

Ideology, Image-making and the Media in
Putin's Russia.

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BY GREGORY J. SIMONS

University of Canterbury

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFP – Associated Foreign Press

AP – Associated Press

ARPI – Agency for Regional Political Research

BBC – British Broadcasting Commission

CEC – Central Electoral Commission

CNN – Cable News Network

COE – Council of Europe

CPCC – Communist Party Central Committee

CPSU – Communist Party of the Soviet Union

DPA – Deutsche Presse Agentur

EJC – European Journalism Centre

EU – European Union

FAPSI – Federal Agency for Government Communications and Information

FOM – Public Opinion Foundation

FSB – Federal Service for Security (KGB successor)

GDF – Glasnost Defence Foundation

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

ISP – Internet Service Provider

IT – Information Technology

ITV – Independent Television (Britain)

JRL – Johnson's Russia List

KGB – Committee for State Security

KPRF – Communist Party of the Russian Federation

NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organisation

NBC – North American Broadcasting Commission

NCT – New Communications Technology

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

NTV – Independent Television (Russia)

ORT – Public Russian Television (now called TV 1, Russia)

OSCE – Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

PC – Personal Computer

POW – Prisoner of War

PR – Public Relations
RIA Novosti – Russian Information Agency Novosti
ROC – Russian Orthodox Church
ROMIR – Russian Public Opinion and Market Research
RTR – Russian Television and Radio
RUJ – Russian Union of Journalists
TV - Television
UN – United Nations
USA – United States of America
USSR – Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VGTRK – All-Russia State TV and Radio Committee
VTsIOM – Centre for Public Opinion and Market Research
WTO – World Trade Organisation

GLOSSARY

- Bespredel – means *without limits*, given to Boris Yeltsin’s period as President.
- Consciousness – totality of attitudes, opinions and sensitivities held by individuals or groups.
- Hegemony – process through which ‘dominant’ ideology is transmitted, consciousness is formed, and social power is exercised.
- Ideology – a system of ideas.
- Infosuasion – to influence the viewers’ attitude to the content in the direction established by the sender. Mixture of verbal and non-verbal cues are used.
- Managed Democracy – maintenance of outwardly democratic forms, while ensuring that those in power are not actually challenged by serious opposition or criticism.
- Mediacracy – concentration of media into fewer hands. Inhibits alternative points of view from being expressed. Media eventually become a big player in politics.
- Zachistka – means *cleaning-up* operations in Chechnya, designed to flush out the rebels.
- Zakazukha – the selling of stories, which appear in the media. Often in the form of hidden advertising.
- Zastoi – means *stagnation*, attached to Leonid Brezhnev’s rule.

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ABSTRACT

This work focuses on the tumultuous and rapidly evolving environment of Russian media and society, from the era of Gorbachev's reforms of *glasnost* to just before the 2003 – 2004 electoral cycle. Over this time, there have been three Presidents – Mikhail Gorbachev, Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. Three leaders who have a different managerial style, although both Gorbachev and Putin have legal training, which seems to have some impact upon the way they try to manage a transforming society.

Media organisations, individually and as a collective body, have been a major actor in the changes that have and are occurring. A role that the mass media have retained throughout this period of tremendous upheaval and change is the role of educator or motivator of the public. The property that has been attached to the mass media and is a reason for political and business interest in gaining editorial control is that, as they conveyer of image as reality the media hold to power to influence the actions and opinions of the audience.

Gorbachev used the Soviet mass media as a tool with which to rally the public's support, which he turned against his political opposition. Those who opposed the proposed reforms were demonised as being die-hard communists who were trying to prevent progress, so as to secure their comfortable existence. An inference in Gorbachev's method and use of the media was that those who opposed him also opposed the will of the people.

Yeltsin also manipulated and used the mass media to his advantage, firstly to topple Gorbachev and the Soviet Union and then to keep himself in the Russian presidential seat for eight years. He was a leader who initially revelled in the media gaze, but as time and troubles built up he became increasingly frustrated. One of the legacies of his years in power was the association of a free media being allowed to flourish under his leadership. In reality however, the legal framework for stifling and silencing the press was gradually established and then consolidated.

In a well executed change of the President, Putin took over from Yeltsin and a very and noticeable change began. The old relationships between the Kremlin and the oligarchs (who owned a lot of the private media) broke down and open conflict ensued. The resurgent central State began to regain control over mass media, beginning with privately owned TV stations that were broadcasting nationally. Alongside the struggle for editorial control came a raft of new images and an ideology of the strong State, which has been labelled as *Great Russia* by Russian academic Ivan Zassoursky. A series of measures, some reminiscent of the Soviet period and others taken from Western PR practice are being used in this struggle.

INTRODUCTION.

No research groups are currently engaged in the study of the Russian media in New Zealand. The 'cutting-edge' nature of my research necessitates my travelling overseas to obtain current and relevant information. Several of my overseas academic contacts are based in Moscow and Stockholm. Research institutes have been established at their universities (Moscow State and Stockholm), which give me access to leading edge theory and more information.

The primary objectives of my thesis are to examine major ideological trends in politics and society in Putin's Russia, as reflected in the media. I intend to refer to events of change in Russian society, dating as far back as Gorbachev's reforms of *glasnost* and *perestroika* (the mid-1980's). A simultaneous analysis of politics and the media needs to be conducted to achieve a greater understanding of why events occur. Neither of these two entities operates in a vacuum. As author John Downing notes, "No serious analysis of media communication can divorce it from the character and operation of the political regime within which it operates."¹

I want to compare and contrast the essence of Russian reforms throughout this tumultuous period of Russian history. By comparing and contrasting these reforms, I may be able to ascertain any similarities or differences. That is, whether Russia's reforms are consistently heading toward a liberal democracy and a market oriented economy or if the policies are reverting to a more authoritarian nature. The media's role in attempting to realise change in society through influencing public perception and opinion will be one of the points focused upon.



The role of the head of state (General-Secretary of the Communist Party and the President) has played a critical role in Russia's transformation. The office of the President has a lot of power at its disposal, which can be wielded against a political foe. To an extent, the leader has been able to set the agenda initially, in the arena of societal reform. However, the political, economic and bureaucratic elite has been able to slow and on some occasions halt the intended transformations, had it been perceived to threaten their interests. At certain points in time, the entrenched interests have been able to topple a leader, who they felt threatened by,

¹ Downing, J., *Internationalising Media Theory: Transition, Power, Culture Reflections on Media in Russia, Poland and Hungary 1980 – 1995*, London, Sage, 1996, pp. 2 - 3.

such as the case with Nikita Khrushchev in 1964.² A similar coalition of the normally diverse and fragmented interest groups attempted to remove Gorbachev in August 1991. Bearing these cases in mind, a leader must be careful in the scope and the speed of their reforms, should they too be toppled from power.

A striking feature of the post-communist era is the lack of distinction between the spheres of politics, business and the media. The business and political worlds are both unstable and prone to conflict. During the Yeltsin era (1991 - 1999) Prime Ministers and even entire governments were hired and fired on a regular basis. At times one person may hold a post in all three of these areas. To illustrate this point I will use the infamous oligarch, Boris Berezovsky as an example. After the presidential elections in 1996, Berezovsky was one of the leading big businessmen in Yeltsin's 'inner circle,' part of his business empire consisted of significant media holdings and Yeltsin appointed him as secretary of the Russian Security Council. On the surface, there would appear to be considerable potential for conflict of interest. Has Russian politics changed in the post-Yeltsin era?

The primary focus of this thesis is centred on Vladimir Putin, his origins, rise to power and his apparent societal objectives. Russian voters elected their second President, since the fall of communism, in March 2000. Vladimir Putin's rise through the political ranks has been very swift, catching some political commentators by surprise. In a short time period Putin had risen from the Director of the FSB, to Prime Minister, to Acting President and was then elected President.

A second aim of this work is to explore the use of PR and image making, currently occurring in the Russian Federation. At present there appears to be a lot of effort being invested in bringing about a change in attitude of citizens, domestic and foreign, toward Russia's status as a nation. Russia's image as a world power has taken a battering since the break-up of the Soviet Union. Yeltsin weakened central authority for political expediency did not help Russia's image as a former world power. The world's TV networks broadcast a weak and frail Yeltsin, who often made a fool of himself (therefore Russia also) on the world stage. The smooth PR campaign, which Gorbachev had used to bring a change in the international community's toward Russia had been long forgotten.

² For a detailed analysis of Khrushchev's leadership style see Taubman, W., *Khrushchev: The Man and his Era*, New York, W. W. Norton & Co, 2003.

Putin's accession to the presidency has seen a change in the power relations between the centre and the regions, the business community and the Kremlin, the Russian government and the media. The above-mentioned changes would seem to be oriented towards a specific goal, the re-establishment of the central government's former power and prestige. To reinvigorate a state that had become lame and lethargic.

This thesis aims to examine some of the mechanisms used by the Kremlin's administration, to 'forge' Putin as a viable successor to Boris Yeltsin. As Yeltsin's term in office neared its 'inevitable' end, the governmental bureaucracy swung into action. The break in the Kremlin's power relationship policy was almost instantaneous, following Yeltsin's resignation from the presidency on 31 December, 1999.

The Russian media has and still is undergoing a dramatic series of transformations since 1985. Prior to Gorbachev and his reforms, the media were a central and integral part of maintaining the socialist state. Media and State were in an interdependent relationship, the media needed the State for funding and support and the State needed the media to provide ideological support – to create a stable political environment in which communism could continue to survive. Above all, the media were subordinate to the will of the State under this particular regime.

However, things began to change, slowly at first, during Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* reforms. Although the role of the media was still to support the State in its political, social and economic objectives, it was to spearhead top down initiated change. The media was used to sway the Soviet public and push aside political opposition to the reforms. A concept was introduced into society by the political elite – positive criticism. This process involved members of the public making observations and comments through the media. Weaknesses were exposed, transgressions were highlighted in order to reinvigorate an ailing Soviet State. A greater level of freedom of speech was permitted in the printed media.

New laws were passed by the Gorbachev administration, such as the 1990 media law. The concept of freedom of speech and press seemed to be taking hold in the Soviet Union. Up until approximately 1990, the Soviet media appeared to be a unified mass that disseminated propaganda from the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU). Breaks began to become visible and were clearly exposed in the August 1991 coup. Media organisations divided

themselves between political patrons and politician factions. Some sided with the hard-line communists and other media sided with Gorbachev.

The new found freedoms of the late Soviet period laid the foundations for a period of run-away tabloid journalism. With political control and censorship measures relaxed, journalistic style changed. Reckless, irresponsible and unfounded accusations were printed in the press during this period. The excesses of freedom of speech became apparent. The hopes of developing an attitude of positive criticism in the Soviet media disappeared.

Centralised control evaporated entirely with the break-up of the Soviet Union. This allowed a continuation of editorial freedom, which was now tempered by market realities. In the early days of the post-Soviet state, a euphoria pervaded that have been dubbed as the *Golden Years* of the Russian media. Some media based themselves on foreign models – for example the newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* modelled itself on the British newspaper *The Independent*.

By 1993, the issue of market realities began to impose a new direction upon the media. Media were no longer supported by the State and had to make their own way financially as the cash-strapped State was in no position to offer any help. This left the option of enlisting the help of financial donors from the Russian business community. A feeling existed amongst the media hierarchy, that although they were seeking financial partners, this would not affect a media organisation's editorial freedom. However, these businessmen otherwise known as oligarchs were not going to give something for nothing.

The oligarchs wanted and needed a voice with which to sway political figures and events in their favour. Media assets came to form parts of large industrial/financial empires and were used by their financial masters as a mouthpiece to put across their message. As a rule, media were not financially viable enterprises in their own right. This situation brought about the blurred distinction, which marked the presidency of Boris Yeltsin, in the line between business and politics.

As time progressed the new Russian State began to grow stronger and stronger and assumed a greater control over society. Media are considered an important aspect, as they are a means of producing cultural identity and are thought of as being important in swaying public opinion. Two important political events that involved media co-operation and goodwill during the Yeltsin era included the 1996 presidential elections and the First Chechen War (1994 –

96). During the First Chechen War, the media initially sided with the Federal Government and ran with the official version of events. However, by mid – late war some privately owned media began to break ranks. By June 1996, the time of the presidential elections, the media appeared to be back on side with the Kremlin again. Media co-operated with Yeltsin, to secure their future (freedom of speech) and the property of the oligarchs from possible nationalisation had the Communist Party been successful in the elections.

Yeltsin appeared to be a guarantor of the media's freedom of speech. Media co-operation with the State in the 1996 presidential elections was considered by some at the time, to be an expedient measure at the time and they could reassert themselves after the election was over. This co-operation seems to have initiated another phase in the development of Russian media. A growing subordination to the will of the State by not only state-owned but private media as well. During the later years of his presidency, Yeltsin initiated changes to media law and introduced new key government personnel in the media and information sector. These actions laid the foundations for a greater level of control over the dissemination of information by the authorities.

Between the economic crisis of 1998 and the Duma elections of December 1999, Yeltsin had become convinced of impending personal disaster if he was unable to successfully choose an heir to the presidency. He needed someone who would be reliable, yet almost unknown. Once again the media would be required, to try and sell Yeltsin's candidate to the Russian people. Media chose their political patrons prior to the Duma elections of December 1999 and the March 2000 presidential elections. This decision is a critical one for media organisations, if they support the 'wrong' (losing) political figure, their business and activities can come under threat as well.

In spite of manipulating the media and laying the foundations of a more restrictive legal framework during his term as President, Yeltsin came to be viewed by many as the champion and saviour of a free Russian press. He held an iron grip on the state controlled media, where he forced his will upon them in a somewhat ruthless manner. The regular sacking of state-TV managers bears testimony to this political interference. Putin's coming to power, through Yeltsin's patronage accelerated a trend that had become apparent by the late Yeltsin era. That of greater central government control over the flow of information into and out of Russia.

During the run up to the March 2000 presidential elections, Putin stood on a political platform that favoured strengthening the central state and on law and order. This combined with his background of service in the KGB and to a lesser extent, bureaucratic administration lent an indication to a possible direction change. Moves have been made to resurrect a stronger and greater Russia. To try and achieve these goals the centres of producing cultural identity have been rallied and their potential power to influence and affect change harnessed. As such, the media are a centre of cultural production and have been subjected to an intensified campaign by the authorities to restrict themselves to disseminating the 'official' viewpoint. This has applied equally to state and private media.

Under the Yeltsin era, catch phrases and rhetoric focused on preventing a return of communism to Russia. This is what bound media and government, at times. The rhetoric has changed under Putin's administration. Initially, there was a focus on law and order and in distancing the oligarchs from the centre of power. Both Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky fell to this particular campaign. Simultaneously, tied to the issue of re-establishing law and order was the Second Chechen War. Putin used this campaign to bring about a higher public profile for the elections.

This war has evolved over time, influenced by events both domestic and international. After the events of September 11, 2001 and various acts of terror committed in Russian territory, the focus of the rhetoric has shifted more toward combating terrorism. An action that has been designed to bring the appearance of a convergence of Western and Russian interests. Such a convergence has helped to mute a lot of international criticism of Russian actions in Chechnya.

In spite of a departure from the policy of regionalism, Putin has retained parts of Yeltsin's old bureaucratic apparatus. This includes some of the political entourage. Does this mean that in the midst of apparent change there is also a measure of continuity?

Leading academics have argued that there is a measure of continuity in the manner in which the Russian politics and media operate. A leading academic in the field of Russian media and politics summed up this sentiment and noted that this is often overlooked.

“(John) Downing [...] concludes that the continuity between the old and the

new system has been largely underestimated.”³

In the title of my thesis is the word *ideology*, it is a widely used and greatly contested political term. I will, at this early stage explain the context in which this term will be used in this work. The principle significance of the term lies in it referring to a coherent (more or less) “set of ideas that provide the basis for some kind of organised political action.”⁴

Ideologies straddle the crossroads of theory and practice. Therefore some common characteristics can be found in ideologies.

- Offer an account or critique of the existing order. This may be given in the form of a ‘world view.’
- Generates a model of a preferred future. The desired model may be given as a vision of a ‘good society.’
- Give an outline as to the possibility of political change and the best means to expedite the change.⁵

Chapter One deals with the debate as to whether a cult of personality exists around the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. The chapter begins by defining the concept of *cult of personality* and then progresses to placing this theory in a practical setting. Origins of the concept are discussed and then the practice(s) of cult of personality in the Soviet Union are discussed. The two most prominent figures in the history of cult of personality are discussed, the Soviet leaders Joseph Stalin and Leonid Brezhnev. Other lesser figures, framed in these terms, have been deliberately excluded. This is intended to bring greater focus and clarity for the reader, to come to terms with these complex phenomena.

After laying the chapter’s theoretical and practical foundations it shifts the focus to Vladimir Putin. Beginning by examining how Putin was able to gain enough public profile for him to win the 2000 presidential elections. What was his method of communication? What kind of appeals did he use to try and win over the voting public? The period in which Putin had his

³ Ekecrantz, J., “Introduction: Post-Communism and Global Culture” in Ekecrantz, J. & Olofsson, K., Editors, *Russian Reports: Studies in Post-Communist Transformation of Media and Journalism*, Huddinge, Almqvist & Wiksell International, 2000, pp. 1 – 30, p. 26.

⁴ Heywood, A., *Key Concepts in Politics*, New York, Palgrave, 2000, p. 22.

⁵ Ibid.

public profile launched was short, but intense.

After his victory at the polls in March 2000, the focus of the Kremlin's PR concerning the personality of Putin changed. It entered a new and more mature phase, which built upon his initial public profile. Many different aspects in society have emerged, which on the surface would seem to suggest that a form of cult of personality exists. But, is this sufficient to say that a cult of personality exists due to several aspects of the theoretical concept have manifested in contemporary Russian society?

The second chapter analyses key political actors and the issue of elections in the Russian Federation. Both Yeltsin and Putin have ideal public images, that is the image that they would like to convey to society of themselves. There are numerous reasons as to why these public identities are created, it seems that one of the main reasons for this to occur in the first instance is to enable a politician to fill a niche on the political scene. The type of political niche to be filled would depend upon the political mood of society. Yeltsin was able to gain his popularity through appealing to the masses. He liked to be associated with the masses, as their champion.

As Yeltsin's term as President continued, the public mood and sentiment changed. The era of Yeltsin's presidency became known as *bespredel*, without limits. Yeltsin realised this change and that political change was to occur in some form, if he was to secure his legacy this change needed to be managed. His eventual chosen successor was Vladimir Putin, due to the Yeltsin legacy of political and economic chaos a new public image was needed.

Initially a potential heir, the politically ambitious Mayor of Moscow, Yuri Luzhkov has sought the Russian presidency for some time. His political office has enabled him to accumulate a measure of power and influence, which he has wielded to support his campaign for Russia's top political position. Among the assets that he has acquired to support his claim, have been significant holdings in the media industry. The media are owned by the Moscow City Council, but effectively controlled by Luzhkov himself.

In addition to Yeltsin, Lyudmila Putina as the Presidential First Lady has her role scrutinised. Questions and issues dealing with topics such as the role played by the First Lady in Russia and whether this role has remained constant or has been evolving are tackled. This

particular facet of Russian politics is mostly overlooked in the field of academic analysis. There appears to be very little academic literature published. The lack of information raises a question, just how important is the First Lady in Russian political life?

A third theme of the second chapter deals with the perceptible increase of the importance and predominance of the state's role in Russian society. This particular facet, that of the pre-eminence of state interests are above all else, seems to have been resurrected during Putin's tenure in power. Certainly, the concept is not new in Russian or world politics. Just to what extent has this re-emergent theme come to dominate the post-Yeltsin political scene?

One of Putin's election pledges was to distance all oligarchs equally from political power. Oligarchs were very influential during the Yeltsin era, especially after helping Yeltsin secure another term in office during the 1996 presidential elections. The oligarchs made a highly visible presence, mixing public life with private gain. Such an obvious conflict of interest, which they managed to accumulate massive wealth, made them an object of contempt in the eyes of the public who struggled to make an existence. High profile examples were made of the oligarchs Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky. But, to what extent and with how much success has the war on the oligarchs been fought?

Chapter Three – *A Search for Identity and the Russian Orthodox Church*, covers a wide range of issues linked to the Russian peoples' search for an identity that is both specific and special, which sets them apart from other peoples of the world. These topics and discussions are related to how Russia and Russians see themselves, as evident through media debates. Is Russia oriented to the East or more to the West? A difficult question to answer and one that has perplexed many for centuries. Some of the sections have been simplified for ensuring the complexities of some of these debates do not overcome the reader. For instance, in section 3.1.1, I only refer to Westernisers and Slavophiles. Ideologies such as Eurasianism are left out, there is not enough room to take the many and varied ideologies into account in a manner that ensures justice is done to each.

The issue of patriotism is inspected in Chapter 3.3. Patriotism can be used to bind a nation together in times of adversity and difficulty. Is patriotism being used again, in order to achieve the objectives of the political elite? Are the tactics the same as those used during the times of the Soviet Union, or have the strategies and manner in which state-sponsored is applied

evolved?

In Chapter 3.4, the focus will be on the interaction between the State, the mass media and the Russian Orthodox Church. The work will begin by firstly briefly examining the ROC's brief revival as a result of the Second World War. In an effort to try and boost a sagging war effort, Stalin enlisted the help of the ROC. An informal agreement was struck between the parties. This agreement allowed for some leniency to be shown to the Church, but brought it under the complete control of the State. Why did the ROC agree to help, what was in effect their enemy?

Close ties began to be forged between Church and State has continued, although on another footing since Mikhail Gorbachev's *perestroika* during the later part of the 1980's. President Yeltsin did not alter the new Church-State union, after the Soviet Union dissolved. In return for political support, recognition and participation the Church offered the political leadership power through legitimisation. In other words, the Orthodox Church would attempt to transfer power and prestige to selected key political powers through officially sanctioning them. Political actors seem to have readily accepted this offer, with the thought that they will be given access to the Church's flock via the leadership of the ROC.

Although the exact number of Orthodox believers is difficult to determine, the ROC's influence in secular matters has been steadily growing. This has continued into the administration of President Putin. A form of partnership between State and Church has become evident. Such a union has not only been taking place on a federal level, but also a regional and local level. Part of the ROC's success in the political arena can be attributed to their highly rigorous, but successful lobbying campaign. Church influence in the areas of education and the military most clearly demonstrate the level of interaction between the State and Church.

One of the circumstances that seem to limit the ability of the ROC in spreading more rapidly among Russian society is the lack of ability to deal with the past. Several issues relating to the Soviet past have surfaced and caused significant image damage. Issues are slowly evolving into scandals by the ROC's inept handling of political communication in matters such as the alleged links between the Patriarch Alexis II and the KGB and the debate on restitution of Church land and property seized by the State during the Soviet era.

Chapter four deals with many different issues, which are and were at play from the late Soviet period into the contemporary period. The late Soviet period is included to provide a form of measure for the reader to gauge developments in the Russian media during the fluid developments of the mid-1980's until the present time. Foreign ownership and influence in the landscape of the Russian media is the first of the issues to be studied. Just how much foreign influence is present in the contemporary mass media of Russia?

Next is the development and direction(s) of the Internet in the Russian Federation. Internet usage rates, political use of the net, attempts to control the flow of information that is transmitted electronically and commercialisation issues are looked at. The Internet had been neglected as a reliable means with which to transmit a message by the authorities for some time, but I intend to demonstrate that such assumptions are very misplaced in the contemporary environment.

Chapter 4.3 – 4.5 explores the role and interaction between media and society. Important questions and concepts are examined, such as the level of trust of the media in modern Russian society, methods of manipulating the public and the availability of ordinary citizens to communicate with the political elite to name a few.

The final parts of chapter four give the reader an understanding of the philosophy and practicalities of the Soviet media and the short period of intense change and transformation that it underwent. These parts lay an understanding of the purpose of the mass media in the Soviet Union and how this purpose, although in the bigger picture remained constant, did change a little. This change then permitted the tumultuous events of 1990-1991 to transpire, without the changes brought about by the Gorbachev administration the fall of the Soviet Union may have taken somewhat longer to occur.

Chapter four concludes with sections on media in the present-day setting. Developments in the media are traced in areas such as state support of the mass media, censorship and other mechanisms that are used as a means of leverage on editorial content. What are the similarities and the differences in the way(s) in which the state and big business set out to influence what appears in the mass media?

Relations between the media, government and the military during periods of armed conflict

are scrutinised in Chapter five. This chapter begins by looking at the First Chechen War (1994-96) and the consequences of this war on politics and the media. Did the federal government begin the war with a set plan for political communications and if there was a plan was it implemented correctly? The war had a negative impact upon freedom of speech and saw an increase in central government attempts to act as the *gatekeeper*.

Inept handling of both the military action and political communications brought about a humiliating withdrawal from Chechnya by the federal government. There was to be some three years of a form of peace before the outbreak of the Second Chechen War in late 1999. During this interlude lessons from the First Chechen War were learnt and political communications of foreign countries to their public during times of war studied. Two conflicts (not directly involving Russia) that have seen the art of communicating something as unpleasant as war to the public in a very 'friendly' manner has been the 1991 Gulf War by UN forces and the 1999 Kosovo operation by NATO forces. These two conflicts have the dimension relating to political communication examined and this is then related back to the Russian experience.

The Second Chechen War was prosecuted in a more concise and professional way. A lot of PR work went into effect before the open hostilities erupted. President Putin used the war as one of the platforms to gain publicity and popularity for the 2000 presidential election. The government has seemed to be in more control of the flow of information concerning events in this particular war. Alongside the use of coercive means and persuasive means has been the employment of a very specific language, which has the ability to create emotion and cloud the real issues at hand.

Chapter six *Framing the News*, the final chapter looks at the use of topics and agenda setting in news programmes. There are many broadcasting media organisations operating in the Russian Federation. At the beginning of 2002, a total of 1457 TV stations and 1100 radio stations held valid broadcasting licences.⁶ A brief introduction gives an account of the use of agenda setting during the Soviet era and how it developed. Then the focus of the chapter is fixed on the modern setting, with regard to the news content of *ORT* (later *TVI*) and *NTV* for a given period. The first channel being a state channel and the second given channel a privately

⁶ *The Russian Broadcasting Industry*, National Association of TV and Radio Broadcasters of Russia, www.nat.ru/eng/rb/industry.php, 9 October, 2003.

owned one. What topics are raised, is there any readily identifiable bias? These are some of the questions and themes that shall be studied.

CHAPTER 0: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE THESIS.

0.0 Chapter Objectives

The principal aim of this introductory chapter is to give the reader an understanding of the underlying goals and objectives of the thesis, and the theoretical framework upon which the work is built. The main themes shall be presented to the reader, peripheral themes which help to generate a greater understanding (and their significance) will also be mentioned.

I will begin by outlining what is to be discussed in the following chapters. An introduction to my theoretical approaches follows 1.2 Theories such as critical theory, media theory (based on McQuail's work and the *Four Theories of the Press*), political communication and semiotics will be explained. The applications and possible shortcomings of these theories when applied to the media of the Russian Federation will also be outlined.

This introductory chapter will include not only theory on how events are framed through the use of theory, but will go further. For events to occur in the first instance, a catalyst is needed to generate a sequence of incidents, which will culminate in an event. For the purposes of this work, the role of the media in trying to manage, manipulate or create an event will be analysed.

0.1 Media Theory

In this part I shall deal with the concepts of how the media operate, the significance of the media, social functions of the media, requirements for freedom of the press and lastly, some theories of the press will be outlined. Most of the material from this section has been drawn from *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction* (McQuail, 1994: 1 – 2).

0.1.1 The significance of the mass media

According to McQuail, there are five ways in which the mass media are able to manipulate or form public opinion:

(1) Power Resource: it is a possible medium of determining control and innovation in society.

The mass media is the principle way in which information that is vital to the viability of most social institutions is disseminated and received.

- (2) Location (or Arena): this is where many aspects of public life, at a national and an international level are played out.
- (3) Media as a Source: the media provide a major source of definitions and images of social reality. As a source, this is the place where the construction of societies and groups culture and values occur. And where these concepts are stored and expressed.
- (4) Fame: the means of attaining publicity and effective performance in the public arena by, in this instance, politicians.
- (5) Normal: this is the measure by which society deems what is normal and that which is abnormal. It is a benchmark that the public uses to make judgements based on that society's current value system of normality.⁷

0.1.2 Social functions of the media

Functionalist theory: social practices and institutions are explained in terms of individual and societal needs. When applied to the media these needs include such things as: order, integration, guidance, motivation, adoption, socialisation and continuity. Society is perceived as a working system of linked subsystems, of which the media is one of the subsystems. The media is portrayed as self-directing and self-correcting.⁸ (McQuail, 1994: 77 - 78)

According to Functionalist theory, the media specify certain social functions. In this role the media may reinforce existing values and beliefs or may act to change incumbent values and beliefs. There are five aspects of social function; information, correlation, continuity, entertainment and mobilisation.

- (1) Information: in the constantly changing world in which we live, the media are the

⁷ McQuail, D., *Mass Communication Theory: An Introduction*, London, Sage, 1994, p. 1.

⁸ Some functionalist theorists include; M. Janowitz, H. Lasswell, H. Mendelsohn, K. R. Stamm and C. R. Wright.

providers of information about what is happening at a local level and news concerning the larger international community. Through the information provided by the media, indications regarding relations of power are put forward.

(2) Correlation: this is where opinions are formed. By commenting on events through explanation and interpretation the process of consensus building begins to take place. Through the way in which the news is presented orders of priority are set and the relative status of the news is given.

(3) Continuity: through the nature of the events covered the media may either express itself in the dominant culture, thereby maintaining a commonality of values. Or recognise other subcultures and new cultural developments that will help create a new set of values.

(4) Entertainment: the primary function of the entertainment aspect is to provide a source of amusement and relaxation, resulting in a reduction in the level of social tension.

(5) Mobilisation: various societal objectives may be campaigned for, issues of politics, the economy, environmental concern and freedom of speech.⁹

0.1.3 Requirements for the freedom of the press

There are certain conditions and expectations to be met before the label of a 'free press' can be given. The expectations may differ slightly from culture to culture, there are however some common attributes associated with a truly free press.

The issue of censorship is pivotal to the issue of press freedom. Governmental controls such as licensing and censorship restrict what can and will be said. A news organisation should be able to publish the news and opinions that it wishes to express, without fear of punishment or reprisal. In addition to the publishing of the news, access with regard to the collection, should also be equally unimpeded.

Bound in the ideal of the right to communicate, the public should have free reception of and

⁹ McQuail, D., op. cit. (1994), p. 79.

access to all points of view and news.

With the advent of vast commercial empires, in which media organisations have been swallowed up, comes the concern over the influence on the type and nature of the communication of information by the owners. Socialist theorist and American academic, J. Herbert Altschull stated in his second law of journalism that ‘the contents of the media always reflect the interests of those who finance them.’¹⁰

Taking Altschull’s thesis further, British academic William Bloom makes no distinction between state controlled and private media. “[...] because a free press, like a controlled press, needs to satisfy the demands of its patrons – whether these demands are political or for financial profit.”¹¹

The relevancy of these two reflections will become clear in the course of this work. Suffice to say at this stage that demands will be made upon media regardless of the nature of its ownership that is state or private. Media may be viewed as a prize, which when used effectively can manipulate events (to a certain extent) to one’s advantage. I intend to demonstrate, in the Russian context that the media is manipulated by both commercial and governmental interest groups to bring about a particular situation.

0.1.4 Political Communication

Brian McNair, in his book *An Introduction to Political Communication* uses the definitions of Robert E. Denton and Gary C. Woodward (1990) extensively in describing political communication.¹² The issues surrounding what defines a political communication are complex and broad, as are the issues of politics in Russia. The press is often used by its owner to express their interests. Politics and business are closely tied, at times seemingly inseparable from each other. Media barons vie for positions of influence and favour by attacking each other and their political foes through the newspapers and television channels.

¹⁰ (1) McQuail, D., op cit. (1994), p. 162

(2) Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W., *Media/Society: Industries, Images and Audiences*, 2nd Edition, Thousand Oaks, Pine Forge Press, 2000, p. 36.

¹¹ Bloom, W., *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 86.

¹² Definitions taken from Denton, R. E. & Woodward, G. C., *Political Communication in America*, New York, Praeger, 1990.

Denton and Woodward define political communication as the:

public discussion about the allocation of public resources (revenues), official authority (who is given the power to make legal, legislative and executive decisions), and official sanctions (what the state rewards and punishes). [...] the crucial factor that makes a communication 'political' is not the source of a message, but its intent and purpose.¹³

By this definition, political communication does not necessarily originate from the government or politicians. What makes a message 'political communication,' is that the message is designed to have an impact upon the political thought process. As such, a further definition needs to be made, to define groups that make purposeful communications about politics.

According to McNair, there are three groups that constitute those that perform purposeful political communication.

- (A) Politicians and political actors: every type of communication by these groups that is done with the aim of realising a particular goal.
- (B) Non-politicians: communications that are directed at the first group by interest groups such as voters or newspaper columnists.
- (C) The media: media analysis of politics (and of the politicians, as defined in the first group) that takes the form of news reports and editorials.¹⁴

McNair explains three parts to political 'reality.' The reality is determined by who the observer is, of the three groups that have been defined above.

- (A) Objective political reality: this category is made up of political events as and when they occur.

¹³ McNair, B., *An Introduction to Political Communication*, London, Routledge, 1999, pp. 3 - 4.

¹⁴ McNair, B., *op. cit.*, p. 4

- (B) Subjective political reality: how politicians and citizens interpret political events.
- (C) Constructed political reality: this is how political events are covered and reported by the media. ¹⁵

Russian business interests lobby the politicians for both power and wealth. The most powerful lobby groups are made up by the Russian business elite, the so-called oligarchs. These oligarchs are a wide and varied group of business and political interests. Some will make use of the existing politicians to achieve their aims, others became the politicians making the decisions (such as Boris Berezovsky). Part of the financial interests held by the more powerful oligarchs (as outlined in the section relating to media ownership) is media groups, which are used to disseminate the owner's point of view to the public and to the politicians. Although, with time and deciphering a media outlet's messages, a hint of the owner may become apparent, the owner is not obligated by law to declare their ownership. Instead, a founder must be registered. Some of the duties that are undertaken by the founder include; "it is an entity that applies for the registration papers, signs contracts with the editor and can make a decision to cancel the publication."¹⁶ It should be noted that the owner and the founder are not necessarily the same person.

By controlling the media, the oligarchs are to an extent able to influence the constructed reality. The control over constructed political reality in turn, has an influence on subjective political reality. This is because of the oligarchs through their media holdings, limit the content and focus of news. The public will form opinions on what they are able to view, read or listen to. Recent events (the Kremlin's crackdown on the media, starting openly in approximately May 2000) signal the government's realisation of the importance of controlling the flow of information (and consequently the interpretation of the information which is supplied).

The view expressed by sociologist J. B. Thompson in 1988 appears to be very relevant to the thesis, he gave an interpretation of communications. He looks for the message, which is given inside the main message and the end goal of the communication. "When our concern is with the analysis of ideology, then the role of interpretation is to explicate the connection between

¹⁵ McNair, B., op. cit., p. 12

¹⁶ Richter, A., Moscow Media Law and Policy Institute, received by e-mail on 14 October, 2002.

the meaning of the symbolic constructions and the relations of domination which that meaning serves to sustain.”¹⁷

Thompson advises a study which comprises of three parts when analysing the social processes of mass communication.

- Institutional arrangements for production.
- The messages themselves.
- Reception and incorporation of messages by individuals and groups.¹⁸

These attempts to influence the government or the public are tied to the notions of the critical theorist Jurgen Habermas. Two of Habermas’s concepts hold particular relevance, firstly the concept of the ‘public sphere.’ A definition of public sphere involves the existence of “a socially organised rational-critical discourse targeted on influencing state power.”¹⁹

The second concept to be considered, revolves around what Habermas describes as the “colonisation of life-world of the public by both corporate and governmental forces, against which the public has come to react by organising various types of oppositional and social movements.”²⁰ A recent period in the expansion of media watchdog groups in the Russian Federation may be linked to the concept of public resistance to the governmental and corporate forces control of media assets.

I will be assuming a totalist theory approach to the analysis of political communication. Totalist theory occurs where media communication is principally defined in relation to other power institutions, such as politics and economy.²¹

0.2 Critical Theory

The area of critical social theory has a specific focus on “issues of power and justice and the ways that the economy, matters of race, class, and gender, ideologies, discourses, education,

¹⁷ Editor Elderidge, J., *Getting the Message: News, Truth and Power*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 44.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 25.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 182.

religion and other social institutions, and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 281).

Critical theory was developed in the 1930’s by three German academics. Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (from the so-called ‘Frankfurt School’) moved to the United States after the Nazi accession to power in 1933. The theory of critical enlightenment derives from critical theory.

Jurgen Habermas, an influential thinker of the Critical Theory school of thought, proposed three types of knowledge. The first type is *empirical - analytical* which is linked to the area of natural sciences. Another type which was proposed is *historical - hermeneutic*, which has to do with meaning and understanding. The final classification is *critical sciences*, with an emphasis on issues of emancipation.²²

The Frankfurt School believe that modern media do not challenge the audience to be active and to think. Instead, it provides them with ready-made opinion and ‘infotainment.’ The purpose of the media is to reinforce the existing hegemonic structure.²³ A possible conclusion that could be drawn from this notion is that the owners of the media and the incumbent political elite are one and the same.

What is the reason in behind providing the public with ready-made opinion and ‘infotainment?’ Critical theorists have an opinion to explain this phenomenon as well.

“[...] members of the Frankfurt School were also convinced that the culture industry focussed on trivia rather than substance. Presenting trivia makes it possible to avoid issues that might lead to real debate and conflict.”²⁴

Critical theory’s role is to analyse the competing power interests between groups and individuals within a given society. A focus is made on identifying who gains and who loses in certain circumstances. An argument of Criticalists stipulates that privileged groups sometimes have an advantage in supporting the status quo, to protect their advantages.

²² Kauppi, M. V. & Viotti, P. R., *International Relations Theory: Realism, Pluralism, Globalism and Beyond*, 3rd Edition, Boston, Allyn and Bacon, 1999, p. 46.

²³ Louw, P. E., *The Media and Cultural Production*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 2001, pp. 96 – 97.

On the other hand the Birmingham School of thought offers an alternative explanation. They assume an active and not passive audience, which is a vulnerable object of 'education.' The Birmingham School re-empowers the audience by tying the use of the notion of alternative or oppositional decoding of media messages to them.²⁵

My argument is that the oligarchs (especially Vladimir Gusinsky and Berezovsky) are the result of the previous power regime, as represented by the former President Yeltsin. Putin's election as President has brought about a partially new power regime, which has no place for some of the oligarchs. The incumbent power system (the oligarchs) are therefore fighting for their power and privilege, in some cases their very existence. They want to see the old power base maintained.

0.3 Semiotics

Dualist Theory (Self and Other):

In the book *The Semiotics of Russian Culture*, Lotman and Uspenskii (1984) claim that the dual semiotic model of binary opposition was formed in eighteenth century Russia. Their argument centres on the premise that there were only two outcomes in Russian culture, right and wrong, good or bad. There is no room for neutrality or 'grey' areas, everything is black or white.

Dualism was first applied to the reforms of Peter I, which created Russia as a partly Easternised and partly Westernised state. This was a departure from the past, when Russia was considered to be an Eastern nation.

At any one period of time, two sets of mutually opposed mechanisms within a given culture are said to operate at given time. One of these mechanisms has a tendency toward diversity and the "polyglotism" of culture.²⁶

²⁴ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 35.

²⁵ McQuail, D., *McQuail's Mass Communication Theory*, 4th Edition, London, Sage Publications, 2000, pp. 97 – 99.

²⁶ Uspenski, B. A, Ivanov, V. V., Lotman, J. M., Toporov, V. N. & Pjatigorski, A. M., *Theses on the Semiotic Study of Cultures*, Tartu, Tartu University Press, 1998, p. 27.

The other mechanism, which operates concurrently, has the inclination toward uniformity. An attempt will be made to organising a conformist culture.²⁷

Lotman and Uspenskii claim that this tendency is uniquely Russian. The bipolar Russian values did not hold in the 'Catholic Christian West,' which had an allowance for a neutral state of being.

According to Uspenskii, cultures may be "oriented toward writing (text) or toward oral speech, toward the word or toward the picture [...]."²⁸ Russia's rich literary past indicates that text is of significant value to the Russian culture. Text has a history of carrying more meaning and being more than just a form of entertainment. A dry narrative of events, such as in the Western style press, is instead made in the form of political or moral analysis. The meaning that is transmitted is more emotionally charged.

Russian bipolarism did not end at the end with the death of Tsar Peter I. The Soviet regime exploited the concept throughout their tenure in power. The use of this strategy did not solely apply to labelling the foreigner as the enemy. Stalin used bipolarism to rid himself of any possible vestiges of opposition by tarnishing people as 'enemies of the people.'

The popularity of exploiting bipolarism seemingly waned during the early Yeltsin years. From 1996 however, the political leadership has shown themselves to be willing and able to exploit this tool. Recently in the Second Chechen War, a concerted effort has been initiated by the Kremlin to vilify the Chechen people. It is my intention to apply the dualistic theory to the Chechen situation. Media coverage has portrayed a struggle of good (the Federal Russian forces) against evil (the Chechen leadership), an evil that according to the Kremlin will stop at nothing to destroy the Russian state and its people.

0.4 Ideology

A pivotal concept of this thesis is the term 'ideology.' To an extent, ideology has determined Russia's immediate past. The mass state-imposed ideology of Marxism-Leninism dictated society's shape and function, what was important and what should be discarded. This all-

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Uspenski, B. A., Ivanov, V. V., Lotman, J. M., Toporov, V. N. & Pjatigorski, A. M., op. cit., p. 28

pervading guiding principle was dominant for over seventy years in the Soviet Union.

It seems as though the legacy of Marxism-Leninism still leaves an influence in contemporary Russia. But to what extent? This effect is difficult to measure and can be the source of an endless debate.

But, first it is necessary to provide a definition of this controversial concept, for the purposes of this thesis. What is *ideology*? And what are its characteristics?

The Media Reader gives, what I believe is a good definition of the term. Ideology “[...] those images, concepts and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand and ‘make sense’ of some aspect of social existence.”²⁹

Ideology does not exist in a pure and insulated environment. The underlying philosophy of an ideology needs a medium, to be communicated to an audience. A means of achieving these ends can be found in language “[...] is by definition the principal medium in which we find different ideological discourses elaborated.”³⁰ Significance of language, in terms of what is not said (may be implied, hidden meanings or a ‘natural’ conclusion) can be of equal and possibly be of greater significance as the exact text of what is said.

Ideologies, by their very nature are a phenomenon of mass culture. A subconscious collective identity introduced to society, not necessarily introduced by violent means. An ideology appears to offer an individual a chance to ‘belong,’ a very strong motivation. In addition to the belonging aspect, ideology presents the believer with a system or guide on how to interpret and react to events, it is the creation of an idealised existence.

Because of this idealised existence, some certain traits exist across the spectrum of ideologies;

- An articulation of different elements into a distinctive set or chain of meanings.
- In a liberal ideology ‘freedom’ is connected with individualism and the free market; in a socialist ideology, ‘freedom’ is a collective condition, dependent on, not counterposed to, ‘equality of condition,’ as it is in liberal ideology.

²⁹ Editors Alvarado, M. & Thompson, J. O., *The Media Reader*, London, BFI Publishing, 1990, p. 8.

- Ideological struggle can take place by articulating the elements differently, thereby producing a different meaning. The ‘chain’ is broken and a new articulation is established.
- Ideological statements made by individuals, but ideologies are not the product of individual consciousness or intention. Ideologies are a collective process and practice.
- Ideologies tend to disappear and become a ‘naturalised’ state of common sense.
- Ideologies work by ‘making sense.’³¹

During the transitional period, there appears to be a tension created between individualism and collectivisation. From a certain perspective, a form of binarism also exists here. British academic James Lull contends that “[...] ideology must be represented symbolically to be effective.”³²

Ideology is an essential element in the establishment of authority through the exercise of a form of power. “Ideological influence is crucial in the exercise of power.”³³ Therefore, for an ideology to be successful, it requires an effect means of communicating its message to an audience. What happens if the message does not get through to the target audience at all, or in the manner intended by the sender?

“Fabricators of dominant ideologies become an ‘information elite.’ Their power, or dominance, stems directly from their ability to publicly articulate their preferred systems of ideas.”³⁴

To illustrate the above point, we can refer to Mikko Kivikoski, a researcher in the Department of Political History at the University of Turku, Finland. Kivikoski’s penetrating analysis of Vaclav Havel (Czechoslovakia) and Gyorgy Konrad (Hungary) is presented in his article.³⁵ These two dissident intellectuals theorised on how to break a hegemony as strong as the East-Central European states. They both concluded that it was not possible to bring about change from within the system, as demonstrated by the Soviet backlash in Hungary in 1956 and the 1968 Prague Spring.

³⁰ Editors Alvarado, M. & Thompson, J. O., op. cit., p. 9.

³¹ Editors Alvarado, M. & Thompson, J. O., op. cit., pp. 9 - 10.

³² Lull, J., *Media, Communication, Culture: A Global Approach*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1995, p. 166.

³³ Lull, J. (1995), op. cit., p. 32.

³⁴ Lull, J. (1995), op. cit., p. 7.

³⁵ Kivikoski, M., “‘Anti-politics’ and Civil Society: Forgotten Ideas in East Central Europe?” in Kangaspuro, M., *Russia: More Different than Most*, Helsinki, Kikimora, 1999, pp. 45 – 70.

The best means of bringing about change was thought to be by bringing about ideas of civil society and anti-politicisation of society. This could awaken society's consciousness. The creation of individualism in a totalitarian society would bring about a contradiction and conflict in society, as Eastern Europe during the post-war period was a mass society.

This conflict, caused by two very different ideologies in the same political space would bring about the fall of one or the other. Resulting in a winner take all scenario. Awakening individualism in society would have the effect of putting expectations and demands upon the state, which could not be fulfilled. The result of this action would be a long-term project. The collapse of the Eastern Bloc took some ten years to eventuate, the rot started as far back as the early 1980's.³⁶

Described above, are the two sides of a coin. On the one hand, a competing ideology is able to get a message across to an audience effectively, thus initiating change. The flip side is the incumbent ideology that failed in its bid to remain as the hegemony. This was caused in part, by the ability to communicate effectively with their nation's citizenry.

Mass-mediated ideologies are strengthened by collaboration on information between various agencies such as the government, schools, businesses, religious groups, the military and mass media. The result is a reinforcement process of the ideological influence. Society's most entrenched and powerful institutions rely on one another as they share an ideological foundation.³⁷ This means that mass media are part of the process of reinforcing an ideology, they are not the total sum of the process.

British sociologist John B. Thompson took the notion that mass media help to serve the interests of the incumbent elite further in 1990. Embodied in the theory of mediaisation, he argues that;

“[...] instead for a new understanding of how mass media extend the availability of symbolic forms in time and space in order to establish and sustain relations of domination.”³⁸

³⁶ Kangaspuro, M., Editor, *Russia: More Different than Most*, Helsinki, Kikumora, 1999, op. cit., pp. 45 - 76.

³⁷ Lull, J. (1995), op. cit., p. 33.

³⁸ Lull, J. (1995), op. cit., p. 27.

Since Putin's ascension to power, there has been less pluralism in the media and a much greater level of compliance to the official version. A signal was given to the media via the mention of creating a 'single information space.' The re-building of a strong centralised state has been matched by attempts to 'educate' the public in topics such as 'culture' and patriotism.' A media campaign has been launched in conjunction with initiatives from other sources of ideology, such as the Russian Orthodox Church and the schooling system.

0.5 Jean Baudrillard's Theory of Simulation and Simulacra

The two concepts, simulation and simulacra are somewhat controversial theories, but ones that warrant further scrutiny and investigation. I will begin this sub-chapter by providing a definition of these concepts. Then I will attempt to relate various concepts, throughout this work, to these concepts.³⁹

Simulation is the first concept, which I shall attempt to clarify;

"[...] simulation is the process whereby representations of things come to replace the things being represented. In other words, we think that the representations are more important than the 'real.'"⁴⁰

"[...] a form of illusion, the replacement of the world by its image, so that we do not experience things originally but only as a copy of something else."⁴¹

This means that an idealised image of reality, which may or may not be a mirror of 'reality.' Baudrillard goes further, he states that society has lost touch with reality. Contending that society is infatuated with the simulation of reality, as represented by mediums such as TV and the Internet. The 'new reality' replaces the 'real reality,' society has come to feel comfortable in the artificial reality. An important point is that the new reality is not fake, just an imitation of something real. "It is another reality, that has a power and a meaning that is, if anything,

³⁹ For more on the subject see Baudrillard, J., *Simulacra and Simulation*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1997, especially pages 79 – 87.

⁴⁰ http://carmen.artsci.washington.edu/panop/subject_S.htm, February 12, 2002.

Also see, Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W., *Media / Society: Industries, Images and Audiences*, Second Edition, Thousand Oaks, Pine Forge Press, 2000.

⁴¹ Butler, R., Editor, *Jean Baudrillard: The Defence of the Real*, London, Sage Publications, 1999, p. 23.

greater than the 'real' real."⁴²

As a result of the above-mentioned reasoning, an important point emerges, concerning the very nature of simulation;

“A model is 'built' by combining features or elements of reality, and an event, a structure or future situation is 'played out on' those elements, and tactical conclusions are drawn from this with which to operate on reality.”⁴³

The above statement does not mean that reality is entirely removed from the process of simulation, but the process from which reality may be derived.

“The aim of simulation is not to do away with reality, but on the contrary to realise it, make it real.”⁴⁴

Now for the definition of the concept of simulacra. In this concept the process goes one step further than in simulation.

“Simulacra are copies of things that no longer have an original. Ideas about simulacra are part of the post-modern notion of the worlds without origins and a world without depth, a world of surface. There is no underlying meaning, only an exploration of surfaces.”⁴⁵

“[...] 'simulacra' are reproductions of objects or events [...].”⁴⁶

In the circumstance of a harsh or unfamiliar present people may look back to their past with nostalgia. French intellectual Jean Baudrillard has argued that it is a fear of the future which causes an attempt to re-run history.⁴⁷ A type of cultural re-cycling.

⁴² http://carmen.artsci.washington.edu/panop/subject_S.htm, February 12, 2002.

⁴³ Baudrillard, J., *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*, London, Sage Publications, 1998, p. 126.

⁴⁴ Butler, R., Editor, *Jean Baudrillard: The Defence of the Real*, London, Sage Publications, 1999, p. 23.

⁴⁵ http://carmen.artsci.washington.edu/panop/subject_S.htm, February 12, 2002.

⁴⁶ Kellner, D., *Jean Baudrillard: From Marxism to Postmodernism and Beyond*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1989, p. 78.

⁴⁷ Stevenson, N., *The Transformation of the Media: Globalisation, Morality and Ethics*, New York, Pearson Education Ltd., 1999, p. 121.

For further reading on Baudrillard see pp. 121 - 122,

Baudrillard hypothesises that the constant bombardment of images, which society is subjected to, instruct people how to live their lives by the creation of the artificial world. Following on from this point, “culture and society become a flux of undifferentiated images and signs.”⁴⁸ But, how are these images and signs transmitted? Modern media have provided a rapid means of transmission, which Baudrillard has addressed.

“The rise of broadcast media, especially television, is an important constituent of post modernity, for Baudrillard, along with the rapid dissemination of signs and simulacra in every realm of social and everyday life.”⁴⁹

American academic Byron Hawk has likened Baudrillard’s concepts to a concept of the German critical theorist Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse’s notion of one-dimensionality where “the multi-perspectival negating potential of art becomes collapsed into one-dimensional thinking is promoted by dominant ideology.”⁵⁰ The simplifying potential of art may make an ideology more easily accepted by recipients of the message. Baudrillard drew attention to this facet also.

“All dichotomies between appearance and reality, surface and depth, life and art, subject and object, collapse into a functionalised, integrated and self-reproducing universe of ‘simulacra’ controlled by ‘simulation’ models and codes.”⁵¹

An effective control over the delivery of the message can have a profound affect on the target audience, by blurring the distinction between fact and fiction. Without firm reference points, such as values and beliefs, an audience might be easier to manipulate. However, if the message suffers from poor and inconsistent delivery, the consequences for the sender of the message can be catastrophic.

Russian media have moved on from the Gorbachev era practice of trying to encourage constructive criticism, which went wrong and may have been a significant factor in helping to

⁴⁸ www.uta.edu/english/hawk/semiotics/baud.htm, February 12, 2002.

⁴⁹ Kellner, D., *op. cit.*, p. 68.

⁵⁰ www.uta.edu/english/hawk/semiotics/baud.htm, February 12, 2002.

collapse the Soviet Union. People lost faith in the system that had begun to criticise itself, a process that ultimately transformed into a destructive process.

In the contemporary situation, which still has some pluralistic aspects remaining, the media are trying to a new reality to life. Ideology and discourse seem to be aimed at rebuilding a strong Russian state that is built upon a strong patriotic feeling. The manner in which this effort is being directed utilises some old symbolism to convey a message to the public. Messages are condensed and simplified to facilitate public consumption.

The content of the media (pro-Kremlin) has created a positive artificial world, which is what the public yearned for after the Yeltsin years of *bespredel* (order and stability). An example of this is the high profile stand taken against the oligarchs by Putin. He made a stand promising to distance the oligarchs from power, two high profile cases against Gusinsky and Berezovsky were then initiated. This gave the impression that something was being done. But, have any genuine major changes been brought about by this limited campaign?

0.6 Image Theory

A comprehensive plan of strategy and implementation is needed to cultivate and maintain a desired image. The process can be made more difficult if there is no control of media assets or the control is tenuous. A set plan of action needs to be adopted from the outset, each stage in the over-all plan contributes to the final outcome.

At the beginning of the exercise of image making, thought needs to be focused on the transition from 'Current Image' to 'Target Image.' A question needs to be asked, how close is the current image from the target image?⁵²

A series of cumulative steps are then followed, which progressively serve to guide the manufacture of image.

⁵¹ Kellner, D., op. cit., p. 77.

⁵² Beach, Lee-Roy, Editor, *Image Theory: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations*, Malwah, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1998, p. 104.

Value Image ----- Trajectory Image ----- Strategic Image

- Value Image - decision maker's principles. These serve to guide a decision on plans or goals.
- Trajectory Image - decision maker's goal agenda. Represent the hopes for the future and what will be achieved.
- Strategic Image - plans adopted for achieving the goals and plans adopted during the trajectory phase.⁵³

A desired image can be transmitted via the media into a target audience. TV is considered to be among the most effective medium available to bring about a change or reinforce an existing social convention. But there are limits to the effectiveness of the campaign, namely the nature of the audience.

“Employing media imagery in the routine construction of interpersonal discourses of all kinds is a social common use of TV. [...] Media consumers' own interests, exercised within the circumstances and venues of reception (the endless micro-social contexts), greatly influence how media imagery is interpreted and used too.”⁵⁴

French academic Gabriel Tarde expressed his thoughts on how the media derive their power of influence. He stated that “One pen suffices to set off one million tongues [...]” and that mass media possess the ability to transport “[...] thought across distance.”⁵⁵

A society's values can be determined by the experience, collectively and individually. Therefore, a society that has experienced hardship or deprivation at the hands of their political elite in the past may be more wary or suspicious of TV content, than a society that has not experienced such conditions.

To get the desired image output, a set procedure needs to be adhered to by the message sender. In the case of the Russian media, the current dominant sender of messages is the

⁵³ Beach, Lee-Roy, op. cit., pp. 12 - 13.

⁵⁴ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 61.

⁵⁵ Ewen, S., *PR! A Social History of Spin*, New York, Basic Books, 1996, p. 69.

government. The current administration would appear to want to re-establish a strong Russia. This needs to be brought about by well-planned and concise means to avoid ‘noise’ or confusion among the intended recipients of the message. The value image phase seems to be running, evidenced by the employment of themes such as patriotism and the pre-eminent role of the state. Just how far in achieving the set goals has the process gone now?

0.7 TV and Power

Rules form an important part of every society’s ability to function. They can be formal or informal in nature. That is, rules which are prescribed in a country’s regulations and statutes or rules, which form a part of social norms (it is understood, by members of a certain society, that tasks are performed in a certain way).

Rules are “explicit codes and implicit understandings that constitute and regulate social behaviour. Rules assert what is normal, acceptable, or preferred and how social interaction is to be carried out.”⁵⁶

From an early age, all members of society are initiated into the world of power play and rules. We are taught to respect and obey social institutions – ‘the church,’ ‘the school,’ ‘the army’ and ‘the law.’⁵⁷ Rules can facilitate the smoother functioning of society in two ways;

- “Rules promote explicit and implicit understandings that inspire patterns of social behaviour.” In other words it helps in creating a form of identity through a measure of uniformity in society’s functioning.
- “People frequently find rule structures comforting.” Rules bring a degree of predictability in what is generally an unpredictable world.⁵⁸

However, the use of rules can have a sinister twist as well. “Explicit and implicit rules help organise social behaviour by connecting ideology to authority.”⁵⁹ Taking the process further, “rules simultaneously manifest and reinforce authority.”⁶⁰ The authorities to their advantage

⁵⁶ Lull, J., *Media, Communications, Culture: A Global Approach*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1995, p. 191.

⁵⁷ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 57.

⁵⁸ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 54.

⁵⁹ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 61.

⁶⁰ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 54.

can use this situation. One of the areas in the media where this is occurs is in news production.

“[...] a defining characteristic of news production, namely that news is the ultimate bureaucratised meaning-making – that news is simply the outcome of a highly routinised process of collecting and processing information, where the process is guided by formal rules.”⁶¹

If a ruling group has the ability and the will, they are able to use the concept of rules to push through and legitimise their actions. There are two possible methods of achieving these ends;

- Rules “are often used to rationalise and invoke authority [...]”⁶² This sentiment is enshrined in the phrase ‘because it is the law.’ The notion of law, in a western context evokes an image of impartiality and fairness.
- “[...] rules are malleable. They can be manipulated to serve the purposes of the issuing authorities [...]”⁶³ Governments can make new laws to suit their agenda. If an old law is an obstacle, it may be possible to modify or remove the law.

Taking into account what I have explained concerning law, there is a relationship between law and power. Those who own the law have the power to exercise control. Power can be observed in numerous forms;

- Economic Power – institutionalised in industry and commerce.
- Political Power – institutionalised in the state apparatus.
- Coercive Power – Institutionalised in military and paramilitary organisations.
- Symbolic Power – “the capacity to use symbolic forms [...] to intervene in and influence the course of action or events.”⁶⁴

A fast and effective medium is needed to transmit a message (ideology) to an audience for the realisation of power to occur. Electronic media are among the most efficient transmitters of information. The effectiveness stems from “[...] the ability of the electronic media to

⁶¹ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 165.

⁶² Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 56.

⁶³ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 50.

⁶⁴ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 71.

effectively call attention to certain symbols, persons, and ideas.”⁶⁵

One form of electronic media has been the focus and attention of those who have sought to accumulate political and economic power. TV has often been at the centre of political struggles. But, why has there been such an intense battle over the control of TV broadcasting?

By being able to control TV’s content it is possible to enact a measure of discursive management. This ties in with the notion that “the more legitimacy rulers have, the less coercion they need to employ.”⁶⁶ Those who are in power will have three discursive goals;

- Produce discourses that advance and confirm their interests.
- Try to create as much discourse closure as possible by using the power they already possess to influence discourse making processes in the direction of closures favouring the ‘perspectives’ and ‘practices’ that benefit themselves and their allies.
- Try to regulate discourse shifts so that discursive change favours the interests of the already dominant.⁶⁷

The battle seems to have been triggered by some ‘unique’ attributes of TV, which other forms of communication seem to lack. “TV has the unparalleled ability to expose, dramatise and popularise cultural bits and fragments of information.”⁶⁸ This means that TV is able to highlight and promote certain bits of information.

The ‘cultural bits and fragments’ are not merely randomly selected, but the decision is made at a conscious level. “[...] the selected information often congeals to form ideological sets that over-represent the interests of the powerful and under-represent the interests of the others.”⁶⁹

It is possible to deduce from the above-mentioned quote that, rather than challenge the incumbent elite, TV is more likely to be engaged in a role of supporting and reinforcing the existing ideology. American academics George Gerbner and Larry Ross reached this conclusion in 1976. They said with regard to TV, “[...] its chief cultural function is to spread

⁶⁵ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 9.

⁶⁶ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 107.

⁶⁷ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 114.

⁶⁸ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 9.

⁶⁹ (1) Ibid.

and stabilise social patterns.”⁷⁰

Through the use of a combination of voice and image, TV is able to generate a perceived greater credibility than other mediums such as newspapers or radio. The use of a narrator while news footage is being shown simultaneously is an effective way of generating the senders desired meaning.

“Accessed voices in TV news can be either empowered or disempowered by the connotations produced by the signs of the situation which are present in the shot.”⁷¹

An example may be some news footage showing Russian troops performing a task. It is possible to derive an inference from this scene, which could project an image of orderly and purposeful meaning.

TV is the interface between a society’s public and private lives. It brings the outside world into a family’s living room. Therefore, TV may become viewed as the medium that connects society’s two spheres. “The TV medium has a mythic identity as a technology which bridges the gap between public and private.”⁷²

The importance of TV as a source of information, when compared to other mediums is made apparent in surveys.

“In 1999, the overall audience of the print media was equal to 80% of the whole population while the leading medium, TV, got the attention of 95% of all Russians, and radio of about 82%.”⁷³

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union and the beginnings of private broadcasting, the number of TV stations in the Russian Federation has boomed. By 1999, there were approximately 800 TV stations in existence. This number can be divided further, into private

(2) Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 9.

⁷⁰ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 11.

⁷¹ Bignell, J., *Media Semiotics: An Introduction*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997, p. 124.

⁷² Bignell, J., op. cit., p. 125.

and state owned companies.

- 500 privately owned TV stations.
- 300 partly or completely state owned TV stations.⁷⁴

As this data demonstrates, the state (regional and federal) does not play an insignificant part in the TV broadcasting industry.

0.8 Making the News

News is an important source, from which society can derive their meaning of events in the wider community (regional, state or world community). A lot of the news content is distant from most individuals' personal experience. News making and production is a complex process, but which is managed in a very methodical manner. Certain routines and steps must be carried out in order to achieve the desired end result.

A news story consists of four main parts;

- Framing – establishing the topic.
- Focussing – the event's significance is explained.
- Realising – story confirmation and the process of authentication.
- Closing – alternative views are discounted. This process occurs throughout the story.⁷⁵

One of the most important tools of legitimisation in news is the use of photographs. By using a photo in a news story, a claim is made regarding the story. Photographs carry a "claim to denote reality."⁷⁶ It may be possible to try and defend a story's authenticity by claiming, 'they have a photo, so it must be true.' The appearance of truth and reality reside with the concept of photographic ('irrefutable') 'evidence.'

⁷³ Vartanova, E., "Media Structures: Changed and Unchanged" in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, *Russian Media Challenge*, Helsinki, Kikimora Publications, 2001, p. 25.

⁷⁴ Vartanova, E., "Media Structures: Changed and Unchanged" in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 41.

⁷⁵ Bignell, J., op. cit., pp. 119 – 121.

⁷⁶ Bignell, J., op. cit., p. 103.

The interpretation of photographs is an important aspect to appreciating the power of the application and use of the photo in news items. A key to this power lies in the concept that images are influenced by a linguistic code. Pictures are an effective way of influencing and triggering memory due to the instantaneous nature of recalled memory. A picture evokes a linguistic association. The written word requires decoding by an educated reader.⁷⁷

“[...] every photographic image depends on the system of language despite the fact that they are made up of iconic and not linguistic signs.”⁷⁸

News items, whether in newspapers, on TV or on the radio are given a ranking or order of importance. The news item is not randomly slotted in somewhere because ‘it fits.’ A conscious decision is made to rank news, this indicates to the audience the perceived value of a particular story. With regard to TV news;

“In general, reports with high news value are those which appear near the beginning of the bulletin, just as the front pages of newspapers present stories with high perceived news value to readers.”⁷⁹

As I stated in chapter 0.7 *TV and Power*, media tend to support rather than challenge the dominant ideology. The news aspect is a component of the wider media industry and can be viewed as working toward supporting the incumbent political elite. TV’s perceived neutrality may make the task of transmitting ideology an easier task.

“News discourse, even in the apparently ‘balanced’ and ‘objective’ context of TV news, will use the current dominant ideological myths about society as its ‘neutral’ way of perceiving news events. What is perceived to be factual and neutral is a mythic construction determined by the dominant ideology.”⁸⁰

The importance of news is not restricted to solely informing or manipulating the public about certain issues. News can be aimed at other target groups, sometimes to establish a type of

⁷⁷ Ewen, S., op. cit., p. 152.

⁷⁸ Bignell, J., op. cit., p. 102.

⁷⁹ Bignell, J., op. cit., p. 114.

informal dialogue between two or more parties.

“[...] news enables policy makers to send messages to one another: to make their programmes known without discussing them directly. The news serves as a testing ground for the reactions of others in power.”⁸¹

Polls, although not always giving an absolutely accurate and full picture of complex processes occurring in society, do none the less provide an insight into an instance of time. Results that have been derived from Russian polls regarding attitudes toward the media and news can be quite confusing and may even appear to be contradictory, although one should consider the political orientation and allegiance of the polling agency concerned. The results of a May 2002 poll, which was published on www.monitoring.ru was publicised by the newsagency *Interfax*. A nationwide poll of 1300 people was conducted. The subject concerned the notion of censorship; 57% of those polled considered it necessary to impose censorship on the Russian media, 35% disagreed and 8% were undecided.⁸²

Two polls were conducted in the first quarter of 2002 by two different polling agencies, which concerned the level of trust in TV news. The polls derived different results from their surveys. In February 2002 the polling agency *Public Opinion Foundation* made results of a poll available to the privately owned newsagency *Interfax*. A sample of 1500 people from rural and urban areas were questioned on their opinions of TV news. The results derived showed that, of those polled; 43% believe that news they hear from TV is objective, 39% think that it is often biased, 32% consider TV news exhaustive and 56% regard it as insufficient.⁸³

Then in April 2002 results from an opinion poll that was conducted by the polling agency *ROMIR* were released to the state-owned newsagency *ITAR-TASS*. There was a different orientation and result from this particular poll. The *ROMIR* poll showed that 63.3% of respondents trusted news programmes on the state-owned channels *ORT* and *RTR*. The news

⁸⁰ Bignell, J., op. cit., p. 128.

⁸¹ Turpin, J., *Reinventing the Soviet Self: Media and Social Change in the Former Soviet Union*, Westport, Connecticut, Praeger, 1995, p. 8.

⁸² *Majority of Russians Favour Media Censorship – Poll*, *Interfax*, 30 May, 2002. Johnson's Russia List (JRL) #6281, 31 May, 2002.

⁸³ *Pollsters Say 39% of Russians Think TV News is Often Biased*, *Interfax*, 18 February, 2002. JRL #6085, 19 February, 2002.

item then went into a bit more detail as to which particular programmes were trusted; 46.8% thought that *ORT* news carried the greatest level of credibility, 16.5% thought that *RTR* news was the most credible, *NTV* rated at 16.2%, *Kultura* and *TV Tsent* rated at 0.5% of trust each. 4.9% of respondents stated that they trusted no news programmes.⁸⁴ As seen from the above mentioned results, the outcome can be confusing and can be tied to what message the owner or controller of the polling agency and/or media outlet wants to convey to the public.

0.9 Chapter Summary

By their very nature, theories are a simplification of reality that is designed to help understand and in some cases predicts trends in society. Added to this is the fact that a lot of research has been conducted, but most of it has been carried out in the Western world – the United States and Western Europe especially. This has left a gap in an adequate theoretical understanding of the former Eastern Bloc. A problem further compounded by the complexities of the region.

Even during the Soviet era, when the former Eastern Bloc's media systems were given by some (such as McQuail) as a uniform functioning theoretical body, certain nuances existed. Some countries exercised much more control over the mass media than others. After the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the problem of constructing a useful theoretical tool for the region has intensified. Uneven economic and political development through the region during this transformatory phase has translated to uneven progression in the field of the mass media.

Although this thesis relates to the Russian situation, some of these problems exist here too. The political situation has changed markedly, not only as a result of a change in presidential administrations (Yeltsin to Putin), but also within the time that Yeltsin was President. Regional differences also exist, some regional governors tend to rule in a very autocratic manner and others less so.

This makes it very difficult to utilise a solitary theory, which will give an acceptable picture of the actual situation. The situation in Russia requires a combination of theoretical approaches because the Russian media is not entirely similar to the Western one, because of

⁸⁴ *Majority of Russians Trust State TV News – Poll*, ITAR-TASS, 20 April, 2002. JRL #6199, 21 April, 2002.

its hybrid nature that includes the legacy of the Soviet past. Therefore, I have chosen to adopt different theories from a range of disciplines, such as political science, sociology and communications studies. These theories need to be moulded, so that they can be adapted to the Russian context. Additionally, my focus is on media based in the main cities, especially Moscow, for the reason of simplicity of empirical material.

CHAPTER I: VLADIMIR PUTIN AND THE DEBATE ON THE EMERGENCE OF CULT OF PERSONALITY.

1.0 Chapter Objectives.

A lot of debate exists as to whether a cult of personality surrounds the Russian President, Vladimir Putin. Many have argued that due to the nature of publicity used to portray his image that it is clear that a cult of personality does in fact exist. However, publicly at least, Putin has tried to distance himself from being seen to publicly endorse some aspects of an emerging industry that is built upon producing and selling Putin memorabilia. He has also not condemned such actions.

In order to examine and discern if a cult of personality exists, first a definition and explanation of the term needs to be conducted. This will provide the article (and the reader) with a neatly defined boundary from which to work. A necessity when dealing with such a loaded, emotional and contentious issue and concept. The definition that I will provide will be the lynchpin and will act as the framework for the rest of the work.

A cult of personality can be transformed into a form of ritual. If it becomes ritualised, then a measure of 'normality' is associated with the figure at the centre of the cult of personality. When 'normality' is attained, the system becomes a routinised process that can (if successfully applied) act as a regulator of society through conscious and/or subconscious control of the citizenry.

After having established a definition for the phenomenon of cult of personality, I shall examine its history in the Soviet Union. This is intended to act as a base for comparison further in the work. By establishing its nature, through providing practical examples from Soviet history I will be better able to judge if cult of personality has been revived in contemporary Russia. An emphasis will be placed on a study of Joseph Stalin, as a consequence of his importance to the study of cult of personality.

British academic Christel Lane argued that it was necessary for the Soviet political elite to employ mechanisms, such as cult of personality, to 'smooth-over' and disguise the inconsistencies in the system. That, had cult of personality not been employed, the Soviet

system would be de-legitimised through a break in society's belief that the communist ideology worked.

“[...] is continually forced to cover up this discrepancy between ideology and reality by structuring the citizens' perception of the later.”⁸⁵

As I have stated above, Putin has been careful to distance himself from an emerging industry that has based itself on selling products that are based upon his claimed personality, charisma and the importance of his position as the President of the Russian Federation. There would appear to be two distinct phases to Putin's PR campaign so far. The first phase being the establishment of a 'public Putin.' A public persona that can be recognised and liked by the people. This phase was used during the election campaign, to get Putin into office.

The second phase of Putin's PR campaign has already begun. It is aimed at not only reinforcing and consolidating his positive image, but to develop the image further. It is a continuous process that requires regular renewal, if it is to remain effective. During this phase, which is still current, some elements of the past have been revived. Some of these include the creation, distribution and sale of portraits of Putin, busts of Putin and pop songs about Putin, to name a few.

Ultimately, this requires the asking of some important questions to clarify the situation, as to whether a cult of personality exists around Vladimir Putin or not. What is a concise definition of 'cult of personality'? How did 'cult of personality' manifest itself in the Soviet Union? Do the present day conditions, under President Vladimir Putin, match the definition and the practice of 'cult of personality'?

1.1 Definition of Cult of Personality.

'Cult of personality' is a very evocative and emotive term. This provides a necessity to give a clear and definitive understanding of this concept from the outset of this work. The absence of such could usher a certain confusion through the lack of clarity, which may become evident in writing on this contentious issue.

⁸⁵ Lane, C., *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society – The Soviet Case*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1981, p. 28.

The term 'cult of personality' was first used in the USSR at a Communist Party conference in 1956. It was initially used to "denote and explain away the style of government exercised by Stalin, but of wider application."⁸⁶

Author Frank Bealey agrees with the origins of the term as a "term used by Khrushchev to describe the exaggerated idolatry of Joseph Stalin during his time in power (1923 – 1953)."⁸⁷

But, how does the 'cult of personality' manifest itself? What are the 'symptoms' and tell-tale signs displayed by this phenomenon? Many explanations have been offered and some common threads exist. Kale

At its most basic level, 'cult of personality' can be described as "the attribution of superhuman powers and wisdom to an individual."⁸⁸ Other definitions can be more detailed, but still contain the basic elements listed in this brief definition.

A Dictionary of Political Thought's analysis of the cult of personality phenomenon offers a good definition.

"It seems to refer to the concentration of political power and authority in a person, rather than in the office which he occupies, accompanied by an enforced adulation of that person on the part of ordinary citizens, and massive propaganda designed to display his superhuman virtues."⁸⁹

Another view of how cult of personality manifests itself is described in a very vivid and emotional manner.

"In posters, paintings literature and through the media the Soviet dictator received sickening praise. [...] It was revived, though not to the same degree, under Brezhnev (1964 – 82)."⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Scruton, R., *A Dictionary of Political Thought*, 2nd Edition, London, MacMillan Press, 1996, p. 121.

⁸⁷ Bealey, F., *The Blackwell Dictionary of Political Science*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 93.

⁸⁸ Laird, B. A. & Laird, R. D., *A Soviet Lexicon: Important Concepts, Terms and Phrases*, Lexington, Lexington Books, 1988, p. 53.

⁸⁹ Scruton, R., op. cit., p. 121.

⁹⁰ Bealey, F., op. cit., 1999, p. 93.

Israeli academic (former Soviet academic) and author of *Manipulation of a Language: Lexicon of Soviet Political Terms*, Ilya Zemtsov gives a more ‘colourful’ interpretation of ‘cult of personality,’ in addition to the standard concept of building an image through the use of media (newspapers, film and literature). Although the following extract pertains to Stalin, Zemtsov does not restrict this definition solely to Stalin, but to the entire Soviet leadership up to the time of publication (1984). It is Zemtsov’s contention that the Soviet regime requires ‘cult of personality’ as a means of gaining legitimacy for their rule.⁹¹

“The cult of Stalin’s personality was regulated by a code of minutely defined rituals, and the authorities insisted on their observance. Public buildings, parks, highways and town squares were decorated with portraits of ‘the father of the peoples.’ Party conferences and plenums commenced and concluded with salutations to Stalin and pledges of love, loyalty, and respect for him.”⁹²

By breaking down the basic and consistent elements of these definitions, it is possible to derive a single definition that incorporates the essence of what is explained above. Taking into account the prior mentioned conditions, my definition of ‘cult of personality’ from a sender’s perspective is as follows; an enforced system that bestows extraordinary human powers, knowledge and intellect of a single leader that is supported (and disseminated) via a massive propaganda campaign, which is designed to convey and reinforce the given positive attributes of the individual.

