendly federal media across the entire country and the modern, critical private media in the big cities. Consequently, any description of the media system and its contents will in some way be incomplete, and this incompleteness is a circumstance.

The four Nordic countries Finland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark and their populations are, for any number of good reasons, covered differently. In spite of all the differences and numerous media, however, the coverage of the Nordic countries by Russian media shares quite a few characteristics and clear patterns. These will be analysed and described below using 30 Russian editors and 2 professors as primary sources. Their perceptions of reality will be presented.

The Russian media system is not only complex and serves many different political and economic causes; to a large extent, it is also challenged by developments in society. The system is undergoing the same extensive change as media systems in the West – and in almost any country.

The federal Russian TV system and the republic-owned public media still dominate, especially outside the major cities – but more social groups now watch less and less TV, with youth and the well-educated, in particular, switching to other media types. The circulations of dailies and printed magazines are decreasing – as is advertising revenue – business models are wavering, and some dailies are currently closing down. Instead we see online newspapers, websites and social media gain popularity but, as in other countries, the revenue from these types of media generate less than print media. As far as Russian internet media are concerned subscription fees are not really a tradition; content is free. Finally, we see a credibility crisis in media users' relation with the federal TV media and newspapers in particular, but also to the many major private media owned by Russian oligarchs. Many Russians simply don't believe them.

To sum up, these changes and challenges could mean that the situation analysed in this study of today's media may have changed in a month. Nevertheless, it makes good sense to monitor the Russian news media's present coverage of the

Nordic countries – there are clearly some shared characteristics, patterns and possible consequences to present and discuss.

2.1 THE AMORAL NORDIC COUNTRIES

To understand the present coverage we need to look back. For some years up until 2012, the continuous Russian coverage of the Nordic countries was characterised by an inquisitive look at phenomena like the Swedish version of ‘true’ socialism, the Scandinavian welfare systems, tourism and the Nordic energy systems.

But in the years 2012 and 2013, things took a decisive new turn. The Russian editors and experts were unanimous about this and gave some examples in our interviews. According to Professor Ivan Kurilla, European University at St Petersburg, the following took place after Vladimir Putin regained the presidency in 2012:

“Before 2012, moral and patriotic values in the media received little attention. But after the election in 2012 and strong protests across Russia, people started focusing on traditional Russian values as opposed to democratic and liberal ideals.”

“Suddenly, we were supposed to be a people and a country known for our classical values. They started using Europe as a counterpart”.

“‘Counterparting’ was introduced as a communication tool, and the culture in the Nordic countries was described as a direct contrast to the orthodox Russian family values – the Nordic countries were amoral in the eyes of the media.”

The professor did not specifically mention who was the acting driver behind the ‘counterparting’ but it was commonly understood that a campaign run by the Kremlin men of power was behind it.

The new focus in 2012–2013 on contrasts made up the foundation of a tabloid’s coverage of the way children grew up in Norway, Sweden and Finland and the way the Nordic welfare systems treated families – especially Russian immigrant mothers. There are examples of articles and TV reports describing how boys in Nordic kindergartens are forced to sit down and pee like girls, which was presented as an example of feminine indoctrination. That Norwegian and Finnish men raped and humiliated children of Russian women and in one case a child was even dressed like Putin. That Russian women in Norway and Sweden had their

children stolen by society and were forced a return to Russia without them. In 2013–2014, a couple of Russian women and a lawyer from Finland were invited to appear on popular Russian TV talkshows where they told one horrible story after another about the amoral Nordic countries and their lack of any kind of family values. The most exaggerated stories were, however, not aired on the main Russian TV and radio channels but circulated in the media system and society through talkshows and web media.

According to the Finnish foreign correspondent Anders Mård, the narrative of the amoral Nordic countries had a big impact on himself and other Norwegians, Swedes and Finns living in Russia. It was emotionally intrusive and thoroughly unpleasant.

Professor Ivan Kurilla, Anders Mård and a number of the Russian editors underlined that this outrageous way to describe the living conditions in the Nordic countries faded in 2014 and later in connection with the Russian annexation of Crimea, but they also said that it is still present, just underneath the surface, ready to be ‘reactivated’ promptly – should anyone have an interest in doing so.

We were also told that the perceptions of the amoral Nordic countries in the Russian public and the Russian news media are part of the overall image of Europe: Europe is going through a crisis and staggering under the weight of the massive refugee influx. The EU is in chaos. The Europeans have weak moral and cultural values in contrast to Russia and the Russians.

According to many of the interviewed editors and experts, in the period from 2014–2018, no new orchestrated campaigns were targeted at the Nordic peoples and cultures. Instead, foreign journalism focused on topics like the annexation of Crimea, the military conflict in East Ukraine, the increased tension in the Baltic Sea area in relation to NATO, the international sanctions against Russia by the West (the Russian sanctions against the import of food from the West are rarely discussed as a Russian retaliation) and the war in Syria.

In the following sections, we will describe the media coverage of the Nordic countries in recent years as understood and presented by 30 editors and 2 professors.

2.2 THE PROVINCIAL TOWN OF KONDOPOGA IN MAY 2018

Fifty kilometres north of the republic of Karelia's capital Petrozavodsk lies the small provincial town of Kondopoga. The town has 30,000 inhabitants – a decreasing population since its young people are moving away. The citizens are totally dependent on a large paper factory with 4,000 employees. Many live in houses owned by the paper mill, which is in constant crisis. Competition from outside is fierce, and the Kondopoga community is in deep stagnation.

Apart from the federal TV channels, regional and local newspapers, web media and TV and radio channels owned by the republic, there is an independent weekly that has been running since 1932. The circulation of the *Novaja Kondopoga* is 2,500. Ten years ago, this figure was 10,000. In the summertime, the circulation is even lower as many of the buyers go to their dachas in the enormous woods enclosing the town. The newspaper is run by a staff of seven, including editor, driver and bookkeeper. The weekly is published in print and an online edition was attempted, but given up as it generated no income.

Julia Shevchuk, journalist and commentator, and Galina Shvetsova, executive secretary, told us that the small town paper does not follow the international news and does not cover conditions in the Nordic countries, except for Finland. Instead, it focuses on local news and setting its own agenda based on reader interest.

As to Finland, the coverage has received more attention in recent years:

“After the border became relatively open and Finnish/Russian families were reunited, interest in Finland increased. Many Russians travel to Finland, we have a great deal of cultural exchange and yes, we write about that.”

“We do not cover Finland as a country but write about it when our representatives travel to Finland. In general, we have a close relationship; many descendants of Finns live in our town. Our editor's parents were Finnish.”

The big journalistic and editorial challenge for this small editorial office is its relations with the local and regional authorities who, to a considerable extent, want to dictate the form and contents of the newspaper, but have limited success. The weekly newspaper is not publicly funded and insists on writing its own agenda. This general problem inside the Russian media system is further described in section 3 and 4.



The office and the staff of the newspaper Novaja Kondopogas with a weekly circulation of 2,500 (Photo: Lars Kabel).

2.3 THE REGIONAL CAPITAL OF PETROZAVODSK IN MAY 2018

The republic of Karelia covers an area of 172,000 km² and has a population of 637,000, roughly 300,000 of whom live in the capital, Petrozavodsk. The city scenery is dominated by the beautiful Onega Lake and the city is so big that the Russian media system is present here: there are publicly owned federal TV channels and regional and local media in great numbers on TV, radio, paper and the web. They are owned by the government of the republic, including the newly started TV station of Sampo TV – 360 grader. There are private classic media houses running paper media, web, radio and TV channels like Karelskaya Gubernia and TVR-Panorama. They are owned by oligarchs in opposition to the government in the Kremlin, one of the oligarchs being in exile in Finland. There is a modern media, Stolitsa na Onego, a web and mobile platform newspaper that is proactive on social media platforms. The small media house makes a business out of following the news flow and delivering breaking news on local topics. According to its editor-in-chief, Natalja Zakharchuk, critical voices in Petrozavodsk call the editorial office a ‘vacuum cleaner’ because they overhear and copy any relevant news and publish it promptly. And finally, the region has the oppositional magazines and websites, e.g. 7x7 Karelia – Horizontal Russia, which follows and creates part of the news flow itself and conducts critical and investigative journalism, but has limited traffic and readership.

In Karelia, there are between 250–300 journalists; most of them work at media houses under state control where they are better paid. The public media are by far the biggest and they cooperate with a national information agency. Many of the independent media are struggling with bad economy.

The news media in Petrozavodsk focus on regional and local events and cover the city authorities and institutions; all of them focus mainly on Karelia. As one of the editors at Sampo TV explained:

“The government of the republic is the big news maker. When they go on holiday, the oppositional media also cut down on page numbers.”

Interest in the Nordic countries is concentrated around Finland and the Finns. The Stolitsa na Onego editorial office copy-pastes most of its Finnish news from Fantanka’s news site on Finland (see next section) and from the Finnish TV station YLE. Only a few of the interviewed editors mentioned examples of journalistic coverage of the Scandinavian countries. Any such examples were typically about a delegation of politicians or businessmen from Sweden or Norway visiting Petrozavodsk. Or cultural exchange events, including art exhibitions.

The big public TV and radio station Sampo TV – 360 grader operates under a public service contract with the Karelia government and works closely with the media house of Kanal 4 – 360 grader in Moscow to deliver most of the content for Sampo TV's regional 24/7 channel. One of Sampo TV's tasks is to provide the population with local information based on information from the Karelian authorities – for example, about the repair of sewers and roads, kindergartens welcoming new children or institutions receiving visits from outside.

The TV station Petrozavodsk has enough editorial resources to cover Finland and in some cases also the other Nordic countries – but as editor-in-chief Andrey Rayev described it:

“We cover topics when Karelia is concerned: Finland versus Karelia, Norway versus Karelia – not versus Russia.”

“We cover cross-border cooperation, and next month, the president of the republic is going to Finland. And we will cover that, too. We have lots of relationships with Finland when normal people are involved. Similarities and differences, we compare ordinary things.”

Where Norway, Sweden and Denmark were concerned, the examples were rare. None of the editors mentioned political or military tensions as a relevant topic in the media coverage. Sampo TV would like to cover wind energy from Denmark. And should Vestas invite the TV station for a visit, they would accept. The electric cars in Oslo are also a matter of interest to the editorial office, but not the gas pipeline Nord Stream II. According to the editor-in-chief, they have never covered it, but a week after our interview, the owner Gazprom announced a planned press conference, and Sampo TV intended applying for participation. If Nord Stream II were the subject of the press conference, the TV station would cover it.

When asked if the TV station would send a reporting team to Finland or any of the Scandinavian countries to find and cover activities that could serve as a leading model for Russia's development of, for instance, green tech and waste management, Andrey Rayev answered:

“We would not rule out the possibility. If we are facing a local problem, then we will start looking for solutions; and if we find them abroad, we could go for them. But the general picture is that we plan to solve our own problems, not yours; that is up to you”.



Gazprom is the state owned Russian energy company who owns Nord Stream I and builds Nord Stream II. Gazprom owns too a large media group including the critical Radio Echo Moscow (Photo: Benoit Tessier, Ritzau Scanpix).

Several public and private media in Petrozavodsk underlined that interesting people on both sides of the Finnish border are prioritised. According to the editors, especially if they can be characterised as heroes. In general, the editorial offices focus on people who have acted as heroes and done something for the good of others – or have performed acts of patriotism. Finns may also be depicted as heroes in the news media in Russian Karelia.

2.4 THE METROPOLIS OF ST PETERSBURG IN JUNE 2017

St Petersburg is a continuous urban area of 1,500 km² with 5 million inhabitants and, as a former European cultural centre, is the most western-oriented society in Russia.

Here, the full complexity of the Russian media system unfolds with all its players and political as well as financial considerations blooming. The global changes in urban daily life and media consumption are clearly visible, also in the St Petersburg area. As Professor Ivan Kurille explained:

“People from St Petersburg consider themselves Europeans, we are part of a greater European civilisation. This is not the case for many Russians in the southern or eastern regions.”

“There is a general mistrust in the state media. The social networks have definitely taken a large bite of the traditional media position.”

“In today’s Russia, people do not share a common stand on our values, there is great disagreement – much more than in the USA and Europe. We do not see a hegemonic discourse on our society. The young generation is deeply split when it comes to orthodox values, and this affects their media consumption.”

Russia has three leading social media: Yandex.ru – a search engine in Russian, like Google; VKontakte.com or vk.com – the Russian Facebook; and Odnoklassniki.ru or ok.ru – a social relations website, mostly for former classmates. They all have great influence on Russian society, also in the St Petersburg area. Various social groups, not only the youth, have practically stopped using traditional media – public media as well as most private media.

News and other media coverage of the Nordic countries are not shared much on mobile or social platforms. According to several of the Russian editors, demand for this type of content is limited and this low demand defines the scope of the media attention on Norway, Sweden, Denmark and, to a smaller extent, Finland.

Contrary to some of the editors’ statements, the study in this report (see section 9) performed by Professor Svetlane Bodrunova shows continuous news coverage of the Nordic countries – with May 2018 as an example. And this has also been the case in the St Petersburg area in recent years, according to several of the interviewees. When describing the types of events and topics they gave priority in their media coverage, they mentioned ecology and the Nordic countries as green role models; voluntary work traditions in Scandinavia; efforts to introduce ‘universal basic income’ in Finland; a Danish member of the forbidden Scientology movement imprisoned in Russia; cross-border shopping with Finland and new shopping centres on the Finnish side of the border; refugees in the Nordic countries, Finland in particular, and the aggressive reactions from Finnish nationalists; food sanctions and attempts to smuggle food produced in the Nordic countries – before it was seized and destroyed; global companies like Carlsberg and Volvo in Russia.

According to the editors, there was no public or media interest in politics in Scandinavia and Finland; the Nord Stream II gas pipeline and the Arctic were

not mentioned. Climate changes were not covered; as editor-in-chief Alexander Gorskov from Fontanka put it: “They haven’t reached us yet.”

In St Petersburg, they experienced a new media interest in ‘Nordic carbon economy’, but only in some of the news media, and editor-in-chief Fedor Gavrolov from RBK Daily explains it like this: “To many Russians, green economy is a kind of dissident thinking.”

Concerning the media coverage of Denmark, most editors needed extra time to come up with any examples. Some of them mentioned two tabloid topics: the Copenhagen Zoo cutting-up of a giraffe some years back and the submarine killing in 2017, both of which enjoyed a lot of media attention in Russia. According to the editors-in-chief, many Russians considered cutting up the giraffe as yet another example of the totally incomprehensible and amoral Nordic countries and an illustration of a Danish nation that hates animals and treats them badly.

The many news media in St Petersburg and their editors have completely different relations with the Russian authorities and their efforts to inform and control editorial copy (see section 3 and 4), with the market, and with potential readers, viewers and listeners in the metropolis. The media target various population segments like the media in any other country. Their coverage of the Nordic countries is quite similar, but varies in priorities and underlying purposes. This will be exemplified below through three selected media and media houses.

Fontanka and the online newspaper fontanka.fi by editor-in-chief Alexander Gorskov and editor Yana Prussakova.

Fontanka is an ultramodern private news-based media house publishing on web, mobile and social media platforms. The staff also handle investigative journalism projects, events, books and other types of profit-making activities, including a niche site for commercial drivers. For years, Fontanka ran a news site in Russian on Finland and the Finns named fontanka.fi. Lately, the material has, however, been included in Fontanka’s large news website as it did not pay off as an independent media platform.

Fontanka brings foreign news every day, but, according to Alexander Gorskov, not much about the Nordic countries:

“We do not see the Nordic countries as one unified topic. We talk about Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Finland as separate countries. We cover Finland, and Sweden to a smaller extent – and not really the other Nordic countries – they do not produce much news material.”

Over the years, the editor-in-chief has practised impressive investigative journalism and taken part in major journalistic cooperation projects. The critical investigative projects did not, however, include any Nordic topics, but Alexander Gerskov mentioned that he would like to do collaborative projects with Nordic media houses and journalists on two themes: one is the Arctic, which is difficult to reach. Another is the thousands of Chinese tourists who visit St Petersburg without spending many roubles. He hopes to start a collaboration with Norwegian and Finnish media around these stories.

Fontanka covered Finland through the website fontanka.fi, now embedded in its news site. The target audience was businessmen, Russians with property in Finland and people with an interest in travel, tourism etc. The site also described and covered how Russians can start a company in Finland.

Editor Yana Prussakova explained that the sanctions after the annexation of Crimea and the Russian food sanctions towards the West have been central and controversial subjects in the media in recent years:

“After the sanctions, it was no longer possible to buy Finnish cheese in Russia – which was seen as a big problem. We write impartially about the sanctions, not like other Russian or Finnish media do.”

Other sources told us that Russians go on daytrips to Finland to buy large quantities of Finnish cheese – now called ‘Putin cheese’ – and bring it home to Russia.

The regional public TV station

TV – LOT by editor-in-chief and manager Andrey Radin.