The term, as outlined earlier, was introduced by Khrushchev to describe Stalin’s rule. It should be understood that this was a period of ‘de-Stalinisation.’ Therefore the term carries with it a negative connotation. Cult of personality, as a concept is meant to convey and express the excesses of Stalin’s rule, explained as a deviant departure from ‘true’ socialism. So, cult of personality can be described, in terms of its existence as being ‘abnormal’ and deviant.

⁹¹ Zemtsov, I., *Manipulation of a Language: Lexicon of Soviet Political Terms*, Fairfax, Hero Books, 1984, p. 73.

1.2 Cult of Personality in the Soviet Union.

The system of cult of personality is an important element in a method of control. It was one of the tools that were used to motivate and ‘guide’ the masses. Christel Lane described the role of ritual in the Soviet Union, as compared with the West.

“In Soviet society cultural management in general and ritual in particular are much more important as a means to maintain social control than they are in Western society.”⁹³

Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin, after whom the term ‘cult of personality’ is named, managed to successfully convey an image, which was disseminated by using a mixture of techniques that included methods of free will and force. Different media techniques, during the pre-electronic media age were used to propagate the desired image. These techniques are described in the book *Stalin and Stalinism*.

“The war raised Stalin’s stature to new heights; afterwards he basked in the reflected glory of military success. The years which separate 1945 from his death on 5 March 1953 saw the cult of his personality reach astounding heights. He became the true charismatic leader. There was always an air of mystery about him. [...] Stalin was also sparing in his public appearances. In a pre-television era most citizens knew him only from newspaper photographs. The films in which he appeared presented him in heroic colours with no sign of the pockmarks on his face. Like many short men – he was only about 1.6 metres in height – he was acutely conscious of the fact, and portraits and films give the deliberate impression of a taller man.”⁹⁴

Stalin was careful to cultivate an image that gave the impression of his being at one with the people. He ensured that positive attributes were cultivated to the full potential. Stalin, who described writers as the “engineer of the soul”, displayed an acute awareness of the power of

⁹² Zemtsov, I., op. cit., p. 72.

⁹³ Lane, C., op. cit., p. 28.

⁹⁴ McCauley, M., *Stalin and Stalinism*, 2nd edition, New York, Longman, 1996, p. 63.

pen.⁹⁵ When opportunities were presented, the publicity was soon seized upon. An example of this was the Second World War, he played on the symbolism and imagery of a soldier after hostilities broke with Nazi Germany. Stalin was rarely seen out of uniform in the public.

Images of War outlines how the process began, “he began to address the masses as their military rather than political leader. [...] Stalin, who had never fought a battle in his life, became synonymous with Soviet military might.”⁹⁶ Stalin’s new image, as embodied in the idea of a soldier was transferred to him because of the public’s association of the soldierly appearance. This was to have a flow-on effect, by bestowing other virtues on Stalin.

“On 24 June, 1945 a victory parade was held in Red Square to celebrate the end of the ‘Great Patriotic War’ in Europe. Stalin was acclaimed a ‘Hero of the Soviet Union,’ the man who alone won the war for Communism and the Soviet Union.”⁹⁷ Through the use of a mixture of visual cues (army uniform), Stalin was able to manufacture an image of prowess and power. Attributes were attached to him, traits that he may not necessarily have possessed at all. The important point is that these attributes existed in the memory of the Soviet people.

Nowhere is it the ‘cult of personality’ issue of the Stalin period more evident than in the writings of the period. The following extract is taken from *Joseph Stalin: A Short Biography* by G. F. Alexandrov.

“Stalin is a brilliant leader and teacher of the Party, the great strategist of the Socialist Revolution, military commander, the guide of the Soviet State. An implacable attitude towards the enemies of Socialism, profound fidelity to principle, a combination of clear revolutionary perspective and clarity of purpose with extraordinary firmness and persistence in the pursuit of aims, wise and practical leadership, and intimate contact with the masses – such are the characteristic features of Stalin’s style. After Lenin, no other leader in the world has been called upon to direct such vast masses of workers and peasants. He has a unique faculty for generalising the constructive revolutionary experience of the masses, for seizing upon and developing

⁹⁵ McCauley, M., op. cit., p. 63.

⁹⁶ Groman, J., Editor, *Images of War, The Warlords: Profiles of Power*, London, Marshall Cavendish, 1989, p. 40.

⁹⁷ Groman, J., op. cit., p. 41.

their initiative, for learning from the masses as well as teaching them, and for leading them forward to victory. [...] Stalin is the worthy continuer of the cause of Lenin, or, as it is said in the Party, Stalin is the Lenin of today.”⁹⁸

Lane believes that the Soviet Union was ‘susceptible’ to the ‘cult of personality’ phenomenon, which stems from its history. Stalin had progressed to be the most advanced case of cult of personality in the Soviet Union and depending on the political orientation of the literature read, Lenin and Brezhnev (to a lesser extent) can be added to this list. But, Lane still maintains that there was ample potential for another cult of personality to rise.

“Soviet political culture [...] is distinguished by an acceptance of a strong central power and the belief in its infallibility. Such a culture is, of course, fertile soil for the development of a renewed leader cult.”⁹⁹

Leonid Ilych Brezhnev became the Soviet Union’s general-secretary in 1966 and remained there until November 1982. During the Second World War he had served as a political commissar, rising to the rank of major general. During his tenure in office, Brezhnev attempted to cultivate an image of himself, which consisted of many different facets. He lauded himself as the great fighter for peace, a great theorist and Leninist and a hero of Soviet culture.¹⁰⁰ The intended over-all picture was of a great, energetic and learned man.

By May 1970, Brezhnev had managed to secure his position of power. This was reflected by images disseminated by the Soviet propaganda machine. His photo appeared in newspapers almost everyday, he was quoted in scientific and theoretical journals and his portraits were bigger than anyone else’s.¹⁰¹

The following are a selection of books, which Brezhnev has credited to his name;

- *Following Lenin’s Course*
- *Malaya Zemlya* (part 1 of memoirs)

⁹⁸ McCauley, M., op. cit., pp. 115 - 116. Taken from Alexandrov, G.F., et al., *Joseph Stalin: A Short Biography*, Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow, 1947, pp. 198 – 201.

⁹⁹ Lane, C., op. cit., p. 220.

¹⁰⁰ <http://homepage.tinet.ie/~manics/MSPedia/Brezhnev.htm>, February 5, 2003.

- *Rebirth* (part 2 of memoirs)
- *Virgin Lands* (part 3 of memoirs)
- *Memories*
- *Moldavian Spring*
- *Space October*
- *Word About Communists*.¹⁰²

In May 1976 Brezhnev 'became a marshal of the Soviet Union. The highest Soviet military rank has been held by only Communist Party chairmen Brezhnev and Stalin. Further public accolades were heaped upon his burgeoning collection in 1979, when he received the Lenin prize for literature (which was later re-called).¹⁰³ These public prizes and offices were designed to demonstrate in a very public manner and to legitimise Brezhnev's rule, as the Soviet Union's leader.

Brezhnev received a multitude of awards in his lifetime for many different tasks or accomplishments he performed or was credited with performing. To give an idea of some of these various recognitions, I have illustrated some of these below.

- April 1961: made *Hero of Socialist Labour* for his contribution to development of rocketry and for guaranteeing the success of Gagarin's space flight.
- May 1965: for his wartime service is awarded *Hero of Soviet Union*.
- December 1966: for 60th birthday is awarded *Hero of Soviet Union* medal.
- 1968: for bravery in war is awarded *Order of Lenin with Gold Star* and the title *Hero of the Soviet Union*.
- July 1973: granted *Lenin Prize* for 'The Promotion of Peace Among Nations.'
- November 1975: *F. Joliot-Curie Gold Medal for Peace*.
- December 1981: B. Karmal of Afghanistan awards Brezhnev with *Sun of Freedom* medal.
- December 1981: to mark his 75th birthday is given *Order of Lenin* and *Gold Star – Hero of the Soviet Union* medal. Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, GDR, Hungary and Romania also award medals to Brezhnev.

¹⁰¹ www.anet.net/~upstart/brezhnev.html, February 5, 2003.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ <http://homepage.tinet.ie/~manics/MSPedia/Brezhnev.htm>, February 5, 2003.

- May 1982: receives medal *In Memory of the 1500th Anniversary of Kiev*.
- May 1982: Vietnam's Lee Zuan gives Brezhnev *Order of Ho Chi Minh*.¹⁰⁴

To mark his 75th birthday, Brezhnev celebrated the occasion with much pomp and ceremony. This included a film that showed presents and tributes flowing from all over the Soviet Union, to their leader.¹⁰⁵ Modesty or at least the appearance of it, did not seem to agree with Brezhnev. Stalin used to publicly not approve of the personality cult, which surrounded him. Possibly, this may have been an attempt to try and display the modesty trait, which seems to be valued by Russians.

However, as with Stalin, upon his death the public image of Brezhnev was unravelled by his successors. During the annual party congress in mid-1988 Gorbachev criticised the cult of Brezhnev. After his posthumous fall from grace, Brezhnev's name was removed from a city at the request of its citizens, also from the names from streets, squares and public buildings.¹⁰⁶ These events display some similarity with the de-Stalinisation process that was initiated by Khrushchev after Stalin's death.

1.3 Does a 'Cult of Putin' Really Exist?

Professionals have carefully nurtured Vladimir Putin's public image in the PR business. There have been very few lapses, which contradict the carefully manufactured image. In 1996, prior to Putin's rapid rise to prominence, he was an unemployed city official from St. Petersburg. Through contacts he was able to initiate a series of events, which would lead him to several high-ranking government service jobs in the Kremlin's bureaucratic apparatus. His patron was the Kremlin's Director of the Office of the Administration, Pavel Borodin.¹⁰⁷

Putin rose rapidly through the ranks of the civil service, culminating in his appointment as the director of the FSB in 1998 (the FSB—Federal Security Service is the successor of the KGB). After Yeltsin had selected Putin to be his eventual successor, a flurry of activity was aimed at building a suitable image for the heir apparent. His earlier career in the KGB and low public profile gave the PR people a 'blank canvas' on which to create the desired image. In

¹⁰⁴ www.anet.net/~upstart/brezhnev.html, February 5, 2003.

¹⁰⁵ Vasilyev, Y., "Putin is Interesting, Yeltsin is not", Moscow News, October 9, 2002. JRL #6483, October 10, 2002.

¹⁰⁶ <http://homepage.tinet.ie/~manics/MSPedia/Brezhnev.htm>, February 5, 2003.

the following, I will discuss how this was realised.

Work on Putin's identity has now entered a new and more mature phase. It is not so much about creating identity, but about reinforcing positive traits. New mechanisms and mediums are being employed in this process, including some means that were used during the Soviet period. Some of these mediums include the production of paraphernalia such as portraits of Putin, busts of Putin and pop songs about Putin to name a few. Putin however, has consistently played a public distance between condoning this emerging 'Putin culture industry,' he has also not condemned such activities.

An important question to be considered in light of events that are transpiring is 'does a *cult of Putin* really exist or is what we are seeing merely an extension of the apparent Russian tradition of displaying adulation toward the nation's leader?'

1.3.1 Creating Putin.

Although Putin had been chosen by Yeltsin to succeed him, a distance between the two politicians needed to be established. Yeltsin had negative connotations associated with his public persona, which presented a problem. He needed to offer a candidate, which appeared to be the opposite of what he appeared to be, if he was to be successful in having his candidate accepted by the public on voting day.

Putin set out to establish himself as a young, vital and energetic man of action by opening a campaign against the breakaway republic Chechnya. But this was only one of the personal traits, which were sought to be created. The following are some of the means used by Putin to establish his credentials in the eyes of the voting public.

- Putin travelled widely around Russia—tried to distance himself from a Moscow centric approach. The all-inclusive approach brings the meaning that everyone matters, from the biggest city to the smallest village.
- He rode in Moscow's suburban trains and chatted with commuters—this act establishes the premise that Putin is able to relate to the 'ordinary' man in the street.
- He was the dinner guest of an ordinary Kazan family—once again demonstrating his close

¹⁰⁷ Putin, V., *First Person*, London, Hutchinson, 2000, p. 125.

proximity to the problems of ordinary Russians that he is able to understand and empathise with the populace and is not above them.

- He met with women at a textile factory in Ivanovo—in this move Putin appears to demonstrate that he values the female constituency as well by attempting to court women voters (something which Yeltsin never did).
- He spent a night on a nuclear submarine and flew in a military jet over Chechnya—these actions were to demonstrate Putin’s ability to be an effective Commander-in-Chief, by virtue of the fact that he has spent time with ‘his’ men on ‘dangerous’ military duties.¹⁰⁸

Putin’s creation of self-image is fraught with possible dangers, but the power of his creation of self lies in what this self represents. “Selfhood [...] is a chronically unstable productivity brought situationally—not invariably—to some form of imaginary order, to some purpose, as realised in the course of culturally patterned interactions.”¹⁰⁹ That is to say, that Putin’s ‘new’ image needs to be constantly reinforced and must evolve in a society if the message is to remain effective. An image cannot be created and then left to its own devices, because the message design will ultimately fail. In a time of great upheaval, during the last of Yeltsin’s period of *bespredel*, Putin came to be represented as stability, law and order. This is what the public appeared to demand.

1.3.2 Creating an ‘Acceptable’ Public Personality.

The PR strategy has been aimed at showing Putin as an honest and apolitical political figure. This strategy was stepped up during the election campaign. Putin’s image ‘minders’ wanted to show that he was not an ordinary politician, but an honest person who cares deeply about Russia. During the presidential race, Putin never actually issued a programme. Instead he published an open letter to voters that outlined Russia’s problems. The open letter offered no concrete solutions, only a promise to tackle the problems and to restore Russia’s former greatness.¹¹⁰

News often showed favourable coverage of Putin, surrounded by supporters. A positive spin was also put on his refusal to participate in televised debates. Putin was promoted as Russia’s

¹⁰⁸ Brown, A., Editor, *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 172.

¹⁰⁹ Battaglia, B., Editor, *Rhetorics of Self-Making*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995, p. 2.

¹¹⁰ Brown, A., op. cit., p. 172.

new face, while depicting his opponents as relics of the Yeltsin era. This was in spite of the fact that Putin was Yeltsin's handpicked successor. A majority of news coverage was devoted to following Putin. The positive spin could be maintained in spite of the saturation coverage, because Putin only gave interviews to sympathetic reporters.¹¹¹

Putin faced relatively few risks of adverse publicity in his carefully managed PR campaign. He was never 'exposed' to 'hostile' reporters, never put in an unpredictable environment (such as a televised political debate) and generally was able to choose the time and place of his interviews. This situation was able to secure Putin with a guaranteed outcome, prior to any interview. Putin was able to maintain a moral ascendancy over the interviewer, which promoted the appearance of a strong leader.

By refusing to be drawn into a conventional campaign Putin was possibly able to distance himself in the public psyche from the largely discredited politicians. Additionally, by stating the obvious with regard to Russia's problems, he displayed an empathy and greater understanding of the average public feeling by putting into words what few if any politicians would dare say. If he had promised various measures and they failed, Putin would have been held to account personally, by the public. This way ensured that there was nothing of substance he could be held to account for, he merely mouthed public sentiment and aspirations. Putin won the March 2000 presidential elections in the first round. The next presidential elections are due sometime in 2004.

1.3.3 Reinforcing the Image.

During Putin's term in office so far, numerous opinion polls have been conducted concerning President and his leadership. A portion of these polls relates to Putin's popularity rating as Russia's leader. The majority of the polls give Putin high ratings, as much as between 70 – 80% approval ratings. A possible effect of these polls would be to reinforce an image in the public's mind that Putin is a very popular leader, without regard to how the polls deduced their statistics. The newspaper *Novye Izvestia* raised the above issues well on November 28, 2001 in the article *Putin's Rating Needs Verification*.¹¹²

¹¹¹ Brown, A., op. cit., p. 332.

¹¹² Nadzharkov, Alexander, *Putin's Rating Needs Verification*, *Novye Izvestia*, November 28, 2001.

On the whole Putin's public image has not faced a serious challenge to the created perception. The sole exception to this occurred when the Kursk incident was initially mishandled, when Putin did not immediately break from his holiday. The Presidential Press Service, who normally looks after the President's PR needs, was absent on this occasion. The Kursk sank on August 12, 2000, this was in the middle of a series of political repositioning and consolidation as a result of a change in power (Putin succeeding Yeltsin). There was a lot of jostling occurring in political circles, ambitious politicians seeking the new President's favour and patronage and the opposition repositioning themselves.

On August 8, 2000 a metro underpass at Pushkin Square was bombed. Putin was also in the midst of bringing 'rogue' oligarchs to heel, Vladimir Gusinsky of *Media-Most* and Boris Berezovsky of *Logovaz*. This was being done to ensure governmental control of television broadcasting (channels with nation wide coverage). These distractions permitted a brief breakdown in the otherwise a well-managed public image of the President. The break was brief and therefore no permanent damage to Putin's public image seems to have occurred at the time.

A more broad-based effort is now underway to create and cultivate a desired image. Some measure of control has been secured over the mass media through a mixture of legislation and intimidation (such as the raids on *Media-Most* in May 2000). One of the means used to reinforce an idealised image of Putin is through a proliferation of biographies. Among the first of these was *First Person*, by Vladimir Putin. This book portrays a very 'correct' picture of an 'ordinary man' who is devoted to his family and Russia.¹¹³

Former military journalist Oleg Blotsky (working in the propaganda section) has undertaken a trilogy with the blessing of Vladimir Putin (Sergei Yastrzhembsky, the presidential aide acted as the go-between).¹¹⁴ Blotsky's volumes to date include, *Vladimir Putin: A Life History* (volume 1) and *Vladimir Putin: A Rise to Power* (volume 2). This series of biographies appears to be aimed at manufacturing a very serene, modest and sincere portrait of the Putins.

JRL #5569, November 28, 2001.

¹¹³ See Putin, V., *First Person*, London, Hutchinson, 2000.

¹¹⁴ *Book About Life of Putin to be Released Soon*, Interfax, January 16, 2002.

JRL #6027, January 17, 2002.

Vladimir Putin: A Life History goes as far back as the 18th century and up to the point where Putin joined the KGB. The book is written as a collection of memories from Putin's friends and acquaintances, as well as extensive interviews with Putin himself. Putin's friends and acquaintances offer only the warmest descriptions and praise of the President. Only Putin retains his characteristic trait of humility, a key aspect to his public persona.¹¹⁵

This first book of the trilogy portrays Putin as fearless, steel-willed, hospitable, altruistic, very resilient, warm and unpretentious. The book asserts that Putin has lost none of these traits upon assuming the Russian presidency. *Vladimir Putin: A Life History* is written in easy to understand Russian and has been compared to the anecdotal stories of the good deeds of Lenin. Blotsky has defended his book by stating "I do not think it is a eulogy. I simply conveyed what people (who met Putin) said."¹¹⁶ Descriptions of the books layout and style would seem to suggest that it is a product intended for a broad, potential mass audience.

Oleg Blotsky's *Vladimir Putin: A Rise to Power* details Putin's life from 1975, when he joined the KGB, until his ascent to the presidency on December 31, 1999. He has hinted that the third book will not be ready until at least mid-2003. This volume is intended to cover Putin's accomplishments as the President of the Russian Federation.¹¹⁷

Vladimir Putin: A Rise to Power relies on the monologues of Lyudmila Putina and pictures the President as a hard-working, reliable man, but devoid of emotional warmth and feeling. However, Lyudmila Putina's tone is not one of complaining at her circumstance. It has been postulated that as a result of the excessive praise of the first volume, the second volume is intended to give the impression of adding some measure of balance.¹¹⁸ Certainly, if the public perceive the works to be too one-sided they may not pay much attention to the books. If however, the appearance of partiality is managed, then the literature may be considered as having more credence.

Putin's PR image has managed to have an effect on at least the female section of society,

Sergei Yastrzhembsky was President Yeltsin's Press Secretary and has managed to maintain his position of influence and power in the Putin administration.

¹¹⁵ Shukshin, A., *Book Shows Putin at his Best*, Reuters, January 21, 2002. JRL #6033, January 21, 2002.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Williams, C. J., *Book Details the Unenviable Life of Mrs. V. Putin*, Los Angeles Times, September 16, 2002. JRL #6440, September 17, 2002.

¹¹⁸ Ibid

where he has some kind of appeal them. Writer and commentator on women's issues, Maria Arbatova makes the assertion that;

“Putin is widely popular among Russian women and is considered [to be] a typical European man.”¹¹⁹

Television talk-show moderator Yelena Khanga agrees and says that Blotsky's portrayal of Putin runs contrary to the popular public perception of his image.

“A lot of women see him as the perfect man. He does not smoke. He does not drink. He is in good physical condition. [...] Russian women love him because they want someone reliable and strong. We are sick and tired of guys who have to be taken care of as if they were another baby in the family.”¹²⁰

From the statements of the two above-mentioned commentators, it would seem that the image-makers have succeeded in disseminating the message to at least some of the public. The strong image that has been offered to society would appear to be the 'correct' choice, as it has generated a positive impression of Putin in the minds of Russian women. This implies some measure of growing competence in the abilities of the state-run PR apparatus.

An anti-thesis to the official oriented versions appeared in Moscow on December 25, 2001. The book featuring the Putin family, *Piquant Friendship* was written by Irene Pietsch. She was an acquaintance of Lyudmila Putina, beginning when Vladimir Putin was stationed in Germany. Several Russian newspapers refused to publish any excerpts from the book. This is most likely due to some unflattering criticism levelled at the President. Most of the criticism seems to refer to chauvinistic and boorish behaviour displayed towards Lyudmila Putina.¹²¹

By October 2002, according to historian Roy Medvedev there were approximately nine books published in Russia about Putin. Books about Putin have also been published in a

¹¹⁹ Williams, C. J., *Book Details the Unenviable Life of Mrs. V. Putin*, Los Angeles Times, September 16, 2002. JRL #6440, September 17, 2002.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ *Book on Putin's Family Life goes on Sale in Moscow*, BBC Monitoring, NTV, Moscow, December 25, 2001. JRL #5616, December 25, 2001.

foreign language abroad including; Two in Chinese, with as many in French and German.¹²² As Medvedev points out, Putin may seem to be more interesting than other Russian politicians. This may stem from his ‘mysterious’ and obscure background, such as his service in the KGB. The books on Putin may be filling the public’s demand to know more about their President.

Currently, literature about Putin would appear to be more aimed at perpetuating a myth through instilling a concept, image or belief in the public psyche. The St. Petersburg branch of Yedinstvo produced an ‘ABC’ book. This book tells first year school children about Vova Putin’s youth. According to the article *Putin Cult Touches New High*, there are similarities between this book and the way that Soviet school children had the stories of the young Vova Ulyanov (Lenin) recounted to them.¹²³

Putin, as a man of action and understanding for the people have been stressed in the Russian media. This was demonstrated by an opportunity, which presented itself to the Kremlin’s PR machine in May 2001. The Siberian town of Lensk was under threat of flood due to ice that blocked the Lena river. The ice plug was bombed by three Sukhoi SU-24 fighter-bombers, apparently on Putin’s orders.¹²⁴ Putin merely utilised an publicity opportunity that presented itself, as would most politicians in a similar circumstance.

TV, which is considered to be the most effective medium in terms of the ability to influence an audience has been employed in the task of reinforcing Putin’s image to the public. On June 11, 2001 the state-owned channel *RTR* ran a documentary on Putin, it showed him dwelling on state business and talked about his vision for Russia. The documentary coincided with the 10th anniversary of the Russian declaration of sovereignty (from the Soviet Union).¹²⁵ This act could be construed as being highly symbolic, possibly to try and distance any associations or ties with the Soviet Union, thereby reinforcing the perception of a ‘true’ Russian patriot.

¹²² Vasilyev, Y., “*Putin is Interesting, Yeltsin is not*”, Moscow News, October 9, 2002. JRL #6483, October 10, 2002.

¹²³ Radyuhin, V., *Putin Cult Touches New High*, The Hindu, May 9, 2001. www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/2001/05/09/stories, January 29, 2003.

¹²⁴ Whittell, G., *Putin Uses Bombers to Boost his Image*, The Times, May 17, 2001. JRL #5259, May 17, 2001.

¹²⁵ Lannin, P., *Russians get Close Up of Putin in TV Documentary*, Reuters, June 12, 2001. JRL #5296, June 13, 2001.

The programme was one hour long and offered a mostly positive perspective of the President. During the documentary Putin stated that he would only run for a second term of office if he had proved to the nation that he deserved it. A 'down-to-earth' portrayal of Putin was offered through a selection of documented scenarios. Some of these scenarios are listed below.

- Footage of Putin in March 2000, on the verge of winning the presidential race.
- Visiting a former schoolteacher at her apartment. They are shown chatting and laughing, he then hugs his former teacher and her husband before leaving.
- Putin shown in the back of his limousine returning from the Kremlin, regretting that he would like to stop for a beer but could not. Because it would cause crowds to gather and result in traffic chaos.
- Showed Putin weighing (75 kg) himself after taking a swim at a pool at his residence outside Moscow.¹²⁶

These images are combined to build a positive profile of Vladimir Putin. Many characteristics can be derived from analysing the meaning of these scenes. The scenes were not randomly chosen, but were designed to create a character that the Russian public can learn to like. By showing Putin chatting with his former teacher, at her home, it is meant to convey that Putin does care about the ordinary person and is not 'afraid' to be seen with them. Taking this concept further, it means that Putin can relate to and empathise with the ordinary 'man on the street.' Many Russian politicians have the reputation as being out of touch with those who they are meant to represent.

When Putin is shown lamenting his dilemma over his desire to stop for a beer and the social consequences of doing so, several traits can be deduced from this particular setting. By thinking about wanting a beer Putin is shown to be human, just like everyone else. People are better able to identify with someone who is able to think like them. His decision not to stop due to the possible traffic chaos conveys the image of social responsibility. The reason given for not stopping is meant to reflect Putin's 'selfless' (collective) desire not to inflict problems or inconvenience upon road users.

The last image that I would like to analyse is when he is weighed. During the period of the Soviet Union physical fitness was an important concept, so much so that it was a compulsory subject at university (and still was when I attended Russian University of Friendship Peoples). Putin is shown to be exercising and to be in good physical condition. In this capacity, he is acting in the capacity of a good role model for society to imitate. This may well revolve around the concept of a strong body equals a strong mind.

Of the two state owned, national channels (*TV 1* and *RTR*) it is significant that *RTR* was chosen to air the documentary. *RTR* is the more trusted of the two channels and this has been reflected by past government actions and policy. For instance, in August 2000, *RTR* was the only state-run media organisation that was trusted enough to be allowed close to the events of the Kursk disaster. Additionally, the new structuring of state-owned media organisations and assets gives a disproportionate level of responsibility and power to *RTR*.

Putin's 50th birthday provided an opportunity for a media display. Celebrations and tributes poured into the President from around the Russian Federation. Various items were covered by the media, which included cards being sent by school children to youth groups singing admiring hymns to Putin. Gifts were also included in the media coverage, a crystal crocodile from Moldova, a slow-growing Siberian pine tree from Tomsk and promises of a reproduction of the Tsarist crown from the Urals region.¹²⁷

Some interesting aspects are being displayed in the type of gifts and celebrations that marked Putin's 50th birthday. There is nothing new in respect to the cards and hymns, these would appear to be more 'traditional' means of the Russian public to demonstrate to their leader respect and acknowledgement. However, some of the gifts, especially the promise of reproducing the Tsarist crown would appear to demonstrate an emerging Imperial discourse and notions that are connected to Russia's leader.

A St. Petersburg based film director, Igor Shadkhan also 'celebrated' Putin's 50th birthday by completing a TV film about the President. The film is called *Vladimir Putin: A Conversation*

¹²⁶ Lannin, P., *Russians get Close Up of Putin in TV Documentary*, Reuters, June 12, 2001. JRL #5296, June 13, 2001.

¹²⁷ Jack, A., *The Empire Strikes Back: Putin Cult Reaches New Levels*, Financial Times, October 12, 2002. JRL #6489, October 12, 2002.

in the Evening, screened on *RTR* on October 6, 2002 (Putin's birthday).¹²⁸ This news story was told in *ITAR-TASS*, the state-owned news agency. The news item conveyed the impression that the President had not changed at all upon being elected Russia's leader. An implication that can be derived from this suggestion is that Putin is not a man who is corrupted by power. Therefore he is able to remain above the level, which many Russian politicians can sink to.

1.3.4 Putin's Initial Public Profile: A Summary.

Putin's initial lack of public profile may have been a contributing factor to Yeltsin nominating him as his successor. None of the negative connotations, which plagued many of the more experienced politicians, were associated with Putin. As an unknown factor the PR specialists were better able to create a political figure that would appeal to the public.

The government had control of the media and therefore possessed the means to create and transmit their desired ideal image. Yeltsin ensured that the full resources of the government supported Putin. His impending retirement from political office would leave him in a vulnerable position if a 'non-friendly' politician would win the presidential election.

In stark contrast to Yeltsin's public image of ill health, lethargy, inaction and chaos, Putin was given the chance (with large-scale state media presence on hand) to be portrayed as energetic, youthful, brave and a dedicated family man. The numerous favourable qualities associated with Putin through his widely covered actions showed a man who was determined, patriotic and willing to restore Russia's and the Russians' place in the world.

Through a mixture of legal manoeuvring and intimidation, high profile opposition media were pacified. This reduced the availability and access to alternative information (to the government's view) in Russian society. The use of opinion polls has supplemented the Kremlin's PR strategy by creating the appearance of topics of public debate and consensus reached on the issues discussed.

Lastly, the illusions of the PR generated idealised public image of Putin are being reinforced

¹²⁸ *Russian Film About Putin Completed in Time for Leader's 50th Birthday*, ITAR-TASS, October 1, 2002. JRL #6467, October 2, 2002.

through the use of literature. Rapid successions of politically correct biographies on the Putin family have appeared. These books have been produced under strict supervision and offer a mostly positive and glowing view of Russia's First Family. The appearance of book literature may be an attempt to add greater credence to Putin's ascribed personal qualities by using a more respected and traditional means of conveying the message.

1.3.5 Putin: The Passionate Lover of Literature.

As Putin consolidated his position as head of the Russian state, media have set out to strengthen an image of the President in society. The humanistic values that have been attributed to Putin include what appears to be some long-held tradition values, in addition to some of the more modern traits that were mentioned earlier in the work (during the presidential election campaign). Some of these traditional values have also been utilised by Soviet leaders, such as Stalin and Brezhnev.

One of the important value that acts as a measure of cultural sophistication is the love and appreciation of literature, especially classical literature. In 2002 Putin signed a decree *On Publishing a Great Russian Encyclopaedia*. Yuri Osipov, President of the Russian Academy of Science and chair for the scientific and editorial council, which will be responsible for the publication confirmed this. He stated that the council had been "instructed systematically to inform Putin about the preparation of the encyclopaedia for publication."¹²⁹

If Putin's intentions are genuine, then this may be a move to increase the level of public knowledge. More cynical views may include, that this will be an extension of the '*Patriotic Programme*' and designed to offer an sanitised and official view. Another motive may be, by associating himself with the publication of a scientific work, such as an encyclopaedia, Putin may be trying to project a more educated aspect of himself to the Russian public.

An upbeat story appeared in the state-run news agency *ITAR-TASS* in January 2003, on the theme of what Russians like to give their leaders as New Year presents. The article began by quoting Soviet writer Maksim Gorky, "a book is the best present of all." *ITAR-TASS* then went into detail over the depth and breadth of literature that has been gifted to the President.

¹²⁹ *Russian Radio's Commentator Stresses Putin's Role in Publishing New Encyclopaedia*, BBC Monitoring, Ekho Moskvi News Agency, October 15, 2002. JRL #6496, October 17, 2002.

Nataliya Gavrilenko, a Deputy Chief of the Presidential Library Operations Department explained that 1500 books that were given and are kept in the Kremlin's library mainly cover history, law, economics and fiction. And that the themes of books ranged widely.¹³⁰

On the surface, this article, from a Kremlin controlled media source, is attempting to paint a picture of a sophisticated President who likes literature. The emphasis of the story on the diversity of the literature is possibly an attempt to convey the idea that Putin is a complex man of wide and varied interests. The theme on the use of literature has the appearance of being used in a complementary fashion with Putin's physical attributes (decisive, man of action, etc.). This man be used as a balance, a decisive man of action could be construed as being impulsive and reckless. But, if it known that Putin reads (or is associated with reading) a wide variety of literature, then he could be considered to be learned. And learned people, theoretically, should not be prone to making incorrect and impulsive decisions.

The reading of literature, can add other attributes too. Certain types of literature can convey an image, such as mystique, sensitivity and intelligence. Even Olbik's thriller utilises the imagery offered by association with literature. In *The President* Putin is described as reading "Roman stoic poet Seneca" when he is "in between killing Chechens."¹³¹ An almost 'romantic' notion indeed.

1.3.6 Putin For Sale: The Industry Dealing in Putin Paraphernalia.

A varied industry has become established, selling Putin souvenirs and paraphernalia. This industry, which may seem strange to many observers, established itself soon after Putin's election victory. First and foremost, this section is intended to bring to the reader's attention some of the different items that have been and will be produced. I will not be making any moral judgements myself, but will raise some of the arguments that have emerged during the public debate surrounding the issue of Putin and a cult of personality.

Popular items of Putin memorabilia include photographs of the Russian President. Colour photos come in numerous sizes throughout the country. The social and political culture of the

¹³⁰ *Putin Gets Books as New Year Presents Most Often*, ITAR-TASS, January 2, 2003. JRL #7003, January 3, 2003.

¹³¹ O'Flynn, K., *The President With the Golden Gun*, The Moscow Times, July 17, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/07/17/003.html, July 17, 2002.

state bureaucracy is such that it has once again become 'important' to have a portrait of the President on the wall and/or desk of government officials.¹³² During the Soviet era, government officials did likewise with portraits of the Soviet leader.

A project, whose fate I do not know, was to produce 25cm bronze sculptures with a likeness to Putin. By May 2001 a plaster model of the sculpture was completed and *Yedinstvo* (Unity party) officials from St. Petersburg were seeking a sponsor to fund this project. If they are successful, Putin will be the first Russian leader after Stalin to have his bust cast in bronze during his lifetime.¹³³ Possibly connected with this story, news of a metals factory in the Urals that had begun producing Putin busts surfaced in the media in May 2001.¹³⁴ Putin's aides intervened on one occasion to stop the proposed busts.¹³⁵

The following are a summary of some of the other items of Putin memorabilia available for purchase in the Russian Federation.

- A local handicrafts factory located at Chelyabinsk, Siberia produced a pocket watch with a portrait of Putin on its face.
- Yedinstvo party officials from St. Petersburg developed a new game called *President the Patriot*, a president's joker helps the red patriots defeat the white enemies.¹³⁶
- Villages, where Putin has made pit-stops, offer guided tours around these sites.¹³⁷
- Calendars and Easter eggs with Putin portraits.¹³⁸
- An enterprise in Tajikistan produces carpets with Putin's profile, in various sizes.¹³⁹
- Nikolai Yegorov from Chelyabinsk wants to have his frost-resistant tomatoes patented under the name Vova Putin tomatoes, but officials hesitant.
- Putin lollipop and Putin ice-cream.¹⁴⁰

¹³² Radyuhin, V., *Putin Cult Touches New High*, The Hindu, May 9, 2001.
www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/2001/05/09/stories, January 29, 2003.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Chazan, G., *Efforts to Indoctrinate Russian Youths With Love for Putin has Mixed Results*, The Wall Street Journal, May 29, 2001. JRL #5275, May 30, 2001.

¹³⁵ Baker, P., *Putin on a Pedestal: 'A Cult of Positive Personality'*, Washington Post, February 12, 2001. JRL #5088, February 12, 2001.

¹³⁶ Radyuhin, V., *Putin Cult Touches New High*, The Hindu, May 9, 2001.
www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/2001/05/09/stories, January 29, 2003.

¹³⁷ Chazan, G., *Efforts to Indoctrinate Russian Youths With Love for Putin has Mixed Results*, The Wall Street Journal, May 29, 2001. JRL #5275, May 30, 2001.

¹³⁸ www.prima-news.ru/eng/news/articles/2002/6/25/15916.html, February 5, 2003.

¹³⁹ Kiseleva, E., *Putin: Son of God?*, On-Line Pravda, August 21, 2002.
<http://english.pravda.ru/main/2002/08/21/34930.html>, February 5, 2003.

These products do not necessarily reflect government intention or policy to institute a cult of personality that is centred on Putin. Much of the activity seems to stem from the initiatives of business people of local officials. As the Deputy Head of the Russian Government Staff put it in an interview with *RIA-Novosti*, “[...] industry produces anything for which there is a demand.”¹⁴¹

1.3.7 Cultural Putin: Art and Culture Dedicated to Putin.

For the purposes of this work, my definition of art and culture and the inclusion of examples, will be somewhat broad. In addition to the more usually associated facets, such as music and theatre, other more unusual examples will be added. Some additional examples to be included will be religion, places and people.

Some of the seemingly bizarre acts of adoration directed at the President or in Putin’s name have included:

- At a contest in St. Petersburg, a tattoo portrait of Putin won a special prize for patriotism.
- Siberian farmers have named a collective farm after Putin.
- An orthodox priest from the Krasnodar region is building a ‘Putin temple.’¹⁴²
- Ingushetia, a village named a street in Putin’s honour in October 2002. The President of Ingushetia was the former head of the FSB in the republic and was supported by the Kremlin in 2002, during the elections there.¹⁴³
- An opera composed by Vitaliy Okorokov in Saratov, titled *Monica in the Kremlin*. The opera, which is yet to be produced, will feature Putin’s private life.¹⁴⁴
- A plaque was erected by a businessman, at the site to commemorate the occasion when Putin planted a maple tree some years previously.

¹⁴⁰ Bransten, J., *Russia: From Pop Songs to Vegetables, Is a Putin Personality Cult Emerging?*, RFE/RL, September 9, 2002. www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/09/09092002150915.asp, February 5, 2003.

¹⁴¹ Isayeva, A., *Russian Government Spokesman Denies Putin Personality Cult*, June 24, 2002. JRL #6322, June 25, 2002.

¹⁴² Radyuhin, V., *Putin Cult Touches New High*, *The Hindu*, May 9, 2001. www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/2001/05/09/stories, January 29, 2003.

¹⁴³ Jack, A., *The Empire Strikes Back: Putin Cult Reaches New Levels*, *Financial Times*, October 12, 2002. JRL #6489, October 12, 2002.

¹⁴⁴ *Opera About Putin’s Private Life Could be Produced in Russia*, BBC Monitoring, Ekho Moskvi, January 23, 2002. JRL #6038, January 24, 2002.

- In the town of Mytishchi (near Moscow) a local newspaper published a poem called *Beloved President*, the poem promised that so long Putin was in office “worldwide glory awaits Russia.”¹⁴⁵
- Pop song *Just Like Putin* sung by all-girl band *Singing Together*.¹⁴⁶
- In the *Union of Creativity* art gallery in Moscow, an exhibition entitled *Our Putin* ran from January 29 – February 12, 2001.¹⁴⁷

The above-mentioned exhibition stirred some controversy during its brief period of display. A total of nine portraits of Putin were on display, showing him in various poses.

- Vladimir Putin shown standing beneath a Kremlin tower. The picture of Putin is described as “strangely majestic” and he is seen to be “surveying his empire.”
- In another, Putin is shown staring into the choppy waters of the ocean. In this pose he is depicted as a defender of the motherland. He is wearing a submariner’s hat and has a pair of binoculars in his hands.¹⁴⁸

An artist at the exhibition, Fyodor Dubrovin rationalised the decision to open the ‘Our Putin’ exhibition.

“In any society there should be a cult of positive personality [...] Why not promote this image? People are trying to be like him. He is a role model.”¹⁴⁹

Dubrokin’s statement would seem to indicate that the exhibition was conceptualised on the basis of higher principles. His reference to a ‘cult of positive personality’ bears a remarkable similarity to the role of the Soviet media, whose role was to guide and motivate the populace by suggesting models for imitation and models for avoidance. However, journalist Peter Baker suggests that the motives for the exhibition were not set upon high political principles.

¹⁴⁵ Baker, P., *Putin on a Pedestal: ‘A Cult of Positive Personality’*, Washington Post, February 12, 2001. JRL #5088, February 12, 2001.

¹⁴⁶ (1) MacKinnon, M., *‘Personality Cult’ Bedevils Wary Putin*, The Globe and Mail (Canada), September 27, 2002. JRL #6460, September 27, 2002.

(2) Leeds, L., *Pop Song “Just Like Putin”*, September 19, 2002. JRL #6446, September 19, 2002.

¹⁴⁷ Baker, P., *Putin on a Pedestal: ‘A Cult of Positive Personality’*, Washington Post, February 12, 2001. JRL #5088, February 12, 2001.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ Baker, P., *Putin on a Pedestal: ‘A Cult of Positive Personality’*, Washington Post, February 12, 2001. JRL #5088, February 12, 2001.

He suggests that it was a publicity gimmick, one that got the gallery on the front page of one of Moscow's largest newspapers and boosted attendance by as much as 20%.¹⁵⁰

The probable arrival of a new thriller novel, *President* written by Latvian author Aleksandr Olbik, for the Russian market hit the news headlines in July 2002. *President* is a story, which depicts Putin as a version of a 'James Bond' character, who is "personally hunting down and assassinating Chechen rebel leaders while doing his bit for world peace."¹⁵¹

In describing his novel, Olbik draws upon much of what Putin's image-makers having being trying to convey to the Russian public. He also plays on the sense of community or belonging and the fear of enemies of Russia, which in the contemporary context means terrorists.

"What I wrote is a literary version of events that could have occurred [...] The former Soviet Union has not had a political leader like Putin for a long time. Russia needs a strong leader because we have strong enemies."¹⁵²

The book offers various explanations and accounts of Putin's activities. For instance, his unpopular decision not to immediately leave his holiday retreat in Sochi and take control of the Kursk crisis in August 2000. Olbik's book suggests that Putin was challenged to a personal duel by Shamil (reference to Shamil Basayev the Chechen rebel leader who was reportedly killed by the FSB). As a result Putin travelled to Chechnya and because of this encounter between the two of them was wounded, therefore unable to console the families of the crew of the Kursk.¹⁵³

Russian media have criticised Olbik for the glowing depiction of the thriller's hero. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, Moscow's biggest selling daily, is one of the media organisations that have criticised Olbik. In face of this criticism, Olbik has maintained that the thriller was not initiated on the request of the President.¹⁵⁴ Olbik later admitted to an underlying motive for the title and character of his book. "If I had named 'the hero' Petrov or Ivanov, nobody would read it." The book had to be published in Ukraine because of official objections in

¹⁵⁰ Baker, P., *Putin on a Pedestal: 'A Cult of Positive Personality'*, Washington Post, February 12, 2001. JRL #5088, February 12, 2001.

¹⁵¹ Walsh, N. P., *Putin Turns 007 in New Thriller Novel*, The Observer, July 14, 2002. JRL #6356, July 16, 2002.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Walsh, N. P., *Putin Turns 007 in New Thriller Novel*, The Observer, July 14, 2002.

Russia.¹⁵⁵ Ultimately, it would seem that the use of Putin's name, in this instance is a decision based on economics rather than politics and was based on the initiative of the author.

The pop song *Just Like Putin* blanketed Russian airwaves for some time after the song was released by the all-girl band *Singing Together*. Below is a translation of the song by journalist Lenard Leeds.

Just Like Putin

“My boyfriend is such a jerk, I just can not stand him
Some kind of drugs he always must be shooting
He is history, I am surely going to dump him
And then I will find a real man just like Putin

CHORUS

(Just Like Putin) if he is half that man
(Just Like Putin) he will be sober and
(Just Like Putin) he won't diss me or
(Just Like Putin) ever run away no more

I saw him on TV news, talking all alone
He said the world's at risk, he is rootin'-tootin'
He would be funny at a party, sweet at home
And now I will find a real man just like Putin

CHORUS¹⁵⁶

Singing Together is also going to re-record the song in both English and Spanish according to the song's composer Kiril Kalashnikov. He has also hinted on tackling social issues in Russia, such as the high incidence of abortion.¹⁵⁷ Kalashnikov would appear to be using an

JRL #6356, July 16, 2002.

¹⁵⁵ MacKinnon, M., *A 'Personality Cult' Bedevils Wary Putin*, The Globe and Mail, September 27, 2002.

JRL #6460, September 27, 2002.

¹⁵⁶ Leeds, L., *Pop Song "Just Like Putin"*, September 19, 2002. JRL#6446, September 19, 2002.

¹⁵⁷ Birch, D., *Putin's Popularity Reaches High Note*, Baltimore Sun, September 3, 2002. JRL #6419,

attention grabbing theme to launch *Singing Together* into the commercial world and he intends to keep in the news through broaching sensitive societal issues.

1.3.8 Putin's Heritage.

Blotsky's biography on Putin, *Vladimir Putin: Life Story*, is written in a manner that is not uncommon to tactics used by past leaders in Russia. It is a tactic about legitimisation of a leader's position through recounting their heritage. If the leader's bloodlines or associations can be traced back to someone of stature and significance, this is used to add of the perception of rightful succession. *Vladimir Putin: Life Story* comes with a complete genealogical tree, which is traced back to the beginning of the 18th century. This aspect has been deemed important enough for Blotsky to dedicate a chapter to Putin's ancestors.¹⁵⁸

In July 2002 *Pravda* published the first of its articles on the genealogy of the Putin family. The article stressed the closeness of Putin's ancestors to Russian royalty. "The President's ancestors belonged to the relatives of the first tsars – the Romanovs."¹⁵⁹ *Pravda's* story then goes on to describe the hardship faced by Putin's ancestors, by events such as the Lithuanian invasion of the 17th century.

Later in 2002, in November, *Pravda* wrote another story that raised the prospect of Putin having royal blood. Firstly, the physical similarity between Vladimir Putin and Prince Mikhail Tverskoy is discussed. This may be intended to plant the idea in the readers' head, that a blood tie may exist between Putin and royalty. A catchy agenda-setting opening to the article, which could subconsciously plant the notion. An examination of the name Putin then follows. According to the article the illegitimate offspring of noble families were often granted shortened names. In this particular example, a clan of Princes from the Tver region, whose name was Putyanin was used. Their claim to fame was then detailed.

"This clan gave Russia many outstanding military leaders, as well as artists, politicians, and priests. This is one of the oldest clans in Russian history. If

September 4, 2002.

For an alternative translation see www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/08/27/003.html, O'Flynn, K., *Sexy New Putin Song Lights Teenagers' Fire*, August 27, 2002.

¹⁵⁸ Shukshin, A., *Book Shows Putin at his Best*, Reuters, January 21, 2002. JRL #6033, January 21, 2002.

¹⁵⁹ Kiseleva, Y., *Genealogical Tree of the Russian President Traced Back to the 18th Century*, Pravda.ru, July 20, 2002. JRL #6361, July 21, 2002.

President Putin is a descendant of the Putyanin clan, this means that Vladimir Putin is related to nearly all the royal families of Europe.”¹⁶⁰

By all appearances, this article seems to be an attempt at legitimising Putin’s position as Russia’s ruler. It gives a notion of links with the Imperial past, thereby creating the image of a ‘natural’ right of succession. *Pravda* is not the only media organisation to use a royal tie, in October 2002 the *Moscow News* published an article that compared Putin to Tsar Alexander III. The article concludes that Putin has many attributes of the Tsar, but is an improvement upon him.¹⁶¹ The above mentioned article would appear to be trying to achieve the goals of *Pravda*, but attempting the result through a different method.

1.4 ‘Moving Together’ – The Rise of the So-Called *Putin Jugend*.

From the outset of its conception, *Idushchiye Vmeste* (Moving Together) seems to have been created with the aim of re-establishing the phenomena of a mass organisation. The individuality of members appears to be stripped away and replaced by a collective culture, which is directed toward serving the State and its interests. As such, its function could be to serve as an organiser, motivator and guide of the masses (Russian youth in this particular case). The organisation’s slogan is “to be the best.”¹⁶² The Kremlin has denied the existence of any formal links between itself and *Idushchiye Vmeste*.

Idushchiye Vmeste was created by Vasily Yakimenko in mid-2000. Yakimenko left his position as overseer of state-run charities in May 2000, for this purpose.¹⁶³ The youth organisation is openly pro-Kremlin, Yakimenko has stated that *Idushchiye Vmeste* wants “to create a new generation to help the President bring Russia out of crisis.” Deputy head of the presidential administration, Vladislav Surkov, adds official weight and backing of this ‘youth organisation’ as its patron.¹⁶⁴ *Idushchiye Vmeste*’s website claims that their membership stands at some 100, 000 from Russia’s entirety, of which some 80% are classed as students.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ Klimov, G. & Orlova, M., *Tsar Vladimir Putin?*, Pravda.ru, November 5, 2002. JRL #6536, November 6, 2002.

¹⁶¹ Leonov, S., *Vladimir Putin as the Emperor Alexander III: How Putin Compares With Russia’s Other Rulers*, Moscow News, October 16 – 22, 2002. JRL #6497, October 17, 2002.

¹⁶² www.idushie.ru/rus/about/index.php, January 30, 2003.

¹⁶³ (1) Cecil, C., *Pro-Putin Cult Urges Return to Soviet Glory*, The Electronic Telegraph, January 27, 2002. JRL #6043, January 27, 2002.

(2) www.idushie.ru/rus/about/index.php, January 30, 2003.

¹⁶⁴ Cecil, C., *Pro-Putin Cult Urges Return to Soviet Glory*, The Electronic Telegraph, January 27, 2002.

Idushchiye Vmeste claims to be pro-President and not pro-Putin. Yakimenko has stated that the organisation is run by young people, funded by company sponsorship and not controlled by the presidential administration. He said that they would continue to support Putin and the presidential administration “for as long as they want what we want for Russia.”¹⁶⁶ However, some public statements have cast some doubt over this claim. “A year ago today our organisation was started. The organisation was set up by Putin. Therefore, we call this day *Day of Putin*, in short.” (Unidentified boy)¹⁶⁷

Yakimenko has made no secret of his attitude toward Putin. He has, as outlined previously, denied any intention of trying to create a personality cult or having ‘blind’ loyalty to Putin. A statement that he made to media in May 2001 does provide an indication of his closeness to the Russian President. “He is the only person who can consolidate society and drag Russia out of the moral swamp it is in right now.”¹⁶⁸

Other junior members of *Idushchiye Vmeste* have made comments to this effect more recently. On November 7, 2002 the organisation held an ‘action’ celebrating Moscow’s liberation from the Polish invaders in 1612. Several thousand members were present, including Pavel Tarakanov, a Moscow student who openly announced his support for Putin.

“This victory represents the Russian Federation’s glorious fighting spirit. [...] We like Putin as a person. Nobody makes fun of him, like they did about every Russian leader since Stalin. Putin is not a joke.”¹⁶⁹

Tarakanov’s words would appear to be underlining the processes of several new trends currently occurring in Russian society. The mention of the ‘glorious fighting spirit,’ which is indicative of the increasing militarisation of society. Tied with this notion is the selective use of history to generate pride and patriotism. In hand with the historical theme is the process of psychological ‘normalisation’ of the Stalin era. Stalin who was previously denounced by most

JRL #6043, January 27, 2002.

¹⁶⁵ www.idushie.ru/rus/about/index.php, January 30, 2003.

¹⁶⁶ *Russian Youth Movement to Back Putin for Now Says Leader*, BBC Monitoring, NTV, November 7, 2001. JRL #5532, November 8, 2001.

¹⁶⁷ *Pro-Putin Youth in Streets to “Clean Russia of Political Rubbish”*, BBC Monitoring, TV6, November 7, 2001. JRL #5531, November 8, 2001.

¹⁶⁸ Chazan, G., *Efforts to Indoctrinate Russian Youths With Love for Putin has Mixed Results*, The Wall Street Journal, May 29, 2001. JRL #5275, May 30, 2001.

¹⁶⁹ Golovnina, M., *Communists, pro-Kremlin Youth Rally for Red October*, Reuters, November 7, 2002.

Soviet leaders after his death in 1953, is to some extent being ‘rehabilitated’ as an example of a strong leader. Putin’s strong attributes are emphasised in this brief quote, which may indicate that either the ‘correct’ answer is being given or that the significant amount of resources that have been invested in shaping Putin’s image are beginning to bear fruit.

The rewriting of Russian history is in line with some of Putin’s statements on the ‘patriotism programme,’ which among other objectives sets out to ‘right’ the ‘errors.’ An action, which was called ‘For the Last Time’ was held on October 22, 2002 near Lenin’s Mausoleum to coincide with the 85th anniversary of the publication of Lenin’s work *Advice from a Stranger*. The organisers of *Idushchiye Vmeste* were going to publish at least 100, 000 copies of a brochure that cited figures of victims of the 1918 – 22 Russian Civil War, the smuggling of gold from Russia and lists of writers, philosophers and scientists who had to leave Russia. Yakimenko said that “these real figures taken from historical literature will help young people realise Lenin’s true role in this country’s history.”¹⁷⁰

An odd mixture of old and new ideology are present, creating an organisation of a somewhat hybrid nature. *Idushchiye Vmeste* as previously mentioned, is pro-Putin, official government policy is alleged to be pro-Western in orientation. However, some xenophobic tendencies have been surfacing. Although, no overly negative statements concerning the organisations stance on Western Europe, the same can not be said for statements regarding the United States. Yakimenko was quoted as saying that American culture was “an absolute evil, devoid of the important components like spirituality and awareness of its own ethnic nature.”¹⁷¹

A statement from *Idushchiye Vmeste*’s leader on the May 8, 2001 rally gave an indication of the depth of the organisation’s rejection of Western values, in favour of embracing Russian culture. He also stressed the important role that Russian history has and probably will continue to have on shaping ‘desirable’ values in society.

“[...] Russia’s youth had finally turned their face toward Russia, and you-know-what toward the West. [...] all Western nonsense is being shoved aside and youth understand that what is most important today are not

JRL #6540, November 7, 2002.

¹⁷⁰ *Moving Together Invites Young People to Visit Lenin’s Mausoleum*, Interfax, October 22, 2002.

JRL #6506, October 22, 2002.

¹⁷¹ Glikin, M., *Walking into the Past*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 23, 2002. JRL #6366, July 23, 2002.

Western values, but preserving the system of relations handed down to us by our own history.”¹⁷²

Idushchiye Vmeste has also displayed a strong affinity with the Russian Orthodox Church. Yakimenko has issued strongly supportive public statements regarding the role of the Church in providing Russian people with a good moral basis. The Orthodox Church is a conservative organisation, which also displays a distinct suspicion and dislike for things foreign.

“[...] the last organisation sincerely and systematically concerned with issues of moral upbringing of young people. [...] The Russian Orthodox Church is striving to restore and preserve morality and cultural values. We are co-operating with the Russian Orthodox Church.”¹⁷³

November 2000 was the first public appearance (rallies and other activities are referred to by the organisation as ‘actions’) of *Idushchiye Vmeste*, in which members celebrated Putin’s presidency. During the rally, the crowd numbering in the thousands, gathered near the Kremlin, wearing t-shirts emblazoned with Putin’s face and speaking of their love for the President.¹⁷⁴ This stance was in stark contrast to the apparently nonchalant beginnings of the organisation, which seemed to want at least the appearance of distance between *Idushchiye Vmeste* and President Putin.

On May 8, 2001 *Idushchiye Vmeste* rallied in Moscow to commemorate the first anniversary of Putin’s swearing in ceremony. An estimated crowd of 10, 000 youths from all over Russia participated. They were seen wearing t-shirts with Putin’s head and chanted “Putin, Putin.”¹⁷⁵

Membership of the organisation is ‘sold’ mainly to the 14 – 30 year old age group.¹⁷⁶ This may be partly due to the belief, by the political establishment, of the existence of a ‘lost’ generation of Russian youth. The director of the *All-Russian Centre for the Study of Public*

¹⁷² *Press Reacts to Pro-Putin Youth*, Jamestown Foundation Monitor, May 8, 2001. JRL #5244, May 9, 2001.

¹⁷³ Glikin, M., *Walking into the Past*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, July 23, 2002. JRL #6366, July 23, 2002.

¹⁷⁴ Cecil, C., *Pro-Putin Cult Urges Return to Soviet Glory*, *The Electronic Telegraph*, January 27, 2002. JRL #6043, January 27, 2002.

¹⁷⁵ Radyuhin, V., *Putin Cult Touches New High*, *The Hindu*, May 9, 2001. www.hinduonnet.com/thehindu/2001/05/09/stories, January 29, 2003.

¹⁷⁶ Cecil, C., *Pro-Putin Cult Urges Return to Soviet Glory*, *The Electronic Telegraph*, January 27, 2002. JRL #6043, January 27, 2002.

Opinion, Yuri Levada emphasised the apolitical and ‘corrupt’ nature of contemporary Russian youth in an interview. He feels that youth lack any higher moral goals, commitments or ethics.

“They have no concept about any long-lasting values in life. [...] We never had politicised youth. All our political upheavals of the past 10 – 15 years took place without the participation of young people. The active people were those aged 40 and above. Russia’s youth are resolutely apolitical and appear content to support President Vladimir Putin.”¹⁷⁷

Although Russian youth hold a generally positive image about Putin and ‘support’ him. This support is not manifested as anything tangible. Jeremy Bransten conducted interviews with several young Russians for the article *Russia: Nation’s Youth are Apolitical and Materialistic*, which seem to back this contention. One interviewee, Veronika (aged 17) gave a response that was fairly typical of those who were interviewed.

“I watch the (TV) news fairly often, I read the papers, but I don’t have any special opinion about the President for the moment. Politics is not my hobby. For the moment, it doesn’t interest me.”

“As a person he appeals to me, as a man he appeals to me. You know, he looks like a trustworthy person. He’s always well groomed, he looks great. And as regards politics, I’m not interested in politics in general.” Irina (24) on Putin.¹⁷⁸

Idushchiye Vmeste would appear to be an attempt to mobilise, politicise and utilise Russia’s youth in achieving politically motivated social objectives. Without a politically engaged youth now, Russia in 30 – 40 years in the future could well face a political crisis. Any gains toward a strong and centralised state in the immediate future could possibly be lost to political indifference, if the current trend is to continue.

¹⁷⁷ Bransten, J., *Russia: Nation’s Youth are Apolitical and Materialistic*, RFE/RL, November 7, 2001. JRL #5531, November 8, 2001.

¹⁷⁸ Bransten, J., *Russia: Nation’s Youth are Apolitical and Materialistic*, RFE/RL, November 7, 2001. JRL #5531, November 8, 2001.

The organisation's members are rewarded for their participation in 'actions.' Various incentives are offered to the participants, which hints at the problem faced by the organisers of *Idushchiye Vmeste* in generating self-initiated participation by youth. A news item on *TV6*, from Moscow gave viewers an indication of some of the benefits that were on offer. Other offers have also been documented by other media organisations.

- "For this action we were given free cinema tickets." (Unidentified boy)
- "Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin finds sponsors, as it were, to organise, for instance, cruises for us, or holidays in the resorts. We were there a week ago, for instance. We go to swimming pools, we go to gyms, we enrich our inner lives, we go to concerts, all this is absolutely free." (Unidentified boy)¹⁷⁹
- On May 8, 2001 *Kommersant* published an article, where a member of *Idushchiye Vmeste* claimed she was guaranteed ten hours of Internet access per month, two movie tickets per week, access to a swimming pool once a week, promises of free aerobics classes and foreign language instruction.¹⁸⁰

A vigorous recruitment campaign has been initiated by *Idushchiye Vmeste*, which rewards existing members who are successful in bringing in new members. *Idushchiye Vmeste* is organised along military lines, members are divided into groups of five called *Red stars*, which are led by a *foreman*. The *foreman* receives a free pager and £30 for their services. Each of the five *soldiers* receive £1 and free t-shirts.¹⁸¹ Existing members are also enticed to encourage others to join through the use of granting of higher rank and other rewards.

"Once you have a red star, try to persuade another fifty to join. Give them a party if they show interest in the group. You must be able to encourage and to punish, then you will become a commander of a division. If you persuade another thousand to put their fate in your hands, you will be a co-ordinator."¹⁸²

¹⁷⁹ *Pro-Putin Youth in Streets to "Clean Russia of Political Rubbish"*, BBC Monitoring, *TV6*, November 7, 2001. JRL #5531, November 8, 2001.

¹⁸⁰ *Press Reacts to Pro-Putin Youth*, Jamestown Foundation Monitor, May 8, 2001. JRL #5244, May 9, 2001.

¹⁸¹ Cecil, C., *Pro-Putin Cult Urges Return to Soviet Glory*, 'The Electronic Telegraph', January 27, 2002. JRL #6043, January 27, 2002.

¹⁸² Cecil, C., *Pro-Putin Cult Urges Return to Soviet Glory*, 'The Electronic Telegraph', January 27, 2002. JRL #6043, January 27, 2002.

The organisation is very regimented and guided by an expansive set of rules and guidelines for the members. Some of the compulsory cultural commitments of members include such deeds as;

- Reading at least six Russian classics a year.
- Visiting the site of a battle, where the Russians were the victors.¹⁸³
- Listening to Classical Russian music.
- Involvement in charity work with veterans and orphans.¹⁸⁴
- No swearing, drugs or drunkenness.
- Emphasis on patriotism and physical fitness.
- Respect you elders.¹⁸⁵

Idushchiye Vmeste has taken on the task of acting as literary and cultural censors in Russia, on their own accord. In this instance, I will use the case of attempting to influence the consumption of literature to illustrate my point. Yakimenko has already stated his intention to “purify Russian literature.”¹⁸⁶ The aims of the organisation in this respect seem to be two-fold. Firstly to discourage the production, distribution and consumption of modern ‘liberal’ books. A second aim is to encourage books that offer a more ‘positive’ view of Russian life and history.

The second aim is tied to the first possible objective, to rid Russia of ‘corrupting’ modern ‘liberal’ books. *Idushchiye Vmeste* has been printing thousands of copies of books of the Red Army’s victories during the Second World War. These books were offered, free of charge, in exchange for the ‘corrupting’ literature. This enterprise is expensive, but appears to be secretly financed by two companies with close connections to the Kremlin and the Moscow City Council.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ Cecil, C., *Pro-Putin Cult Urges Return to Soviet Glory*, The Electronic Telegraph, January 27, 2002. JRL #6043, January 27, 2002.

¹⁸⁴ Peterson, S., *In Russia, a Kinder, Gentler Komsomol*, Christian Science Monitor, May 30, 2001. <http://csmweb2.emcweb.com/durable/2001/05/30/p6s2.htm>, January 29, 2003.

¹⁸⁵ Chazan, G., *Efforts to Indoctrinate Russian Youths With Love for Putin has Mixed Results*, The Wall Street Journal, May 29, 2001. JRL #5275, May 30, 2001.

For an extensive list of the organisations code of conduct please refer to the ‘moral code’ section of their website at www.idushie.ru (website in Russian only).

¹⁸⁶ Cecil, C., *Pro-Putin Cult Urges Return to Soviet Glory*, The Electronic Telegraph, January 27, 2002. JRL #6043, January 27, 2002.

¹⁸⁷ Cecil, C., *Pro-Putin Cult Urges Return to Soviet Glory*, The Electronic Telegraph, January 27, 2002. JRL #6043, January 27, 2002.

One of the targets of *Idushchiye Vmeste* is postmodernist writer Vladimir Sorokin. The group were able to influence prosecutors in filing charges against Sorokin on July 11, 2002. Charges faced by the writer are based on allegations of disseminating pornography. *Goluboye Salo* (Blue Lard), a 1999 novel written by Sorokin is the source of the controversy. The masculine form of the Russian word for blue is also a slang term for homosexuals. Passages in the book, among other things, depict sexual acts between the clones of Stalin and Khrushchev.¹⁸⁸ This action has started a debate that has centred on allegations that there is a general tendency in culture to make it more controlled.

In addition to targeting Sorokin, *Ad Marginem* the Russian publisher and anyone who sells the book is subject to investigation. If convicted, Sorokin could face up to two years in prison. *Idushchiye Vmeste* engaged in an 'action' against Sorokin in Moscow in June 2002. The group put on rubber gloves and destroyed copies of Sorokin's books, throwing them into a large mock toilet bowl. According to Aleksandr Ivanov, director of *Ad Marginem* the publicity and controversy caused by *Idushchiye Vmeste's* actions has quadrupled the sales of Sorokin's books.¹⁸⁹ *Idushchiye Vmeste* had also published excerpts from *Goluboye Salo* and other works of Sorokin, then set fire to them near the Bolshoi Theatre.¹⁹⁰

In contrast to the quick actions of the police and prosecutors in initiating legal proceedings against Sorokin, a complaint made by Sorokin and his publishing house accusing *Idushchiye Vmeste* of infringing the copyright law. This complaint was dismissed by a Moscow District court.¹⁹¹

The 'front men' of the book exchange are usually smartly presented teenagers and young adults. Anthologies of Russian classics, called Russian Legacy, are exchanged for the works of modern writers, whom the group claims are trading in cynicism and despair. Mikhail Myasoyedov, a supervisor of the *Idushchiye Vmeste* group stationed at Pushkin Square justified the organisations actions.

¹⁸⁸ Kishkovsky, S., *Russian Writer, Facing Charges, Warns Free Expression is at Risk*, New York Times, July 16, 2002. JRL #6356, July 16, 2002.

¹⁸⁹ Gutterman, S., *Russia Investigates Prominent Writer*, Associated Press, July 11, 2002. JRL #6351, July 12, 2002.

¹⁹⁰ Blagov, S., *Russian Writers Feel State Heat*, Asia Times, September 27, 2002. JRL #6461, September 28, 2002.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

“I think this lack of spirituality is the basis for all other problems around us. It causes the general degradation of culture and morals.”¹⁹²

Idushchiye Vmeste's founder, Yakimenko has also stated his favouring restrictions being placed on the sale of “dark and explicit fiction because it rots the psychological health of the people living in this country.”¹⁹³ Such emotive and idealistic rhetoric seems to be an integral part of the organisation's communication strategy with its members and the public. Other ‘actions’ have also been undertaken, which among other things have included;

- Letter writing campaign again TV6's reality TV programme *Behind the Glass*, due to alleged explicit sexuality and the depiction of slack youth.
- ‘General Cleaning of Russia,’ where members took up brooms and swept the streets of 50 Russian cities.¹⁹⁴

Schools have also been the target of the group's attention. They established, what have been described as ‘military style check-points’ and established 24-hour patrols. This was designed to enforce drug-free zones in schools.¹⁹⁵ The above-mentioned community service programme (such as the ‘General Cleaning of Russia’ action) has strong similarities with the Soviet era *subbotnik* phenomena.

Idushchiye Vmeste have been vocal in various public debates, including a debate revolving around the issue of alternative military service. Their path has also been determined by the traditional values and concepts that are held. The group has publicly taken the stance that has been adopted by the government with its policy of patriotic education, coupled with a perceivably increased level of militarisation of society. They would appear to believe that serving in the armed forces will instil a set of good values and moral code.

In an apparent reaction to the activities of *Idushchiye Vmeste*, a bomb was detonated in the Moscow Office of the organisation on September 11, 2002. An explosive device equivalent to

¹⁹² Birch, D., *Russian Youth Group Takes Pages From the Past: Repression of Ideas Seen in Book Trade-in*, Baltimore Sun, February 9, 2002. JRL #6067, February 10, 2002.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Chazan, G., *Efforts to Indoctrinate Russian Youths With Love for Putin has Mixed Results*, The Wall Street Journal, May 29, 2001. JRL #5275, May 30, 2001.

350 – 400 grams of TNT was detonated at 01:00 hours.¹⁹⁶ The timing of the explosion seems to suggest that no casualties were intended by this act.

Other youth organisations than *Idushchiye Vmeste* exist in the Russian Federation. Among these organisations are *The Pioneers*, an organisation that has been resurrected from the Soviet past. *The Pioneers* used to be a nation-wide organisation during the days of the Soviet Union, a society that included most of the nation's children aged from 10 – 14 years. However, this organisation almost totally collapsed along with the Soviet Union in 1991. Although several scout like groups became established, an exact organisation had not re-emerged.¹⁹⁷

However, *The Pioneers* was kept alive by a dedicated core of organisers. *The Pioneers* is still under the wing of the Communist Party, but a less politicised organisation. Some members of the Communist Party believe the organisation to be on the road to recovery. Communist Party leader, Gennady Zyuganov claims that there are approximately 60, 000 pioneers in Russia. *The Pioneers* met in Red Square to mark the 80th birthday of the organisation, where potential members were inducted into the rights and ceremonies. This included visiting Lenin's Mausoleum and tying red neckerchiefs around their necks.¹⁹⁸

In spite of some similarities with the Communist past, such as the rituals that were described above and the retention of their slogan "always ready," there are some breaks with the past. They no longer have the duty to build communism or fight for the cause of the working class. Their new societal duties include such tasks as standing up for the motherland, goodness and justice.¹⁹⁹ These new tasks have a remarkable similarity to the goals and aspirations of *Idushchiye Vmeste*.

Sofia Ruzina (88) who was a delegate at the first Congress of Pioneers in 1929 and was present at the Red Square ceremony, stated her past and present philosophy.

¹⁹⁶ *Bomb Rocks Office of Marching Together Organisation*, Interfax, September 11, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/doc/HotNews.html, September 11, 2002.

¹⁹⁷ Korchagina, V., *The New Adventures of the Young Pioneers*, The Moscow Times, May 20, 2002. JRL #6256, May 20, 2002.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Korchagina, V., *The New Adventures of the Young Pioneers*, The Moscow Times, May 20, 2002. JRL #6256, May 20, 2002.

“Pioneers organisation will live. Now everyone thinks only about where to get money. Meanwhile we were fighting for good causes. [...] was taught to fight for peace, bread, the revival of industry and the liquidation of illiteracy.”²⁰⁰

The seemingly contradictory task of trying to shape the future by looking at the past, through examining history is important. *Idushchiye Vmeste* also shares this concept and its important status. *The Pioneers* use tales from events such as the Second World War (The Great Patriotic War) to give their members a sense of both pride and belonging, to their motherland.

As with *Idushchiye Vmeste*, the theme of defending the motherland against an enemy is an important ethos of the organisation. A pioneer from the Moscow Region, Misha Pavlov (11) stated that a young pioneer’s main goal is to defend the motherland from the enemy. Nastya Donnik (11) and Biana Karasonova (12) agreed with this priority. They added that terrorists were the ‘enemy’ and they planned a look out. When they were asked what a terrorist looked like they answered;

“Anyone strange or suspicious, or unknown could be a terrorist. [...] dark haired people from the Caucasus, like Armenians [...] terrorists are just bad people regardless of their nationality.”²⁰¹

This statement exemplifies some of the prejudices in Russian society, concerning the ‘other.’ People from the Caucasus have been the target of this prejudice and are often referred to in everyday street language as ‘blacks.’ The terrorist is emerging as the new ‘enemy of the people’ in the contemporary environment. Putin has used fear of the terrorist to gain political support, this has been helped by having readily identifiable terrorists from the Caucasus region.

Other youth organisations have also been further developed after Putin’s election victory in March 2000. *Soyuzmol* held its first congress concerning a union between other organisations and Walking Together on October 29, 2001, the birthday of the Soviet youth organisation

²⁰⁰ Korchagina, V., *The New Adventures of the Young Pioneers*, The Moscow Times, May 20, 2002. JRL #6256, May 20, 2002.

²⁰¹ Korchagina, V., *The New Adventures of the Young Pioneers*, The Moscow Times, May 20, 2002. JRL #6256, May 20, 2002.

Komsomol. As with *Walking Together*, *Soyuzmol* is concerned with building a bridge between the state and Russian youth. To illustrate this point I will quote one of their slogans.

“Civic, patriotic and personal responsibility of each member to the union. *Soyuzmol* believes its aim is to consolidate young people and to conduct a dialogue with the state.”²⁰²

Soyuzmol has been influenced somewhat by its predecessor *Komsomol*, this has been reflected in rhetoric from the organisation. During the three-day congress, officials made a statement to the effect that the positive experience of *Komsomol* should be further developed. This statement received applause from the audience.²⁰³

The subject of this October 2001 congress was the notion of a union, which would unite some 200 public organisations and would bring a membership of 500, 000 under one roof. Putin had already voiced his support for such a union.²⁰⁴ Such a move would streamline control over this vast and varied array of organisations, bringing them under a form of centralised control would allow for better deployment and use of their activities. Additionally, those activities would also be a lot more easily screened.

1.5 Chapter Summary.

Two of the questions asked in the Introduction have now been answered in the course of this work. A working definition of cult of personality has been derived and the nature of cult of personality in a practical application was discussed, with reference to the Soviet period. However, the last question still remains. Do the present conditions, under Vladimir Putin, match the definition and the practice of cult of personality?

Although certain aspects of cult of personality would seem to be manifesting themselves in Putin’s Russia, this does not necessarily equate to the existence of a ‘classic’ case of this phenomena. In short, my answer has to be no. It is for the following reasons that I do not believe that a true cult of personality exists in contemporary Russia.

²⁰² *Reincarnation of Soviet Youth League Blessed by Putin*, BBC Monitoring, NTV, October 29, 2001. JRL #5514, October 30, 2001.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

Putin has attempted to publicly distance himself from the appearance of trying to create or endorse the formation of a cult of personality around him. In 2002 he told journalists that limits should be placed on the growing trend of naming things after him.²⁰⁵ This may in part, possibly demonstrate that there is some reluctance on the part of Putin in allowing an unchecked growth of ‘Putin-mania.’

Other reasons are possibly behind and driving the expansion of the ‘Putin culture’ industry. Senior lecturer in contemporary Russian politics and society at the London School of Slavonic and East European Studies, Peter Duncan has suggested that the emerging trends may be interpreted as an emerge cult of personality, but warns about reading too much into it.

“I agree that it looks like a classic personality cult of the sort that Stalin or the later [Leonid] Brezhnev had. But really, Russia has changed an awful lot since that time. And the state does not any longer have the capacity to organise that sort of personality cult, in the way that it could in the past. Russia is not a totalitarian society anymore. And the state, if anything, is weak.”²⁰⁶

Deputy editor of the Moscow newspaper *Novye Izvestia*, Otto Latsis has speculated that Putin is not ‘controlling’ the current ‘Putin-mania,’ external factors are at play. He proposes different people, from businessmen to local politicians wish to gain an advantage from Putin’s popularity and are simply jumping on the bandwagon.

“There is not a personality cult. [Putin] can be criticised. He does not react much to criticism, but we do have that option. The fact that there are some toadies who want to praise him – that is their initiative.”²⁰⁷

Historian Roy Medvedev also excludes the possibility of the existence of a personality cult and proposes that other factors are at play, creating the perception of the creation of a personality cult.

²⁰⁵Bransten, J., *Russia: From Pop Songs to Vegetables, Is a Putin Personality Cult Emerging?*, RFE/RL, September 9, 2002. www.rferl.org/nca/features/2002/09/09/, February 5, 2003.

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

“A personality cult is a more complex notion, half-religious in nature. Its first symptom is when all criticism is being banned. We do not have it yet. There is gratitude to Putin, maybe even love for him among some social groups. There is also an element of grovelling in it. However, it would be wrong to speak of a personality cult.”²⁰⁸

On occasion, Putin or those who represent him have intervened to stop excessive examples of ‘Putin-mania.’ He has stated his wish that “I would ask them neither to write books about nor cast busts of me.” But added, that he is for the most part, powerless to stop much of this activity.²⁰⁹ The Russian constitution, provided that it is conducted within the given guidelines, allows for freedom of speech and expression. This may, to some extent bind Putin in a dilemma. He too, must act within the law and not be seen to be overly inhibiting the rights of citizens who wish to go about legal business or activity.

Another possible reason for all of the fuss around Putin may be found in a lack of identity and public disillusion. At breakneck speed the Soviet Union disintegrated from a nation of superpower status, disintegrated into the current form of post-Soviet states, which are suffering unprecedented economic and social hardship (as far as its current citizens are concerned). This has resulted in a desire for law, order and strength. Andrei Ryabov, an analyst with the Carnegie Centre in Moscow describes this sentiment.

“People are beginning to look not for the previous system of values but the symbols of the previous system because these symbols in their minds are associated with a good age [...] They are very tired from 10 years of revolution. They are waiting for a new era of calm.”²¹⁰

Political analyst Aleksandr Tsyenko offers a similar view on the crisis of ideology and values, which is currently besetting Russia.

²⁰⁸ *Russian Analysts See no Personality Cult Trend in Street Being Named After Putin*, BBC Monitoring, Ekho Moskvi News Agency, October 9, 2002. JRL #6486, October 11, 2002.

²⁰⁹ Baker, P., *Putin on a Pedestal: 'A Cult of Positive Personality'*, Washington Post, February 12, 2001. JRL #5088, February 12, 2001.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

“This is no personality cult. This is a latent passion for extolment coming from the grassroots. This is a wish to associate all one’s hopes for the future with one person. It indicates that after the break-up of the Soviet Union, modern Russia has found itself in a difficult situation from the moral and ideological points of view.”²¹¹

Putin has understood and appreciated this public desire. And as a perceptive politician has build an image that appeals to these ideals. His image-makers seem to have succeeded in transmitting the ‘correct’ picture to the Russian public. From this point of view, it could be argued that this displays good political intuition and practice rather than the specific goal of creating a cult of personality. To use the adage, no news is bad news and even bad news is good news.

During his public appearances Putin has consistently denied creating a personality cult and has been seen to be a little awkward and modest about the attention. He has stressed that it is ‘work as usual’ and that gifts that he has received as head of state will remain state property. This is in contrast to Yeltsin’s actions during his term in office.²¹²

The process of tributes and accolades devoted to the President seems to be driven or propelled as a bottom-up process rather than a process that has been initiated and guided as a top-down system. Many of the many, often bizarre forms of what could be construed as adulation are brought about on the initiative of businessmen or officials and have not been started on the orders or request of Putin.

A culture of offering flattery to Russia’s leaders has existed for a long time. This may be one of the aspects that is plaguing and binding Putin in the current situation. Putin sees that the excesses of flattery could be damaging, but is powerless to put a stop to it. Aleksandr Tsypko describes Putin’s dilemma aptly.

²¹¹ *Russian Analysts See no Personality Cult Trend in Street Being Named After Putin*, BBC Monitoring, Ekho Moskvi News Agency, October 9, 2002. JRL #6486, October 11, 2002.

²¹² Jack, A., *The Empire Strikes Back: Putin Cult Reaches New Levels*, Financial Times, October 12, 2002. JRL #6489, October 12, 2002.

“Servility, flattery, eulogy are fundamental flaws in our political culture. The President can not but see that such flattery is detrimental to his image.”²¹³

It should also be considered that the phenomenon of cult of personality was set in a one-party totalitarian state some fifty years ago. Putting aside allegations of unfair elections, through either intimidation or some form of manipulation, people can still choose another candidate (other than Putin) should they desire to do so. There may not be many viable alternatives to Putin, which is a debate in the media, but this does not reflect the inadequacies of political system, but rather those who represent the system (the politicians themselves).

A second point to consider, on the theme of the origins of cult of personality, is the time period in which it was set. Media and communications technology was rather clumsy and easy to control by state authorities who worked in a totalitarian environment. It would be inconceivable for a Russian journalist to criticise Stalin for operating a cult of personality during his period of rule. In the contemporary setting this has occurred. Some minimum level of legal protection does exist, up to a certain point, although broken on occasion by the authorities when suppressing debate on some issues (such as Chechnya). As the Russian government seeks to normalise relations with the outside world through integration into the world community, expectations and obligations are placed upon it by the community in which Russia seeks to join.

Since Putin’s accession to power, a lot of debate has centred on conflict in the media and the issue of freedom of speech. Much as happened, with regard to the level of permissible freedom of speech and editorial independence, many of the changes are not favourable for freedom of speech in the media. Conflict continues between media and the State, although to a lesser extent than in the beginning of Putin’s coming to power. This suggests at least two processes at play. Firstly, that media independence has been to some extent subdued by government pressure. The second point, referring to the fact that some conflict between the two parties still exists is that some measure of pluralism still exists in the Russian media. If the government were outright victors in the ‘information war’ there would be no pluralism and consequently no need to use coercion to enforce compliance to the government’s wishes.

²¹³ *Russian Analysts See no Personality Cult Trend in Street Being Named After Putin*, BBC Monitoring, Ekho Moskvi News Agency, October 9, 2002. JRL #6486, October 11, 2002.

The arrival of New Communications Technology (NCT) has also had an impact on the ability of any person or organisation wishes to initiate a cult of personality. NCTs are by nature, small, portable and able to access independent information. These aspects make NCTs very difficult to control through the traditional methods of censorship. A cult of personality environment requires a monolithic information structure. Total control of information is required; from image formation, to dissemination for the possibility of successfully planting the sender's message in the mind of the intended audience. Currently, it is possible for Russian citizens with access to technologies, such as computers with Internet access, to gain outside information, which may contradict the sender's message. Such contradictions would render the sender's message ineffective through cognitive dissonance.

CHAPTER II: PUTIN AND HIS INHERITANCE.

2.0 Chapter Objectives

The first parts of this chapter are intended to give the reader an appreciation of the image that has and is present, initiated by political figures to promote a person or a cause. Three key figures have been chosen – Boris Yeltsin, Lyudmila Putina and Yuri Luzhkov. Yeltsin as the past President is important in this study. He was the first post-Soviet leader of the Russian Federation. How did he come to be in this position, what public profile did he send to the Russian public to enhance his appeal?

Lyudmila Putina plays an increasingly public role in political life. Is this a new trend or merely a continuation in the line of Presidential First Ladies in Russia? To answer this question, it is necessary to delve into the immediate past and look at the role played by Raisa Gorbacheva and Naina Yeltsina in society. Another important point for consideration is whether Putina's role has remained constant from March 2000 or if her role has changed with changes occurring in society.

The final political actor to be considered of the above mentioned names is the Mayor of Moscow Yuri Luzhkov. He is an ambitious, charismatic and energetic political survivor. Over time he has managed to accumulate a sizeable media asset to wield at his will. Since Yeltsin's time Luzhkov has held ambitions of being President of Russia and has actively tried to manipulate circumstances and events that would be conducive to bringing this about.

In the period leading to the March 2000 election, one of Putin's popular platforms was the promise to distance all oligarchs from political power. Russian society witnessed the very public destruction of Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky's media empires shortly after Putin's successful attempt at the presidency. But, what else has happened since this time, have there been many or any significant changes in the relations between the central power and the oligarchs?

Chapter 2.3 is intended to verse the reader with the manner in which elections are conducted in the Russian Federation. Issues such as the use of *kompromat* will be discussed. The elections of 1996 and 2000 will be the focus. In addition to the election strategies employed in

these presidential elections, I will also investigate events and occurrences which seem to be having an influence on the upcoming 2004 presidential election.

Lastly, chapter 2.4 explores the issues of totalitarian discourse and state interests in Russian society. Since Putin has come to power, the State has attempted to recreate a strong centralised control. Along with the desire to bring about a more vibrant and centrally controlled Russia has come the rhetoric through the mass media. How has the will to create a strong Russia been expressed in the media?

2.1 Image Making

According to the Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci, the ruling elites use mass media to “perpetuate their power, wealth, and status by popularising their own philosophy, culture and morality.”²¹⁴

Certainly, Stalin was not the last Russian leader who attempted to create a public perception by associating wartime exploits with themselves. On July 29, 1987 in *Literaturnaya Gazeta*, historian Professor Iurii Poliakov accused Soviet leaders of creating personality cults and exaggerating their war records. The primary targets of his criticism were Konstantin Chernenko and Leonid Brezhnev.²¹⁵ There would appear to be some form of benefit for the Soviet leadership to be associated with the war effort. Some of the beneficial attributes may include traits such as; courage, reliability, integrity and decisiveness.

The main focus of this section will be on personal image and the image of Russia. A brief introduction will be given to the nature of Yeltsin’s image making efforts as a background and comparison to the contemporary style utilised by Putin.

Cultivation analysis may prove to be a useful tool of evaluation for the style of political advertising campaign used to appeal to the public sentiment. A definition for the term cultivation analysis is as follows;

²¹⁴ Lull, J., op. cit., p. 32.

²¹⁵ Editors Graffy, J. & Hosking, G. A., *Culture and Media in the USSR Today*, London, Macmillan Press, 1989, p. 28.

“[...] seeks to define long-term role of TV in contemporary society, proposing that heavy TV exposure blends attitudes in the direction of mainstream cultural values, and bends them in line with the somewhat conservative political agenda of the media owners and the power structure in general.”²¹⁶

2.1.1 Lyudmila Putina and the Use of the Presidential First Lady, As Portrayed in the Russian Media for Providing Model Behaviour.

Throughout the Soviet era the press was the “collective organiser, agitator and propagandist of the Party.”²¹⁷ In order to meet this expectation the media’s role in society was clearly defined by the Marxist-Leninist ideology, they were to be a motivator of the people’s will and efforts in order to create a better socialist state.

During the Soviet era, the media was designed to be an advocate that also instils certain traits into society. They were not designed to be transmitters of neutrally loaded information. This way of thinking and acting was part of the mass media’s core identity for nearly ¾ of a century. Consequently, this behaviour has been carried through into the post-Soviet period.

Much has been written on the mostly male leadership of the Soviet Union and Russia over the years. A vast amount of material has covered many different aspects of their rule. However, one area that has been gaining increasing importance recently (gauged by the increasing coverage in the media) has been the role of the First Lady in politics and society. This area seems to have been mostly neglected, excepting some brief articles written in newspapers periodically. The subject is long overdue for some attention, to bring this ‘hidden’ topic into public discussion.

Traditionally, in Soviet and Russian politics, the wife of the country’s leader is faceless and barely even recognised. This changed when Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in the mid-1980’s, his wife Raisa enjoyed a high profile both domestically and internationally. Her image or public persona was created, as a highly educated, intelligent and modern woman with a mind of her own. Other traits which came to be attributed to her included virtues such as

²¹⁶ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 182.

²¹⁷ Elderidge, J., Editor, *Getting the Message: News, Truth and Power*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 55

working for the betterment of the state / people of the Soviet Union. The compassionate and caring facet added to Gorbachev's over-all strategy of giving socialism a 'human face.'

As the Soviet Union crumbled and the Russian Federation came into existence, Boris Yeltsin assumed leadership of the newly formed state. The Russian President's wife appeared to assume a lower key and traditional role (according to Soviet politics). During her public appearances, Naina Yeltsina was publicly seen in the supporting role and tended to shy away from most political commentary.

The change in the role of the First Lady may have been brought about for a variety of reasons. For instance, the Gorbachevs seem to have received a lot of blame for the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In the contemporary society people do not remember the shortages of the late Soviet period, but the cradle to grave welfare system (even if this system was not functioning perfectly).

Another reason for Raisa Gorbacheva's unpopularity was that she appeared to be different from 'everyone' else. Her style of dress and manner was more Western than Russian. Due to this ill feeling toward the Gorbachev's it was necessary for Boris Yeltsin to assume a more traditional and less controversial identity. This would have the effect of distancing Yeltsin from any association with Gorbachev's regime (possibly viewed as being somewhat decadent and out of touch with the average citizen).

Yeltsin came up through the ranks of the Soviet regime. He held high ranking numerous posts in the system. Although Boris Yeltsin liked to consider, or at least been seen as a rebel, he was part of the old guard. As such, he was the Patriarch of his family. If he could not be seen to be in control of his own family, how could he ever control Russia? This may have been one of Mikhail Gorbachev's downfalls. He was seen as being led or controlled by Raisa Gorbacheva, this may have been taken as a sign of weakness.

President Yeltsin resigned from office on December 31, 1999. He promptly promoted his chosen successor, Vladimir Putin to the Russian public. The little known Putin was elected President in March 2000, in the background was the equally mysterious First Lady Lyudmila Putina. As time has progressed, she has assumed a greater role in public life. Although she is not as assertive as Raisa Gorbacheva, the role played is still greater than Naina Yeltsina's

public role.

President of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev stressed Raisa Maksimovna's unique situation in his memoirs. "Our society did not have a tradition of according the First Lady a special status [...]"²¹⁸ Gorbachev was also resolute on Raisa's independence; "[...] she was neither an extra nor simply the President's shadow."²¹⁹

Raisa Maksimovna was entangled in the political intrigues of the infamous 'Kremlin Wives' through her husband's rise in the political ranks. A specific 'pecking order' existed in this group, which was rigidly enforced.²²⁰ She did not like or enjoy this vicious environment and described it in the following manner "[...] the atmosphere, full of arrogance, suspicion, sycophancy, and tactlessness."²²¹

The first presidential lady in Russian (the Soviet Union) history was Raisa Maksimovna Gorbacheva. She was a highly educated, professional woman (lectured in sociology at university level), who dressed in a 'Western' style. Raisa Maksimovna gave the perception that she was very much her own person. Her character and style was a cause for admiration overseas, but engendered much hate and loathing in the Soviet Union.²²² In an article in 1999, Raisa Gorbacheva was described as being "feted in the West as a symbol of change in the Soviet Union as she brought First Lady-style glamour to the Kremlin."²²³

The evident style and glamour of Raisa Gorbacheva, which was possibly enhanced and exaggerated in the Soviet public's mind became a source of contention. Raisa Gorbacheva was different, this seemed to create ill feeling amongst sections of Soviet society who were in the grip of food and commodity shortages.

"Raisa Gorbacheva's elegant wardrobe was seen as a symbol of the privileges enjoyed by senior party members and their families. Her appearance conjured up images of special shops with luxury food items, the

²¹⁸ Gorbachev, M., *Memoirs*, New York, Doubleday, 1996, p. 447.

²¹⁹ Gorbachev, M., op. cit., p. 275.

²²⁰ Gorbachev, M., op. cit., p. 122.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² For further information read *Passage: Raisa Gorbachev*, 67, September 20, 1999. www.wired.com/news/topstories/0,1287,21841,00.html accessed April 29, 2002.

²²³ *World: Europe Raisa Gorbachev dies*, September 20, 1999.

polyclinics which gave party members better health services than those available to the general public, the special shops with Western clothes.”²²⁴

In *Memoirs*, Gorbachev’s autobiography, he tries to instil an image in the reader’s mind that separates the possibility of Raisa Maksimovna influencing Kremlin policy. “Of course I did not give lectures in philosophy for Raisa Maksimovna, just as she did not do my work.”²²⁵

However, an apparent contradiction appears later on in the book. Under Soviet law, spouses of the leader Soviet Union were not permitted to be employed in high government positions. Gorbachev did admit to acting on Raisa Maksimovna’s advice.

“[...] often resulted in my giving assignments to various agencies to work on specific problems. Her professional training and practical experience allowed her to give me more than just a list of facts and impressions; she could share her thoughts and sometimes suggest specific policies.”²²⁶

Raisa Maksimovna’s real or perceived interference in official politics and her departure from the ‘traditional’ role of a leader’s spouse drew criticism and even anger from some of the public. Her presence on high profile occasions, such as overseas trips attracted hostility. Gorbachev indicated that one critic even wrote to him with the terse message, “who does she think she is, a member of the Politburo?”²²⁷

Possibly as a counter to the increasing criticism, to satisfy a personal wish or to try and enhance the policy of ‘socialism with a human face,’ Raisa Maksimovna engaged in numerous humanitarian causes. For example, her voluntary work for the Soviet Cultural Foundation.²²⁸

Naina Yeltsina played a very different role in Russian politics. In Boris Yeltsin’s *Midnight*

www.wired.com/news/topstories/0,1287,21841,00.html accessed April 30, 2002.

²²⁴ Martin, Seamus, *Gorbachev – Hero or Holy Fool?*, The Irish Times, January 12, 2002.

www.ireland.com/2002/0112/310748760WK12GORBY1.html accessed April 30, 2002.

²²⁵ Gorbachev, M., op. cit., p. 274.

²²⁶ Gorbachev, M., op. cit., p. 275.

For further details on Raisa Gorbacheva’s alleged influence see;

www.wired.com/news/topstories/0,1287,21841,00.html.

²²⁷ Gorbachev, M., op. cit., p. 274.

²²⁸ Gorbachev, M., op. cit., pp. 275 – 276.

Diaries, she was portrayed as a very family oriented person. Numerous accounts throughout Yeltsin's autobiography try to reinforce this concept of traditional role-play.²²⁹

Boris Yeltsin highlighted some of Naina's qualities in his autobiography. Examples of supportive role-play included:

- Accompanying Boris Yeltsin to the ballot box in the 1996 presidential elections, at a crucial point, when Yeltsin's career was far from secure.
- Naina accompanied Yeltsin on his overseas tours.

Some of the supportive roles, which were enacted 'behind the scenes' and not readily seen by the public eye, were;

- Caring for Yeltsin during his bouts of illness.
- Trying to reason and talk sense into Yeltsin when his judgement appeared to be blurred by emotion.

However, Naina Yeltsina did not stay out of the headlines altogether. On March 1, 1997 an article by Reuter titled *Yeltsin's Wife Says She is Nostalgic for Soviet Times* was published. Naina Yeltsina was quoted from an interview she had with the Moscow radio station *Ekho Moskvy*.

"I do not rail against the past. Like everybody I feel nostalgia for the Soviet Union as for a large family when we were all together. [...] Now I find that my friends live abroad – in Belarus, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, and this of course is sad. [...] But I look forward with optimism. With time our economic space will be one and we will be together all the same."²³⁰

Reuter tried to put a 'spin' on her interview, which was not intended by Naina Yeltsina. On the surface it seems to be an attempt to create the idea of a resurgence of the Soviet Union. What the interview probably conveyed to the Moscow public was the traditional importance

²²⁹ Yeltsin, B., *Midnight Diaries*, New York, Public Affairs, 2000, pp. 320 – 322.

²³⁰ Reuter, *Yeltsin's Wife Says She is Nostalgic for Soviet Times*, March 1, 1997. Magic News Archives, March 1997,

of close family and friends. No political statement concerning the revival of the Soviet Union seems to have been made rather a loss of kinship.

Another article written by a Western agency seems to be less alarmist and more realistic concerning Naina Yeltsina's public style.

“Russian First Lady Naina Yeltsin, a far cry from the glamorous Raisa Gorbachev, is likely to stay firmly in the background when her husband and U.S. President Bill Clinton meet this week.

Naina -- a wallflower with a steady, motherly image – turns the clock back to the Soviet era when Kremlin wives were rarely seen or heard and she turns her back on publicity.

“I am only the President's wife. I shudder when people call me the First Lady,” she has been quoted as saying.

Her image is a stark contrast to the attractive and well-dressed Gorbachev, who impressed in the West but attracted criticism at home for being outspoken.

[...] Popular at home for her down-to-earth image, well-wishers sent Naina over a million roses for her 65th birthday last week, according to *Itar-Tass*, which appeared to be enjoying a little poetic licence.

[...] Naina has said that her main duty is to be a good wife, mother and grandmother and that she has no desire to enter politics.

Shortly before her husband's re-election last year, Naina unveiled her secret recipe for a chocolate cake in a Russian television interview designed at boosting Yeltsin's image as a family man.²³¹

<http://idc.cis.lead.org/idc/bmn/97-03-02.html> accessed May 1, 2002.

²³¹ *Yeltsin's Wife Set to Fade into Summit Background*, May 1, 2002,

www.europeaninternet.com/russia/special/summit/summit1.php3 accessed May 1, 2002.

This article places great emphasis on Naina Yeltsina's attempt to adhere to the traditional role of the leader's wife. Certain traits are repeated throughout the article. The most common attributes placed on Naina Yeltsina are:

- Keeps low public profile.
- Her appearance and standard of dress is kept at a modest point.
- A lot of importance placed on the traditional roles of being a good wife, mother and home maker.
- Is of a modest nature and humble.
- *ITAR-Tass*'s comment that she was popular with the Russian public because of her low key approach.

Working on the assumption that the media convey a message for a specific purpose, other than a merely serving an informative function, *ITAR-Tass*'s message would appear to be an attempt at constructing an identity for the female segment of the Russian media market. This last point could be construed as a model for others to emulate, because Naina Yeltsina's approach has earned her popularity unlike the 'Un-Russian' manner of Raisa Gorbacheva. Taking this line of argument further it is possible to reach the conclusion that, if women copy Naina Yeltsina's public persona they will be popular too.

Lyudmila Putina has been somewhat of an enigma, a shy person who had managed to keep a remarkably low public profile for some time. Some public exposure came with the publication of *First Person*.²³² It seemed as though she wished to remain out of the public spotlight and that Lyudmila Putina would adhere to the traditional role of the First Lady.

Possibly as a result of the increasingly assertive and public roles of the first ladies from other leading world states, this seclusion may be coming to an end. This would imply that if Russia copies the traits of leading world states, she might come to be accepted as a leading world state too. Another possible explanation is that Vladimir Putin wants to be seen in the Russian public as a family man, for this image to succeed he needs to have his family in a higher public profile. A matter of politicking and perhaps, leading to greater appeal to the female constituency.

²³² For more information concerning Lyudmila Putina, please see Putin, V., *First Person*, London, Hutchinson, 2000. Especially pages 149 - 161.

A series of biographies have been, or are about to be published on the presidential family. *First Person* was one of the earlier biographies, but other publications have been produced, producing a glossy and palatable account of the Putin family. Former military journalist Oleg Blotsky has undertaken a trilogy with the blessing of Vladimir Putin (Sergei Yastrzhembsky, the presidential aide acted as the go-between).²³³

Blotsky's volumes to date include, *Vladimir Putin: A Life History* (volume 1) and *Vladimir Putin: A Rise to Power* (volume 2). This series of biographies appears to be aimed at manufacturing a very serene, modest and sincere portrait of the Putins. During the course of producing the second volume, Blotsky has worked with Lyudmila Putina. The account in the *Interfax* article of this relationship gives an impression of the possible content of these works.

“Now the journalist is working on the second half of his book and keeps in touch with the President's wife, Lyudmila Putina. The journalist characterised Lyudmila Putina as ‘a very modest, decent and simple woman.’ The journalist said the Putins are a really happy family. The only topic they would not discuss was their daughters. ‘We want them (the children) to have a normal life,’ Lyudmila Putina said. [...] ‘I am a father myself, so I respect and understand the decision of the presidential family,’ the journalist said.”²³⁴

Certain traits and characteristics are emphasised in the above-mentioned article. Some of the ‘desired’ themes that emerge from the text are, the Putins are a ‘perfect’ nuclear family with strong family values and commitments. Lyudmila Putina is painted as a protective mother, but is a normal person just like ‘everyone else.’ The themes of modesty, decency and simplicity seem to be important characteristics for Lyudmila Putina's image-makers, as they frequently emerge in pro-Kremlin literature.

An article by *RIA Novosti* on January 6, 2002 has attempted to further create and reinforce the public persona for the First Lady. The full text of this article is reproduced below.

“The Russian President's wife Lyudmila Putin (nee Shkrebnova) was born

²³³ *Book About Life of Putin to be Released Soon*, Interfax, January 16, 2002. JRL #6027, January 17, 2002.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

in Kaliningrad on January 6, 1957, finished a secondary school in 1975 to undergo a course at a technical college, and graduated from the Leningrad State University in 1986 where she majored as a philology student of Spanish and French. Later, when her husband stayed in Germany on a business assignment, she joined him and learnt German on her own. Once getting a school leaving certificate, she practised temporarily such jobs as a post woman, then a turner apprentice at the Kaliningrad Torgmashworks with becoming a skilled turner in a short while, a nurse at the city hospital, the chief of an amateur drama studio for teenagers, an accompanist, a stewardess on internal routes in the Kaliningrad air company. Shortly after meeting her future husband Vladimir Putin in Leningrad, at the age of 22, moved to the city to enter a preparatory department of Leningrad State University and live at a student dormitory. She was a third year student when she married Vladimir Putin, an intelligence officer then. Lyudmila moved with her husband and daughter Masha to Dresden at the end of the '80's where their second daughter Katya was born. As the President's wife, Lyudmila Putin is engaged in cultural and welfare affairs, including active her work at the Centre for Support, Development and Dissemination of the Russian language in Russia and the former Soviet republics and other European countries. Friends and acquaintances describe Lyudmila Putin as a very modest, amiable woman alien to make-up and devoted to her household, a person of integrity. According to Lyudmila, the role of the First Lady meeting all the expectations is very difficult for her. "It is very hard to remain oneself in such circumstances and what can be more important?" she wonders. In her foreign trips, she is attracted by discovering a lot for herself and spreading knowledge about modern Russia. "When heads of state meet, they can see through each other better and learn more about their countries," said Lyudmila Putin."²³⁵

RIA Novosti, a government owned and operated news agency, certainly attempts to associate certain traits and characteristics with Lyudmila Putina. President Vladimir Putin has a highly mediated public image, one generated as much by media and PR specialists as through fact. In

Russia's new age of 'American-style' mediated presidential elections, the candidates family become part of the 'package' to be sold to the public. This differs greatly from the Soviet period when a leader's family was rarely seen or heard. Such a profound change in the conduct of the elections has necessitated breaking the seclusion of the First Family.

A series of traits and attributes are bestowed upon Lyudmila Putina in the above article, which both support and contradict the 'traditional' role of the First Lady. One of the points that *'Toward Lyudmila Putin's Birthday'* tries to emphasise is her intelligence and academic aptitude. Numerous accounts are rendered to the reader, referring to her school and tertiary accomplishments. The reason for highlighting such accomplishments is not entirely clear, but it may relate to her 'suitability' for her new public role as the First Lady. By 'suitability,' I refer to the possible association of intelligence and aptitude with a tertiary education. This trait is more reformist than traditional, but necessarily so in the current climate of highly televised politics and image-making.

Lyudmila Putina's family achievements are noted too. Her devotion to husband and children are part of the picture of a happy 'traditional' family. This was one of Vladimir Putin's political personas. The importance of this persona may be heightened during Russia's current period of rapid population decrease, which has made the topic an important political issue in the Russian Federation. Strong family values are a traditional personality trait. The predecessors of Lyudmila Putina, Raisa Gorbacheva and Naina Yeltsina had diametrically opposed family value images held by the public, as has been outlined earlier in this work.

The previous work experience of Lyudmila Putina, which is highlighted in the article goes some way toward reinforcing her personality image, as a caring and nurturing figure. Working as a flight stewardess and a nurse in a city hospital for instance. By mentioning that she was a turner at the Kaliningrad Torgmashworks, the story gives the impression that Lyudmila Putina can also relate to the 'average' person from the street and she can empathise with them. In this instance, Lyudmila Putina's image is an odd mixture of old and new ideals. Certain kinds or types of work tend to carry a stereotype, such as nurses or airhostesses may be seen as caring and nurturing. This point when taken to an extreme, the work could be regarded as 'motherly' type of occupation. Then, the reference to the factory work could be viewed as an opposite to

²³⁵Toward Lyudmila Putin's birthday, *RIA Novosti*, January 6, 2002. JRL# 6008, January 7, 2002.

this notion. Under the artistic form of Socialist Realism, 'ideal' female role models were created. These women were held to be the equal of men, able to handle the rigours of a labouring profession without tiring or complaint.

An admission by an American First Lady, to working in a factory would be unlikely because of possible negative consequences that could follow. They may be seen as 'common' or lower class. No such connotations appear to exist during the Soviet times in Russia, due to the above-mentioned role of Socialist Realism. Another kind of effect may occur, such as being able to identify and 'bond' with the masses through a shared experience.

Lyudmila Putina is portrayed as being a modest person, a far cry from the perceived excesses of Raisa Gorbacheva. Mention is made of Lyudmila Putina being "[...] very modest [...] alien to make-up [...]." This is an important way in demonstrating the traditional qualities of someone who is firmly 'planted' in reality and is capable of handling most situations, because they do not let power 'corrupt' them and begin to act or behave as if they were superior to the rest of society.

The final trait that I shall mention relates to the public role of Lyudmila Putina. Her public projects, which often carry a high media profile. In this respect, there are some similarities between Raisa Gorbacheva and Lyudmila Putina. Raisa Gorbacheva's projects often involved working in areas of humanitarianism and culture. Lyudmila Putina's work seems to be connected to some of the broader state goals, such as reviving pride in Russia and things that are Russian, resurrecting a form of patriotism.

An image is conveyed to the reader that Lyudmila Putina is actively engaged in not only protecting, but also in spreading Russian culture and heritage. "As the President's wife, Lyudmila Putin is engaged in cultural and welfare affairs, her active work at the Centre for Support, Development and Dissemination of the Russian Language in Russia and the former Soviet republics and other European countries. [...] In her foreign trips, she is attracted by discovering a lot for herself and spreading knowledge about modern Russia."²³⁶

²³⁶ Toward Lyudmila Putin's birthday, *RIA Novosti*, January 6, 2002. JRL# 6008, January 7, 2002.

Could this section of the article be aimed at restoring some measure ‘Russianess’ in the nation’s identity? Certainly, Russia is at a crossroads in the search for identity. The collapse of the Soviet Union also brought about a crisis in identity. Russia lost her place in the world, the republics declared independence and the Eastern Bloc nations kept Russia at a political distance. In addition to the loss of the inner and outer layers of the Soviet Empire, Russia also lost her status as one of the world’s superpower states. It is a lot for a society to absorb in such a short span of time.

One of the recent high media profile cases undertaken by Lyudmila Putina is the debate over Russian language. Two camps of thought exist in this debate; those who want to modernise the Russian language, through such acts as the inclusion of foreign words into mainstream Russian language. The other side calls for a purification of Russian language, by excluding such things as foreign words from the Russian vocabulary.

Andrei Ryabov, an analyst with the Moscow Carnegie Centre referred to the language debate as part of a strategy from President Vladimir Putin to strengthen the state and restore national pride.²³⁷ Lyudmila Putina entered into the language debate in mid-2001, when she attended the opening of an international Russian language contest (in which participants from 41 countries entered).²³⁸ She also opened a roundtable on ‘Language Policy in Modern Russia’ on April 16, 2002 at St. Petersburg State University.²³⁹

Izvestia, a newspaper owned by oligarch Vladimir Potanin, who still retains close links to the Kremlin gave a glowing account of Lyudmila Putina’s participation.

“The roundtable on Tuesday was a model affair in the literal sense of the word, with participants seeking to demonstrate the exemplary command of the great and mighty Russian speech. Some even succeeded.

Lyudmila Putina opened the meeting of philologists, politicians and teachers. The First Lady skilfully used the rhetoric stratagem of

²³⁷ Yablokova, Oksana, *Government Moves to Purify Russian*, Moscow Times, June 27, 2001.

JRL #5325, 27 June, 2001.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Kantor, Julia, *In the Beginning There Will be the Word: The Russian Language will Become the Basis for the National Idea*, *Izvestia*, 17 April, 2002. JRL #6193, 18 April, 2002.

unexpectedness. To start with, she made an elegiac confession to the effect that it was ‘an honour to be seated next to Lyudmila Verbitskaya (rector of St. Petersburg University)’ within the walls of one’s alma mater. She noted ‘it is a pleasure to see the state give so much attention to language policy.’ And then abruptly: ‘The reform of the Russian language conducted by the Academy of Sciences seems timeserving to me.’ She suggested that the roundtable participants give thought how to preserve and advance the Russian language in the modern world.”²⁴⁰

This article by a Kremlin ‘friendly’ media outlet only served to intensify the debate. One week later, this time in Moscow Lyudmila Putina appeared to actively and publicly intervene in the debate through public statements that were made.

In an article titled ‘*Putin’s Wife Puts Spokes in the Wheels of Language Row*,’ she is quoted as saying “it is too early to launch language reform.”²⁴¹ The article went on to describe the response of her interference by a newspaper.

“But the media has openly gloated over the intervention of the powerful President’s wife.

‘Putin has de facto annulled the reform,’ the *Vremya MN* daily boasted.”²⁴²

The above comments seem to hint that Lyudmila Putina has a powerful and influential position. In this instance the implied model of behaviour here would appear similar to that associated with Raisa Gorbacheva. Therefore this implied behaviour would not seem to agree with the overall image that is desired by image-makers in the Putin camp. A part of the argument of Lyudmila Putina that is congruent with Kremlin policy is the defence of ‘purity’ in the Russian language.

²⁴⁰ Kantor, Julia, *In the Beginning There Will be the Word: The Russian Language will Become the Basis for the National Idea*, *Izvestia*, 17 April, 2002. JRL #6193, 18 April, 2002.

²⁴¹ Nedbayeva, Olga, *Putin’s Wife Puts Spokes in the Wheels of Language Row*, Moscow, AFP, April 23, 2002. The last time language reform was carried out in Russia (Soviet Union) was in 1956.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

The Academy of Science commission, which has been tasked with investigating the prospect of language reform has countered Lyudmila Putina's criticism. Their main point of contention is the lack of academic or professional qualifications held by Lyudmila Putina to enter such a debate, with 'uninformed opinion.'

"It's good that the state should be interested in language, but Lyudmila Putina was last studying philology 30 years ago, and she studied Spanish – that is not enough to evaluate the work of experts, said Maria Korolyova, who explains language rules daily in Moscow Echo radio's broadcasts."²⁴³

Taking into consideration the mixed signals, which this article gives the reader, may hint at a wider problem. On January 13, 2001 Putin was quoted as saying, "any talk about unity of the Russian State apparently starts with the formulation of its tasks and goals. A single information space is a priority task. It would be worth noting that the word came first."²⁴⁴ Vladimir Putin's words seem to imply a lack of tolerance towards pluralism in the press. A 'single information space' would appear to hint at the beginnings of a single truth, instituted from the nation's highest political office. The lack of conformity in this article may imply that the government is not yet fully in control of all Russian media and the 'single information space' has not been realised yet.

On March 6, 2001 President Putin answered questions live on the internet for one hour. During this time, a St. Petersburg internet user put him on the defensive. The user described the absence of Lyudmila Putina from many public trips and appearances as 'patriarchal' and unlike the role of her predecessors Raisa Gorbacheva and Naina Yeltsina.

In reply to this accusation Putin said "this is just the way we operate, whether you like it or not. The people elected me, not my wife, [...] I can not issue instructions. Our relationship is such that if I started to do that the result would be quite the opposite. She carries herself in the way she feels necessary."²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Nedbayeva, Olga, *Putin's Wife Puts Spokes in the Wheels of Language Row*, Moscow, AFP, April 23, 2002. The last time language reform was carried out in Russia (Soviet Union) was in 1956.

²⁴⁴ *Putin Says Single Information Space Essential for Integrity of State*, ITAR-TASS, 13 January, 2001. JRL #5026, 15 January, 2001

²⁴⁵ Popeski, Ron, *Putin Goes Online, Defends Record*, Reuters, 6 March, 2001. JRL #5135, 7 March, 2001.

The question and reply give an indication of the sensitive nature of what is trying to be achieved through the use of image manipulation. On the one hand the President does not want to appear as being condescending to women. Such an image may cost him their support at the ballot box. But, this needs to be tempered with not being seen as too weak and liberal by conservative elements of the voting public.

On this occasion the criticism aimed at Putin seems to have been acted upon. A new presidential website has been opened on June 20, 2002, which has been given the address www.president.kremlin.ru.²⁴⁶ An attempt appears to have been initiated to combat Lyudmila Putina's perceived low level public profile during presidential business. This information has the appearance of being aimed at and offered to a domestic audience. In the photo album section, especially where the photos have been taken on overseas trips, Lyudmila Putina is featured often and beside her husband. If the action was taken deliberately, to counter the criticism, the result has the hallmarks of a compromise. A compromise between the desired image of Putin being a strong leader and Lyudmila Putina in a visible but supportive role.

The main focus of this work is looking at how the media have created the public persona of Lyudmila Putina, and suggesting a possible reason for the creation of this stereotype or model. Russian media still have some legacies of the Soviet era remaining in their style and manner. This is not surprising considering Russian journalists had been trained in a specific and regimented doctrine for some 75 years. Traditionally, the role of the media was not to solely inform society but to educate and motivate them toward a specific goal or purpose.

In order to get a better appreciation of Lyudmila Putina's role in the process of conveying an image for imitation it was necessary to briefly examine her predecessors to form a context. Raisa Maksimovna Gorbacheva and Naina Iosifovna Yeltsina were opposite ends of the scale personality wise and the role they played in society.

Raisa Gorbacheva was an educated, glamorous and assertive woman. She dared to step out of the shadow of her husband, Mikhail Gorbachev and consequently reaped the wrath of society. Some of Raisa Gorbacheva's 'mistakes' included her Western dress standard, frequently appearing in public (in the Russian media) and being labelled as interfering in

²⁴⁶ Naumenko, Larisa, *Putin Gets a Website with Bells and Whistles*, Moscow Times 21 June, 2002. JRL #6319, 21 June, 2002.

politics through influencing national policy. The model that was presented by Raisa Gorbacheva was very radical at the time, breaking many of the longstanding protocols and traditions of the era. Whether a case of ‘tall poppy syndrome’ or resentment concerning the decay of the Soviet Union’s power, prestige and society’s standard of living or maybe some other reason, Raisa Gorbacheva was not popular at all in the Soviet Union.

The next First Lady was Naina Iosifovna Yeltsina, who proved to take an opposite approach to that of Raisa Gorbacheva. She kept a usually low public profile, apart from being seen in the supportive role of Boris Yeltsin. Naina Iosifovna’s clothes were kept to a neat but drab standard and if she gave an opinion it did not contradict the President’s. Over the years that Boris Yeltsin was President (1991 – 1999) she cultivated a very motherly, modest, low key and traditional persona. If *Itar-Tass*’s assertions are correct, this approach seems to have worked as she seemed popular with the Russian public.

Lyudmila Putina seems to have taken a persona that is a hybrid of the two previous approaches taken by Raisa Gorbacheva and Naina Yeltsina. This hybrid may be a reflection of the complexities of politics. Russia wants to be admitted to the world community via membership of various international organisations, such as G7, World Trade Organisation, Council of Europe, United Nations etc. For this goal to be successfully fulfilled and Russia could once more play a leading role in world affairs, a desirable image needs to be conveyed to the world community. President Putin has stated that this ‘desired’ image will be based on Russia’s ‘Europeaness.’

“Russia is a diverse country, but we are part of Western European culture. No matter where our people live in the Far East or in the South, we are Europeans.”²⁴⁷

Since the 1996 presidential elections, politics in the Russian Federation has become increasingly mediated and Americanised. As with presidential politics in the United States, the presidential candidate is not a stand-alone entity. The candidate’s entire family can be submitted to public scrutiny through the media.

²⁴⁷ Putin, V., op. cit., p. 169.

Some of Lyudmila Putina's profiles are somewhat Western in nature, such as her charity and cultural work. This particular example is not necessarily based on a European example, but would have a closer association with one of the roles of an American First Lady.

A counter-force of the Western brand of image is the domestic population. 'Too much' Western image may turn Russian voters from supporting President Putin in the next elections, as may have been the case with the Gorbachevs. Therefore a balance needs to be struck during the course of identity construction. To allay public concerns or fears of too much foreign influence in their leadership some distinctly 'Russian' traits or characteristics needed to be included in Lyudmila Putin's profile.

Her Russian profiles have included modesty, motherly nature, does not wear make-up, absence from official tours and duties and the association with Russian 'institutions,' such as language and the Russian Orthodox Church. These profiles are designed to exclude any possible association with the perceived excesses of the first First Lady. The Kremlin's PR managers have brought desirable and traditional qualities of the First Lady together in one person.

The use of imaging appears to be in support of the Kremlin's domestic objectives. One of the main goals seems to be the resurrection of a strong and centralised state. But, in order to achieve this goal more readily the public may require motivating to join the state in attaining these ends. A method to bring about public consensus is by using the media to motivate and bring about 'desired' modes of behaviour.

Creating personal profiles for First Ladies is by no means a strictly Russian phenomenon. The profiles that are offered to the public can be regarded as an indication of where on the political spectrum the presidential candidate is located. For instance, U. S. President George W. Bush has a traditional image. Laura Bush, the First Lady keeps a usually low profile with the main thrust of her public profile being geared at producing a homely and motherly image.

On the other hand, Cherie Blair, British Prime Minister Tony Blair's spouse is a lawyer by trade and maintains her own life. The British Labour Party, in this case have manufactured either by design or default a liberal image of an independent working woman.

One of the conditions, which must occur in order to facilitate the successful transmission of the sender's desired image to the public is consistency of image. This is more likely to occur when complete consensus is reached in media outlets. If alternative or competing messages are disseminated through media channels, this will affect how the receiver interprets the message. A government friendly message may lose some credibility or be treated with suspicion if contradictory information is readily available. Indications seem to be that the Kremlin does not exercise complete control over all Russian media outlets. This is evident in some mild measure of pluralism that still exists in story and news content in the Russian media.

Another problem faced by the Kremlin is the existence of pluralism in society. The break-up of the Soviet Union and the dismantling of the Marxist-Leninist hegemony has allowed some measure of political pluralism to begin to develop. Ultimately, this means that the voting public cannot be treated as an entirely homogenous group. Therefore any message intended to appeal to the public must be delivered in a manner that caters to a heterogeneous group. A message of this nature is more difficult to create and maintain due to lack of uniformity, bringing with it numerous pitfalls for the sender in achieving their desired end goal.

The above mentioned problem became evident during President Putin's internet question answering session. He had his image built on a patriarchal model, which was assumed to be catering to the nation's desire to relive the past. The question from St. Petersburg proves that not everyone approves of a 'strong man' image that has been portrayed.

Lastly, a possible obstacle to effective reception of the message, as per the sender's goals is the history of the Russian media in the role of public agitator and motivator. It would be naive to think that the entire public would be completely unaware of media manipulation, given that the Soviet people were subjected to propaganda for some 75 years. Public wariness of media manipulation, from at least some sections of society may prevent the 'correct' interpretation of the message. This would have the effect of creating an alternative or counter-intended message.

2.1.2 Oligarchy and Putin

Russia's economic elite seemed to have materialised from nowhere and have at times, blatantly exercised considerable influence on politics. The economic elite, so-called oligarchs, epitomise the merging of business and political power. Their strength and influence became a source of contention for not only the public, but also the political elite. So much so, that the topic of distancing the oligarchs from political power became an issue in the 2000 presidential elections. Yet, a little over one decade ago, officially there was no such group existing in society. From where do the oligarchs originate?

Russian sociologist and writer, Yuri Burtin was less than flattering of the nature of contemporary politics. He has described the new Russian political elite as 'nomenklatura democracy,' where "democracy exists only for the members of the nomenklatura." Burtin added, that Russia's new economic system is 'nomenklatura capitalism.'²⁴⁸

The oligarchs were able to gain power because of access to economic resources, which generated wealth and economic power. They are drawn from the old Soviet economic nomenklatura. This placed them in an ideal position in the old hierarchy. In addition to this, the oligarchs had the ability and intention to utilise this power for further personal gain.

On July 8, 2000 Putin addressed both houses of parliament in his first state of the nation address. A portion of his speech contained his ideas on the defense of the state, and the building of a strong central state. In his address, Putin said "the only real choice for Russia is to be a strong country, strong and sure of itself."²⁴⁹

One of the methods that Putin intends to use to achieve a strong central state, is the rule of law, the so-called 'dictatorship of law.' President Putin believes that a strong set of laws will clarify what is expected of the country's citizens, to bring order to a chaotic Russia. "We need to get all the authorities, all citizens to be aware of their responsibilities before the country."²⁵⁰ A message that echoed the famous inauguration speech of President Kennedy, "ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

²⁴⁸ Ra 'anan, U. & Martin, K., op. cit., p. 9.

²⁴⁹ Reuters, *Highlights of Putin's State of the Nation Address*, 8 July, 2000. JRL # number 4391, July 9, 2000.

²⁵⁰ Reuters, *Highlights of Putin's State of the Nation Address*, 8 July, 2000. JRL # number 4391, July 9, 2000.

In Russia's chaotic present, a proposed cure, that of patriotism was hinted by Putin. There is some concern that what makes Russia unique and different is being lost. If these lost Russian traditions and culture are revived, a renaissance of the Russian state will soon follow. "The unity of Russia is strengthened by the patriotic nature of our people, by our cultural traditions, memories [...]." ²⁵¹ An emphasis was placed on patriotism and unity during the speech, on the premise that a strong central state can only exist if people feel strongly for their motherland and if the people are unified in their purpose.

One of Putin's concerns is the nature of the relationship between Moscow and the regions. The governors of the provinces have been given a free reign since the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Governors of the eastern spans of Russia, and the more remote areas, rule these regions as their own (independent of Moscow's authority). Events such as the scramble to grab Russia's wealth in the privatisation auctions, a rising rate of crime and a harsh life for the ordinary citizen have created a desire for the re-emergence of a strong central state. In the electioneering prior to the March presidential elections, Putin offered an appeal by promising a dictatorship of law. Implying that this would bring stability back into peoples lives. For this to work, the power of the regional governors needs to be broken.

Power is to an extent diffused, some of the Kremlin's wishes are not carried out, especially if they do not further the local governor's ambitions. Some of the regions are ruled by the governors as states within a state. "The regions should not compete for power [...]. We have created little islands of power, but there are no bridges to connect them." ²⁵²

The recent attacks by the government on *Media-Most* have another possible meaning, other than the suppression of a free press. As outlined earlier the media was largely controlled by the oligarchs. Putin made the pledge to end the oligarchs grip on Russian politics. In order to send a message to the oligarchs, he needed to make an example of a media group.

Media-Most has the reputation for being one of the most independent and outspoken media organisations in Russia (when they refused to follow the Kremlin's wishes on what is allowed to be shown in the coverage of the Chechen war). If the government had succeeded in bringing *Media-Most* to its knees, then other media groups, which were less independently

²⁵¹Reuters, *Highlights of Putin's State of the Nation Address*, 8 July, 2000. JRL # number 4391, July 9, 2000.

²⁵²Ibid.

minded would soon bow to their pressure and the oligarchs would lose their voice. This test case could become a blueprint for tackling the other media organisations under the control of other oligarchs.

The detention of Vladimir Gusinsky, *Media-Most's* head, and the attacks on *Media-Most* did not have the desired effect. Instead of crushing resistance to the Kremlin will, the actions of the Kremlin united the previously divided and feuding oligarch community. In an unprecedented move the oligarchs displayed open solidarity and supported Gusinsky. On 14 June, 2000, seventeen of Russia's most prominent business leaders published an open letter to the prosecutor general, Vladimir Ustinov. In the letter, the oligarchs labeled Gusinsky's arrest as a political vendetta and a threat to democracy in Russia.²⁵³

Media-Most and the government have been involved in a constantly changing relationship. At present relations between them are strained. The involvement of *Media-Most* in exposing 'truths' in Chechnya, corruption in government circles and supporting candidates other than Putin in the presidential elections has had the two sides feuding. A series of misfortunes have been plaguing Gusinsky's organisation recently.

The media group have had state owned banks calling in their loans. Another incident was a raid on the offices of *Media-Most* in Moscow. And on a more personal note, an official from the Kremlin publicly referred to Gusinsky as "a type of bacteria."²⁵⁴

Prior to the Kremlin's open display of hostility toward *Media-Most* a meeting took place preceding the upcoming elections of December 1999 and March 2000 between Vladimir Gusinsky and the Kremlin's Chief of Staff, Alexander Voloshin. Gusinsky claimed that Voloshin tried to persuade him to co-operate with the Kremlin during the presidential elections. According to Gusinsky the following conversation took place, "Voloshin said, as if he were joking, let's pay you US\$100 million so that you won't be in our way while the election is on. You could go on a vacation."²⁵⁵ When Gusinsky refused Voloshin's offer, he was told that it meant war between the Kremlin and *Media-Most*.

²⁵³Russia's 'Oligarchs' Rally Behind Fallen Comrade, EJC News Media Digest, 15 June, 2000. www.ft.com/ft/gx.cgi/ftc?pagename=View&c=Articles&cid=FT35TBB5H9C&live=true&, 16 June, 2000.

²⁵⁴Editorial, Moscow Times, *Raid Part of a Disturbing New Pattern*, May 17, 2000.

The vicious and humiliating language used resembles the Soviet press language, when newspapers used to initiate smear campaigns against Western politicians, etc., seeing them as enemies from the outside. This was due to the tensions of the Cold War period. This example appears to be born from this Soviet legacy, but is applied to what the State sees as enemies from within.

On the morning of Thursday May 12, 2000, offices of the *Media-Most* group around Moscow were simultaneously raided by the FSB, tax police and the general prosecutor. The original purpose of the raid was given as a tax raid, this was later changed. The FSB gave the explanation, that they were looking for eavesdropping devices.²⁵⁶

Mikhail Berger, *Segodnya*'s chief editor proposed two possible explanations for the raid. Firstly, as a direct response to the recent reports on corruption in Russia's power structures. The second reason given, is that this raid is merely the start of a broader clampdown on the freedom of the press.²⁵⁷

During the Presidential campaign, *Media-Most* gave their support to Grigory Yavlinsky. Thus giving Yavlinsky a platform to deliver verbal attacks on Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin.²⁵⁸ Due to the nature of the allocation of airtime on state controlled media at the time (March 1999), these attacks would have been very difficult to attempt without this help.

The government and the various agencies involved in the operation have offered their explanations following the consequences of the raid.

Vladimir Putin offered a defence through the PPS on May 12, he reiterated his commitment to freedom of speech and went on "this attitude does not depend on the position taken by this or that publication or channel, nor to what degree that position agrees with that of the authorities [...] all are equal before the law, no matter what business they are in." The statement argued that media companies cannot try to gain immunity from criminal investigations. "No attempt at blackmail in relation to law enforcement is permissible, just as limits on freedoms of speech and of the mass media are not permissible."²⁵⁹

While Putin tried to distance himself from acting in a heavy-handed manner against a free press, the Press Minister Mikhail Lesin gave a different explanation. Lesin tried to pin the blame of the raid on the media. His statement revealed a certain zeal, with regard to the idea

²⁵⁵Dixon, R., *Pushing the Boundaries of a Free Press*, Los Angeles Times, June 1, 2000.

²⁵⁶Editorial, Moscow Times, *Raid Part of a Disturbing New Pattern*, op. cit.

²⁵⁷*Putin's Men Raid Media Group*, EJC Media News Digest, 12 May 2000.

www.news.bbc.co.uk/low/english/world/europe/newsid_744000/744620.stm, 13 May, 2000.

²⁵⁸Ibid.

²⁵⁹Bohlen, C., *Russian President Defends Raid on Offices of Media Company*, New York Times, 12 May, 2000. www.nytimes.com/library/world/europe/051300russia-media.html, 16 May, 2000.

that the state must be protected at all costs against those who want to destroy it. “The defense of the state from the free mass media is a pressing problem at present.”²⁶⁰

In the post-raid analysis, several theories have been offered to explain why the *Media-Most* offices were targeted by the government. This incident has attracted the attention of human rights advocate groups, such as *The Gorbachev Foundation*, *Institute of Humane Communication*, *Russian Union of Journalists* and the *Glasnost Defence Foundation*. Each offering an interpretation of events. These groups believe that the raid was a carefully orchestrated attempt by the government to curtail the freedom of the press.

An article in the *Christian Science Monitor* by Fred Weir, puts the notion forward that this raid is merely the latest event in the sometimes very public feuds among the oligarchs. A struggle between the oligarchs on the ‘inner circle’ of the government (such as Boris Berezovsky) and those that are vying for influence.²⁶¹

Many, mostly unsupported accusations are aired publicly. The feud between the two media magnates, Berezovsky and Gusinsky is particularly vicious. Gusinsky has been the target of anti-Semitic coverage on *ORT*, a television channel controlled by Berezovsky (both Berezovsky and Gusinsky are Jewish).²⁶² An editorial in the *Moscow Times* (May 17, 2000) was more specific on one of these allegations of *ORT* against *NTV* and Gusinsky, *ORT* had apparently insinuated that *NTV* was a base for Israeli spies.²⁶³

Alexei Simonov, chairman of the *Glasnost Defence Foundation* (GDF), did not view the raid as a random act. “This assault did not come out of thin air, it is part of a deliberate pattern of actions. There have been many warnings that the new President intends to force the press to follow his line, and use all means to punish those who refuse.”²⁶⁴

The *Russian Union of Journalists* (RUJ) was equally scathing of the raid, viewing it as an attack on the freedom of the press and as an anti-constitutional act. In a statement released by RUJ several issues were raised, “the armed raid was an anti-constitutional, arbitrary act of

²⁶⁰Editorial, *Moscow Times*, *Raid Part of a Disturbing New Pattern*, op. cit.

²⁶¹Weir, F., *A Kremlin Warning to Media?* *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 May, 2000.

²⁶²Karush, S., *2000 Demonstrate for Free Speech*, *The Moscow Times*, 18 May, 2000. www.moscowtimes.ru/18-May-2000/stories/story8.html, 18 May, 2000.

²⁶³Editorial, *Raid Part of a Disturbing New Pattern*, *Moscow Times*, op. cit.

²⁶⁴Weir, F., *A Kremlin Warning to Media?* *Christian Science Monitor*, 15 May, 2000.

government conducted with the goal of intimidating the independent mass media. This is a real attempt to introduce censorship by (men in) ski masks.”²⁶⁵

Iosif Dzyaloshinsky’s view, who is the President of the *Independent Institute of Communicativists*, is that “whatever Putin’s programs for the economy and politics, we are absolutely sure he does not intend to tolerate dissent in society.”²⁶⁶

Some analysts feel that there has been a shift in power, and as a result of this shift, it has enabled an attack on the freedom of the press. The *Gorbachev Foundation’s* conclusion, is that “the security forces have become much more influential in Russia under Putin, and they are behind these new pressures on the press. The free press stands in their way, and *Most* is the premier symbol of independent media in Russia.”²⁶⁷

In view of the above statement, it does not come as a surprise, that approximately one week before the raid on the *Most* offices, the Moscow newspaper *Kommersant*, published what was reputed to be a Kremlin ‘working paper.’ This paper called for an expansion of the security forces duties, to include such roles as intervening against opposition media and political groups. According to what was published in *Kommersant*, the document proposed that “the President needs a structure in his administration that cannot only forecast the political situation but also clearly control the political and social processes in Russia.”²⁶⁸

With the raid following this document’s publication, there was some skepticism about the government’s true intentions. And the reasons offered by the government were treated with little serious regard. The response of the press community in Moscow was to organise an *Obshchaya Gazeta* (Joint Newspaper). This paper is only produced when the press community feels that there is a threat to the freedom of the press. Some 62 newspapers and media organisations helped to produce the issue on May 17, 2000 (only 30 sponsors helped with the edition which protested against Andrei Babitsky’s treatment by the government).²⁶⁹ The media organisations owned by Boris Berezovsky were noted for their lack of support in the joint edition.²⁷⁰ Which highlights the highly political nature of the newspaper business and the

²⁶⁵Weir, F., *A Kremlin Warning to Media?* Christian Science Monitor, 15 May, 2000.

²⁶⁶Ibid.

²⁶⁷Weir, F., *A Kremlin Warning to Media?* Christian Science Monitor, 15 May, 2000.

²⁶⁸Ibid.

²⁶⁹www.moscowtimes.ru/18-May-2000/stories/story8.html, op. cit.

²⁷⁰Ibid.

oligarchs.

An uneasy truce between the government and *NTV* was reached on the 28th of May. *Kukly* (“Puppets”), a political satire show using puppets, was dropped by *NTV*.²⁷¹ The show was a source of irritation for Putin, who did not like the way he was portrayed on the program. Yevgeny Kiselyov of *NTV* said that

“*NTV* and *Media-Most* executives received conditions, the respect of which would mean the authorities would leave us in peace. Foremost, that Putin should no longer be the hero of the *Kukly* program. In order not to fan the flames, if someone high up is so worried about a rubber puppet of the President, before it was Yeltsin and now Putin, we have decided to try an experiment. We will try one program without the Putin puppet.”²⁷²

Kukly has had a long and troubled history with attempted political interference. The program has been a source of discontent for the Russian elite due to their irreverent portrayal. In 1995 the prosecutor general pursued a criminal investigation against *Kukly* for “insulting” President Yeltsin. On this occasion political support favoured the program, resulting in the prosecutor’s dismissal.²⁷³

A renewed effort was waged against *Kukly* by supporters of Putin. They claimed that the President Putin had been “insulted” and called for the filing of criminal charges. Senior police officials added a warning to *NTV*, that if *Kukly* did not tone down the content *NTV* could face “unpleasantness.”²⁷⁴

Andrei Ryabov, a political analyst at the Moscow Carnegie Centre summed up why he thought the government behaved in this way toward *Kukly*:

²⁷¹In the early 1990’s Russian TV used the British media as a model, and this satirical programme became a hallmark of the Russian media policy in the 1990’s, reflecting the Yeltsin government’s commitment to pluralisation of opinion and freedom of speech. *Kukly* is an imitation of the British satirical show “*Splitting Image*.”

²⁷²*Russian TV Drops Satirical Putin Puppet in Kremlin Truce*, Agence France Presse, 29 May, 2000. www.russiatoday.com/press.php3?id=163796, 30 May, 2000.

²⁷³York, G., *Piqued Putin Cancels Satirical TV Show*, *The Globe and Mail*, May 30, 2000. JRL #4334, 31 May, 2000.

²⁷⁴*Ibid.*

“The Kremlin does not want to destroy *NTV*, it only wants to make it submit to the Kremlin’s official line. They were very dissatisfied with *Kukly*’s interpretation of Putin’s political activities. This show is more damaging to Putin’s reputation than any criticism from the communists or other politicians. [...] (the Press Ministry) is trying to restrict and correct the media. It is a real threat to the free press in Russia.”²⁷⁵

The Kremlin’s actions in trying to force *NTV* to submit to their will seems to be heavy handed and unnecessary. *Kukly* was a very popular program, the popularity arising from an irreverent treatment of Russia’s leading political and business figures. This popularity has come into conflict with the government’s intention to control the flow of information. Should they succeed in their efforts against *Kukly*, the Kremlin will have brought to heel a long-lived source of irritation. In addition, their success will also display the power at the government’s disposal by subduing a high profile, private independent media organisation. This would have the effect of ‘frightening’ other would-be independent media groups into complying with future government demands. The recent series of ‘attacks’ on *NTV* are part of a bigger picture of subduing the remnants of a free Russian press.

In an interview at *Radio Mayak*, one week from the election, Putin said that the oligarchs influence was largely due to their “merging of power with capital.” Putin went on to issue the threat that “such a class will cease to exist. [...] Unless we ensure equal conditions for all, we won’t be able to pull the country out of its current state.”²⁷⁶ Putin’s comment has brought him into conflict with the oligarchs. One of the more outspoken oligarchs is Boris Berezovsky.

In May 2000 Berezovsky was openly boasting about his prowess as the power broker of Russian politics. He talked of his role in being able to persuade President Yeltsin to resign, and in promoting the next President to office, Vladimir Putin. By late July 2000, however with the political fortunes seemingly turning against him, Berezovsky has been taking a different approach. He has begun to distance himself from the government and into the position of opposition. When Berezovsky was in the process of resigning from parliament he parted with a message, “I do not want to take part in the destruction of Russia and the

²⁷⁵York, G., *Piqued Putin Cancels Satirical TV Show*, The Globe and Mail, May 30, 2000. JRL #4334, 31 May, 2000.

²⁷⁶*Oligarchs Will Become Extinct, Putin Vows*, Agence France Presse, 19 March, 2000. www.russiatoday.com/news.php3?id=143908&text, 20 March, 2000.

creation of an authoritarian regime. There is a deliberate campaign being unleashed, aimed at destroying big business in Russia. All power is being concentrated in the President's hands."²⁷⁷

But what are Boris Berezovsky's exact motives for this sudden change in political affiliation? Are there any ulterior motives? A possible reason for Berezovsky's actions are related to recent events of the political past.

Boris Berezovsky has tried to exert his influence on the newly elected President Putin very quickly. It was a blatant attempt by a political actor to influence his audience (President Vladimir Putin) with subjective political reality. In late March 2000, a paper owned by Berezovsky printed an article which reminded Putin of who was responsible for getting him into the presidential office, and the possible consequences if he forgot.

Putin's planned reforms have the potential to seriously disrupt the way that Berezovsky will be able to conduct his business deals in the future. The plans to strengthen the central government at the expense of the regional governors means that separate business deals with the regions may not be allowed. And it is in the regions where the vast wealth of natural resources are located, at present in the control of the governors.

Recently, Putin has also pledged to crackdown on the oligarchs, to distance them all from power. Berezovsky's proximity to power has placed him as a target of this crackdown. Another of Putin's election promises was to tackle the problem of corruption. When the government was headed by Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov, a charge of embezzlement and money-laundering was laid against Berezovsky in 1999. When Yeltsin removed Primakov as Prime Minister, Berezovsky's arrest warrant was lifted.²⁷⁸ Kasper was quoted as saying "Berezovsky clearly understands that his number is coming up. That is why he has been moving for the past month into opposition to Putin. When the police come for him, he wants to be able to say it is about political repression, not a criminal investigation."²⁷⁹

²⁷⁷Fred Weir, *Russian Moguls Cry Uncle*, Christian Science Monitor, 25 July, 2000. JRL #4421, 25 July, 2000.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹Fred Weir, *Russian Moguls Cry Uncle*, Christian Science Monitor, 25 July, 2000. JRL #4421, 25 July, 2000.

During April and May 2000, Berezovsky's business 'transactions' were subjected to intense scrutiny by the Prosecutor General's Office. One of the investigators assigned to the *Aeroflot* case, Nikolai Volkov was prepared by early April 2000 to officially lay charges against the oligarch. Berezovsky was accused of fraud and money-laundering, an estimated US\$400 million made by *Aeroflot* was transferred to two of his financial companies (*Andawa* and *Forus*) in Switzerland. An additional charge of creating a criminal association is under consideration.²⁸⁰

Berezovsky does not intend to be passive in his resistance to the likely scenario of his business being curtailed. He has made two announcements, firstly that he is stepping down as a deputy in the State Duma (supposedly as a mark of protest because Putin's style of leadership). The second announcement was that he is consolidating his media assets into a single company, to protect his political interests.²⁸¹ Through the newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, Berezovsky made it quite clear that he intended to use his media empire as a political weapon, that would enable it to serve as an "important political lever" in challenging President Putin.²⁸²

Initiating an information war with Putin's administration, Berezovsky continues to try and influence public opinion and the government through his media assets. In May 2000, Berezovsky had published an open letter which criticised Putin's plans to limit regional power. Andrei Ryabov, a political analyst at the Moscow Carnegie Centre, said that "the letter is a pretext to form a new opposition of regional leaders and oligarchs."²⁸³

Yevgenia Albats, an independent journalist based in Moscow, went on to describe an article published in another paper owned by an oligarch that she refers to as BAB (Boris Abramovich Berezovsky). The article alleged, in a half-hearted manner that election fraud had taken place. This article refuted previous election claims;

"According to information from unofficial sources, acting President Vladimir Putin won around 42% of the vote on March 26, not the 44.8% the

²⁸⁰*Gusinsky Will Laugh Until Berezovsky Cries*, 22 May, 2000. www.smi.ru, 23 May, 2000.

²⁸¹*Russian Tycoon Announces Media Plan*, EJC Media News Digest, 19 July, 2000. www.newsday.com/ap/international/ap978.htm, 20 July, 2000.

²⁸²*Ibid.*

²⁸³Feifer, G., *Berezovsky's Letter Dominates*, The Moscow Times, June 1, 2000. JRL #4339, 1 June, 2000.

Communists say that he got, and certainly not the 52.5%, as the Central Election Commission has stated. Putin received 10.5% of his votes as the result of outright election fraud.’²⁸⁴

Berezovsky claimed that he was worried about Russia’s future, he did not want to see the end of democracy. *Izvestia* took a more cynical approach as to possible motives for writing this letter. The newspaper claims Berezovsky views himself as a kind of father figure to Putin (because of his help at the elections), the letter was a public attempt to control Putin, who was making decisions which were independent of ‘The Family.’²⁸⁵

The letter contained eight suggestions, which Berezovsky wanted put to a public referendum. These suggestions would ultimately enhance the regions independence. Berezovsky’s proposals would also give him more opportunity to interfere with regional politics. The sixth suggestion would benefit Berezovsky, because Prosecutor General Ustinov is an associate of Berezovsky’s.

- Ask President Putin to cancel the decree which establishes the seven federal districts.
- Use direct popular elections to create the Federation Council.
- To pass legislation that the dismissal of elected regional and local leaders will only be carried out by the will of voters.
- Delineate and unify respective rights and obligations of the federal centre and the regions in a single, standardised federative agreement.
- Retain present system of creating organs of local government, while strengthening legislation which gives their independence from regional leaders and accountability to voters.
- Establish local prosecutor’s offices, which are directly accountable to the Prosecutor General’s Office, for overseeing compliance to the constitution.
- To introduce a common legislation which would establish the criminal liability of regional executive officials for specific violations of the federal law.
- To have the law dismissing or appointing the regional heads of regional offices of federal

²⁸⁴ Albats, Y., *Power play: Oligarch’s Message Clear to Careful Readers*, Moscow Times, April 6, 2000.

²⁸⁵ Feifer, G., *Berezovsky’s Letter Dominates*, The Moscow Times, June 1, 2000. JRL #4339, 1 June, 2000.

agencies canceled. This should be agreed to by the regional leaders.²⁸⁶

Putin's intended reforms have been labeled as a mistake and 'Soviet.' Berezovsky told Reuters on June 2, 2000, "what Putin is suggesting is destroying the principle of the vertical division of power. It is the centralisation of vertical power [...] in other words, the Soviet system of government. [...] but this is a mistake."²⁸⁷

The destruction of the vertical division of power which Berezovsky refers to is the power relationship between the regions and Moscow. Putin has announced that he wants to reform the provinces, and part of this reform entails amalgamating Russia's 89 provinces into seven administrative regions. The proposed reforms would also give Putin the power to sack the governors and place administrators of his choice in place of the governors.

Putin's threatened 'dictatorship of law' has the potential to ruin Berezovsky. Promises of keeping the oligarchs from power and to investigate alleged acts of corruption have proved popular with the Russian public. In a *Reuters* conducted poll, Putin received a 73% rate of approval for his conduct in July 2000.²⁸⁸ Berezovsky relies on his contacts within the inner circle of power in order to conduct his business. If the Kremlin is successful in its pursuit of the oligarchs, with Berezovsky shutout of the inner circle and his past business deals are used against him, then he will be finished. So far, Berezovsky's reaction to the pressure exerted on him and the other oligarchs, seems to be out of the desire for the self-preservation of his business interests and himself. In the nine years since the fall of communism, during the rule of President Yeltsin, Berezovsky has amassed a fortune and he has a lot to lose if Putin is successful.

2.2 Access and Method of Communication: Yeltsin and Luzhkov.

Both Boris Yeltsin and Yuri Luzhkov are high-profile political actors in the Russian Federation. Yeltsin held power from 1991 until 1999, during which time he appeared regularly on the mass media mediums. He initially began his public image as a vibrant man of

²⁸⁶ Feifer, G., *Berezovsky's Letter Dominates*, The Moscow Times, June 1, 2000. JRL #4339, 1 June, 2000.

²⁸⁷ Reuters, *Russian Businessman Dubs Putin's New Plan "Soviet,"* 2 June, 2000. www.russiatoday.com/news.php3?id=165524, 3 June, 2000.

²⁸⁸ *Putin's Popularity Rises Again*, RFE/RL Newline, 2 August, 2000. www.rferl.org/newline/1-rus.html, 3 August, 2000.

the people, who was capable of both empathy with and compassion for ‘his’ people. He held the advantage of political incumbency and therefore access to all of the state owned media. But ultimately his positive PR image attempts foundered and in the end failed. Why did this occur?

Yuri Luzhkov, the current Mayor of Moscow has long held the ambition of being elected to the Russian presidency. Consequently he retained close links with Yeltsin to increase the chances of being named as Yeltsin’s successor. At the same time he built up a media base via the Moscow City Council, which acquired media assets that have been effectively controlled by Luzhkov. After Yeltsin nominated Putin as his successor, Luzhkov aligned himself with Primakov. The results proved to be potentially dangerous for Moscow’s Mayor. What image does Luzhkov portray to the Russian public and was his message effective?

2.2.1 President Boris Yeltsin – Russia’s Past President.

Boris Yeltsin was the first Russian president of the First Russian Republic. Although he was the country’s first democratically elected leader, his roots began in the Communist Party hierarchy. He had his own distinct style of governance, gaining initial popularity by his association as one of the people. The popular appeal to the masses was an initial success, however as Russia lurched through a series of recessions and economic difficulty he needed to devise an alternative motive to regain public appeal.

The roots of the contemporary Russian Presidency lies in Gorbachev’s creation of the Soviet Presidency in 1990.²⁸⁹ To launch his political career, Yeltsin needed to destroy another’s, that of Mikhail Gorbachev. To bring this plan to eventual fruition he established the newsagency *RIA-Novosti* to wage an information war.²⁹⁰ Other Soviet relics that were inherited by the First Russian Republic (1991 - 1993) included the Supreme Soviet and the Congress of People’s Deputies. It was intended that the two forces (the president and the executive) would balance each other and operate as a dyarchy (*dvovlastie*).²⁹¹ Checks and balances in this system

²⁸⁹ Klyamkin, I. & Shevtsova, L., “The Tactical Origins of Russia’s New Political Institutions” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 14 – 17, p. 14.

For an in-depth study of modern Russian politics see McFaul, M., *Russia’s Unfinished Revolution: Political Change from Gorbachev to Putin*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001.

²⁹⁰ Brown, A. & Shevtsova, L., Editors, op. cit., p. 76.

²⁹¹ Klyamkin, I. & Shevtsova, L., “The Tactical Origins of Russia’s New Political Institutions” in Brown, A., op. cit., p. 16.

seemed to ensure that no one institution gained too much power and influence.

During the euphoria of this period, Yeltsin had a distinct advantage over his political opponents. Yeltsin was the dominant figure in Russian politics of the immediate post-communist period due to public perception, which strongly identified him as being symbolic of the victory over communism in August 1991. This meant that there was no viable political alternative to Yeltsin.²⁹²

Yeltsin is a shrewd politician and a survivor, he knew how to turn this circumstance to his advantage. His tendencies oscillated between democratic and autocratic throughout the eight years that he was president. After outmanoeuvring his political opponents, Yeltsin was able to concentrate a great deal of power in the hands of the president. The Prime Minister has little real power. This enabled Yeltsin to make the Prime Minister the scapegoat during periods of political unpopularity.²⁹³ The alarming rate at which Prime Ministers were hired and fired during Yeltsin's tenure is testimony to this notion. During a period of less than two years Yeltsin dismissed no less than four Prime Ministers.²⁹⁴

The media's honeymoon with the new Yeltsin government was brief. As the crises in society began to emerge, the media found that these made for sensational reporting. Yeltsin, who had been held up by the media as a champion of democracy now began to receive bad publicity.

A discernible break in Yeltsin's style of leadership occurred before and after the 1993 coup attempt. The groups who he patronised also changed as the requirements of his administration changed. One outstanding feature that continued through the Yeltsin years (1991 - 1999) was the sense of chaos and lack of law.

Political scientist, Thomas Remington, describes Yeltsin's Russia as a 'soft state;'

"Yeltsin's Russia today displays all the pathologies of a soft state: government can not ensure that policy is carried out, or even guarantee the

²⁹² Klyamkin, I. & Shevtsova, L., "The Tactical Origins of Russia's New Political Institutions" in Brown, A., op. cit., p. 15.

²⁹³ Klyamkin, I. & Shevtsova, L., "The Tactical Origins of Russia's New Political Institutions" in Brown, A., op. cit., p. 14.

timely payment of wages to employees, announcements about new state agencies and progress are made and soon forgotten, and a crisis of law enforcement is manifested by the enormous rise of organised crime, deep government corruption, and lax fiscal control.”²⁹⁵

The above description of Yeltsin’s Russia paints a bleak picture. Russian commentators, when referring to the period of Yeltsin’s term in office, use the term *bespredel* (without limits).²⁹⁶ To infer that the entirety of the country operated without limits is an over-exaggeration. Yeltsin was a ‘hands-on’ ruler, who liked to be at the ‘coal face’ of politics.

Although Yeltsin made his initial profile as that of a democrat, his words and actions told another story. Yeltsin made compromises as a strategy for his personal survival, on the one hand (such as the fostered regionalism – to ‘buy’ to regional governors support in the Federation Council). But, he also liked to be in charge of matters and once stated that “I act the way I consider necessary.”²⁹⁷ As such, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace senior associate Lilia Shevtsova, considers Yeltsin to be a reactive and impulsive politician.²⁹⁸

Yeltsin’s perception of democracy and the form it should take, appears to be tainted by a mixture of past experience and his personality type. His intentions and aspirations are plain, using his own words.

“Everything should be subordinate to a single, sharply defined principle, law, establishment. Roughly speaking, someone in the country should be chief. That is all there is to it.”²⁹⁹

As the head of the executive branch of government, Yeltsin was able to wield a lot of influence over the state controlled media assets. As will be explained in the censorship sections, he could hire and fire the heads of state TV at will. In addition to this, the government appoints the chairman and the deputies of *RIA-Novosti*. Since 1993 (until 2000)

²⁹⁴ Fogelklou, A., “Constitutional Order in Russia: A New Territory for Constitutionalism?” in *Review of Central and East European Law*, Number 3, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000, pp. 231 – 257, p. 246.

²⁹⁵ Dunlop, J. B., “Sifting Through the Rubble of the Yeltsin Years” in Brown, A., op. cit., pp. 51 – 70, p. 66.

²⁹⁶ Dunlop, J. B., “Sifting Through the Rubble of the Yeltsin Years” in Brown, A., op. cit., p. 61.

²⁹⁷ Brown, A. & Shevtsova, L., Editors, *Gorbachev, Yeltsin & Putin: Political Leadership in Russia’s Transition*, Washington D. C., Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2001, p. 69.