In 2017, the TV station broadcasted through 21 channels/cables/TV towers in the city and the surrounding Leningradsky region. It was a free public service TV. TV – LOT’s many tasks include providing the public with information on local society based on information from the regional authorities. The region owned 75 percent of the shares with private investors owning the remaining 25 percent; the station was partly financed through advertising. According to editor-in-chief Andrey Radin the purpose of the TV station was:

“To cover governmental projects, culture, sports, art. Our primary shareholders are the authorities and institutions in the region, and our main goal is to cover their activities. Most towns in the region number 10,000–15,000 inhabitants, and we cover them all. We usually go to events ourselves but may also use stringers.”

In the coverage of the Nordic countries the same pattern applied for TV – LOT as for most other news media in the metropolis but with an important exception – a wish to find and cover positive news in the neighbouring countries that could be used to improve conditions in the Leningradsky region:

“The St Petersburg region is a large transportation hub; therefore, we take an interest in logistics in our neighbouring countries, including bridges and tunnels. Also new energy systems that we can implement in our region.”

“Most of our foreign material is focused on positive matters. The federal channels from Moscow cover the Nordic countries, but in most cases, the news has a negative bias and focuses on problems like terror, migration, refugees, Breivik and other scandalous persons. If we just follow in the footsteps of the federal TV stations, then we won’t get a chance to improve our conditions here.”

Editor-in-chief Andrey Radin said that he had trouble understanding the motives and methods of the western and Nordic media systems: “They undermine their own societies through their critical angles on everything and everybody.” On the other hand, he found that it was a central public service responsibility of a TV station, mainly owned by the authorities in the region, to find the positive and constructive things about our neighbouring countries and bring them to the attention of the general Russian population.

The business media Deleroy Petersburg by editor-in-chief and owner Maxim Vasiukov.

First published in 1993, the daily was founded and formerly owned by the Bonnier Group, Sweden. But in 2016, when it became forbidden for foreigners to own media in Russia, Bonnier sold the newspaper to editor Maxim Vasiukov. However, Bonnier still owns the allowed 20 percent. The business newspaper had a circulation of 27,000 and between 75,000–100,000 unique daily readers on the internet.

The newspaper covers trade, finance and business professionally, providing reflective and critical journalism. But the editor-in-chief told us there are limits as to how they may cover certain themes:

“The newspaper has to choose the straight and narrow path to avoid any problems. This means we cannot write about Putin and his family and money, Ukraine or other sensitive foreign policy topics.”

As regards the topics and events from the Nordic countries that made it to the newspaper columns, the copy was again limited and clearly selected to reflect the general St Petersburg interests:

“It is not much, but when Nordic companies generate news we cover it, e.g. Volvo, Swedbank and Carlsberg. The only true news-maker is IKEA. Finland gets slightly more coverage, for one thing, because Russian businessmen buy property in eastern Finland.”

“We only cover Nord Stream II if it generates new jobs and boosts the region’s economy, but not otherwise.”

“We may have published more news in relation to the Nordic countries before the Ukraine crisis, but many companies left the region after Crimea.”

Because a large part of the Russian news media is syndicated, the vast majority of their foreign and security policy news and coverage of the EU, NATO and government matters in the Nordic countries comes from the main offices of the media groups – often based on telegrams from the three Russian news agencies ITAR-TASS, RIA NOVOSTI and INTERFAX. The hard foreign policy coverage comes from Moscow.



Russian rescuers try to take a car out of the frozen Gulf of Finland in St Petersburg. The focus of the north-west media are on every day life and the development of the region more than on politics and foreign news. (Photo: Sergey Kulikov, Ritzau Scanpix).

2.5 THE CAPITAL MOSCOW IN OCTOBER 2017

Moscow, with the Kremlin at its centre, houses 12 million people. Sources in Moscow told us that there are also millions of unregistered people living in the city.

Apart from being the political seat of power in the vast Russian country, Moscow is also home to the syndicated Russian media's main editorial offices, foreign TV stations and foreign correspondents. Private Danish newspaper publishers, for instance, have three permanent correspondents in Moscow while the Norwegian media have two. In general, foreign media are stationing fewer people in the capital than in the past.

The foreign editor of the national TV channel Rossiya 1, Petr Fedorov, estimated that this withdrawal from Russia would influence the media images of Russia created around the world.

“Recently, the Boston Globe closed down its office in Russia – it was set up as far back as the end of the 1800s. Today, there are no Swedish correspondents in Russia; they use stringers. But stringers do not present their own view on Russia – they report what the main office hires them to do. So it is not a reflection of Russia, but an image of the main office’s reflection. The result is primitivisation – a perilous development in journalism.”

At the centre of the foreign news from Russia we have the three Russian news agencies: the two state-owned ITAR-TASS and RIA NOVOSTI and the private INTERFAX. The agencies also present official news from the Russian government and the ministerial offices to the rest of Russia and the wider world. Media all over Russia subscribe to news and other journalistic content from two or three of the agencies. According to the two editors, Andrey Surzhansky, ITAR-TASS, and Dmitriy Gornostaev from RIA NOVOSTI, Russian news agencies operate in the same way as other agencies around the world. They have foreign correspondents and stringers posted in the world’s power centres – the Nordic countries are not considered as such – but they do have one single correspondent stationed in Stockholm. According to the editors, the news agencies’ journalists work to universal journalistic standards and news selection criteria – just like anywhere else in the world. This means that classic topics such as Nordic government acts and hostile statements from Nordic ministers, visiting heads of government and delegations, NATO exercises and crisis talks in the EU as well as crimes like the Breivik case in Norway and acts of terror in Stockholm and Copenhagen get high news ratings.

In Moscow, the interviewed editors described, almost unanimously, that there is no deeper interest in the Nordic countries in the Russian media or the population; Russians see the Nordic countries as part of Europe and rank them number four on their barometer of interest, after Germany, France and the UK.

The Nordics are, however, covered continuously, and Professor Anna Kachkaeva, Higher School of Economics in Moscow, mapped this coverage through a non-scientific thematic reading of the Russian media coverage from mid-August to mid-October 2017. The reading drew on the Russian database of publicised media coverage, Integrum, and the professor highlighted the following findings:

“The top headlines were stories about Crimea, the submarine killing and Lars Von Trier on sexual harassment in connection with MeToo and the Weinstein case. The story of the murdered journalist ran for months and was the only breaking news on the federal news channels.”

“Nord Stream II was covered when the Danish Folketing passed a bill enabling the government to prevent the gas pipelines being rolled out – but this was mostly in the business media and focusing on sanctions and counter-sanctions.”

“Various media covered the story of how NATO held an exercise close to the Russian border, and we heard that our foreign minister Sergej Lavrov told ministers in Norway and Sweden not to be so paranoid about Russia.”

The professor described some examples of significant Nordic events and statements, including:

“In 2016, the refugee situation in the Nordic countries attracted great media attention. Sometimes it was covered as a matter of profound astonishment, for instance, in the case of a new law in Denmark determining that when refugees arrived in Denmark, the authorities could confiscate their belongings to cover the expense to society. Even their wedding rings could be taken away. Here in Russia, the media called it a confiscation of the refugees’ belongings.”

“The media also covered sanctions and counter-sanctions. Finnish ministers were quoted as saying we do not need sanctions. The Finnish president was cited as saying he does not believe that Russia would attack its neighbours. In general, the media have a warmer approach to Finland than to the other Nordic countries. Finland is like one of our provinces.”

Also in Moscow, the many news media run very different editorial concepts, business models and target groups, and to a smaller extent have different priorities in their coverage of the Nordic countries. The following three coverage examples represent three very different media forms:

Russia Television and Radio – VGTRK: Petr Fedorov, Director of RTR, foreign affairs. Dmitry Kulistikov, deputy editor-in-chief, Russia-24.

VGTRK, Russia’s big public service media house, runs a main channel, Rossiya 1, as well as the 24/7 news channel Russia-24 and a number of other TV and radio channels and multimedia platforms. The media house consists of 92 regional companies broadcasting their own news 240 hours daily in 54 different languages covering 6 time zones. According to Petr Federov, 1/3 of the budget is financed by parliament, and 2/3 through commercials. Russia Television and Radio employs approx. 19,000 people across Russia and is by far the leading media house in Russia.

When it comes to covering the Nordic countries the editors explained that the coverage is primarily produced by the north-western Russian departments in Murmansk, Karelia, St Petersburg and others. Possible topics are Nord Stream II and the Arctic. But sometimes big stories are covered from Moscow, for instance the killing of the journalist in a submarine.

Deputy editor-in-chief Dmitry Kulistikov described the news coverage in Russia-24 like this:

“I found the story in the German magazine Bild; Eurovision and Reuters also ran it. We do not have a local correspondent posted there, which turned out to be a problem. Our network of agencies/correspondents in Europe consists of one in Brussels, one in Rome, one in London, one in the Baltic countries and one in Paris. When dealing with news of this importance we simply have to send one of our own correspondents to the scene. This narrows our possibilities.”

Dmitry Kulistikov raised the question himself: “Why was the criminal act given such high editorial priority? It was basically about brutality – like the giraffe story.”

“When covering such topics we tell the story of a brutal Europe and today’s amoral Europe. I remember these two events as examples of brutality – crazy things that all Russian media covered.”

When dealing with the heavier foreign policy and security policy issues we do not look to the Nordic countries, but to NATO, the USA and Europe. Foreign editor Petr Fedorov explained:

“Many western media people and politicians say: how dare Russia go so close to the NATO countries? Seen from our perspective it’s the opposite way around. NATO is so close to Russia.”

“We cover the NATO exercises as a danger to peace. And we have to protect our borders; we must keep our troops prepared for NATO aggression. I’m convinced that the NATO countries write about it in the same way when Russia reorganises its troops.”

“It is true that this is leading to an increased tension, but alas, so be it. During the Cold War it was precisely like that – and it’s coming back, I’m afraid.”

Novaya Gazeta. Andrey Lipsky, deputy editor.

The newspaper house is known far beyond the Russian borders for writing critical oppositional journalism of high quality, constantly challenging the Russian men of power – for the past many years the Putin administration. The target audience is elitist, but the daily paper's penetration in Russia and abroad goes much further than its limited print (300,000 newspapers) and online readership.

Andrey Lipsky pinpointed various tendencies in the Russian press in recent years: honest journalism is fading. Foreign topics are disappearing. Investigative journalism as such is almost non-existent, and this also affects Novaya Gazeta and its foreign coverage of the Nordic countries:

“The coverage of the Nordic countries relates to the major foreign policy themes: Ukraine and its relations with the USA. Europe and the new populist right-wing trends and NATO and the activities of the alliance. These are our most important agendas.”

According to the editor, the perception of Sweden has changed a lot in the Russian media image; the media are no longer interested in the Swedish welfare system, Swedish socialism (previously well covered) and the Finnish educational system. Media experts and politicians now include Sweden in the group of countries most hostile towards Russia. This group comprises Poland, the three Baltic countries and Sweden: “An axis of evil against Russia”.

The editor sums up the daily published coverage of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Denmark in the Novaya Gazeta:

“We are not particularly interested in the Nordic countries. But we try to go against the myths that are told about the countries.”

“The Novaya Gazetta has always shown the Nordic countries great respect. We stay on good terms with the Swedish embassy, for example.”

Vedomosti. Kiril Kharatyan, deputy editor-in-chief

A private independent business newspaper, Vedomosti was formerly a unique joint venture between Dow Jones, the Financial Times and the publishers of The Moscow Times. However, the foreign co-owners sold their shares in 2015 just before the new law on media ownership took effect in 2016. The newspaper is now owned by Demyan Kudryavtsev, former manager of the newspaper Kommersant.

Vedomosti has a daily print circulation of 65,000 and 300,000 unique online users. The media house is one of the few in Russia making money on an online newspaper, even after the introduction of a paywall in 2017 on the websites of Vedomosti.

Vedomosti writes classic business journalism focusing on companies, trade, production, finance, IT and technology, among others. The staff works professionally and according to normal journalistic principles, also when it comes to the coverage of the Nordic countries.

There were no important new topics on the newspaper's list of relevant themes from the Nordic countries. Kiril Kharatyan explained the intentions behind the coverage:

“Vedomosti tries to be objective, and we publish a lot of interviews with Nordic ministers. We cover Swedish companies investing heavily in Russia; they invest in media, gas, food, etc. Norway has Telenor but they are on their way out. These are the kinds of stories that we cover. And the newspaper enjoys excellent cooperation with the Nordic countries on business news.”

When it comes to Vedomosti's overall foreign journalism and Russian readers' perception of foreign countries, including the Nordic countries, the editor concludes critically:

“Russia is withdrawing into herself. Step by step. Many Russians believe that the country is surrounded by enemies. By people who dislike Russia. That's why the country must kick back, it is said. And this is a paradox – for Russians love to travel to the EU and the USA, they love iPhones, Gucci bags and Mercedes, but the enemy image still lives on. Pure schizophrenia, but nevertheless our reality. And the image builds on the perception that we are rich in culture and history. And the West is not, but they can still enjoy the consumer culture.”

2.6 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It is a must for the news media in the Nordic countries as well as in Russia to cover the increasing tension, the sanctions, the escalation of conflict-provoking activities and the critical, tough rhetoric in both East and West. In this way, the news coverage and the media set the stage for this hard-hitting political and military rhetoric. It sometimes sounds harsh and brings back memories of the Cold War.

The closer you get to Moscow and the more you focus on the important foreign and security policy themes, the more blurred the lines between each of the Nordic countries, the Nordic region and Europe become. In relation to international topics the Nordic countries were seen as the outskirts of Europe, and their populations were often included in the major Russian narratives of an amoral Europe, poor in culture as opposed to Russia. That Russia is surrounded by enemies and that among them you'll find Europe and the institutions NATO and the EU.

In recent years, the narratives of the Nordic countries in particular as amoral societies have been replaced by the problems of Crimea and Ukraine, but according to Professor Anna Kachkaeva, they could quickly be reactivated, should anyone have an interest in so doing.

Vitaly Dymarsky, the widely renowned Russian editor-in-chief of the critical and freethinking radio station Echo Moskv, concluded that: "When there is no demand for information, there is no media image of the Nordic countries." But this is incorrect – as clearly shown by the above findings and conclusions of the Russian research group's mapping of the media coverage in north-western Russia in May 2018 (see section 9). There was continuous coverage with certain patterns and media images.

The published media coverage and the underlying journalistic choices and priorities do of course reflect the type of media concerned as well as its editorial objective and target group. And we have been given several examples.

When it comes to the ways that western media and journalists see and cover the surrounding world there are various things in Russian media that seem different. We can mention three of them: the major editorial attention given to the 'astonishing topic' of the Copenhagen Zoo cutting-up of a giraffe and the fact that so many editors emphasised precisely that event several years later. That heroes are given much attention in the media coverage; also Finnish heroes who have done something for the good of others or performed acts of patriotism. That 'counterparting' between European and Russian is a commonly used journalistic method. And that Europe is described as a counterpart.

The Nordic countries were given low priority in the news media in north-western Russia, St Petersburg and Moscow, and were covered in somewhat the same way by many of the news media. The demand for this kind of news was limited. But as Professor Ivan Kurilla concluded, Russian society is far from homogeneous, and

this was also reflected in the media. There were contemporary realities to depict; the result was different types of media images of the Nordic countries, and they differed for Norway, Sweden, Denmark – and Finland, not least.

3.0

**The media system in Russia
– insider description
by editors and professors**

BY LARS KABEL

In Russia, as in most other nations, the right to vote, speak and publish media is embedded in the country's constitution, which was drafted at the beginning of Boris Yeltsin's presidency and quickly passed after a referendum in 1993.

According to the constitution, the Russian Federation is a federal state with 21 republics and a total of 89 administrative units. The responsibilities between the central government in Moscow and the local units are not clearly defined. The 21 republics are based on ethnic minorities with their own constitutions, state languages and republic-owned media. The exploitation of natural resources and responsibility for healthcare, education, housing and protection of minority cultures are all shared tasks for the federal and local governments. Since 1994, an increasing share of the taxes goes to the local parliaments.

Russia has a democratic constitution segregating the legislative, the executive and the judicial powers. The constitution dictates a parliamentary system in Russia with two chambers: the State Duma (lower house) and the Federal Council (upper house) plus the presidency.

The executive power belongs to the president who enjoys great influence. He/she approves all laws and has the power to issue law decrees. He/she appoints the head of government and its members, pursues the Russian foreign policy, is head of the armed forces and holds the codes for the Russian nuclear weapons.

As in many other countries, the Russian constitution guarantees the civil rights of the people. In the constitution Russian citizens enjoy universal democratic rights: to unionise and assemble, to speak, to stand for election and to vote. The rights apply to everyone regardless of political, religious or ethnic affiliation. (Sources: the Danish encyclopaedia Den Store Danske and dr.dk).

At least that is what the constitution says, but what about the freedom of the press in 2017 and 2018? What did the Russian media system look like 25 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union? How did the 30 editors and 2 professors describe the media situation of that time – which is almost like today's?

Constitutionally, the media and news reporting in Russia are not limited by law. According to the law, there is freedom of expression, freedom of the press and no censorship. A number of the interviewed editors from the major news media houses underlined that the Russian media legislation is ambitious and liberal.

None of the 30 editors and 2 professors mentioned any direct censorship by the state or regional authorities. None of the 32 sources described any examples of

commissioners or other public authorities imposing direct censorship on the media houses. Several editors stated that they had no recollection of cases where they had to avoid any controversial topics.