²⁹⁸ Brown, A. & Shevtsova, L., Editors, op. cit., p. 71.

there have been five chairpeople.³⁰⁰ The lack of job security by state media workers creates an environment of fear. Therefore incumbency endows the political actor with much power and influence to dictate the course of state media actions and coverage. The state media workers are obliged to carry out the wishes of their political master, for if they do not they will be without work.

Russia was operated as a myriad of interest groups vying for influence and power. Yeltsin was able to play these groups against one another to maintain his position of power. Certainly, Yeltsin considered himself to be the Patriarch of his entourage / family. As the Patriarch, he demanded nothing less than total loyalty and obedience from the 'Family' (the inner circle of friends and associates was known as the Family).³⁰¹

His patriarchal tendencies did not stop at relations with members of the Family, but also member states of the CIS. Yeltsin considered these countries to be his children. As the 'children's' father, he was very protective of Russian interests in the CIS. A continuance of tone, as if the Soviet Union still existed.³⁰²

A difference existed between the early and later years of Yeltsin's presidency. The watershed of change occurred in 1993, during the coup attempt. During the early stages of his rule, Yeltsin was a populist who was able to mobilise the masses against his political opposition.³⁰³ He carried an air of charismatic authority about him, such as his speech on top of the tank outside the Whitehouse during the 1991.

The later presidency saw a shift toward patriarchalism, he wanted to be firmly in charge of affairs. His personality became more inaccessible and withdrawn.³⁰⁴ But what was the reason for this change in attitude?

The catalyst of the change appears to be the events surrounding the 1993 coup. During the unrest, the secret police and the armed forces failed to publicly voice their support for Yeltsin. He had considered this group to be among his trusted allies. Consequently he became a more

²⁹⁹ Brown, A. & Shevtsova, L., Editors, op. cit., p. 69.

³⁰⁰ Brown, A. & Shevtsova, L., Editors, op. cit., p. 71.

³⁰¹ Breslauer, G. W., "Boris Yeltsin as Patriarch" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 70 – 81, p. 70.

³⁰² Breslauer, G. W., "Boris Yeltsin as Patriarch" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 70 - 81.

³⁰³ Breslauer, G. W., "Boris Yeltsin as Patriarch" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 78.

bitter, untrusting and brutal ruler.³⁰⁵

A change was witnessed in the groups, which Yeltsin favoured. Certain types of entourage were more dominant than others, at certain stages. Early in his presidency, before he became disillusioned, Yeltsin chose young and reform minded democrats (such as Chubais and Nemtsov). But, as time progressed, a stronger tendency toward favouring the so-called *siloviki* (the ‘power ministries’ such as police, FSB and armed forces) became apparent. When choosing his government, *ex-siloviki* filled the top posts, men such as Primakov, Stepashin and Putin.³⁰⁶

Yeltsin was the president of the Russian Federation for some eight years. He inherited his position from the Soviet president Mikhail Gorbachev. As time progressed, Yeltsin’s health and popularity both declined. It has been suggested that Yeltsin wished to be president until the year 2000, when he was expected to step aside. On December 31, 1999, Yeltsin suddenly resigned his position. But this move helped to ensure that his legacy remained secure. This gave Putin, his chosen successor, the advantage of incumbency (as the acting president) and brought the presidential elections forward three months. The constitution requires an election to be held within ninety days of the president’s resignation.³⁰⁷

During Yeltsin’s tenure in office, conflict between the legislative and executive branches of government began at an early stage. Throughout this conflict, Yeltsin used the media as a tool to discredit his political opposition. The main gist of his argument revolved around the premise that the parliament was the chief obstacle to reform.

Yeltsin’s main political rival in 1992 was Ruslan Khasbulatov, but he was not able to match the President’s popular public profile. This was for a number of reasons as characterised in the following description.

Ruslan Khasbulatov had a “gloomy character and acerbic manner inspired a strong dislike for him in many people. [...] His team of unappealing

³⁰⁴ Breslauer, G. W., “Boris Yeltsin as Patriarch” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 79.

³⁰⁵ Breslauer, G. W., “Boris Yeltsin as Patriarch” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 57.

³⁰⁶ Breslauer, G. W., “Boris Yeltsin as Patriarch” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 80.

³⁰⁷ Brudny, Y. M., “Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 154 – 178, p. 171.

appartatchiki generally compared unfavourably with the dynamic, polished, and articulate people around Yeltsin.”³⁰⁸

During Yeltsin’s tenure as President of the Russian Federation (1991 – 1999), he held the advantage of incumbency. This meant that he was able to harness the power of the state media to his benefit. Relations between the media and Yeltsin began well. During the initial period of privatisation, Yeltsin gave the media complete independence from their Soviet minders. In return, the media assumed that their independence would continue so long as Yeltsin’s presidency continued. Therefore the media were closely aligned to Yeltsin.³⁰⁹

Relations with the private media were however, not so clearly defined. By 1995 the media began to turn away from Yeltsin. The First Chechen War was offered as a possible reason, as Yeltsin seemed powerless to stop the war.³¹⁰ However, the 1996 presidential elections saw a convergence of interests between the government and the owners of the private media, due to the Communist Party ‘threat.’ After the successful conclusion to the elections (for Yeltsin), a series of economic crises and bouts of illness saw the gradual erosion of Yeltsin’s public credibility. No longer was he perceived as being an energetic man of the people, but perhaps as a sick and corrupt politician with only self-interest at heart.

In a final act, to try and protect *The Family* and himself, Yeltsin executed a very well timed and choreographed exit from office on 31 December, 1999. The scene and setting were well staged and had several important aspects to it.

- Done on New Years Eve – people were celebrating and were distracted.
- Yeltsin wiped a tear from his eye on the televised broadcast.
- Asked for the peoples’ forgiveness as “many of our dreams have not been realised.”³¹¹

³⁰⁸ Shevtsova, L., *Yeltsin’s Russia: Myths and Reality*, Washington D. C., Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1999, p. 38.

³⁰⁹ Zassoursky, I., “Media and Power: Russia in the Nineties” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 74.

³¹⁰ Zassoursky, I., “Media and Power: Russia in the Nineties” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 75.

³¹¹ Brown, A. & Shevtsova, L., Editors, op. cit., p. 87.

2.2.2 Yuri Luzhkov – Mayor of Moscow

Moscow's mayor, Yuri Luzhkov has proved to be a very ambitious and driven political figure. He has been the Mayor of Moscow since 1992.³¹² For some time he considered himself to be Yeltsin's heir to the Russian presidency. He strove to achieve popularity by undertaking high profile public acts and embarking upon a massive upgrade programme of Moscow's public infrastructure. Luzhkov also has close ties to the Russian Orthodox Church.³¹³

Testimony to his influence and power in Moscow is a nickname that he has earned – the *Tsar* of Moscow. Luzhkov supported Yeltsin at critical points, such as the August 1991 coup and the 1993 crisis between Parliament and the Yeltsin. As a sign of gratitude of this 'loyalty' Yeltsin rewarded him by granting broad powers outside of federal control, which exempted Moscow city from Russia's privatisation programme.³¹⁴

As a shrewd and astute politician, Luzhkov is aware of the need for political connections, good media coverage and publicity. He set about achieving this goal by granting media outlets that were based in Moscow privileges. Some of these concessions included lower taxes, rents and utility charges. In return he had secured neutral or favourable media coverage.³¹⁵

Luzhkov gradually brought a merging of media, financial and political capital to help him with favourable publicity in the media, which could in the end be used to start a PR campaign for entry into national politics. The weekly publication *Obshchaya Gazeta* is financed by Luzhkov. *Mosbiznesbank* funds the publication of the newspaper *Rossiya*.³¹⁶

In addition to influencing media outlets, Moscow City controls numerous media outlets directly. As the Mayor of Moscow Luzhkov has been able to exert his influence over these media. Some of the media enterprises that are controlled by Moscow City include;

³¹² www.businessweek.com/1998/45/b3603029.htm, 9 June, 2003.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ www.fortunecity.com/boozers/ferret/451/profiles/yluzhkov.htm, 18 February, 1998 (9 June, 2003).

³¹⁵ (1) Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 325. Downing, J., op. cit., p. 131.

(2) Hagström, M., "Control Over the Media in Post-Soviet Russia" in Ekecrantz, J. & Olofsson, K., Editors, op. cit., pp. 197 – 246, p. 230.

³¹⁶ Telen, L., *The Cloth Cap Mayor*, Transitions On-Line. <http://archive.tol.cz/transitions/thecloth.html>, 10 June, 2003.

- *TV Tsentr*
- *Literaturnaya Gazeta*
- *Rossiya*
- *Vechernaya Moskva*
- *Metro*
- *Moskovskaya Pravda* (printing plant)³¹⁷
- *TeleExpo*
- *Metropolis* (publishing house)
- *Tsentr Plus*
- *Kultura*
- *Vecherny Klub*
- *Tverskaya 13*³¹⁸

The 1996 Moscow Mayoral elections saw Luzhkov take 96% of the vote.³¹⁹ In the 1997 elections to the Moscow City Duma, those aligned to Luzhkov did very well. In the aftermath of the successful elections, his supporters took steps to create a pro-Luzhkov party, which could launch his presidential aspirations into a more practical application. The party *Otechestvo* was founded.³²⁰ He began to distance himself from the Kremlin in the late-Yeltsin era. In one instance, the airforce declined permission for Luzhkov to travel by helicopter into Tver, on the grounds that Yeltsin was to fly to Germany for a G-8 meeting the next day. Luzhkov's inspection of the farms proceeded, but by car and with the declaration that the Kremlin had made him "enemy No. 1."³²¹

Several issues and areas have been targeted by the Mayor and his advisors, to give him a social-democratic political platform from which to initiate his national political aspirations. Sometimes these issues may be 'ordinary' and on other occasions could be considered to be

³¹⁷ Hagström, M., "Control Over the Media in Post-Soviet Russia" in Ekecrantz, J. & Olofsson, K., Editors, op. cit., p. 229.

³¹⁸ Fossato, F. & Kachkaeva, A., *Russian Media Empires V*, Radio Liberty, August 1999. www.rferl.org/nca/special/rumedia5/city.html, 9 June, 2003.

³¹⁹ Feifer, G., *Luzhkov Readies for the Trenches*, August 1999. <http://archive.tol.cz/jul99/specr899.html>, 10 June, 2003.

³²⁰ Telen, L., *The Cloth Cap Mayor*, Transitions On-Line. <http://archive.tol.cz/transitions/thecloth.html>, 10 June, 2003.

³²¹ Feifer, G., *Luzhkov Readies for the Trenches*, August 1999. <http://archive.tol.cz/jul99/specr899.html>, 10 June, 2003.

controversial, they are all designed to bring Luzhkov publicity. A partial list of issues or causes that have been raised or championed by Luzhkov is given below.

- Visited Crimea and proclaimed that Sevastopol should be Russian and not Ukrainian.
- Made favourable remarks regarding the Belarussian President Alexandr Lukashenka and the Russian-Belarusian Union.
- April 1998 called for economic sanctions against Latvia due to alleged civil rights violations against the Russian-speaking minority in the country. Took part in a street protest outside the Latvian embassy in Moscow.³²²
- Vowed to resurrect Russian industry his way. Two ailing auto-makers were re-nationalised in the process (*ZiL* and *AZLK*).
- Likes to be seen, in well publicised media events, manning wrecking cranes, destroying the Khrushchev-era apartment blocks and building new ones in their place.³²³

Specific, colourful and patriotic symbols are employed by Luzhkov to facilitate the manufacturing of a favourable public sentiment toward him. At the Mayor's request, central Moscow buildings had large banners displaying Soviet military medals draped over them. An imperial era symbol that seems to be often employed by Luzhkov is his donning of armour, as the 11th Century figure credited with founding Moscow – Yuri Dolgoruky. He wears a leather cap at most dedication ceremonies and public events, this is his trademark that is used to differentiate him from other political figures.³²⁴

Between the August 1998 economic crisis and the 1999/2000 electoral cycle, Luzhkov saw his political ambitions unravel. He embarked on a deliberate campaign to distance himself from the Kremlin to capture the anti-Kremlin vote, but ended up in a protracted legal (see chapter 4.8.4) and *kompromat* (see chapter 2.3.2) campaign with the government. This fight proved to be very costly, as both Luzhkov and Primakov were targeted in a very nasty and

³²² Telen, L., *The Cloth Cap Mayor*, Transitions On-Line. <http://archive.tol.cz/transitions/thecloth.html>, 10 June, 2003.

³²³ Feifer, G., *Luzhkov Readies for the Trenches*, August 1999. <http://archive.tol.cz/jul99/speccr899.html>, 10 June, 2003.

³²⁴ Ibid.

slandorous black PR action. The 2000 mayoral elections reflected this, as Luzhkov received 70% of the vote in these elections.³²⁵

Perhaps sensing impending financial and political strife, Luzhkov changed allegiance again and cast his public support for Putin. This seemed to bring a halt to government actions against Luzhkov and his interests. From June 2000, his political prospects appeared more rosy. He accompanied Putin on a visit to Italy, where a possible pact or an understanding may have been forged during a three hour closed session meeting between the two. The Berezovsky controlled newspaper *Kommersant* announced that Luzhkov had been “rehabilitated.”³²⁶

2.3 Presidential Elections

The importance of friendly media coverage to politicians has been realised for some time. Politicians have used various means to gain this coverage, often by less than scrupulous means. I will start by outlining the main political parties in contemporary Russian politics and their role in the political process.

Elections in the Russian Federation, both presidential and gubernational, are contested bitterly by political rivals. Dirty tricks and compromising material (*kompromat*) are widely used to gain an advantage over the opposition. The public has become wary and cynical toward Russian politics and politicians. In a poll conducted in 1999; only 3% of respondents thought that the ‘worthiest individuals’ won elections. However, 83% of respondents thought that the ‘most cunning’ won the elections.³²⁷

During times of unpopularity Yeltsin’s convenient scapegoat was usually, immediately preceding an election the director of state TV. The first years of the post-Soviet transition witnessed a rapid succession of directors. Yegor Yakovlev was dismissed from the directorship of state TV in November 1992, Yeltsin accused him of allowing negative coverage of Russian troops in North Ossetia. Yakovlev’s successor, Vyacheslav Bragin did

³²⁵ Fossato, F. & Kachkaeva, A., *Russian Media Empires VI*, Radio Liberty, September 2000. www.rferl.org/nca/special/rumedia6/index.html, 10 June, 2003.

³²⁶ Fossato, F. & Kachkaeva, A., *Russian Media Empires VI*, Radio Liberty, September 2000. www.rferl.org/nca/special/rumedia6/index.html, 10 June, 2003.

³²⁷ Levada, Y., “Homo Praevaricatus: Russian Doublethink” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 312 – 322, p. 312.

not fear much better and was dismissed in December 1993. His crime was permitting a documentary about Zhirinovsky to be aired the night before the national elections. The next appointment to state TV's directorship was Aleksandr Yakovlev.³²⁸

The 1995 and 1996 elections were a watershed in electoral conduct. Collusion between the oligarchs and Yeltsin, to maintain the status quo saw the decline of pluralism in the media. Something from which the media has not recovered.³²⁹ The presidential campaign was a bruising, gruelling and merciless slog for the candidates. A deliberate strategy was employed to bring about a more easily manageable campaign by dividing it into a two-way contest.³³⁰

In the 1995 elections National TV and radio was legally required to provide one hour free airtime to political party advertising. This advertising allocation had to be shared among 43 parties. However, parties could choose to purchase additional airtime, which cost between US\$10,000 – 30,000 per minute. Consequently, small parties were not in a financial position to compete for airtime with the larger more established political parties.³³¹

The content of media coverage gave the voter little in the way of information on party image and ideology.³³² Instead, the focus of the election was based on anti-Communist rhetoric and a war of personalities. This superficial method of waging an election campaign gave the voter very little idea of what social, political and economic policy they may expect after a government has been sworn in.

As the Kremlin controlled the country's main national TV stations, they were in a position to exact some measure of control over the share of airtime that political parties received. The pro-government *Our Home is Russia* party gained a 25% share of the free airtime in 1995.³³³ This share of the free airtime is very disproportionate when the number of political parties involved in the electoral process is taken into account.

³²⁸ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 128.

³²⁹ McFaul, M., op. cit., p. 323.

³³⁰ (1) For a detailed account of the 1996 elections, the strategy and the result see McFaul, M., op. cit., pp. 292 - 297.

(2) Gill, G. & Markwick, R. D., *Russia's Stillborn Democracy? From Gorbachev to Yeltsin*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 190 – 191.

³³¹ Oates, S., "Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy" in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., pp. 147 – 170, p. 152.

³³² Oates, S., "Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy" in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., p. 157.

³³³ Ibid.

The Central Electoral Commission, a supposedly neutral body designed to oversee and ensure a free and fairly contested electoral process had an influence in the final outcome. They consistently supported the government's case when the other political parties lodged complaints.³³⁴

Yeltsin fought the 1996 presidential campaign on a strongly anti-Communist platform.³³⁵ As may be expected, the state owned media were openly biased toward the Yeltsin campaign. If resistance was sensed or undesirable results achieved, a more 'reliable' person usually replaced the head of state media.³³⁶ During the course of the presidential election campaign Yeltsin received 53% of the transmission time allocated to the presidential candidates.³³⁷

Co-operation was also secured from the private media. One of the reasons for their assistance was a fear that a return to communism would see the end of media freedom in the Russian Federation.³³⁸ In his autobiography, Yeltsin summed up the resource and financial help that he received from the oligarchs. "During the elections financial capital turned into political capital."³³⁹

The KPRF presidential campaign failed to take advantage of the first round lead. They did not take Yeltsin to task on issues such as Chechnya (1st War), conscription or economic decline. Their campaign was poorly co-ordinated and at times sent contradictory messages to the public through the mixing of Leninist and Russian Orthodox symbolism.³⁴⁰

KPRF's approach to the election campaign differed greatly from Yeltsin's, which was conducted on a more professional level. His campaign message was consistent and had a well planned strategy. In addition to using the fear of a resurgent Communist Party and all of the chaos that it would bring, Yeltsin's personal traits were touched upon. Yeltsin projected himself as the 'glue' that held Russia together, a message that became more intense as the

³³⁴ Oates, S., "Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy" in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., pp. 156 – 163.

³³⁵ Oates, S., "Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy" in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., pp. 163 – 164.

³³⁶ Oates, S., "Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy" in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., p. 163.

³³⁷ Gill, G. & Markwick, R. D., op. cit., p. 195.

³³⁸ Oates, S., "Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy" in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., p. 165.

³³⁹ Yeltsin, B., *Midnight Diaries*, New York, Public Affairs, 2000, p. 91.

³⁴⁰ Gill, G. & Markwick, R. D., op. cit., p. 193.

campaign progressed.³⁴¹

Open hostility between the executive and legislative branches of government was briefly abandoned in late 1997. Yeltsin was able to secure a truce with parliament by increasing parliamentary access to the media. This was achieved via the following measures;

- Two hours of airtime each week on state radio dedicated to parliamentary activities.
- Two hours of airtime each week on *RTR* dedicated to parliamentary activities.
- Funding was provided for a new parliamentary newspaper.³⁴²

Yeltsin found compromise necessary during periods of low popularity. At this stage low popularity coincided with a large Communist Party representation in parliament.

A perceivable break in campaign rhetoric between the Yeltsin era presidential elections and Putin's style is evident. A new set of issues and styles has taken a dominant role in the presidential election campaign.

“It is characteristic that during the last Duma and presidential election campaigns, the rhetoric has changed strikingly in comparison with earlier campaigns. Neither democracy nor freedom of the press, issues that carried the day during the early 1990's, were present among the slogans of either candidate or their programmes. Much more fashionable have become clichés such as ‘law and order,’ and ‘state’ and ‘national interests.’ Patriotic appeals rather than universal human values or human rights now dominate electoral campaigns most of all at the expense of public interest.”³⁴³

Putin was able to disseminate his desired image in the period prior to the presidential elections via state owned and other government ‘friendly’ media outlets. In the period from January to March 2000, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* informed its audience about Putin's biography. The affect of this publicity was to make Putin appear more understandable and

³⁴¹ Gill, G. & Markwick, R. D., op. cit., p. 194.

³⁴² Shevtsova, L., op. cit., p. 223.

³⁴³ Zassoursky, Y. N., “Media and the Public Interest: Balancing Between the State, Business and Public Sphere” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., pp. 155 – 188, p. 158.

human to the readers.³⁴⁴

State controlled media carefully covered all of Putin's visits and cultivated the image of an apolitical politician. Putin had as much coverage on Russian TV as Zyganov, Yavlinsky and Zhirinovskiy combined (Putin's three main contenders). During the period leading up to the election of March 26, 2000, Putin received nine hours of coverage between March 3 - March 21 on the state channel *ORT*.³⁴⁵

As the 2000-election campaign progressed and Putin seemed increasingly likely to win the contest, some media switched their allegiance. *NTV* and *TV Tsentr* became more pro-Putin in their coverage from February 2000. By this time it had become clear that the networks would have no other presidential candidates to support.³⁴⁶

A political scientist at Oxford University, Professor Archie Brown, summed up a major difference between Boris Yeltsin and his successor, Vladimir Putin. Both Yeltsin and Putin have their roots in the Soviet administration, but "Vladimir Putin, who unlike Boris Yeltsin, displays some real nostalgia for the Soviet Union, clearly wishes to restore Russia as a great power - though not necessarily as a 'superpower.'"³⁴⁷

2.3.1 New Rules of the Game

President Putin facing little in the way of serious political challenge to his rule or the reforms which he has been pushing through parliament. His opposition is broken into factions, which also fight each other.

In the years after Russia adopted a democratic model of government, there has been an increasing number of minor political parties that have been formed. In the 1995 Duma elections, 43 political parties were on the ballot. But, by the 1999 Duma elections the trend

³⁴⁴ Raskin, A., "Television: Medium to Elect the President" in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 99.

³⁴⁵ Simonia, N., "Economic Interests and Political Power in Post-Soviet Russia" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 269 - 288, p. 269.

³⁴⁶ Raskin, A., "Television: Medium to Elect the President" in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 111.

³⁴⁷ Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 416.

had been reversed with only 26 parties on the ballot papers.³⁴⁸ What had caused this new trend, and why?

New rules had been instituted which made the survival of minor parties very difficult. The all-powerful Central Electoral Commission (CEC) was in charge of administering the electoral laws. They have the ultimate power that has the potential to bring about a party's demise, if the CEC had such an intent.

The structure of the electoral system has forced some political adaptation and compromise. Russia's ballot consists of two distinct parts, a proportional representational part and a first past the post system. A 5% threshold applies to the proportional representative portion of the system, this in effect deters small parties from contesting the elections. Of the 43 parties which contested the 1995 Duma elections, only four passed the 5% threshold.³⁴⁹

First past the post applies to the single member district part of the ballot. Constraints imposed by this system force parties of similar ideologies to run mutually agreed upon candidates.³⁵⁰ This political collusion, required for the survival of parties may have the effect of limiting or stunting the full potential of political pluralism. An alternative view may state that it is best to rid the system of weak and ineffectual parties. A kind of 'political Darwinism,' survival of the fittest parties only.

As previously established, the CEC is a powerful organisation with a series of wide-ranging powers at its disposal. Listed below is an outline of some of the main means at its disposal, which can allow the CEC to exclude some political parties from the political process:

- a requirement to verify 20% of the 200, 000 signatures needed for inclusion in the ballot.
- parties with 15% or more, invalid signatures are disqualified.
- candidates who do not submit an accurate financial statement, disclose a criminal record or foreign citizenship are disqualified.
- disqualification of any top three candidates or 25% of candidates on entire list,

³⁴⁸ Brudny, Y. M., "Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 157.

³⁴⁹ Brudny, Y. M., "Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 156.

³⁵⁰ Ibid.

automatically excludes the party from the list.

- 1999 electoral law stipulates a US\$77, 000 deposit to be paid to get a party on the ballot, as an alternative to the 200, 000 signatures. If party gains less than 3% of vote the deposit will be forfeited. Additionally, if the party gains less than 2%, they will be required to reimburse the CEC for allocated TV and radio time.³⁵¹

These measures would appear to be aimed at limiting the proliferation of small political parties. The impact on a smaller party could be devastating, if one or more of these laws were found to be broken. But what have been the practical implications on Russian politics, apart from the stifling of small party creation?

2.3.2 Use of Kompromat in Elections

Through their ability to apply some control over the media, hence the makers of meaning, the government can derive benefits from a secondary power. A definition of the term secondary power is “the power that derives from the capacity to make or break political leaders, and either circulate or suppress information and ideas.”³⁵² Using the Russian example, the circulation or suppression of information and ideas are embodied in the use and application of kompromat and ‘freezing out’ political opponents.

The elections of 1999 and 2000 will be the focus of this section. I will be referring to the 1995 and 1996 elections as a background and to compare these elections, to evaluate any possible differences or similarities in the way the campaigns unfolded. Needless to say, Russia’s leading politicians waged both election campaigns in a ruthless manner.

With the methods of the 1996 presidential campaign still fresh on the minds of the KPRF, they kept a relatively low profile. They did not want to ‘rock the boat’ from 1996 - 1999, because of the fear of another political crackdown if they did. The ideology and rhetoric of the party was strongly anti-systemic, but their actions were neutral. This was not ensure that a systemic crisis was not precipitated by their actions.³⁵³

³⁵¹ Brudny, Y. M., “Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 156 - 157.

³⁵² Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 9.

³⁵³ Brudny, Y. M., “Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 157.

Gennady Zyganov, leader of the KPRF, attended a lot more interview programmes than in 1996. This time, the Communist Party and Zyganov were not demonised, but their activities received very little media attention. All TV channels, including NTV gave considerable time and attention to Zyganov's rival, Aman Tuleev (Kemerovo oblast governor). In 1996 Tuleev had supported Zyganov, but in the 2000 campaign he repeatedly criticised the leadership of the Communist Party.³⁵⁴ By not launching an all-out smear campaign against the Communist Party, it seems as though the government campaign strategists had discounted the KPRF as the Kremlin's main rival in the elections. So, if the Communist Party was not the main rival who was considered to be the main rival?

The smear campaign waged by the government seemed to have two primary targets. One of these targets was Yabloko and its leader, Gregory Yavlinsky. A vicious smear campaign was unleashed in the final week of the race. It was feared that Yavlinsky, who appeared to be benefiting from high profile exposure, may have prevented Putin from winning an outright win in the first round of the elections.³⁵⁵ This could have occurred by splitting the vote, thereby taking votes from the other candidates, Putin required 50% or more of the vote to win in the first round.

ORT and *RTR* refused to air two interview programmes featuring Yavlinsky, during the final week before the elections and launched a series of scathing attacks. Reports were shown, accusing Yavlinsky of breaking campaign spending rules, taking money from foreign sources, seeking to undermine Russian stability and having plastic surgery. Three days before the election *ORT* and *RTR* aired a phoney press conference, in which flamboyant homosexuals gave their support to Yavlinsky.³⁵⁶

In addition to be attacked by the government, Yabloko was also embroiled in a bitter information war with SPS and OVR. This ensured that Yavlinsky and Yabloko remained mostly on the defensive. Yavlinsky had begun the campaign by trying to highlight his legislative achievements in the Duma and Stepashin's work during his tenure as Prime Minister. To counter the smear campaign he tried to tarnish SPS. This was attempted by reminding the public of SPS's involvement in the unpopular 1992 'shock therapy' reforms

³⁵⁴ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 332.

³⁵⁵ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 333.

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

and by pointing out that the August 1998 crisis hit when Kirienko was Prime Minister.³⁵⁷

The target of Yabloko's smear campaign, SPS, recognised the popularity of the Chechen War. As a consequence, they gave their full support for the war. SPS and its leader Kirienko, criticised Yabloko for being a 'do nothing party' and for taking a neutral stance on Chechnya. SPS's strategy attempted to cash-in on Putin's popularity. In a strange twist, Kirienko was shown meeting Putin in one of SPS's campaign ads. At a later stage, Kirienko officially endorsed Putin's presidential candidacy.³⁵⁸ The strategy applied by SPS does not appear to be aimed at Kirienko winning the presidential election, but to eliminate any chance of an effective challenge to Putin by other parties (especially Yabloko). Additionally, Kirienko's actions tend to indicate some reliance on riding the wave of Putin's popularity.

Another leading contender for the presidential elections was the Fatherland All-Russia Party (OVR), headed by Moscow mayor Yuri Luzhkov and former Prime Minister Yevgenni Primakov. They had positioned themselves as a centrist party, which opposed Yeltsin's policies. OVR pledged greater state support for agriculture and industry, vowing to fight corruption in the highest echelons of government (i.e. 'The Family').³⁵⁹

Luzhkov, a one-time supporter of Yeltsin and a possible heir of his legacy, became a critic in 1998. During his criticism of Yeltsin, Luzhkov stated that Yeltsin was no longer fit to serve. Throughout 1999, attacks against Yeltsin and 'The Family' intensified. Oligarch Boris Berezovsky, an archenemy of Luzhkov, was targeted. Procurator-general Skuratov had opened a criminal investigation against Berezovsky with Primakov's blessing. By May 1999 Primakov was Russia's most popular politician.³⁶⁰

If Primakov or Luzhkov were elected president, Yeltsin and 'The Family' (including their property) would not be secure. This prompted the government to launch a series of scathing attacks against OVR and personal attacks against its leadership, TV hosts such as Dorenko

³⁵⁷ Brudny, Y. M., "Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 161 - 162.

³⁵⁸ Brudny, Y. M., "Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 161.

³⁵⁹ Brudny, Y. M., "Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 162.

³⁶⁰ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 330.

earned their reputation as ‘information killers.’³⁶¹ Lesin even entered the fray, when he criticised OVR during an appearance on *RTR* two weeks prior to the election.³⁶²

Luzhkov was accused of graft, nepotism, corruption and conspiracy to commit murder. Primakov was also subjected to a smear campaign founded on unsubstantiated rumour and hearsay. Some of the accusations levelled against Primakov included be blamed for failing to halt NATO’s bombing campaign of Yugoslavia, ordering the assassination of the Georgian president (Eduard Shevardnadze), destroying the Russian defence industry and being too old to lead Russia.³⁶³

OVR’s regional allies were not immune from these scathing personal attacks either. *ORT* accused the presidents of the Ingushetian and Kabardino-Balkarian republics of sheltering Chechen terrorists. Both of these presidents had given their support to OVR.³⁶⁴ The Kremlin waged an insidious information war against their opponents, the scale and level of work committed against any one single political rival may be an indicator to the perceived level of threat which that particular rival poses.

OVR was able to offer some limited resistance and counters to the government onslaught, through media assets controlled by Luzhkov. But OVR’s media assets were inferior to those, which were pitted against them. *TV Tsent*r is a small Moscow based TV station, where as the government controlled the national TV stations *ORT* and *RTR*.³⁶⁵ Consequently, OVR was only able to reach a limited and localised audience, the government’s media assets could target Russia’s entire population. In a war of attrition such as this, those who possess superior means of information dissemination will eventually win the contest.

During the 1995 and 1996 electoral campaigns, the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR) and its leader Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, were leading contenders in the elections. LDPR was largely excluded from national TV coverage, which bears testimony to the government assessing them to be a threat to their re-election bid.

³⁶¹ Belin, L., “Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 331.

³⁶² Belin, L., “Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 333.

³⁶³ Brudny, Y. M., “Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 162.

³⁶⁴ Brudny, Y. M., “Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 162.

³⁶⁵ Belin, L., “Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 331.

During the inter-election period (1996 - 1998), LDPR built up a solid reputation as being pro-Kremlin. This was achieved through their voting record in the Duma. In recognition of this support, the government gave LDPR almost unrestricted access to the pro-government TV channels during their election bid.³⁶⁶

Zhirinovskiy gave seven interviews to *ORT* and *RTR*, a further six interviews were given to *TV 6*. *ORT* gave 15%, *RTR* 10% and *NTV* 11% of the campaign coverage time to LDPR's election bid.³⁶⁷ This was a remarkable turn of events considering LDPR was technically an opposition party and the government had the means to ensure that the party could be marginalised in terms of the amount of coverage it received from the nation's national TV channels.

The political party that is associated with the government, Unity, was a target of the smear campaign also. *NTV* (which was owned by Gusinsky and was subject to a lot of pressure from the government) supported OVR, the nature of their allegations consisted of exposing graft, corruption and the dictatorial ruling style of the regional governors who supported Unity. The regions in question were Primorye, Kaliningrad oblast and Kalmykia.³⁶⁸

Numerous factors culminated, which ensured that the kompromat levelled at Unity was essentially ineffective in achieving any lasting or significant damage to the party. The pro-presidential media promoted Unity heavily. 28% of *ORT*'s election coverage and 15% of *RTR*'s, was devoted to Unity. The party gained greater popularity after Putin endorsed Unity on state TV on November 24, 1999.³⁶⁹ Putin's actions brought about an event which ensured that Unity's popularity was tied to Putin's. If Putin's ratings remained high, so did Unity's. As I explained earlier, OVR had fewer media resources at their disposal and were not able to match the level of coverage attained by government sponsored parties and politicians.

Unity's campaign was waged on the promotion of personalities and not policies. A strong emphasis was put on differentiating Unity's leadership from the 'other' political parties. They

³⁶⁶ Brudny, Y. M., "Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 160.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Brudny, Y. M., "Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 163.

³⁶⁹ Brudny, Y. M., "Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 163.

were promoted as being unlike regular politicians, such as OVR's career politicians. Drawing on their distinctiveness, voters were told that they could trust in Unity's honesty and integrity, based on the fact that they were not regular politicians.³⁷⁰

Lesin, the minister of press and information, also interfered at several critical junctures in the electoral process. He personally asked *TV Tsentr* to cancel a weekly TV programme featuring journalist Alexander Khinshtein. Some time earlier, Khinshtein had run foul with the authorities when he published an article accusing the government of corruption. Initially, the authorities tried to have him admitted to a psychiatric hospital in Vladimir. Khinshtein was able to avoid detention. He was now running for a seat in the Duma. No such objections were shown by Lesin toward Alexander Nevzorov, a journalist from *ORT* who was also running for a seat in the Duma.³⁷¹ Once again, the government attempted to attain the situation of sidelining 'undesirable' political aspirants by denying them any publicity.

On the whole, it seems that the use of *kompromat* is a relatively ineffective way of achieving an end result. The audience does not focus on the veracity of the story in question, instead they focus on the dynamics that initiated the production of the story. "Questions about who wrote what about whom and on whose orders often seem to get greater attention in the media discussion than whether the report was actually true."³⁷²

2.4 Totalitarian Discourse And State Interests

The aim of this section is to assess totalitarianism, as a pure political concept. I will firstly give a description of the nature and trends of the totalitarian phenomenon. After I have given the reader a basic understanding of the meaning and the functioning of a totalitarian regime, I shall attempt to apply the concept to the contemporary Russian situation and make a determination as to whether the concept is applicable or not.

³⁷⁰ Brudny, Y. M., "Continuity or Change in Russian Electoral Patterns? The December 1999 – March 2000 Electoral Cycle" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 163.

³⁷¹ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 333.

³⁷² Hagström, M., "Control Over the Media in Post-Soviet Russia" in Ekecrantz, J. & Olofsson, K., Editors, op. cit., p. 215.

2.4.1 Definitions and Characteristics

I will begin this section by giving a brief and narrow definition of totalitarian. For the purposes of this thesis I have kept the definition this way, due to the wide ranging discourse available on the nature and definition of this word. After the definition, I will attempt to explain some of the peculiarities of the totalitarian phenomenon, giving some examples.

By definition, totalitarian states are the strictest regimes. The Soviet Union and other communist countries of the Eastern Bloc are considered to be examples of totalitarianism. In descending order, the next most invasive class of regime is authoritarianism. Regimes that fall into this category are dictatorships, such as Spain under Franco's rule.

Totalitarianism - a philosophy which "seeks to be comprehensive and / or has a systematic impact upon societal organisation."³⁷³

"[...] is an all-encompassing system of political rule that is typically established by pervasive ideological manipulation and open terror and brutality. [...] seeks 'total power' through the politicisation of every aspect of social and personal existence. [...] implies the outright abolition of civil society: the abolition of 'the private.'"³⁷⁴

Downing (author of *Internationalising Media Theory*) claims that "totalitarian rule begins with totalitarian movements."³⁷⁵ The underlying premise of this assumption is that the totalitarian regime is aided to power by support from below. Unlike a coup d' etat, where the elite use force to impose their will on the masses. An example of this is the August 1991 coup.

During the bid for total power, totalitarian ideologies seek to create a motivating force, to mobilise their followers in a common goal. "Totalitarian ideology [...] identifies as a key component of their rise is not simply a regime-sponsored public relations fog, but a vital mobilising force in the transition from movement to regime and for the inner core of the

³⁷³ Downing, J., op. cit., 1996, p. 2.

³⁷⁴ Heywood, A., op. cit., p. 184.

³⁷⁵ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 3

regime.”³⁷⁶

A mobilising message used by the Nazis rise to power was the resurrection of a strong Germany, after the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles. The use of the image of the restoration of national pride exerts a powerful pull on a population that has endured a long period of hardship and degradation. In their study of the nazification of pre-war Germany, Adorno and Horkheimer theorised that two pre-conditions must be present for a totalitarian power to exist.

- Hardship - such as economic or loss of a country’s prestige on the world stage.
- Loss of individual consciousness - A mass society is easier to manipulate.³⁷⁷

An ideology of popular appeal (to the masses or a target group) must be disseminated by some form of media, for a movement or regime to gain or hold the audience’s attention. Presently, on the totalitarian movement level, Russian right-wing organisations are looking to new methods at spreading their message. The traditional forms, such as newspapers (*Pamyat* - meaning Memory) are being complemented by more modern means of dissemination.

A new tool of their information war arsenal is the internet. Information is spread rapidly, cheaply and to a large potential audience. The increasing globalisation of right-wing organisations becomes apparent by the fact that some of these groups publish their information in English, as well as Russian. Two examples are :

- National Patriotic Front “Pamyat” - www.geocities.com/Colosseum/Loge/8461/
and
- Russian National Socialist Party - www.nationalism.org

The existence of an English translation of these movements ideological literature would seem to indicate the possibility that the material is not solely intended for domestic consumption.

Downing states that the “[...] emphasis on the paramount role of ideology implicitly

³⁷⁶ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 3

underlines the significance of media communication in diffusing and developing such ideologies at every phase in the coming to ascendancy of such regimes.”³⁷⁸

During the process of political communication, the totalitarian movement or regime will seek the establishment of several ‘favourable’ conditions for their continued expansion or maintenance of power. A primary objective of the communication process is to enter private as well as public spheres of communication. As Hannah Arendt, a political scientist expresses this phenomenon “total domination succeeds to the extent that it succeeds in interrupting all channels of communication, those from person to person inside the four walls of privacy no less than the public ones.”³⁷⁹

One of totalitarianism’s goals is to aggregate a society’s consciousness. That is to create a mass consciousness. “Totalitarianism seeks to stamp out individual consciousness and replace it with a mass consciousness. By creating an ‘us’ as opposed to a you or I, the product is a ‘People as One.’”³⁸⁰

An important aspect of totalitarian language is the aspect of creating binary opposition. By using the emotional rhetoric of nationalism and / or patriotism, the audience is urged to ‘do their duty.’ In some cases a highly persuasive argument. Stalin used the message ‘defend your motherland’ as a far more symbolic and potent rallying point for the Soviet population during the Great Patriotic War (1941 - 45). Had a call to defend socialism been used, the result of the call to arms and the populace’s resolve may not have been so effective.³⁸¹

During a regime’s ascendancy to power, a surreal world is created to make and perpetuate a myth. To use Le Fort’s (a political scientist) terminology, it is the creation of a totalitarian fantasy, “[...] to efface social division, to absorb all processes of socialisation into the process of state control, to push the symbolic into real.”³⁸² The ultimate embodiment of this ideal is the construction of Socialist Realism, which pervaded all aspects of life in the Soviet Bloc for nearly fifty years.

³⁷⁷ Downing J., op. cit., pp. 207 - 210.

³⁷⁸ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 3

³⁷⁹ Downer, J., op. cit., p. 6.

³⁸⁰ Downer, J., op. cit., p. 7.

³⁸¹ The Great Patriotic War marked an end to what is known as the Great Terror. A series of bloody purges, which were, directed at large sections of Soviet Society. This resulted in the alienation of Soviet citizenry, consequently (initially) many in Western Russia initially welcomed the German invaders as liberators.

Le Fort has formulated a system of five basic assumptions, which define the ideology of a totalitarian regime.

- Image as the 'Power-as-One' is ultimately expressed as faith invited in a single supreme leader.
- Enemies and parasites constantly threaten the project and must be searched out and destroyed.
- Society can recreate itself totally according to an already understood definition of where it will end at the close of the process.
- 'Total knowledge of the detail of social reality' is available to the power structure.
- The project addresses "the most secret, the most spontaneous, the most ungraspable element of social life [...] customs [...] tastes and [...] ideas."³⁸³

Editors of *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy* (1966) C. J. Friedrich and Z. Brzezinski devised a six point 'syndrome of inter-related traits and characteristics':

- existence of an 'official' ideology.
- a one-party state, usually led by an all-powerful leader.
- a system of terroristic policing.
- a monopoly on the means of mass communication.
- a monopoly on the means of armed conflict.
- state control of all aspects of economic life.³⁸⁴

As pointed out above, in the case of a totalitarian state, the state shall seek to ensure complete control over means of cultural production. The media is one of the means of producing culture.

"In extreme cases (totalitarianism), state-owned media agencies, broadcast media and film studios act as propaganda arms of the state, promoting a narrow set of government sanctioned images and messages. Audiences in such nations must become adept at 'reading between the lines' in decoding

³⁸² Downer, J., op. cit., p. 7.

³⁸³ Downer, J., op. cit., p. 7.

³⁸⁴ Heywood, A., op. cit., p. 184.

such propaganda efforts.”³⁸⁵

As stated earlier, a totalitarian regime seeks and demands total control over all areas of public and private life. To help enforce this control, specific security agencies are required. The use of such control mechanisms has been acknowledged by Putin, “they (the secret agencies) were a manifestation of a totalitarian state.”³⁸⁶ Arendt viewed this stance as a potential weakness in the totalitarian system. She wrote, that the regimes reliance on the “demand of unlimited power leaves them vulnerable in the long term. [...] the most likely outcome of the Soviet system is a sudden and dramatic collapse of the whole regime [rather] than a gradual normalisation.”³⁸⁷

Le Fort takes Arendt’s notion further, and in more detail as to the nature of a regime’s demise;

“The power which disseminates itself runs the risk of reappearing as the organ of oppression towering over the whole society and becoming the common target of all contestation. The party, which penetrates every milieu and exercises control over all activities, runs the risk of being seen everywhere as a parasite. The distance between those above and those below, and more generally, inequality, runs the risk of being exposed. Finally, the all-pervading ideology runs the risk of provoking a generalised refusal to believe a radical mode of disaffection which relegates it to the status of a pure political lie; the power of discourse collapses, leaving the image of the oppressive power without a protective screen.”³⁸⁸

History of the Eastern Bloc collapse (1989 - 1991) seems to have added some weight to the contentions of Arendt and Le Fort. A powerful mixture of falling living standards combined with the ability for anyone to disseminate news or information which was detrimental to the continued survival of the incumbent regime, ended communism’s stranglehold in Eastern Europe. The finishing blow was the removing the fear of strict punishment, such as the death penalty, which prompted the population to openly challenge the authorities.

³⁸⁵ Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W., op. cit., p. 77.

³⁸⁶ Putin, V., op. cit., p. 50.

³⁸⁷ Downer, J., op. cit., pp. 4 - 5.

2.4.2 Applicability of Totalitarian Theory to the Russian Federation.

The short answer, as to whether the term totalitarian can be applied to the Russian Federation, is no. Certainly, some totalitarian elements exist within the Russian State, but the overall situation falls short of totalitarianism. In the autobiography *First Person* Putin stated that “Russia needs a strong state. I am not calling for totalitarianism.”³⁸⁹ Taking Putin’s statement at face value, it would seem as though there is a desire to resurrect a strong centrally governed state, but not a return to a strict, totalitarian state.

Contemporary politics in the Russian federation is a curious hybrid of the old communist period and the new democratic system. Russian historian Dmitri Furman links the two periods vividly.

“Today’s elite is the old elite wearing new costumes. [...] But in the former USSR they feel like they are at home. Here they put on their field dress. Here they display their old instincts - chauvinistic, class, and so on.”³⁹⁰

This odd Russian hybrid of old and new methods and values displays a democratic framework laid over a system that is inherently authoritarian. “Post-Soviet Russia has an authoritarian political system with formal democratic institution, very strong presidential leadership, a fragmented party system and a weak ideological framework.”³⁹¹

In the contemporary post-Yeltsin political world of the Russian Federation, in the period of the central state’s reconstruction, the term guided democracy best describes what is happening to the political framework. Guided democracy is a quasi-democracy. Elements of both authoritarianism and democracy co-exist in the same political space. The main component of this system is the regional authorities control of political processes. This is often achieved by the authorities direct intervention in the process of party formation. There are no uniform means of directing the political situation, this varies according to the regions’ models of power.³⁹²

³⁸⁸ Downer, J., op. cit., p. 7.

³⁸⁹ Putin, V., op. cit., p. 215.

³⁹⁰ Ra ‘anan, U. & Martin, K., op. cit., p. 9.

³⁹¹ Heo, U. & Horowitz, S., op. cit., p. 243.

³⁹² Chirikova, A. & Lapina, N., “Political Power and Political Stability in the Russian Regions” in Brown, A.,

Totalitarianism can be used to describe a regime or a movement. In the example of the regime, as represented by the Russian government, some tendencies exist which fall short of what is expected of a Western democracy. The free use of presidential decrees to override parliament's will and Yeltsin's well exercised right to hire and fire ministers (and to dissolve parliament when differences were irreconcilable) are but two examples.

Russia politically, seems to fall some where between a dictatorship and a democracy. Elements of both of these systems exist. Political Scientist O'Donnell offers a possible classification for Russia's political system. He has proposed the term 'delegative democracy,' which is a "[...] potentially enduring regime type, with its own particular features mid-way between dictatorial rule and representative democracy."³⁹³

A delegative democracy has some features, which differentiate it from other forms of political systems. These features include "the endowment of the presidency with more and more formal powers in order to be able to address ever worsening economic crisis but leading in practice to a curious mixture of presidential omnipotence and impotence."³⁹⁴ The August 1998 crisis seems to support this theory. Yeltsin had wide ranging powers at his disposal, supposedly to facilitate the quicker functioning of the political process to meet challenges faced by Russia. When the time came, an strange lethargy seemed to grip Russia's politicians, locking them in to a pattern of no action.

2.5 Chapter Summary

Image-making is a key aspect to modern political life around the world and Russia is no exception to this rule. Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, and with it an end to a one-party State it has become necessary for political actors to 'sell' themselves to the voting public. Consequently, a political figure's image and public traits are created around some popular or appealing notion. Aspects of appeal and popularity however, are not constant over time nor space. Ultimately this means that a politician's public persona needs to be updated and changed, to reflect the public mood and sentiment.

Editor, op. cit., pp. 384 – 397, p. 396.

³⁹³ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 14.

³⁹⁴ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 14.

Boris Yeltsin, the first post-Soviet Russian President, built up his image in the late Soviet period. The public mood during that time was for more freedoms and ultimately democracy. Conditions in the late Soviet period, such as the increasing lawlessness and shortages of even basic items in shops, meant that a change from the perceived faceless, cumbersome and inefficient Soviet system was desired. To cater for this public demand, Yeltsin marketed himself as an energetic and dynamic reformer and democrat. He also tried to form a 'bond' with the average person, as opposed to the impersonal Soviet system.

Initially Yeltsin succeeded in selling this concept of himself to the Russian public. He reinforced his image by mixing with the people in well-publicised events. Political events brought about a change in his character, namely the 1993 conflict. As a result, Yeltsin became more withdrawn. His image ultimately failed because there were simply too many contradictions available to the public, through such sources as the mass media, which contradicted the image offered by Yeltsin and his advisors. Periods of ill-health and scandals involving corruption ate away his public support.

Moscow's current Mayor, Yuri Luzhkov has national political ambitions that he has been working toward for some time. He has used his position as Mayor to accumulate a lot of financial, political and media capital with which to try and launch his bid for the presidency. Luzhkov stood on a social-democratic political platform. Some of his public persona traits are similar to Yeltsin's – being with the people, energetic and motivated.

It seemed as though Luzhkov was going to be named as Yeltsin's successor, after Yeltsin retired. However, when this did not materialise and relations between the two soured, Luzhkov chose to align himself (and his party) with former Prime Minister Yegeny Primakov. The challenge to the incumbent political structure, real or perceived, resulted in the state owned media being unleashed in a vicious smear campaign against both Primakov and Luzhkov. Luzhkov's media assets, although providing some measure of returning the fight were in the end insufficient. This was due to the fact that his media assets are mainly Moscow based, as opposed to the nationwide capability of the state.

The Oligarchs received a lot of attention around the time of the 1999/2000 electoral cycle. Putin used them as a means of gaining a popular platform. Excesses of the Yeltsin era saw the oligarchs attain massive wealth very quickly. This drew enmity from the Russian public,

approximately 2/3 of whom live below the poverty line. Their influence on politics was also very evident, so much so that at times the distinction between business and politics was very blurred and indistinct.

In a promised war to distance the oligarchs from the seat of political power, Putin was able to strike a chord with the public's sentiment. A very publicly fought financial and information war between the government and Gusinsky and Berezovsky seemed to demonstrate the willingness to bring the oligarchs to task. However, a closer examination of the conflict soon reveals other factors at play. Both Gusinsky and Berezovsky were loud, pushy and had the means, via their media assets to make a public spectacle. As such, they represented an early threat to the Putin administration that needed to be neutralised and at the same time would send a message to others who may challenge them as well as satisfying public sentiment.

While the above mentioned conflict between the government and some of the oligarchs was in progress, the Putin administration needed to cement its credibility. The changes that have been occurring in the manner in which Russian politics is prosecuted has meant that the first family and not just the President is in the media spotlight. PR for the Putins has been carefully managed and cultivated. Although the children have largely escaped the public's gaze, Lyudmila Putina is in the middle of it.

Lyudmila Putina has been given a lot of managed publicity to show her as a traditional, caring and Russian woman. To give her some standing in society, some issues have been created to display her patriotic and humanitarian aspects, such as the debate surrounding the reform of the Russian language. The causes for which she fights seem to be closely related to the political agenda of building a strong and patriotic state. Lyudmila Putina's public portrayal lies somewhere between that of Raisa Gorbacheva and Naina Yeltsina.

Electoral cycles are a period of elevated political and social tension. There is much at stake for both the incumbent and challenging political forces and those who support them. As a result, there is often an accompanying rise in the level of conflict between politicians and the media. According to the written rules, the playing field should be even for the political players, but in practice this does not appear to happen. Bureaucratic structures such as the Central Electoral Commission tend to side with the government.

In addition to the advantage of having either neutral or friendly bureaucratic structures, the government also enjoys the benefits of incumbency due to access to the state owned media assets. This gives a definite advantage over political rivals who have to either buy time, align themselves with businessmen who possess media or own media assets themselves. The rules of the political game are set by the incumbent political power, others have to adopt these rules or exit the political arena.

The above will enable political actors to compete more effectively in the conflict surrounding the lead up to the elections. Not only do political actors engage in party political advertising, cover events of leading party figures, they also actively participate in the use of *kompromat*. In its application and use *kompromat* is negative and slanderous. Many allegations that are made are unsubstantiated or false. The role of the black PR is solely to destroy the personal reputation of leading opposition political figures. According to the rules set by the CEC and Media Ministry, media who carry *kompromat* are liable to face legal action. Opposition media have been subjected to legal action, however there would appear to be little to fear for state owned media who appear to avoid any negative consequences of their actions.

In the course of establishing a strong and centralised State, allegations have been levelled that there has been a return of totalitarianism to Russia. Alleged events as loss of personal liberty and an attack on independent media have been used to justify this claim. Upon defining the concept of totalitarianism and some practical applications, there are some elements of totalitarian theory present, but not to warrant labelling Russia as a totalitarian State.

CHAPTER III: A SEARCH FOR IDENTITY AND THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH.

3.0 Chapter Objectives

The main objective of this chapter is to create an understanding of some possible underlying reasons for the changes, which are currently transpiring in the Russian Federation. After some years of declining prestige, a yearning for the symbolism of the former Soviet Union (power and prestige) is in the process of being established. A pattern has begun to emerge, of the use of the methods employed during the Soviet times, such as the emergence of a strong central state based on Moscow.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union was both rapid and traumatic for Russian citizens. By appearance, in 1990 the Soviet Union was a superpower, equal in all respects to the United States. However, by the end of 1991 the illusion was shattered. Many of the former Soviet republics wanted their independence and broke from their union with Russia. Post-Soviet Russia has slowly slipped into an abyss marked by rampant crime, degradation of social services, erosion of state power (nationally and internationally) and a drop in living standards for many ordinary Russian citizens.

The harsh realities of the new Russia have caused some to look back on the years of the USSR with a sense of nostalgia. A nostalgia for what the Soviet Union represented, the power and might of the state (for which one could be proud) and a guaranteed existence for the average citizen (even if it meant shortages and cues for some items).

Changes in the public's attitude are needed before the resurrection of a strong Russian state can be enacted. The shock of a 'loss of empire' has been profound. Part of Putin's appeal is his image as a man of decisive action, and who wants to restore some of Russia's pride.

Since Putin's election to the presidency, an incremental series changes has taken place in Russian politics and society. One of these changes has been the increased control exercised by the government over the media. The media has begun to carry a new ideology, of the state's interests above everything else.

There has been a return to what may be construed as Neo-Soviet methods, in the Kremlin's relations with the media. Russian media are in the process of being restricted (editorially) by what is becoming an increasingly regulated environment. The government seems to consider control over the media as being essential in order for them to achieve their objectives. American academic Ellen Mickiewicz illustrates a possible reason for this concisely.

“Control over the media [...] is seen as control over the shaping of fundamental Russian values and identity in the post-Soviet period, when the very definition of the country is at issue.”³⁹⁵

During the last three to four years the use of the highly emotive 'banners' of patriotism and nationalism have been used by the state to justify or explain their actions. This has been used in an attempt to bypass associated issues of their actions and to unite the populace behind them.

I shall look at the rise of patriotism and its use in contemporary Russian society. There has been relatively little written about the greater importance being assumed by the concept of patriotism. Patriotism, as a tool with which to mould society is in the process of being reintroduced into society, after its absence following the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In dealing with a concept, such as patriotism, it is necessary to first deal with the definition of the concept. This forms a basis for the argument of this work. Is patriotism being introduced into Russian schools? And if so, why? Without knowing the nature of what patriotism is, it would be very difficult to adequately answer questions such as these.

Issues of identity, patriotism and the mixing of state and religious matters shall be considered. The Russian Orthodox Church played a central role in the political life of Imperial Russia. At times the boundaries between Church and state became blurred, such as the role of the infamous Siberian monk Gregory Rasputin. Church activities were curtailed and eventually all but closed down by the outbreak of the Second World War (1941). However, the link between being Russian and being Orthodox had a strong association. “To be Russian,

³⁹⁵ Gunther, R. & Mughan, A., Editors, *Democracy and the Media: A Comparative Study*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 86.

Dostoyevsky said, is to be Orthodox.”³⁹⁶

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a slow but steady reconciliation between the Church and state has occurred. By late 1997 some 8000 Orthodox communities served more than 27, 000 towns and villages throughout the Russian Federation’s entirety.³⁹⁷

The loss of Marxism-Leninism in 1991 signalled a crisis of social values. Since 1917 state ideology had defined Russia’s place in the world, and the place of her citizens within society. So, the loss of the hegemonic ideology was accompanied by a loss of identity. Does the Russian Orthodox Church offer a viable alternative to Marxism-Leninism?

3.1 Neo-Soviet Ideology and the Fluctuations of Identity

As one of the most prominent US political scientists, Michael Urban clearly stated his position, with regard to the importance of identity in post-communist politics. “Politics in post-communist societies is in large measure a politics of identity. Central to it [...] national communities recreate themselves.”³⁹⁸

For over seventy years, various forms of communism have shaped Russia’s consciousness. By ‘various forms of communism,’ I refer to the ‘ritual’ of reversing or altering the policies of the previous Soviet leader. Rites of passage which included denouncing their predecessor and removing and alienating his followers from power. Nikita Krushchev denounced Iosif Stalin, and in turn was denounced by his successor.

Culturally, communism was ‘sold’ to the populace via the all-pervading Socialist Realism. All competing ideologies and identities were either purged or incorporated into the Soviet structure.

Competing political ideologies were outlawed. But, the resurrection of the Russian Orthodox

³⁹⁶ Laqueur, W., *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia*, New York, Harper Collins, 1997, p. 66.

³⁹⁷ White, S., *Russia’s New Politics: The Management of a Post-Communist Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 204.

³⁹⁸ Urban, M., *The Politics of Identity in Russia’s Post-communist Transition: The Nation Against Itself*, *Slavic Review: American Quarterly of Russian, Eurasian and East European Studies*, Volume 53, Number 3: 733 - 765, Fall 1994, p 733.

faith by Stalin during the darkest year of 1941 (as a rallying point for the people) was achieved under strict state supervision. The Great Patriotic War was fought as a struggle for the very survival of the 'Motherland' against an aggressive foreign enemy.

On the Soviet side, the war was not fought on the premise of the very survival of communism being at stake. Perhaps this is a realisation by the authorities that the excesses of the Stalinist purges were fresh in the minds of the Russian people and a call to arms under the banner of communism was likely to fail. The Germans, on the other hand, portrayed the conflict along ideological grounds. The war was to result in the crushing, not only of the hated and feared Bolshevism, but the subjugation of an 'inferior people.'

The defeat of Nazi Germany saw the beginning of the Soviet Union's re-entry onto the world's international stage, as an equal partner. An embodiment of this ideal was the Soviet Union's permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian Federation is the Soviet Union's recognised successor state, by virtue of inheriting the seat on the United Nations Security Council. In the immediate post-communist euphoria the former Eastern Bloc wished to distance themselves as far as possible from any associations of their communist past, embracing the concept of a market economy. This embracing of the new brought about a crisis in identity, "[...] Russian national identity was closely intertwined with patriotic feelings for the now deceased Soviet State."³⁹⁹

In attempting to redefine an identity a dual system of acquiring and rejecting symbology has occurred. On the one hand, a recovery of identity markers (that is symbols, rituals, anthems, history, literature and so on) from the period which preceded the Bolsheviks rise to power. Some of the pre-Soviet symbols and institutions that have been recovered in Russia include; the double headed eagle, the imperial flag, Orthodox Church and the reburial of the last imperial family.⁴⁰⁰

These re-invoked images are very important to the concept of national identity. Their power lies in a latent symbolism, which awakens a sense of identity. Images that embody the idea of

³⁹⁹ Heo, U. & Horowitz, S., op. cit., p. 246.

⁴⁰⁰ Suny, R. G., "Russia's Identity Crisis" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 363 – 368, pp. 363 - 364.

a nation are more important as emblems of the national idea than as pictorial things.⁴⁰¹

The second part of this system refers to the attempt to purge identity markers associated with the communist past. Such acts as the toppling of statues dedicated to various ‘heroes’ of the communist era and the renaming of towns and streets, eliminating these connections.⁴⁰²

Symbology, when offered to the public, is best done so within a polysemy and polysemic framework. This is because “[...] nothing is interpreted neutrally, and meaning can not be imposed.”⁴⁰³ The open ended symbology used, draws upon or appeals to existing perceptions which are already circulating in the public. Politicians or those who seek to benefit from introducing a new ideology or system are then able to apply the media to achieve these ends.

Lull gives an account, which would seem to substantiate my analysis on the use of symbology. “When the media and popular culture contribute to social change, this occurs because represented ideas appeal to predisposition and intentions people already hold.”⁴⁰⁴ Therefore, it is a matter of being able to ‘harness’ existing public perceptions and prejudices.

Rhetoric of the early post-communist debate has revolved around the issues of stigmatising and purging the Soviet past. This was seen no more so than in the struggle between President Yeltsin and the Parliament. On 12 March, 1993 Ruslan Khasbulatov (at this stage Chairman of the Supreme Soviet) stated that the entire executive branch was “genetically linked with Bolshevism.” Yeltsin’s reply hinted that Khasbulatov and his followers were anti-constitutional.⁴⁰⁵

Attempts by politicians trying to score ‘political points’ by referring to their opposition as Soviet are somewhat unusual. A large proportion of the Russian political establishment and bureaucracy has a Soviet era heritage. On a deeper level of analysis of the situation, a pattern has emerged, through the use of a mixture of cultural symbology and language. A “store of cultural ‘materials’ inherited from the past that are available to contemporary political actors

⁴⁰¹ Battaglia, B., *Rhetorics of Self-Making*, Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1995, p. 10.

⁴⁰² Urban, M., op. cit., p. 733

⁴⁰³ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 143.

⁴⁰⁴ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 143.

⁴⁰⁵ Urban, M., op. cit., p. 736.

endeavouring to (re)construct a national identity.”⁴⁰⁶

Political actors try to capitalise on the situation, through a ‘logical’ sequence of phases by creating binary opposition. The process begins with “[...] actors [...] they appropriate language and symbols of the past in order to deploy them against their opponents.”⁴⁰⁷ This situation is not unique to Russia, although it may be considered to be utilised more aggressively in the former Eastern Bloc nations.

An attempt is made to bestow upon the actor good virtues and negative connotations on their opponent. This is achieved by trying to exploit the existing preconceptions of the public. Political actors, “[...] by unmasking others as ‘communists,’ they present themselves as defenders of the nation, as bearers of the national interest.”⁴⁰⁸ A creation of the theme of good versus bad.

Another equally important point emerges from the process of stigmatising political opponents. It is inferred that “[...] by demonising others onto who is projected culpability for the discredited past.”⁴⁰⁹ In other words, by association failures that occurred in the Soviet system are linked with those who are labelled a communist. It may be drawn, by inference that the ‘communist’ is therefore a failure.

The political rhetoric which is used in political communication, the messages have been encoded against ‘the other,’ (in this context to be defined as alien, evil, treasonous [...] etc.) although these messages are sometimes redirected back to their (Collective) sender. This ideal is embodied in Iurii Lotman’s theory of *hyper-semiosis*.

Hyper-semiosis occurs when “a communicative orientation aiming to realise itself in one ‘great word,’ that functions in political struggle as the annihilation of the other through the incantation of certain words possessing magical properties - “the Russian Idea” and its synecdoches on the one side of the spectrum, “reform,” “democracy” and like terms on the other.”⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁶ Urban, M., op. cit., p. 737.

⁴⁰⁷ Urban, M., op. cit., pp. 737 - 38.

⁴⁰⁸ Urban, M., op. cit., pp. 738 - 39.

⁴⁰⁹ Urban, M., op. cit., p. 739.

⁴¹⁰ Urban, M., op. cit., pp. 744 - 45

Lotman's hyper-semiosis manifests itself in the context of the construction of self as a political subject. The use of 'great' and 'magical' words can be a potent symbol for the user, but with one important proviso. Imagery created by highly charged words and the manipulation of the desired response can be directed by the user so long as connotations associated with its meaning remain constant.

Relying on the premise that perceptions and definitions remaining constant would be a hazardous course of action. Culture and society are in a state of constant flux, in terms of social definitions, as a result of individual and collective experience. Nor are definitions and perceptions within a given society uniform or constant.

To illustrate my point, I refer to the general Russian public's perception and meaning (and associations) of the concept of democracy. On the eve of the Soviet Union's demise, democracy in the mind of the public seemed to be linked to such ideas as material and monetary wealth, as well as the more usual connections of political and individual freedom. This perception may have been moulded by the domestic media's portrayal of the Western life and culture.

Images of prosperous Western countries, cities and people began to be shown on TV sets as the walls of state censorship were being eroded. This image of Western wealth was (and still is) further reinforced by a high rate of consumption of foreign soap-operas. As a rule, soap-operas concentrate on the themes of power and success, as money can be used to acquire these concepts, wealth is central to the story.

For the 'average' Russian, political freedom and a market economy have not brought about the expected personal wealth. An argument for democracy, as represented by the freedom of speech and political affiliation could be countered by the sentiment that, 'it is all very well having political freedom, but without the ability to feed your family adequately it is rather meaningless.'⁴¹¹ Poverty, corruption and the vast wealth accumulated by the oligarchs have left a sizeable portion of Russian society feeling disaffected and disenfranchised from the new system. Democracy has become associated with these negative factors present in the Russian

⁴¹¹ While studying in Moscow in 1998 - 1999, I was informed about the average salary in Post-Soviet Russia some salary figures of close friends and university staff. A Music teacher (school) earns \$US25 per month, a teacher at university earns 800 roubles per month, security guards at Russian University of Friendship Peoples

political model.

State statistics have painted a bleak picture for the ‘average’ Russian. In 1997 the National Living Standards Centre identified 79 million people living below the poverty line (more than 50 % of the population).⁴¹² Poverty had become more exaggerated since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The rich had become richer and the poor had become poorer. A comparison between share of the nation’s wealth, in 1991 and 1997 reveals the trend.

- 1991 - least well paid 20% of population earned 12% of all money incomes. Best paid 20% earned 31% of all money incomes.
- 1997 - Least well paid 20% earned 6% of all money incomes. Best paid 20% earned 60% of all money incomes.⁴¹³

By 1997 1.5% of the Russian population had acquired control over 65% of the nation’s wealth.⁴¹⁴ A large and visible imbalance between rich and poor. These figures give the reader a possible reason for the general public’s frustration and helplessness over the direction taken by the Russian economy and the absence of any tangible results from years of economic ‘shock therapy.’

To an extent, no viable ‘home grown’ cultural alternative had been developed to replace the identity void left by the collapse of the discredited Marxist-Leninist doctrine. But, why had no alternative evolved during the seventy years of communist rule?

A possible explanation for the absence of an alternative identity is provided by Claude Levi-Strauss’s theory of ‘*Indifferent variety*.’ A critical assumption of this theory states that “repression of communication by the party-state prevents individual and collective identities from circulating in society.”⁴¹⁵ The Soviet Union demanded a mass collective identity, imposed by the party-state upon the people. This mass collective identity shaped and reinforced by use of the media and arts, personified by Socialist Realist culture.

receives 400 roubles a month.

⁴¹² White, S., op. cit., p. 158.

⁴¹³ White, S., op. cit., p. 145.

⁴¹⁴ Ibid.

⁴¹⁵ Urban, M., op. cit., p. 746.

Socialist Realism was designed to shape the 'perfect' Soviet citizen and to mobilise the populace to achieve various state goals. The process of creating an identity continues and has resulted in a dilemma. In the search for a model of identity, some have retraced Russian history (prior to the Bolshevik take-over) in search of a uniquely Russian brand of identity. Another group of thought has looked to the West for an identity.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn contemplated the dilemma of the Soviet Union's boundaries and identity in 1990. The Soviet Union was facing a crisis, civil wars were breaking out (or had broken out) in some of the republics and the Baltic states were demanding independence, while the communist leadership of the Eastern Bloc were being toppled.

"The word 'Russia' has become soiled and tattered through careless use; it is invoked freely in all sorts of inappropriate contexts. Thus when the monster-like USSR was lunging for chunks of Asia and Africa, the reaction the world over was: "Russia, the Russians" [...] What exactly is Russia? Today, Now? Who today considers himself part of the future Russia? And where do Russians themselves see the boundaries of their land?"⁴¹⁶

3.1.1 East or West?

There appear to be two main alternatives in Russia's search for identity. The competing identities a 'Western' or an 'Eastern' type, this process is still in a state of flux and no one identity dominates entirely.

Russian academic Georgy Shakhnazarov summed up Russia's dilemma of identity and some possible choices in a concise manner.

"Russia is entering the 21st century in the throes of a severe economic, social and political crisis. Its troubles are made even more difficult by the turmoil in people's minds. As the Soviet Union broke up the society lost its goals and values that guided it for seventy years and the resulting vacuum has yet to be filled. The nation that has more than 1000 years of history

⁴¹⁶ Suryadinata, L., *Nationalism and Globalisation: East and West*, Singapore, Institute of South East Asian Studies, 2000, p. 325.

behind it is now once again in search of identity, trying to answer the questions important for itself and for the world: 'Who are we, and what do we want?' Primary among these questions will be the issue whether Russia belongs to Europe or to Asia or perhaps constitutes a unique society which is to serve as a bridge between the two continents, a country with a unifying mission that expresses the Eurasian spirit.⁴¹⁷

A 'Western' concept centres on several prominent ideals associated with the term. The concepts revolve around the ideas that a country becomes 'normal' and 'civilised' if it embraces Westernism. 'Normal' and 'civilised' are both subjective and vague ideals, the meanings are multiple. The pivotal aim of those who seek to impose Western identity appears to be Russia's (re)entry the elite club of the world's international forum, within close proximity to first world nations (particularly Western Europe). Russia's gradual shift in closer relations with the West had another effect. A unifying influence of a common enemy, i.e. the West, no longer existed. This may have been a contributing factor to the break-up of the Soviet Union.⁴¹⁸

Putin has stressed on numerous occasions that he is in support of a more Western orientation for Russia. When it was popular and usual to hang firstly, portraits of Lenin or Kirov during the communist era and portraits of Yeltsin post-1991, Putin chose another figure. He hung the portrait of the Western thinking Tsar, Peter the Great in his office, when working for the St. Petersburg City authorities (during the administration of the city's mayor Anatoli Sobchak).⁴¹⁹

But Putin was not the first person or organisation to try and cash-in on the public's perception of Peter the Great. Yegor Gaidar's party, Russia's Democratic Choice held conventions under huge portraits of the Tsar.⁴²⁰ Boris Yeltsin also tried to form an association with the Westernising Tsar, claiming that Peter the Great was his favourite historical hero. Yeltsin tried to have his political and economic reform programme compared to Peter the

⁴¹⁷ Suryadinata, L., op. cit., p. 339.

⁴¹⁸ Berglund, S., Aarebrot, F. H., Vogt, H. & Karasimeonov, G., op. cit., p. 60.

⁴¹⁹ Putin, V., op. cit., p. 90.

For a detailed account of Peter the Great, refer to Hughes, L., *Russia in the Age of Peter the Great*, London, Yale University Press, 1998.

⁴²⁰ Ra 'anan, U. & Martin, K., Editors, *Russia: A Return to Imperialism?*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1995, p. 4.

Great's efforts at reform and modernisation.⁴²¹

These moves by Russian politicians at linking their image to that of Peter the Great was done during a period of pro-Western sentiment in Russian society. On the surface, it would appear to be a somewhat cynical attempt to cash in on the public mood, through the use of a 'home-grown' hero, which would appeal to Russians patriotic sentiment.

An Eastern focus is centred on finding and adopting the 'Russian idea.' By taking this path, supporters of this method claim that Russia will remain a unique nation with a unique destiny. The assimilation of Western ideals would "corrode the very core of Russian national identity."⁴²² One of the revived concepts from this 'Russian idea' is *sobornost*, a collective body with a common religious / spiritual effort.

Russia's process of globalisation began in the later stages of *perestroika*. The end of the state monopoly on media and publishing saw a massive influx of Western culture. Integration into the world economy was fostered by Russia's need for loans to finance the reform programme. International institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provided Russia with a sizeable proportion of the necessary finance, demanding in return, that certain political and economic conditions were met if their support was to continue.⁴²³

The Singaporean Institute of South East Asian Studies has identified three possible consequences of globalisation upon national identity. The cost of these consequences is as follows:

- Erosion of national identities as a result of cultural homogenisation.
- Strengthening of national or local identities as a reaction or resistance.
- Decline of national identities accompanied by the creation of new identities of hybridity.⁴²⁴

The benefits of globalisation in the Russian Federation have been far from evenly and equally throughout the population. Inequalities and disparities in wealth have become more marked. This contention is confirmed by the Tenth Annual United Nations Development

⁴²¹ Ra 'anan, U. & Martin, K., op. cit., p. 14.

⁴²² Urban, M., op. cit., p. 741.

⁴²³ Suryadinata, L., op. cit., p. 336.

Programme report, which indicated that globalisation only benefits the top 20% of the world's population.⁴²⁵

There appear to be two primary sources of Russian national identity. These sources are the Slavic racial identity and the Russian Orthodox faith. Both of these identities have been in existence for a considerable period of time, they constitute a more Eastern facing identity, where a unique destiny supposedly awaits Russia.

Pan-Slavism is an emotionally charged and popular cause, especially for the far right. The theoretical framework of the Pan-Slavic centres on the ideal of creating a great Slavic state, where the Slavic people of the world are united. This notion is certainly not new, problems of agreeing on the exact nature and boundaries of this 'superstate' have plagued discussions, as problems of definition hampered the creation of a stable German state until the conclusion of the Second World War (*Kleindeutschland* or *Grossdeutschland* - Small Germany or Big Germany).

As with the German example, the issue of fellow peoples living abroad has proved to be a contentious issue in some political circles. After the Soviet Union's disintegration in 1991, some 25 million live in the 'Near Abroad.' These people had never formally emigrated from their native land, but have none the less been left stranded. In some of the ex-Republics they are unwelcome and discriminated against in such areas as citizenship and employment. The dilemma being that returning to Russia is difficult due to the lack of housing and employment to support them.⁴²⁶ Paradoxically, Russia is facing a population crisis, the death rate currently far exceeds the birth rate.

Pan-Slavism is also present on the regional political agenda. The brotherhood ties with the Serbian people, fellow Slavs, provides an example. NATO's campaign against the former Yugoslavia in 1999 stirred sentiment in Russia. History has seen the Russian state prepared to

⁴²⁴ Suryadinata, L., op. cit., pp. 337 - 38.

⁴²⁵ Suryadinata, L., op. cit., pp. 339 - 40.

For public reaction in former Eastern Bloc see also Downing, J., op. cit., p. 47.

⁴²⁶ (1) Suryadinata, L., op. cit., p. 328.

(2) Downing, J., op. cit., pp. 55 - 56.

(3) Skak, M., *From Empire to Anarchy: Post-communist Foreign Policy and International Relations*, London, Hurst & Co., 1996, p. 17.

(4) Ra'anan, U. & Martin, K., Editors, *Russia: A Return to Imperialism?*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1995, p. 7.

resort to waging war to protect their Serbian 'brothers,' the First World War bears testimony to that. During the NATO campaign, the Liberal Democratic Party opened recruitment offices in Russia, for those wanting to fight alongside the Serbs in April 1999.⁴²⁷ A possible cause for the Kremlin's indignation over the Kosovo crisis was NATO's lack of consultation or appreciation of Moscow's point of view. Which would have never occurred during the Cold War years, perhaps an indication of Russia's declining prestige on the international stage as 'has been' superpower.

Mainstream politics has dabbled in the idea of (re)creating a greater Slavic state. For a number of years, negotiations have been conducted among some of the CIS states for a more integrated political structure. This is most noticeable between Russia and Belarus. However, Belarus appears to be the more enthusiastic partner. During mid-April - July 1999, negotiations were conducted to discuss forming a loose union between Belarus, Russia and Yugoslavia. To date, nothing substantial has been implemented or agreed upon.⁴²⁸

Within the diverse and fragmented Russian far right, there exist some common themes and aspirations. At the heart of some of these assumptions, held by the far right, it would appear as though a belief exists in Russia's unique destiny. But this destiny has been spoiled, or at least delayed by hostile foreign intervention, such as communism and the Western inspired transition to a market economy.

- Russian ancient history is a blueprint to national rebirth, prior to foreign inspired reforms.
- National identity will only be retained if the Russian Orthodox Church regains its powerful central position within spiritual life.
- Russia was the prime victim of the Soviet Union.
- Russia must cease the subsidising patronage relationship with the minority cultures in Central Asia.⁴²⁹

Vera Tolz, a prominent British academic, has identified three incompatible variants of a legitimate Russian state. The concepts are based on the beliefs of political theories and aspirations held by various factions;

⁴²⁷ Suryadinata, L., op. cit., p. 331.

⁴²⁸ Suryadinata, L., op. cit., p. 331.

⁴²⁹ Suryadinata, L., op. cit., p. 329.

- Conservative nationalists, ultra-militant communists and Eurasianists believe that the Russian Federation should restore the Union, which should be joined by as many of the former Soviet republics as possible.
- The re-establishment of an imperial Russian territory, resulting in a nation based on Slavic unity. Regions with large Russian minorities resident would be included, such as Northern Kazakhstan.
- A republic consisting of Russian speakers. The Russian speaking diaspora would be integrated into the Russian Federation. Some non-Russian autonomies would be permitted to separate.⁴³⁰

3.2 An Empire Lost

The Soviet Union, was arguably at its pinnacle of power (after the defeat of Nazi Germany in May 1945) by occupying Eastern Europe, this resulted in the division of Europe into 'spheres of influence.' Russia quickly established political control over their occupied zone. For some forty-five years, the Soviet Union's Eastern Bloc remained in existence, the power and prestige associated with Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe became a part of the Russian identity.

This resulted in Winston Churchill's speech which contemplated the significance of what was occurring in Eastern Europe in what was to become a symbol of an emerging reality. On March 5, 1946, at Fulton Missouri, Churchill announced the "fall of an Iron Curtain" across Europe.⁴³¹

Apart from several 'uprisings' (East Germany, Czechoslovakia 1968, Hungary 1956), Russian authority was supreme until 1989 - 1990. By this time a change in political attitude (as embodied in Glasnost and Perestroika) and a will by the various nationalities for self-determination saw a rapid break-up of this once vast empire.

The Soviet Empire had been composed of four layers. By late 1991 three of these layers had vanished.

⁴³⁰ Suny, R. G., "Russia's Identity Crisis" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 364.

- Six East - Central European states.
- 14 Soviet Republics.
- Outer layer of diplomatic ties and alliances - India, Cuba, Angola, Egypt and Libya to name a few.
- Deep inner layer of Russia. Ethnic zones such as Chechnya, Tartarstan, Sakha and Dagestan.⁴³²

The disintegration of the Soviet Union was rapid. All of the republics chose to break away from Russia. There are still remnants of this process occurring today, for instance in Chechnya. Polish born, British analyst Bogdan Szajkowski identified 274 trouble spots, disputes and ethno-territorial conflicts in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in 1993.⁴³³ But, why did this process occur in the first place?

On the surface the Soviet Union appeared to be a strong state. A state, which controlled the country's political means, economic, means and means of culture production. So, it seems strange that the state ideology failed when it had these advantages at its disposal. But, the hegemony was being weakened slowly over a prolonged period. Other ideologies had slipped into the Soviet Union, assisted by the rapid advances in communications technology.

This trickle of information via the various forms of *samizdat*, slowly but surely undermined the CPSU as the gatekeeper and eroded the dominant ideology. "The impact of subtle, subversive symbolism can be far greater than often repeated representations of the dominant ideology."⁴³⁴

Lull offers his interpretation of why the Soviet Union failed to remain as a single political entity after the collapse of the Marxist-Leninist ideology. "Social uprisings [...], the states of the former Soviet Empire [...] took place because conditions encouraged production of subversive ideology and the construction of resistant interpretations and actions by audiences."⁴³⁵

The explanation by Lull appears to allude to the breakdown of the Marxist-Leninist

⁴³¹ Editor, Thomas, V., *The War Years: 1946 the Verdict of History*, London, Marshall Cavendish, 1991, p. 226.

⁴³² Downing, J., op. cit., p. 47.

⁴³³ Skak, M., op. cit., p. 6.

⁴³⁴ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 126.

⁴³⁵ Lull, J., op. cit. (1995), p. 127.

hegemony caused a vacuum of ideology. Immediately following the breakdown, other actors sought to take advantage of the situation during this period and manipulate an agenda of national independence in the wake of independence from communism.

In the wake of the political vacuum, with no viable heirs apparent, the situation in Russia has become volatile. Political instability coupled with a succession of economic crises has created fertile grounds for the rise of political extremism. Shenfield has drawn a comparison between Weimar Germany and contemporary Russia, with regard to the potential dangers of emergent fascism.⁴³⁶

At this stage the comparison is somewhat overly pessimistic. Crippling inflation and a total collapse of the German economy in the wake of a world war, followed quickly by a civil war (as well as the breakdown of the central authority of the weak government) proved to be more severe than what Russia is currently facing.

Several leading Russian politicians have made public announcements on what they saw as necessary to restore the Russian State to what it 'should be.' The remedies offered are expansionist in nature, they may appeal to any sentiment in the public which may be nostalgic toward the concept of empire.

- Vladimir Zhirinovskiy - has argued for the recreation of the 19th Century Russian Empire.
- Gennady Zyganov - advocates the "voluntary recreation of a unified union state."
- Boris Yeltsin - stated that Russia had a special sphere of influence of security matters in the former Soviet Union.⁴³⁷

All of these ideas have the foundation that Russia has a special place in the world. The notions bound in these expressions advocate the loss of sovereignty of neighbouring states. This may be in the form of the complete absorption of the territory into the Russian Federation or the loss of some of a state's functions (such as conducting their own foreign relations).

⁴³⁶ Shenfield, S., op. cit., p. 49.

3.3 Use of Patriotism in Russian Society

There has been an absence of State taught patriotism since the collapse of the Soviet Union occurred. For this reason, it becomes necessary to examine the role that was played by patriotism during the Soviet Union's existence. To look for any grounds for similarities and differences, which exist between these two eras, this will form the basis of a discussion later on in the work.

The political elite can use both patriotism and nationalism as a symbol, to rally a country's citizens toward a social or political goal. However, to try and define identity and communality through ethnicity could prove to be very unpredictable. Russia's various ethnic groups, some of which seek a measure of dependence from Moscow, could feel alienated in a nationalistically based setting. The Soviet Union based national sentiment on patriotism. Both of these concepts offer a potentially powerful pull on a populace that is in despair after over a decade of hardship. Which of the two options would provide the political elite with the best means of achieving their goals?

Since President Putin's election victory in March 2000, there has been an attempt to resurrect a strong and great Russia again. Changes have been brought about in politics and society to help in the creation of this 'new' Russia. Mechanisms such as the creation of the seven 'super districts,' exercising greater control over the content of the mass media and a myriad of new laws are all designed with the intention of once again making the Kremlin the centre of power in the Russian Federation.

As a centralised state, the Kremlin may be able to better control the direction and development of society. However, they need a committed and motivated population to help them realise their goals. The current generation of Russia's workforce and society aged in their 20's to 30's should be the group that helps to realise societal objectives. But, this age group grew up in the era of *perestroika* and *bespredel*. An era of firstly great potential and hope, then followed by an equal measure of disappointment and frustration for many. In effect, they are a 'lost' generation.

⁴³⁷ McFaul, M., op. cit., p. 256.

Putin has made comments regarding the importance and the role that patriotism will play in Russian society. As a consequence of the above-mentioned 'lost' generation, the political elite has been forced into concentrating their efforts in guiding the consciousness of the next generation. The plan seems to be long term and will run a course a lot longer than Putin's presidency. One of the best places to initiate training and instilling values and ideology are in the centres of cultural production.

Centres of cultural production include such institutions of society as; the army, the church and schools. These institutions help to mould an individual's identity and their place in society. They also possess qualities of political power, therefore can command a measure of respect and acquiescence by members of the public.

By making a concerted effort on influencing the next generation of Russians through the reintroduction of lessons in patriotism, the government's actions possibly indicate intentions of having large-scale societal objectives. Rather than trying to re-educate society into attaining the 'correct' values, another method could be to ask a question. What has made Russian society become so cynical and distant from the State?

3.3.1 Definition of Patriotism

It is necessary to begin this article with some key definitions that will help to facilitate the understanding of some arguments, which will be used. Patriotism is a key aspect in this article, but different aspects surrounding the concept need to be explained. Then, facets such as the motivating factors of patriotism will become more clearly understood and appreciated.

Patriot – “A person who loves his country, and zealously defends its interests.”⁴³⁸

Patriotic – “Actuated or inspired by the love of one's country, directed to the public welfare.”⁴³⁹

Patriotism - “The qualities of a patriot, love of ones country.”⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁸ Patterson, R. F., Editor, *The Regent English Dictionary*, London, No. 1 Publishing Co Ltd., p.296.

⁴³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁴⁰ Patterson, R. F., Editor, *The Cambridge English Dictionary*, London, Tophi Books, 1990, p. 296

“[...] is a sentiment, a psychological attachment to one’s nation, literally a love for one’s country.”⁴⁴¹

The concept of patriotism is relatively straightforward. Patriotism is derived from the Latin word *patria*, which means fatherland.⁴⁴² Although, as earlier stated, the concepts of patriotism and nationalism are different, patriotism provides nationalist sentiment with a conduit for its objectives by forming an attachment to one’s state. The significant traits, which may occur, are the generation of national unity and solidarity and by instilling a sense of rootedness and belonging in individuals.⁴⁴³

3.3.2 Patriotism in the Soviet Union

Patriotism in the Soviet Union, underwent a transformation from the later years of Joseph Stalin’s rule (1950-53), into a more Russian form of patriotism.⁴⁴⁴ Focus was shifted from an international basis to Russian oriented view. Elements of Russian history were used selectively to glorify Russian accomplishments and used to give or legitimate Soviet rule.

As Soviet patriotism evolved, it led to a restoration of Russian traditions and values.⁴⁴⁵ The process was selective in identifying heroes and villains of Russian history, to provide models of behaviour for Soviet citizens to either emulate or avoid. The resurrection of symbols and people seems to have been conducted on a need basis. That is, when a situation was dire enough or the political leadership wanted to attain a given goal, symbols were brought to life and given a meaning and context.

A clear example in providing evidence of this phenomenon occurred in the Second World War, after the German invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. The political elite’s appeal to the Soviet people was a call to defend Russia and not socialism. Once again, the concept of *Rodina* (Motherland) was used as a rallying symbol for Soviet citizens to resist the German threat.⁴⁴⁶ The Russian name for the Second World War also suggests that a cause

⁴⁴¹ Heywood, A., op. cit., p. 256.

⁴⁴² Ibid.

⁴⁴³ Heywood, A., op. cit., p. 257.

⁴⁴⁴ Laqueur, W., *Black Hundred: The Rise of the Extreme Right in Russia*, New York, Harper Collins, 1997, pp. 63 – 64.

⁴⁴⁵ Laqueur, W., op. cit., p. 62.

⁴⁴⁶ Laqueur, L., op. cit., p.63.

other than the defence of socialism / communism was used, which is known as *The Great Patriotic War*.

Another, seemingly incompatible symbol of the past, which was erected by the Soviet regime during the first desperate months of the Great Patriotic War was allowing the Russian Orthodox Church to operate again. Although the Church was tightly restricted and controlled in its functions, this was a significant event. However, the link between being Russian and being Orthodox had a strong association.

Upon the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991, the ethos of Soviet patriotism was abandoned. Boris Kagarlitsky, a Moscow based sociologist offered a possible explanation for the neglect of a State offered course in patriotism.

“In the early 1990’s, the reformers/Westernisers viewed themselves as opponents of tradition and the enemies of patriotism. They sought to break with the past and completely rebuild all social structures. Inevitably, the rhetoric of patriotism passed into the arsenal of the communists.”⁴⁴⁷

During Boris Yeltsin’s rise to power and eventual winning of the presidency of the Russian Federation, he used an anti-Communist platform to bolster his support among the people. The argument was simple – communism was negative and democracy was positive. Patriotism’s close association with the Soviet Union meant that it was classed as being a negative aspect and therefore made redundant in the new ‘democratic’ Russian society.

Yeltsin possibly chose this strategy, as conflict emerged between the executive and legislative branches of government. The use of this simplistic manipulation was designed to be highly emotive and easy for the Russian public to ‘understand’ and digest. Opponents and obstacles to Yeltsin’s will could then be labelled as being Soviet, with the resulting loss of credibility that came with this branding.

3.3.3 Patriotism or Nationalism?

The diverse ethnicity of the Soviet Union's population made exploiting ethnic divisions a potentially very volatile situation. Various brands of state 'sponsored' nationalism and patriotism tends to be broad based and inclusive. The Russian Federation has continued this practice, as a rule. Nationalism tends to be based on ethnicity rather than citizenship.

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Russian nationalism has focused on *Rossiiskii Narod* (Russian citizens) The ethnically pure component *Russkii* (ethnic Russian) has been largely ignored.⁴⁴⁸ This has continued after the demise of the Soviet Union, after which, the ethnic mix of the Russian State has been more homogenous. A 1996 census revealed that ethnic Russians made up 81.5% of the Russian Federation's population.⁴⁴⁹

Enclaves of other ethnicities are present in the predominantly Russian Russia. Some of these peoples have been content to be ruled from Moscow, but others have sought a limited autonomy within the Russian State. These autonomous republics, or 'Republics' as they are referred to, are ethnically nations within a nation. A Russian term for this situation is *Matrioshka Nationalism*.⁴⁵⁰

Sources of ethnic mobilisation seem to originate not from Russian government sources, but from anti-state forces in Russia. For instance, the separatist Chechen forces. The Singaporean

⁴⁴⁷ Kagarlitsky, B., *Patriotism for New Russians*, Moscow Times, 1 June, 2001. JRL #5278, 1 June, 2001.

⁴⁴⁸ (1) Suryadinata, L., op. cit., p. 324.

(2) Shenfield, S., op. cit., p. 49.

⁴⁴⁹ Suryadinata, L., op. cit., p. 323.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid. The term refers to the traditional Russian dolls. Sometimes, as many as 30 smaller dolls can be contained within the biggest doll. A series of different sized figures each hidden in the next bigger sized doll.

Institute of South East Asian Studies identified two main factors, which bind the Chechens together in their bid for separation from the Russian Federation. These points are ethnicity and religion (Islam).⁴⁵¹

Advances in modern mass media communications have made the opportunity for public manipulation a much easier task. The communication process has become much more centralised, which ensures fewer communication nodes to monitor. TV's introduction has provided the chance to communicate directly and instantaneously into many houses at once. "Images concerning symbols of national identity can be communicated to the whole nation at the same time."⁴⁵²

Changes in the nature of media ownership can also assist the government in its information dissemination goals. Media ownership is in the process of being concentrated in fewer and fewer hands. This presents an opportunity for a virtual monopoly on political communication. The close proximity of big business to the government, who controls a large portion of the private media, merely reinforces the notion of a monopolistic communication process.

"Contemporary mass media, however, provide the opportunity for virtually instantaneous mass communication and also for a monopoly of that communication. [...] possibility exists [...] a modern government to sustain a continuous manipulation of the national identity dynamic for political purposes."⁴⁵³

During the era of the Soviet Union, the political elite ruled over a very ethnically diverse country. The country's leaders realised the potential volatility of attempting to exploit nationalistic sentiments with such a diverse population. The authorities used a more inclusive policy, based on citizenship, as opposed to nationality.

Although the Kremlin has chosen to follow the less volatile route of patriotic political discourse, some elements in the right wing parties have stirred up nationalist sentiment based on race. The government, has on occasion selectively used a nationalistically oriented

⁴⁵¹ Suryadinata, L., op. cit., p. 340.

⁴⁵² Bloom, W., *Personal Identity, National Identity and International Relations*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 85.

⁴⁵³ Bloom, W., op. cit., p. 86.

discourse in order to achieve State objectives. This seems to have been conducted on a small-scale and selective basis. In 1997, a Russian academic, Valery Tishkov noted a change in the direction of academic and political discourse;

“With the emergence of ethnic politics in the former Soviet Union, ethnographic primordialism ceased to be merely a marginal and empirical approach and suddenly revealed its potential for being enthusiastically applied in the quest for new identities, as well as nationalist political discourse.”⁴⁵⁴

The most obvious recent manifestation of this change was witnessed after the outbreak of the Second Chechen War. A hysteria was created during the course of the infamous apartment bombings, which occurred late in 1999. This in turn generated ill feeling toward the ‘Other.’ Many Chechens and ‘Blacks’ from the Caucasus region were expelled from Moscow.⁴⁵⁵

3.3.4 Reintroduction of Patriotism into Contemporary Russian Society

In one sense President Vladimir Putin has a connection to a form of continuity with the Soviet past. He has stated that, “I was a pure and utterly successful product of Soviet patriotic education.”⁴⁵⁶

Putin has linked patriotism to a strong Russian state, going as far as to imply that without patriotism Russia would sink into an abyss.

“Patriotism is a feeling of pride in one’s country, its history and accomplishments. [...] Patriotism is the source of our people’s courage, staunchness and strength. If we lose patriotism and the national pride and dignity that are connected with it, we will no longer be a nation capable of great achievements.”⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁴ Duffield, M., *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security*, London, Zed Books, 2001, p. 110.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁶ Putin, V., *First Person*, London, Hutchinson, 2000, p. 42.

⁴⁵⁷ Putin, V., op. cit., p. 214.

In an interview on the loyal state TV channel *RTR* in October 2002, Putin confirmed his stated belief in the link between patriotism and a strong nation. “I believe that patriotism and love of one’s homeland are the basic values for any nation or country.”⁴⁵⁸

Promoting the notion of ‘patriotic education’ was in existence before Vladimir Putin’s rapid rise through the political ranks. As early as 1998, the head of *Rosvoentsentr* (Russian Military Historical-Cultural Centre) Vice-admiral Yuri Kvyatkovsky, proposed a similar programme as the current one under the title ‘Russian Patriot.’⁴⁵⁹

The nature of the programme that was proposed by Kvyatkovsky had a clear set of goals, including the nature of the values that the education was intended instil in Russia’s youth.

“[...] resurrecting military-sporting games and similar activities. This will put the ‘Zarnitsa’ (a pioneer tradition consisting of military related sporting events) back in schools. From there, the high-impact part of the programme is to consist of observing *Defenders of the Fatherland* day and month. In the conception of the authors’ at *Rosvoentsentr*, all of this will cause youth to accept the right values, reject the wrong, and enter the draft age with a feeling of profound pleasure in heading off to active military service.”⁴⁶⁰

The goals and objectives of the above-proposed programme would appear to be aiming to reintroduce the ‘tried and true’ methods of Soviet patriotic education for the purposes of achieving the desires of the contemporary political elite. But, why would the new ‘democratic’ elite want to use Soviet methods to achieve their ends?

A sizeable portion of the ‘new democratic’ elite are made up from the Soviet elite, the so-called *nomenklatura*. 75% of President Boris Yeltsin’s Presidential Administration was drawn from the communist *nomenklatura*. This proportion was matched in the Russian government.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁸ *Putin Wants Powerful Russia its Citizens to be Proud of*, RTR, 7 October, 2002, BBC Monitoring. JRL #6483, 10 October, 2002.

⁴⁵⁹ Makarin, A., *Hello, Zarnitsa! The Government has Approved a Programme for the Patriotic Education of Citizens*, www.segodnya.ru, 22 February, 2001. JRL #5112, 23 February, 2001.

⁴⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶¹ White, S., *Russia’s New Politics: The Management of a Post-Communist Society*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 267.

The Russian government identified a problem that ‘plagued’ Russian society as “indifference, egoism, individualism, cynicism, unmotivated aggression and a lack of respect for the State and social institutions.”⁴⁶² As a result of these listed problems the government sought a solution that would; “improve national morale, but will also aid the preservation of social stability, help the resurrection of the nation’s economy and strengthen the country’s defensive capacity.”⁴⁶³

In order to try and resolve the mentioned problems, the government announced on March 12, 2001 their intention to introduce a five-year programme of ‘patriotic education.’ This was enshrined in the government’s ‘Decree on the State Programme Patriotic Education of the Citizens of the Russian Federation for 2001 – 2005.’⁴⁶⁴ The text of the document lamented that the “gradual loss of traditional Russian patriotism has become more and more noticeable.”⁴⁶⁵

News of the decree was published in the parliament’s newspaper *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, in a full-page article format, which has similarities with the Soviet past.⁴⁶⁶ When new laws were enacted in the Soviet Union, they were often announced by publishing the entirety of the legislation in newspapers. Some US\$6.4 million was allocated to the funding of “patriotic museum exhibitions, academic research, sporting events, contests and conferences.”⁴⁶⁷

To win over the youth of Russia, a number of initiatives have been proposed, using a mixture of modern and traditional lures. Some of the ideas that have been proposed have included methods such as;

- Video games based on famous points in Russian history.
- Soviet tradition of naming schools after contemporary and historical national heroes to be restored.

⁴⁶² *Russia Unveils 5-yr Plan for “Patriotic Education,”* Reuters, 12 March, 2001. JRL #5146, 12 March, 2001.

⁴⁶³ Gentleman, A., *Reinventing Russia Following Recent Knocks to the Nation’s Pride, A Programme of ‘Patriotic Education’ has Been Launched by the Government,* The Guardian, 21 March, 2001. JRL #5162, 21 March, 2001.

⁴⁶⁴ *Russia Unveils 5-yr Plan for “Patriotic Education,”* Reuters, 12 March, 2001. JRL #5146, 12 March, 2001.

⁴⁶⁵ Gentleman, A., *Reinventing Russia Following Recent Knocks to the Nation’s Pride, A Programme of ‘Patriotic Education’ has Been Launched by the Government,* The Guardian, 21 March, 2001. JRL #5162, 21 March, 2001.

⁴⁶⁶ *Russia Unveils 5-yr Plan for “Patriotic Education,”* Reuters, 12 March, 2001. JRL #5146, 12 March, 2001.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

- Patriotic websites to be established by the government.
- The media will be actively involved in promoting certain values.⁴⁶⁸

A measure of continuity would appear to exist between the current Putin administration and the Gorbachev administration. The pro-Kremlin website, www.strana.ru published an upbeat appraisal of Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to a Moscow school, to deliver a lesson in patriotism.

“The former President of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, participated in the *Day of Knowledge* activities at school 237 in Moscow on September 1. He greeted the schoolchildren on the festive occasion and then gave a lesson in patriotism to senior graders. He urged the pupils not to be shy of being a patriot. By abusing patriotism, people lose their bearings, he declared. Under the guise of struggling for freedom and democracy, we must not trample on our past.”⁴⁶⁹

Publicity and lures are not solely targeting Russian youth. The wider public has been exposed to a publicity campaign aimed at promoting the new patriotic programme. Posters that portray the Russian medieval hero Yury Dolgoruky on horseback have greeted Moscow's pedestrians. Dolgoruky, dressed in armour is seen calling and urging citizens to help Russia overcome her present difficulties.⁴⁷⁰

The nature of the funding allocation was very specific in some categories. Specific categories included study devoted to;

“State activities for the propaganda of patriotism in the mass media, including prizes for patriotic journalists and funds for the active opposition to distortion and falsification of the history of the Fatherland.”⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁸ Gentleman, A., *Reinventing Russia Following Recent Knocks to the Nation's Pride, A Programme of 'Patriotic Education' has Been Launched by the Government*, The Guardian, 21 March, 2001. JRL #5162, 21 March, 2001.

⁴⁶⁹ *Gorbachev Gives a Lesson in Patriotism in Moscow School, Former President Sees Vladimir Putin's Efforts in Reforming Education as Positive*, www.strana.ru, 1 September, 2001. JRL #5422, 3 September, 2001.

⁴⁷⁰ *Russia's School for Patriots*, AFP, 15 March, 2001. JRL #5154, 15 March, 2001.

⁴⁷¹ *Russia Unveils 5-yr Plan for "Patriotic Education"*, Reuters, 12 March, 2001. JRL #5146, 12 March, 2001.

What does the government expect to achieve from providing ‘patriotic education,’ in terms of output? During interviews with journalists and in press conferences, it has become clear that the government has some set expectations as to the benefits of ‘patriotic education.’ Wording of the decree states that a main aim of the legislation is to;

“[...] create in citizens a high patriotic consciousness, a sense of loyalty to the Fatherland, and a readiness to perform civil duties and constitutional obligations in order to defend the interests of the homeland.”⁴⁷²

An anonymous official from the Ministry of Education also outlined the importance and relevance of patriotic education in contemporary Russian society. The official was also careful to stress that it was patriotism and not nationalism that was the subject.

“Sociological research has shown that since the collapse of the Soviet Union, when a great many shocking facts were published about the USSR’s history, there has been a wholesale rejection of the country’s past by its population – including those aspects of it in which one could take pride. [...] Our programme is not aimed at imposing some kind of new ideology on the population; we are highlighting the importance of education in love and respect for one’s country.”⁴⁷³

Former President of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev has lent his support to the notion of ‘correcting’ the textbooks. Whilst giving a lesson a patriotism lesson, he stated that “[...] in particular, to provide schools with a good material basis, to overcome the chaos found in textbooks [...]”⁴⁷⁴ An indication or clue of the likely nature and orientation of the new textbooks can be found in the government’s announcement of its intention to reintroduce ‘patriotic education’ in March 2001.

A Moscow based political analyst, Andrei Piontkovsky, commented on a likely outcome of the financial incentives. “It means that a great many people are going to receive a lot of

⁴⁷² Gentleman, A., *Reinventing Russia Following Recent Knocks to the Nation’s Pride, A Programme of ‘Patriotic Education’ has Been Launched by the Government*, The Guardian, 21 March, 2001. JRL #5162, 21 March, 2001.

⁴⁷³ Ibid.

money, and make patriotism their profession.”⁴⁷⁵ However, even if some people are going to make patriotism a profession, this does not necessarily involve a personal commitment to the State philosophy. Therefore, the problem still remains, only a surface facade of patriotism may be created.

If the results of a November 2001 poll are anything to go by, Piontkovsky’s scepticism may be well placed. The poll asked respondents to rank, in order of importance twenty-five words that expressed human values. Concepts and notions such as ‘security,’ ‘peace’ and ‘family’ ranked highest at over 30%. However, ‘patriotism’ was only ranked as being of high importance by 3% of respondents. Additionally, 29% of respondents considered that “patriotism does not mean attitude but means a heroic deed.”⁴⁷⁶

A poll result such as the one above, if it gives a true indication of public sentiment, is bad news for the government and its intentions. Not only does society display apathy toward the concept of patriotism, but the public’s and the government’s definition of the concept would also appear to be different. For the government to be successful in their ‘patriotic education’ programme, they need to change the prevailing attitude, values and definitions of contemporary Russian society.

On the positive side for the government, a recent poll conducted by www.monitoring.ru sociologists gives the Kremlin some hope of achieving their ends. The November 2002 poll of 1500 respondents showed that 77% of respondents considered themselves to be patriots, only 20% considered themselves to be unpatriotic and a further 3% were undecided. The group who considered themselves to be patriotic was broken down further;

- Entrepreneurs – 79%
- Servicemen – 76%
- Pensioners – 82%
- Citizens with a higher education – 84%

⁴⁷⁴ *Gorbachev Gives a Lesson in Patriotism in Moscow School, Former President Sees Vladimir Putin’s Efforts in Reforming Education as Positive*, www.strana.ru, 1 September, 2001. JRL #5422, 3 September, 2001.

⁴⁷⁵ *Russia Unveils 5-yr Plan for “Patriotic Education,”* Reuters, 12 March, 2001. JRL #5146, 12 March, 2001.

⁴⁷⁶ Ilyuchev, G., *Love for the Motherland is Something Intimate*, *Izvestiya*, 4 December, 2001. JRL #5580, 4 December, 2001.

- Unemployed – 69%⁴⁷⁷

These results would appear to indicate that the idea of patriotism appeals to a broad spectrum of Russian society. An interesting indication of the results is that society's elite (those with an education and in business) and pensioners associate themselves more closely as being a patriot. Although society does not appear to judge patriotism as being important, an overwhelming majority of the respondents do identify themselves as patriots.

However, everyone has, not wholeheartedly welcomed the new programme that is in the process of being implemented. The daily newspaper *Izvestiya*, raised the question "How do you go about making a patriot?" *Izvestiya* also recalled the results of 'patriotic education' in the Soviet Union.⁴⁷⁸

"Once they went out into the real world, either they cracked, realising that all they had learned was inapplicable, and became cynics, or they became fanatics for their ideas."⁴⁷⁹

Greater government interest in the content of school textbooks has already been publicised on occasion. Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov appeared on *ORT* on the 30th of August, 2001, he took one textbook to task on a question that it posed. The textbook asked the question "why Russians had consistently failed to establish a safe and prosperous society?" He added that "it is not very clear what kind of people these textbooks are supposed to prepare." Kasyanov hinted that questions could leave students with an "inferiority complex."⁴⁸⁰

At the opening of a cabinet meeting on 31 August, 2001 Kasyanov exclaimed that he "found so much astonishing" material in school books on contemporary Russian history.⁴⁸¹ Possibly as an attempt to rectify this perceived problem, the government announced a contest for the

⁴⁷⁷ *Overwhelming Majority of Russian Citizens Consider Themselves Patriotic*, Interfax, 17 November, 2002. JRL #6556, 17 November, 2002.

⁴⁷⁸ *Russia's School for Patriots*, AFP, 15 March, 2001. JRL #5154, 15 March, 2001.

⁴⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁰ *ORT, Russian Premier Unhappy With New School Textbooks*, BBC Monitoring, 30 August, 2001. JRL #5418, 31 August, 2001.

⁴⁸¹ *The Government Tries to Gain Control Over History Schoolbooks*, *Izvestiya*, 31 August, 2001. JRL #5419, 31 August, 2001.

creation of new textbooks on national history. The government's aim was to have the textbooks ready for school use by September 2002.⁴⁸²

Patriotism, if applied in an effective manner, can prove to be an excellent means of motivating society. As was seen in the definition of the concept, the interests of the State come before everything else. Individuality is sacrificed for a collective mentality that works toward the 'betterment' of the country. Emotion rather than reason guide the actions of the collective. For these reasons, patriotism can be organised as a motivating force that directs society toward an objective or goal. But who decides what is best for society and directs society's goals and objectives?

3.4 The Influence of the Russian Orthodox Church as Reflected Through the Media

It is not my intention to make a detailed account of the political relations and events that have taken place between the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and the State. The aim of this work is to try and bring to light the ROC's influence in contemporary Russian society, through statements made through the media and via statements made by members of the political elite. For this reason, due to constraints on time and space, I will be concentrating on the content of 'main-stream' media organisations.

In studying the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church, via their media communications, I shall be taking the work from viewing the ROC as a collective body, rather than as individuals. For instance, statements from the Patriarch will be assumed to be the voice of the ROC, as the Patriarch is the embodiment of the Church's chief representative. I do realise that there are factions, conflicts and voices of dissent within the ranks of the ROC that are heard periodically, but given the physical constraints of this work there is not enough latitude to give full consideration to this pluralism of debate and thought.

3.4.1 Russian Orthodox Church During The Soviet Era

After the Soviet victory in the Russian Civil War and the foreign interventions (1917-22), the authorities viewed the ROC as a pillar of the old Tsarist regime and therefore a potential

⁴⁸² *The Government Tries to Gain Control Over History Schoolbooks*, Izvestiya, 31 August, 2001. JRL #5419, 31 August, 2001.

danger to the fledgling communist state. Then from 1929 the Soviet regime tried to eliminate organised religion from society as quickly as possible.⁴⁸³ Institutions that are responsible for helping to form cultural identity include, the education system, the army and the church. As such, the ROC was potentially a competing source of cultural identity to a regime that was not established in society and could therefore be construed as a threat.

During the opening phases of the Great Patriotic War (June 1941 – May 1945), enormous setbacks were inflicted upon the Red Army and the low morale of the Russian people caused Stalin to reverse his earlier decision on closing the Church completely. By 1943 limited religious observance under strict state supervision was permitted, for the purpose of attempting to lift the public's morale, by offering them hope through belief. A kind of symbiotic relationship developed between the Church and the State, in return for their co-operation the ROC would be allowed to exist in the Soviet Union.

This relationship between the ROC and the Soviet State was formalised on September 4, 1943. A meeting between Stalin and high-ranking Church officials took place and the agreement was reached in this unprecedented occasion.⁴⁸⁴ During this period the link between traditional Russian patriotism and the ROC, played a significant role in rallying the masses to resistance against the German led invasion of the Soviet Union.⁴⁸⁵ ROC priests were instructed to instil 'Soviet Patriotism' by preaching and by example into their congregation.⁴⁸⁶

With respect to the patriotic aspect, the ROC has a strong *Caesaro-Papist* heritage that results in "many bishops firmly believe that it is their patriotic Christian duty to side with the State. This is especially true when their state is criticised by foreigners."⁴⁸⁷ This statement may seem strange to the reader, in light of the fact that the Soviet State had tried to destroy the Church prior to the war and only let the ROC exist because they were considered to be of some use to the State. However, the pull of an outside threat to a nation can have the effect of uniting what would otherwise be splintered political interest groups.

⁴⁸³ Fletcher, W. C., *The Russian Orthodox Church Underground, 1917-1970*, London, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 2.

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ (1) Fletcher, W. C. (1971), op. cit., p. 156.

(2) Ellis, J., *The Russian Orthodox Church: A Contemporary History*, London, Croom Helm, 1986, p. 4.

(3) Hansson, P. H., Editor, *Church Leadership*, Uppsala, Svenska Kyrkans Forskningsråd, 1997, p. 181.

⁴⁸⁶ Ellis, J. (1986), op. cit., p. 80.

English born writer, Irena Maryniak, claimed that the State used religion as a motivating tool. Although this work did not strictly relate to the period of the Great Patriotic War, it gives a clear indication of religion being used as a motivating and collectivising means by the State.

“[...] presentations of religious faith, or indeed faith of any kind, as an effective tap for the energies of the socialist collective. These may also carry a suggestion that it might be useful to create a deity (even though none exists) in order to encourage people to behave in a more decent, patriotic way and to make them work harder.”⁴⁸⁸

A revival of the ROC's physical condition also took place. The number of active churches rose significantly during the course of the war. At the beginning of the war in 1941 there were approximately 4000 churches in existence. By the conclusion of the war in 1945 there were approximately 16, 000 operational churches.⁴⁸⁹ Although the Church gave up its freedom and independence from an atheist state, by doing so they averted what seemed to be certain destruction at the hands of the state. They were serving a new master now.

As a result of the 1943 understanding between the State and the Church, the ROC found itself cast in a role. That role was to support Soviet policy both on a domestic and an international basis. And, for doing a 'good' performance they were rewarded by the State.⁴⁹⁰

However, during the war, not all clergy were supportive of the Soviet regime. In the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, many new churches were opened. These churches then served as a focal point for rallying support for the German forces, resistance against Soviet activities or serving the interests of nationalistic independence movements.⁴⁹¹

Various religious repressions, aimed at limiting or destroying the influence of the ROC were in part successful. During the Soviet period 25, 000 of the 45, 000 churches based upon the

⁴⁸⁷ Ellis, J. (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 214.

⁴⁸⁸ Ellis, J., *The Russian Orthodox Church: Triumphalism and Defensiveness*, Basingstoke, MacMillan Press in Association with St. Antony's College, Oxford, 1996, p. 22.

⁴⁸⁹ Fletcher, W. C. (1971), *op. cit.*, p. 162.

⁴⁹⁰ Ellis, J., *op. cit.* (1996), p. 11.

⁴⁹¹ (1) Fletcher, W. C. (1971), *op. cit.*, pp. 162-63.

(2) Ellis, J. (1986), *op. cit.*, p. 4.

territory of the Russian Federation have been permanently lost.⁴⁹² This loss in the number of churches lost bears testimony to the scale of the anti-religious campaign by the authorities, prior to their concept of a role for the ROC in the Soviet State.

3.4.2 Effects Of Perestroika And Glasnost Upon The Church

Initially, religion was a low-priority on Gorbachev's political agenda and was not considered to be very important. However, this changed as "religion became important as ideology was usurped by politics."⁴⁹³ Two important circumstances combined to make the issue of religion more central to the political struggles that were taking place behind the scenes during *glasnost* and *perestroika*.

From 1987 the ROC had tried to apply pressure on the Soviet government through the use of open letters.⁴⁹⁴ It is uncertain whether this method bore any success. One of the events, which pushed the issue of religion into the political mainstream, however, was the Millennium celebration that was held in 1988. This was a celebration of the Slavic States adoption of Christianity in 988.⁴⁹⁵ The Millennium celebrations provided the occasion to highlight the activities of the ROC.

Two media organisations that helped to campaign for the Church on matters such as the restoration of Church property were *Izvestiya* and *Ogonek*.⁴⁹⁶ However, from the late 1980's the ROC also began to build their own media apparatus. A monthly journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, *Moskovsky Tserkovny Vestnik* was the first of the new publications and first appeared in 1989.⁴⁹⁷ This course of action could have ultimately meant that the church authorities did not need to rely on the goodwill of the Soviet media to continue receiving favourable coverage.

During the progression of Gorbachev's reforms, he found an ever increasing level of resistance to his goals and reforms. At times, the Gorbachev camp, media and ROC acted in unison. During the period of *glasnost* and the uncovering of past 'mistakes' the press

⁴⁹² Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 67.

⁴⁹³ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 12.

⁴⁹⁴ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), pp. 23-24.

⁴⁹⁵ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 12.

⁴⁹⁶ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 64.

⁴⁹⁷ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 75.

highlighted state abuses against religion. Therefore any officials seen to be acting against religion could be portrayed as an obstacle for the reforms.⁴⁹⁸

The ROC was viewed as being of potential value for providing supporters for the reforms. In 1988 the estimated number of believers in Soviet society was put at 25% of the population, which equated to approximately 70 million people.⁴⁹⁹ Gorbachev definitely needed this support, he also assumed that the Church could provide this support for his administration by influencing the Church's congregation.

State-Church relations began to thaw as early as 1988. Gorbachev and the Patriarch uttered assurances and pleasantries to each other during the beginning of the reconciliation. The process began with Gorbachev urging believers and atheists to unite in the "common great cause of the restructuring and renewal of socialism." In response, the Patriarch called the Party programme "highly humane" and "close to the Christian ideal."⁵⁰⁰ From this point, the political influence of the Church has slowly increased its influence in the political sphere.

The importance of the ROC to the Gorbachev administration's policy reform programme was clearly demonstrated by events surrounding the 1988 Church Millennium celebrations. The activities of the Millennium celebrations were very well publicised by the Soviet media.⁵⁰¹ Had the Church considered to be a threat or a neutral stance was taken, it is unlikely that these celebrations would have received much attention in the Soviet media, if any attention was going to be paid in the first place.

In addition to a great deal of Soviet media coverage of the Millennium events, a great deal of political participation in the festivities also took place. The celebrations occurred on State and Church property. All of these aspects combined to raise the public profile of the ROC.⁵⁰² The softening in State attitudes toward the ROC was reflected in political statements.

A meeting between Gorbachev and the clergy took place on April 29, 1988 and was covered in the newspaper *Izvestiya*. During the course of this meeting, Mikhail Gorbachev was

⁴⁹⁸ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), pp. 18-19.

⁴⁹⁹ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 20.

⁵⁰⁰ White, S., op. cit., p. 206.

⁵⁰¹ Hansson, P. H., Editor, *Church Leadership*, Uppsala, Svenska Kyrkans Forskningsråd, 1997, p. 185.

⁵⁰² Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 27.

reported as describing the Millennium as “a significant milestone in history, culture and development of Russia.” He then went on to describe Believers as “Soviet people, working people, patriots.” A need to revise religious legislation was also mooted at this meeting.⁵⁰³ These statements appeared to indicate a reversal of the Soviet government’s attitude toward the ROC and its members.

The April 1988 meeting between Gorbachev, Patriarch Pimen and members of the Holy Synod in the Kremlin had been the first occasion since Stalin’s meeting with the clergy in September 1943. In addition to the above mentioned statements, Gorbachev reaffirmed a common past, present and future between State and ROC when he said, “we have a common history, a common Motherland and a common future.”⁵⁰⁴

As a result of the rhetoric of the meeting, a series of verbal exchanges between the Kremlin and the ROC eventuated. The limits to religious legislation were given. It was decided, by the Soviet government, that the legislation was to be;

- Revised “on the basis of Leninist principles.”
- And that the State attitude to the ROC and Believers “should be defined in the interests of strengthening the unity of all working people and of the whole nation.”⁵⁰⁵

Patriarch Pimen responded to the signals, which were sent by the Kremlin. His words gave the impression of support for Gorbachev’s administration and the Soviet Union’s reform programme. He stated that;

- Believers were “fervently praying for the success” of the reforms and “the new political thinking.”
- Pimen stated that the ROC was concerned with morality and in promoting “universal human norms” and that the ROC had always been devoted to “the moral education of the faithful, the assertion of the dignity of the human personality, the strengthening of the sanctity of the family home and a conscious attitude towards labour.”⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰³ Ellis, J.,op. cit. (1996), pp. 27-28.

⁵⁰⁴ Ellis, J.,op. cit. (1996), p. 2.

⁵⁰⁵ Ellis, J.,op. cit. (1996), p. 28.

Property and land that was seized by the communist authorities began to be returned during 1988 - 1989. From this point, the Kremlin granted several key concessions to the Church. In 1989 the first religious leaders were elected to the Soviet parliament. 1990 saw the first religious services for some seventy years in the Kremlin's cathedrals and religious broadcasting was aired on state TV. Official recognition of religious observance came in 1991 when the Orthodox Christmas became a public holiday.⁵⁰⁷

The elections to the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies in 1989 proved to be very successful in cementing the ROC's continued role in Soviet politics. During these elections three ROC hierarchs were appointed.⁵⁰⁸ This action brought about close political ties between some members of the political elite and the church elite.

In addition to the concessions offered by the Soviet State to the Church, legal provisions were instituted as a measure to protect the newly won freedoms. Three key pieces of legislation guaranteed a freedom of choice and prevented the state from legally repossessing what it given.

- 1990 Law on Property - gave the Church full ownership rights to its property.
- 1991 Law on Freedom of Conscience - gave believers the right to propagate their faith and for parents to offer their children a religious upbringing.
- 1991 Declaration of the Rights and Freedoms of the Individual - guarantee of freedom to practice and believe religion.⁵⁰⁹

These laws not only signalled a change of state attitude toward religion, but also were the beginning of a departure from a 'mass' oriented society, to one that was more individualistic. Gorbachev's law reform of religion made it possible to openly espouse an alternative ideology (to Marxism-Leninism). The way was made clear for the Church to pursue the fulfilment of society's spiritual and ideological needs. These events laid the path for a greater role for the ROC in the spiritual affairs of the Soviet Union, so what did the Church hierarchy do with this opportunity?

⁵⁰⁶ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 49.

⁵⁰⁷ White, S., op. cit., p. 206.

⁵⁰⁸ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), pp. 109-110.

⁵⁰⁹ White, S., op. cit., pp. 206 - 207.

Soviet press began to cover the activities of religious organisations more favourably in the late Soviet period. This was especially so with the activities of charity work by religious groups, such as the Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Muslims and the ROC.⁵¹⁰ This publicity provided religious groups with the opportunity to further strengthen their public profile, influence and activities.

The ROC's increasing political influence began to be felt in the Soviet political circles. Aleksandr Degarev, the First Deputy Director of the Ideological Department of the CPSU Central Committee made comments regarding the dismissal of Konstantin Kharchev, the Director for the Council for Religious Affairs (the government agency tasked with 'administering' the religious portfolio during the Soviet era). Degarev admitted that the ROC leadership played an instrumental role in Kharchev's dismissal from his position. This political struggle involved two other government departments, that had tried to have Kharchev removed, but was unsuccessful.⁵¹¹

On May 3, 1990 Patriarch Pimen died and was replaced on June 7, 1990 when Patriarch Alexis II was elected Patriarch.⁵¹² During *glasnost* the excesses of communist rule were presented to society. The ROC, in acting with the Gorbachev administration played an active role in exorcising the demons of the past. Alexis II talked of the need for the Church's repentance because of their silence during this period.⁵¹³ This comment seems to have come back to haunt the Patriarch though.

To the outside world at least, it seemed as though problems pertaining to religious freedoms had been resolved. However, some debate and problems remained. By approximately 1989-1990, some public debate began to emerge about the Church's past. During Gorbachev's reforms the ROC had been called upon to participate more fully in societal matters. But, there had been no internal restructuring of the ROC. This had resulted in some conflict and public debate as to whether the ROC was equipped to meet these new challenges. These fears were expressed by some members of the clergy and also appeared in the Soviet press.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹⁰ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), pp. 2-3.

⁵¹¹ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), pp. 49-50.

⁵¹² Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 4.

⁵¹³ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 8.

⁵¹⁴ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 53.

An example of one of the debates within the Church, concerning not facing up to its past was concerning the Council of Religious Affairs (CRA) classification systems for priests. The CRA divided priests into three categories, numbered one to three, category one being the most loyal to the Soviet State. Alexis II was classified as a category one priest under this system. The following is a description of the work and deeds of a category one priest.

“[...] both in words and deeds affirm not only loyalty but also patriotism towards the socialist society, strictly observe the laws on cults and educate the parish clergy and believers in the same spirit, realistically understand that our state is not interested in proclaiming the role of religion and the church in society and, realising this, do not display any particular activeness in extending the influence of Orthodoxy among the population.”⁵¹⁵

Such an assessment is, on the surface at least, a resounding blow for the personal integrity of someone in Alexis II's position if it is true. Even if the statement is not true the dilemma caused by an apparent conflict of interests could easily force most to step down from office. However, Alexis II has continued to hold his appointment through much political turmoil.

This action has not been the final damaging political revelation or action for Alexis II. In December 1990 Alexis II signed a letter, in which 53 prominent political, academic and literary personalities had put their names. The letter called for the declaration of a state of emergency and the imposition of direct presidential rule. Alexis II seemed to side with the conservative forces. His action was unpopular and resulted in a rushed press statement by ROC authorities who alleged that he was ill and did not know what he was doing.⁵¹⁶ Alexis II and/or his backers would seem to be reasonably politically aware, this action may have been sparked by a perception and an anticipation of future political events. If the conservative faction had ousted Gorbachev from power, then the ROC may have benefited from the actions of Alexis II.

⁵¹⁵ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), pp. 88-89.

⁵¹⁶ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), pp. 125-126.

3.4.3 The Russian Orthodox Church In The Russian Federation

According to a 1999 poll conducted by the All-Russian Centre for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM), the Church's status is high. Russia's two most respected organisations were the Orthodox Church rating a 65% approval and the armed forces (53% approval).⁵¹⁷ Such a result is heartening for the Church's potential in Russian society. But, what does the Church offer the people, and is this high approval rating translating into a greater influence on society?

On paper, the Russian Orthodox Church enjoys a strong following from the Russian public. Between 50 - 75% of Russians identify themselves as Russian Orthodox believers.⁵¹⁸ Whether this figure represents the true number of active participants in the Church's, or is a reflection of cultural identity, is uncertain.

In the immediate era of post-communism, Yeltsin continued and arguably accelerated religious freedom. Taking care to cultivate a warm relationship with the Orthodox Church. Part of the 1993 Constitution specifically guarantees religious freedom, this article cannot be amended by parliamentary vote. Its wording is specific, granting the "right to profess individually or jointly with others any religion or to profess none, to freely choose, hold, and propagate religious or other beliefs, and act in accordance with them."⁵¹⁹ Close ties between Yeltsin and Alexis II may have helped in the State wanting to be seen in aiding in the ROC's physical restoration.⁵²⁰ Although, the question remains as to whether this relationship is either merely politically convenient or a genuine relationship.

Symbolic of the Yeltsin administrations close relationship with the Church was the costly rebuilding of the Church of Christ the Saviour in Moscow. This church was destroyed on Stalin's orders in 1931.⁵²¹ This act, by the state, in the reconstruction of the spiritual home of Russian Orthodoxy demonstrated the growing influence of the Church in political life. In November 1993 Yeltsin also ordered rebuilt the Kazan Cathedral in Red Square, which had

⁵¹⁷ Dunlop, J. B., "Sifting Through the Rubble of the Yeltsin Years" in Brown, A., Editor, *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2001, p. 65.

⁵¹⁸ Shenfield, S., *Russian Fascism: Traditions, Tendencies, Movements*, New York, M. E. Sharpe, 2001, p. 60.

⁵¹⁹ White, S., op. cit., p. 207.

⁵²⁰ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), pp. 145-146.

⁵²¹ (1) White, S., op. cit., p. 207.

(2) Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 57.

been destroyed in 1936 as a 'cult building.'⁵²²

Yeltsin also employed the centuries old tradition of the Russian Head of State consulting a leading Church figure prior to an event of national significance. Events such as the signing of the nuclear arms reduction treaty with the United States or the April 1993 referendum on early parliamentary and presidential elections.⁵²³

Patriarch of the ROC, Alexis II played an active political part in the September / October 1993 dispute between the Russian executive and legislative branches of government. He offered to mediate between the opposing sides, which they both agreed to. Although the negotiation process ultimately failed, the Church received a lot of media publicity for their mediation role.⁵²⁴

From 1993, when the ROC began to feel the effects of competition from other faiths, they sought to remedy the situation. This was attempted via actively trying to bring about amendments in religious legislation (in the ROC's favour).⁵²⁵

During his term as President, Yeltsin came to be seen at many religious ceremonies. Debate exists as to whether this is a genuine show of faith on Yeltsin's part or merely a vote-catching exercise.⁵²⁶ Yeltsin did make promises to the ROC while in office. Some of these promises included;

- Eventual restoration of all Church property and buildings.
- State funds to restore and rebuild religious buildings.
- To discuss the question of offering tax relief on Church income.⁵²⁷

The ROC has continued to build upon its media asset base. In 1994 a new publication, *Khronika* that is devoted to theology and history appeared.⁵²⁸

⁵²² Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 57.

⁵²³ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 146.

⁵²⁴ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), pp. 152-54.

⁵²⁵ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 6.

⁵²⁶ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 148.

⁵²⁷ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 147.

⁵²⁸ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 77.

What could be construed as a possible clampdown on non-Orthodox religions occurred in 1997. After the Duma passed the bill by a large majority in September 1997, Yeltsin was forced in to signing the bill in to law. The new law excluded ‘non-traditional’ churches from educational activities, publishing literature, or visiting hospitals and prisons unless they could prove that they have been operating in Russia legally during the preceding 15 years.⁵²⁹

The effect of the law was to drive some religious groups underground to avoid police harassment. For instance, Jehovah’s Witnesses were defined as a “destructive religious organisation of Western orientation” and were charged with “spreading religious hatred.”⁵³⁰ This law was passed in spite of the fact that it contravened the 1993 Constitution and the Law on freedom of conscience.

American academic Stephen Shenfield has made a somewhat disconcerting observation in Church-State relations. “The process of interpenetration of church and state has already gone so far that as Russia enters the 21st Century can no longer be considered a secular state.”⁵³¹

A possible explanation for the state’s apparent fervour in resurrecting the power of the Russian Orthodox Church lies with the church’s cultural production aspects. The church has a history of being a powerful ally of the Russian State in the past. It may be the intention of the contemporary political elite to resurrect this relationship.

“In the liturgy of the Russian Orthodox Church, [...] the inculcation of obedience and indeed devotion to the Tsar was the central message, incessantly broadcast to the faithful.”⁵³²

3.4.4 State-Church Relations Under The Putin Administration

Church and State have been moving together in a mutually beneficial alliance. Professor of Comparative Religion at Moscow State University, Alexander Kolunov outlined what he saw as the current relationship between State and the ROC.

⁵²⁹ White, S., op. cit., p. 211.

⁵³⁰ Ibid.

⁵³¹ Shenfield, S., op. cit., p. 61.

⁵³² Poggi, G., *Forms of Power*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2001, p. 83.

“Since Russian civil society is so weak, the Orthodox Church looks to the State to provide material support and funding. [...] In return, the Church provides ideological legitimacy for the State and helps to bring up youth in the spirit of patriotism.”⁵³³

The ROC’s role in State matters has continued since Putin’s accession to power. This may be in part to the intensified search for a ‘Russian’ identity and a desire to strengthen the Russian State that has taken place. However, other factors may also be at play, which are leading to a greater participation of the Church in the affairs of State.

“Apart from the army, the Russian Orthodox Church is probably the only social institution in Russia no politician can afford to offend [...] Russia’s present leader’s are desperate to receive some of the authority the Church bestows.”⁵³⁴

Although politicians may believe that by courting the ROC leadership, which will lead to them gaining ‘control’ over the entire congregation, a problem in this calculation exists. The ROC leadership does not enjoy the full trust of all of its members.⁵³⁵ Reasons for this lack of trust will be discussed in *Coming to Terms With its ‘Dark’ Past*.

The size of the ROC has grown significantly and the organisation is a very sizeable body. On 25 March, 2003 Alexis II released the Church’s statistics via the State-owned news agency *RIA Novostei*. These figures were given at the diocesan assembly of Moscow’s clergy in Moscow. The figures are as follow;

- 16, 195 registered parishes of the ROC on Russian territory.
- 17, 480 priests and deacons serving these parishes.
- ROC has 131 dioceses.
- 155 bishops serving.
- 614 active cloisters – 295 monasteries and 319 nunneries.
- 198 quiet cloisters – 160 monastery inns and 38 sketes.

⁵³³ Weir, F., *Russians Protest Unorthodox Revival*, Christian Science Monitor, 29 April, 2002. JRL #6214, 29 April, 2002.

⁵³⁴ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 154.

- 560 Orthodox churches and chapels and 959 clergymen serving in Moscow.
- 8 cloisters in Moscow – 4 monasteries and 4 nunneries.⁵³⁶

Putin has been seen as being close to the ROC from early on in his term as President. For instance his ‘pilgrimage’ to ROC monasteries in the White Sea area. These monasteries were devastated during the Soviet era, both Putin and the Church have expressed their desire to see these monasteries rebuilt.⁵³⁷

Of the 560 Orthodox churches located in Moscow, this group can be broken down further. Not all of these churches are active currently. Of the 560 churches:

- 30 have not yet resumed services
- 34 still house secular organisations
- 52 are still under construction.⁵³⁸

The ROC has increasingly been using media to deliver political statements, matters more pertaining to State than to religion. At times, these statements have been on controversial societal topics or debates. On the 5th of January, 2002 Metropolitan Kiril was interviewed by *Radio Mayak* in Moscow. During the course of the interview, the presenter asked Kiril about Kaliningrad.

Presenter – “What do you think the Church can do in this direction and put an end to all these political gambling regarding Kaliningrad region?”

Metropolitan Kiril – “My answer will be quite harsh. As long as the Orthodox Church is out there in the Kaliningrad region, the region will always belong to Russia.”⁵³⁹

⁵³⁵ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 149.

⁵³⁶ Lipich, O., *Russian Orthodox Church has Over 16, 000 Parishes in Russia*, RIA Novostei, March 25, 2003. JRL #7116, March 26, 2003.

⁵³⁷ *Russian Patriarch Urges Introduction of Orthodox Culture Subject in Schools*, BBC Monitoring (of RTR), 3 September, 2001. JRL #5424, 4 September, 2001.

⁵³⁸ *Some 63, 000 Believers Attended Easter Services at Moscow Churches Last Night*, Interfax, 27 April, 2003. JRL #7156, 27 April, 2003.

⁵³⁹ *Senior Russian Clergyman Reveals Views on Orthodox Christmas and Other Matters*, Radio Mayak (BBC Monitoring), 5 January, 2002. JRL #6007, 6 January, 2002.

This comment made by Kiril gives a glimpse at the perceived inter-dependent relationship of the State and ROC by high-ranking members of the ROC clergy. However, clergy have not been the only ones to stress a close relationship between Church and State. *Interfax* reported a speech made by Putin in Solovki on August 20, 2001. Referring to the role of religion in society, Putin said:

“[...] must be made the backbone of Russia’s domestic and foreign policies. [...] God has saved all nations, Metropolitan Illarion once said. If so, all nations are equal in the eyes of God. [...] This simple truth has been the nucleus of the Russian State system, making it possible to build a strong multi-ethnic State, [...] Our spiritual teachers not only glorified the Russian people – without any exclusiveness or chauvinism. They have been teaching us throughout the centuries to respect other peoples. It would not hurt to think of this today. [...] contrary to the teaching about the God-chosen nature of individual peoples that asserted itself in medieval Western Europe, the Russian Orthodox culture has been laying the main emphasis on the equality of all peoples, which is a matter of principle for Russia. Since time immemorial, our country has been called ‘Holy Russia’ and these words have carried a great spiritual meaning, as they emphasized the special role of Russia voluntarily, as the keeper of Christianity. Without Christianity Russia would have hardly become an accomplished State. It is therefore extremely important, useful and timely to get back to this source [...]”⁵⁴⁰

During this trip, Putin and the Patriarch travelled together, to the Solovki Archipelago, which was the site of persecution of members of the monastery by Stalin’s security services. The land confiscated during Stalin’s era was returned prior to the activities and the ceremony being conducted there during Putin’s and the Patriarch’s visit.⁵⁴¹ Putin’s actions and comments

⁵⁴⁰ *President Putin Stresses Role of Christianity in Russia’s Development*, Interfax, 20 August, 2001. JRL #5402, 21 August, 2001.

⁵⁴¹ *President Putin Stresses Role of Christianity in Russia’s Development*, Interfax, 20 August, 2001. JRL #5402, 21 August, 2001.

Solovki was established in 1928 as the first prototype of a big scale *Gulag* or labour camp, the first such camp was opened in Crimea in 1923. People were taken randomly from all centres of the Soviet Union. In 1989 a documentary, *The Power of Solovki* was produced by Marina Goldovskaya, which won the Joris Ivens Special Jury Prize. She is currently a professor in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television at UCLA in the United States.

display a closeness not only between himself and the ROC, but also strong religious convictions.

A controversial issue that has the habit of appearing and disappearing from the public forum is the topic of the Soviet State's confiscation of Church land and property and possible restitution by the contemporary Russian government. Some land and property has been returned, but the State still holds onto other former Church assets. A form of compromise has been reached in regard to this situation.

From the mid-1990's the ROC was given some commercial concessions by the government. It is allowed to import between US\$75 – 100 million worth of cigarettes. The ROC also acquired an 40% interest in the oil-export firm *MES*, which gave them an annual income of approximately US\$2 billion. However, the cigarette concession was cancelled in 1996 and *MES* went out of business around 1998.⁵⁴²

As a consequence of these 'failures,' the Church has sought funds from other sources. Now, the ROC survives partly on a commercial bottled water enterprise and donations from the energy giants *Gazprom* and *Lukoil*.⁵⁴³

An article written in the newspaper *Vremya MN* by Sergei Markedonov tells of the rise of the ROC's power and their ability to make news and political agendas – such as the issue of land reform and meetings between President Putin and Alexis II. He also issued a warning with regard to attempting to impose an Orthodox ideology upon society by the Church and political elite.⁵⁴⁴

When addressing the World Tartar Congress in Kazan on 30 August, 2002 Putin made a very strong speech regarding the role of State in religious affairs. He made it very clear that no political interference of religious activity should be tolerated and that religion was to become the bearer of 'human values'.

⁵⁴² LaFraniere, S., *Russia's Well-Connected Patriarch*, Washington Post, 23 May, 2002. JRL #6264, 23 May, 2002.

⁵⁴³ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁴ Markedonov, S., *The Time People: Plus the Conversion of the Entire Country to the Russian Orthodox Faith*, *Vremya MN*, 31 July, 2002. JRL #6388, 6 August, 2002.

“We must not tell religious figures what to do, who to choose and how to form associations. We must create favourable conditions for their activities and do our best to prevent the building of barriers between them and citizens [...] I’ve become increasingly convinced that now that we have no work collectives or party organisations, such as those of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, or educators at places of work, nothing but religion can make human values known to people.”⁵⁴⁵

From Putin’s remarks, it seems as though the ROC is destined to become the new bearer of national identity. However, problems exist, if this is in fact the intended goal. Many surveys have been conducted in the Russian Federation, with respect to religious belief and practice. And a common thread of these surveys are a majority of the Russian population identify themselves as Orthodox, but their religious observance is somewhat lax. A survey conducted by the All-Russia Centre for the Study of Public Opinion (VTsIOM), which was published in *Izvestiya* on 25 August, 2002 displayed some interesting results.

- 58% of respondents identified themselves as Orthodox believers
- 5% as Muslims
- 2% belonging to non-Orthodox Christian religions
- 31% as atheists
- 60% of those identified as believing in God had not read any biblical text
- 42% of those claiming to be Orthodox had never been in an Orthodox church
- 31% of those claiming to be Orthodox had been “not more than once a year.”⁵⁴⁶

A poll conducted by *Romir Research Centre* of 2000 adults in November 2002 produced a results with both differences as well as similarities.

- 60% of Russians believe in God
- 21% believe in a Supreme Force, Spirit or Reason
- 16% do not

⁵⁴⁵ *Russian President Rejects State Interference in Religious Matters*, Interfax, 30 August, 2002. JRL #6414, 30 August, 2002.

⁵⁴⁶ *Two-Thirds of Russians Profess Faith in God*, RFE/RL (Un)Civil Societies, Vol. 3, No. 36, 4 September, 2002. JRL #6421, 5 September, 2002.

- Orthodox Christianity practiced by 69% of respondents
- Islam 2.5%
- Buddhism 0.4%
- Other types of Christianity 3%
- Other religions 1%
- Atheists 22%.⁵⁴⁷

However, once more, a gap emerged between profession and active practice of a faith.

- 46% of respondents did not have time to pray.
- 14% pray daily.
- 10% pray once a week.
- 9% once a month.
- 7% pray twice a year.
- 10% pray less frequently.⁵⁴⁸

Another survey conducted by the *Public Opinion Fund* on 19 April, 2003 of 1500 respondents displayed more changes or differences from previous polls. The same poll was first conducted on 9 August, 1997.

- 69% of respondents professed a religion.
- 59% of this figure identified themselves as Orthodox.
- 8% as Muslim.
- 30% as Atheists.
- In 1997 – 62% professed a religion.
- In 1997 – 38% declared themselves to be Atheist.⁵⁴⁹

These diverse results derived from the various polls differ from figures given by Church officials in media communiqués. Metropolitan Kiril gave the figure of Russians who say that they are Orthodox Christians in a press statement as being 80%. He also added that the figure

⁵⁴⁷ *Some 60% of Russians Believe in God – Poll*, Interfax, 29 November, 2002. JRL #6579, 29 November, 2002.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴⁹ *69% of Russians Say They Profess a Religion*, Rosbalt, 28 April, 2003. JRL #7157, 28 April, 2003.

of 80% did not relate to those who are active members of the ROC.⁵⁵⁰ The many and varied, what are essentially guesses, underlie the difficulty in accurately ascertaining the exact number of Orthodox Christians in the Russian Federation.

The Patriarch used the last Orthodox Christmas message to deliver a political statement on the hopes of the ROC filling the role of chief ideological provider in Russia. He linked State, social and religious issues together. Alexis II lamented the youth who:

“[...] get caught in the nets of various alien teachings, and are corrupted spiritually and physically [...] The Church is making every effort to help people find their spiritual core [...] (everyone) to do his/her work in the place where the Lord has put them with faith, hope, and love as though working for the Lord himself, without expecting any reward or human fame. By doing so, each of us will serve our earthly homeland well [...].

When Russia heard constant prayer and tended to the erecting of God’s churches, it prospered and expanded. But as soon as the light of Christ and the powerful love of the Christian faith began to dim among the people, our country lost its power and strength, and fell under the yoke of theomachists, who sought to turn it into a spiritual desert.”⁵⁵¹

In his speech, Alexis II has tried to create a link between the notion of equating a ‘healthy’ flourishing of Orthodox culture with a sound nation. He has also used very purposeful rhetoric in trying to motivate the populace into working for the State without expectation of any form of recognition or reward. Because, by helping the State, the believers are engaging in God’s work. The Patriarch is attempting to appeal to the section of the population that want to see a strong Russia again, he is suggesting the way to achieve this is by being an active member of the Church and the greater Russian community.

Putin also spoke of religious matters in January 2003, from a more personal point of view. The story of how the Putin family came to seek God through the Orthodox Church was told during an interview to an American TV host, Larry King. Two incidents were told. Firstly of a

⁵⁵⁰ *About 80% Russians Say They are Orthodox Christians*, Rosbalt, 25 January, 2003. JRL #7034, 26 January, 2003.

⁵⁵¹ *Patriarch Alexis Extends Greetings to Russians on Orthodox Christmas*, Interfax, 6 January, 2003. JRL #7006, 6 January, 2003.

wooden cross given to Putin by his mother. This cross had been allegedly found in the ashes of the Putin house unscathed by the fire. Another story was that of his wife, Lyudmila Putina who had survived a serious car crash in Kaliningrad. In the aftermath of the accident, in her despair Lyudmila Putina found religion.⁵⁵²

More controversy followed throughout late January and February 2003, with the spectre of a political-religious partnership becoming more open and apparent. The occasion was the debate surrounding a new bill, which had been put before the Duma. Some Duma lobbyists had proposed that in exchange for official recognition and funding, clergy should take over some of the State's social functions. By late January 2003 the ROC, Islamic and Buddhist faiths were named as those religious organisations with which the State could organise a social contract. Judaism was possibly going to be added to this list.⁵⁵³

Following in tandem with this proposed bill was the governmental taskforce, which was designated the role of defining the parameters of proposed legislation aimed at extinguishing 'religious extremism.' A draft report by the group proposed "technical intelligence measures" against suspects and a six year prison term for those found guilty. One of the given characteristics of 'religious extremism' was given as the "propaganda of the superiority of one religion over another."⁵⁵⁴

Putin has publicly professed his support of Alexis II through the words of his speeches. On 27 April, 2003 Putin congratulated Russian Christians on the Holy Resurrection of Christ, in a story carried by *RIA Novosti*. He ended the speech with a tribute to the Patriarch.

"I would like to note your considerable contribution to the rebirth of the life of the Russian Orthodox Church and the development of state and religious relations. Today, with your active participation, the Church and the State continue to co-operate actively in the sphere of culture and education, Enlightenment and charity. Your high authority as a religious figure and

⁵⁵² *Putin's Road to Church*, www.pravda.ru, 15 January, 2003. JRL #7020, 16 January, 2003.

⁵⁵³ Vinogradov, M., *Access to the Flock*, *Izvestiya*, 24 January, 2003. JRL #7032, 24 January, 2003.

⁵⁵⁴ Uzzell, J., *Eroding Religious Freedom*, *The Moscow Times*, 24 January, 2003. JRL #7032, 24 January, 2003.

your rich pastor's experience contribute to the settlement of many social and moral problems of society, the preservation of peace and accord."⁵⁵⁵

Putin's comments heap praise on the Patriarch and attribute a lot of positive characteristics to him. The speech also reveals the growing ROC-State partnership and the increasing influence in the Church in what could be considered to be secular matters.

The ROC has been vocal on important domestic and foreign issues. Chechnya has been one such issue, raised by the Church. Alexis II made a strong statement opposing the criminal element of Chechen society on 11 March, 1999. This was some 4 – 5 months before open armed conflict broke out between separatist Chechen forces and the Federal Russian forces.⁵⁵⁶

A strongly anti-Globalist stance has been taken by the ROC. This is reflected in the ROC's own written communications. In August 2000 the Church adopted a document titled *Foundations of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church*, which stated their position concisely.

“Spiritual and cultural expansion fraught with total unification (of humanity) should be opposed by the joint efforts of Church, State, Civil Society, and international organisations with a view to promoting a truly equitable and mutually enriching exchange of information and cultural values, combined with the efforts to protect the identity of nations and other human communities. [...] While always open to co-operation with people of non-religious convictions, the Church seeks to assert Christian values in the process of decision-making on the most important public issues at both the national and international level. It strives for the recognition of the legitimacy of the religious world view as a basis of social action (including by the State) and as a vital factor influencing the development of international law and the work of international organisations.”⁵⁵⁷

⁵⁵⁵ Vladimir Putin Congratulates Orthodox Christians and all Christians of Russian With Christ's Holy Resurrection, RIA Novosti, 27 April, 2003. JRL #7156, 27 April, 2003.

⁵⁵⁶ Alexis II, *Statement on the Situation in Chechnya*, 11 March, 1999.
www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/ne903111.htm, 5 March, 2003.

⁵⁵⁷ Verkhovsky, A., *September 11 and the Orthodox Anti-Globalism of the Moscow Patriarchate*, Panorama, 11 December, 2001. JRL #5592, 11 December, 2001.

The document on *Foundations of the Social Concept of the Russian Orthodox Church* has left the way clear, in the ranks of the Church, to have a say on what could be considered to be matters of State. Its wording gives justification for influencing not only Russian domestic policy, but also foreign affairs too.

Perhaps the fruit of the above philosophy, the ROC opened a diplomatic representation to the European international organisations in Brussels, with an opening reception on 5 February, 2003. A significant number of dignitaries were invited to the event. The permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the European Communities, Vasily Likhachev delivered an opening address that was full of praise for the ROC.

“The representation has begun its work only recently, but has already managed to establish good relations of partnership with the Mission of the Russian Federation to the European Union and the Embassy of the Russian Federation to the Kingdom of Belgium. These relations correspond to the spirit of partnership and co-operation existing today in relations between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian State which respects all the traditional religions in today’s society.”⁵⁵⁸

The Church’s diplomatic representative in Brussels, Bishop Hilarion of Podolsk, outlined the reasons for the ROC’s decision to open the office.

“In recent years the Russian Orthodox Church has manifested a growing interest in European problems. There are several reasons for it. First, after the collapse of the Iron Curtain, new opportunities have opened up for dialogue between the European Union and the countries which used to comprise the so-called ‘Eastern Bloc’. Secondly, the considerable growth in the number of communities of the Russian Church in the European Union countries in recent years has made more tangible the presence of our Church in the religious, cultural and public life of Europe. Thirdly, the planned entry of traditionally Orthodox states and Baltic countries, in which there are some 300 parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate, offers additional

⁵⁵⁸ *Reception to Mark the Beginning of the Mission of the Representative of the Russian Orthodox Church at the European International Institutions*, www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/ne302104.htm, 1 March, 2003.

opportunities for co-operation between our Church and European political structures.”⁵⁵⁹

Bishop Hilarion’s comments highlight to ROC’s desire to become a much more active political actor. An active political actor not solely in domestic matters in the territory of Russia, but of the wider international community. His examples demonstrate the Church’s willingness to delve into sensitive international issues, such as the status of the Baltic States.

In keeping with an increased presence on international matters, the 2003 Iraqi War drew verbal responses from the Patriarch. The denunciations of the military action were carried most noticeably in Russian news agencies. *RIA Novostei* carried a brief item in which Alexis II described himself as being upset over the “hegemony of one power” in the current international community. And denounced any American military action as being more likely to harm the civilian population as the military, drawing a parallel with what happened in the 1999 Yugoslavian operations.⁵⁶⁰

Interfax carried the Patriarch’s statement of condemnation of military action against Iraq. In his statement, he singled out the United States for blame and urged Iraq’s neighbours to offer refuge to civilians fleeing the fighting. Part of the communiqué went as follows:

“The Russian Orthodox Church calls upon the governments of the anti-Iraqi coalition to stop the bloodshed. Do your best to prevent the spread of military operations. Resume negotiations for peace. Spare thousands of innocent lives.”⁵⁶¹

The ROC’s success in managing to disseminate political communications to the Russian public and the wider international community can be in part explained by their access to media. As has been shown in this paper, the close relations between State and Church have meant that the ROC has access to the network of state-owned media, which is a considerable

⁵⁵⁹ *Reception to Mark the Beginning of the Mission of the Representative of the Russian Orthodox Church at the European International Institutions*, www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/ne302104.htm, 1 March, 2003.

⁵⁶⁰ Lipich, O., *Head of Russian Orthodox Church is Upset Over “Hegemony of One Power” in World Community*, *RIA Novostei*, 7 March, 2003. JRL #7096, 10 March, 2003.

⁵⁶¹ *Alexis II Denounces Beginning of War in Iraq*, *Interfax*, 20 March, 2003. JRL #7111, 20 March, 2003.

asset. In addition to this aspect, the ROC also has media assets of its own. This enables the Church to have even greater editorial control in some situations.

The ROC announced plans in February 2002 to bring journalists working for their publications under a form of centralised control. A spokesman for *Media Union* (headed by Aleksandr Lyubimov), the pro-Kremlin journalists' association Aleksandr Shepkov explained about plans for a club of Russian Orthodox journalists. This was intended to 'promote unity' among reporters writing about the ROC. Head of the Moscow Patriarchate's Publishing Department, Sergei Chapnin stated that this step would be used to create a unified mass media holding of the ROC. The ROC owns and controls some 600 publications.⁵⁶²

It would appear that the state authorities and the Church authorities are acting together in establishing a union of Orthodox journalists/writers. Their stated aim is to create unity among those media personnel working in the area of the ROC. However, another effect would be to have and exercise greater editorial control. This is achieved by centralising the organisational structure and by the possibility of excluding those whose work is not considered to be ideologically compatible with those who head or control the union. Exclusion from the union could make continued work in the area very difficult.

A strong Internet presence is also maintained by the ROC. The *Rambler* Internet portal conducts annual polls in 57 different categories – state, public, cultural, scientific, educational and other categories. For the second year in a row, Metropolitan Kiril has been named as 'Man of the Year' in the religion category.⁵⁶³ Kiril's success in this poll would suggest that the ROC maintains a high level of public awareness of its activities and key personnel, in this particular instance, within the Internet community.

In addition to the main Orthodox website located at www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru, the Church has initiated other sites. One such site is associated with the ROC's representation in Brussels, www.orthodoxeurope.org. The site is available in both the English and French languages. A wide variety of material exists on the site, which includes the free electronic

⁵⁶² *Russian Orthodox Church's Club of Journalists*, European Journalism Centre Media News Digest, 15 February, 2002.

⁵⁶³ *The Internet Community Once Again Calls Metropolitan Kiril "Man of the Year"*, www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/ne301282.htm, 1 March, 2003.

bulletin *Europaica* (with some 3000 subscribers worldwide).⁵⁶⁴ The ROC's increasing presence on the web displays an awareness of the value of the Internet as an effective means (both in terms of time, resources and expense) to disseminate a uniform message instantaneously to a large audience. Additionally, it demonstrates the Church's willingness and desire to reach a wider audience than solely a domestic audience based upon citizens in the region of the Former Soviet Union.

In addition to access to state media assets, such as news agencies, radio and TV, for instance Metropolitan Kiril has a time slot on *TVI* (previously *ORT*) called *Word of the Pastor*.⁵⁶⁵ They are in the process of building a formidable communications empire, access to other media is also possible. This is achieved via oligarchs who are aligned with the Kremlin, such as the media assets of Vladimir Potanin. An occasion that demonstrated this point clearly was the celebration surrounding the 85th anniversary of the newspaper *Izvestiya*.