Editor-in-chief Andrey Rayev from Sampo TV – 360 grader, owned by the republic of Karelia, added to this description:

“You have to understand that ‘oppositional and independent’ are two different things. In Russia we say that you are completely independent when nothing depends on you. And that alone is not worth fighting for. In our opinion, we depend not only on our creators/owners and the government of the republic but on all our viewers. If we are not able to bring good content then we will not succeed.”

The constitutional freedom of expression and freedom of the press in Russia give us relatively free hands and the management of and influence on news forms and content happen in a more indirect way (see chapter 4).



*According to the Constitution Vladimir Putin enjoys great influence as President of Russia. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is one of the few other Russian rulers, who are covered in the Western media
(Photo: Alexander Zemlianichenco, Ritzau Scanpix).*

Freedom of the press means certain types of Russian news media have been actively critical for decades and still set alternative agendas through powerful investigative journalism, among others. According to several media house editors, the present critical coverage is, however, mostly local or regional, rarely federal – very rarely pointing at the authorities or naming any men of power in Moscow.

3.1 **THE FEDERAL AND NATIONAL MEDIA SYSTEM**

Many Russian news media – both public and private – are syndicated and controlled from head offices in Moscow. The public sector in Russia is still enormous. 60 percent of all companies, institutions and activities in Russian society are directly or indirectly owned by the state. The editors said that the percentage of news media owned by the state is even higher, but none of them was able to mention the precise figures. They are either directly or indirectly state-owned through, for instance, the Bank of Russia National Media Group or Gazprom, which has a large media division and includes the critical Radio Ekho Moscow.

The Russian public service media system is very big, TV being the dominant media type. Approx. 75 percent of the Russians still watch flow TV from the state-owned TV channels, especially outside the major cities. 75 percent of all households have internet access, and many people read and follow online papers. It is difficult to locate the correct figures for the national penetration of the state broadcasting service in the population, but foreign editor Petr Fedorov from Russia Television and Radio – VGTRK informed us that in October 2017, they had 4 nation-wide TV channels, 4 nation-wide radio channels, 92 regional TV and radio stations and broadcasted in 54 different languages. In Russia, the total number of registered TV channels was 2,400 – 600 of them being international TV channels from abroad. Via satellite or cable TV, most Russians had cheap access – around 1.5 EURO a month – to hundreds of TV channels, including CNN, BBC, Al-Jazeera, Euro Views and many others. According to Petr Fedorov, this proves that Russians can enjoy access to other countries' critical views on Russian more openly than people in the West because normally, they do not have access to foreign Western-critical media. The foreign editor concluded that Russia enjoys a very open media system.

Professor Anna Kachkaeva emphasised that the very size of Russia Television and Radio poses a threat to the free commercial media market in Russia. VGTRK has a staff of around 19,000 across Russia. She described Russia Television and Radio as Europe's biggest media company.

3.2 MAJOR TV CHANNELS WITH MANY VIEWERS

Pervy Kanal/Russia 1 and Russia-24, a 24/7 news channel in Russia, are owned by the federal government. Channel forms and content are determined in public-service contracts that must be met. They are financed by state funds and commercials.

Together, the nation-wide public service media and the system-friendly privately owned media houses with several multimedia platforms are the dominant actors in Russia, most of them owned by oligarchs with close relations to the top power hierarchy in the Kremlin.

Foreign editor Petr Fedorov explained that the mission of the popular Pervy Kanal/Russia Channel 1 and Russia-24 is to support the Russian state. In their daily journalistic coverage the staff must support Russia, the system and its interests. If they fail they are not considered true Russian journalists.

According to some of the Russian editors interviewed, large Russian news media are not directly controlled editorially but are indirectly controlled through the Temnik list which means “agenda” and is the Kremlin’s informal digest of the week’s essential news. A kind of “guidance” based on briefings and phone calls without notes.

The existence of this kind of indirect editorial control was, however, dismissed by both Petr Fedorov and the editor-in-chief Maxim Dodonov from Zvezda TV, a national TV channel owned by the ministry of defence covering the Russian military. The two editors underlined that they have full editorial freedom. They set fully professional editorial standards for themselves and their staff.

Maxim Dodonov described Zvezda TV as mainly news about the Russian military, spiced with a little foreign news, political talk shows and other entertaining programme types to attract viewers. The editorial guideline is patriotism, with the emphasis on the younger viewers. The editor-in-chief explained that the young Russian generation has a positive approach to the military and it is the ambition of Zvezda TV to support this attitude in its editorial style. It does not, however, act as a public relations organ for the Russian military – it has its own communication departments and media platforms.

According to the editor-in-chief, the Zvezda editorial office does not need to force patriotism onto its viewers: this already runs in their blood. Instead, the TV station honours and commemorates the fallen soldiers of World War II and other heroes, supports Russian family values and core values and tries to show the young generation what good behaviour is.

3.3 THE PUBLIC MEDIA IN TOWNS AND REPUBLICS

In north-western Russia alone – a vast area of 1,066,500 km² – there are hundreds of small and middle-sized TV and radio channels, newspapers in print, often weeklies and web media that are publicly owned by the republic governments and, for instance, by the town government in St Petersburg and, to a limited extent, co-owned by private investors. The media are partly financed by public funds and commercials. The number of viewers, listeners and readers is high, especially outside the metropolis of St Petersburg, but the editors did not mention any precise number of viewers and listeners.

The TV and radio stations are controlled through detailed public-service contracts that must be met – as in the Nordic countries. They also cooperate with the communication departments of the republic and town governments. The interviews did not specify how this cooperation works.

In principle, the regional state media like the TV and radio stations Sampo TV – 360 grader in Petrozavodsk and LOT and NTV in St Petersburg are patriotic, primarily covering news in social developments, business news and everyday life in the cities and extensively covering the seven republics of north-western Russia. They get most of their limited foreign coverage from the news agencies and their national political material from the head offices in Moscow, including the coverage of the Scandinavian countries, but not Finland. The primary station “shareholders” are the regional authorities, and their editorial goals are centred on describing and supporting the doings of the governor and the community institutions. The TV stations prioritise the coverage of news “that helps improve living conditions in the regions”; the approach is positive. Editor-in-chief Andrey Rayev from Sampo TV in Karelia explained the editorial concept like this:

“We form a TV channel with the intention to cover life in the republic objectively. We follow the agenda of the authorities but strive to meet the professional standards of good journalism, for instance, having two or more sources.”

The editor-in-chief of LOT in St Petersburg, Andrey Radin, said that he does not understand the mission of the Western media and their journalistic methods. The editor finds that the Western media constantly seek to undermine society instead of being a constructive and responsible actor contributing to better institutions, empowering their elected leaders and improving the living conditions of the population.

3.4 **NEUTRAL, INDEPENDENT AND LIBERAL MEDIA ON DIFFERENT PLATFORMS**

In small provincial towns like Kondopoga in Karelia, republic capitals like Petrozavodsk and St Petersburg and in Russia's centre of power Moscow, private, independent and liberal media are published as papers in print, online newspapers – and to a smaller extent also as TV and radio. Some of them are business media in print and on the web but are also privately owned society-descriptive news media. However, their reader, viewer and sales figures are relatively limited compared to the state media and the large Russian population of some 147 million.

Regional private media like the business papers Karelskaya Gubernia and Stolitsa na Onego in Karelia seek to deliver professional daily news coverage of the communities. Their journalistic form is popular, based on breaking news and news bites and focusing on politics, crime, culture, business development, tabloid topics and famous people, especially heroes. This is what readers are looking for and will pay for, according to the editors.

Stolitsa na Onego (approx. 25,000 daily unique visitors in May 2018) is only published on the web and social media. The editorial office follows the news flow day and night; among other things, they work in two shifts to monitor other news media like the Finnish public service station YLE in Russian and the flow on the social media platforms. When the journalists find some useful news they copy it. This kind of media concept only just pays off, nothing more.

Even though Stolitsa na Onego is privately owned and independent the editor-in-chief Natalja Zakharchuk told us that it has independence with limitations:

“In Russia in my opinion, you cannot talk about total independence because the media is controlled by the owner, the advertisers and very often the authorities. But if we find a good, critical story I check up on facts to be 100 percent sure – and then we publish the story. It is okay with most of the private companies, but more problematic when it comes to the authorities. They react strongly to any kind of criticism. It could mean that the next interview will be difficult to get.”

The logo for Yandex, featuring the word "Яндекс" in a stylized font with a red "Я" and black "ндекс".

The youth and other population groups in cities prefer the three dominant Russian social media: Yandex.ru, VKontakte.com and Odnoklassniki.ru as their primary news suppliers.

The dailies Delovoy Petersburg (distribution 27,000 in June 2017), the nation-wide Kommersant (distribution 120,000 in October 2017) and Vedomosti (distribution 65,000 and 300,000 daily unique visits on the web in October 2017) in Moscow are produced and based on the universal ideals of critical, balanced and informative journalism and news stories. The three newspapers are run on commercial terms, with the business media Vedomosti, for example, generating 70 percent of its revenue from advertisements and the rest from newspaper sales and paywall income. That makes them vulnerable to, for instance, advertisement boycotts from the major state advertisers. Deputy editor-in-chief Kirill Kharatyan explained that his newspaper sometimes suffers from such a boycott reaction from a large state bank after critical coverage, for instance. After a while, however, the state advertisers start advertising again, but they have sent a clear Temnik message.

In 2017, the deputy editor-in-chief and the owner/editor-in-chief of Delovoy Petersburg, Maxim Vasiukov, both concluded independently that the free environment they worked in has grown smaller since 2014 when Russia annexed Crimea. The two editors agreed that the freedom of the press in Russia is gradually being restricted through a number of sophisticated means.

3.5 THE CRITICAL MEDIA

Russia does, however, have quite a few critical news media published as dailies, radio channels and on the web. The ownerships are complex and varied. With departments all over Russia, the critical radio station Echo Moskvy is, for instance, 66 percent owned by Gazprom Media while its remaining shares are owned by private and foreign investors. The radio station Echo Moskvy is independent, critical and loves a good debate, but does not challenge the system directly.

The famous and system-critical daily Novaya Gazeta (distribution 300,000) is privately owned. The oligarch Alexander Lebedev used to be its main investor (he also owned the London Evening Standard and The Independent), but when he withdrew in June 2017 the question of ownership became unclear, according to Diana Kachalova, editor-in-chief of the St Petersburg branch of the Novaya Gazeta.

Founded by its present editor-in-chief Alexander Gorskov in 1999, the ultramodern and internationally known private web media and media house Fontanka (250,000 unique visitors a day in May 2017) is owned by Azhur Media. Fontanka has a critical approach but does not challenge the system directly; the editorial office brings up a number of cases based on qualified investigative journalism – often strongly challenging the men of power in the St Petersburg area.

Critical media are also published in the province of north-western Russia. A few are critical of the system, but most merely question the way the regional and local men of power manage their power positions. And they are persistent. What they all have in common is a limited number of readers, strained financing – and they are seen as important voices in their communities.

This was the case for the small weekly Novaja Kondopoga (distribution 2,000 in May 2018), for instance. For decades, the small editorial office has challenged the town and regional leaders with its journalism while suffering from constant political and financial pressure – but managed to secure financial support from Russian funds at the yearly award ceremonies.

In the provincial capital of Karelia, Petrozavodsk, a regional version of the web media 7x7 – Horizontal Russia is produced. 7X7 builds on an NGO structure and receives foreign capital in spite of the risk of being labelled a foreign agent. 7X7 produces critical and agenda-setting case-based journalism, but just like everybody else is challenged by the general media development in Russia. PhD and journalist Gleb Yarovoy, who also teaches journalism at the town university, described the situation this way:

“The great demand for professional journalism that is as objective as possible which we saw just three or four years ago no longer exists – nor is there a demand for different angles, professional standards, more sources. The general atmosphere has changed; people want entertainment and highly simplified content. Putin is great, the prime minister is bad. Westerners are enemies. We also have internal enemies – foreign agents.”

In the big cities and on the national level we see a market for and a public awareness of quality journalism. In recent decades the private media Fontanka and Novaya Gazeta have published revelatory stories that have attracted great attention across Russia. Editor-in-chief Alexander Gorskov from fontanka.ru and deputy editor-in-chief Andrey Lipsky from Novaya Gazeta both conclude that the Russian media system still offers ways of producing and publishing critical journalism. As an example, Fontanka proved that a squad of Russian mercenaries used by Russia in the war in Syria was hired out by an oligarch. This was illegal.

Since the fall of the Soviet Union, the Novaya Gazeta has practised critical investigative journalism at great personal risk to the journalists involved. Since 2000, the media house has lost six editorial workers including Anna Politkovskaja in 2006 plus two in Chechenia and two in East Ukraine some years ago. Nonetheless, in October 2017 the editorial office sent two journalists to Azerbaijan to carry out critical research into a possible connection between Azerbaijan and the murder of the Panama Papers journalist, Daphne Caruana Galizia, in Malta.

The revelatory journalism regularly published by the two media sometimes gains international impact. The Novaya Gazeta was the first to document that Russian soldiers were stationed in the Donbas region in the East Ukraine even through president Putin and the authorities denied it. This they no longer deny. The newspaper was also the first to document the existence of troll factories in Russia. In recent years, Fontanka has published important disclosures of heavy corruption in St Petersburg where the orthodox church is also deeply involved. The revelation put Fontanka very close to the red line in today's Russia but it did so anyway.

3.6 A LARGE MEDIA SYSTEM IN TRANSFORMATION

As in almost any country on the planet the Russian news media are severely challenged by the breakdown of business models, urbanisation, digitalisation and the very different urban lifestyle of the younger Russian generation and their media consumption based on social platforms. Professor Ivan Kurilla said in June 2017:

“The media content is more raw and radical than the reality, also on Facebook, but most Russians understand the nuances. The majority of the common people do not share the opinions of the state media. People are suspicious of the media which, for their part, are suffering from a deep credibility crisis.”

The professor says that one of the most important reasons is that youth – and also other population groups in cities all over the country – prefer the three dominant Russian social media: Yandex.ru, VKontakte.com and Odnoklassniki.ru as their primary news suppliers. To a large extent, they also use the foreign platforms Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and blogs. The depth of the transformation can be illustrated by the fact that the young deputy director, Dmitry Kulistikov, from the large 24/7 state news channel, Russia-24, said that he did not watch the Russian TV channels even though he leads one of them. His favourite TV channel was YouTube.

4.0

Media manipulation in East and West

BY LARS KABEL

Words create reality. Media manipulation in the Nordic countries and Europe as well as in Russia consists of specific communicative acts and methods with an aim to influence and dictate current media coverage, and consequently the articulation of important social conditions. Often with a political purpose and to support the present men of power and their position of power, also the popularly elected.

Almost all the sources, oral and written, in this study define Russia as a society with large-scale media manipulation extensively controlled by a state propaganda machine, and where huge private and public financial resources and advanced new technology are used to considerable effect. The social starting point of the information and propaganda systems is to form cohesion around political and cultural values. Both independent and dependent sources describe unanimously the Russian propaganda machine as having a high impact on the choice of media topics, perspectives and sources and as such, it plays a decisive role in writing the public agenda and discourse in Russia.

When it comes to Nordic media coverage of Russian news and vice-versa, the role of media manipulation, planned disinformation and misinformation is important and thus described below. This study has not uncovered any examples of Russian manipulation of coverage in the Nordic news media in 2018 and preceding years – which would also be a very difficult task. That would be a vast and complex field to study, more relevant to intelligence services than to us.

But in order to fully understand the context of the news media and the media coverage of the four Nordic countries and Russia, however, media manipulation was (and is) a relevant factor.

4.1 CONTROL OF MEDIA CONTENT WITHIN RUSSIA

According to the interviewees, direct censorship of media content does not occur in a Russia where freedom of expression is protected by the constitution. But as one of the editors-in-chief explained: “More sophisticated means are used”. The methods are generally well-known, they are continuously mentioned in the Russian media and public debates, and the interviewed editors and the two professors all wanted to talk about them, but in quite different ways. The most frequent means are: Temnik, the Red Line, the Stop List and an expectation of patriotic behaviour. One of several key tools in the influence system is trolls and troll factories.

Temnik means “theme – agenda”, with connotations to the Russian word for darkness: “temnota”. Temnik is a kind of guidance that the Russian authorities diffuse to media managers and further out to staff. Temnik is described as the Kremlin’s unofficial list of important weekly stories; Temnik is a briefing with relevant topics to cover during the week and suggests good sources to back up the stories. They are not orders but inspirational stories, and after a Temnik briefing the editor will know what the system expects this week – where the line goes, so to speak. According to our sources, most of the editors follow this guidance. Temnik is used by and aimed at both the state media and the private news media. Temnik is a verbal list, no notes are taken, and it is practised through meetings or phone calls.

The experienced media editor Fedor Gavrolov from the private media house RBK-daily regional branches gave his version of Temnik in June 2017:

“The old practice from the Soviet time – ‘the telephone regulation’ – is still up and running. You’ll receive a call from someone above. They’ll tell you to do something and you don’t have the power to resist. Very often, the call comes from the very powerful Presidents Administration. This administration has a special division responsible for the media; the efficient running and development of the media is not their responsibility – theirs is to ensure the media remain loyal and follow the regulations and the agenda.”