During a long interview with the Patriarch, which included the exchanging of pleasantries and the discussion of many political and social topics including the freedom of speech, the Catholic-Orthodox problem, death penalty and the armed forces, the meeting ended on a positive tone. Alexis II made numerous references to his long-term association with *Izvestiya*, being a reader of the paper for some 40 years.⁵⁶⁶ Through his actions, Alexis II implied an endorsement by the ROC for the newspaper. It was a mutual exchange, the paper gave the ROC a means to voice its opinion publicly and the ROC reciprocated by giving its 'seal of approval.'

3.4.5 The Role Of Religion In Education And The Armed Forces

Currently there are 37 Orthodox churches recorded as being situated on the grounds of military garrisons.⁵⁶⁷ Ties between the Church and the military have been stressed as being important by high-ranking members of the *siloviki* (power ministries, such as police, army,

⁵⁶⁴ (1) *The Website of the Representation of the Russian Orthodox Church to the European Institutions is now Operational*, www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/ne301154.htm, 1 March, 2003.

(2) www.orthodoxeurope.org, 1 March, 2003.

⁵⁶⁵ *The Internet Community Once Again Calls Metropolitan Kiril "Man of the Year"*, www.russian-orthodox-church.org.ru/ne301282.htm, 1 March, 2003.

⁵⁶⁶ Konovalov, V. & Serdyukov, M., *Lofty and Earthly*, *Izvestiya*, 26 February, 2002. JRL #6105, 28 February, 2002.

⁵⁶⁷ *30% Of Russia's Servicemen are Believers – Defence Ministry*, Interfax, 1 April, 2003. JRL #7127, 2 April, 2003.

FSB ... etc.). In 2001 the Director of the FSB Nikolai Patrushev stressed the value and need for such interaction “from the viewpoint of national unification.”⁵⁶⁸

On July 8, 1993 the Defence Minister Pavel Grachev met with Metropolitan Kiril to discuss what were described as;

“[...] co-ordination and relationships between the Church and the armed forces, especially in the field of moral formation of servicemen and educational work in the army.”⁵⁶⁹

The Ministry of Defence released statistics on the number of believers in the Russian armed forces to Interfax on April 1, 2003.

“The number of believers among Russian servicemen amounts to 27%. The figure for believers among contract servicemen is higher (up to 30%).”⁵⁷⁰

Figures were also given in terms of categories of different believers by percentage. The breakdown of faiths went as follow:

- Orthodox Christians – 74%
- Moslems – 9%
- Buddhists – 3%
- Other confessions – 2%
- Undecided – 12%.⁵⁷¹

However, the source from the Ministry of Defence who presented the figures also stated that most believers comprehended religion only superficially. The source also added that religious values particularly among the Christian faith, as a rule include elements from other religions and superstitions.⁵⁷²

⁵⁶⁸ Bulgakov, V., *Analytical Forecast for Social Tensions in 2002*, Vremya MN, No. 35, 2002. JRL #6133, 14 March, 2002.

⁵⁶⁹ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 147.

⁵⁷⁰ *30% Of Russia's Servicemen are Believers – Defence Ministry*, Interfax, 1 April, 2003. JRL #7127, 2 April, 2003.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid.

“Nearly half of the servicemen regarding themselves as Orthodox Christians have outward notions of the basic symbols of faith. Among the servicemen identifying themselves with Moslems, Buddhists, and followers of non-traditional movements and cults, the share that know the fundamentals of their teaching is relatively higher – over 80%. [...] among commissioned officers, the number fluctuating between faith and atheism has increased.”⁵⁷³

A ceremony on 28 August, 2002 witnessed further revival of a military-religious tradition and co-operation. In a morale boosting exercise for the Russian Navy’s Pacific Fleet, an icon and the remains of Admiral Fyodor Ushakov were presented in a ceremony that included ROC priests and the presence of President Putin. Ushakov was made famous for his exploits in the 1788-91 Russo-Turkish war and fighting against Napoleonic forces based in Italy.⁵⁷⁴

Ushakov was made a saint by the ROC in 2001. In an elaborate ceremony, a gold and silver box containing the remains of the Admiral and with an icon fixed to the lid was presented at the Headquarters of the Pacific Fleet by priests dressed in ceremonial attire.⁵⁷⁵ This public ceremony seems to underline a closeness that is developing between the ROC, the President and the military.

During the period from the late 19th Century to the early 20th Century over 40, 000 religious parish schools existed, giving elementary religious education to the masses.⁵⁷⁶ The power and influence of this ‘formidable’ educational institution was broken in 1918. In January 1918 a Soviet government decree on the Separation of Church from State and School from Church was enacted.⁵⁷⁷

⁵⁷² 30% Of Russia’s Servicemen are Believers – Defence Ministry, Interfax, 1 April, 2003. JRL #7127, 2 April, 2003.

⁵⁷³ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁴ Heintz, J., *Putin Presides at Icon Ceremony*, AP, 28 August, 2002. JRL #6410, 28 August, 2002.

⁵⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁶ Pushkarev, S., Rusak, V. & Yakunin, G., *Christianity and Government in Russia and the Soviet Union: Reflections on the Millennium*, Boulder (Colorado), Westview Press, 1989, p. 42.

⁵⁷⁷ Geraci, R. P. & Khodarkovsky, M., Editors, *Of Religion and Empire: Missions, Conversion, and Tolerance in Tsarist Russia*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001, p. 223.

The ROC was to lose this opportunity for almost 80 years. The right to religious education of one's own choice was restored during 1990. On October 25, 1990 the Russian Law on Freedom of Religion was adopted.⁵⁷⁸

On the Orthodox Christmas Eve (January 6) Alexis II delivered his message to the people, whether out of genuine concern as an indicator of a future plan, he outlined some of society's major problems and the source of these problems.

“We are still experiencing many difficulties and problems – poverty, social vulnerability, the threat of terrorism and crime, the propaganda of immorality, the epidemic of alcoholism and drug addiction, and other appalling vices. [...] As the root of all of these evils is the injury of the human soul, it is impossible to change society for the better without faith, hope and love. [...] In our turbulent world, people are again fighting against each other, and thousands of civilians in different countries have fallen victim to the evil will. God has also sent many trials to Russia, which was befallen by floods, storms and droughts last year. [...] But even in the worst of circumstances Christians must never forget their saviours words, ‘don't be afraid and keep believing,’ addressed to each of us.”⁵⁷⁹

Alexis II clearly identifies the crux of modern Russian society's problems being linked to moral decline and decay. He also states that should the ‘injured’ human soul be repaired, then the Russian State will also rejuvenate and grow stronger. This statement may have been a prelude to the notification of an intention to reintroduce an Orthodox culture education programme into the Russian schooling system.

In September 2001, Alexis II celebrated his 40th year of service in the ROC. He used this opportunity, when interviewed for the programme *Details* (on the State channel *RTR*) to propose the need for the Church's involvement in education.

⁵⁷⁸ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), pp. 162-63.

⁵⁷⁹ *Russian Patriarch Asks Russians to Pray for the Whole of Mankind*, Interfax, 6 January, 2001. JRL #6007, 6 January, 2001.

“We understand that after 70 years of an atheistic education, the issue should not be posed today of introducing religious education in to school or high school education. But we are proposing that the history of Orthodox culture should be introduced as a subject, because our culture is based on Christian principles, on Orthodox traditions, and every cultured person should know about the principles of his or her Orthodox culture.”⁵⁸⁰

The issue was developed further in a December 2001 article in *Argumenty I Fakty*. In this instance the State and the Church acted in unison. A claim made by supporters of the new education programme was that young people had lost some traditional values and that the ROC had the ‘answers’ to restore those lost values. Deputy Education Minister Yury Kovrizhkin gave the figure that $\frac{3}{4}$ of all believers in Russia are Orthodox Christians. And that 60% of Russians were convinced that religion was necessary in preserving national self-awareness.⁵⁸¹

Kovrizhkin then outlined reasons for the necessity of Orthodox culture lessons to Russian youth.

- Youth constitute 25% of Russia’s population.
- 17% of youth believe in some form of ‘higher power’ and not in God.
- 16% of young people are superstitious.
- 17% believe in UFOs.⁵⁸²

Based on these figures, Kovrizhkin concluded that this makes Russia’s young people potential victims of totalitarian sects and religious extremism, which meant that ‘saving’ them from this was a priority. To do this he summed up what would be needed in order to be successful in this goal.

“[...] close co-operation between the Church and the State on the issues of education, the environment and human rights.”⁵⁸³

⁵⁸⁰ *Russian Patriarch Urges Introduction of Orthodox Culture Subject in Schools*, BBC Monitoring (of RTR), 3 September, 2001. JRL #5424, 4 September, 2001.

⁵⁸¹ *Church and State*, *Argumenty I Fakty* (WPS Monitoring Agency), 5 December, 2001. JRL #5590, 10 December, 2001.

⁵⁸² *Ibid.*

The framework and infrastructure needed to support the stated cultural objectives were also detailed by Kovrizhkin.

“[...] opening Orthodox day-care centres, kindergartens, schools, gymnasiums (high schools), Christian-patriotic and Christian-sports clubs under the patronage of local authorities.”⁵⁸⁴

Putin appeared to show his support for the idea of Orthodox culture lessons in schools in a comment he made on a visit in Kazan on 30 August, 2002. He made a comment that suggested that only religion has the ability to make human values known to people. His comment stirred some critical comments from members of the political factions *Union of Right Forces* and *Yabloko*, who expressed the opinion that some separation needs to exist in society between the functions of the State and the functions of the Church.⁵⁸⁵

In spite of political pressure against the introduction of Orthodox culture lessons, the Minister of Education Vladimir Filippov released a 30-page description of the proposed course in mid-November 2002. He said that it was only submitted for consideration.⁵⁸⁶ The report was a recommended syllabus for the Orthodox culture class (which was already at this stage taught in some schools) and was sent to all schools by the Education Ministry.⁵⁸⁷ However, this appears to be the case of a high-ranking political figure, using his position of power to announce that the government will permit such lessons to commence.

The closeness of Church and State is evidenced by one of the authors of the 30-page report. Hierodeacon Kiprian Yashchenko is the Dean of the Pedagogical Department at St. Tikhon Orthodox Theological Institute, commented on his (and by extension the ROC's) involvement in the report, “Yes, we are separate from the State, but we can co-operate, can't we?”⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸³ Church and State, Argumenty I Fakty (WPS Monitoring Agency), 5 December, 2001. JRL #5590, 10 December, 2001.

⁵⁸⁴ Church and State, Argumenty I Fakty (WPS Monitoring Agency), 5 December, 2001. JRL #5590, 10 December, 2001.

⁵⁸⁵ *Russian MPs Critical of Putin's Remarks on Religion*, Ekho Moskvyy News Agency (BBC Monitoring), 30 August, 2002. JRL #6418, 3 September, 2002.

⁵⁸⁶ Zolotov, A., *Schools to Teach Orthodox Culture*, The Moscow Times, 18 November, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/11/18/001.html, 18 November, 2002.

⁵⁸⁷ Karush, S., *Ignoring Constitutional Bar, Russian Schools Make Religion the Fourth R With Orthodox Culture Classes*, AP, 4 January, 2003. JRL #7005, 5 January, 2003.

⁵⁸⁸ Zolotov, A., *Schools to Teach Orthodox Culture*, The Moscow Times, 18 November, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/11/18/001.html, 18 November, 2002.

A vast catalogue of themes were listed in the report, which included subjects such as:

- Biblical subjects
- Orthodox tradition
- Asceticism
- Liturgy
- Literature and art.⁵⁸⁹

By the end of their Orthodox culture classes, students are expected to be able to write a paper on one of the 64 subjects given. Some of the listed subjects are; 'Faith and Science,' 'Moscow as a Third Rome' and the 'Orthodox Understanding of Freedom.'⁵⁹⁰ The lesson plan was given a trail in the town of Noginsk, approximately 50 kilometres southeast of Moscow.

Noginsk's Orthodox culture lessons were formulated by co-operation between local officials and local priests. Teachers of the subject are put through on-going training, which includes lectures by theologians and priests, informal gatherings and pilgrimages. Archpriest Mikhail Yalov, the programme's architect in the Noginsk district deflected criticism of the mixing of Church and State.

"In the church school, we teach children to pray. [...] In the public school, we explain to children how Orthodox Christians do it. A person can be religious or non-religious, but he should not be ignorant."⁵⁹¹

Critics of the notion of Orthodox culture lessons in the schooling system have cited several areas of possible concern. Points against the scheme that have been raised so far have included the constitutional separation of Church and State, because it may result in inter-ethnic and inter-confessional conflict. Another point has been the view that religion is archaic and has no real place in a modern society.⁵⁹² Yalov's quote reveals a very thin line between direct religious tuition and instructing how religion is conducted in a correct manner.

⁵⁸⁹ Zolotov, A., *Schools to Teach Orthodox Culture*, The Moscow Times, 18 November, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/11/18/001.html, 18 November, 2002.

⁵⁹⁰ Ibid.

The entire Ministry of Education report can be found via the link www.ed.gov.ru/sch-edu/prkult/let.html.

⁵⁹¹ Zolotov, A., *Noginsk's Orthodox Culture Experiment*, The Moscow Times, 28 February, 2003. www.themoscowtimes.com/2003/02/28/002-print.html, 28 February, 2003.

⁵⁹² Zolotov, A., *Noginsk's Orthodox Culture Experiment*, The Moscow Times, 28 February, 2003.

There would appear to be some merit in the opponents' case. In June 2002 *The Movement for Human Rights* asked prosecutors to open a case against Education Ministry endorsement of a certain textbook in the Orthodox culture programme. The prosecutors refused twice, to bring about charges of inciting ethnic strife against the editor and publisher of *Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture*. Then on 24 March, 2003 the Meschansky District Court upheld the decision of the Moscow prosecutors.⁵⁹³ Two examples of textbook interpretations were outlined. Some of the book's claims included:

- Jews forced Pontius Pilate to crucify Jesus as “they thought only about power over other peoples and earthly wealth.”
- Non-Orthodox “guest” religions were accused of “not always behaving nobly in the traditionally Orthodox State.”⁵⁹⁴

The abovementioned examples could form the basis for misgivings regarding the introduction of Orthodox culture lessons into the schooling system. What has happened with regard to the issues surrounding a particular textbook, implies that abuses may and can creep into the structure. Has this been borne out in other examples, where an established system of Orthodox orientated education has been functioning?

Over the last decade, Archpriest Alexei Vasilenko the Russian Orthodox community St. Alexy Hermitage at Novoalexeyevka in the Yaroslavl region. Some 100 children receive an education from here, in a wide range of subjects. One of the pupils, 12 year old Alexei Klyuchevsky named his favourite subjects as military training, math, Russian and Latin during an interview.⁵⁹⁵

Educational standards of the school seem to be successful and high. A strict discipline is maintained among the boys. Those who break the school's norms are punished by scolding, penance or expulsion. Vasilenko explained the origins of the school's cadet corps.

www.themoscowtimes.com/2003/02/28/002-print.html, 28 February, 2003.

⁵⁹³ Krichevsky, L., *Ruling Allows Controversial Textbook Raises Issue of Church and State in Russia*, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 30 March, 2003. JRL #7125, 1 April, 2003.

⁵⁹⁴ (1) Karush, S., *Ignoring Constitutional Bar, Russian Schools Make Religion the Fourth R With Orthodox Culture Classes*, AP, 4 January, 2003. JRL #7005, 5 January, 2003.

(2) Krichevsky, L., *Ruling Allows Controversial Textbook Raises Issue of Church and State in Russia*, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, 30 March, 2003. JRL #7125, 1 April, 2003.

⁵⁹⁵ Zolotov, A., *Easter at a 'Monastery for Laymen'*, Moscow Times, 25 April, 2003.

www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/04/25/003-print.html, 25 April, 2003.

“Unfortunately, we can not spank the children. [...] Sometimes I wish we could.”⁵⁹⁶

Mikhail Lyukshin the Commander of the school’s Cadet Corps went on:

“They were hard to deal with, rebellious boys, and now, dressed in uniforms, they have changed – they know they have to obey orders [...] That is Father Alexei’s principle – not to give them a single minute of free time, because that is when the desire to do wrong emerges.”⁵⁹⁷

The attitudes expressed above, demonstrate a very strict and regimented approach to academic life in the school, along an Orthodox philosophy. It would appear to be bearing some measure of success. But, what is also revealed is an element of militarism into the school, along the lines of the reintroduced patriotism education programme in the State schools.⁵⁹⁸ Could this be an indication of State-Church collusion or a convergence of State-Church interests?

According to the statistics released by the Patriarch, Alexis II in March 2003, the ROC possesses a powerful educational arm. Such a varied educational offering, which caters for every stage of education, could be used as a means of shaping the future youth of the nation. The ROC has declared that it has;

- 43 theological schools.
- 32 seminaries.
- 6 preparatory pastor courses.
- 4 theological academies.
- 2 Orthodox universities.
- 2 diocesan theological schools for women.
- 1 divine institute.
- A number of preceptor and icon-painting schools.
- 135 parish Sunday schools in Moscow.⁵⁹⁹

⁵⁹⁶ Zolotov, A., *Easter at a ‘Monastery for Laymen’*, Moscow Times, 25 April, 2003.
www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/04/25/003-print.html, 25 April, 2003.

⁵⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁹⁸ Please see “Lesson in Patriotism: Putin’s (Re)Introduction of Patriotism to School Curricula”, in *Working Papers*, No. 75, Uppsala: Department of East European Studies, 2002, 16pp.

⁵⁹⁹ Lipich, O., *Russian Orthodox Church has Over 16, 000 Parishes in Russia*, RIA Novostei, March 25, 2003.

- 6000 theological students.⁶⁰⁰

3.4.5 Coming To Terms With Its 'Dark' Past

According to some, the ROC is still refusing to come to terms with unsavoury revelations and secrets from the Soviet era. Orthodox layman and sociologist Sergei Filatov has stated that the Church still has to come to terms with its past, such as collaboration with the KGB, financial impropriety and dubious morals. He maintains no real changes to the Church structure have been made in spite of surfacing information.

“For any other social institution, as recent years have shown, such revelations would have meant at the minimum a total shake-up of the leadership [...].”⁶⁰¹

Filatov offers some possible reasons for the ROC being unable to successfully fill the ideological vacuum left by the collapse of the Soviet Union. He suggests that in spite of very favourable political conditions, some of the reasons are linked to the nature of the Church.

“Given the general hopes for the saving role of the Church, the Russian Orthodox Church had a very favourable conditions for heading the country’s religious revival. But its internal moral and organisational state in practice excluded it from such a mission [...]. In conditions of the growing pressure from below in favour of democratisation, the leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church has in general regularly responded to this threat by strengthening its authoritarianism in governing the Church.”⁶⁰²

In 1992, the ROC established a special commission to investigate its ties with the KGB. However, no reports appear to be published to date.⁶⁰³ Alexis II is also the focus of controversy, concerning the collaboration role he may have played during the Soviet era. The

JRL #7116, March 26, 2003.

⁶⁰⁰ *About the Russian Orthodox Church*, www.orthodoxeurope.org/bginfo/church_en.php, 8 April, 2003.

⁶⁰¹ Ellis, J., op. cit. (1996), p. 149.

⁶⁰² Ibid.

⁶⁰³ LaFraniere, S., *Russia’s Well-Connected Patriarch*, Washington Post, 23 May, 2002. JRL #6264, 23 May, 2002.

controversy, which surrounds him, only seems to snowball and the situation is not helped by the Church's stance on the matter.

Some research points to a possibility that Alexis II was recruited by the KGB in his native Estonia in 1958 and served as an agent for some 30 years. KGB documents from Tallinn that had been obtained tell of an agent only known as 'Drozdov' being rewarded by being made Bishop there. Alexis II was made Bishop in 1961.⁶⁰⁴

Alexis II has hinted at some measure of collaboration in the past. In a 1991 newspaper interview he broached the subject. Announcing that he was: "[...] sometimes forced to give way" (to Soviet authorities) and that he apologised for "such concessions, the failure to speak out, the forced passivity and expressions of loyalty of the Church leadership."⁶⁰⁵

More recent Church communications on the matter, have been less apologetic in nature. A spokesman for the ROC Father Vsevolod Chaplin said in March 2002:

"Nobody has ever seen a single real document that would confirm the Patriarch used his contacts with Soviet authorities to make harm to the Church or to any people in the Church."⁶⁰⁶

Such a bland and meaningless statement is unlikely to reassure anyone who has doubts in this matter. The statement does not deny that Alexis II was associated with the KGB. Which raises the question, just how involved was he? Chaplin's words would seem to raise more questions, rather than be any effective form of 'damage control.'

In addition to the problems associated with the proximity of members of the clergy and their proximity to the power structures of the Soviet State, also arise questions from 'injustices' perpetrated by the State upon the ROC. And continuing from this line, the issue of the contemporary State redressing these past wrongs. One of the more controversial topics is the debate surrounding State confiscation of Church property and land.

⁶⁰⁴ LaFraniere, S., *Russia's Well-Connected Patriarch*, Washington Post, 23 May, 2002. JRL #6264, 23 May, 2002.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid.

Household Manager for the Moscow Patriarchate, Metropolitan Sergius of Solnechnogorsk made a statement through *RIA Novosti* on 31 July, 2002 in order to try and neutralise press criticism concerning the issue of restoration of Church land and property. He verbally reprimanded the Russian media and tried to ‘correct’ some of their assertions.

“It is clear that return of all property, including land, is impossible, [...] (media) produce a negative impression [...] At the present stage, we are simply on the sidelines and the way the press presents the matter is simply inexpert.”⁶⁰⁷

The Patriarch also made a statement through Interfax on the matter a short time later, at Tambov on 8 August, 2002. This followed a meeting with the Federation Council, where he discussed the problem of the return of Church-owned lands.

“I think that there were certain grounds for this issue to emerge [...] Unfortunately, they (the Federation Council) have taken the wrong approach to the issue and told the press about three million hectares (the Church owned before the October 1917 Revolution). In the meantime, there is no possibility to return these lands today, since cities, plants and other buildings were built on them.”⁶⁰⁸

Alexis II stressed in his talk, that the only lands that needed to be returned to the ROC were the lands being used by Orthodox churches and monasteries.⁶⁰⁹ A definite line of argument, to try and counter the PR damage caused by press claims of large-scale land and property claims by the ROC is being formed. This action demonstrates that the Church is aware of the possible political damage that may be caused if Russian society believes that the ROC will endeavour to make large claims. The actions of the Federation Council concerning their communication of Church intentions in the land issue also display either a lack of political communication sense on their part or that the ROC is not on friendly terms with all political institutions (or elements within institutions) in the Russian Federation.

⁶⁰⁷ *Russian Orthodox Church Does Not Claim Return of Revolution-Snatched Property*, RIA Novosti, 31 July, 2002. JRL #6380, 1 August, 2002.

⁶⁰⁸ *Russian Church does not Demand that all Lands it Owned Before Revolution be Returned – Patriarch*, Interfax, 8 August, 2002. JRL #6392, 8 August, 2002.

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid.

The Russian media had taken a stand in the issue of restitution of Church property and lands. ROC communications have been careful, so as not to inflame a potentially volatile situation, by making a demand for an unconditional return of all Church land and property confiscated during the Soviet era. This tactic does not seem to have been completely successful though, judging by the comments made by Alexis II on *RTR*, who chastised the media for their reporting on this issue.

“You see this issue is being resolved in a routine manner and the mass media have somewhat exaggerated the fact that I posed the issue of all the lands belonging to the Church being returned. We did not put the issue like that and will not put it like that. Today the monasteries cannot use those lands that once belonged to them. But today the monasteries are receiving land that they can cultivate to feed themselves and the pilgrims. I think that there is no need to raise the issue of restitution, because it evokes many other problems, and we are not posing the issue of having the property, which belonged to the Church returned. Wherever possible the Church should have returned to it the infrastructure that it needs for the normal activity of the parishes and plots of land that it can cultivate. And this is being done in a routine manner.”⁶¹⁰

Restitution of lands has the potential to spiral out of control. Although Orthodox communications on this issue have been cautious and have attempted to distance the Church by use of denial, this falls short of what is required. The issue remains alive as a public debate, so long as it does the reputation of the Church is at stake. Private property as a concept is relatively underdeveloped in Russia still, which can hold back economic development. Added to this, the real or perceived possibility of having ‘your’ land taken off you as the result of a land claim made by the Church adds to the volatility.

3.5 Chapter Summary

When the Soviet Union broke up in 1991, the Soviet identity was also broken. This seems to have left some people without of sense of belonging or identity of any specific cultural

⁶¹⁰ *Russian Patriarch Urges Introduction of Orthodox Culture Subject in Schools*, BBC Monitoring (of RTR), 3 September, 2001. JRL #5424, 4 September, 2001.

marker. The political elite realise this problem and have been trying to create identity to encourage and motivate the populace to endeavour great achievements and to bind the fragmented society through recreating a collective society. The problem thus far, seems to be that of which identity to adopt.

The desire to recreate a strong Russia again needs direction and motivation to succeed. Debate has raged in society as to take an Eastern identity, Western identity and other identities. Since Putin has taken office, there has been a definite shift in the direction of adopting a Western stance and identity, through proclamations as his we (Russians) all are all Europeans. The search for identity has become apparent in the discourse of the Russian media. Media organisations have aligned themselves editorially to the beliefs that are expressed by their political patrons. These patrons understand the potential value of mass media, in terms of the influencing potential on the public, in disseminating their political agenda.

The Soviet Union developed the concept of patriotism for political purposes. In this particular instance, patriotism was used as a motivating and unifying factor. Society was motivated into achieving the ruling Communist Party's plans and desires for the development of the State. But, this was conducted in a manner that was inclusive of all peoples, as many people and one nation.

Because of the Soviet Union's and the Russian Federation's diverse ethnic mix, it would be dangerous to use a nationalistically oriented discourse to motivate society. This may end in antagonism between various ethnic groups. Such antagonism would serve to undermine the ability of the State to realise its objectives. Possibly for this reason, the political elite in contemporary Russia has chosen a patriotically based discourse over a nationalistically based one. Some elements of nationalism have been applied by the State, but seem to be an exception to the more common use of patriotism. The nationalistic elements appear to be catering for specific localised cases, such as Chechnya.

Attempts to reintroduce patriotism began before Putin came to power. These attempts however, amounted to nothing. Patriotism had made its State-sponsored re-entry into Russian society in 2001. This move seems to be in keeping with Putin's apparent attempt to resurrect a strong, centralised state based on Moscow. Putin has stated that he is a product of the Soviet past. His heritage has many similarities with a line of Soviet leaders, both Yuri Andropov and

Mikhail Gorbachev began by rising through the ranks of the KGB, then they entered national politics.

The Putin administration has identified one of Russian society's major problems as being unmotivated (to serve the interests of the State). The political elite has thought of a generation of Russians, which grew up from *glasnost* into the Yeltsin years, known as *bespredel*, as a 'lost' generation. Therefore, a government initiative launched in 2001, aimed at once again motivating Russian citizens was tailored for the next generation.

Putin's administration is flexible and adaptable, they have come to realise that the goals and aspirations of society (Russia's citizenry) and the government (the political elite) have become divergent. In order for the State to be able to motivate and organise society into achieving the political elite's goals, a hybrid of old and new means have been applied. This move is designed to bring about convergence of values and ideology between the State and society.

The government seems to have 'borrowed' the Soviet era concept of patriotism, but has in some instances, 'packaged' it to appeal to contemporary Russian youth. Some 'traditional' aspects of Soviet patriotic education have been retained, such as the military related sporting games. But, new aspects have been added, which reflects a certain appreciation by the government that an appeal needs to be close to the values of the targeted section of society for the programme to be effective.

If the programme is launched with an appeal that is too far removed from the values of those who the government intend to influence, the attempt may fail as the values are too different and can be rejected. The programme of 'patriotic education' appears to have the aim of gradually shifting the values of Russia's youth over time and not to attempt a sudden and massive shift in values.

Moves by the government to re-establish 'patriotic education' as a taught subject should not be viewed in isolation to other changes that are occurring in Russian society. This move should be seen as being part of a larger change in contemporary society, which is being initiated by the political elite. Distancing the oligarchs, Boris Berezovsky and Vladimir Gusinsky, from political power; creation of a 'single information space' in the Russian media;

re-organisation of the regional administration; new laws and regulations; patriotic education as a subject, are all seemingly aimed at the recreation of a strong, centralised state that is based in Moscow.

For Russia to regain her ‘greatness’ of the past, which is seemingly what the political elite wants, a ‘guided’ and motivated population is needed for creating the conditions that are necessary for establishing such. The conditions that are needed, do not at this stage exist, which could be why many of the above-mentioned changes have been initiated, ‘patriotic education being but one of those changes.

The rise in importance and status of the ROC and its involvement in secular affairs would appear to be tied to the issue of identity. This has been demonstrated in a very clear and precise manner, when a report accompanied a Parliamentary Assembly resolution. The report described the relationship between the State and the ROC in the following way;

“The Russian Orthodox Church appears to equate Russia with Orthodoxy, and Orthodoxy with Russia.”⁶¹¹

In a long-term study, funded by the Finish Academy of Sciences (the project running from 1991-1999 is called *Religion and Values After the Fall of Communism*) the number of Russians identifying themselves as Orthodox has increased.

- 1991 – 27%
- 1999 – 82%⁶¹²

At the same time this rapid growth took place, the proportion that stated that they believe in God grew more modestly.

- 1991 – 34%
- 1999 – 61%⁶¹³

⁶¹¹ Pleven, L., *Orthodox, Catholic Tensions Church Mirrors Rift in Russia*, Newsday, 9 June, 2002. JRL #6298, 9 June, 2002.

⁶¹² Furman, D. & Kaariainen, K., *A Religious Revival Without Believers?*, Old Churches, New Believers: Religion in the Mass Consciousness of Post-Soviet Russia, Moscow and St. Petersburg, Letni Sad, 2000. JRL #5425, 4 September, 2001.

The results of the research project and the report that accompanied the Parliamentary Assembly resolution perhaps indicate that religion is not necessarily strictly serve as solely a spiritual experience. This evidence seems to point to the role of religion as a cultural identity marker. It defines and distinguishes Russia and Russians from the rest of the world, gives a feeling or impression of being special and/or unique.

A place of prominence was held by the ROC in Russian society during the Imperial period. After the Bolshevik revolution of 1917 and the subsequent suppression of all religious activity in the Soviet Union, up till mid-1941, their status was almost destroyed. At this point, when the Axis armies thrust deep into Soviet territory, the Soviet State needed a rallying point for the people to give them hope and determination. This was not to be found in the Soviet State, especially after the excesses of the Stalinist purges.

The ROC was enlisted into the service of the Soviet State, a seemingly inconceivable union. But, the offer could not be refused from the ROC's point of view. In return for offering the State ideological support in rallying the masses to resist the German led invasion, the Church was to be allowed to exist. In light of the devastation that had been brought upon the Church, there was no realistic alternative, if the Church was to survive in some form in the territory of the Soviet Union. Recognition offered to the ROC by Stalin in September 1943 ensured that the Church would survive for the time being. Both the Church and the State needed each other at this particular point in time.

With the exception of Nikita Khrushchev's campaign against the Church, a relatively stable period in State-Church relations followed. A change in relations came about once more during the *glasnost* and *perestroika* reform period. Once more the State, Mikhail Gorbachev to be more exact, needed the help of the Church in the role of legitimiser of the Gorbachev administration and as motivator of the people. On this occasion, the State allied itself with the Church offering it privileges in return for its public support of the reform programme and the public denunciation of political figures opposed to it.

The rules of this union were different to those of the union that the Church entered into with Stalin. Prior to this union, religious affairs were considered to be marginal. Gorbachev's need

⁶¹³ Furman, D. & Kaariainen, K., *A Religious Revival Without Believers?*, Old Churches, New Believers: Religion in the Mass Consciousness of Post-Soviet Russia, Moscow and St. Petersburg, Letni Sad, 2000. JRL #5425, 4 September, 2001.

for numbers to support him brought about a higher status of the Church in society. Some of the privileges offered to the ROC included access to state owned media and greater media coverage of ROC events. This period allowed the ROC to not only consolidate its position in Russian society, but to extend its influence into the political real.

After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, political actors continued to court the ROC leadership, possibly in the belief that this would allow them to gain access to the Orthodox flock. By this stage, the ROC had raised its status considerably and had become a formidable political actor in its own right. Leading Russian politicians, such as Boris Yeltsin maintained a high public profile during occasions of religious significance. Both state owned media and media aligned with the government covered these events in a positive tone.

The ROC was able to gain good PR from the 1993 coup. During this event they were cast in the role as negotiator between the warring factions – the executive and legislative branches of government. Although their actions ultimately failed, the Church received a significant amount of media coverage. Maybe as a reward for their ‘loyalty,’ Yeltsin made a point of consulting the ROC on matters of both national and international significance.

Putin came to the Russian presidency in 2000, relations between his administration and the ROC have been most cordial. He has consistently supported the Church in matters, such as the Catholic-Orthodox conflict, where it has been made clear through the media (both domestic and international) that the ROC has the final say on issues as a possible visit by the Pope to Russia. Putin has also made it clear that he and his family are active Orthodox believers and are not just pretending to be believers to gain support from the Orthodox constituency.

State owned media, such as the news agencies *ITAR-Tass* and *RIA Novosti* seem to bear the main stories concerning the ROC. If the government and the Church were not on good terms, the ROC could be simply shut out of the state media. Stories given by state media organisations, such as the mentioned news agencies are positive in their spin. Sensitive issues, such as the involvement of the ROC in the military and education have been handled in a mostly positive fashion. This is a significant move, to tie media, education, the military and religion together as they are all institutions from where cultural identity is derived. The values of the next generation will be shaped by these societal institutions, which are increasingly pro-

Kremlin in nature. This is in keeping with the desire by the political elite to recreate a powerful, centralised state.

Although it can be dangerous for media to criticise the ROC or provide information that is contrary to the Church's belief due to the considerable political clout. It does on occasion transpire that some media will disseminate some information that the ROC does not agree with or like. This is seen in some issues that the Church wants to see disappear, such as the Patriarch's alleged links with the KGB and the issue of restitution of property and land seized by the Soviet State. It is something that the ROC has to deal with, possibly in a more assertive manner before more significant PR damage is done. These issues seem to have tainted the ROC already, which seems to be having an effect on the level of citizen participation in the Church's activities and life.

The ROC does have a significant holding of its own media assets. There are some 600 publications owned by the Church, as well as a presence on the Internet and other forms of communication. In recent years their media structure has been undergoing a revamp. This may be due in part to the desire to be able to exercise a more effective and greater level of editorial control over their media assets. The Russian government restructured the state owned assets recently, which seems to have paid dividends with respect to this presupposed aim

CHAPTER IV: MAIN TRENDS IN THE MEDIA.

4.0 Chapter Objectives

A quote from the 1990 Freedom Forum report on East Central Europe initiates an apt setting for one of the main questions / issues to be tackled by this particular part of the work.

“Raw political power [...] will be the decisive factor in determining how much freedom the media have.”⁶¹⁴

Some aspects that will be investigated initially include, how foreign interests and influences have affected the Russian media, the role of the press in society and the development of the Internet in the Russian Federation. These aspects have all contributed in some way in bringing about the current characteristics and tendencies in the contemporary media. I will bring to light some of the less obvious as well as obvious results of political-media-societal interaction.

This chapter will focus on a series of aspects in the Russian media. The period covered is broad, stretching from the Gorbachev era to the present. By returning to the Gorbachev era it is possible to gain some appreciation of some aspects of the contemporary media's peculiarities and identity. A break in the media's 'normal' methods of operating in the Soviet system can be found in the mid-1980's, which then had a flow-on effect that generated consequences in Russian society from an ideological and an idealistic point of view.

Some aspects and methods used to control and manipulate the media during the Soviet era have continued into the present day. Leading academics, such as Ellen Mickiewicz, have noted a remarkable level of continuity between the Soviet era mass media and the contemporary mass media. This can be clearly seen in areas where the struggle for control of the medium is most intense, TV is considered to be the most influential media source and therefore prone to a greater level of conflict than other mediums.

The chapter also gives accounts of how the media are used to manipulate the public and the

⁶¹⁴ Milton, A. K., *The Rational Politician: Exploiting the Media in New Democracies*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2000, p.1.

public response to this attempt at manipulation. Certain virtues or powers of persuasion are associated with an effective application of media strategy. I will try to determine some themes, such as agenda setting in the media and just how effective or otherwise, these measures have been. The public's response to the media's reliability in providing accurate information, by assessing the public reaction to investigative journalism will be covered.

In the later part of chapter four, I will look at the Soviet media, their role in the Soviet Union and what characteristics of this epoch remain today. Mechanisms of controlling the media shall be examined, as shall be demonstrated, the controls do not need to be graphic and violent to be effective. The media industry is in a vulnerable position due to its financial state, it is not uncommon for media outlets to continually operate at a financial loss. Therefore, governmental 'assistance' in the form of funding help can be tempting. Often, the funding comes with strings attached.

The fourth chapter then deals with the issues surrounding censorship. Soviet era measures will be described, along with some of the outcomes. This will form a bench mark from which to draw a comparison with contemporary measures. I intend to show that censorship measures are not used solely by the government, but is also frequently used by the business sector. Regulation and law making of the media industry

4.1 Issues of Foreign Ownership and Influence in the Media

The renowned academic, Karol Jakubowicz, proposed a three-stage continuum in 1995. This continuum forecast a 'natural evolution' of media in the former Eastern Bloc nations.

- (1) Media demonopolisation and decentralisation, and internationalisation of TV content.
- (2) New media legislation, signs of journalistic professionalisation in new private media.
- (3) Consolidation of media legislation, professionalisation and democratisation, beginnings of media concentration and influence of foreign media capital.⁶¹⁵

From an early stage, media law inhibited the level of allowable foreign influence in the

⁶¹⁵ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 170.

Russian media. The law prevents foreign citizens, but not foreign companies, from owning (founding) mass media. This is embodied in the *Statute on Mass Media*, which replaced the 1990 *Media Law* in early 1992.⁶¹⁶ This may account for Terhi Rantanen's observation on foreign investment in the Russian media.

“Russia is one of the few countries in Eastern Europe where foreign investment has not played a key role in the growth of media.”⁶¹⁷

Foreign intervention or influence, via using mass media does not necessarily entail being physically present in the country concerned. This dilemma or problem was encountered in the Soviet Union. By 1990 an estimated 60 million Russians could receive foreign radio broadcasts.⁶¹⁸ This situation ensured that the Soviet government was not able to maintain its position as the country's gatekeeper, which would affect the effective transmission of ideology by virtue of the public's access to alternative information.

Periodically, xenophobic predictions are made concerning foreign ownership of the Russian media. At times, prominent persons make these sometimes unfounded statements. Whether these statements demonstrate genuine concern or are made to generate publicity (or an agenda) it is not entirely certain.

In February 1994, Mikhail Poltoranin the State Duma committee chairman on information policy and communications publicly cast his sentiments on the influence of foreign content in the Russian media. His comments concerned the negative impact of low-grade foreign films on Russian morality and the “destruction of the common information space” in Russia.⁶¹⁹ These negative attributes seemed to be aimed at creating excuses for introducing some measures to influence programming, in the name of the public good.

Renown exiled Russian academic, Alexander Solzhenitsyn once accused *Radio Liberty* of becoming a mouthpiece of the United States and of promoting Siberian separatism.⁶²⁰ Certainly, *Radio Liberty* was sponsored by the United States and this would have some

⁶¹⁶ Rantanen, T., op. cit., p. 28.

⁶¹⁷ Rantanen, T., op. cit., p. 29.

⁶¹⁸ Vartanova, E., “Media Structures: Changed and Unchanged” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 53.

⁶¹⁹ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 132.

bearing on setting editorial content and hence the agendas. As for the promotion of Siberian separatism, the notion is somewhat fuzzy concept, which is difficult to prove or disprove. How would a foreign radio station influence a large heterogeneous region by engendering notions of separatism in its population?

Although the authorities seem to be foreign influence in the Russian media as generally being negative, a notable exception to this 'rule' has occurred in the most unlikely of places. In the turbulent period of the immediate disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russian broadcasting sought guiding principals. The ideals were thought to be found in the structure of Britain's *BBC*. A Director of TV at Ostankino, Oleg Slabyenko explained;

“[...] the role of Ostankino as a unifying broadcaster is very important. [...] Ostankino may be the station which can keep all these different peoples together, and to help resolve ethnic problems. In this respect the *BBC* is our model – as a unifying broadcaster, a corporation, and a regulator.”⁶²¹

As a rule, the penetration of foreign ownership in the sphere of mass communications in the Russian Federation is minimal. There are however, some notable exceptions do exist. Mixtures of joint venture or wholly foreign owned media outlets have emerged in the post-Soviet period.

Foreign investment in the Russian media industry seems to have been attracted to some aspects or types of the industry more than others. For instance, there has been very active and competitive foreign investment in PR, advertising, film and video distribution and news agencies (such as Reuters).⁶²²

The entry of Western news agencies into the Russian market has had a series of profound influences upon this sector of the media market. There has been an influence upon the news style used by Russian actors in the Russian news agency market. The Russian audience became familiar with the new news format, which has forced the domestic news agencies to

⁶²⁰ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 132.

⁶²¹ McNair, B., “Commentary” in *Media Culture and Society*, Volume 18, Number 3, Sage, July 1996, pp. 489 – 500, p. 492.

⁶²² Zassoursky, Y. N., “Media and the Public Interest: Balancing Between State, Business and the Public Sphere” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y. N., op cit., p. 170.

adapt a little in order to remain competitive.⁶²³

In May 1995 *Reuters* announced plans to set up a network in Russia and the CIS. *Agence France Presse* soon followed *Reuters*'s plans.⁶²⁴ These international media news groups did not seem to want to take-over existing domestic media structures. The intention seemed to be to establish a new network. *Reuters* 1995 move in establishing a Russian language economic news service had another effect on the Russian market. It has stifled attempts by Russian news agencies from entering this market segment.⁶²⁵

Another highly emotional communication appeared, this time in an article in *Obshchaya Gazeta* (25 - 31 May, 1995). This article claimed that “*Reuters* already owned half of Russia’s information space” and that “Russians would become slaves of *Reuters* and foreign information empires.”⁶²⁶

One of the most prominent foreign investments in Russian media is from the *Independent Media Group*. The group was founded in 1992 and is the largest publisher of consumer magazines in Russia.⁶²⁷ This group owns a string of media outlets, which include:

- *The Moscow Times*
- *Playboy*
- *Cosmopolitan*
- *Good Housekeeping*
- *Harper’s Bazaar*.⁶²⁸

Independent Media reshuffled its media portfolio in late 2001. In September 2001 they announced that they were going to stop publishing *Playboy* by the end of 2001, which had been published since 1995 and launch a Russian edition of the men’s magazine *FHM*

⁶²³ Rantanen, T., op. cit., pp. 78 – 79.

⁶²⁴ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 132.

⁶²⁵ Rantanen, T., op. cit., p. 79.

⁶²⁶ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 133.

⁶²⁷ *VNU to Sell Russia Holdings*, www.europemedia.net/shownews.asp?ArticleID=15199, 6 March, 2003. EJC Media News Digest, 6 March, 2003.

⁶²⁸ (1) Zassoursky, Y. N., “Media and the Public Interest: Balancing Between State, Business and the Public Sphere” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y. N., op. cit., p. 170.

(2) Rantanen, T., op. cit., p. 29.

instead.⁶²⁹

In a move designed to shed itself of all consumer information activities, *International Media Group* (the parent company of *Independent Media*) announced the sale of its 35% stake in *Independent Media*. The shares were to be sold to existing stakeholders. The new owner to emerge from this deal was *Prof-Media*, which is part of the *Interros Group*.⁶³⁰ This new stake has significantly boosted the amount of media assets under the control of *Interros*, which is controlled by the oligarch Vladimir Potanin. He remains as one of the few large scale private owners of media and remains close to the Kremlin.

Another foreign media group, *Burda Publishing House*, possesses a series of magazine style publications under its control:

- *Cool*
- *Cool Girl*
- *Lisa*
- *Avtomir*.⁶³¹

Other foreign interests exist elsewhere in the media industry. To name a few of the more prominent investments, these include:

- A Greek publisher had bought a 51% stake in *Pravda*.
- Partial French ownership of the radio stations *Nostalgie* and *Europe Plus*.
- Partial American ownership of *Radio Maximum*.⁶³²

Joint venture enterprises in the Russian media industry have also existed. One of the joint venture programmes involved Britain's *Financial Times* and the American *Wall Street*

⁶²⁹ *Independent Media Launches FHM, Closes Playboy*, issue 40, *Media Digest*, 12 September, 2001.

⁶³⁰ (1) *VNU to Sell Russia Holdings*, www.europemedia.net/shownews.asp?ArticleID=15199, 6 March, 2003. *EJC Media News Digest*, 6 March, 2003.

(2) Editorial, *Oligarchs Just Come and Go*, *The Moscow Times*, 4 March, 2003. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/03/04/005-print.html, 4 March, 2003.

⁶³¹ Zassoursky, Y. N., "Media and the Public Interest: Balancing Between State, Business and the Public Sphere" in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y. N., *Russian Media Challenge*, Helsinki, Kikimora Publications, 2001, p. 170.

⁶³² Rantanen, T., *op. cit.*, p. 29.

Journal teaming up and launching the newspaper *Vedomosti*.⁶³³ *Itogi* is another example of a joint venture enterprise, with *Newsweek*.⁶³⁴

On occasion, foreign influence or intervention in the Russian media industry makes headlines. One of the first of such occasions, after Putin came to office in March 2000, happened in the wake of the *Media-Most* controversy. As the company was collapsing, offers were made by foreign interests to acquire the assets of *Media-Most*. Both U. S. media magnate Ted Turner (founder of *CNN*) and businessman George Soros (of the *Soros Foundation*, a group that campaigns for media and freedom of speech issues in the former Eastern Bloc) expressed an interest in gaining up to 60% of *NTV*.⁶³⁵

Turner and Soros were acting in response to Gusinsky's attempt to find a foreign investor for the heavily indebted media company (to the state-owned *Gazprom*), to prevent it from falling into the control of the government. Gusinsky stated that he would only sell his stake if the independence of the TV station was guaranteed. Putin also cleared the way for foreign involvement to begin by stating that he had no objections to Turner taking a stake in *NTV*.⁶³⁶ These actions laid the path for a very complicated series of events, which eventually saw the control of the station eventually taken over by *Gazprom* and other 'partners' slowly excluded from the company.

The Swedish *Modern Times Group (MTG)* has been another active commercial participant in the Russian media market. They have also been active throughout the former Eastern Bloc, buying up media assets. In April 2001 *MTG* announced plans to buy into *Darial TV*. At the time, *Darial TV* was one of eight commercial TV stations with a licence to broadcast nationally, with a potential audience of 20 million viewers.⁶³⁷

On 16 June 2001, Norway's ambassador to Russia, Ogvind Nordsletten told *RIA Novostei* that Norwegian and Swedish firms were eyeing more prospective media assets in the Russian

⁶³³ Zassoursky, Y. N., "Media and the Public Interest: Balancing Between State, Business and the Public Sphere" in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y. N., *Russian Media Challenge*, Helsinki, Kikumora Publications, 2001, p. 173.

⁶³⁴ Zassoursky, I., "Media and Power: Russia in the Nineties" in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 81.

⁶³⁵ *Foreign Consortium Bids to Save Russian TV Channel*, AFP, 7 March, 2001. JRL #5138, 7 March, 2001.

⁶³⁶ Ibid.

⁶³⁷ *Modern Times Group to Acquire 75% of Russian TV Station*, Reuters, 9 April, 2001.

www.europeaninternet.com/russia/investorinsight/business.php3?id=333316&brief=html, 10 April, 2001.

Federation. He announced that planned future investments included *Izvestiya*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* and other press outlets.⁶³⁸

4.2 The Internet

Rafal Rohozinski of the University of Cambridge argued that the legacy of Soviet ideology still has an influence on the internet in Russia, setting Russia apart from the Western experience.⁶³⁹ This argument would appear to support my contention of the existence of binary opposition, a division exists between east and west (between the Russian and the Western worlds). A distinction exists between the ideology and mentality as a result of the environment, which has shaped this development. Russian society was for the most part, a 'closed society' for some seventy years. The skills acquired by Soviet citizens, which were necessary for survival in this climate, cannot be discarded quickly. Contemporary Russia (in the current political form) has only been in existence for approximately one decade.

Rohozinski asserts that this ideology has hampered the development of the Internet. The central government (Soviet) wanted to create an integrated system. Lower order bureaucrats and officials who wanted control of such a project thwarted this system's development.⁶⁴⁰ The project was also seen as threat by some, to the hidden economy. *Blat's* very existence would be under threat, along with the associated personal networks if information was readily available.⁶⁴¹ It should be noted that the level of Soviet technology was somewhat less advanced than its Western counterparts level of technology.

It seems as though a mixture of a perceived threat to Soviet culture (among other things the existence of *blat*) and a lack of understanding concerning the Internet's potential hampered the development of the Internet in the Soviet Union. The Internet was a very new medium of information dissemination and retrieval. As such, the full potential of such a medium would be hard to grasp and may have been considered either a lower order priority or superfluous.

⁶³⁸ *Scandinavians Invest in Russian Press*, Radio Liberty, www.rferl.org/newsline, 20 June, 2001. EJC Media News Digest, 20 June, 2001.

⁶³⁹ Rafal Rohozinski is a Ph.D. candidate in the Faculty of Social and Political Sciences at Trinity College, University of Cambridge. His article *How the internet did not Transform Russia* (October 2000) is drawn from a previous work, *Mapping Russian Cyberspace: A Perspective on Democracy and the Net*. (this work is available at www.unrisd.org/infotech/conferen/russian)

⁶⁴⁰ Control over such a project would give an agency or individuals access to information, which could be subsequently used as a bargaining chip to gain goods and services, in exchange for this information.

Russian media organisations, especially those that are aligned with the government are a constant source of encouraging news for Internet development in the Russian Federation. For instance, at a conference government official Andrei Korotkov used selective figures to announce that Russia occupied the 15th position among the world's Internet using countries.⁶⁴² A report that was disseminated by the government's news agency *RIA Novosti*. Is this portrayal of Internet use development in the Russian Federation a realistic appraisal of the true situation?

4.2.1 Internet Use in the Russian Federation

Www.monitoring.ru has been conducting an on-going survey of Internet use of Runet visitors. Internet users have been divided into two groups, 'active users' that are on the net no less than three hours per week. The other group studied is the 'regular users,' who spend at least one hour per week on the net.⁶⁴³

The survey revealed that 61% of 'active users' and 55% of 'regular users' read news on the web. Internet 'chat' was the second most popular activity, 44.5% of 'active users' and 45.8% of 'regular users' were spending time in Internet chatrooms. According to a report from CNews.ru, these priorities have not changed significantly from the 2000 survey.⁶⁴⁴

The Russian Public Centre for Internet Technologies profiled Internet users and reported their findings. They discovered that the audience was generally young and male. 64% of Russian Internet users were aged between 16 and 34, 59% of Internet users were men.⁶⁴⁵

In a poll conducted by the All-Russian Public Opinion Research Centre, a snapshot of the disparity of computer access and use between the centre and the regions was highlighted.

- 84% of Russians never use computers.
- 69% of Muscovites never use computers.

⁶⁴¹ *Blat* is the giving and receiving of favours, whether they are goods or services. It works on a system of being mutually beneficial, of 'if you scratch my back, I will scratch yours.'

⁶⁴² Scherbachova, O., *Russia 15th at Internet Using Suzdal / Vladimir Region*, RIA Novosti, 13 February, 2002. JRL #6076, 14 February, 2002.

⁶⁴³ *Runet Users Prefer News*, Independent Media News Digest, Number 34, 1 August, 2001.

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴⁵ *Russian Internet Audience Doubles in 2001*, Interfax, 29 April, 2001. JRL #6216 30 April, 2001.

- 26% of Muscovites use computers daily or at least several times a week.
- 9% of all Russians use computers daily or at least several times a week.
- 23% of Moscow families have personal computers at home.
- 6% of all Russian families have personal computers at home.⁶⁴⁶

These poll statistics provide a poor indication on the use of computers by Russians. According to the poll, the vast majority of the respondents have never used computers, the figure of those who have never used computers remains high in the Muscovite category as well. A peculiar trait for a capital city in Europe in the 21st Century. The other point that emerges from these figures is the disparity between Moscow and the rest of Russia, in the use of computers.

In February 2002 the Communications Ministry released a wealth of statistics concerning computers and the Internet to the news agency *RIA Novosti*. The data given pertained to the 2001 year. It was announced that 400, 000 personal computers (PCs) were sold quarterly in Russia. This raised the number of PCs per capita from 6.4 PCs in 2000 to 7.5 PCs.⁶⁴⁷

To try and reinforce the image of Russia being on the leading edge of IT, Korotkov stated that some 1.5 million experts worked in the field of information and communication technology and that the yearly growth of this sector was in the region of 10 – 15%.⁶⁴⁸ Assuming these figures to be true and correct, they give a very promising indication of the potential for growth of IT in the Russian Federation. However, is this growth in the process of being realised?

According to the Deputy Communications Minister Alexander Volokitin, Russia had 7 million Internet users. Three million of these users are classified as being frequent users, the remainder are classified as occasional users. Volokitin also stated that Russians owned some 10 million personal computers.⁶⁴⁹

In research published by www.monitoring.ru in August 2000, approximately 9.2 million

⁶⁴⁶ *One in Four Muscovites, One in Ten Russians Use Computers*, Interfax, 29 January, 2002.

JRL #6048, 31 January, 2002.

⁶⁴⁷ Scherbachova, O., *Russia 15th at Internet Using Suzdal / Vladimir Region*, RIA Novosti, 13 February, 2002.

JRL #6076, 14 February, 2002.

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid.

Russians have used the net. However, only 20% of these are regular users (Online for more than one hour per week). The research also established that the Internet users are mainly concentrated in the main cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg.⁶⁵⁰

Growth in the Internet audience over the year 2001 was spectacular, there were some 18 million users, of which about 8 million were classified as 'regular users.'⁶⁵¹ Moscow and St. Petersburg continued as the main centres of Internet activity. 66.3% of the country's Internet users reside these cities. A noticeable increase in Internet use from the regions is occurring.⁶⁵²

In February 2002 the Communications Ministry announced the rate of Internet usage. The total number of Internet users was stated at approximately 10 million (almost 7% of Russia's population). Runet's total traffic during the 2001 year increased by 53% to 19.1 million surfers (including web surfers outside Russia). Of this figure, 7.5 million were classified as 'regular users.'⁶⁵³ An increasing percentage of those using Runet originate from outside Russia.

- 2001 - 45% (4.8 million) of Runet users were Russian residents.
- 2000 – 60% (4.5 million) of Runet users were Russian residents.⁶⁵⁴

A September 2002 poll has highlighted a lack of computer and Internet use in the Russian Federation. This poll has generated a wealth of statistical information.

- 7% of respondents have a computer at home (5% in 2001).
- 11% use a computer several times a week.
- 3% use a computer roughly once a week.
- 1% use a computer approximately once a month.
- 83% have never used a computer.
- 4% of respondents use the Internet several times a week.
- 2% use the Internet once a week.

⁶⁴⁹ *Russia has 7 million Internet Users*, Interfax, 29/11/2000. JRL #4659, 29/11/2000.

⁶⁵⁰ Gerrans, Sam., *Democratic Russia Goes Online*, TechWeb News, www.techweb.com, 27/11/2000. JRL #4666, 3/12/2000.

⁶⁵¹ *Russian Internet Audience Doubles in 2001*, Interfax, 29 April, 2001. JRL #6216 30 April, 2001.

⁶⁵² Ibid.

⁶⁵³ Naumenko, L., *Net Use Leaps 39% in 2001*, Moscow Times, 6 February, 2002. JRL #6063, 7 February, 2002.

- 1% use the Internet up to a couple of times a month.
- 91% of respondents have never used the Internet.⁶⁵⁵

The 2002 poll statistics display some improvement on the poll results from the previous year. However, the few gains that have been achieved are modest. In addition to computer use, a survey of Internet use was conducted. As seen from the figures above, Internet use is still very much in its infancy. Results obtained from the poll would suggest that the use of computers and the Internet is very poorly developed and the Russian government has a monumental task in trying to promote greater use of computers and the Internet. However, it should be noted that these results are obtained from a poll of only approximately 2000 people and this may not be truly representative of real situation.

Forecasts had predicted that Russia will have 11 million Internet users or 8% of the population on the net by 2003.⁶⁵⁶ However, approximately only 2.5% of Russia's population is online in 2001. This figure is less than 1/10 the portion of American households online.⁶⁵⁷

World Bank statistics from 2000 painted a bleak picture of computer usage and penetration in Russia. There were only 43 computers per 1000 people in the country (4.3%). This figure compares poorly with many other nations. Belize had 12.5% computer penetration, St. Vincent and the Grenadines 10.6%, Fiji 5.5%, Jamaica 4.7%, Bulgaria 4.4% and the United States 58.5%.⁶⁵⁸

An initiative that has been launched, with the designed intention to double the number of Internet users in Russia over the next five years was signed into law by the Prime Minister Mikhail Kasyanov on 29 January 2002. 'Electronic Russia' as the programme is called, also has the mission of integrating all of Russia's educational and government systems into the Internet.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁴ Naumenko, L., *Net Use Leaps 39% in 2001*, Moscow Times, 6 February, 2002. JRL #6063, 7 February, 2002.

⁶⁵⁵ (1) Naumenko, L., *Study Finds Just 8% of Russians Has Surfing Net*, The Moscow Times, 10 October, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/10/10/043.html, 10 October, 2002.

(2) Interfax, *Most Russians do not Have Modern Means of Communications – Poll*, 9 October, 2002. JRL #6482, 9 October, 2002.

⁶⁵⁶ Varolist, J., *Russian Internet Use is Low, But Great Potential is Pushing Expansion*, New York Times, 16 July, 2001. JRL #5349 17 July, 2001.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁵⁸ Naumenko, L., *Study Finds Just 8% of Russians Has Surfing Net*, The Moscow Times, 10 October, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/10/10/043.html, 10 October, 2002.

⁶⁵⁹ *Prime Minister Launches 'Electronic Russia' Programme*, www.rferl.org, 5 February, 2002.

'Electronic Russia' is scheduled to run from January 2002 until 2010. Total funding for the project is US\$2.4 billion, of which 51% is derived from the federal budget, 30% from regional budgets and 19% from private sources.⁶⁶⁰

Some of the projects stated aims include:

- Creating an Internet portal for the government's economic and finance bodies.
- Computerising the country's schools.
- Creating an on-line tax payment system.⁶⁶¹

The low Internet usage may reflect Russia's level of poverty, which in 1999 showed that 1/3 of Russians lived below the poverty line.⁶⁶² People can earn an average of between US\$50 – 100 per month.⁶⁶³ The State Statistics Committee reported on the level of poverty in the Russian Federation at the end of May 2002. Russia's poverty line was set at US\$55 per month. During the first quarter of 2002, some 47.7 million Russians were classified as living within the poverty level.⁶⁶⁴

Under such poor economic conditions a lot of Internet access is carried out at the place of work. In a ROMIR poll it was found that 81.6% of respondents use the Internet at work.⁶⁶⁵ The cost of Internet access excludes many private residences due to the cost. Estimates of net access in Russia vary greatly, from as low as US\$120 up to between US\$400 – 1500 per month.⁶⁶⁶ When these figures are compared with wages the net result is that the growth of net use is retarded by low wages. Spending priorities under such circumstances have to be focussed on the necessities of life (such as housing and food) and luxuries such as computers and access to the net are low order wants.

Another factor, which hampered the development of the Internet in Russia was the poor state

EJC Media News Digest, 5 February, 2002.

⁶⁶⁰ Naumenko, L., *E-Russia Funding to be Slashed*, 22 October, 2002.

www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/10/22/048.html, 22 October, 2002.

⁶⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶⁶² Vartanova, E., "Media Structures: Changed and Unchanged" in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 35.

⁶⁶³ Varolist, J., *Russian Internet Use is Low, But Great Potential is Pushing Expansion*, New York Times, 16 July, 2001. JRL #5349 17 July, 2001.

⁶⁶⁴ AP, *33% of Russians Live in Poverty*, 31 May, 2002. JRL #6283, 1 June, 2002.

⁶⁶⁵ Cohen, N., *Russian Internet Landscape Still Bleak*, www.marketer.com, 21 February, 2001. JRL #5111, 22 February, 2001.

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid.

of the telecommunications infrastructure. Less than 20 people out of every 100 have telephones in Russia (in 1997). A survey conducted in September 2002 has indicated that currently, 43% of Russians have a phone at home (91% of Muscovites have a phone at home).⁶⁶⁷ People in the regions are often placed on waiting lists, sometimes years long, before having a regular telephone installed.⁶⁶⁸ Experts and operators in the telecommunications industry have estimated that the infrastructure, which is unsuitable for modern communications will require many years of upgrading before reaching Western standards.⁶⁶⁹

Some improvements in the level of technology introduction have occurred. The results of a survey conducted by VTsIOM in September 2002, were released on 9 October, 2002. This selective representative poll of approximately 2000 people has produced some interesting results. Two points soon become apparent, the lack of penetration by modern technology and regional disparity.

A result of the survey conveyed noteworthy information regarding phone use and penetration. According to the poll only 9% of respondents had a mobile phone (4% in the 2001 poll).⁶⁷⁰ However, 28.6% of Muscovites had a mobile phone, where as only 2.9% of rural respondents reported carrying a mobile phone. ACM Consulting estimated that 28.5 million mobile phones were in Russia in September 2002. This differs from VTsIOM's estimate of 14.5 million mobile phone users.⁶⁷¹ If technology, such as mobile phones have such low rates of penetration in Russia, what are the chances of achieving high rates of Internet use in Russia? Low penetration of mobile phone use in Russia could be, as it is with computers and the Internet, indicative of greater social problems in society, namely the question of the standard of living.

On the surface, it appears as though the Russian government is actively encouraging a greater participation of its citizens in the Internet, as embodied in the 'Electronic Russia'

⁶⁶⁷ (1) Naumenko, L., *Study Finds Just 8% of Russians has Surfing Net*, The Moscow Times, 10 October, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/10/10/043.html, 10 October, 2002.

(2) Interfax, *Most Russians do not Have Modern Means of Communications – Poll*, 9 October, 2002. JRL #6482, 9 October, 2002.

⁶⁶⁸ Fossato, F., *Russia: Joining the Cybertimes, But Slowly*, 20 October, 1997. www.rferl.org/nca/features/1997/10/F.RU.971020124837.html, 2 October, 2002.

⁶⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁰ Interfax, *Most Russians do not Have Modern Means of Communications – Poll*, 9 October, 2002. JRL #6482, 9 October, 2002.

⁶⁷¹ Naumenko, L., *Study Finds Just 8% of Russians has Surfing Net*, The Moscow Times, 10 October, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/10/10/043.html, 10 October, 2002.

programme. Internet usage rates in the Russian Federation are low when compared to Western countries such as the United States. Figures on Internet use and participation would appear to indicate that a growing demand for access to the web exists.

On 21 October, 2002 the Deputy Economic Development and Trade Minister, Andrei Sharonov announced that funding for next years 'Electronic Russia' would be greatly reduced.⁶⁷² He was unspecific on the exact figures of the cuts, but this would appear to contradict the government's stated commitment to developing the Internet further.

Speaking at the same news conference was Communications Minister Leonid Reiman, who said that the programme was "in a good condition and is ready for further development."⁶⁷³ Two different comments from two government ministers, on the same day and at the same venue. This gives an impression that the government is uncertain in its goals and objectives, and may well be implementing contradictory programmes.

4.2.2 Political Activity on the Net

A multitude of Internet sites have been established, dedicated to politicians and politics. They range from personal websites of politicians such as Boris Nemtsov and Vladimir Putin (www.putin2000.ru) to political discussion sites (www.polit.ru). Sometimes these sites are in English as well as Russian, indicating the intention to communicate to a wider audience than just Russia.

Political interest in the Internet's possibilities and potential has been on the increase in recent years. Ella Pamfilova, a presidential candidate in the 2000 elections, used the Internet to spread her message and to generate publicity. However, this did not appear to be overly successful, due to low Internet usage.⁶⁷⁴

During the recent round of elections (1999 and 2000) kompromat was found in a supposedly 'neutral' Internet environment. Several Internet sites run by *The Foundation for Effective*

⁶⁷² Naumenko, L., *E-Russia Funding to be Slashed*, 22 October, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/10/22/048.html, 22 October, 2002.

⁶⁷³ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁴ Raskin, A., "Television: Medium to Elect the President" in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., pp. 99 - 100.

Politics were found to have posted kompromat.⁶⁷⁵ Gleb Pavlovsky well known as being one of the Kremlin's top media advisors (a position that he said he has resigned from) started *The Foundation for Effective Politics*.

This spilling over of politics from the traditional media (newspapers, radio and TV) may be creating an adverse public perception of the Internet's informational reliability. "[...] Russian users consider the information from the Internet fairly unreliable."⁶⁷⁶

The Internet's potential is being investigated and exploited with more purpose and energy since Putin's election to the presidency. However, the roots of the government move to making more use of the Internet can be traced to December 28, 1999 when the Government Information Department began supplying electronic information to the public and the media (the trafficking of hard copy material almost ceased).⁶⁷⁷

Electronic Russia is the name of the government's federal programme for the development of Internet technologies.⁶⁷⁸ According to the pro-Kremlin website www.strana.ru, in 2001 President Putin and the Prime Minister supported proposals for establishing an effective mechanism for feedback between the government and society.⁶⁷⁹ A formation of a kind of 'virtual public sphere,' where the public would be able to be involved in debates concerning public figures and issues. The agreement that paved the way for the creation of the Government Department of Information's website was reached at Moscow's Civic Forum in November 2001.⁶⁸⁰

Currently, this website gives public access to Government staff, Government related agencies, and government plans and programmes. The contents of the site are arranged in alphabetical order. Plans exist to upgrade the site with features such as news banners carrying official events and government resolutions and a banner that will detail the work of ministries and other government departments.⁶⁸¹

⁶⁷⁵ Vartanova, E., "Media Structures: Changed and Unchanged" in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., pp. 21 – 72, p. 61.

⁶⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁷ *Government Revamps Its Internet Site*, www.strana.ru, 17 June, 2002. JRL #6313, 18 June, 2002.

⁶⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid.

In keeping with the government's new policy of making the government and governmental ministries and agencies more accessible to the public, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs has launched an increased presence on the Internet. The project was initiated with the participation of *Interfax* news agency on 2 September, 2002.⁶⁸²

The rhetoric of the Foreign Ministry's project implies greater public accessibility, The Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov announced:

“Today, the Russian Foreign Ministry together with *Interfax* are launching an action called ‘The Russian Foreign Ministry – Russia and the World in Answers to your Questions.’ Anyone may ask a question about Russian foreign policy or pressing international problems through the Internet, and beginning in October, the Ministry will regularly give answers to them.”⁶⁸³

Ivanov went on to explain the purpose for the website launch as ensuring a conduit for the official point of view. A stress was placed on the of Russian diplomacy being “correctly understood by the public. [...] We should resolutely get rid of manifestations of office diplomacy and expand our channels of dialogue.”⁶⁸⁴

As with the Russian Information Department's website, this site is also interactive. Questions from anyone, in Russia or abroad may be posed to the Foreign Ministry. These questions are sent through a special window in either English or Russian via the *Interfax* websites (www.interfax.ru – Russian or www.interfax.com – English).⁶⁸⁵ The use of a system where it is possible to pose questions in two languages hints at the growing importance being placed by the Russian government of disseminating their stance to the domestic audience but to the wider world community.

The flagship of official Russian presence on the Internet is the upgraded presidential website www.president.kremlin.ru. *AYAXI*, the company that won the tender to upgrade the website in

⁶⁸¹ *Government Revamps Its Internet Site*, www.strana.ru, 17 June, 2002. JRL #6313, 18 June, 2002.

⁶⁸² *Foreign Minister Announces New Web Project With Interfax*, *Interfax*, 2 September, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/doc/HotNews.html, 2 September, 2002.

⁶⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸⁵ *Foreign Minister Announces New Web Project With Interfax*, *Interfax*, 2 September, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/doc/HotNews.html, 2 September, 2002.

June 2001, expended some 15,000 working hours on a site that includes; 12, 000 pages and over 1000 photos. This new site went online on 20 June, 2002.⁶⁸⁶ www.president.kremlin.ru's importance can be appreciated by using President Putin's own words regarding its significance.

“This is a bit more than the site of a specific person. It is the Kremlin's site, and the Kremlin is not only an architectural ensemble – it is the centre of power, and this is something bigger – it is the spiritual centre of the country.”⁶⁸⁷

AYAXI completed work on the site in March 2002, however the work was subjected to an extensive evaluation by the Federal Agency for Government Communications and Information (FAPSI). The government agency spent three months testing the site to evaluate the condition of its security requirements.⁶⁸⁸

The presidential website still contains some of the earlier features such as news updates and speech transcripts, but has come to include a variety of other information.

- A searchable database of laws and regulations signed by the President.
- A list of the President's residences and partial inventory of Kremlin cars, ships and planes.
- Pictures of Putin and his family, pictures of the First Family on vacation and the text of the autobiographical book 'First Person.'⁶⁸⁹

Putin made some suggestions for improving the site. One of the suggestions was the posting of the text of draft laws, as “a good democratic way of discussing them.”⁶⁹⁰ This statement is in keeping with the government's stated desire to make society feel part of the political process and not alienated from it, by making government more accessible for the 'average'

⁶⁸⁶ Naumenko, L., *Putin Gets a Website With Bells and Whistles*, 21 June, 2002. JRL #6319, 21 June, 2002.

⁶⁸⁷ “*It is a Bit More Than the Site of a Specific Person – It is the Kremlin Site ... the Centre of Power*”: *Putin on New Presidential Website. The English Language Version, However, Must not be Work for Export*, www.strana.ru, 21 June, 2002. JRL #6321, 23 June, 2002.

⁶⁸⁸ Naumenko, L., *Putin Gets a Website With Bells and Whistles*, 21 June, 2002. JRL #6319, 21 June, 2002.

⁶⁸⁹ (1) Naumenko, L., *Putin Gets a Website With Bells and Whistles*, 21 June, 2002. JRL #6319, 21 June, 2002. (2) “*It is a Bit More Than the Site of a Specific Person – It is the Kremlin Site ... the Centre of Power*”: *Putin on New Presidential Website. The English Language Version, However, Must not be Work for Export*, www.strana.ru, 21 June, 2002.

⁶⁹⁰ Naumenko, L., *Putin Gets a Website With Bells and Whistles*, 21 June, 2002. JRL #6319, 21 June, 2002.

citizen. Another suggestion made by Putin was what he saw as the necessity of launching an English language version of the site.⁶⁹¹ By launching an English language version, the intention is to spread the government's stance to an audience that includes potential audiences from overseas. The site attracted some 10, 000 hits on its first day of operation, including "several dozen abortive hacking attempts."⁶⁹² According to information released by the Presidential Press Service to the government news agency *ITAR-TASS*, the old website was one of the most popular sites on the Runet with an average 50, 000 hits per day.⁶⁹³

An attempt has been initiated by the Kremlin to create the appearance of pluralism in Russian politics and the media. A leading figure in establishing the Kremlin's presence on the net was their chief media advisor Gleb Pavlovsky. When the Fund for Effective Policy was founded, Pavlovsky heralded it as an independent source of political information.

Pavlovsky's Fund for Effective Policy had managed to create an impressive presence on the web. The Director of Internet projects for the foundation, Marina Litvinovich listed some of the informational resources that are at work on the web; www.gazeta.ru, www.lenta.ru, www.smi.ru, www.vesti.ru, www.strana.ru and numerous others.⁶⁹⁴

The Kremlin's chief media advisor had made the scale of his ambition clear from the outset. On 19 September, 2000 he stated that it was his intention to create a "Russian CNN." This was to be achieved by uniting all state owned or controlled media outlets at a massive, single multimedia site.⁶⁹⁵ Such a site would provide the government with an effective and cost efficient method of getting their message out across not only Russia, but also the rest of the world. The organisational structure of strana.ru gave a hint as to where Pavlovsky's political loyalties lay, which was based on Putin's newly created seven super districts.⁶⁹⁶

In an article published by *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, the ideology and hint at strana.ru's influence are portrayed in a concise manner:

⁶⁹¹ Naumenko, L., *Putin Gets a Website With Bells and Whistles*, 21 June, 2002. JRL #6319, 21 June, 2002.

⁶⁹² Ibid.

⁶⁹³ *Russian President's Site Most Popular on Runet*, Independent Media News Digest, Number 34, 1 August, 2001.

⁶⁹⁴ Bardin, P., *Internet Expert Views Russian New Media Market*, *Izvestiya*, 23 November, 2000. JRL #4657, 28 November, 2000.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁹⁶ Bardin, P., *Internet Expert Views Russian New Media Market*, *Izvestiya*, 23 November, 2000. JRL #4657, 28 November, 2000.

“[...] Pavlovsky’s editions have always positioned themselves as official, ones reflecting and preaching nothing but the political line of the Kremlin, they never the less managed to preserve a definite degree of independence in their evaluations and judgement. [...] More than that, strana.ru was regarded not only as a well informed web publication but also a very influential medium reflecting a quite concrete position of definite power circles. It is common knowledge that many a high-ranking official used to start his morning Internet browsing by clicking on strana.ru.”⁶⁹⁷

Pavlovsky also admitted to receiving help at gaining control of Russia’s biggest news portals, such as www.lenta.ru, www.vesti.ru, www.smi.ru and the electronic version of *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* www.ng.ru.⁶⁹⁸ Under the current regime, it is unlikely that any official help would be offered let alone given to an organisation that was not considered to be politically ‘reliable.’

On 1 November, 2001 Pavlovsky announced his withdrawal from the Internet business.⁶⁹⁹ Much speculation and rumour flowed concerning possible reasons for this sudden and unexpected departure from the Internet based news business. One of the rumours involved the repercussions of an article, which appeared on strana.ru on 29 October, 2001. The article alleged that Alexei Miller, the head of *Gazprom*, had been forced to resign. This was not the case and political ‘fallout’ from this error had forced Pavlovsky’s resignation.⁷⁰⁰

Another rumour was based on the dire financial situation faced by the Foundation for Effective Policies. According to *Kommersant*, Pavlovsky announced the intention to sell the Internet assets to a commercial buyer as early as June 2001.⁷⁰¹ The article went on and stated that the financial situation had become critical by December 2001. In a departure from *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*’s assessment of Pavlovsky’s Internet media holdings, a possible reason for a no sale was offered.

⁶⁹⁷ Glikin, M. & Rostova, N., *Pavlovsky Nationalised*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 July, 2002.

The Russian Issues.Com: Pavlovsky Nationalised, www.therussianissues.com/print/15700.html, 4 July, 2002.

⁶⁹⁸ Bardin, P., *Internet Expert Views Russian New Media Market*, *Izvestiya*, 23 November, 2000.

JRL #4657, 28 November, 2000.

⁶⁹⁹ *Russian Media Adviser Downs Own Website*, www.rferl.org, 5 November, 2001.

EJC Media News Digest, 5 November, 2001.

⁷⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰¹ *Newspaper Predicts End of Russian Leading Spin-Doctor’s Career*, BBC Monitoring, source: *Kommersant*, 4 July, 2002. JRL #6339, 5 July, 2002.

“Professional Internet people attributed this to the frankly propagandist and pro-state thrust of the media managed by the Effective Policy Foundation which inevitably deprived them of their competitiveness in the market.”⁷⁰²

The Kommersant article went further in describing the level of poverty faced by the Foundation for Effective Policies. Quoting a comment that was released by the VGTRK, it was claimed that strana.ru “was in a near default situation.” Additionally, unofficial conversations of unnamed staff members suggested that wages might have not been paid for a period of up to three months.⁷⁰³

The approximately fifteen websites, which were under control of the Foundation for Effective Policy were handed over to the Internet board of the All-Russia State TV and Radio Committee (VGTRK).⁷⁰⁴ During an interview concerning this transaction, Pavlovsky was asked how he felt about the deal. He answered “I feel like a man who has given a puppy into good hands.”⁷⁰⁵

What appears to be an emerging trend is the movement of opposition figures from the ‘conventional’ media (such as print and broadcasting media) to the Internet. This has proved to be the case with the chief editor of the opposition magazine *Itogi*, who was sacked when the government controlled energy giant *Gazprom* took over control.⁷⁰⁶ Another instance of a ‘mainstream’ journalist relocating to the Internet is the infamous ex-*ORT* anchor Sergei Dorenko (www.dorenko.tv).

The new Internet publication is called *The Real Itogi*. At the time of the new publication’s launch, the intention was to publish online until such a time when it could once again return to a paper based format.⁷⁰⁷ *The Real Itogi*’s actions and intentions would appear to indicate that some in the media industry think of the Internet as a place of refuge for media professionals that have been marginalized in the current political climate.

⁷⁰² *Newspaper Predicts End of Russian Leading Spin-Doctor’s Career*, BBC Monitoring, source: Kommersant, 4 July, 2002. JRL #6339, 5 July, 2002.

⁷⁰³ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁴ Glikin, M. & Rostova, N., *Pavlovsky Nationalised*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 4 July, 2002.

The Russian Issues.Com: Pavlovsky Nationalised, www.therussianissues.com/print/15700.html, 4 July, 2002.

⁷⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁰⁶ *Russian Magazine on the Net*, www.europeaninternet.com/russia/news.php3?id=384989, 23 April, 2001.

EJC Media News Digest, 23 April, 2001.

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid.

The political elite has come to understand the potential of the Internet as a means of spreading their message. Until recently the Internet appeared to be a relatively neglected part of the media environment as far as government presence and regulation is concerned. Attempts have been made and continue by the government to gain some measure of control over the flow of information over the net.

Another tactic by the government would seem to be the creation of a 'virtual political opposition' through the efforts of Gleb Pavlovsky. This may be due in part to the relocation of genuine political opposition on the net. A new sphere for the incessant 'information war' is being fought in this particular part of the Russian information space.

A possible reason for wanting to communicate to a worldwide audience, giving the appearance of greater government accountability and accessibility to the public is to create a form of 'virtual democracy.' That is, the appearance of pluralism in politics, media and society without the physical manifestation of this pluralism. This may be done in order to reintegrate Russia into mainstream world political life, to facilitate membership in world bodies such as WTO and G8. The appearance of pluralism would also help to deflect criticism from world bodies such as EU, concerning sensitive issues, for example the freedom of speech.

4.2.3 Policing and Controlling the Internet

The rapid expansion of unchecked or censored information has caught the attention of the Russian authorities. On March 26, 2000, the Chairman of the Russian Electoral Commission Aleksandr Veshnyakov, announced that his agency would "consider the Internet as a mass medium," and would "monitor and punish" any cyber-violations of Russian electoral legislation.⁷⁰⁸

The nature of the Internet is complex and difficult to monitor, due in part to the sheer volume of users and information flowing through the networks. In spite of these characteristics, measures are being undertaken by the Kremlin to control the Internet.

⁷⁰⁸ Vartanova, E., "Media Structures: Changed and Unchanged" in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 61.

In an effort to try and police the web Russian Internet Service Providers (ISP's) are required by law to link their computers to the FSB (KGB's successor). This law was signed into effect in July 1998, which allows the FSB to monitor selected electronic transmissions, including e-mails, without having to provide any warrants.⁷⁰⁹ Putin signed another law, taking effect in January 2001, which has extended this requirement to include seven other law enforcement agencies.⁷¹⁰

The implications of this law mean that the law enforcement agencies are able to supervise e-mail and other electronic traffic. Searches can be made using keywords to seek out specific information, regardless of whether it is prejudicial to state security or not. Electronic information is accessed relatively easily by the governmental agencies after a presidential decree in 1995, banning the use of encryption algorithms or devices unless these were certified by the FSB.⁷¹¹ These agencies have in effect been given a free hand to act as a new cyber-censor.

Such rigorous law making on a medium as the Internet implies that the authorities are very much aware of its potential to influence the public with an alternative source of information. The above-mentioned measures seem to be aimed at governmental control being secured before the Internet use becomes more widespread and influential. Governmental presence on the net has also been on the increase. Sometimes the government's actions take on the appearance of a counter-measure against a specific informational 'problem.'

Under the aegis of the 'Electronic Russia' programme, a new series of efforts, this time they are aimed at 'standardisation' of Russian Internet publications. The standardisation will be attempted through a series of obligatory requirements in the format of the publications. These requirements are as follow:

- Information about the publisher.
- The publication's state issued licence.
- A copyright disclaimer.

⁷⁰⁹ *Russian Police Take Aim at Open Internet Access*, AFP, 1 February, 2002. JRL #6051, 1 February, 2002.

⁷¹⁰ Gray, Emma. *Putin's Media War*, www.cpj.org/Briefings/Russia_analysis_March00/Russia_analysis_march00.html, 6 December, 2000.

⁷¹¹ Rohozinski, Rafal. *How the Internet did not Transform Russia*, University of Cambridge, October 2000.

- Content annotation.⁷¹²

Such conditions would make the work of the cyber-censor very easy. The information provided by the Internet publication could ultimately be used against them. As the FSB already possess the electronic ‘key’ to Russian web space they are able to use a word search, which would be a simplified process via the content annotation, to root out any ‘unacceptable’ information from electronic publications. All of the critical information will be more readily accessible and concentrated under this regime.

In the world of wild rumour and accusation, stories may emerge (true or false) concerning an ‘impending’ event. This environment seems to flourish in the Russian Federation. On 1 February, 2002 the Russian daily *Noviye Izvestiya* published an article regarding an alleged draft law being prepared by the Ministry of Internal Affairs. According to the article, web access would be restricted to individuals who have permission from law-enforcement agencies.⁷¹³

The Ministry of Internal Affairs denied this rumour and pointed to the ‘Electronic Russia’ programme, which would appear to contradict the article’s argument.⁷¹⁴ In this instance the rumour may have been fuelled by events occurring at a conference held in Rome. During the Rome conference, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov launched the concept of ‘information terrorism.’⁷¹⁵

Ivanov went on to explain this new concept and its implications for a country such as Russia. According to him, modern society has developed a dependence on electronic databases and electronically transmitted information, which directly affects the defence and intelligence arms, law enforcement agencies, banking and public utilities. He went on to state that the “vital spheres of any state have become accessible to hackers, and their co-ordinated actions could not only paralyse a whole country, but could also result in numerous human casualties.”⁷¹⁶

⁷¹² *Prime Minister Launches ‘Electronic Russia’ Programme*, www.rferl.org, 5 February, 2002. EJC Media News Digest, 5 February, 2002.

⁷¹³ (1) *Internet Censorship – Rumour or Reality?*, www.strana.ru, 4 February, 2002. JRL #6056, 5 February, 2002.

(2) *Noviye Izvestiya* is owned by self-exiled tycoon Boris Berezovsky, a leading opponent of the Kremlin and as such is more likely to engage in ‘mud raking’ or kompromat than present an ‘unbiased’ report.

⁷¹⁴ *Internet Censorship – Rumour or Reality?*, www.strana.ru, 4 February, 2002. JRL #6056, 5 February, 2002.

⁷¹⁵ Ibid.

⁷¹⁶ *Internet Censorship – Rumour or Reality?*, www.strana.ru, 4 February, 2002. JRL #6056, 5 February, 2002.

Such statements by high-ranking politicians are bound to generate rumours. A new concept has been introduced, that of 'information terrorism' and the impact that this may have on society if no measures are taken against such an activity. The introduction of new laws and regulations would be a logical first step as a means to prevent the doomsday scenario that was presented by Ivanov.

Ivanov's statement was not the first such statement made by a high ranking figure in the government. Gleb Pavlovsky openly endorsed the adoption of the Russian Information Security Doctrine. Like Ivanov, he made mention of a threat to information security, although not specifically pertaining to electronic information and the need to adopt some form of protection against this 'threat.' One of the suggested methods was "that the Russian state must create a single information centre inside the presidential administration."⁷¹⁷

It is interesting to note the timing of Ivanov's use of the term 'information terrorism,' which was in February 2002. This is a matter of only five months after the terror attacks on the US mainland in September 2000. The use of the term 'terrorism' has surpassed the older word for the pretext for intervention, 'humanitarianism' in world politics.

Terrorism and its implications also hold an important place in the Russian psyche. After the bomb blasts around Moscow and other Russian cities in 1999, the suppression of Chechen aspirations for independence by military action was justified by suggesting the acts of terror would be prevented by that course of action. The word terrorism, both in Russia and the world as a whole, has sinister and highly emotionally charged connotations. Through the evocation of such strong sentiment it may be more probable for a government to 'get away with' actions that it would not ordinarily do so, in times of peace, security and certainty.

The government has been able to exercise some measure of control over the conventional media via a raft of laws and other means. Removing their broadcasting licence or increasing the cost of transmission fees can silence broadcasting media. Print media are also vulnerable to manipulation through such levers as non-payment of subsidies or refusing or increasing the cost of newsprint and / or printing services. Until recently, no such mechanisms existed for controlling the Internet.

⁷¹⁷ Bardin, P., *Internet Expert Views Russian New Media Market*, Izvestiya, 23 November, 2000. JRL #4657, 28 November, 2000.

From 1995 the Kremlin has sought to monitor and control the flow of information through legal means. A series of laws have been passed that make it possible for the government to intercept electronically transmitted information (assuming that the sender has acted within the law). The most recent laws regarding the requirements for Russian Internet publications would appear to ease the burden of the Kremlin's task in the monumental task of the surveillance of information available on the net.

4.2.4 Commercial Developments on the Net

Commercial development of the Internet in the Russian Federation seems to be progressing steadily. There has been a remarkable rate of growth in the number of second level domains in the domain zone '.ru' between 1 August, 2001 to 1 August, 2002.⁷¹⁸ On 1 August, 2001 60,000 domain names were registered and by 1 August, 2002 this figure had jumped to 135,000.⁷¹⁹

Approximately 60% of the Internet address users in Russia are legal entities.⁷²⁰ This group of legal entities can be further broken down. Of the legal entities, 95% of this group consists of Russian companies and the offices of foreign firms that are located in Moscow. The remaining 5% derive from foreign companies without offices in Russia.⁷²¹ These figures demonstrate a growing appreciation of having a commercial presence on the Internet, not only from foreign companies but Russian businesses as well.

The ratio of corporate to private users has been slowly shifting toward a greater corporate use of the Internet. This trend is expected to continue according to the Russian Public Centre for Internet Technologies:

- 2000 – ratio of private to corporate users 40% / 60%
- 2001 – ratio of private to corporate users 37% / 63%
- 2002 – ratio of private to corporate users 35% / 65% (estimate).⁷²²

⁷¹⁸ *Number of Addresses in '.ru' Zone Doubles*, Interfax, 1 August, 2002. JRL #6382, 2 August, 2002.

⁷¹⁹ Ibid.

⁷²⁰ Ibid.

⁷²¹ Ibid.

⁷²² (1) *Russian Internet Audience Doubles in 2001*, Interfax, 29 April, 2001. JRL #6216 30 April, 2001.

A gradual increase in media organisations making use of an Internet presence has been noticeable between 1995 – 2000.

- 1995 – 300 online media outlets.
- 1997 – 800 online media outlets.
- 2000 – approximately 50 TV companies, 60 radio sites, 33 Internet news agencies and approximately 1200 newspapers had online editions.⁷²³

A framework for regulating and developing commercial aspects of the Internet is currently under construction. In January 2002 the multibillion-dollar project for IT development in Russia, 'Electronic Russia' and a law on the electronic signatures (important for the signing of deals over the Internet) were passed.⁷²⁴

Tseren Tserenov, the head of the Electronic Russia programme has estimated that the IT sector will eventually account for 2% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This figure is currently 0.61% of GDP.⁷²⁵ The estimated value of the sale of goods and services through the Internet was expected to reach US\$285 million.⁷²⁶

Commercial presence on the Russian Internet appears, at this stage to be growing with more interest being shown by companies in developing a presence on the Internet (through WebPages and commercial transactions being concluded over the net). The poor regulation framework for overseeing this activity is in the process of being formed, which seems to indicate that the government sees that commercial activity via the Internet is assuming a greater importance.

(2) *Russian Internet Penetration Doubles*, <http://ojr.usc.edu/content/ojc>. EJC Media News Digest, 8 May, 2002.

⁷²³ Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, *Russian Media Challenge*, Helsinki, Kikimora Publications, 2001, p. 60.

⁷²⁴ Naumenko, L., *Net Use Leaps 39% in 2001*, Moscow Times, 6 February, 2002. JRL #6063, 7 February, 2002.

⁷²⁵ (1) Ibid.

(2) *40% More Russians on the Internet in 2001*, Interfax, 5 February, 2002. JRL #6059, 6 February, 2002.

⁷²⁶ *Internet Trade Expected to Increase Almost 2.5 Times in Russia in 2001*, Interfax, 4 November, 2001. www.themoscowtimes.com/doc/HotNews.html, 5 November, 2001.

4.2.5 Kavkaz.org and the Information War

One of the Chechen's most notable successes in the Second Chechen War is the use of an Internet based information service. The site www.kavkaz.org is the brainchild of Movladi Udugov. Possibly inspired by the Zapatista's use of the Internet in their struggle⁷²⁷ Kavkaz.org was launched in the summer of 1999, just prior to the information blackout that was imposed by the Russians.⁷²⁸

In the course of the Second Chechen War, this Internet information link to the outside world has assumed critical importance. Unlike the First Chechen War, the number of foreign journalists reporting from the Chechen side on this occasion is a mere fraction.⁷²⁹ This has meant that, combined with the Russian jamming of radio and TV broadcasts and the lack of 'friendly' media, the Chechens primary method of getting their information to the outside world came via the Internet.

When examining kavkaz.org, it soon becomes apparent that the website is not designed to cater for a domestic audience, i.e. Chechens. The website is designed to influence foreign audiences, this is evident in the languages that are used. Information appears in English, Russian and other languages, but not Chechen.⁷³⁰

The website contains news, interviews with Chechen leaders, fighters and civilians and displays numerous photographs to back their claims. Pictures of casualties from both sides are shown, as are photos of Russian prisoners and military aircraft that have been shot down by the rebels. This has proved to be somewhat embarrassing for the Russian government who has on occasions been forced to admit the veracity of some of the rebel claims. One such incident occurred on 7 May, 2000, when the Russian government cast doubts on the Chechen rebels claims of shooting down a Russian SU-24 jet fighter-bomber. After pictures were published on the Chechen website, the Russian government was forced to admit that the claims were probably true.⁷³¹

⁷²⁷ The Zapatista's have used the Internet to bring to the world's attention their guerrilla war against the Mexican government in the Chiapas region of Mexico from 1994.

⁷²⁸ Guzman, D., *Chechnya: Rebels use Internet in Propaganda War With Russia*, 30 May, 2000. www.hrea.org/lists/huridocs-tech/markup/msg00516.html, 14 August, 2002.

⁷²⁹ Ibid.

⁷³⁰ Ibid.

⁷³¹ Guzman, D., *Chechnya: Rebels use Internet in Propaganda War With Russia*, 30 May, 2000.

Possibly in response to the Chechen website www.kavkaz.org, the Russian government has established the Russian Government Information Centre. This organisation has attempted to counter information that has been disseminated by kavkaz.org, information that would otherwise be inaccessible to the Russian public through conventional media.⁷³²

However, kavkaz.org has not been without its problems. The Russian government has sought to shut down the site, succeeding in Autumn 1999 to have the server remove the site on the grounds that it contained “terrorist propaganda and hate material.”⁷³³ This has forced kavkaz.org to move among several different servers, where it has been successfully attacked by Russian hackers on at least two separate occasions.⁷³⁴

Another threat to the site comes from within the ranks of the Chechen rebel hierarchy. Aslan Maskhadov, the Chechen President has taken the site to issue in its use of evocative language. The site makes reference to the term *jihad* or ‘holy war,’ an act that is aimed at bringing about strict Islamic law to Chechnya. This has created an atmosphere of rumour, where associations with Osama Bin Ladin’s terrorist network have been made. A situation that makes it easier to dismiss the rebels as extremists.

Kavkaz.org was successful in helping to bring the Chechen issue to world attention by providing information from the war-zone. By creating awareness of various issues, such as abuse of human rights and through successful lobbying attempts, the Chechens were able to bring about words of criticism and condemnation of the Russian government’s actions. Countries and organisations, such as the United States and the Council of Europe questioned and criticised Russia, thereby applying some external pressure.

However, after the events of September 11, 2001, external criticism of Russian actions has been muted. Russia insisted on a link between the Chechen separatists and Osama Bin Laden’s organisation. A convergence in the interests and political goals of the Western world (as represented by the United States and her allies) and Russia has seen a virtual halt to

www.hrea.org/lists/huridocs-tech/markup/msg00516.html, 14 August, 2002.

⁷³² Ekecrantz, J., “Introduction: Post-Communism and Global Culture” in Ekecrantz, J. & Olofsson, K., Editors, op. cit., p. 24.

⁷³³ Guzman, D., *Chechnya: Rebels use Internet in Propaganda War With Russia*, 30 May, 2000.

www.hrea.org/lists/huridocs-tech/markup/msg00516.html, 14 August, 2002.

⁷³⁴ Guzman, D., *Chechnya: Rebels use Internet in Propaganda War With Russia*, 30 May, 2000.

www.hrea.org/lists/huridocs-tech/markup/msg00516.html, 14 August, 2002.

criticism of Russian conduct in the Second Chechen War.

Maskhadov's representative in Washington, Lyoma Usmanov has made it clear that this situation plays into the Russians hands and has tried to put some distance between kavkaz.org and the Chechen administration:

“Kavkaz.org and Udugov do not represent Chechen interests at all. The method of kavkaz.org about any event in Chechnya is that they report it as a struggle between Islamic rebels, mujaheddin, and Russians maybe somehow, one can see, against Christians. We can not accept it.”⁷³⁵

As the Russian government was able to block the transmissions of broadcast media from the Chechens, a new method of getting their message to the outside world was needed. The Internet has provided a cheap and easy way of getting their message to not only a Russian audience, but also the world as a whole.

Kavkaz.org has been a very successful venture for the Chechens. It has not only enabled an alternative view (other than the official Russian government's stance) to be disseminated to a very large potential audience, but has forced the Russian government to admit to the existence of potentially damaging information, regarding their progress in the Second Chechen War.

4.3 Interaction Between Media And Society

A useful insight into the inner 'guiding' philosophy of media in society can be gained through examining the words of those who work in or with the industry. When these comments begin to alter over time, an appreciation of an 'evolving' media may be developed.

In the aftermath of the fall of the Soviet Union, an unnamed deputy editor of *Moskovskoe Novosti* was quoted in 1993 as saying;

“[...] press freedom in post-Soviet Russia has not meant giving full and objective information to the reader. Infected by the decay of communism it

⁷³⁵ Guzman, D., *Chechnya: Rebels use Internet in Propaganda War With Russia*, 30 May, 2000. www.hrea.org/lists/huridocs-tech/markup/msg00516.html, 14 August, 2002.

has turned into the freedom of abuse and insult; freedom to pursue private ideological wars; freedom to unleash any dirt on the page and on air – in a word, freedom to do anything without limits.”⁷³⁶

Some five years later, Russian academic Svetlana Kolesnik noted a change in the guiding principles of the Russian media (with an emphasis on broadcasting);

“We can say that modern broadcasting is treated by the new political elite as ideological institutions where journalists are considered ideological workers in service to the state and / or private owners.”⁷³⁷

The crux of critical theory focuses on the idea that “the image of society we are offered is of a powerful combination of people (not always clearly specified) reinforcing their power and social systems which are reproducing forms of social inequality and in which the political, economic and cultural spheres are inextricably mixed.”⁷³⁸ This seems to be the case in contemporary Russian society, specifically in the Russian political and business (oligarchs) elite.

Power play among the oligarchs, which has spilt over into the media (which they have an interest in). After the outcome of the 1996 elections, attributed in part to a large-scale media campaign, the oligarchs came to view the media as an asset. An asset, not as a commercially viable enterprise, but as a tool to influence government decisions in their favour or to sabotage their rival’s aspirations. The media has been caught in the middle of this mixture of political and business conflict.

“[...] the media mediates, which means they select and edit, dramatising some and repressing other events according to their own standards and rules. They stand between the public on one side and, on the other, the official managers of institutions, organisations, movements, or the society’ hegemonic elites. Media develop their own machinery and rules for

⁷³⁶ McNair, B., “Pornography, Pluralism and the Russian Press” in Price, M. E., Richter, A. & Yu, P. K., Editors, op. cit., pp. 152 – 154, p. 153.

⁷³⁷ Kolesnik, S., “Controlling Content on Television in Russia” in Price, M. E., Richter, A. & Yu, P. K., Editors, op. cit., pp. 188 – 192, p. 190.

⁷³⁸ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 18.

generating convincing accounts of social reality, and of what is worth featuring or reporting at all. To that extent and quite apart from their objectivity, media must generate accounts that differ in some measure (even if they do not expose or criticise) from accounts rendered by social managers.”⁷³⁹

Some mediums of communication are more effective in transmitting the message or setting an agenda than other forms. Academic, Marshall McLuhan has observed three modes of information exchange in the modern world.

- Oral
- Print
- Electric.⁷⁴⁰

These three modes of communication can be broken down further, in to two mediums of transmission;

- Hot Mediums - high on informational content and disallows consumer participation, e.g. print culture.
- Cool Mediums - leaves more opportunity for the audience to participate. This form exhibits lower levels of information density, e.g. the Internet.⁷⁴¹

Another factor that can be used to influence the audience, is the viewers’ reliance on the media for information and therefore images and meaning of various people, countries or events. If the audience’s experience is remote from the issue covered, they may be more susceptible in believing what is offered to them by the media.

Two points to illustrate my case are from American examples, but clearly display the likelihood of the above-mentioned notion. The first example is drawn from the 1991 Gulf War. During this conflict, 55% of news stories originated from the United States and only 8%

⁷³⁹ Elderidge, J., op. cit., pp. 19 - 20.

⁷⁴⁰ Stevenson, N., op. cit., p. 102.

⁷⁴¹ Stevenson, N., op. cit., p. 103.

were generated in Baghdad.⁷⁴²

A similarly narrow source of information was broadcast to the American public, on news concerning the Soviet Union. On the newscasts of three (unnamed) major American networks between 1972 - 1981 1/6 of international news stories was about the Soviet Union. However, only 3.8% of these reports originated from the Soviet Union.⁷⁴³

During the Soviet era, the media was designed to be an advocate and to instil certain traits into society. They were not designed to be transmitters of neutrally loaded information. This way of thinking and acting was part of the mass media's core identity for nearly ¾ of a century. Has this behaviour been carried through into the post-Soviet period?

“The concept of media as advocate, rather than media as an unbiased purveyor of information to the public, has lingered well beyond the end of the Soviet regime.”⁷⁴⁴

In such an environment, leading personalities begin to emerge and play a disproportionately large role. “Both the Russian government and Russian television tend to be based more on individual personalities rather than institutions.”⁷⁴⁵ The popularity of a leading TV personality may give them some measure of protection against being fired by a government initiated move. But ultimately, when a personality has outlived their use they will be dismissed quickly. The case of Dorenko's dismissal from *ORT* highlights this point amply.

4.3.1 Media as the Protector of Public Interest

From 1987 open talk about social problems in Soviet society began to appear in the media. Discussion on problems such as crime, drugs, prostitution and poverty, to name a few, became public issues. TV was an important part of the process, the origins of investigative reporting and mud raking were founded at this juncture.⁷⁴⁶

⁷⁴² Tumber, H., *Media Power, Professionals and Policies*, New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 298.

⁷⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴⁴ Oates, S., “Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy” in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., pp. 164 – 165.

⁷⁴⁵ Oates, S., “Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy” in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., p. 165.

⁷⁴⁶ Gill, G. & Markwick, R. D., op. cit., p. 48.

However, by uncovering some of the Soviet Union's darker secrets the media also managed to contaminate their own image in the eyes of the public. Investigative reporting uncovered journalism's role in sustaining the Soviet hegemony.

“As they moved toward investigative journalism, reporters exposed the reality that their own work had historically served the Communist Party.”⁷⁴⁷

Yassen Zassoursky's opinion as to the time when journalism's reputation was tainted differs from the above-mentioned date. In *Media and the Public Interest: Balancing Between the State, Business and the Public Sphere* Zassoursky mentions that the press became popular in the late 1980's until the early 1990's because of the critical and independent views expressed. And it was not until 1994 – 1995 that the public became dissatisfied and disappointed with the media.⁷⁴⁸

Public perception of the media as a protector of public interests is somewhat tainted. Since of the involvement of the oligarchs in the media industry, and subsequently involving them in their bitter information war, the public has become somewhat cynical. The same question is asked and re-asked over again, ‘who benefits from this?’

The public treats investigative journalism with suspicion. The public assumes journalists to be ‘hired guns’ sent on some kind of political agenda. Many ‘exposes’ by the media are barely acknowledged by the public.⁷⁴⁹

A poll conducted by the newspaper *Finansovye Izvestiya* on September 29, 1997 revealed the lack of trust in media coverage of scandals by the public.

- 31% of respondents thought that journalists were bought by financial groups and highlighted specific scandals.
- 27% thought that journalists gave objective coverage during the media war over privatisation.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁷ Turpin, J., op. cit., p. 131.

⁷⁴⁸ Zassoursky, Y. N., “Media and the Public Interest: Balancing Between State, Business and the Public Sphere” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., pp. 157 – 158.

⁷⁴⁹ Belin, L., “Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 339.

⁷⁵⁰ Hagström, M., “Control Over the Media in Post-Soviet Russia” in Ekecrantz, J. & Olofsson, K., Editors,

Editor in chief of the newspaper *Sreda* Alexei Pankin offers a more detailed explanation for the lack of media credibility.

“Bribery, patronage and intimidation are still very common. The outright payment of cash, the promise of jobs to relatives, total blindness when it comes to the rise of monopolies, and financial and other pressure exerted on competitors are all traded by those in power for positive coverage in the mass media.”⁷⁵¹

In another article, Pankin offers some insight into the lack of press credibility in Russia. His comments relate, in this case to governmental attitude toward the media, but this sentiment can be applied in a wider setting. He made these comments during a discussion with an unnamed media executive.

“Of course the government has no respect for the press, [...]. But we have only ourselves to blame. Most of the officials in the Putin administration who deal with the press have worked on election campaigns in some capacity, so they know the dark secrets of how the press works: how much editors charge for favourable articles; who’s working for whom; how the press gets involved in smear campaigns. To these officials, the criticism that goes public is just the tip of the iceberg. To react publicly to what this shady machine churns out is not just difficult, it’s pointless – especially when you were part of it. Controlling two state-owned television stations and buying off, bullying or ignoring the others is a perfectly normal way for the government to deal with a press that it holds in disdain.”⁷⁵²

Studies have shown, such as those conducted by Mickiewicz, that the Russian public is a sophisticated and educated audience. The rules of how society operates and functions are known very well in Russian society, as a necessity for survival (both in a physical and an economic sense). Pankin’s comments highlight the relationship between media and the

op. cit., p. 239.

⁷⁵¹ Ekecrantz, J., “Introduction: Post-Communism and Global Culture” in Ekecrantz, J. & Olofsson, K., Editors, op. cit., p. 27.

⁷⁵² Pankin, A., *What the Media Needs is a Little Bit of Self-Respect*, The Moscow Times, 13 May, 2003. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/05/13/007-print.html, 13 May, 2003.

government, but it also demonstrates what appears to be an established and entrenched social system, which is well known. Such knowledge is not conducive to cultivating public confidence in the media.

Perhaps another part of the credibility equation has been a move toward sensationalisation of news and events. Although this appears to be popular in terms of sales figures, it is also having other effects. Postgraduate student, Boleslav Lichterman wrote on the proliferation and popularity of *chernoukha* or programmes featuring disaster and suffering on Russian TV. One of the more popular programmes of this type was *Dorozhnyi Patrul* on *TV-6*, which featured such things as murders, car crashes, fires, suicides and domestic incidents. The producer of this show tried to justify its content by saying that the programme performed a public health function by informing people about the dangers of drinking and driving or drug use. Also claiming that the show was more effective in communicating the message than the handing out of government information leaflets.⁷⁵³ In spite of the stated good intentions, the shows success in terms of ratings seems to be a more probable reason for its content.

Pankin asked a collection of journalists from the Soviet era, what they thought of the standard of contemporary journalism in Russia. The responses came from his parents (who both worked as newspaper journalists), Inna Rudenko and Yelena Brushkova (both worked for *Komsomolskaya Pravda*). A collection of their responses is given below.

“It seemed to us that nothing could be more terrible than the dictatorship of Communist Party Central Committee. However, it turned out that the dictatorships of proprietors, money and ratings are no better.”

“One gets the impression that the young journalists (of today) are prepared to write any old rubbish if their bosses so desire. We said ‘no’ (to our bosses) much more frequently.”

“Young journalists are not afraid to call themselves cynics and to look down on their readership and the subjects of their articles. In our day, it was considered poor form. For all our faults, we genuinely believed that

⁷⁵³ Lichterman, B., *TV: Valuable Voyeurism?*, BMJ 2001; 322:871, 7 April, 2001. <http://bmj.com/cgi/content/full/>, 9 December, 2002.

journalists had a mission, that good people had to be defended and progressive undertakings, aimed at improving the quality of life, had to be supported. We wrote about ordinary people [...] Nowadays, most papers are full of stories about the Moscow *tusovka*. And there is so much violence on TV that it really gets you down.”⁷⁵⁴

A problem in the post-Soviet media era, which has helped to destroy credibility of the mass media is the widespread practice of *zakazukha*. That is taking money for publishing articles. One of the reasons for these articles is to discredit the payer’s adversary, the price of such stories varies and quotes have ranged from US\$2500 – 8000. In February 2001 a PR firm, *Promaco*, exposed this side of the media to the public by presenting the sums charged, invoice numbers and photocopied clips from the newspapers that published an advertisement for a fake electronics store that was disguised as a news story.⁷⁵⁵ Former Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov seized upon the opportunity and attacked the press. Fyodorov released a pamphlet to the press in June 2001, which stated that the Russian media;

“[...] are always talking about freedom of speech and the press, about the imagined or real dangers posed by the State. Yet we never hear about a much greater danger posed by the corruption and prostitution of sections of our mass media.”⁷⁵⁶

In spite of all the bad news and cynicism given here, the news is not all bad. Some investigative journalists seem to have recognised the problem and are trying to do something about rectifying the problem. Andrei Konstantinov, a former military interpreter and Middle East expert started the St. Petersburg news agency *Azhur* in the mid-1990’s (ca. 1995-97). It was founded with a team of twelve investigative reporters, but has grown to approximately 50 reporters.⁷⁵⁷

Azhur investigates many, often very controversial cases, such as the 1999 murder of the

⁷⁵⁴ Pankin, A., *Journalistic Fathers, Mothers and Sons*, The Moscow Times, 14 January, 2003. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/01/14/007.html, 14 January, 2003.

⁷⁵⁵ *Russian Media “Corrupt and Prostituted”*: Former Minister, AFP, 6 June, 2001. JRL #5340, 7 June, 2001.

⁷⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁵⁷ (1) *Russian Newshounds Aim to Fight Crime, Clear Bad Name*, AFP, 4 May, 2003. JRL #7166, 4 May, 2003.

(2) Abdullaev, N., *A New Kind of Investigative Reporting*, The Moscow Times, 17 April, 2003. www.internews.ru/en/rumedia/2003/reporting.html, 26 June, 2003.

deputy Galina Starovoitova and the 2000 killing of the opposition journalist Georgy Gongadze in Ukraine. They run a website, www.fontanka.ru and publish a weekly *Vash Tainy Sovyetnik*. Konstantinov stated the method used to gain the best and most impartial method of the agency's reporting. "Freedom is a myth. Our objective is to obtain the fullest information possible from many different sources."⁷⁵⁸

The agency tries to maintain a professional footing in terms of the not being tainted as hired guns in an information war. A slogan used by *Azhur* alludes to this attempt to put the perception of distance, to reinforce a strictly independent image.

"One can hire us to investigate a case, but it is impossible to commission the findings in advance. Our clients may sometimes get totally different results from what they bargained for."⁷⁵⁹

Alexei Simonov (head of *Glasnost Defence Foundation*) and Leonid Kesselman of the St. Petersburg Sociology Institute both agree on *Azhur's* independent nature when compared to other media. But, Kesselman added, "however they still have to operate within the limits of what is allowed in our country."⁷⁶⁰

4.4 Opinion Polls And Public Consultation In The Russian Federation

The recent creation of polling agencies is a new means of an old tradition, of bottom up communication. New technology has called for a faster medium of communication between the state and society. During the medieval period, a bucket was placed in the window of the old Kremlin Palace. Petitioners would place their grievances in this bucket.⁷⁶¹

In the early post-revolutionary period, a system of consultation was established with the public. There were several possible avenues of communication;

- Council of People's Commissars, which received approximately 10, 000 letters a year.

⁷⁵⁸ *Russian Newshounds Aim to Fight Crime, Clear Bad Name*, AFP, 4 May, 2003. JRL #7166, 4 May, 2003.

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁰ (1) Ibid.

(2) Abdullaev, N., *A New Kind of Investigative Reporting*, The Moscow Times, 17 April, 2003. www.internews.ru/en/rumedia/2003/reporting.html, 26 June, 2003.

- Lenin's personal mailbag.
- Attendance before the Communist Party Central Committee.⁷⁶²

With Lenin's death and Stalin's rise to power, by the 1930's a noticeable departure from consultation was evident. Instead, attention was paid to the mobilising of the masses to meet specific objectives. Opposition to the objectives was either marginalized or ignored.⁷⁶³

After Stalin and his supporters were removed from power, communication from the public began to receive more attention. This occurred during Krushchev's 'thaw' period. S. White refers to this era as a period of "consultative authoritarianism."⁷⁶⁴

Gorbachev attached a great deal of importance and attention to letters, which he received from the public. Occasionally, he went as far as to quote passages from some of the letters that he received.⁷⁶⁵ The policy of dealing with personal letters in such a manner indicates that Gorbachev may have felt that the general public was alienated from decision making by the Soviet Union's elite. If the general public felt alienated from 'their' country, it may be concluded that they have no interest in the future viability of the state. When the impression is given, that the public is actively helping to sustain or build a state, the public feels as though they have a special interest or stake in the continued existence of the country.

Early correspondence received was generally supportive of the liberalisation and a more market oriented economy. But, as the fruits of these reforms failed to materialise for the average citizen correspondence became more angry, disillusioned and anti-state.⁷⁶⁶ There seems to have been a link in the minds of the public, between Westernism and wealth. When a large proportion of the population failed to benefit from the expected wealth, the response was a lack of faith in the system and the associated emotions (anger and disillusionment for example). This brought about a chain of events, which lead to the collapse of the communist hegemony.

The value attached to letters and bottom up consultation did not die with communism. The

⁷⁶¹ Gelman, V., "The Iceberg of Russian Political Finance" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 179 – 194, p. 194.

⁷⁶² Gelman, V., "The Iceberg of Russian Political Finance" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 194.

⁷⁶³ White, S., op. cit., p. 195.

⁷⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁶⁵ White, S., op. cit., p. 195.

President of the Russian Federation, Boris Yeltsin, received up to 1500 letters per day. These letters addressed a broad range of issues, such as personal questions, politics and public policy. A Department of Letters and the Reception of Citizens, with a staff of 100 was established in the Presidential Administration, to deal with the correspondence. A remarkable 350, 000 letters arrived annually, with some 25, 000 replies.⁷⁶⁷

Each week an analytic overview with briefings on specific topics was conducted. The findings of these briefings were regularly reported to Yeltsin.⁷⁶⁸ Although Yeltsin has seemingly attached a great deal of importance in keeping the channels of communication open with the public, possibly more so than during the years of perestroika, it is not surprising. Yeltsin had built up his image as a ‘man of the people.’ He seemed to take some measure of pride in being able to relate to the common man. To ignore the man in the street would be to ignore his support base, politically suicidal for a shrewd politician such as Yeltsin.

One of the bureaucratic avenues for citizens to communicate with President Putin is through correspondence with the Office for Citizens’ Appeals. The office is manned by 25 staff and is headed by Mikhail Mironov. A department operating in the capacity of the Office for Citizens’ Appeals, began organised work on petitions to the Tsar for the first time in 1497. The current department in its current form was founded in 1997.⁷⁶⁹

In the year 2001, Putin received 565, 000 letters through the office, which equates to approximately twice the average annual volume received by Yeltsin. Peaks periods of correspondence occur during special events, such as the December 2001 televised national call-in show. Some 492, 000 e-mail and phone messages were received in the week prior to the show.⁷⁷⁰ Mironov rated the letters as serving “as a very reliable barometer of sentiments in society,” which was “more exact as any public poll.”⁷⁷¹

Approximately 70% of the letters are complaints about social rights such as housing and

⁷⁶⁶ White, S., op. cit., pp. 197 - 198.

⁷⁶⁷ White, S., op. cit., pp. 199 - 201.

⁷⁶⁸ White, S., op. cit., p. 199.

⁷⁶⁹ *Russian Presidential Department Official on Citizens Letters to Putin*, ITAR-TASS, 13 October, 2002. JRL #6494, 16 October, 2002.

⁷⁷⁰ Ingram, J., *Russians Put Their Faith in Letters to Putin*, St. Petersburg Times, 17 May, 2002. JRL #6250, 17 May, 2002.

⁷⁷¹ *Russian Presidential Department Official on Citizens Letters to Putin*, ITAR-TASS, 13 October, 2002. JRL #6494, 16 October, 2002.

pensions, less than 10% of the letters have policy proposals. The Office of Citizens' Appeals often forwards the letters to lower-level agencies that are responsible for the concerns raised in the letter. They also prepare briefing material for Putin, before he embarks upon a tour in Russia. A weekly two-page summary is made of the letters received in the previous week by Mironov, every Saturday and delivered to Putin and his key aides.⁷⁷²

In October 2002 *ITAR-TASS* wrote on the work of Mironov and his department. Mironov was quoted as saying that an average of 1500 letters arrive at his department daily. During the celebrations around Putin's 50th birthday, some 111, 000 letters arrived in one week. Statistics were given on the nature and amount of letters received from foreign sources too. 122, 000 'foreign' letters arrived from January – September 2002. 72, 000 of these were concerning ecological issues and 33, 000 human rights.⁷⁷³

Lyudmila Putina also receives some correspondence, but only a fraction of that received by President Putin, averaging at some 100 letters per month. Mironov stated that the nature of correspondence to Putina related to mainly to charity, requests to visit an event, personal invitations to weddings or name-days.⁷⁷⁴ It seems as though much of the correspondence received by Putina is closely aligned to the public image that has been generated for her by the political image-makers (and is discussed in detail in chapter 2.1.1 of this thesis).

Another article was published by *ITAR-TASS* December 2002 gave an account of the issues raised by those who wrote to Putin. With reference to the issues of letters received in third week of December 2002 (two months after the hostage crisis at the Dubrovka Theatre), the news agency split the origin of the writers between Russians and foreigners. *ITAR-TASS* noted that 10, 350 letters were received during the stated period, of which 1131 letters occupied social issues. Some of the issues raised included cost of living and services, wages and crime.⁷⁷⁵ In regard to the correspondence received from foreign sources, there was a brief and glowing note.

⁷⁷² Ingram, J., *Russians Put Their Faith in Letters to Putin*, St. Petersburg Times, 17 May, 2002. JRL #6250, 17 May, 2002.

⁷⁷³ *Russian Presidential Department Official on Citizens Letters to Putin*, ITAR-TASS, 13 October, 2002. JRL #6494, 16 October, 2002.

⁷⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁷⁵ *Russians Write to Putin on Social Issues, Foreigners on Zakayev*, ITAR-TASS, 26 December, 2002. JRL #6617, 26 December, 2002.

“Most letters in foreign mail denounce the stand of some Western quarters on the ‘Zakayev case.’ For instance Chairman of the Access to Justice organisation P. Patton of Britain claimed that the envoy of Chechen terrorists, looking for refuge in Britain, should be extradited to Russia. This military criminal should be expelled, as the tasks of the international coalition in struggle against global terrorism demand, he emphasized.”⁷⁷⁶

Mironov claimed that the Russian department was loosely based on its U. S. counterpart, which gets some 18, 000 letters addressed to the American President daily. He went as far as to claim that the problems of the Russian and U. S. Presidents were similar. “There is no great difference in the work of our services, simply everything is technologically streamlined in the U. S..”⁷⁷⁷

The measure of ‘public opinion’ through the use of opinion polls can create something that may not necessarily exist. A form of illusion created by pollsters. Just the notion of public opinion in itself is a very ambiguous, volatile term and idea. There is very little agreement on the exact meaning.⁷⁷⁸

‘Public opinion’ can be influenced and manipulated by the government and media. For example, in the West during the Cold War the Soviet Union was seen as the aggressor with expansionist plans. NATO was portrayed as the saviour of the West.⁷⁷⁹ In this instance a continuous and uniform message was delivered to the public. The message needs to be disseminated in this form if it is to be effective in influencing the target audience.

Societies normally are pluralistic in nature. Therefore, public opinion in a society should be a heterogeneous phenomenon. However, the results of an opinion poll appear to be held as evidence of homogeneity.

“Claims about opinion as well as the publicising of poll results assert or

⁷⁷⁶ *Russians Write to Putin on Social Issues, Foreigners on Zakayev*, ITAR-TASS, 26 December, 2002. JRL #6617, 26 December, 2002.

⁷⁷⁷ *Russian Presidential Department Official on Citizens Letters to Putin*, ITAR-TASS, 13 October, 2002. JRL #6494, 16 October, 2002.

⁷⁷⁸ Edelman, M., *The Politics of Misinformation*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 53.

⁷⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

imply that an ‘opinion’ is a clear, unambiguous belief.”⁷⁸⁰

By creating the appearance of public consensus, through the use of opinion poll results action can be taken by a country’s elite. The elite can use the excuse of public opinion to justify their actions.⁷⁸¹ This gives the outward appearance of government through direct involvement of public input.

The use of opinion polls in Russia has been a relatively recent phenomenon. In 1983 the CPSU was committed to the establishment of a national public opinion centre. Two main objectives drove the decision; to gauge public mood and sentiment and to create bottom up communication.⁷⁸²

For whichever reasons, it was not until 1987 that the first national public opinion centre opened its doors. This centre (called VTsIOM) was primarily tasked with the identifying the public attitude toward “social and economic issues.”⁷⁸³

The goals and tasks of this polling centre would seem to indicate an initiative on the part of the political elite that Soviet society was in need of rejuvenation. Theoretically, according to socialist doctrine bottom up communication was the norm rather than the exception. But, by stating their expected outputs in the creation of public opinion centres there is an admission that this is not the case. Additionally, the Soviet Union’s political elite seem to have had lost touch with the average citizen. Because there would be no need to gauge public opinion, they would already know the public’s sentiment.

Another centre Vox Populi was opened in 1989 and Boris Grushin was the director. This centre intended to specialise in work with the political elite. Results of their research were published in the newspaper *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* and in an ‘in-house’ monthly bulletin.⁷⁸⁴ Russian Public Opinion and Market Research (ROMIR) is another well established polling organisation in contemporary Russia.

⁷⁸⁰ Edelman, M., op. cit., p. 55.

⁷⁸¹ Ibid.

⁷⁸² White, S., op. cit., p. 185.

⁷⁸³ Ibid.

⁷⁸⁴ White, S., op. cit., p. 186.

In order to stimulate debate in society, Gorbachev manufactured debate in the media. Opinion polls proved to be an effective means of generating this outcome. Although the significance in terms of scientific significance of each poll was minimal, the appearance of the poll may have had some measure of influence on society through an effect, such as agenda setting.

“These new *Novosti* opinion polls manipulated public opinion to demonstrate dissent, defining public attitudes that opposed the doctrines of bureaucratic authoritarianism; in other words, dissent was manufactured.”⁷⁸⁵

Opinion polls were used by the Gorbachev regime as a means to mobilise public support for the intended reforms. From this perspective, opinion polls were an extension of the traditional mass media, performing a similar function as laid down in Lenin’s original doctrine (for the role of the mass media in society).

“Collective agitation and propaganda remained central to the media’s purpose, only the policies advocated had changed.”⁷⁸⁶

Jumping from the Soviet period to concentrate on the recent phenomenon of opinion polls and their use in the Putin period is necessary due to the sheer volume of poll material and information available. This is not to say that Yeltsin did not consider polls to be useful, just that time and space does not permit an adequate discussion of it. I have also narrowed the focus of the study of some given polls on attitudes toward Putin and attitudes toward the government. The period that will be briefly examined runs from 2001 – 2003.

Many polls have been conducted during Putin’s presidency, to measure his popularity, image and the public’s attitude toward the government to name but a few of the topics tested. Numerous polls have been conducted, marking certain milestones in Putin’s presidency, such as annual anniversaries of time spent in office. Periodically stories surface in the media, regarding polls that imply or state that Putin is seen as one of the people. No worse and no

⁷⁸⁵ Turpin, J., op. cit., p. 126.

⁷⁸⁶ Ibid.

better.⁷⁸⁷ This fits well with his projected image of being an understanding and compassionate leader who is in touch with his people.

A poll conducted by *ROMIR* on the first anniversary of Putin taking office was conducted in March 2001. The poll displayed some interesting statistical hints. According to the poll 56.4% of respondents stated that they would vote for Putin, if elections were held on the nearest Sunday. Also revealed, from the poll's statistical breakdown was the origin of Putin's support from this sample. It showed that his strongest supporters were drawn from young (18-29 years), old (aged over 60) and those on a low income (US\$48 – 160 per month).⁷⁸⁸

Another poll, of 1500 urban and rural respondents was conducted on 31 March, 2001 by the *Public Opinion Foundation* on a nationwide basis. Results from this poll showed that the majority of the respondents considered that there were more achievements than setbacks during Putin's first year in office. The results were 60% thought that there were more achievements and 14% thought that there were more setbacks.⁷⁸⁹

Further approval rating polls were carried out in April 2001, linked with analysing Putin's first anniversary in office. The *Public Opinion Foundation (FOM)* conducted a poll in April 2001, on the President's electoral rating. During the first year of office, Putin's electoral rating polls did not slip below 40% and his approval rating stood at approximately 45 – 46%. This particular poll rated Putin's electoral rating at 42% and his approval rating at 37%.⁷⁹⁰

VTsIOM also undertook a poll on April 20 – 23, 2001, which looked at several different aspects of public sentiment toward Putin. Some 70% of those polled approved of the job Putin was doing and 24% disapproved. In March 2001 Putin had polled at a 75% approval of his performance in office. The February 2001 approval rating was 69%. Those who named Putin as the most trusted politician also experienced a drop during this period, from 47 – 39%.⁷⁹¹

⁷⁸⁷ RTR, "No Different From Us" – Russian Political Scientists Say About Putin, BBC Monitoring, 26 March, 2001. JRL #5171, 27 March, 2001.

⁷⁸⁸ *Putin Still Popular in Russia – Poll*, ITAR-TASS, 19 March, 2001. JRL #5160, 20 March, 2001.

⁷⁸⁹ *60% of Russians View Putin's First Year of Presidency as Successful*, www.strana.ru, 5 April, 2001. www.cdi.org/russia/148.html, 9 April, 2001.

⁷⁹⁰ Grigoryeva, Y., *Constant Action Needed to Keep Presidential Ratings High*, *Izvestia*, 24 April, 2001. JRL #5221, 25 April, 2001.

⁷⁹¹ McHugh, D., *Poll Shows Putin's Popularity has Slipped a Bit, remains Sky High*, AP, 25 April, 2001. JRL #5223, 26 April, 2001.

The head of *VTsIOM*, Yuri Levada offered an explanation for the drop.

“[...] the March figures were slightly pushed up by the March 26 anniversary of Putin’s election, which got several days of prominent press coverage including newspaper articles reviewing Putin’s record.”⁷⁹²

In late April 2001 *ROMIR* polled 2000 Russians as to who they thought Putin most closely resembled.

- 37.5% of respondents said Putin is unique and does not resemble any of his predecessors.
- 18% said Yuri Andropov.
- 15.8% found it difficult to state their opinion.
- 6.8% stated Boris Yeltsin.
- 4.9% thought Peter the Great.
- 3.7% said Mikhail Gorbachev.
- Vladimir Lenin 3%.
- Former U. S. President Bill Clinton 2.4%.
- Nikita Khrushchev 2%.
- Former French President Charles de Gaulle 1.9%.
- Joseph Stalin 1.5%.
- Leonid Brezhnev 0.8%.
- Mahatma Gandhi 0.5%.⁷⁹³

The issue of trust in politicians was brought up again in October 2001 by *VTsIOM*. A representative poll of 1600 Russians was carried out on the end of September 2001 and again on 30 October, 2001. Putin’s rating increased from 73% in September to 75% in October. And when asked to name six political figures that the respondents trusted most, 42% named Putin in September and 47% in October. The number of respondents who did not trust any Russian

⁷⁹² McHugh, D., *Poll Shows Putin’s Popularity has Slipped a Bit, remains Sky High*, AP, 25 April, 2001. JRL #5223, 26 April, 2001.

⁷⁹³ *Poll Shows Over One-Third of Russians Think Putin Unique and not Like any Other Historical Figure*, Interfax, 15 May, 2001. JRL #5258, 17 May, 2001.

political figure dropped from 22% in September to 19% in October.⁷⁹⁴

VTsIOM conducted a poll in December 2001. This poll displayed Putin's continued high approval rating, at 73%. 19% of those questioned did not approve of Putin's activities. Additionally, Putin received 49% of those questioned named Putin as Russia's most trusted politician.⁷⁹⁵

On the 16th of March, 2002 *FOM* organised a poll of 1500 Russians from 100 localities in 44 of the 89 Federation constituent members. 59% of the respondents claimed that they trusted the President, 61% believe that Putin has made many breakthroughs in his term in office and 13% believe the opposite.⁷⁹⁶ The poll was held in the run-up to the second anniversary of Putin taking office.

Interfax carried the story of the same poll about three weeks after *RIA Novosti*. The story ran by *Interfax* was a lot more statistically detailed than that of the government's news agency. Overall, the poll displayed a slight drop in the indexes that measured Putin's popularity. 50% of respondents stated that they would vote for Putin, should an election be held next Sunday. This represented a 3% point drop from the January 2002 poll. 36% said that they were satisfied with Putin's work (41% in January 2002), 35% gave Putin 'good' marks (39% in January 2002) and 8% gave him 'excellent' marks (no change from January 2002).⁷⁹⁷

A poll that was undertaken by *VTsIOM* over the period 21 – 27 August, 2002 of 1600 Russians showed an improvement of Putin's performance at the polls. Putin's approval rating saw an improvement, from 73% in July 2002 to 76% in August 2002. 20% of respondents in July 2002 said that they disapproved of his performance, this figure did not change in August 2002. Although a small drop was recorded, Putin still remained the most trusted politician in Russia according to the poll, which rated him at 50% in July 2002 and 47% in August 2002. But, a significant 20% said that they did not trust any Russian politician.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹⁴ *Russians Put Their Faith in Putin and Emergencies Minister – Poll*, Interfax, 31 October, 2001. JRL #5519, 1 November, 2001.

⁷⁹⁵ *Putin Backed by 73% of Russians – Agency*, Reuters, 26 December, 2001. JRL #5617, 27 December, 2001.

⁷⁹⁶ *Two Years on Tuesday Since Vladimir Putin's Election as Russian President*, RIA Novosti, 26 March, 2002. JRL #6157, 26 March, 2002.

⁷⁹⁷ *Half of Russians Would Vote for Putin in Hypothetical Election*, Interfax, 18 April, 2002. JRL #6196, 19 April, 2002.

⁷⁹⁸ *Russian Poll Shows Putin's Popularity Rise, Government's Fall*, Interfax, 28 August, 2002. JRL #6411, 29 August, 2002.

The August 2002 poll conducted by *VTsIOM* bore bad news for the government though. In July 2002 36% of respondents approved of the government's performance, which slipped to a 35% approval rating in August 2002. However, those who disapproved of the government's performance remained the majority. 48% of the July 2002 respondents disapproved of the government's performance and this figure climbed to 54% in August 2002.⁷⁹⁹

A *FOM* poll occurred on September 28, 2002, which sampled 1500 village and town residents. 47% of the respondents said that they would vote for Putin, should an election be held next Sunday. 44% rated Putin's activities as 'good' and 'excellent', 10% rated his activities as 'bad' and 'very bad'. Although some did not approve of Putin's activities, this was not reflected in the statistics relating to the question as to whether they liked him or not. 67% said that they liked Putin and 6% said that they did not like him.⁸⁰⁰

VTsIOM undertook a representative express poll of 1600 Russian citizens from 25 – 28 October, 2002. In an *Interfax* article the results of the September and October 2002 polls were compared. In September and October 2002, the approval ratings of Putin remained steady at 77% were in favour and 19% disapproved of his activities. A slight drop was recorded in the most trusted politician segment though. 53% named Putin as the most trusted politician in Russia in September and 49% in October 2002. In September 17% of respondents trusted no politician and in October 2002 the figure was 18%⁸⁰¹

Matters improved slightly for the government's standing at the polls. In September 39% praised the government's work and this figure increased to 45% approval in October 2002. A large level of dissatisfaction remained though. 51% of respondents criticised the government's efforts in September, but this dropped to 46% in the October 2002 poll.⁸⁰²

A poll was conducted by *VTsIOM* one month after the hostage crisis in Moscow, of a representative sample of 1600 people on the 22 – 25 November, 2002. Putin's approval rating soared to 83% from the 77% that it had been sitting on in September and October 2002. Those who disapproved of Putin's performance fell from an average of 20% to an all-time low of

⁷⁹⁹ *Russian Poll Shows Putin's Popularity Rise, Government's Fall*, Interfax, 28 August, 2002. JRL #6411, 29 August, 2002.

⁸⁰⁰ *Honesty and Decency are Putin's Main Positive Qualities – Poll*, Interfax, 3 October, 2002. JRL #6471, 4 October, 2002.

⁸⁰¹ *Putin's Rating Remains High – Poll*, Interfax, 30 October, 2002. www.interfax.ru, 30 October, 2002.

15% in the November 2002 poll.⁸⁰³

The Director of *VTsIOM* Yuri Levada tied the jump in Putin's approval rating to the hostage crisis at the Dubrovka Theatre (23-26 October, 2002) in Moscow.

“Leaders’ approval ratings typically increase when a country feels itself in danger or under attack, as U. S. President George Bush experienced after the attacks of September 11, 2001.”⁸⁰⁴

A wave of polls were conducted in March 2003, marking the third anniversary of Putin's presidency. In late March 2003 *Agency for Regional Political Research (ARPI)* poll showed that the majority of respondents were reasonably satisfied with Putin. 82% of voters who had voted for Putin three years earlier said that they felt they made the right choice. Only 6% expressed any regret for voting for Putin.⁸⁰⁵

Interfax ran a story on a *VTsIOM* poll (of 1600 people). Putin gained slightly in the March poll over the results in February 2003 in the most trusted politician part of the poll. In February 49% named Putin as the most trusted politician and this increased to 51% in March 2003. Approximately 19% of respondents did not trust any Russian politician. Satisfaction with Putin's performance remained steady over February to March 2003. 75% were positive about Putin's performance and 21% were negative.⁸⁰⁶

Confidence and satisfaction with the government's performance remained relatively stable, at a low level, according to the *VTsIOM* poll. 35% of respondents were positive about the government's performance in February and 36% were positive in March 2003. Disapproval was relatively steady too. 58% were negative toward the government's performance in February, which decreased slightly to 56% in March 2003.⁸⁰⁷

⁸⁰² *Putin's Rating Remains High – Poll*, Interfax, 30 October, 2002. www.interfax.ru, 30 October, 2002.

⁸⁰³ Zolotov Jr., A., *Polls Show People Like Putin, Not His Policies*, Moscow Times, 29 November, 2002. JRL #6578, 29 November, 2002.

⁸⁰⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁰⁵ *Russia's Putin Marks Three Years Since Election on Wave of Popularity*, AFP, 26 March, 2003. JRL #7118, 27 March, 2003.

⁸⁰⁶ *Putin Tops List of Most Popular Russian Politicians*, Interfax, 26 March, 2003. www.interfax.ru, 27 March, 2003.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid.

In furthering the aim of projecting the image of a caring leader that is in touch with his people, a new phenomenon has begun in Russian politics – the live call-in TV show. Callers are given a platform where they can pose a question to President Putin, which gives the impression that Putin understands and listens to everyone. These shows are hosted once a year on the main state TV networks in a reasonably ‘controlled’ environment (*RTR* and *TV 1*). This format also seems to be a very popular medium for the public to communicate with their President. Announcements made of an upcoming phone-in can generate a massive and rapid response from the public.

Journalist Andrei Zolotov Jr. of the *Moscow Times* put the PR value of this call-in format in a frank and concise manner.

“By linking the President directly with ordinary Russians – seemingly over the heads of bureaucrats or journalists – the call-in show that premiered last December is proving to be an effective public relations tool for the Kremlin, which knows well that Putin’s political base is first and foremost with the people and not the elite.”⁸⁰⁸

On December 19, 2001 the Kremlin’s Press Office announced such a call-in scheduled for December 24, 2001 and the President was to be live on *RTR* and *TV 1*. That very day, switchboard operators took 13, 946 calls. The next day, a further 74, 083 calls were placed.⁸⁰⁹ The volume of calls would seem to indicate the public’s willingness to be actively engaged in the political process.

The next call-in was scheduled for 2002, but its scope was broadened due to the popularity of the first call-in in 2001. As in 2001, the date for the call-in was set for 19 December, 2001. However, the live broadcasts were carried by the radio stations *Mayak* and *Russia’s Radio* in addition to *RTR* and *TV 1*.⁸¹⁰ One of the 59 workers who were fielding the calls, Natalya Lyubimova claimed that the call centre for the event had taken some one million calls between the 14th – 18th December, 2002. This had more than doubled the number of calls

⁸⁰⁸ Zolotov, A., *Preparing for Putin’s Call-in TV Show*, *The Moscow Times*, 19 December, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/12/19/002.html, 19 December, 2002.

⁸⁰⁹ Sviridova, Y., *Russians Have 4 Million Questions to Ask President*, *RIA Novosti*, 21 December, 2001. JRL #5612, 22 December, 2001.

⁸¹⁰ Chirkin, D., *Having Problems? Call Putin*, www.pravda.ru, 17 December, 2002.

received in 2001 (442, 689 calls) and there were still some time to run before Putin went live. This excluded any correspondence received by e-mail. A special website was opened for this occasion, www.linia2002.ru.⁸¹¹ By the end of the televised call-in, some 1.4 million calls had been received.⁸¹²

As in the previous year, a proportion of calls related to socio-economic issues, approximately 30% during this round of calls. Lyubimova also estimated that as much as 90% of the telephone calls originated from pensioners.⁸¹³ She took a guess as to some possible reasons why this was so.

“Working people don’t call too much. [...] Why? Maybe because their life is better, maybe because they have no time, or maybe because they have less faith. Maybe they understand better what is going on.”⁸¹⁴

If Lyubimova is correct in her assumptions this could pose a problem in the future, if not for Putin, then his successors. Assuming generation of pensioners, who grew up in the Soviet period and still have faith in the ‘goodness’ of their leader die out and are replaced by cynics who have no faith in the political leadership, at least two major consequences will be felt. Firstly, that the popularity and hence the effectiveness of the call-in TV show in generating positive PR for the President will be broken. The second possible consequence will be a greater level of public disengagement from political participation.

4.5 Development Of Media As A Tool Of Opinion Manipulation

The founder of modern PR Eduard Bernays emphasised what was at stake with regard to success or failure of manipulating the public. “[...] the future of civilisation lay in the capacity of the elites to guide public opinion efficiently.”⁸¹⁵ It may be an overstatement, about the future of civilisation being in jeopardy. What is clear, an ideology will find that its governance

JRL #6606, 18 December, 2002.

⁸¹¹ Zolotov, A., *Preparing for Putin’s Call-in TV Show*, The Moscow Times, 19 December, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/12/19/002.html, 19 December, 2002.

⁸¹² Ingram, J., *Putin Fields Questions From Across Russia*, AP, 19 December, 2002. JRL #6608, 19 December, 2002.

⁸¹³ Zolotov, A., *Preparing for Putin’s Call-in TV Show*, The Moscow Times, 19 December, 2002. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2002/12/19/002.html, 19 December, 2002.

⁸¹⁴ Ibid.

⁸¹⁵ Ewen, S., op. cit., p. 34.

over a society will be more problematic, maybe even impossible if it is not able to manipulate public opinion.

Even as early as the 1890's, German sociologist Ferdinand Tonnies noted the potential power of the newspaper.

“[...] the newspaper had become an unprecedented machinery for the manufacture and marketing of public opinion, a channel through which a particular faction could present its own will as the rational general will.”⁸¹⁶

Media are one of the sources available in society, which help to generate culture within individuals and within society. For this reason, the media is considered to be an important prize, by those who wish to influence the way we think. The media is not the sole means of cultural production.

“Institutions such as schools, religion, and the media help the powerful exercise this cultural leadership, since they are the sites, where we produce and reproduce ways of thinking about society.”⁸¹⁷

The above quote is useful in helping to realise that, through the use or manipulation of these agencies, an actor may be able gain hegemony through the use of consent. Schools, churches and the media help to identify and understand who and what we are. These agencies help to create meaning and instil a sense of self within society. They are also forms of mass cultural production, which could potentially be used very effectively by an individual wanting an effective conduit of influence.

American scholar of propaganda, Harold Lasswell, urged the need to co-ordinate a propaganda campaign to ensure the ‘best’ results. By this he meant that media are not a ‘stand alone’ tool of propaganda. “[...] the high importance of co-ordinating propaganda with all other means of social control cannot be too insistently repeated.”⁸¹⁸

⁸¹⁶ Ewen, S., op. cit., p. 70.

⁸¹⁷ Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W., op. cit., p. 164.

⁸¹⁸ Ewen, S., op. cit., p. 119.

Although the media may not be able to directly influence how we think about certain topics, they may be able to influence what we think and talk about. Some topics of discussion are highlighted and others are marginalized or neglected from public debate. In other words, the media has the ability to fulfil the function of an agenda setter.⁸¹⁹

A major problem or obstacle faced by the sender of the message is the concept of polysemy. That is, multiple meanings may be present in the media's text.⁸²⁰ Active media audiences interpret the meaning of text in three levels;

- Individual interpretation of media products.
- Collective interpretation of the media.
- Collective political action.⁸²¹

Individual and collective experience helps to shape the decoding of media text. The meaning of the text is derived from "widely shared cultural values and sets of assumptions about the way the world works."⁸²² What the media provides though, is only the basic framework onto which we add meaning. Additionally, meaning is not a static element over time or space.

"If media messages circulate versions of a 'dominant' ideology, these messages are only the raw materials of meaning, they require construction and are subject to revision."⁸²³

In writing on agenda setting by America's elite, Noam Chomsky (1989) noted a somewhat insightful observation;

"[...] The media do contest and raise questions about government policy, but they do so almost exclusively within the framework determined by the essentially shared interests of the state-corporate power. Divisions among elites are reflected in debate but departure from their narrow consensus is

⁸¹⁹ For more detail on the nature of agenda setting in the media, please refer to; Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W., *Media / Society: Industries, Images and Audiences*, Second Edition, Thousand Oaks, Pine Forge Press, 2000, pp. 239 - 241.

⁸²⁰ Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W., op. cit., pp. 266 – 268.

⁸²¹ Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W., op. cit., p. 263.

⁸²² Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W., op. cit., p. 269.

⁸²³ Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W., op. cit., p. 284.

rare.”⁸²⁴

The above mentioned statement is further supported by another passage on the role of shared interests in generating consensus in the media.

“When a particular version serves our interests, we are likely to define reality in terms of that version. [...] The versions that are motivated by self-interest, moreover, are constantly reinforced as others are not: by the continuing need to justify one’s own situation and actions and also by reinforcement from others whose self-interest is served by the same version.”⁸²⁵

Although, as stated, Chomsky’s supposition refers to social processes at work in the United States, It seems that there is some applicability to the Russian situation. Most media enterprises in the Russian Federation are under financial control or depend on financial help from governmental or large corporate groups. These economic-political interests have made it clear that certain topics are taboo and are best left ‘undiscovered’ by the media. The 1996 elections are a clear case in point, indicating a convergence of state and big business interests. The recent breakdown of relations between elements of the oligarchy and the Kremlin may be an indication of a degradation of some of these shared interests.

In 1999 a poll was conducted by VTsIOM to gauge the level of trust that the public place in the media. Of the respondents that answered, 53% of them had a ‘fair degree of trust’ in radio and 55% of respondents had a ‘fair degree of trust’ in television.⁸²⁶ This poll shows that, if properly ‘managed media assets still retain a high potential to influence or manipulate public opinion. Interest still exists in business and governmental circles to tap into this potential.

TV is considered to be one of the most powerful mediums with which to transmit a message to an audience. One reason for this is uniformity, the message is not altered or changed in any manner from the original product. The message can also be delivered instantly to many different reception sites at once. By the end of 1995 TV was available to 98.8% of Russian

⁸²⁴ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 28.

⁸²⁵ Edelman, M., op. cit., p. 6.

⁸²⁶ Dunlop, J. B., “Sifting Through the Rubble of the Yeltsin Years” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 68.

households.⁸²⁷ Such a large potential audience reach makes TV a very valuable asset to those who seek to gain influence.

4.6 Soviet Media

Karl Marx proposed the idea that political power was closely tied to the ownership and control of “‘the production and distribution of ideas’ - the media of mass communication.”⁸²⁸ As the Bolsheviks assumed power in Russia, Lenin, well aware of Marx’s contention, was equally aware of the media’s potential. Lenin’s view of the hierarchy of power influenced the role which the media were to play in political affairs. The Party (CPSU) was considered to be “‘the legitimate representative of the proletarian class interests, should closely control and supervise the work of the media.” Furthermore, the press was the “‘collective organiser, agitator and propagandist of the Party.”⁸²⁹

Statistics dating from the 1970’s and the 1980’s showed that the Soviet Union was the world’s largest exporter of broadcast information. Every week the broadcast schedule included 2010 hours of programmes in some 80 different languages.⁸³⁰ Such a large and diverse industry helped to shape opinions about the Soviet Union, especially Central and Eastern Europe, where many of these programmes were destined to go.

University of Edinburgh academic Dr. Lara Ryazanova-Clarke made a statement that supports the above claim, as to the Soviet media’s function in society. “‘In the Soviet period the media was given the honourable role of, and proudly served as, a major conduit of ideological propaganda.”⁸³¹

A Russian author characterised the nature and objectives of the Soviet media in 1986.

“‘[...] this monotony of ritualistic slogans [...] [and] their continuous repetition [...] [signal] to all that the [...] system remains intact, and that the

⁸²⁷ Oates, S., “‘Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy” in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., p. 147.

⁸²⁸ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 54.

⁸²⁹ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 55

⁸³⁰ Rantanen, T., op. cit., p. 11.

⁸³¹ Ryazanova-Clarke, L., *The Dichotomy of the Totalitarian and the Post-totalitarian in the Language of Russian Public Discourse (1990’s)*, Essays in Poetics: The Journal of the British Neo-formalist Circle, Autumn

authorities will act to block those who seek to change the system. [...] sheer repetition, Soviet ideology has managed to persuade many citizens that the Soviet system of economic planning is more efficient than the capitalist market economics, that the ‘national question’ has been solved in the USSR but remains perplexing in Western societies, that a one-party system is the most effective way of meeting the needs of the population, and that political pluralism would be counter-productive.”⁸³²

Under the hierarchy of the Soviet system, the media was subordinate to the state and was obliged to facilitate the state’s wishes. This is a crucial assumption, which enables a reader to understand why Soviet journalists behaved as they did. The media’s role in society was clearly defined by the Marxist-Leninist ideology, they were to be a motivation of the people’s will and efforts in order to create a better socialist state.

According to American academic Seymour Goodman the *Soviet Style Information Society* was based upon goals rather than trends. Goodman listed the perceived goals of the Soviet Union.

- Attain real gains in productivity and to modernise the industrial base.
- Improve economic planning and control mechanisms.
- Support both military and internal security needs.
- Present an image of a progressive society, both to the people of the USSR and to the outside world.⁸³³

Official Soviet doctrine was rigid and stressed top down communication. The masses were considered to be the target of the messages and readily manipulated by the official communications. “In Soviet times, official theory dictated that the public was a target, not the co-creator of media messages and was considered to be malleable.”⁸³⁴

Mickiewicz contends that the Soviet media employed a strategy involving ‘saturation’ to get their message to the public. This strategy was intended to achieve total penetration of the

2000, Volume 25, pp. 187 – 211, p. 187.

⁸³² Downing, J., op. cit., p. 182.

⁸³³ Rantanen, T., op. cit., p. 49.

potential audience. Total penetration of the intended audience was to be delivered via an approved message pattern and content to thoroughly infuse the output of the media, sending a single Party line and eliminating the possibility of counter-messages.⁸³⁵

An important point to note at this juncture is the role of interpretation and informal communication in Soviet society. The practice of the use of rumour was widespread. Downing states that the “role of rumour as a mode of communication operating at all levels of Soviet Bloc life.”⁸³⁶ This method may have been used to fill in information missed by information conveyed via the official media channels.

Culture and the Media in the USSR Today expand on the above notion further. The book states, that prior to perestroika, people consumed media product to find out the official view or to detect changes in the official view. The media was not used to find out what had happened.⁸³⁷

Mickiewicz has noted this phenomenon and has coined the phrase ‘Soviet-era’ heuristics to describe it. The process involves the use of mental shortcuts when watching the news, with a reliance on emotion and reason. She adds that “[...] Russian viewers exhibit an extraordinary degree of media literacy and active engagement with news messages.”⁸³⁸

‘Soviet-era’ heuristics consists of three elements that are founded on scepticism. News content is ‘sifted’ for hints of threats and opportunities.

- Suspicion of broadly generalised good news.
- Attention to sources of news as potential beneficiaries.
- Evaluations of internal inconsistencies in news.⁸³⁹

Noticeable changes in the nature of how the Soviet media was used began before Gorbachev,

⁸³⁴ Gunther, R. & Mughan, A., Editors, op. cit., p. 87.

⁸³⁵ Rantanen, T., op. cit., p. 23.

⁸³⁶ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 119.

⁸³⁷ Gaffy, J. & Hosking, G. A., Editors, *Culture and the Media in the USSR Today*, London, MacMillan Press, 1989, p. 26.

⁸³⁸ Gunther, R. & Mughan, A., Editors, op. cit., p. 103.

⁸³⁹ (1) Gunther, R. & Mughan, A., Editors, op. cit., pp. 115 – 116.

(2) Mickiewicz, E. P., *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1999, p. 289.

with his predecessor and sponsor Andropov. He began campaigns against social undesirables, such as theft, corruption, alcoholism and black marketeering. “[...] while censorship was firmly maintained, a movement towards constructive social criticism was favoured.”⁸⁴⁰

I intend to examine the later years of the Soviet regime only and the media’s role in the period of glasnost and perestroika. The identity and the role of the media was thrown into a chaotic state, which culminated in the division of the Soviet media by the time of the August 1991 coup. Media organisations either joined or sided with the ‘Reformers’ or the ‘Conservatives,’ it was difficult not to take sides at such crossroads. At the time, it may have seemed to be a choice between democracy or a return to the authoritarian past.

A noticeable downturn in the Soviet standard of living began to develop in the 1980’s. Shortages of foodstuffs and materials, degradation of social services, a rising crime rate and the infamous queues began to appear. These events had a profound impact upon the public perception of the Communist Party’s credibility.

Some movement toward what was to be later called glasnost occurred during the Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko regimes. Movement was slow and the nature of the reforms chopped and changed with the steady flow of leaders. The pace of change became more focused and noticeable under Gorbachev’s guidance from 1985.⁸⁴¹

It is important to note that these changes came from within the existing power structure. The kingmaker of Soviet politics was the KGB. They saw the urgency to rejuvenate the economy, more so than the Party, government bureaucracy or the military. Gorbachev was brought to power under the patronage of Andropov (an ex-director of the KGB) and with the support of the KGB.⁸⁴²

Gorbachev took this concept further when he came to power and started to institute a form of bottom-up communication.

“Gorbachev argued from the outset that popular access to honest and

⁸⁴⁰ Lawton, A., *Kinoglasnost: Soviet Cinema in our Time*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 37.

⁸⁴¹ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 78.

⁸⁴² Downing, J., op. cit., p. 12.

reliable information was crucial to generating popular activism and support for the party and its programmes.”⁸⁴³

This statement by Gorbachev would imply that initiatives for societal change were not originating from the masses, but from society’s political elite. Change that is initiated in this manner may imply that the elite intended to manage and control any forthcoming reforms.

“The impetus thus came from above with the implication that the boundaries of such discussion could be set and the room for initiative from below was limited.”⁸⁴⁴

Noticeable changes in the Soviet media occurred in the period 1985 – 1990. But, were these changes merely superficial ‘window dressing’?

“Most of the publications kept their Soviet-era layouts, staffs, formats and genres but embraced the new ideology of market fundamentalism and a firm belief in democracy.”⁸⁴⁵

The above mentioned quote would seem to demonstrate that the process of glasnost in the media was performed in a somewhat ad hoc manner. A thin veneer of democracy and liberalism was superimposed over a structure that was inherently the opposite of these traits. This situation had the potential of creating confusion through conflicting signals and lack of communication.

Glasnost was not intended to contribute to the downfall of the Soviet Union. Gorbachev merely wanted to reform an ailing structure, this is evident in his public stance. He portrayed his policies as returning to ‘true’ Leninist ideals. If by some chance the reforms were going to fail, the blame was going to be placed on those elements of society which were resistant to the change.⁸⁴⁶

⁸⁴³ Gill, G. & Markwick, R. D., *Russia's Stillborn Democracy? From Gorbachev to Yeltsin*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 33.