The Red Line marks the borderline of topics – certain issues with special importance to the men of power in the Kremlin, the Putin Administration in particular. It is not a physical or regulated phenomenon: the line moves through time, and – although an abstraction – it is clearly demarcated, and all media professionals can describe where the red line goes right now. Currently, it stops at critical articles on Russia’s politics and practice towards Crimea and East Ukraine, the private life of Vladimir Putin, the financial transactions of the Putin family and certain types of questions about the Russian Orthodox Church. These topics are a no-go. Corruption is not on the red side of the red line unless it concerns Vladimir Putin’s family.

Crossing that line is known to have serious consequences for the media or the editor involved: advertising boycotts, dismissals or media closings, even when normally system-loyal media are involved.

In June 2017 Fedor Gavrolov, the editor-in-chief of RBK-daily regional branches, mentioned that it was then unclear who owned and controlled the national media group where he was employed. One year before, RBK was managed by a group of editors who chose to publish information on the properties owned by

Vladimir Putin, his family and friends – inspired by the Panama Papers. The entire management was fired, and when the new group of editors continued down that same alley they were fired, too. Then the oligarch who owned the RBK media house at the time put it up for sale. According to Fedor Gavrolov, the men in power lost their patience and wanted to change the newspaper's ownership.

Even though the consequences of crossing the red line can be severe the critical news media in Russia do, however, get involved in borderline journalism. Editor-in-chief Alexander Gorskov from fontanka.ru and deputy editor-in-chief Andrey Lipsky from Novaya Gazeta both conclude that the Russian media system still offers ways of producing and publishing critical journalism. However, Alexander Gorskov told us that usually they do not cross the red line, even though they are strongly opposed to the phenomenon. As the editor-in-chief put it: "We do that because in the end, we will win."

The Stop List is a list of the media's major advertisers, and it is expected that their financial support will give them the right to special treatment. Natalja Zakharchuk, editor-in-chief of the modern web media Stolitsa na Onego in Petrozavodsk described the Stop List in May 2018:

"The list is no secret in Russia. You put your advertisers on a list and you do not write bad news about them. Most Russian media do not interfere with their main advertisers."

Trolls and Troll Factories are individuals and offices/companies who bombard social media platforms – 24/7 – with manipulated content whose hidden intent is to harm and destroy. This could also be virtual attacks in the shape of personal harassment. Trolls are paid bloggers/employers working to promote a special political interest or stance through exposure, often in a professional way and on a large scale.

The methods they use are false identities and fake Facebook groups, robots and personally targeted interaction with manipulated responses, but they also resort to more ingenious types of manipulation targeted at particularly responsive recipient groups. This could be a credible Facebook profile communicating enthusiastically in an informal tone on the platform most of the time, with examples of complete misinformation occasionally interspersed. Not all of it is heavy propaganda.

Back in 2012, the news media disclosed that trolls and entire troll factories employing a lot of people existed in Russia. These factories produced (and produce) enormous volumes of manipulated social media content. It was (and is) difficult to trace the money behind the trolling activities but many people point at the Russian central administration with loyal oligarchs acting as straw men.



The Russian whistleblower Lyudmila Savchuk and the Finnish journalist Jessikka Aro, YLE, who published critical investigative journalism revealing Russia's increasing use of internet trolls and misinformation. The photo of Jessikka Aro is manipulated by Russian trolls based on a photo of her own taken from Facebook (Photo: Lars Kabel and the internet).

In 2015–2016, the phenomenon harvested more attention in Russia as well as in the Nordic countries. The Finnish journalist Jessikka Aro, YLE, published critical investigative journalism revealing “Russia’s increasing and well-organised use of internet trolls, misinformation and the active pursuit on social media



Et manipuleret foto, der skal vise, at Jessica Aro er i Nato's sold, hører til internettrollernes panere og mere klassiske våbenarsenal. Det oprindelige billede, der er manipuleret ind i Nato's logo, stammer fra Aros besøg på et diskotek; et billede som hun selv havde lagt på nettet.

of Finnish debaters with a critical view on the annexation of Crimea and the war in East Ukraine, in particular” (Politiken, March 6, 2017). Jessica Aro also published research articles like *The cyberspace war: propaganda and trolling as warfare tools* (CrossMark, 2016). Subsequently, Jessica Aro was exposed to very aggressive and threatening viral harassment by Russian internet trolls.

In 2015, the Russian journalist and activist Lyudmila Savchuk worked for some months at a troll factory in St Petersburg, the Internet Research Agency. After that, she stood forward as a whistleblower and described how they worked in shifts at this Russian troll factory. Her information attracted great attention both in Russia and abroad. The disclosure stigmatised her in her own home and family as anti-patriotic.

Patriotism and self-censorship are not phenomena expressed physically in Russia; for instance, to our knowledge no written manual exists describing the good patriotic behaviour of a media professional. However, the phenomena are mentioned as key words for media manipulation – in two quite different ways. According to numerous sources, patriotism is a main guiding star in Russia; editors at Russian state media and private system-loyal newspapers expect their employees to be patriotic, follow a patriotic path and support orthodox religious values in their daily journalistic work. What this actually means is interpreted in countless ways.

According to the Russian editors from the state media that we interviewed in 2017 and 2018, being a patriot and patriotic behaviour did not seem to be forced upon

them. They obviously had a shared and common understanding that this was (and is) the right way for a Russian editor or journalist to act.

As for self-censorship, it was clearly different. We did not ask our interviewees specifically about self-censorship, and none of the thirty editors or two professors highlighted self-censorship as a key phenomenon in the Russian media landscape. Nevertheless, quite a few critical foreign observers did (or do) but without being able to document their understanding of the nature of self-censorship, of course.

In his report *Truth vs Truth* (NJC, 2017) project manager Malcolm Dixelius concluded the following about the Russian media system:

“The development of journalism in post-Soviet Russia over the last decades, the situation for independent journalism and freedom of speech have taken a turn to the worse. The study reveals a very lopsided media situation and a clear tendency towards politicised journalism, sometimes bordering on propaganda.” (Dixelius, 2017: 46).

4.2 RUSSIAN INFLUENCE OUTSIDE RUSSIA

In 2018 a NATO unit, the NATO StratCom CoE (Strategic Communication Centre of Excellence), in Riga in Latvia published a report: *About Russia's (Dis)Information Activities Against Nordic-Baltic Region. Russia's Footprint in the Nordic-Baltic Information Environment 2016/2017*.

In its report, the NATO unit described the objectives and methods behind the Russian attempts to influence the Nordic and Baltic countries. These included:

“The main tools for advancing Russia's aims are identified as: Russia's domestic and international media system; the Internet and social media; government-organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs), Russia's compatriot policy; pipeline diplomacy; economic interdependency, the encouragement of political radicalisation and polarisation of Western societies; intelligence operations; and demonstrations of military force.” (NATO StratCom, 2018: 8).

Meanwhile, at a conference in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on November 20, 2018: *#Misinformation #Propaganda #FakeNews – A Danish Perspective*, the Danish foreign minister, Anders Samuelsen, said that the Danish intelligence at that time had not discovered any Russian attempts to influence the political process in Denmark through media manipulation, systematic misinformation, trolls, etc.

In the autumn of 2018, shortly after the Swedish general election, a Swedish report, *Smearing Sweden* by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, concluded that “the Swedish election was not exposed to any considerable influence from abroad”.

“Our research found that international far-right and Russian state-supported media outlets are involved in efforts to smear Sweden’s reputation internationally, galvanising xenophobia in North America and Europe, and undermining trust in electoral democracy. But these efforts did not appear to focus directly on influencing the election results.” (*Smearing Sweden*, 2018: 12).

“Our research identified very few international attempts to influence the Swedish election through online platforms, disinformation, coordinated amplification tactics or harassment campaigns. While activities could have been conducted on closed groups and encrypted channels that lie outside the realm of our research, the public information space was not targeted by significant foreign campaigns.” (*Smearing Sweden*, 2018: 19).

This information is in line with the information given by the many editors and two professors during our interviews in 2017 and 2018: that in Russia, there was (and is) limited interest in the Nordic countries as a whole and in any of the Nordic countries specifically, with certain Finnish topics being the exception. Interest in Denmark was the least – especially when it comes to topics like national policy and international security policy.

Apparently, we are outside or on the outskirts of internationally targeted Russian media manipulation.

The globally targeted system of Russian influence on the news media and community agenda in Europe, the USA and elsewhere is beyond the scope of this report. This includes the media RT (formerly Russia Today) and Sputnik (web and multimedia channel) with their alternative perspective on the world view given by the Western media.



Layoutes i en boks med fotos Photo 8: One of the pictures with caricature dogs dressed as prostitute
(Photo: EU East StratCom).

NORDIC MEDIA MANIPULATION IN DENMARK

An example of manipulation in Nordic countries from autumn 2017 consists of articles with photos from Russian web media telling about the existence of animal brothels in Denmark with dog prostitutes, and the articles were illustrated with caricature dogs dressed up as prostitutes.

The EU unit of East StratCom found the articles on Russian websites; one of its jobs is to monitor the Russian media to find examples of fake news and planned misinformation. East StratCom runs a website where it publishes identified misinformation supplemented with background information on the research. The animal brothel article with photos was published on the site at the beginning of September 2017 as an example of how the Russian media use planned manipulation to create a distorted picture of Denmark/Europe. The EU unit concluded that the text and photos were first published on a French satire website, SecretNews.fr, and then copied by East European and Russian internet sites.

On September 9, 2017, the articles, photos and the case were mentioned in news articles in Denmark in major national dailies like Jyllands-Posten, Ekstra Bladet, Politiken and B.T. “Russian media: the Danes want to open animal brothels”. This was just before the weekend of Sunday, September 10 when the Danish minister for foreign affairs, Anders Samuelsen, announced that vacancies for new cyber diplomats were being advertised, marking the beginning of intensified efforts to combat misinformation. Specific reference was made to the animal brothel articles.

And the “case” spread – and so did the quotations. In January 2018, a report from the United States Senate was published mentioning the animal brothel coverage as an example of how Russian media paint a distorted picture of the West with an aim to undermine our democracy. The daily newspaper Jyllands-Posten featured an article on the conclusions of the report entitled “Russia spreading false story of animal brothels in Copenhagen to weaken the democracy of the West” (January 16, 2018). In March 2018, an article from the news agency Ritzau was published in many Danish newspapers with the headline: “Claus Hjort (minister of defence, Denmark) sounds the alarm about fake news from Russia”; the animal brothel story was highlighted as an example. And finally, on November 30, 2018, at a large conference on fake news at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, the Danish minister of foreign affairs and the minister of defence both mentioned the story as an alarming example of planned Russian misinformation.

It took only a moment for the story to spread from a French satire website, via East European and Russian websites to ministers and ministries in Denmark and into the United States Senate. The story had a long life – more than one and a half years.

According to the sources, the animal brothel case was never covered in the major Russian news media, the article was not published. The case never made it to the Russian public agenda. No sources claimed the opposite.

5.0

Coverage of Russia in Finnish Media

BY ANDERS MÅRD

Finland

This study – Coverage of Russia in Finnish Media – is analysing and discussing the coverage of Russia by dominant Finnish daily news media, both quantitatively and qualitatively. The coverage comes from the two major newspapers, Helsingin Sanomat (HS) and Aamulehti and the business newspaper Kauppalehti plus the popular online news websites Ilta-Sanomats and Yleisradios (YLE). The TV news items come from the private MTV3 at 22 o'clock and YLE at 20.30 o'clock.

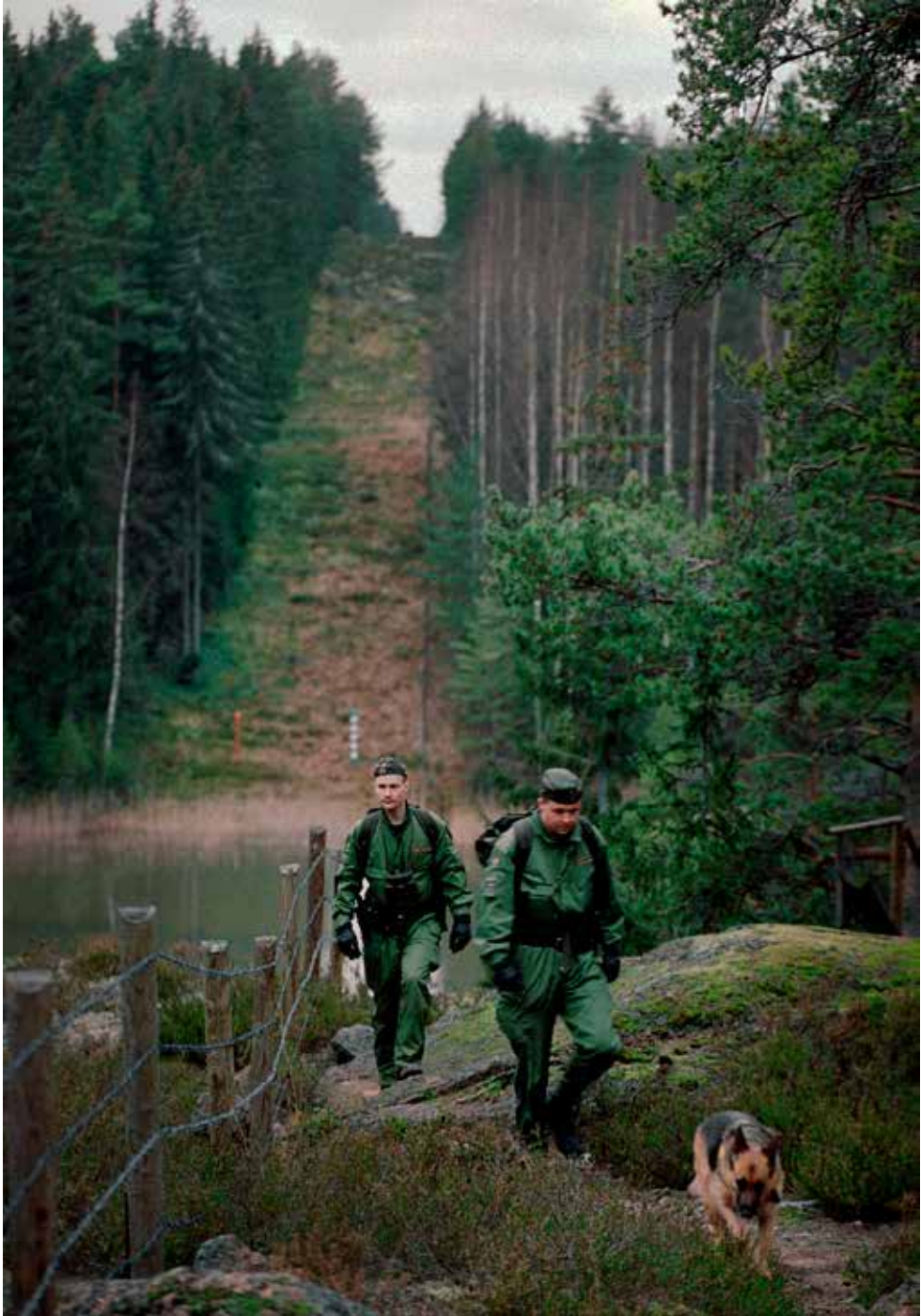
The material for the study was collected over two periods: three weeks in March 2018 during the presidential election and the month of May. The observations and conclusions in this report build upon critical examination of a large number of media texts.

In total, this study collected 417 articles and TV reports on Russia most of them highly relevant, others not. 140 items about the presidential election in March and 277 from May 2018. The material was quantitatively analysed through a coding manual with 18 categories developed by head of the project, Ass. Professor Lars Kabel from the Danish School of Media and Journalism. In a second phase, 107 articles and 33 TV reports were chosen for a close qualitative reading and analysis.

In general, the Finnish reporting of Russia was very critical and often negative. When Russia was described as a country with opportunities it was almost exclusively about economy and Finnish investments.

The reporting often dealt with international conflicts and Russia represented the counterpart. Russia as an antagonist was a frequent theme in the reporting where a division into “west” and “east” was clearly visible. In material dealing with the military security around the Baltic Sea, Russia was framed as a potential enemy.

The Finnish media houses have a long tradition of prioritising the coverage of Russia. The two countries are neighbours; they share a long border and a common history where the economic cooperation is strong. The coverage has always been on a broad scale with Russia material being published not only in the foreign news section, but also on the domestic, cultural, sports and editorial pages. A tradition this study can also confirm. But at the same time, the number of texts dealing with Russia seems to have declined since the 1990s.



Finland has a very long green border to Russia. Some areas the border is traditionally guarded by guard patrols with dogs. New technologies are used in all the border crossings. (Photo Leif Rosas, Ritzau Scanpix)

5. 1 **DOMINATED BY NEWS AND METROPOLES**

The Russia material in this study period was largely dominated by news journalism. We saw many examples of news analyses and editorials, but only a few reportages and long interviews.

The majority of the texts were written by the medias' own journalists working in Finland. Own correspondents and stringers based in Russia produced 14 percent of the material.

The geographical variation of the material was poor and strictly concentrated on the metropolises Moscow or St Petersburg. The Finnish media houses in this study have two correspondents stationed permanently in Moscow and three stringers working in St Petersburg.

We also discovered a lack of important society topics: Agriculture, IT, NGOs, regional policy, the labour market, education and healthcare did not receive any attention.

Monitoring the presidential election in March the news was naturally dominated by Russian domestic politics. Other major topics were Russian foreign policy, international politics and business.

Social conditions in Russian society did not receive much news attention. Stories about everyday life were lacking.

In May, international conflicts in relation to Ukraine often made the headlines. More specifically, the Ukrainian themes dealt with the staged assassination of the Russian journalist Arkady Babchenko, the opening of the bridge connecting Russia with the Crimea and the report on the passenger plane MH-17. It is worth noting that the war in eastern Ukraine was constantly below the news threshold also in May.

The tragic case of the MH-17 illustrates the antagonistic relationship nowadays between Russia and the West. A case where Russia is the accused whereas the West is constantly presenting new evidence – proofs that Russia sees as propaganda and with Moscow writing alternative narratives about the tragedy.

The staged assassination of Arkady Babchenko in Kiev was eagerly reported on the last three days of May. Many media houses immediately agreed with the Ukrainian authorities that Putin's Russia was behind the murder. This

understanding was mostly implicit in the choice of words and headlines. Hardly anyone questioned the Kiev statements of the case on the first day of reporting.

The Russian interior policy and international policy were the other major topics in May. There were also sports and culture reports, but everyday life was once again missing.

The journalists themselves played a surprisingly important role as experts. The second largest genre group in this report was columns written by the media houses' own journalists. In general, the journalists actively worked as Russia experts. Other experts were cited to a lesser degree.

The biggest group used as sources in this report belongs to the most influential elite in society (politicians, civil servants and military people). Previous research (Pietiläinen, 1998) also showed that usually, this elite is quoted most often in the Finnish Russia reporting.

The Finnish Russia reporting has been criticised for interviewing ordinary Russian citizens far too rarely. This survey can confirm this. A serious shortcoming in the reporting was that the material concentrated too much on Russia as a state whereas the viewpoints of its citizens were ignored.

In Pietiläinen's material from 1998, private citizens were used as sources in 26 percent of the material. In this survey, the ratio did not exceed 15 percent during the reporting on the presidential election in March. In May, the ratio dropped even more, to seven percent.

5.2 THE RETURN OF THE TSAR

This survey shows that the Finnish reporting on Russia was focusing on President Vladimir Putin. There is also a consensus in the reporting on Putin as an irrational and authoritarian president pursuing unlimited power and not the wellbeing of the Russian society.

Everyone seemed to agree that Russia is a threat and that the country is developing in the wrong direction. Comparisons to the Soviet Union were common, sometimes even to Russia during the Tsars. Voices with other opinions rarely made it to the scene and this consensus sometimes gave a one-track reporting with no alternative thinking.

The reporting on the presidential election in March was strictly focusing on the only favourite of the election: President Putin was the key player in 57 percent of the material. In May, the President played a more modest role. That month, Putin was the central player in 20 percent of the material.

A trend also reflected in the headlines. The word "Putin" occurred in 28 percent of the headlines on the web and in the newspapers in May, compared to 56 percent in March.

In the media images that were created, Putin appeared as a threatening and unpredictable president. The narrative was about a president and his use of an aggressive foreign policy to increase his own popularity at home – making the Russian people forget about their everyday problems. There was also a consensus that Putin's Russia is becoming increasingly authoritarian and that the country continues to be a threat to the western countries.

Reporting on the presidential election was generally very critical. The texts expressed a big disappointment in a democracy that does not work in Russia. There was a consensus in the material that the presidential election was not a real election compared to Western democratic standards. At the same time, explanations were missing as to why the Russian political system is so "different" and how it works on its own terms.

Many pre-election reports were discussing the turnout and how the authorities sought to increase the numbers by using different suspicious methods. Again, there was a consensus on the problem and the texts reinforced the perception of an election controlled by the Kremlin in Moscow.

The report also agreed that electoral fraud occurred. A fraud that was described as something natural during Russian elections. At the same time, it was agreed that the fraud did not affect the actual result as to who won the election.

Finnish media reported diligently on the nerve agent attack that occurred in early March and targeted former Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter in England. However, just a few texts made a direct link to the Russian presidential election.

The week after the election, much of the reporting was focusing on what Putin's policy would look like over the next six years. The media took a very critical view on Putin's reform promises.

The president was instead described as a cynical politician only interested in retaining power, most likely even after the year of 2024. The material painted a picture of a monolithic political system, totally dominated by the president. Articles on the power struggle within Putin's team were missing.

Many analyses stressed Russia's unpredictability on the international scene and expected the same policy to continue. Some authors believed that Putin would bring conflicts and war. There were tendencies of panic-stricken pictures that only wanted to confirm a Finnish stereotype of "Russia, the historical enemy".

In this context it is important to stress that the Finnish reporting mainly consisted of traditional news journalism based on interviews with various experts and that Russia's voice was also heard. The reporting followed the basic rules for journalism and can by no means be accused of propaganda.



Reporting in the Finnish media on the presidential election was generally very critical. The texts expressed a big disappointment in a Russian democracy that does not work (Photo: Nikolay Gontar).

5.3 **MORE NEGATIVITY AND THE STRANGE 'OTHER'**

Finnish journalism is criticised for being far too careful in their Russia reporting; a journalistic cautiousness based on the country's complicated historical relationship with the great neighbouring country to the East. A tradition that has faded a lot in recent decades, but not disappeared completely.

This survey wants to claim that the Finnish Russia reporting is not characterised by excessive caution – rather that the proportion of negativity in the reporting has increased.

The Finnish researcher Jukka Pietiläinen's report from 2011 analysed the Russia reporting from a positive-negative point of view. Pietiläinen concluded that Russia was not treated more negatively in the Finnish media than in other countries.

In 1998, 43 percent of the news material about Russia was considered negative. A proportion close to average in the international survey that Pietiläinen's results were part of. By 2010, the proportion of negative coverage of Russia was reduced. That year, only 20 percent of the articles were classified as negative. The proportion was about the same as the negative reporting in Finnish media on the USA, Sweden and Germany.

A similar survey on the proportion of negativity has not been done since 2010. This report has not examined the current material from a positive-negative point of view. But considering the political escalation between Russia and the West since 2014, it is more than likely that the negative reporting on Russia has increased in recent years. An assumption strengthened after reading the journalistic texts in this survey.

The material in this survey could not show many attempts to understand the motives behind Russia's policy, nor how Russians think and why based on their own historical and cultural traditions.

Russia in the role of "the other" has always played a central role in Finnish identity-forming. Russia has often represented "what we Finns are not". A tradition that also affects modern Finnish journalism. Reporting on political, economic and cultural issues in Russia journalists quite often choose to stress features that seem alien and different.

A constant duplication of Russia as “the strange other” has consequences, too. Such reporting only strengthens the stereotypical image of a dangerous, unpredictable and incomprehensible neighbouring country.

In general, the Finnish Russia reporting could use more vivid curiosity and less one-track thinking. The media houses should also raise their journalistic ambitions. Finland cannot afford a poor coverage of a neighbour such as Russia.

6.0

Coverage of Russia in Swedish Media

BY JONATHAN NORSTRÖM

Sweden

In this study of the coverage of Russia in Swedish news media, material from eight different media outlets regarding three different themes in 2018 has been analysed. The eight media are: Dagens Nyheter, Svenska Dagbladet, Göteborgs-Posten and the business newspaper Dagens Industri. The two most viewed TV news programmes: Sveriges Televisions Rapport and Aktuellt, and the most popular online news websites from Aftonbladet and Sveriges Radio.

In total, this study collected 417 articles and TV reports: 92 on the presidential election in March, 254 in May and 54 articles about the analysed case from autumn 2018.

The first theme was the coverage of the Russian presidential election in March. The analysed media highlighted that the election result was obvious beforehand and that Vladimir Putin was always the given winner. The main purpose of having an election seemed to be giving the rest of the world the impression that Russia has a functional democracy and that Putin is a legitimate leader. The only outstanding question was how high the voter turnout would be. A high voter turnout would increase the president's legitimacy. The Swedish angle was for the most part absent in the media coverage (only 6 out of 92 journalistic units had a Swedish angle on the Russian presidential election).

President Putin was in focus in 64 percent of the analysed units. He received a clear majority of the votes in the election, which the Swedish media partly explained with Putin's special advantages over his opponents and instances of fraud. From that point of view Putin appeared as a kind of dictator influencing the election results. Less frequently the journalists chose the angle of a president genuinely popular among many, and to explain why. Several of the media outlets had reporters present in Russia giving them the opportunity to hear what ordinary people said about the election. "Ordinary people in Russia" was also the single largest category of cited sources.



The much-discussed brochure: “Om krisen eller kriget kommer” from Myndigheten för Samhällskydd och Beredskap (If the crises or war comes) distributed to all Swedish households. The brochure did not specifically mention Russia as the feared enemy, but the Swedish Minister of Defence did (Photo Morten Rasmussen, Ritzau Scanpix).

6.1 AN ELITIST APPROACH

The study continued by looking at the entire coverage of Russia in May and the most sensational news event was the strange story about the journalist Arkady Babchenko.

The randomly selected month showed that the coverage of Russia is mainly focusing on politics, conflicts and people from the elite. The most commonly cited sources were politicians, government authorities, experts and interest groups. However, it is worth noting that a great part of the sources ended up in the “other” category. Ordinary citizens were rarely used as sources and only one article had everyday Russian lifestyle as the dominant theme. The coverage of Russia thus has a strong focus on those in power and their doings. The bulk of the reporting in May consisted of news, and opinionated material was much less common. About 10 percent of the content was made by the correspondents in Russia. They produced six of the seven reportages that were made in total during the month.

Vladimir Putin was considerably less prominent in May than during the time of the presidential election (he was in focus in 12 percent of the material). Even Babchenko was more in focus than the president. This suggests that Putin despite his important position does not personify the entire country. Over 20 percent of the material had a Swedish angle. During this month, the Swedish government decided to stay away from the inauguration of the World Cup football tournament in Russia due to the situation in the country regarding democracy and human rights.

From a national security perspective, Russia was presented as a potential threat to Sweden, and the Swedish government shared this view which was confirmed in a defence agreement with the United States and Finland during the research period to curb this threat.

When the media outlets reported on Babchenko's faked murder, at first, they seemed to insinuate that he had been murdered on orders from the Kremlin and they referred to earlier cases when dissident journalists in Russia had been assaulted as a consequence of their work. When the truth came out – that Babchenko, in fact, was not dead – the media focus shifted primarily to Ukraine's dubious behaviour and away from Russia.

6.2 THE RUSSIAN INTERFERENCE IN THE SWEDISH ELECTION

The purpose of the third study was to investigate a specific subject in the media coverage that connected Sweden and Russia. In September, general elections were held in Sweden and warnings sounded from different directions that Russia would try to interfere in some way. The media reported on how and why Russia would want to interfere, often with reference to other Western countries having experienced it before. During the studied time period, January 1st to August 1st (with over a month left before the election day), the media reported on one actual case when Russia was suspected to be interfering. However, the bulk of the media's coverage dealt with the question of how interference could occur. Especially the viral lies of the ever-present Russian internet trolls should be avoided by Swedish citizens. The media outlets mostly used Swedish government authorities and experts from e.g. the Swedish Defence University as sources. In some cases, Russian government representatives were given the opportunity to say that they had no intention of interfering with the election in another country.

Dagens Nyheter was the medium that revealed suspicions of Russia having intercepted the email traffic of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Member

of Parliament, Hanif Bali, was accused of having benefited Russia when he on Twitter published an email between the ministry and a newspaper columnist. Hanif Bali was suspected to have received the email from the Russians. The underlying Russian wire-tapping could not be proven, but as several commentators pointed out the suspicion was bad enough for Bali whose political career saw a setback. In the general coverage there were several warnings for the spreading of a certain Russian viewpoint or narrative. If the Russian view of Swedish society's current state got a foothold and was taken seriously it could affect the election in a way that benefited the Kremlin – which should be avoided.

A conclusion valid for the whole study is that for the most part, there is a consensus between the studied media in how they present Russia. There are, however, articles and TV segments in the coverage that appear atypical. Dagens Industri's interview (January 13th) with the Russian ambassador to Sweden, Viktor Tatarintsev, might be the best example of such an exception. In the interview the ambassador got the opportunity to dismiss the idea of a Russian threat to Sweden whereas the rest of the coverage often gave the opposite impression of Russia's intentions.

6.3 A THREAT TO ITS OWN CITIZENS

Earlier research found that Sweden views Russia as a "significant other" (Rodin, 2010), the country is presented as an antithesis to the West in the media (Nilsson & Amadeh, 2018) and this negative and threatening image of the country is left unchallenged (Bosson & Trollmâne, 2014). To a certain degree, this study can draw the same conclusions. The image of Russia in the Swedish media is generally one of a country different from Sweden, particularly when it comes to views on democracy and human rights. The country leadership thereby constitutes a threat to its own citizens, but to some extent also to the rest of the world. In several ways the image of Russia therefore becomes an opposite or antithesis to Sweden in which the Swedes can be reflected. It is hard to find examples in the coverage of similarities between the countries being highlighted or favourable contacts between the countries. However, this should not necessarily be viewed as a problem in need of a solution. It can rather be seen as a result of the media reflecting reality as it is, without embellishment.

Kabel (2017) found that the Danish media coverage focused very little on ordinary Russians and the culture in the country. Power and conflict are the topics with most attention. The same pattern is noticeable in the Swedish coverage. During the presidential election, several media outlets had correspondents in

Russia talking to ordinary citizens, but this might have been a deviation from normal conditions. In May, the randomly selected month, this perspective was overshadowed by a focus on people from the elite and high-level politics. Kabel's research also showed that Putin was often in focus and personified Russia. The Swedish media's coverage in May did not have the same strong focus on the president. He is, however, the only person shown to exhibit any power which gives the impression of a president governing his country in a vacuum; rarely do we see the people governing the country with him.

Sweden has been described as a country where russophobia and a generally negative attitude towards Russia have formed over centuries of conflicts (Burgman, 2001). Such an attitude can sometimes be glimpsed in today's media coverage. In those cases Russia appears as a "dispositional enemy" according to Ottosen's definition (1995) when the media creates an expected picture of Putin's regime as behaving aggressively, hostile and inhuman.

When the journalist Babchenko was reported murdered it was connected to his criticism of the Russian government, and the media referred to earlier cases when deaths of journalists could be traced back to the Kremlin. The image of Russia as a "dispositional enemy" was also somewhat noticeable in the coverage of Russian election interference which often confirmed the premise that Russia intended to meddle in the Swedish election, despite the country's denial. However, the fact that government authorities and other influential people warned about Russian election interference makes it easy to understand why the media gave this threat a certain level of attention. One incident in the analysed time period was also described as a suspected attempt of Russian election interference.

If Sweden is a country characterised as russophobic one can ask if it is also reflected in the media coverage. It is difficult to find some sort of objective standard to use when making an assessment like that. However, it is probably safe to say that the understanding of Russia could be strengthened by the media focusing less on the Kremlin and more on the situation for ordinary people. More can be done to explain, for example, how a leader like Vladimir Putin can be so popular. Are the Russians fundamentally different from the Swedes and do they want other things, or do they have other reasons that we do not know of? Specifically, the media outlets might be able to make better use of their correspondents. For instance, only about 10 percent of the May material was produced by correspondents. More reports from everyday Russian life would probably contribute to a balancing of the image of Russia that is so often centred on high-level politics and conflicts.

7.0

Coverage of Russia in Norwegian Media

BY ANJA AAHEIM NAPER

Norway

Russia and Norway are neighbouring countries. According to several researchers, the Russian–Norwegian neighbourly relationship has been dominated by two political approaches. One approach highlighting the importance of a good and stable neighbourly relation that promotes collaboration across the border. Another approach considering Russia a dangerous and unstable superpower in the east and this latter approach more or less corresponding with the general Western political approach to Russia.

This report examines the Norwegian media coverage of Russia. It looks at four national newspapers, two news web sites and the two biggest daily evening news aired on TV. The media outlets investigated are VG, Aftenposten, Dagbladet, Dagens Næringsliv, NRK.no and VG.no. The business paper Dagens Næringsliv was chosen because we wanted to include economical perspectives in our analyses. The others were included in the study because they are among the most read papers and news web sites in Norway. Additionally, they have a rather frequent coverage of Russia. The two daily TV evening news studied are Dagsrevyen, aired on NRK, and TV 2 Nyheterne, aired on TV 2.

In total, this study collected 358 articles and TV reports: 93 on the presidential election in March, 225 in May and 40 articles on the analyzed Frode Berg case.

The study comprises a quantitative textual analysis and a qualitative reading of a range of the texts. The codebook was elaborated by Lars Kabel and his colleagues at the Danish School of Media and Journalism.

As we wanted to look at both the media coverage of the Russian election in March 2018 as well as the media coverage a full random month, we included two periods. The periods investigated are 5 March to 25 March (two weeks prior to the election and one week after) and the entire month of May. In March, only articles directly related to the election were coded and analysed. To get an impression of what the general coverage of Russia looked like all articles on Russia were coded and analysed in May, except articles on sport results and athletes. In the case of NRK, the journalists were on strike from 14 May to 24 May. To compensate, 11 days in June were included in the NRK sample, as the NRK data would not have been complete with 11 days missing. Additionally, one specific event was selected for close reading. It was one of the remand hearings of Frode Berg in Moscow at the beginning of May. Berg is a retired Norwegian border guard who worked at the border between Russia and Norway. He was taken into custody in Moscow on December 6, 2017, accused of espionage on behalf of the Norwegian Intelligence Service. He refused at first, but on April 22, 2018, he admitted that he had been

working for the Intelligence Service. However, he argued that he was not aware of the scale of his doings. As the full coverage of the Berg case is massive, I only looked into the remand hearing in May.

The quantitative examination of all the articles revealed that the total number of articles on the Russian election consisted of 93 articles and the general coverage in May comprised 225 articles. The number of articles published by each media outlet differed significantly. During May and March alike, NRK was the media outlet with the highest number of news items, followed by VG and Aftenposten. Only a few items were published in Dagbladet, Dagens Næringsliv and TV 2 Nyheterne during both periods. Not very surprising perhaps, the news media outlets with correspondents in Moscow (NRK, Aftenposten) or a Europe correspondent responsible for Russia (VG) are also the news outlets with the highest number of news items. In general, the web sites had significantly more coverage than the newspapers, probably due to all the small news updates constantly published online on both NRK.no and VG.no.

In March, 86 percent of all items were reporting articles and only 14 percent were opinion articles. The opinion genre comprised an even smaller share in May: only six percent of all items were opinion articles. In March, the clearly most frequent genre was reportage whereas in May, the regular news story was the most frequent one. Several of the articles published during the election period dealt with stories of how ordinary people in Russia lived their lives, and illuminating social conditions in Russia, and this was mainly portrayed through reportage. The most common source in March was 'ordinary people in Russia' whereas the most frequent source in May was Russian politicians. The most common general theme in March was how the Russian election was fixed and the second most common theme was social conditions in Russia. The most frequent theme in May was military and security policies.

7.1 THE COVERAGE IN MARCH AND MAY

In March, four main themes were identified, and all of them concerned different reasons why president Putin was elected. Firstly, several articles highlighted that the Russian election was fixed and that several election officials used different methods to increase the votes for Vladimir Putin. Secondly, several articles focused on how fake news and media outlets owned by the authorities manipulated the Russian population to vote for Putin. Thirdly, several articles discussed if the other presidential candidates were not actual candidates challenging Putin. On the contrary, some of them were actually working for Putin

and playing the role of oppositional candidates to make the election appear more democratic. The last theme identified acknowledged Putin as a very popular president and sought to explain why the common Russian person voted for him. Several 'ordinary Russian people' were interviewed and they underlined that Putin had brought economic stability to Russia and that he had regained Russia's reputation as a great and respected nation. The interviewees also emphasised that Russia had turned into a safer country during the 'Putin era'.

The general coverage of Russia in May reveals that media coverage of Russia is to a large degree concentrated on Russia as a powerful and dangerous neighbour. Four frequently appearing main themes were identified during May. Firstly, several articles described Russia as a threat and focused on Putin as an aggressive president leading his country with ambitions to expand its territory. The different articles also focused rather frequently on how Norway was in a vulnerable position with regards to its strong and aggressive neighbour. In several of these articles Putin appeared as a personification of Russia and the aggressive leader of the expansion of Russian territory. In an editorial in *Aftenposten* the author writes, for example, that "Putin needs the West to be his enemy" (11.05.18). Secondly, some articles focused on the future of Russia under the newly re-elected Putin. Most agreed that the re-election was bad news for Russia and that changes under Putin would probably only get worse. Thirdly, a smaller share of the articles focused on Russia in international diplomacy and these articles were mainly concentrating on controversy. Fourthly, several articles were news that in different manners implied that Russian authorities lacked ethical standards. For example, several articles thematised how Russian authorities 'cleaned up' cities prior to the FIFA World Cup. This clean-up consisted, among other things, of killing all stray dogs and expelling homeless people from cities hosting the world cup. Russian authorities are i.e. portrayed as having poor ethical standards which contributes to a general negative portrayal of the country.

7.2 A NORWEGIAN SPY IN RUSSIA

However, an exception when it comes to portraying Russia as a threat is the particular case of Frode Berg. Berg is largely portrayed as an innocent victim of Norwegian security policy. In this case, the picture of Russia as a threat is not present at all; instead, focus is on the importance of a good and collaborative neighbourhood with Russia. The only thing threatening the neighbourly relations between Russia and Norway is, according to several media outlets, that the Norwegian Intelligence Service is trying to recruit 'anyone living in the border region to be their agent' (*Dagbladet* 04.05.18). Frode Berg was active in a project



Refugees walk alongside their bikes to the Norwegian border crossing station Storskog near Kirkenes after crossing the border from Russia. Europe is sometimes described as a chaos in Russian news media because of the pressure from foreigners and asylum seekers (Photo: Jonathan Nackstrand, Ritzau Scanpix).

that sought to collaborate across the Norwegian–Russian border and this project was by some media outlets considered ‘the most important peace project in Norway’. In a news story aired at NRK Dagsrevyen, the leader of the group ‘Get Frode home’ argues that the authorities put the local populations living close to the border in a difficult position: “The case of Frode Berg demonstrates how the Norwegian authorities put our local community in a very difficult position. It is a problem for several people in the town of Kirkenes. Many of us do not know what to think, except that we want to continue the good relationship with Russia”. In other words: the case of Frode Berg stands out by not focusing on Russia as a military aggressor but rather as a good and important neighbour and focus is on the importance of building bridges rather than building walls. It is the Norwegian intelligence authorities who represent the threat in the Frode Berg case.

This may appear as two conflicting pictures of Russia: On one hand Russia as a military aggressor, on the other a good neighbour.

7.3 THE TWO APPROACHES IN FOREIGN POLICY AND MEDIA

Summing up, the Norwegian media coverage of Russia is, with some exceptions, largely focusing on negative aspects of Russian politics and there is a lot in the articles seeking to contextualise or explain why. However, during the elections there were several attempts to look into why Russian people vote for Putin and several 'ordinary Russians' were given a voice. In general, the newspapers with a correspondent in Moscow had a more thoroughly coverage of Russia. The general coverage of Russia is focusing on hostile and negative aspects of Russian policies and the media portrayal of Russia sometimes gives the impression of a caricature. Several media outlets focus on Putin as the key aggressor, and in several articles he appears as the 'face of Russia'. However, the particular case of Frode Berg stands out as an example of a good neighbourly relationship with Russia, and the focus is on 'building bridges' between the Norwegian and the Russian community and not 'building walls'. Even if these two pictures of Russia may seem conflicting they correspond with what researchers earlier identified as the two political approaches dominating the Russian-Norwegian relationship. This indicates that the Norwegian media coverage of Russia bears similar traits with Norwegian foreign policy related to Russia.

8.0 Coverage of Russia in Danish Media

BY ASBJØRN SLOT JØRGENSEN

Denmark

Danish news consumers can access a vast supply of news about Russia and our Russian neighbours.

Albeit being varied and generally of high quality, there are significant weaknesses – or room for improvement – in the selection of news.

This report extracts findings from a broader study of the coverage of Russia in Danish news media.

The analysed news media are: the four daily morning newspapers Berlingske, Børsen, Jyllands-Posten and Politiken; the two largest news websites dr.dk and tv2.dk; and the largest daily TV newscasts of national broadcasters DR and TV 2.

The study analyses three weeks around the presidential election in March 2018 and the full month of May 2018.

From a total of more than 1700 stories, 288 were selected based on relevance. These 288 stories went through a detailed analysis of genres, sources, authors, subjects, focus. 134 of them were chosen for a more detailed qualitative reading/viewing.

For this report, we have studied all stories for three weeks on Russia's presidential election in March 2018. And all news coverage on Russia throughout May 2018. Smaller selections of other news stories from 2017–2019 have been included for reference.

8.1 COVERAGE IN MARCH AND MAY

On Sunday, March 18, 2018, 77 percent of the Russian voters re-elected Vladimir Putin as president. Everybody knew he would be re-elected. Nevertheless, the Russian election enjoyed massive attention from the Danish news media.

In general, the election is portrayed as a pseudo-election. Russia is seen as a managed democracy with a marginalised opposition and its news media under control; an autocracy with democratic elements and moreover, where the election results are distorted.

In March 2018, President Putin is everywhere in the Danish news media coverage. Only limited space and airtime are granted to other candidates or political content. (This mirrors the case in the Russian news media, being a

major point of criticism from the international observers). There is an image of Putin painted as a villain and of Russia, and the Russians, as somewhat hostile neighbours.

However, the election weeks in March 2018 were also a rare opportunity to portray and listen to the Russians, with reports from the vast part of Russia outside Moscow. A recurring theme in these reports is that our neighbours are just like us; all they want is peace on earth and a good life for their grandchildren.

Close to this, however, is a common description of Russia as a second-rank nation; economically, politically, militarily – even morally. This discourse is most prominent in the more comment-based news analyses and columns and in op-eds and editorials. Especially looking into the future, the answers revolve around corruption, conflict and inefficiency.

May 2018 was a Russian month without one single dominant media event; instead, we counted 16 events that received considerable attention plus a dozen minor ones. Two of the events take place in Russia: President Putin's reinstatement; preparations for the 2018 Soccer World Cup.

The other events do not physically take place in Russia but are directly related to Russia; among them: the expert report on the shooting down of the MH17 aircraft in 2014; the faked killing of a Russian journalist in Ukraine; continuous news reports on Russian influence on the US presidential elections; the Eurovision Song Contest; the Arctic summit in Greenland; the Ice Hockey World Championship in Herning and Copenhagen; Nord Stream II, the Russian-German gas pipeline; Danske Bank's laundering of corrupt (Russian) money; and floating Russian nuclear power plant's journey through Danish seaways.

Minor media events include Politiken's birthday portrait of German Mathias Rust, who in 1987 landed his Cessna in central Moscow; and dr.dk's multimedia report from Helsingør on the capsule from a Russian Soyuz spacecraft, used by the first Danish astronaut Andreas Mogensen back in September 2015.

Findings from May 2018:

- Putin is less visible than during the presidential elections in March.
- More than half of the stories have conflict as a news criterion.
- The newsrooms produce their own stories, with substantial inputs from agencies and other news media.
- There are virtually no on-site reports and interviews from Russia in May 2018. And ordinary Russians almost disappear as sources, in favour of Danish/Western sources and official Russian sources.
- The Danish angle is hardly seen in the election coverage; by contrast, in May's general Russia coverage there is a clear Danish angle in more than half of the stories.



The world's first floating nuclear power plant sailed through Storebælt in Denmark in May 2018. It created a lot of Danish media coverage but the power plant was harmless, there was no nuclear fuel on board (Photo: Tim Kildeborg Jensen, Ritzau Scanpix).

8.2 RUSSIA IN THE NEWS – PROVIDES SOFT POWER OPPORTUNITIES

Russian actors' actions at home and abroad receive considerable attention in the Danish news media.

Russia, for example, is prominent in the coverage of US politics in the spring of 2018, in particular related to President Trump's fight against the investigation into his Russian relations during his 2016 election campaign. In the coverage of European politics, Russia is also highly visible, for example, during the formation of a new Italian government in May 2018. And after the poisoning of Russian ex-spy Skripal, Russia took over the headlines. The crisis hijacked the political and media agendas in the UK, Europe, NATO and the USA. In Russia, media and politicians brought it into the presidential campaign.

When it comes to Danish affairs, Russia dominates the media coverage of defence, military, cyber warfare.

Danish top politicians, with Minister of Defence Claus Hjort Frederiksen in the lead, generally describe Russia as a threatening and aggressive enemy.

Even the doings of the politically neutral Danish royal family are influenced by the media coverage of Russia. In May 2018, the Danish PM makes breaking news by telling about the government's tightening in on the Crown Prince's IOC work; Frederik created Danish media frenzy by voting in favour of letting the doping-ridden Russian athletes participate in the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in 2016.

The prominence in the media coverage of politics and culture provides Russia with soft power opportunities. The news media become intermediaries between foreign actors, citizens and the political system. And it leaves an impression of what the Russians can and will do (notwithstanding what was the actual impact of the activities). This effect – that media coverage becomes part of soft power diplomacy and hybrid war – is one of the effects of the type and extent of Russia's coverage in the media.

Day-to-day coverage takes over everything

The second effect is that focusing on specific topics and angles leaves less room for other reporting from the US and Europe, and for a more nuanced picture of Russia.

But the news media cannot not cover it intensely when the US president tweets his sacking of one adviser after another while "Russia-gate" is evolving. And the news editors can hardly overlook when, for example, the Danish minister of defence and his Russian colleague are rattling with F-16 aircraft and nuclear missiles.

Cyber attacks, NATO exercises, censorship

The more interesting part is very often what is not mentioned and not put into perspective. Such non-mentioning in the coverage is identified when it comes to the coverage of defence, cyber threats and military.

Russia is seen as the only threat and with new means, whereas logical references to Chinese hackers and Russian cyber war are absent. Also, Russian military exercises like Zapad 17 are portrayed as hostile and aggressive, whereas NATO's parallel exercises like Trident Juncture in October–November 2018 are purely defensive peace-keeping.

The same can be seen when it comes to descriptions of limitations on free speech, a prominent issue in the media coverage of Russia. The Russians certainly do not have the same media freedom as the Danes. Nevertheless, it is striking that similar methods and actions are assigned a negative value concerning Russia – but a neutral/positive value when it comes to Denmark/the West.

The election mistakes

In Danish media, it is presented as a democratic problem that the Russian authorities worked very actively to get the Russians to vote. This media coverage is debatable, from a professional journalistic point of view. For at least two reasons:

1. Because the coverage is inaccurate or even incorrect. Yes, there were incidents and the elections were criticised for not being played on a level field. But words like cheating, illegal and fraud are being used in the coverage, often linked to facts such as students being able to vote at their university or state enterprises having established polling stations. According to the Russian electoral commission, such initiatives are not only legal, they are even recommended.
2. Because an underlying premise appears to be a desire for a high turnout which is particularly Russian. This premise is wrong. In Denmark alone, we have numerous examples that could beat the Russian cases:

At the latest Danish election – the local elections in November 2017 – the national, regional and local governments established a "large-scale campaign" to make more people vote. They teamed up with traffic companies, with foreign corporations such as TDC and Microsoft and with private organisations. Model examples were testimonials from AGF's soccer league players; election marketing at night clubs in Kolding; polling stations at McDonald's restaurants

in Copenhagen; and compulsory political meetings for unemployed people in Næstved. Voting booths at secondary education schools are also on the Danish list.

Similarly, for the elections to the European Parliament in May 2019, a range of activities are in place in an attempt to raise a low turnout.

Imbalance in understanding

That a thematic parallel or a historical perspective is not mentioned does not indicate errors in the individual stories; the news media must select on behalf of their audience. However, it may give rise to an imbalance in the public's overall understanding, and may reflect an imbalance in the editorial work process.

Missing sources and mixed roles

Thus, we approach a possible criticism of the working habits in the newsrooms: Generally speaking, much information comes without attribution to any source.

For example, when the correspondents explain what Putin thinks. Or in the statement that some Russian civil servants were forced to vote under threat of being fired. Or, when the elections, the spy attack and the World Cup are linked, at best with politicians or other news media as sources.

Other media and other journalists as experts are generally the most widely used source types.

This lack of clear sources is not necessarily a problem. In fact, the reader/viewer may come to a better understanding of the issues at hand – which is the purpose of foreign journalism – without getting all the subtotals.

But based on journalistic quality criteria it gets controversial if transparency is blurred or if the source used is distorted. Is it news, or is it rumours and pure guessing?

It is also controversial when the newsroom's own reporters appear opinionated with very personal viewpoints, especially if there is no clear labelling of the content.

The expertise and experience of the foreign correspondents and other journalists are often applied in news analyses and columns. And on the television screen the experienced correspondents with the Kremlin as background must answer the very often quite biased questions from the news anchor.

8.3 **WIDE, BROAD AND DEEP**

– NEW KNOWLEDGE UPON OLD PREJUDICES

The overall impression is that the Danish news consumers have access to a comprehensive and diverse image of Russia.

The analyses lead to the following more detailed conclusions:

- The view on Russia is a one-way view, and with a focus on power, conflict and Moscow.
- Other topics are not regularly covered, such as healthcare, education, business, local development, civil society.
- Most is seen from a Danish and Western perspective, with a shortage of Russian sources and Russian views.
- A picture is painted of Russia as a dangerous country, of a powerful President Putin, of oppression and of Russia flexing its muscles and initiating turmoil abroad – a painting overshadowing other issues.
- But it is also a picture of Russia as a (particularly economic) “loser country” and of the Russians as different from us, and inferior at some points.
- There is a clear tendency to judge Russian methods harder than we judge similar Danish/Western actions, e.g. during election campaigns and major sports events.
- The discourse is skewed; negative words are often used about Russia and the country’s leadership whereas neutral or positive words are used about other countries and us.
- Generally, it’s hard to distinguish between news analysis, reportage and pure commentary, and it is often difficult to see the source of information.

The news media’s experts and correspondents share a great deal of knowledge. And we get the nuances when they go out and meet real people.

But it is mostly as a warming-up to major events – presidential elections or the Soccer World Cup – that we see more from Russia than Moscow’s power centre. And generally, the Danish and Western sources and viewpoints dominate.

Therein lies one of the two great opportunities: The media could involve Russian sources more closely which may even adjust a current situation when the Russians tend to know Western views better than we know theirs.

The other great opportunity is to ensure that Russia will not be judged on harder terms than we judge ourselves in the future. It appears double standard if otherwise similar actions and methods are automatically assigned negative value simply because they happen in Russia.

Yes, the huge and interesting neighbouring country Russia is an autocratic democracy with serious human rights issues and a scary foreign policy. And therefore, there is a need for a thorough and critical Russia coverage in the Danish news media.

But if we believe in our own model of open democracy and free media we can also expect the news coverage to be equally self-critical and constructive as it is critical.

9.0

Coverage of Nordic Countries in North-Western Media of Russia

BY SVETLANA BODRUNOVA

Russia

For the last centuries, the relationships between the Nordic countries and Russia have been intense and quite complicated. Six wars (including the Northern War in the 18th century and two wars between Russia and Finland in the mid-20th century) and changing shapes of territorial belonging have cast their deep impact upon the Russian–Nordic communication for decades, creating traumatic public memories. Today's international tensions and the sanctions regime add to the watchful political communication on official level. At the same time, having positive relations with neighboring Nordic countries continue to be one of the characteristics for both businesses and people in the north-western Russia. Finland remains the most popular tourist and shopping destination for the inhabitants of St Petersburg and the Leningrad region, and, despite the sanctions and a decreasing trust in Russian economy in general, the urge to invest in Russia and participate in economic forums remains the same within the Nordic business communities.

Today, studies of coverage of the Nordic countries in Russian media lack the relevant research history. Even if it is hard to believe given the large amount of intercultural and economic contacts between the two areas, research on how the Nordic area is reflected in the Russian media has so far been extremely scarce. But what the polls suggest is that, in the Russian public mind, including the inhabitants of north-western Russia, Finns and Scandinavians are treated mostly positively, despite some latent negativity caused by both the differences in habits and the mid-20th century's Russian–Finnish war and deprivation of land and property, as well as 'enemy campaigns' in the Swedish and Soviet press in the 1950s and 1960s. The recent past, due to Danish and Norwegian participation in the NATO and open expressions of an anti-Russian position at international events, has had some impact upon the relations between the Nordic countries and Russia, but on local level, the growth of tension is less noticeable. The preserved regional connections allow for hope to preserve trust between the Nordic region and north-western Russia.

Thus, it is interesting to know how the media participate in this process – in particular, what topics and contexts are important in the coverage of Scandinavia and Finland and what images of the Nordic states the regional north-western Russian media convey.

To explore the media market of St Petersburg and the Leningrad region, we had to make several choices in terms of sampling. As our study was a pilot and exploratory project we decided to assess only relevant text-based media, that

is, major newspapers and online news portals. The press (in the old sense) was chosen due to the fact that, still today, coverage of the Nordic countries in textual media is seen by experts as more systemic and full than that on TV. Also, we deliberately excluded from our analysis the media dedicated to covering the Nordic countries, namely Fontanka.FI, FlashNord news portal and the Nordic edition of the federal information agency REGNUM. Instead (as we were more interested in the daily routine coverage), we focused on the following media: two newspapers in St Petersburg: Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti and Delovoy Peterburg, six newspapers in the major cities of the Leningrad region: Baltiyskiy louch, Gatchina INFO, Krasnaya zvezda, Peterburgskiy rubezh, Priozerskie vedomosti and Vyborgskie vedomosti, and two news portals usually called information agencies – Fontanka (in St Petersburg) and 47news.ru (in the Leningrad region).

Using the Integrum database and search engines on the news websites we sampled 369 articles altogether. 78 of them covered more than one Nordic country; 224 were mentioning Finland; and only 33, 23 and 11 were dedicated to Sweden, Denmark and Norway, respectively. Of all publications, six also mentioned Iceland, but the mentioning was insufficient for far-reaching conclusions. This is why our analysis included Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Norway. The articles were formally coded on six parameters, including the number of words, presence of countries, focus (internal Russian issues; internal country issues; Russia-country issues; external issues), genre, topicality and sentiment towards a Nordic country. Then, descriptive statistics metrics (Spearman's rho and Cramer's V) were applied to the coding. Afterwards, a qualitative assessment was applied to the dataset in the form of interpretative reading and visual analysis.

Russian part of the Saimaa Canal leased to Finland



President Medvedev signed a federal law under which the contract is ratified and the Russian Federation **Finland** lease **Saimaa Canal** (Russian side) as well as the surrounding areas through the implementation of the Saimaa **channel** Shipping.

In the Kremlin press service said that the signed law was adopted on November 1, the State Duma and approved by the Federation Council on November 9.

It is about the transfer of Russia to lease part of Finland **Saimaa Canal**. Apart from it **Finland** Maly Vysotsky passed peninsula. The purpose of the contract is to ensure the continued operation as a single complex **Saimaa** channel running **Finland**.

The contract provides for the transfer of the Russian channel term 50-year lease of Finland. According to the provisions of this document Finland should be a year to pay the rent of.

A news story from 2010 describing that Finland has rented the Russian part of the Saimaa Canal for another 50 year. And still do. The canal starts in south-east Finland, runs through the most westerly corner of Russia and ends up in the Baltic Sea. An example of close cooperation between the two neighboring countries (Photo: Internet).

9.1 ONLY 15 % FOCUS ON RUSSIAN-NORDIC RELATIONS

As the sample figures already show the coverage is highly uneven in terms of attention to the different countries: Finland gets more attention than the three other countries altogether. With over 60 % of the coverage dedicated to Finland alone this country is leading in coverage, whereas the Scandinavian countries are hardly salient in both newspaper and news portal content. When it comes to focus of the publications, the same pattern applies to Denmark and Norway: the countries are put either into an internal Russian or international context. Sweden is linked to internal Russian issues, whereas, interestingly, the coverage comprising several countries is almost never on Russian-Nordic relations. It changes between divided contexts – Russian, Nordic and international. In sharp

contrast, the coverage of Finland mainly focuses on internal events and issues; only 20 % of the coverage is given to the Russian–Finnish issues but anyway, this is much more than in any other case. But if we exclude Fontanka’s coverage (influenced by Fontanka.FI), the coverage of Finland will repeat the Swedish pattern. In general, the publications that focus on Russian–Nordic relations, events or issues cover less than 15 % of the dataset which forms a clear gap in coverage as we see the lack of getting deep into issues and covering both sides in the relations between Russia and the Nordic states.

Also, we see a sharp difference in the coverage of the Nordic countries by city media and regional media. The city media are much more active in their coverage of the Nordic states whereas the regional coverage is scarce, indeed; moreover, Denmark was not covered at all in the regional media separately from other countries. Online information agencies (or, rather, news portals) take the lead in news coverage and become sources for the print media who publish only in several thousand copies. Fontanka takes the lead for their coverage of domestic Finnish life as well as providing news on Scandinavian events; Sankt–Peterburgskie vedomosti articulates a more Soviet style in terms of writing but the view on the Nordic countries is sufficiently unbiased; Delovoy Peterburg (‘Business St Petersburg’), contrary to expectations, does not dedicate pages to the coverage of Nordic businesses and their relations to the St Petersburg commercial life. Of the regional outlets 47news.ru and Vyborgskie vedomosti remain the best sources of news on Nordic (especially Finnish) issues for their readers.

The Nordic countries reliably differ in genres of coverage and topicality. Thus, thanks to the attention of news portals, Finland is mostly characterized by hard news reporting whereas for Sweden and Denmark, only about 50 % of publications are hard news. Economy is leading in the coverage of Finland and it is not only the Nord Stream II but also a lot of small internal Finnish issues like a drop in property prices or accidents at production facilities. Only a bit more than 10 % of the coverage somehow relates to politics and often in a financial context.

An evident problem of the editorial offices is scarcity of resources and access to first-hand information from the Nordic states, including Finland. Nordic speakers are rarely interviewed; almost no special or permanent correspondents are sent to Finland or other countries in the region; for the coverage of Finland, the YLE radio station is an important information source since it provides translations into Russian.

9.2 A DEPOLITICIZATION OF THE MEDIA DISCOURSE

The overall portrayal of the region is more positive than negative and in many cases the Nordic ways of organizing business management and local decision-making are seen as exemplary with historical parallels to the perception of Finland by the Russian intelligentsia a hundred years ago. As for now, media content does not reinforce negative stereotyping but there are cases when positive stereotyping is reinforced, which is not always as good as the editorial offices think. At the same time, the Nordic region is rarely portrayed as a unity, even in the publications that focus on several countries simultaneously.

A significant change from the Soviet times is the depoliticization of the media discourse on the Nordic countries; this is especially true for the media of the north-western region due to their regional and local (non-national) status. Economic life – infrastructure projects, trade, tourism, transportation, economic migration – has taken the lead in coverage. But while depoliticization also means de-ideologization and decline of biased reporting, it has also brought along a cease in the systemic coverage of political life in Scandinavia and Finland; today, mostly personalized politics (like scandals and resignations) make the news in the north-western media, and political problems of today's Nordic political life (like growth of populism and radicalism, trans-border relations, strategic alliances and election outcomes). Publications on the current tensions between Russia and the Nordic states pop up sporadically in content but not enough to take the real-world editorial positions.

Some major economic issues and projects, like competition in the timber business or political controversies concerning the Nord Stream II, get substantial coverage but only in the form of news, without deep analysis of causes/outcomes or forecasting attempts. Other meaningful lacunas include reporting of Nordic science and technologies, social issues (beyond criminal incidents, individual refugees' misbehavior and LGBT rights). On the other side of the scale, culture, nature, science and sports remain a source of a clearly positive image of the Nordic states; this is where some 'constructive journalism', not only neutral reporting, may be found.

10.0

New reliable media coverage of the others

BY LARS KABEL

From Cold War to rapprochements, cooperation and cold peace. Our relations with Russia in the east are under constant change. Russia has put revolution and communism behind and should not still be observed and discussed in a neo-Soviet light. Today's Russia is an autocracy – in a new way – and in the western and Nordic countries we need to adapt to this way if we want to build the most stable relations with this vast country and its population.

Words create reality – and the fight to define the predominant narratives is again intensive. The media coverage not only reflects but also frames and defines the reality it describes (Hjarvard, 2016). Many politicians and public debaters use input from the news media coverage of Russia for their facts, arguments and points. The tone is often harsh, sometimes hostile, and this is influencing the discussions and applied politics in the Nordic countries.

The news media in the Nordic countries and Russia have plenty of material to cover: current events, military tension, harsh political statements, cyberattacks, mutual sanctions and trade, sports and culture. Producing reliable media coverage of the others calls for constant editorial selection and rejection based on well-documented arguments.

This report represents an example of such well-documented arguments. It offers data, new knowledge and perspectives on the media coverage of the Nordic countries and Russia in the spring of 2018. It is based on the coding and analysis of a total of 1,832 print and web articles as well as TV reports from 42 of the major news media in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and north-western Russia, in four languages in the five countries. The report also builds on observations and interviews with 30 Russian editors and two professors during three research trips to Karelia, St Petersburg and Moscow in 2017 and 2018. How do Russian media professionals and experts view the media coverage and its possible consequences? How do they see the Russian media system in its own right – and not through western eyes?

In the following conclusions we do not repeat the numerous observations and conclusions from the five country analyses; that would only represent a third and even shorter version of the country analyses in the same report. Instead, the report offers cross-country conclusions, identifies similarities but also points out distinct differences in the media coverage of Russia in the four Nordic countries.



Recently both US and Russia have terminated the important Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, INF, from 1987. In December 2018 Russia successfully tested a new type of missile. President Putin, Defense Minister Shoigu and other top officials watched the test launch from the Defense Ministry's control room in Moscow (Photo Mikhail Klimentyev, Ritzau Scanpix).

10.1 EDITORIAL METHODS NORDIC MEDIA IMAGES

The media in all four Nordic countries covered Russia extensively and in multiple ways in the spring of 2018. The focus was on President Putin and the Kremlin power centre, but the media also selected lots of other themes to cover.

Finland saw more published articles and TV reports on Russia than the other countries, reflecting, among other things, the fact that Finland and Russia share 1,400 km of borders and a long history of war and political tensions as well as shared economic interests.

And in north-western Russia, relations with the neighbouring country of Finland were central in the media coverage. Of 369 analysed paper and web articles, 224 dealt with Finland, 78 covered more than one Nordic country, 33 were on Sweden, 23 addressed Denmark and only 11 dealt with Norway, which also shares borders with Russia.

Even in Denmark, which has no shared borders and only limited political, cultural and financial interests in common with Russia, the media coverage was massive in 2018. The conclusion, based on the extent of the coverage, is that Russia means a lot to the Nordic countries and its people.

As shown in the below table of the coded articles and TV news reports, the number of published articles and TV reports was almost the same in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. This could be an indication of consistent codings and of what we already knew: that the media systems in the three/four Nordic countries are almost identical. This increases the relevance of our comparative collations and cross-country conclusions.

Number of coded units in the Nordic countries and Russia

Nordic countries = 8 media/platforms on TV, print and online

	Presidential election March 2018	May 2018	Case
Sweden	92	254	54
Norway	93	225	40
Finland	140	277	0
Denmark	<u>140</u>	<u>148</u>	<u>0</u>
Total	465	904	94

Russia = 10 media/platforms on print and online 369 units

Total number of coded articles in the five countries: 1,832 units

In the spring of 2018, the analyzed Finnish media had two correspondents stationed in Moscow and three stringers in St Petersburg. Other Finnish media also had correspondents in Russia, Hufvudstandsbladet, for instance. The Norwegian media had two staff stationed in Moscow and Russia reporters at home, the Swedish media had five correspondents in Russia, and the Danish had four people in Moscow and one stringer based in St Petersburg.

In terms of journalistic methods, the media coverage in all the countries was driven by events and communicated through brief news and lengthy articles. The coverage was mainly a flow of short updates coupled with news analyses – classic news journalism based on universal methods for reflective news coverage. When other journalistic genres such as reporting and features were used they were often orchestrated by the media's own correspondents stationed in Russia. They added topicality and authenticity to the news. The correspondents were also

frequently used as commentators and experts, mainly by the TV stations in the four countries. They often ran interviews live and on location.

In all four countries, the editorial news offices and their staff largely created the coverage of Russia themselves, its stories and narratives; the use of sources was limited; and expert comments from abroad were rarely seen. Comments and conclusions appearing in the media coverage were often orchestrated by internal staff/correspondents in the editorial office.

Domestication was also rarely applied – a journalistic method that the media researcher Hillel Nosssek named ‘the domestic filter’ – and the number of domestic angles or national sources in the articles was limited. Events in Russia were often described without ‘the domestic filter’.

The conclusion is that the editorial offices and journalists have (or have taken) power over the communication and coverage of Russian affairs. The coverage could be more influenced by other voices from abroad and a greater variety of sources and experts.

Partly as a result of the frequent use of reflective journalistic methods, all four Nordic country analyses showed that the coverage of Russia mapped in the spring of 2018 was not directly propagandist or russo-phobic. The same applied to the north-western Russian media coverage of the Nordic countries in May 2018; according to the Russian analysis of the coverage of the Nordic countries there was “no pro-Russian political bias against the Nordic states” in the published media coverage.

This does not mean, however, that the coverage on a lower abstraction level in both East and West was without ideologically based narratives. Not at all. Words commonly used to describe Russia were regime, rule and men of power, for example. More neutral words like government, authorities and leaders were used about the western countries.

All four Nordic country analyses characterised the journalism on Russia and the Russians as *negative* and coloured by a *mistrust* of the Russians, their motives and actions.

Negativity and ideologically biased narratives were to a great extent present in the articles and TV reports, mainly implicit but sometimes also explicitly expressed through editorial selection and rejection, assertions, sharply worded quotations and exaggerations.

10.2 THE RUSSIANS' MEDIA SYSTEM IN ITS OWN RIGHT

The Russian media system and media manipulation are a key context for the description and understanding of the media coverage *of* Russia and *in* Russia.

In the strictly centralised Russian media system most of the foreign journalism on the Nordic countries comes from the three large news agencies: the two state-owned ITAR-TASS and RIA NOVOSTI and the private INTERFAX, while a smaller part comes from the media groups' headquarters in Moscow. The news agencies also present news from the Russian government and the ministerial offices to the rest of Russia and the wider world. Media all over Russia subscribe to news and other journalistic contents from two or three of the agencies. According to the two editors Andrey Surzhansky from ITAR-TASS and Dmitriy Gornostaev from RIA NOVOSTI, Russian news agencies work the same way as other agencies around the world. They have foreign correspondents and stringers posted in the world power centres – the Nordic countries are not considered as such – but ITAR-TASS did, however, in 2017, have one single correspondent stationed in Stockholm. According to the editors, the journalists at the news agencies work according to universal journalistic standards and neutral news selection criteria. This means that classic subjects like Nordic government activities, hostile statements from ministers, visits by heads of government and official delegations, NATO exercises and crisis talks in the EU as well as criminal acts like the Brevik crimes in Norway and acts of terror in Stockholm and Copenhagen are given high news rates.

But several of the north-western Russian editors interviewed in 2017 and 2018 characterised the Moscow journalism on the Nordic countries differently from that described above. They found that to a large extent, coverage was dominated by sensation, absurdities, crime and other tabloid events. Politics, security policy and economy ranked lower in the news coverage they were offered from Moscow.

According to its constitution, Russia is a country with freedom of expression and freedom of the press. But Russia is also a country where conformity is part of the national mind and where deviants and dissidents are having a hard time. Where confrontations with the Kremlin power may result in marginalisation.

In two of the media giants in Moscow, foreign editor Petr Fedorov from Pervyj Kanal/Russiya 1 and editor-in-chief Maxim Dodonov from Zvezda TV, who cover the military from a patriotic angle, explained that their coverage is based on the international standards of good reflective journalism as in other societies with freedom of the press and freedom of expression.

Petr Federov from Russia's largest media house also expressed his feeling that foreign media are currently adopting a *more primitive approach* when they cover Russia, especially because many of the world's major news media have now withdrawn their posted correspondents from Russia. According to the editor, this leads to a reflection of Russia based on the values and perceptions already held by the editorial offices in the various countries – not an authentic current coverage of Russia.

Another of the Russian media people interviewed, Gleb Yarovoy from the web media 7X7 Horizontal Russia who also teaches journalism at the Petrozavodsk University, had also observed the same primitive approach inside Russia:

“Today, the great demand for professional journalism that is as objective as possible – which we saw just three or four years ago – no longer exists; nor is there a demand for different angles or more sources. The general atmosphere has changed; people want entertainment and highly simplified content: ‘Putin is great, the prime minister is bad.’ ‘Westerners are enemies. We also have internal enemies – foreign agents.’”

According to several of the interviewed Russian editors from the private, independent and critical media houses, major Russian news media are *not* neutrally reflective but at the same time *not* directly controlled in their editorial style. Instead, they are indirectly controlled through Temnik: ‘agenda’, the Kremlin’s informal digest of the week’s essential news – a kind of ‘guidance’ based on briefings and phone calls without notes. The existence of any such indirect editorial control was, however, rejected by both Petr Fedorov and Maxim Dodonov. However, the two editors also said that their editorial mission is to support the Russian state: “In their daily journalistic coverage the staff must support Russia, the system and its interests. If they fail they are not considered true Russian journalists.”

Another editor-in-chief and manager, Andrey Radin from a large regional public-service media house, TV – LOT in St Petersburg, aired similar views: he finds it hard to understand the motives and methods behind the western and Nordic media systems. “They undermine their own societies through their critical angles on everything and everybody”. On the other hand, he considers that finding the positive and constructive aspects about our neighbouring countries and bringing them to the attention of the general Russian public is a central public-service task for a TV station mainly owned by regional authorities.

Moreover, he and other editors of republic- or regionally owned media see the publication of news from authorities and governors to the public as another central obligation – a kind of information to the public on society.

In 2017 and 2018, the meetings and interviews with the 30 Russian editors and 2 professors painted a clear picture that when we in the West and the Nordic countries speak about the Russian news media and the Russian media system, we often do so from a western perspective – and rarely with an aim to understand and describe these systems in their own right – as the Russians see them.

And they do it very differently.

According to professor Ivan Kurilla from St Petersburg, Russia is often reflected as a single supremacy, one unity, with Putin as a personification of it all – but this is a highly superficial view:

“In today’s Russia, we do not share a common stand on our values, there is great disagreement: much more than in the USA and Europe. We do not see a hegemonic discourse on our society. The young generation is deeply split when it comes to orthodox values, and this affects their media consumption.”

This disagreement and divide between different social groups and their acts and priorities also apply to the media industry. Alongside the national media system owned and controlled by the state, the republics and the regions there is a critical, oppositional and market-based media system, with media houses like Fontanka.ru, Novaya Gazeta and Radio Echo Moscow as the best-known and recognised, also abroad. Although their newspaper sales, readership and user figures are limited, they often impact the societal agenda with their critical journalism in spite of Temnik, the Red Line and other suppressive mechanisms.

It is, however, fundamental and central that Russia and the media in Russia are currently undergoing the same development as any major society: urbanisation, digitalisation, the breakdown of old business models and the transition to mobile platforms are strong business drivers. Russian newspapers, dailies and media houses are closing down due to strained financing and low demand. New web media are emerging, but are based on weak business models. According to the professor and many of the interviewees, the pattern of Russian media consumption is starting to resemble that of most other countries. Urban dwellers, young people and the well-educated are increasingly looking to social media and the wide variety of web sites as their primary news platforms. The Russian social media Yandex.ru, VKontakte.com and Odnoklassniki.ru are now their primary news channels. To a large extent, many Russians are also using the foreign Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and blogs.



Gazprom's Nord Stream 2 makes progress in the Baltic Sea. The construction of the gas pipeline has created a lot of political turbulence and media coverage especially in Denmark. But the Russians and the Germans continue the construction, and the pipeline will soon be finished. (Photo Bernd Wüstneck, Ritzau Scanpix)



10.3 TOPICS, NARRATIVES AND MEDIA IMAGES

The Finnish country analysis concludes that the gap between Finland and Russia is wide, despite the shared borders; a certain amount of regional and political cooperation; and people, investments and commodities that daily cross their national borders. This is at least how the Finnish press describes the Russians and their vast society. Russia is often depicted as “the historical enemy”. And “Russia in the role of the *others* has always played a central role in the Finnish identity building. Russia has often represented something ‘that we Finns are not’”.

The same goes for Sweden, which Russians see as one of Europe’s currently most Russia-hostile societies. In Sweden, the coverage sometimes creates the media image of a Russia that is an “incomprehensible, unstable and dangerous country”. The Swedish country analysis quotes researchers as saying that “Russia is the antithesis that confirms the Swedish and Nordic self-image” (Nielsson & Amadeh, 2018).

Nordic media coverage from Oslo and leading articles and comments in national newspapers in particular represent Russia as an aggressive power with intent to expand the country’s territory – a situation that makes Norway vulnerable. President Putin is described as an autocratic aggressive leader set on expansion.

In all four Nordic countries the country analyses of the large national news media show a clear East-West perspective, a clear East-West opposition in the coverage. Russia is judged by European norms and values. A *them-and-us* or rather *them-against-us* discourse is evident.

The media view on Russia is a view on the men of power and Moscow and includes hardly anything *about* or *from* the rest of the world’s biggest country. Researchers like to mention four to five different ‘Russias’ (Zubarevich, 2015) but we almost only see ‘Russia 1’ – the major cities and especially the metropolises of Moscow and St Petersburg. This applies to all four Nordic countries.

A serious shortcoming in this report is that the coverage concentrated too much on Russia as a state whereas the viewpoint of its citizens was ignored.

President Putin is here, there, and everywhere in the Russia coverage, naturally enough in March 2018, when the presidential election was the major theme, and less so in May 2018, when a number of other topics inside and outside Russia made the headlines. The 2016 study of *Danske mediers dækning af Rusland* (Danish Media Coverage of Russia) and this new comparative Nordic study showed that over the

years, the focus on the autocratic Vladimir Putin has at times been so massive that you get the impression that this man takes care of everything and decides everything in this vast society. Sometimes, however, supported by his foreign minister, Sergej Lavrov.

The headlines give the impression that Putin has annexed Crimea and is acting as military commander in Syria and East Ukraine. That he manipulates elections across five time zones and that votes had been rigged in Siberia. That Putin has built a bridge to Crimea and is constructing a new gas pipeline that will pump large volumes of natural gas to Germany through the territorial waters of Finland, Sweden and Denmark.

According to the four country analyses, President Putin personifies the world's biggest country, but Putin's rule is *not* the same as the Russian population – so where are the remaining 147 million people and the rest of this society? Where are the power hierarchies surrounding Vladimir Putin, in the republics, the regions and the orthodox church? Where is the Russian agriculture and where are the major Russian building and construction companies that helped Putin build the bridge? Where is the *news* on the new cultures and lifestyles in the cities that are changing Russia from within?

The 32 interviews in Russia and the Russian analysis of the media coverage of the Nordic countries in the north-western Russian news media all show that the intense interest is not mutual. According to the interviewed editors and professors, only few Russians take an interest in the Nordic countries. The Nordic countries are not seen as one unit but as part of Europe, the EU – and, as regards Denmark and Norway, also as members of NATO. Mainly Denmark, but also Norway and Sweden, do not attract much attention, sometimes none at all. They are small states, seen as part of global security policy and the foreign policy blocs. And the limited Russian media coverage certainly reflects this perception.

Only 10 percent of the articles published in May 2018 in the media were about politics, security policy, etc. And of the 10 percent, the Nordic countries were usually mentioned as players on the global stage comprising NATO, the EU and the USA. The greater part of the Russian coverage dealt with people, conditions and events in Finnish society and the lesser part with the three other countries.

Again, there is *no* reciprocal tone in the published Russian coverage. The articles in the north-western Russian media are *positive* and reflective, not negative and suspicious. A certain curiosity can be traced when it comes to constructive elements in the welfare systems of the Nordic countries. The Russian analysis

concludes that compared to the Soviet coverage of the neighbouring countries a *depoliticization* of the media's content and angles has taken place. *Little* is at stake for the Russians, hardly anything, and this is evident in the news coverage in Russia.

Reading through reports, as we have done for this report, from the NATO and EU StratCom institutions in Eastern Europe and Brussels on West-Russian relations and security policy analyses from a Danish research institution like DIIS (Danish Institute for International Studies), we often came across concepts and phenomena like “weaponized, soft power, hybrid war, cyberattack, fake news and disinformation as weapons”.

We have not specifically taken a thorough look at the effect of any possible disinformation (which we see as an intelligence agency task), but in our readings and analysis of the 1,463 investigated Nordic articles and TV reports we found *no* obvious traces of Russian disinformation campaigns with manipulative content.

This finding is supported in the report by two central facts/quotations. One comes from the Danish foreign minister, Anders Samuelsen (LA), who at a conference in the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs in November 2018 said that: “We have not detected any Russian attempts to influence the political process in Denmark through media manipulation, systematic misinformation, trolls, etc.”

The second is a new Swedish report, *Smearing Sweden*, from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency, which concluded in the autumn of 2018, shortly after the Swedish general election, that “the Swedish election was not exposed to any considerable influence from abroad.”

Obviously, there is *no* Russian media disinformation aimed at the Nordic countries, nor inside Russia nor in the Nordic countries. A reasonable explanation must be that, seen from the Kremlin's perspective, the Nordic countries are simply not part of the Russian sphere of interest. We are *not* considered important societies on the international stage, and as individual states and as a region we pose *no* threat in spite of the generally negative media mention of Russia in the Nordic countries.

The tough rhetoric of Nordic ministers and politicians frequently quoted in the news media obviously makes *no* great impression on the Russians. It calls for questions like; what stories do the Nordic editors want to include in their media scene? Why are Nordic politicians not asked more critical questions about their

image of Russia? Do the media want to be used and abused in a domestic and party-political game?

10.4 **NEW RELIABLE MEDIA COVERAGE IN EAST AND WEST**

In Russia, the 'hardcore' foreign policy news comes from Moscow. According to several of the interviewed Russian editors and the professors, over the years, the offices in the Kremlin have orchestrated the narratives about the amoral Nordic countries and about a chaotic EU crumbling under the inner pressure from refugees, migrants and weak amoral values. This 'contrasting' of European culture and orthodox Russian values originates from Moscow.

The same is happening in the Nordic countries. The 'hardcore' coverage with Russia-hostile statements is primarily aimed at the ruling power and the Kremlin men of power. Moscow is far away, especially when it comes to culture and policy, and this great distance is reflected in the negative tone and form of the coverage.

According to our analyses, the picture looks much different when we take a closer look. An important conclusion of the entire body of analysis is that when human relations are involved, when borders are crossed and the distance between neighbours narrows, then journalism changes radically in form and content. It 'softens up', the image of the enemy is downscaled. However, it is not a foregone conclusion that this is the case; neighbourly disputes can be very intense and brutal, but the softness can be illustrated through the media coverage of the case from northern Norway about the spy Frode Berg and through the north-western Russian media's positive coverage of Finland, in particular. Behind this 'soft' journalism lie a narrative and an understanding that Russians, Norwegians and Finns are good and important neighbours and that it is more a question of building a bridge than a wall.

The conclusion is that the closer you get and the more interaction and exchange you enjoy, the more positive, curious and open our journalism will become.

The media coverage of Russia written from the Nordic capitals and the coverage of the Nordic countries produced from Moscow can learn a lot from this knowledge.

Foreign correspondent Anders Mård from the Finnish YLE, who lives in St Petersburg, ends his analysis of the Finnish coverage of Russia in these words:

“In general, the Finnish Russia reporting could use more vivid curiosity and less single-track thinking. The media houses should also raise their journalistic ambitions. Finland cannot afford poor coverage of a neighbour like Russia.”

One might think the same about the coverage of Russia in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Our neighbours to the east and the citizens of the Nordic societies all deserve a new and reliable media coverage of *the others*.

Svetlana S. Bodrunova

is habilitated Doctor of Political Science and Professor at School of Journalism and Mass Communications, St. Petersburg State University, Russia. She has been head of five research projects and published two books, several chapters, and over 80 research papers in Russian and English on Russian and European journalism, media and politics, social media, and ethnicity in communication. She leads Center for International Media Research at her university.

Asbjørn Slot Jørgensen.

Journalist and Ass. Professor, Danish School of Media and Journalism (DMJX). Started working in the news media in 1989 as a reporter for newspapers, magazines and newsletters, mainly covering IT, business and media/marketing. Since 2000 at DMJX as a project manager and teacher, primarily with the school's international projects and courses, including Nordic Journalist Centre.

Lars Kabel.

Ass. Professor and journalist at Danish School of Media and Journalism since 1989. MA from Aarhus University (1980) and journalist from Danish School of Journalism (1985). Worked as a journalist at Århus Stiftstidende and Greenpeace. Have during a period of 25 years planned and performed numerous further education courses for journalists, news editors and other media professionals from Denmark and the other Nordic countries. Writer and/or editor of six books and 10 reports on journalism, news, urban digital media development and media-created images of the others.

Anders Mård

is a journalist and writer based in St. Petersburg, Russia since 2002. He was born in Finland in 1968. Graduated with a degree in Journalism from the University of Helsinki. Co-founded the news agency Nevapress in 1999 producing feature stories about the Russian society for Finnish media until 2002. Has worked as a journalist covering Russia for many Nordic papers including Hufvudstadsbladet, Talouselämä, Dagens Industri, Kaleva and Göteborgs-Posten. As a writer, he has published five books. Since 2011, Mård is mainly covering news from Russia for the Finnish Broadcasting Company YLE.

Anja Aaheim Naper

is doing her PhD in Journalism and Immigration policy at Oslo Metropolitan University. Naper has worked on several research projects on climate journalism, political communication and immigration debates. She has also worked as a journalist at the Norwegian broadcasting corporation, NRK, and in a feature magazine, Magasinet Plot.

Jonathan Norström

has a M.A. of Journalism and took his degree from Södertörn University, Sweden. He has participated in several research projects devoted to journalism and media studies. One such project was published in Sweden under the name of "Ukraina och informationskriget – journalistik mellan ideal och självcensur", a study of the coverage of the Ukraine conflict by Polish, Russian, Swedish and Ukrainian media. Norström has also worked as a journalist for several news outlets.

NEW RELIABLE MEDIA IMAGES OF THE OTHERS

From Cold War to rapprochements, cooperation and cold peace. The news media in the Nordic countries and Russia have plenty of stories to cover: military tension, harsh political statements, mutual sanctions, criminal acts and other current events.

Words create reality – and the fight to define the predominant narratives is intensive. At news media in East and West it takes constant editorial selection and rejection to create reliable media coverage of the others. In politics and public debates we also need new knowledge and reflections on the narratives and enemy images we are creating of each other.

This report communicates the results of the comprehensive mapping in 2018 of the media coverage of Russia in Finland, Sweden, Norway and Denmark, and of the north-western Russian news media's coverage of the Nordic countries. A total of 1,832 articles and news reports from the major daily newspapers, online papers and the most viewed TV news in the five countries were analysed.

The report also builds on interviews with 30 Russian editors and 2 Russian professors during three research trips to St Petersburg, Moscow and Karelia. It includes a description of media manipulation and of the Russian media system in its own right – not through western eyes.

The studies in the five countries show that there is no reciprocity in the media images we create of each other. The coverage in the Nordic countries is focusing on power and communicate negativity and fear of Russia's and President Putin's intentions. The media coverage in north-western Russia of the Nordic countries, Finland in particular, is mainly positive and depoliticized.