⁸⁴⁴ Gill, G. & Markwick, R. D., op. cit., p. 33.

⁸⁴⁵ Zassoursky, I., “Media and Power: Russia in the Nineties” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 74.

To overcome possible resistant elements of society, Gorbachev intended to employ the media. He intended to ruin the reputation of resistant groups by the use of kompromat. If the opposition was eliminated or rendered ineffective, then Gorbachev would be able to implement the reform programme. The failure of the reform programme in reaching the intended objectives meant that he was to become the target of the new 'free' press.⁸⁴⁷

The new reforms were publicised by a select number of papers initially - *Ogonyok*, *Moscow News* and *Argumenty i Fakty*. These publications were the flagship of glasnost. The papers brought with them a new style of straight-to-the-point news.⁸⁴⁸ By allowing only a select few newspapers to publicise the reforms of glasnost, it is possible to infer that these papers were considered to be reliable by the authorities. A great deal of trust in the papers was needed, to handle such a delicate task. The limited scope of the initial release may suggest that the Kremlin, to test the public's response to the proposals may have conducted a 'trial run'.

The Kremlin placed a great deal of responsibility in the hands of these select few publications. If they were to have 'reliable' media outlets, 'reliable' personnel were required to head these organisations. As the government was tasked with selection of key staff, they had the opportunity to place 'their' people in the top positions.

“Individuals in key positions in mass media organisations also affect media production. They earn their roles because of a fit between themselves and various organisational agendas.”⁸⁴⁹

As stated above, key media personnel affected the functioning of media organisations. The Kremlin required a specific output from their use of the media to achieve their end goals. In 1988, Akensov, the chair of the committee over-seeing work of broadcasting media (Gostelradio) described the new role of TV and radio.

“Key factors in the renewal of society, essential tools for influencing millions of people, for the formation of public opinion, convictions and

⁸⁴⁶ Turpin, J., op. cit., pp. 76 – 77.

⁸⁴⁷ Turpin, J., op. cit., p. 125.

⁸⁴⁸ (1) Downing, J., op. cit., p. 78.

(2) Gill, G. & Markwick, R. D., op. cit., pp. 34 – 35.

(3) Graffy, J. & Hosking, G. A., op. cit., p.27.

actions, the development of healthy tastes [...] they raise issues connected with education in matters of music, ideology, morals and aesthetics.”⁸⁵⁰

Party credibility was further compromised by a steady flow of ‘cultural contamination’ into Soviet society, in the form of foreign ideas and images. These ‘new’ images and ideas challenged the Party as a source of knowledge and information, thus threatening the communist hegemony.⁸⁵¹

It was hard for the Soviet media to adapt to the changing reality within the existing framework, which constrained it. The media needed political change for it to be able to adjust effectively to the changing social environment. A British cultural theorist, Williams wrote of the dilemma faced by media in an environment where a strict political regime is in force. “The ideological systems of fixed social generality, of categorical, of absolute formations, are relatively powerless to handle changing reality.”⁸⁵²

In recognition of the crisis, affecting the very survival of the Soviet Union, some within the Party sought to reinvigorate the country culturally and economically. The intention was not to replace communism completely, but to introduce a new form - ‘socialist pluralism.’⁸⁵³

Up to 1989 Russian glasnost progressed slowly and unevenly outside Moscow, Leningrad and the Baltic republics.⁸⁵⁴ Lack of credibility in the eye of the public was a serious matter for the Soviet hierarchy, in need of urgent consideration. A revitalisation of the media needed to be attempted, to try and restore some public confidence in domestic channels of communication. But, by attempting a liberalisation of the media industry, they also risked releasing the ‘democratic genie’ from the bottle.

An important aspect of the glasnost process was the origin of the reforms. It was a case of an “instance of liberalisation from above rather than democratisation from below.”⁸⁵⁵ The Soviet Union’s hierarchy initiated the process, in an effort to save the existing power structure from

⁸⁴⁹ Turpin, J., op. cit., p. 132.

⁸⁵⁰ Graffy, J. & Hosking, G. A., op. cit., p. 6.

⁸⁵¹ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 57.

⁸⁵² Downing, J., op. cit., p. 217.

⁸⁵³ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 58.

⁸⁵⁴ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 79.

⁸⁵⁵ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 81

total collapse.

In a legal sense, the state acted as the Soviet Union's sole gatekeeper. During the later stages of the reform process this began to be altered. From June 12, 1990 the operation of private media in the Soviet Union was permitted. This was followed by the removal of the Party's monopoly on radio and TV.⁸⁵⁶

The centrepiece of the Soviet Union's attempt to 'liberalise' the media is enshrined in the 1990 Law on the Press and Other Mass Media. Fyedor Buralatsky, who helped to draft the July 12, 1990 media law outlined the law's intent; "quite new approach to [...] both internal and international information [...] and a clear cut notion of freedom of the press and freedom of information."⁸⁵⁷ Buralatsky's comment would appear to suggest that this new concept revolved around the premise of creating an 'open society' in the USSR.

Several fundamental changes to journalism were evident in the new legislation. One of the foremost radical changes was the virtual abolition of Party control over who should own and control the mass media.⁸⁵⁸ The new freedoms extended to access to unclassified official information. Government departments had to supply information to the media in a timely manner, as heavy fines were liable if they did not. Journalists also had new obligations, among these was a responsibility for the accuracy of their work. If accuracy was deficient, legal redress by the 'wronged' party was possible.⁸⁵⁹

Although censorship was in decline and journalists had a legal right to protect their sources, a great deal of attention was paid to eliminating the possibility of an abuse of freedom of speech. Clause 5 on 'Prohibition of Abuse of Freedom of Speech' was worded plainly, as to the media's new limits.

"[...] it shall be prohibited to employ the mass media for the disclosure of state secrets or of information specially protected as secret under law; for calls for the violent overthrow of or attention to the existing state and social system; for the glorification of war; violence or cruelty; for the

⁸⁵⁶ Gill, G. & Markwick, R. D., op. cit., p. 101.

⁸⁵⁷ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 53.

⁸⁵⁸ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 58.

promulgation of racial, national or religious superiority or intolerance; for the promulgation of pornography [...] The use of the mass media to interfere in individuals private lives , or to infringe upon individual's honour and dignity, shall be prohibited and punishable by law”⁸⁶⁰

Journalists attained the pinnacle of their professional reputation in the final years of the Soviet Union. In the Russian republic “many of the most active reformers elected to office in the legislative elections of 1989 - 1990 were journalists.”⁸⁶¹ A peculiar occurrence, considering the close relationship which existed between the media and the Soviet regime for some seventy years. The media had dutifully served the Verkhushka, the apex of power, during this time.

A possible explanation for this to occur is that those particular journalists were generally associated as being representative of the opposition to the largely discredited Soviet regime. Their articles, which exposed governmental cover-ups, corruption and other irregularities, may have caused the public to bestow virtues of honesty and sincerity upon the profession of journalism. Someone with these specific virtues could be considered to be a suitable candidate for government, in light of the recent exposes on some of the existing members of government.

Journalists from some of the more popular media outlets gained public popularity, which enabled them to pursue public office. “Many journalists also enjoyed considerable social prestige.” An example of this phenomenon is Yegor Gaidar, originally a journalist from the monthly magazine *Kommunist* he rose to become the First Acting Prime Minister in the first reform government.⁸⁶²

The passage of Gorbachev's reforms did not go through the political process unchallenged. A war of ideology developed between media loyal to Gorbachev and media which were loyal to his conservative / extremist nationalist opponents. Some of the media who were aligned to

⁸⁵⁹ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 59.

⁸⁶⁰ (1) Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 59.

(2) Lawton, A., *Kinoglasnost: Soviet Cinema in Our Time*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 56 and 103.

⁸⁶¹ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 68.

⁸⁶² Hagström, M., “Control Over the Media in Post-Soviet Russia” in Ekecrantz, J. & Olofsson, K., Editors, op. cit., p. 206.

Gorbachev included *Moscow News* and *Ogonyok*. Opposition media included *Sovyetskaya Rossiya*, *Literaturnaya Rossiya* and *Nash Sovremennik*.⁸⁶³

Glasnost's impact upon the media was significant, but the reforms never entirely reached their full potential. "The impact of glasnost on the Soviet press [...] has been considerable, but as the test cases show, it has been limited."⁸⁶⁴ This may have been partly due to the bitter political fighting between various factions. Each of these factions (the reformers and the conservatives) was equally determined to exert control over the media to achieve their ends.

Some media were able to take advantage of the political split in the late Soviet period. They aligned themselves to various powerful political patrons, who would look after the media's interests if the media publicised their interests.

"[...] an increasingly fractured institutional base ultimately served to strengthen media pluralism and autonomy. [...] individual media officials, generally at the level of newspaper editor or television department chief, were able to advance more radical or more conservative agendas by entering into working alliances with Politburo patrons of their political hue. In the television sector this meant dramatically different programming policies in different divisions seeking the protection of different Kremlin authorities."⁸⁶⁵

4.7 State Support to the Media

In 1993 the ministry of finance distributed 25 billion rubbles to around 600 print outlets. At the same time state TV received 100 billion rubbles.⁸⁶⁶ This disparity in state funding highlights the continued importance attached to TV by the state in the immediate post-Soviet period. The appearance is given, that the government is investing in an enterprise that may give them a better return on their 'investment.'

During August 1994 50% of the 11 billion rubble subsidy went to two newspapers,

⁸⁶³ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 80.

⁸⁶⁴ Graffy, J. & Hosking, G. A., op. cit., p. 38.

⁸⁶⁵ Gunther, R. & Mughan, A., Editors, op. cit., p. 95.

Rossiiskiy Vestnik and *Rossiiskiy Gazeta* and to the magazine *Rodina*. These papers belonged to the Russian legislature.⁸⁶⁷ These papers share of the state subsidy appears to be somewhat excessive, an accusation of conflict of interest could be levelled at the government's actions. But, did the relative security, offered by easy access to state funds, form a harmonious relationship between the papers and the government?

Relations between the government and *Rossiiskiy Vestnik* did not always run smoothly. At the end of 1993 the paper voted to cut ties with its founder. In response the Russian Council of Ministers advised the paper that they would have to close down until the 130 million rubble debt to the state printing company was paid in full. This pressure, exerted by the government on the paper was sufficient to curtail the paper's bid for independence.⁸⁶⁸ Once again, the government's monopoly of newsprint was a sufficient lever to ensure that the media was not able to exert any effective independence.

4.8 Censorship

Censorship can come in many shapes and forms, sometimes it is not even noticeable. The press can be 'persuaded' through tactics such as ownership or placing 'reliable' people in the essential positions of a media organisation. When these more subtle methods do not work, what transpires may become visible to the public. Acts such as using coercive institutions such as tax police, police, court system, violence or death.

Appointing key members of media is effectively a gate keeping decision. Board members are usually drawn from the ruling hegemonic elite. In turn, they employ 'appropriate' or 'compatible' staff. Thus gate keeping becomes an internalised policing process, because the staff members hold similar values.⁸⁶⁹ This process is not normally visible to the public due to apparently tranquil surface of staff issues.

As explained above, staff practices are not normally visible when the process is operating under normalised conditions. However, the process does become visible during periods of turmoil. For instance when staff are being replaced by staffs who hold a more 'appropriate' set

⁸⁶⁶ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 130.

⁸⁶⁷ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 130.

⁸⁶⁸ Ibid.

of views and values.⁸⁷⁰

Staffing composition has a flow-on effect. The effects are associated with gate keeping and agenda-setting. “[...] news making is a process of selection, emphasis and de-emphasis.”⁸⁷¹

Key staffs are at the ‘coal face’ of making the decisions concerning which news will be shown and the news that will not be disseminated.

A homogenous media workforce is easier to manage due to less pluralism of thought present in the workplace. In such circumstances, it is easier to gain consensus on issues of majority of opinion. Ultimately, a spiral of silence will develop ensuring effect discursive management by the dominant elite.

The media’s “gate keeping and agenda-setting roles have the capacity to set in motion a ‘spiral of silence.’ This means that social discourse is progressively closed because people fall silent if their views do not coincide with what the media portray as ‘majority opinion.’”⁸⁷²

At the end of the communication process, the receiver could be considered to be the final component of the censorship process. The audience will accept or reject information after considering their personal experience, analysing the information to check if it agrees or conflicts with their present values and ideals. In 1980 British academic Stuart Hall wrote on the process of the potential decoding of a message in the Encoding / Decoding model;

- Decoders simply and unproblematically accept and internalise the ‘preferred’ meaning(s) as intended by the encoder.
- Decoders operate in ‘an oppositional code’ and reject the message.
- ‘Negotiated’ meaning, results when decoders accept some elements of ‘preferred’ meaning and rejects others.⁸⁷³

If the nature of the news content is homogenous, this will have an effect on the manner in

⁸⁶⁹ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 157.

⁸⁷⁰ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 157.

⁸⁷¹ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 159.

⁸⁷² Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 160.

⁸⁷³ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 206.

which future information is processed. The meaning is internalised and forms part of the sub-conscious ‘pool of meaning.’

“[...] our language communities (coding systems) set parameters on what we ‘look for’ and hence ‘see.’ This in turn influences the repertoire of pictures already stored in our heads when we encounter the next text that we need to decode.”⁸⁷⁴

Meaning is developed after images of text are internalised by the reader. The reader then develops a ‘commitment’ to this interpretation. If a text is read which contradicts the internalised meaning, the reader may react in a variety of ways;

- Avoid that information.
- Suffer cognitive dissonance because it contradicts the existing beliefs.
- Rationalise away the new and contradictory information.⁸⁷⁵

American PR expert Walter Lippmann recognised the need to exercise some form of censorship, if a propaganda campaign was to have a chance of succeeding. The censorship is necessary to ensure that other senders, which may compete with the dominant ideology’s image, send no competing images.

“Without some form of censorship, propaganda in the strictest sense of the word is impossible. In order to conduct propaganda there must be some barrier between the public and the event. Access to the real environment must be limited, before anyone can create a pseudo-environment that he thinks is wise or desirable.”⁸⁷⁶

4.8.1 A History Of Censorship In The Soviet Era

At the height of its power, the Soviet Union maintained a relatively effective regime of censorship upon the media. This censorship existed not only in the official state organs such

⁸⁷⁴ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 209.

⁸⁷⁵ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 210.

⁸⁷⁶ Ewen, S., op. cit., p. 152.

as *Glavlit*, but also a tacit understanding between the media and the government, in terms of the boundaries of acceptability. In order for one of the primary functions of the media to be successful, the education and mobilisation of Soviet citizens, some subjects needed to be avoided (to pretend that they did not exist). The role of the media was to set the public's agenda, what they were going to talk about. This was a limited role though, as the "news media set public agendas, but not what people think about items on the agenda."⁸⁷⁷

The lack of control over how information was interpreted by the public required further measures of control, over news content. By ensuring that some news remained hidden from the public's attention, resulted in "[...] the stabilising social functions of ignorance [...]"⁸⁷⁸ In other words, what the public did not know did not harm them.

Censorship is not a one-way process that is imposed by the state on an unwilling media. Restricting the flow of information by the state authorities relies to a large degree on self-censorship by the media. The rules of the game are understood by all, the media and the state authorities. A system or way of doing things is formulated and then passed down to the next generation.⁸⁷⁹ This situation begs the question, why would the media willingly submit themselves to the will of the state?

The answer to this question lies in a theory postulated by the author Haraszti. He talked of state relations with artists in a Soviet regime.

"[...] the state represents not a monolithic body of rules but rather a live network of lobbies. We play with it, we know how to use it, and we have allies and enemies at the controls [...] Generosity from above will be matched by docility from below [...] It is like an empty sack that artists with a secure existence fill with anything that will not burst it."⁸⁸⁰

Media personnel fall in to a similar circumstance as the artists, they were supported by the state. Newspapers, TV and radio were supplied with a reliable level of state subsidies, they

⁸⁷⁷ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 114.

⁸⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁷⁹ (1) Downing, J., op. cit., p. 67.

(2) Oates, S., "Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy" in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., 149.

were required to disseminate the view of the state. The media fulfilled this obligation gladly and managed to enjoy a guaranteed existence, without the market uncertainties and pressures of their Western counterparts.

According to Professor Ellen Mickiewicz, a list existed in the Soviet Union, which tabled taboo subjects for the media to inform about or debate. To list some of these subjects, they included; crime, drugs, accidents, natural disasters, security intelligence, organs of censorship, occupational injuries, travel schedules for the political leadership, crime and morale problems in the armed forces, arms sales abroad, hostile actions against Soviet citizens abroad and income and purchasing power structure at home and abroad.⁸⁸¹

In addition to censoring the domestic media, the State also tried to minimise the level of foreign radio and TV reception in the Soviet Union, this was a very costly process. Jamming operations (TV and radio) in 1971 cost the Soviet Union US\$300 million. To put this into perspective, in 1981 the BBC estimated that a four day period of jamming cost the Soviet Union as much as the BBC Russian Service's annual budget.⁸⁸² However, after the 1987 Reykjavik summit, the Soviet Union ceased jamming Western radio broadcasts.⁸⁸³

By late 1990, Gorbachev had more formal powers than Stalin. However, there was no will or possibility to use these powers to their fullest extent.⁸⁸⁴ The previously mentioned reforms of glasnost and perestroika changed the nature of censorship in the late Soviet era (1988 - 1991). *Glavlit*, the agency that had been primarily responsible for censorship, had its objectives redesigned. This department was previously very secretive, the government never openly admitted to the existence of such an agency. Consequently, no public scrutiny or accountability existed. The main function of this agency, after the 1990 Media Law was brought into effect, was to protect state secrets from being disseminated to the public. No longer was the use of objections on the grounds of political or ideological incompatibility a valid means to impose censorship.⁸⁸⁵

The growth of the public's dissension with the official system has been linked to the re-

⁸⁸⁰ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 69.

⁸⁸¹ Mickiewicz, E., *Media and the Russian Public*, New York, Praeger Publishing, 1981, p. 54.

⁸⁸² Rantanen, T., op. cit., p. 53.

⁸⁸³ Rantanen, T., op. cit., p. 26.

⁸⁸⁴ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 127.

emergence of the concept of ‘Civil Society’ in the Soviet Union. “Some commentators [...] refer to the growing vigour of public dissent in the later years of the Soviet system as in the phrase ‘the rebirth of civil society.’”⁸⁸⁶

A definition of civil society refers to “[...] the arena of societal and cultural interaction outside the realm of the state, the economic order and the family.”⁸⁸⁷ The rebirth of civil society in a nation with a state-oriented ideology is dangerous for the incumbent ideology. These two concepts are incompatible in the same political space.

Marxism-Leninism is by nature, a mass oriented ideology that requires individual people’s will to be subjugated to the will of the state. Civil society is a concept, which is individualistic in nature, the individual is able to determine some aspects of their life, the existence of a measure of free will. Consequently, the existence of these two diametrically opposed ideologies in the same political space was going to become an escalating source of political conflict.

The KGB had shown some interest in media manipulation rather than outright censorship, as a means to achieve their goals. Downing’s findings concur, “[...] the close interest of the KGB in media during the period of attempted reforms (glasnost and perestroika), and their commitment to learning how to try and manipulate media coverage rather than simply censor it.”⁸⁸⁸

Media subordination was not the result of the use of coercive force only. During the Soviet era the media were at the forefront of promoting the agenda of the ruling political elite, which placed them in a powerful position. Their importance was reflected by government support of the media, both in terms of financing the media directly and the privileges that were enjoyed by journalists. This mixture of carrot and stick approach to controlling the media appeared to be effective for sometime. Ultimately, journalists’ well-being was dependent on the continued existence of the Soviet regime.

“The privileges received by the nomenklatura, combined with coercive

⁸⁸⁵ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 59.

⁸⁸⁶ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 23.

⁸⁸⁷ Ibid.

threats, served as powerful incentives to maintain the official definition of reality.⁸⁸⁹

The rapid advances in technology, such as faxes, photocopiers and computers were slowly undermining the effectiveness of the official organs of censorship. These technologies had the potential to be able to circumvent the clumsy censorship apparatus by the potential speed with which they could disseminate information.

One of the effects of the 1990 Media Law was the ‘instantaneous’ creation of hundreds of new newspapers and journals within the first few months of its existence.⁸⁹⁰ Certainly, one of the objectives of glasnost was to produce pluralism and positive debate in Soviet society, at first glance this explosion of new publications would be a good endorsement of the reform’s success.

According to Brian McNair however, everything did not go according to plan. Many of the newly independent publications adopted a Western Liberal Pluralist model. They also positioned themselves in the camp of opposition to the government.⁸⁹¹ This situation had the potential to spiral out of control. Instead of producing pluralism through constructive debate, a destructive confrontational model began to develop. This is not what the political elite intended or wanted.

The new found media freedoms unleashed an unprecedented scrutiny of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union’s (CPSU) activities and of the Soviet legacy. Much of this publicity was unfavourable, which caused Gorbachev to apply pressure on the media to ensure a greater level of ‘objectivity’ in their reports.⁸⁹² Had Gorbachev’s reforms brought some early results, in terms of economic success, this would have forced a more conciliatory approach by the press. Success in the sphere of domestic standard of living would have ensured a politically popular figure.

A combination of the failure of Gorbachev’s economic policy, the rise of ethnic and

⁸⁸⁸ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 135.

⁸⁸⁹ Turpin, J., op. cit., p. 7.

⁸⁹⁰ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 60.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid.

⁸⁹² Elderidge, J., op. cit., p 63.

nationalistic conflict throughout the Soviet Union brought about the prospect of a civil war. Media coverage had the potential to widen and heighten the danger. Previously such topics were forbidden, now they were ‘front page’ news. Gorbachev wanted to curb, what he saw as the excesses of the media.⁸⁹³

Gorbachev had intended to create pluralism in the Soviet media as a means of developing positive public debate over the direction of the country. This would have given the public the perception of having some say in the system, possibly the government may have even gleaned some good management ideas from such public debate. But, the media’s role in exposing the ‘excesses’ of the Soviet era had another effect. It brought into question the very legitimacy of the Soviet system by highlighting its flaws. The public’s belief and perception of the system was irreparably damaged.⁸⁹⁴

Author John Downing expresses a view that supports the possibility of danger in allowing media freedom, during a period of turmoil, when no such freedoms officially existed previously.

“[...] unleashing freedom of communication in the glasnost era before making headway in solving economic problems was a recipe for chauvinist social movements and the ethnic and nationality confrontations which have scared the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe thereafter.”⁸⁹⁵

A combination of economic failure and the discrediting of the ruling Communist Party produced discontent in the public. The revolutionary changes brought about by the reform programme had left the public wanting more. Instead of the reforms stabilising the political situation, they seemed help bring about the collapse of the Soviet hegemony.

“[...] revolutionary changes usually transpire when dominant groups have failed to renew sufficiently their composition and / or their discourses, and so lose their ability to lead and organise a

⁸⁹³ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p 63.

⁸⁹⁴ (1) McFaul, M., op. cit., p. 64.

(2) Oates, S., “Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy” in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., p. 150.

⁸⁹⁵ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 18.

(changed) society.’⁸⁹⁶

It is not my intention to imply that glasnost and perestroika were not revolutionary concepts in Soviet society. Perestroika and glasnost were intended to reinvigorate a stagnating society. The ruled may have viewed the changes as too few, too late. Soviet rule had been brought into question during the intensive scrutiny of history, especially during Stalin’s years of leadership. Additionally, the communist hierarchy remained intact which may have been a source of contention for the public.

Post-August 1990 saw a relapse to ‘temporary’ censorship measures by the authorities. A series of measures were introduced, which were designed to try and reign in an increasingly ‘out of control’ press. These ‘temporary’ measures included;

- The Council of Ministers pressuring regional and city papers to register their papers as party publications. Thereby exposing them to party censorship, where troublesome editors could be dismissed.
- Independent newspapers were assessed with large tax bills or other economic sanctions, such as hiking the price of newsprint (or not supplying it at all). Some printing shops went as far as to refusing to print unofficial newspapers at all.
- A presidential decree on the definition of the term *democratisation* was very narrow. This gave the censors the right to obstruct any unsavoury material.⁸⁹⁷

The catalyst, which almost changed the course of the reforms was the volatile situation developing in the Baltic Republics. The reforms proved to be vulnerable to the unrest, which developed in the Baltic Republics in 1990 - 1991. Media coverage of government involvement, which Gorbachev viewed as overly critical, stirred discontent in the Kremlin.

Gorbachev wanted to bring the press back into line, to help him achieve this objective he appointed Leonid Kravchenko as the director of state TV. Kravchenko was a director of *TASS*, having been appointed to that position by the CPCC because of his ‘reliability.’ He was a staunch opponent of the free press and quickly closed down several TV news programmes in January 1991. Attempts were launched, to control the Lithuanian independence movement via

⁸⁹⁶ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 109.

the storming of TV headquarters in Vilnius by Russian Special Forces.⁸⁹⁸

TV was watched closely during Lithuania's 1990 declaration of independence. All news relating to this event went through the government's news agency *TASS*. The TV news bureau was not trusted enough to provide a 'reliable' coverage. TV news programmes, which were critical of the Soviet government's response to the crisis, were threatened and sometimes even closed down. Three programmes which were closed down included *Vzglyad*, *Syem Dnyei* and *Pyatoye Kol'tso*.⁸⁹⁹ The Kremlin's reaction to the media using some of their new freedoms, highlights just how fragile and dependent on government attitude, the nature of these reforms. In crisis, the authorities seemed to revert to their old habits of strict censorship.

A critical series of political events unfolded in mid-January 1991. The first of which occurred on January 15, 1991. Gorbachev addressed a closed session of the Supreme Soviet. During this address he urged that "the Supreme Soviet take-over control of all of television, radio and newspapers, to ensure that they include all points of view."⁹⁰⁰ Editorial independence seemed to be tied to the media disseminating to the public, what the Kremlin wanted them to see or hear. Gorbachev threatened to take matters even further to ensure media acquiescence to the Kremlin's desires.

On January 16, 1991 Gorbachev tabled a proposal to the Supreme Soviet, to temporarily suspend the 1990 Media Law.⁹⁰¹ It is hard to be certain if this was a serious threat by Gorbachev, or a warning by conservative politicians to dissenting journalists.

Whatever the true intention of Gorbachev's move, he was persuaded to withdraw the plan to suspend the 1990 Media Law.⁹⁰² But, the media was not entirely 'let off.' The Kremlin began to focus on re-establishing some measure of control over television. A perception seemed to exist within the political establishment, that TV was a more 'powerful' medium of communication than other types (such as newspapers and radio).⁹⁰³

⁸⁹⁷ Turpin, J., op. cit., p. 130.

⁸⁹⁸ (1) Downing, J., op. cit., p. 127.

(2) McFaul, M., op. cit., p. 90.

⁸⁹⁹ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 80.

⁹⁰⁰ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 64.

⁹⁰¹ Elderidge, J., op. cit., pp. 53 - 54.

⁹⁰² Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 64.

⁹⁰³ For a detailed analysis of the power of TV in Russia, please refer to Mickiewicz, E. P., *Changing Channels: Television and the Struggle for Power in Russia*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1999.

Professor Ellen Mickiewicz's statement concerning the importance of TV to the Soviet regime adds credence to my assertion of TV's significance. "The Soviet State had monopolised the mass media and television in particular, was always a matter of the highest political importance. The Communist Party's ruling Politburo considered television at every one of its weekly meetings."⁹⁰⁴

TV was important to the Verkhushka in three main ways;

- One way top to bottom communication, to a passive audience.
- The message, which is conveyed to the audience, has uniform content.
- The message is able to reach a large potential audience by penetrating people's homes.⁹⁰⁵

These attributes of TV communication are critical to the actor attempting the political communication. TV technology provides the potential to reach a very large audience, at a time when they should be relaxed and therefore possibly more susceptible to suggestions which are woven in the message. The communicator also has the ability to ensure that the message that is relayed to the audience is uniform, thus ensuring that the original meaning of the message is not lost or altered over time and distance.

The state was still able to put unofficial pressure on newspapers. In the period up to the August 1991 coup, the CPSU still controlled 80% of the Soviet Union's newsprint production.⁹⁰⁶ If restricted or no supplies of newsprint reached the newspapers, it effectively shuts down the operation. A very effective way to censor a newspaper in a somewhat subtle manner (no need for armed police - a lot quieter method).

Gorbachev did not intend to lose control of the reform process. This occurred as a flow-on effect of the limited reforms initiated, which took on their own momentum in the end. The resolve of Gorbachev to achieve a managed reform process that was kept within the confines of the Soviet Union is evident in his autobiography *Memoirs*. Concerning the Editor in Chief of *Pravda* Gorbachev wrote;

⁹⁰⁴ Mickiewicz, E. P., Piracy, Policy and Russia's Emerging Media Market, *The Harvard Journal of Press / Politics*, Volume 6, Number 2: 30 - 51, 2001, p. 39.

⁹⁰⁵ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 72.

“For this important position I wanted someone who was not only a professional in this field (an academician and an experienced editor), but also someone who could be trusted.”⁹⁰⁷

It was television, which preoccupied the minds of the political establishment. TV was still very much under governmental influence. The governing body, which was equivalent to a government ministry, was the All-Union State TV and Radio Broadcasting Company. The Director, Leonid Kravchenko, was considered by Soviet Broadcasters to be a ‘Gorbachev man.’ During a talk with senior staff of Central TV, he was alleged to have said;

“[...] is not private television, it is state television. So of course we have to support the state we serve, which pays our wages. Although we do have the right to criticise at every level, even the government, we can only criticise constructively, for the good of the state.”⁹⁰⁸

Kravchenko’s comment appears to support my earlier statement, that the media freedoms were not intended to signal the end of communism. The reforms intended to create pluralism within a socialist framework. An arena where the best ideas would flourish, thereby building a stronger and more vibrant socialist state. Something radical needed to be attempted, the traditional brand of communism was slowly dying. However, Gorbachev was unable to control the media in demonstrating positive criticism, which was the ultimate failure in the process.⁹⁰⁹

Political tension between the reformers and conservatives finally spilled over. In a bid to restore the status quo (pre-dating the reforms), communist hard-liners launched a coup d’ etat in August 1991. Inevitably media were drawn into this political conflict, with little or no room for neutrality.

During their brief reign of control, the hard-line coup leaders favoured certain media outlets and closed others. Some of the media which were allowed to continue operating as ‘normal’

⁹⁰⁶ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 65.

⁹⁰⁷ Gorbachev, M. S., *Memoirs*, New York, Doubleday, 1996, pp. 209 – 210.

⁹⁰⁸ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 65.

⁹⁰⁹ Oates, S., “Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy” in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., p. 150.

were; *Central TV, Gostelradio, TASS, Pravda, Sovyetskaya Rossiya* and *Krasnaya Zvezda*.⁹¹⁰ After the coup was eventually defeated, a decree from Russian President, Boris Yeltsin, saw pro-coup newspapers closed down and their assets nationalised.⁹¹¹

Foreign journalists were generally left alone by the coup plotters. *CNN* was even able to function normally. A number of the Russian newspapers that had been banned, responded by banding together and publishing *Obshchaya Gazeta*, which was circulated in Moscow.⁹¹² The main focus of the coup plotters seemed to be directed toward taking control of the domestic TV networks. The coup plotters were defied in a variety of ways, for instance, the failure to edit out the trembling hands of coup plotters during a press conference and reporting resistance at the barricades in Moscow.⁹¹³

Upon his restoration as the Soviet Union's President, Gorbachev sacked Kravchenko. He replaced him with a leading reformer, Yegor Yakovlev.⁹¹⁴ Some of the media who had sided with the coup plotters were closed down for one month, in retaliation for their 'misguided' loyalties.⁹¹⁵ These moves were an attempt by Gorbachev to completely purge any remaining elements from the media, who may have been sympathetic toward the coup plotters cause.

As the Soviet Union disintegrated and the various states emerged, Gorbachev's attempt to regain some control over the media played into the hands of his arch-enemy Boris Yeltsin. Post-Soviet TV continued to be tied to parliament, enabling Yeltsin and his supporters to gain control over it.⁹¹⁶

4.8.2 The Remains Of Soviet Ideology And New Trends

Herman and Chomsky generated a 'propaganda' model in 1988, although this model relates to a study conducted in the United States, I contend that this model is equally applicable in contemporary Russia. They defined the term propaganda as;

⁹¹⁰ (1) Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 66.

(2) Downing, J., op. cit., p. 127.

⁹¹¹ McFaul, M., op. cit., p. 132.

⁹¹² Downing, J., op. cit., p. 127.

⁹¹³ Oates, S., "Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy" in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., p. 150.

⁹¹⁴ (1) Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 66.

(2) Downing, J., op. cit., p. 128.

⁹¹⁵ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 128.

“[...] interacting and mutually reinforcing filters that enable money and power to bring it about that overwhelmingly in major media the news is fit to print, dissent is marginalized, and the government and dominant private interests [...] get their messages to the public.”⁹¹⁷

In Russia, the existence of political and big business interests have merged. The two groups, the Kremlin and the oligarchs, are at times indistinguishable from one another. They both appear to have formed large media holdings to ensure a measure of control over the flow of information. To reinforce what I have been expressing throughout this thesis, media generally provide coverage and views of those that control them.

The ‘propaganda’ model has some identifiable traits. An important aspect of this theory is that filters which “fix the premises of discourse and interpretation, and what is newsworthy in the first place.”⁹¹⁸

- concentrated ownership of media
- advertising, which is a primary source of revenue for media.
- reliance on approved sources of information, from the government or business.
- PR people / spin-doctors organise an anti-media campaign directed at actual or potential lapses from political propriety.
- US national religion was anti-communism in Russia? The object of hate is often a fuzzy definition. It can be used to demonise opponents.⁹¹⁹

Most of these factors, apart from the point relating to advertising, already exist in the Russian Federation. The final factor, the Russian equivalent seems to be Chechens. Media assets are mostly owned by the oligarchs or by the government. Recent years has seen the emergence of specialised media people whose task is to ensure some measure of media compliance, Lesin and Yastrzhembsky for example.

The point that does not fit the Russian example is relating to advertising as a primary source

⁹¹⁶ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 67.

⁹¹⁷ (1) Downing, J., op. cit., p. 221.

(2) Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W., op. cit., p. 241.

⁹¹⁸ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 221.

⁹¹⁹ Ibid.

of funds for media. Advertising as a source of revenue for the media is underdeveloped and a volatile industry. This may be as a result of the communist era, when advertising was frowned upon by the authorities.

A point of continuity between the late-Soviet era and the post-Soviet period has been the struggle for control over television. The struggle appears to be linked to interest groups who wish to control the content of TV for publicising their agenda. Their belief in the power of TV to influence the minds of the audience being resolute.

“The struggle for control of television has been a constant feature of post-Soviet Russia because power seekers attributed to the medium a near magical persuasive power. This was true in the Soviet times and it continued to be true thereafter, especially during election campaigns.”⁹²⁰

In the aftermath of the 1993 coup, first deputy press and information minister, Dmitri Tsabria summed up his thoughts on the state of the Russian media. He thought that society needed legal protection from anti-social media practices, on the one hand. Tsabria also felt that the media needed legal protection from state persecution and harassment. His final observation was that the arduous transition from Sovietism to democracy needed recognition.⁹²¹

During the 1992 – 1993 period, a series of laws relating to media activities were passed. One of the first laws to be passed was the 1992 Law on Mass Media, which establishes the norms for owning and operating media outlets.⁹²² The concept of private media ownership in the former Soviet Union was a very new and unusual concept, therefore this area needed clear and concise guidelines for those who would become involved in the industry.

1993 proved to be a busy year in terms of media legislation. The new 1993 Constitution has a section that is relevant to the media. Article 29 of the 1993 Constitution guarantees the protection of freedom of speech. There are however, limits placed on this freedom. No person

⁹²⁰ Gunther, R. & Mughan, A., Editors, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

⁹²¹ Downing, J., *op. cit.*, pp. 164 - 165.

⁹²² Oates, S., “Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy” in Kaid, L. L., Editor, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

or institution is allowed to spread social, religious or national hatred.⁹²³ This piece of legislation seems to be fair at face value, but would seem to be open to manipulation. Exactly what constitutes social, religious or national hatred? If the definition is not exact, then it may be possible to use this clause to try and silence contradictory views from being expressed in the mass media.

The transition saw, what appears to be a measure of protection of state activities during the Soviet period. Yeltsin passed the 1993 Law on Archives, which gives a great degree of protection to state activities. A generous period of time restriction on the opening of state archives was granted.

- Any classified document in the KGB archives is not to be opened earlier than 50 years from the document's inception.
- Files concerning specific individuals are to remain sealed for no less than 75 years.⁹²⁴

These measures were further reinforced by an edict, which was issued by Yeltsin in February 1994. The edict pertained to the classification of state secrets, every government department, excepting the ministries of culture and social welfare were permitted to classify documents.⁹²⁵ By enacting these measures, the government demonstrates a desire to cover up the past. This may be as a result of the 'new' democratic political elite's origins, from the ranks of the Soviet nomenklatura.

Andrei Fadin, a journalist summed up the contemporary media's ability to relay an accurate portrayal of events in society. "A peculiar freedom [...] If one reads half a dozen newspapers a day and watches a variety of TV networks, one gets a fairly accurate picture of the news."⁹²⁶ One of the most striking features in modern Russian politics is the extra-ordinary rise in political tension during elections. It seems as though the incumbent politicians will stop at nothing to retain their seats. The reaction of the central government to local government transgressions of media law varies and would appear to be linked to where the loyalties of the local government lie.

⁹²³ Oates, S., "Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy" in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., p. 151.

⁹²⁴ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 136.

⁹²⁵ Ibid.

⁹²⁶ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 337.

Methods used by interest groups to silence or influence what the media say are numerous. Below are some of the means used in the regions to control the media:

- murder and violence
- access to government briefings denied
- print-runs or essential equipment seized
- libel lawsuits filed against journalists
- withholding media subsidies
- tax or fire inspectors are sent to the newsroom by authorities
- regional bodies reward or punish media.⁹²⁷

This list is not a complete list of stand over tactics used. As previously stated, tensions escalate around election time, as the political stakes are higher. Subtle methods of harassment are sometimes used to curtail the activities of the press. During the 1999 gubernational campaign in Primorsky Krai, the authorities cut power to a private radio station and then seized the building. In another incident they used political pressure to remove critical news from the local edition of *Moskovsky Komsomolets*.⁹²⁸ It is possible for these events to go unnoticed in the general public. A probable motive for the disruption of power supply to the radio station was to ensure that they were not able to broadcast the seizure of their building.

The Yeltsin administration laid the framework for providing effective means of silencing dissenting media. Although Yeltsin, on the surface at least, did not consistently seem to favour censoring the mass media his legislation has left a legacy that could provide such an opportunity for an administration which does not exercise this amount of restraint.

Yeltsin achieved this potential tool in a state media ‘restructuring’ exercise. On May 8, 1998 Yeltsin issued a decree that brought all local state stations and government owned technical facilities (such as transmitters) under sole jurisdiction of *RTR*. This meant that *RTR* could impose punitive measures or preferential charging for resources.⁹²⁹ Under such conditions, commercial TV was dependent on *RTR* for technological support. Ultimately, this

⁹²⁷ Belin, L., “Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 340 - 341.

⁹²⁸ Belin, L., “Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 340.

⁹²⁹ (1) Gunther, R. & Mughan, A., Editors, op. cit., pp. 106 – 107.

(2) Mickiewicz, E. P. (1999), op. cit., p. 282.

ends with an ability to censor TV broadcasting, whoever controls *RTR* is also able to exert pressure on other TV stations. And *RTR* is state controlled.

The federal and local governments have other advantages that can be used to apply pressure on media outlets in a subtle manner. One of the few areas of industry yet to be affected by privatisation is the sector involved with the production and distribution of newsprint. “The state also dominates to a large extent the domestic production and distribution of newsprint.”⁹³⁰ Ultimately, this means that if a print media outlet becomes involved in some form of conflict with the authorities they can be effectively closed down through price hikes or simply the denial of newsprint.

To illustrate the effect of an increase in the price of production costs, brought about by the demise of Soviet-era subsidies (as opposed to deliberate price hiking) I shall use the circulation rates of Moscow national daily newspapers. The impact of increased production costs on the newspapers has proved to be very significant. In 1990 the circulation rates of Moscow’s national dailies stood at 90 million copies, by the first half of 1996 this figure had decreased to 8 million copies.⁹³¹

Statistics from the State Committee on the Press are also a cause for concern over the mounting influence of local government in the media. The figures show a rapidly increasing presence of local government controlled media. “Over 80% of the papers founded on the district level were founded by the (local) state.”⁹³²

But what action does the Kremlin take to curb the illegal activities of the regional authorities? The answer in short is very little, unless their interests are threatened by the actions of the regional authorities. I will use two examples to illustrate my point.

- In November 1999, one month before the gubernational elections the federal authorities sought to curb censorship in Bashkortostan, following the actions of local authorities.

⁹³⁰ Hagström, M., “Control Over the Media in Post-Soviet Russia” in Ekecrantz, J. & Olofsson, K., Editors, op. cit., p. 234.

⁹³¹ Zassoursky, Y., “Freedom and Responsibility in the Russian Media” in Price, M. E., Richter, A. & Yu, P. K., Editors, *Russian Media Policy Law and Policy in the Yeltsin Decade: Essays and Documents*, The Hague, Kluwer Law International, 2002, pp. 89 – 94, p. 89.

⁹³² Hagström, M., “Control Over the Media in Post-Soviet Russia” in Ekecrantz, J. & Olofsson, K., Editors, op. cit., p. 231.

Broadcasts of *ORT* and *RTR* produced analytical programmes were suspended by the regional government. The Kremlin's interests were at risk, as the regional governor supported the Fatherland All-Russia party.

- Also occurring in November 1999, federal authorities did nothing about censorship in Primorsky Krai. A possible explanation for this lack of action was that the governor, Yevgenny Nazdratenko, was pro-Unity party.⁹³³

Yeltsin had a history of backing Primorsky Krai's governor. In 1994 Nazdratenko denied newsprint to critical newspapers, fired critical journalists and banned some newspapers altogether. He decreed that all political opponents needed to have triple the signatures to stand in the gubernational election. Then, four days prior to the election he cut power between 7 - 11pm. This in effect ensured that political advertising on TV, from his opponents was eliminated. Journalists made numerous complaints, but the government was slow and cautious in their reaction. Eventually, Yeltsin cancelled the elections in Primorsky Krai and left Nazdratenko in power.⁹³⁴

Yeltsin needed Nazdratenko, he was at his lowest point in popularity rating and the governor was a vocal supporter of Yeltsin. The president's actions would appear to indicate that Nazdratenko's actions did not cause much alarm in the Kremlin and the governor's methods of dealing with opposition in the media were of an acceptable nature. Political considerations, in this case, held much more sway than the even application of Russia's law.

Did the Kremlin remain a relatively passive participant in the censorship debate, apart from when their interests were threatened? The presidential elections were scheduled to be held some four months after the regional elections. Once again a pattern of intimidation began to emerge prior to the elections. The amount of conflict intensified closer to the elections.

Media watchdog, Glasnost Defence Foundation recorded the number of conflicts between journalists and the authorities in the lead-up to the March 2000 presidential elections. The exact nature and definition of 'conflict,' as used in this sense is uncertain.

- January 2000 63 Conflicts

⁹³³ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 340.

- February 2000 123 Conflicts
- March 2000 139 Conflicts.⁹³⁵

Soon after the December 1999 Duma elections, *NTV* showed footage of Russian soldiers looting a 'liberated' village, where an alleged massacre had taken place.⁹³⁶ This break in the media ranks, which spoiled the previous understanding that gave the Kremlin the role as the country's sole gatekeeper. As a result, government pressure to curb criticism mounted.

Economic and political pressure was brought to bear on Media-Most. The pressure to bring Gusinsky's media empire to follow the way as prescribed by the Kremlin had begun as early as June 1999. During the turbulent and unpredictable economic climate of post-Soviet Russia, Media-Most had borrowed heavily to finance the running of the media assets. This would prove to be their weak point.

A rapid series of events in 2000 all but destroyed Media-Most, as controlled by the oligarch Vladimir Gusinsky. State controlled *Vneshekombank*, a major creditor, demanded that Media-Most repay its large loan in cash. An allegation has been made, that Yeltsin's chief-of-staff, Alexander Voloshin hinted at the possible extension of the loan. But, only if Media-Most supported the Kremlin the upcoming elections. Negotiations turned into a stalemate, the loan was eventually repaid after a court battle.⁹³⁷

The result of this action did not end *Media-Most's* siege. *Gazprom's* C.E.O., Rem Vyakhirev met with Putin in February 2000. After this meeting, Vyakhirev criticised *NTV* over its coverage of the Second Chechen War. He followed his rhetoric with action, in March 2000 *Gazprom* demanded repayment of the US\$211 million, which it had paid to *Vneshekombank* on *Media-Most's* behalf. *ORT* had also borrowed a substantial sum from *Vneshekombank* in 1998, US\$100 million, but there was no demand for immediate repayment of this loan.⁹³⁸

Pressure pitted against *Media-Most* proved to be unrelenting. The headquarters of the media group were raided in May 2000. Tax police were involved in the search. The official reason

⁹³⁴ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 141.

⁹³⁵ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 340.

⁹³⁶ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 336.

⁹³⁷ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 335.

⁹³⁸ Ibid.

given for the raid was illegal wire-tapping by the group.⁹³⁹ It would seem to be strange to involve tax police if wire-tapping transgressions were the cause for the crackdown. As stated earlier in this section, a commonly used tool by the authorities against uncooperative media are the tax police, this action would appear to be politically motivated. Gusinsky had been a thorn in the side of the Kremlin for some time, decisive action was required to remove this irritation before the possibility of the government suffering some serious PR damage.

In June 2000 government tactics changed and key figures in the media organisation were singled out and targeted personally. Charges of embezzlement were laid by the state against Gusinsky, this related to his purchase of a St. Petersburg TV station. During the same month, border police blocked Gusinsky's right hand man, Igor Malashenko from attending an international conference in Salzburg, Austria. He was neither arrested nor charged for any offence.⁹⁴⁰

The new tactics appeared to pay dividends for the Kremlin. In July 2000 charges against Gusinsky were abruptly dropped. A secret deal had been brokered in which Gusinsky had agreed to sell the controlling stake of *Media-Most* to *Gazprom*. In September 2000, it emerged that Lesin had signed the secret deal promising that all charges would be dropped if the sale proceeded.⁹⁴¹

Berezovsky, a long time ally of the Kremlin and a reputed 'King maker' in Russian politics had served Yeltsin well in the 1996 re-election bid. Part of his reward was a 49% stake in *ORT* TV. By mid-1997 - mid-1998 a divergence of position on domestic political matters began to emerge between *ORT* and *RTR*. Both of these channels were majority owned by the government. But, Berezovsky offered to 'help' the government by paying the salaries of the top executives in *ORT*. As a result, *ORT*'s financial dependence on Berezovsky ensured that the oligarch's point of view would be expressed, even if this view was not in agreement with the government's stance.⁹⁴²

The state sought to re-establish control of *ORT* soon after the March 2000 presidential

⁹³⁹ (1) Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 335.
 (2) McFaul, M., op. cit., p. 324.

⁹⁴⁰ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 335.

⁹⁴¹ Ibid.

⁹⁴² Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 331.

election. Initially, prosecutors began to investigate alleged embezzlement by companies linked to Berezovsky. In an attempt to counter the increasing pressure, Berezovsky and media under his control, began to criticise Putin.⁹⁴³

Negotiations soon commenced, aimed at the transfer of Berezovsky's minority stake in *ORT* to the state. In August 2000, an attempt was made to put pressure on the government. *ORT*'s Dorenko criticised Putin heavily for his handling of the Kursk incident. Berezovsky tried to increase pressure on the government further in September 2000, when he accused a senior Kremlin official of threatening him with prison unless he gave up his *ORT* shares.⁹⁴⁴

Berezovsky's counter was a case of too little, too late. Within a few days of Berezovsky's public outcry, *ORT*'s director cancelled Dorenko's programme and fired the two executives in the news department who had been nominated by Berezovsky.⁹⁴⁵ In the new political environment where the interests of the state were paramount, the oligarch had failed to detect the change and may have thought of himself as being indispensable to the Kremlin. This proved to be a severe miscalculation on the part of Berezovsky and he paid the price.

As evident in the cases involving the two oligarchs mentioned above, it has become apparent that the state is increasing the involvement of various security agencies in bringing about media acquiescence to government demands. This pressure does not necessarily originate solely from pro-government parties in parliament. The words of an active Communist Party deputy Yuri Ivanov illustrate my point;

"I am in favour of reconsidering the law on the press. What kind of a right is it for journalists to be allowed to conceal their sources of information? [...] Today that law allows the press limitless arbitrary rule [...] The words of some radical democrats should be the subject of investigation by the security organs."⁹⁴⁶

Berezovsky's tenure on *ORT* was broken as the result of debts owed. Two other privately

⁹⁴³ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 335.

⁹⁴⁴ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 335 - 336.

⁹⁴⁵ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 336.

⁹⁴⁶ Shevtsova, L., op. cit., p. 170.

owned TV stations, which broadcast nationally, were also the victim of their financial woes. Both *TV-6* and *TVS* were dissolved, using a seldom used Russian law that stipulates a company that runs at a financial loss for more than two years, can be wound up. *TV-6* fought this decision and won in December 2001, but an appeal to the Presidium of the Highest Arbitration Court saw the decision to uphold the company's liquidation in January 2002. The station was 75% owned by Boris Berezovsky at the time.⁹⁴⁷ On 21 June, 2003 *TVS* was closed down by the Russian Ministry of Media and the frequency was replaced by a state-owned Russia Sports TV channel.⁹⁴⁸ *TVS* was closed down by the authorities on the grounds that it was in financial trouble, if applied equally, this law would also jeopardise the future of state owned stations, such as *RTR*. The apparent arbitrary application of this law has drawn some criticism from media rights groups.⁹⁴⁹

According to the annual press freedom listing released by *Reporters Without Frontiers* in October 2003 (for the year 2002), Russia ranks badly, being ranked at 148th of the 166 countries studied. To put this ranking into a meaningful perspective; Azerbaijan rated at 113, Ukraine at 132, of the former Soviet republics only Belarus (151), Uzbekistan (154) and Turkmenistan (158) were ranked lower than Russia. In 2001 Russia ranked at 121 of 139 countries studied. *Reporters Without Frontiers* cited the main reasons for Russia's ranking as being difficulty in getting information about the Second Chechen War and a high number of murders of journalists.⁹⁵⁰

The exact level of intimidatory and violent acts that are perpetrated against journalists is difficult to determine and a significant variation can exist in data from different organisations and groups. For instance, in the *International Federation of Journalists* 'Report on Media Casualties in the Field of Journalism and Newsgathering' in 2002 quoted a total of 70 deaths among this group worldwide. When broken down into a country by country analysis the figure given for Russia was seven journalists killed for 2002.⁹⁵¹ The *Centre for Journalism in Extreme Situations*, on the other hand, set the number of Russian journalists killed in 2002 at

⁹⁴⁷ *Russia: 2002 World Press Freedom Review*, www.freemedia.at/wpfr/Europe/russia.htm, 12 December, 2002.

⁹⁴⁸ *Too Many Crooks Spoil the Broth – Russian Observer on TVS Closure*, Ekho Moskvi (BBC Monitoring), 27 June, 2003. JRL #7243, 28 June, 2003.

⁹⁴⁹ Belin, L., *Russia's TVS: Another Failed Experiment in Private Television*, RFE/RL Newsline, 27 June, 2003. JRL #7243, 28 June, 2003.

⁹⁵⁰ *Russian Press Freedom Low*, The St. Petersburg Times, #914, 28 October, 2003. www.sptimesrussia.com/archive/times/914/news/n_10770.htm, 28 October, 2003.

⁹⁵¹ International Federation of Journalists, *Journalists and Media Staff Killed in 2002*, www.ifj.org, January 2003.

28.⁹⁵²

4.8.3 Involvement of Big Business in Censorship

A perception seems to exist, that links the growth of private business as being inextricably linked to the growth of democracy, this may not always prove to be the case. An apt quote sums up this notion, “[...] the growth of private business should not be conflated with the growth of democracy.”⁹⁵³ Not all censorship is derived directly from local or central government. Russia’s new corporate culture demands total obedience from its subsidiaries.

The weak state of the media industry in the wake of the Soviet collapse has left them vulnerable to financial take-over. Another factor that works against the media’s editorial independence is the lack of separation and distinction between big business and politics. A rather apt quote gives an impression of the true significance of media assets to the corporate sector, “[...] media sponsors [...] view their holdings as political rather than economic assets.”⁹⁵⁴

A series of price rises coupled with a lack of state funding threw many media companies in to near bankruptcy. In January 1992 there was a forty-fold increase in the price of newsprint.⁹⁵⁵ Which was a crippling cost for newspapers to try to bear. TV and radio did not escape the new market rates either. The cost of transmission and transponding, which was controlled by the ministry of communication, accounted for between 70 - 80% of costs.⁹⁵⁶ Although the media were now ‘free,’ they continued to rely heavily on the country’s government controlled resources to be able to function.

The problem of mass media’s economic viability in the new post-communist Transition State is proving to be crippling. This economic struggle for survival has affected all sectors of the media industry - radio, TV and newspapers. There are few sources of reliable or significant income, which come without strings attached. Consequently, this has forced media to search

⁹⁵² *Russian Press Freedom Low*, The St. Petersburg Times, #914, 28 October, 2003.
www.sptimesrussia.com/archive/times/914/news/n_10770.htm, 28 October, 2003.

⁹⁵³ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 24.

⁹⁵⁴ (1) Belin, L., “Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 338.
(2) Oates, S., “Russian Television, Political Advertising, and the Development of a New Democracy” in Kaid, L. L., Editor, op. cit., p. 153.

⁹⁵⁵ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 128.

for non-traditional sources of income. For example, as other sources of income declined, TV stations began to actively seek advertising money. The August 1998 economic crash destroyed advertising as a viable source of income, 70% of the advertising market simply vanished. This forced a more competitive approach to capture what little was left of the ad market. Advertising rates were discounted by as much as 80%.⁹⁵⁷

American academic Michael McFaul has summed up the plight of private media in the Russian Federation well, “[...] it is the failure of new media companies to make a profit that has made them vulnerable to state control.”⁹⁵⁸ The oligarchs were able to gain control through exploiting this weakness as well. Although, a lack of consideration in making media a profitable enterprise left both Berezovsky and Gusinsky vulnerable to the Kremlin.

A feature of the post-Soviet era has been the rise of corporate energy giants and their entry into the media industry. The government can have a financial interest in these corporations, which ultimately can mean greater governmental control over the media, but hidden through indirect control. *Gazprom* provides one such example, this energy giant has several known media assets under its control. Media assets include the newspapers *Trud* and *Worker's Tribune* and the magazine *Profil*.⁹⁵⁹

In late 1996, the newspaper *Izvestiya* was sold to the energy giant *Lukoil*. The paper's editor-in-chief, Igor Golembiovsky insisted that editorial independence would be retained by *Izvestiya*. An article appeared in the paper in April 1997, which accused the Prime Minister, Victor Chernomyrdin of accumulating massive wealth while in office. It was at this stage that *Lukoil* and Golembiovsky clashed.⁹⁶⁰

Izvestiya sought help from Yeltsin, then sold a major stake of shares to *Oneksimbank* to fend off *Lukoil*. Instead of assisting the paper *Oneksimbank* joined ranks with *Lukoil* and ousted Golembiovsky. A mass exodus of journalists from the paper followed. The end result was that the corporate shareholders' interests were reflected in the paper's content, editorial freedom

⁹⁵⁶ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 130.

⁹⁵⁷ Mickiewicz, E. P. (2001), op. cit., p. 41.

⁹⁵⁸ McFaul, M., op. cit., p. 324.

⁹⁵⁹ Gunther, R. & Mughan, A., Editors, op. cit., p. 101.

⁹⁶⁰ Belin, L., “Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 329.

was lost.⁹⁶¹

4.8.4 Bureaucratic Instruments of Censorship

The government does not necessarily need to use physical bullying and stand over tactics to achieve what is wanted. As the country's law maker and administrator, the Kremlin is able to either alter the legal framework or call upon the might of the many bureaucratic institutions.

One of the most powerful government institutions in Russia is the ministry of press and information. Its head, Mikhail Lesin has the ability and power to determine the fate of all media enterprises in the Russian Federation. The ministry was created in 2000, Lesin being appointed to head the new ministry in July of that year. Although a very new body in terms of its existence, the ministry has made an impact on the functioning of the media (and those who use or own the media). Lesin's roots can be traced back some four years prior to this event. He has become thought of as somewhat of a villain in the media industry, in July 2000 Lesin topped the 'Enemies of the Press' list.⁹⁶² The Russian Union of Journalists compiled this list.

Lesin has been actively involved in attempting to stifle opposition to the Kremlin on numerous occasions. He uses his broad powers to curb or bend the media to achieve political ends. This is most noticeable during an approaching election. One of the most powerful tools at the disposal of the media ministry is the power to revoke broadcasting licences. If a TV or radio station receive two warnings from the media ministry, a review is initiated to determine whether the broadcasting licence will be extended or not. Lesin has also proposed that print media be subject to licensing requirements.⁹⁶³ The licensing requirements currently faced by TV and radio ensure that the government is able to exert pressure, by threatening to revoke or not to renew a licence. Print media are free of this imposition at the moment, which gives a measure of independence from government pressure. Lesin's proposal would give the Kremlin an opportunity to have an enhanced ability to dictate editorial policy to print media.

Less than one month before the presidential election in March 2000, Lesin announced that owing to the two warnings received by *ORT* and *TV Tsentr*, their broadcasting licences would

⁹⁶¹ Ibid.

⁹⁶² Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 334.

⁹⁶³ Ibid.

not be automatically renewed in May of that year. *ORT* was able to regain the licence without incident. But, *TV Tsentr*'s task was more problematic, they had a tender postponed several times. Then a court ruling nullified the second warning, the justification for not extending the licence. A series of meetings between Luzhkov and Lesin followed. Eventually, political considerations permitted the station to retain use of the frequency.⁹⁶⁴

Another powerful institution, the Federal Commission on Competitions for TV and Radio Broadcasting, has been subjected to Lesin's influence. Lesin and other government bureaucrats hold half of the seats in the Commission. More importantly, Lesin has been entrusted with the deciding vote. In February 2000, one month prior to the presidential elections, two radio stations controlled by Moscow City authorities lost their FM frequencies in an open tender. Luzhkov decried the act as political discrimination.⁹⁶⁵ The political discrimination allegation relates to Moscow's mayor, Yuri Luzhkov was a co-leader of OVR and was running against Putin. Luzhkov's media assets, which were owned by Moscow City, were openly pro-OVR and anti-Kremlin.

As I explained earlier in the work, the Kremlin has been installing trusted people into key posts, which relate to the flow of information (such as bureaucratic institutions and state-owned media). I have already mentioned the role of Mikhail Lesin and Sergei Yastrzhembsky, other posts have been filled also.

A long-time news director and later president of *NTV*, Oleg Dobrodeev, left the station in early 2000. He was appointed by Putin to head *RTR*, a state channel. The station's coverage of the Chechen War proved to be entirely loyal to the Kremlin. The level of trust which Putin's administration has placed in Dobrodeev was shown in August 2000. After the Kursk sank in August 2000, only *RTR* was allowed close to the scene of the accident and in Putin's meeting with the grieving relatives. Dobrodeev ensured that he would not fail his political masters in this very sensitive task, by personally editing anything, which may have proved to be politically damaging for Putin.⁹⁶⁶

One of the constraining factors faced by the current regime stems back to the final years of

⁹⁶⁴ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 334.

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶⁶ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 338.

the Soviet Union. The 1990 media law forbids any interference in the media carrying out their work, provided that the media do not break any privacy provisions or intentionally provoke ethnic, religious or any other forms of intolerance.

In order to pursue the interests of the central state further, the Kremlin has needed to use some of these provisions of the 1990 law. Although this may be stretching the letter of the law, and goes against the spirit of the law it can provide a 'smoke screen' for the government's true intentions.

The 2001 government draft budget proposed that media subsidies be labelled as 'top secret.' This would make state funding of the media even less transparent. Another proposal in this draft budget was to task the media ministry with disbursing the funds to the media's commercial bank accounts. Such a move would only serve to strengthen the media ministry's already considerable powers even further.⁹⁶⁷ Such proposals, if brought into law would serve to undermine further the media's ability at any attempt to retain editorial freedom from government interference. Any consequences arising from these proposals would not be open to public scrutiny either, due to the classified nature of the information concerned.

An increasingly commonly used method to try and bind the mass media's editorial freedom is through use of the law making and enforcing process. By using the legal system to enforce the measures of censorship, this can give the appearance of the process being conducted in a more objective and fair manner to the casual observer. The earlier legal measures brought into being by Yeltsin seemed to be aimed at regulating the new post-communist environment. Legal measures appeared to give some measure of protection from interference in the mass media's editorial freedom. By the late Yeltsin era (1998 onwards), the nature of the new laws give the impression that a greater proportion of the burden was beginning to be placed upon the media. This trend has accelerated after Putin was elected President.

Between 1991 and 1999 approximately thirty federal statutes to regulate the mass media were adopted by parliament. The majority of these new legal measures generally allowed for a

⁹⁶⁷ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 339 - 340.

free and independent press.⁹⁶⁸ As mentioned above, who bore the legal burden changed over time. To illustrate this point, I shall mention two specific statutes, one originating in 1991 and the other in 1998.

In 1991 the statute ‘On the Mass Media’ was passed. To date, it has undergone revision no less than seven times. This statute gives an impression of offering a measure of guarantee against governmental interference. A series of checks and balances ensure that a licence may not be arbitrarily removed.

- The state is required to issue two written warnings within one year.
- If the alleged violations persist, the case must go before a court in order for the prosecutor to seek a closure order.⁹⁶⁹

By 1998 however, the wording of new statutes started the process of placing the legal burden upon the media industry. Summary measures could be instituted and the wording of the new laws began to change. The 1998 statute ‘On Licensing of Certain Types of Activity’ is a clear example of the beginning of this new trend.

- Allows for the annulment of licence to broadcast without prior warnings from the licensing body.
- Permits a suspension of licence for a period of up to six months if the following is believed to have been broken; “[...] violations of conditions of the licence that could be harmful to the rights, lawful interests, morals and health of citizens, as well as to the defence and security of the state.” (Article 13)⁹⁷⁰

Examining the wording of Article 13 of the 1998 statute ‘On Licensing of Certain Types of Activity’ certain themes and discourses are seen to be emerging. Firstly, the broadcasting licence may be revoked instantly (no checks or balances) on the assumption that a code of conduct has been breached. No solid evidence is needed to substantiate the allegation. In effect, an uncooperative broadcaster can be shutdown for a period of up to six months.

⁹⁶⁸ Richter, A., “Media Regulation: Foundation Laid for a Free Speech” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., pp. 115 – 154, p. 121.

⁹⁶⁹ Richter, A., “Media Regulation: Foundation Laid for a Free Speech” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 126.

A second issue, which arises from Article 13, is the highly loaded wording of this piece of legislation. Themes that are now part of the contemporary discourse can be seen emerging from the text. One of these themes is the government's self-appointed role as the protector of the public's morals, rights and interests. In this role, the government is also the responsible for setting the parameters of what is good for the public, and what is not good.

Lastly, the very important role of the defence of the state is openly referred to as a legitimate reason to curb the activities of the press. Legislation that had been passed previously had already addressed this issue thoroughly and made a clear statement on state security. This measure is somewhat different, in so far as the consequences for breaking a somewhat vague legal definition has more drastic repercussions on the media outlet concerned.

The Dean of Moscow State University's Journalism Faculty, Yassen Zassoursky has given a good account of the legitimisation process used on the 'Etatist' approach to media control.

“[...] media owners and advertisers press for commercial gains. They treat the freedom of the press as a licence to gain profits by attracting huge audiences with sensational and cheap entertainment [...].”⁹⁷¹

An important and far-reaching piece of legislation was passed in 2000, it gave an indication of the Putin administration's political strategy and orientation. The 'Doctrine of Information Security of the Russian Federation' appeared in full in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* on September 28, 2000 in much the same way as new laws and Communist Party activity was highlighted in the Soviet era press.⁹⁷²

Part one section one of the Security Doctrine outlines the philosophy and reasoning behind the government's initiative. An extract from this part, titled 'The National Interests of the Russian Federation in the Information Area and their Ensuring' reads as follows:

“The interests of society in the information area consist in ensuring the

⁹⁷⁰ Richter, A., “Media Regulation: Foundation Laid for a Free Speech” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 127.

⁹⁷¹ Zassoursky, Y. N., “Media and the Public Interest: Balancing Between the State, Business and the Public Sphere” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 159.

interests of the individual in this area, promoting democracy, creating a law-governed social state, achieving and maintaining accord in society, and promoting Russia's spiritual revival."⁹⁷³

A lot of emphasis has been placed on the government's role of ensuring accurate information in the mass media. At face value, this would appear to be an attempt by the government to fulfil the role of society's gatekeeper. The government tries to justify the measures of the Security Doctrine by numerous mentions in the document of numerous enemies, both foreign and domestic.

The government's perceived threats to information security can be classified into three broad categories:

- The influence of foreigners in the Russian media, which may threaten citizens 'spiritual' and 'moral' welfare as a result of an 'irresponsible' media. Non Russian Orthodox Church religious activity is one of the listed perceived threats. "[...] to combat the negative influence of foreign religious organisations and missionaries."⁹⁷⁴

Another 'insidious' spectre to emerge in the ranks of foreign threats is the resurrection of negative influence from foreign governmental agencies.

"[...] activities of foreign political, economic, military intelligence and information structures directed against the interest of the Russian Federation in the information area; [...] a striving by some countries to dominate and infringe on Russia's interests in the world information space, to dislodge it from the external and internal information markets."⁹⁷⁵

- A second concern or threat raised is that of the internal threat. The internal threats were seen to be emanating from criminal organisations and a lack of a centralised government bureaucracy.

⁹⁷² For a full transcript of the doctrine refer to Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., pp. 251 – 292.

⁹⁷³ Appendices, "Doctrine of Information Security" in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 252.

⁹⁷⁴ Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 276.

“[...] the efforts of public associations to violently change the foundations of the constitutional regime and violate the integrity of the Russian Federation, to fan social, race, ethnic and religious strife, and to popularise these ideas in the mass media.”⁹⁷⁶

- The third category is the government’s view that the lack of governmental control over the mass media’s development and direction, as another threat. Mentioned throughout the Doctrine is the concept of an active information war. As a result of the information war and the perceived foreign threat, the government has rationalised the need to exercise more effective control over the flow of information, i.e. act in the capacity as gatekeeper. These concerns are clearly expressed in the text of the Doctrine of Information Security. The perceived threats have been addressed with the following wording:

“[...] blocking the activity of the state mass information media in informing Russian and foreign audiences.”⁹⁷⁷

“[...] insufficient state control over the development of Russia’s information market.”⁹⁷⁸

The text of the Doctrine of Information Security puts into writing many of the newly emerging discourses that appear aimed at restoring a strong centralised state. During the course of the document, the state identifies what it perceives as the enemies of the people and nominates itself as the sole protector of the citizens’ well-being.

However, some of the justifications for creating such a policy document in the first instance appear to be flawed or misguided as current legislation already exists. An example of this is the mention made of inhibiting public associations from spreading various kinds of hatred and violence through the mass media. The 1993 Russian Constitution’s provisions covering the freedom of speech already cover this possible eventuality more than adequately and in a clear and concise style. A stated aim of officials has been to create a responsible press, the effect of the recent laws will be to make the press responsible to government officials.

⁹⁷⁵ Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 259.

⁹⁷⁶ Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 270.

⁹⁷⁷ Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 257.

The method of placing ‘reliable’ people into key areas of media organisations is becoming more common place again. This trend has been especially noticeable since mid-2002, in relation to individuals with close connections to the Kremlin being appointed to pivotal posts within the state-owned media. This move could be perceived as being a possible early preparation for the 2003-2004 electoral cycle.

On the 17th of June, 2002 Marat Gelman announced in an interview to the newspaper *Gazeta* that he had been appointed to be the Deputy General Director in charge of political analysis and public relations for *ORT*. He was quoted as saying that:

“I will help correctly form the policy of the programmes. [...] I will help *ORT* find the right tone.”⁹⁷⁹

Gelman has been an influential member of Moscow’s artistic community since the mid-1990’s, he has patronised a significant number of modern artists and writers through his assets that include an art gallery, publishing house and Internet activities. He also ran a political consulting business, which had among its clients the political party *Union of Right Forces*. Until late 2001, Gelman worked at Gleb Pavlovsky’s *Foundation for Effective Politics* and withdrew from this pro-Kremlin organisation in May 2002 when he handed back his shares. *Moskovsky Komsomolets* newspaper featured an article that cited unnamed sources as saying the heads of *ORT* and *RTR* had been reprimanded by Kremlin officials for promoting Putin in a manner that was too obvious and was considered to be counterproductive.⁹⁸⁰ Bearing this in mind, Gelman appears to be an attempt to address this imbalance, applying a more sophisticated approach to promoting the President.

Another appointment was made in the sphere of the state-owned media in June 2002. *Novye Izvestia* wrote about the appointment of FSB Lieutenant-General Alexander Zdanovich, Chief for the FSB’s Department for Cooperative Programmes, to a senior executive position in *VGTRK*. An official report stated the appointment in a neutral manner.

“Lieutenant-General Alexander Zdanovich, chief of the FSB department for

⁹⁷⁸ Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 259.

⁹⁷⁹ Zolotov Jr., A., *ORT Gets New Pre-Election Strategist*, The Moscow Times, 18 June, 2002. JRL #6314, 18 June, 2002.

cooperation programs, has been appointed deputy chair of the All-Russian Television and Radio Company (VGTRK), responsible for security.”⁹⁸¹

Zdanovich is not the sole representative from the security services to find himself being an overseer of state-owned media. There are other notable examples where this has occurred.

- General Kobaladze (Foreign Intelligence Service) appointed Deputy General Director of *ITAR-TASS*
- General Aksionov (Interior Ministry) appointed head of *TV-7*
- General Vladimir Kozlov (one of creators and leaders of FSB Anti-Terrorist Centre) was appointed Deputy Media Minister
- General Manilov (Defence Ministry) appointed to *Mediasoyuz*.⁹⁸²

The method of the government nominating key state media personnel from the ranks of the security services was a well known aspect of the Soviet period. It has the effect of internalising the mechanisms of censorship within a given media organisation.

4.9 Chapter Summary

A quote from editor of the trade magazine *Sreda*, Alexei Pankin, is a fitting way to begin this summary. “The Press can write the truth about anybody, but not its owner.”⁹⁸³ This reflects on an earlier remark in this work, that a media outlet reflects the values and interests of its owner. A certain set of unwritten rules existed during the Soviet times, mass media and the Soviet State were entangled in a mutually beneficial relationship, they supported each other and relied on each other to ensure the survival of the Soviet system. The State relied on media, as was reflected through Socialist Realism, to perpetuate a myth and to sustain the public’s acceptance of the system. Mass Media relied on the State to fund their activities and were able to enjoy a comfortable and stable lifestyle.

The system of mutual reliance, between the State and mass media broke down in the later

⁹⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁹⁸¹ Yakov, V., *The FSB On Air*, Novye Izvestia, 5 June, 2002. JRL #6290, 5 June, 2002.

⁹⁸² Ibid.

⁹⁸³ *Country Report: Russia*, Committee to Protect Journalists Country and Regional Reports, www.cpj.org/attacks98/1998/Europe/Russia.html, 31 December, 1998 (accessed 5 July, 2002).

period of the Soviet Union and was dismantled in the Yeltsin era (1991 – 1999). Alliances were loose and were prone to shifting, changes in circumstances did at times lead to changes in allegiances. Individual media companies became more concentrated, in terms of ownership, being organised into media empires by the oligarchs who bought them, not to make financial profit, but for gaining what Ivan Zassoursky describes as political capital. That is influence in the Kremlin, to further enrich themselves during the privatisation process. During this era, media outlets were generally not run on a profit making basis. This was both a strength and a weakness. A strength being, that media did not need to rely on the goodwill of advertisers when covering news. For instance, if an advertising customer was unhappy with some news that could be potentially damaging for them, they may withdraw their advertising revenue, which could hurt a media outlet. Naturally, news coverage that reflected badly on the owner of the media outlet was understood by employees as off bounds, as were the political and business allies of the owner. Attacks and exposes against rivals, whether the allegations were or could be substantiated or not, were not discouraged.

A significant change in relations between media and the State occurred with Putin being elected as President in March 2000. The previous running of the State, by concession and compromise with business and political figures to ensure Yeltsin's continuation as President no longer applied. A new focus on a powerful and centralised State, the subjugation of individual interests for the betterment of the collective (i.e. Russia). Such policies and sentiment can be detected in the rhetoric and doctrine of the Putin administration. Not long after Putin declared the intention of bringing a 'single information space' to fruition, a new set of guidelines and laws sent a message to the media community, communicating the behaviour and relationships that were going to be expected by the new regime.

The Doctrine of Information Security was a crucial step that sent a clear signal to the media industry, as to what may be expected in the future. In the year 2000 the Russian Security Council Secretary Sergei Ivanov, he stated the new rules of media-Kremlin relations.

“The role of the later (the State), from my point of view, is reduced to not hindering the former (mass media), on the condition that they do not violate the law. [...] Since Soviet times, the mass media in Russia have traditionally been viewed not only and not so much as a source of information, but also as an effective instrument of solving important social problems. Today the

press, both printed and electronic, is losing its communicative function, which is its main function for society, and is doing so on its own initiative. Now the private mass media primarily reflects the interests of the political and economic elites. Tough totalitarian technologies predominate.”⁹⁸⁴

Ivanov’s speech highlights several key elements to the new relationship between the federal State and the mass media. The new rules put an effective end to the lack of direction from the centre, which characterised the Yeltsin years (an exception to this being the 1996 presidential elections). Mass media were expected to act within the law, laws are dictated by the State, therefore media accountability was being handled by civil servants who enforced the will of the State. So, in an indirect way, media are being made more accountable to the State. New laws that have come into force enhance the ability of the State to place limitations on topics covered and to close down media outlets immediately, without lengthy delays due to court hearings. The new regulations that are introduced by the authorities are promoted in a manner that seems logical or beneficial. For instance, private media groupings were said to be no more than mouthpieces of their owner, who used them to gain political capital. This is of course true, the solution offered by the authorities was framed that for the sake of public good and the mass media’s good, the State could take a more active role through breaking up the media empires (of Gusinsky and Berezovsky).

The role of the mass media in Russian society, from a historical point of view, is touched upon too. That is, mass media are viewed as a tool for public or societal education. Mass media are considered to be potent shapers of image and opinion, some mediums more so than others (TV is considered to be the more influential medium). The extent to which messages transmitted via mass media influence the thought and behaviour of the audience is a matter of debate. It is this attribute, which is attached to the media that make it an attractive proposition for prominent figures in big business and politics. Ivanov makes the point about these properties in the above mentioned quote.

However, as alluded to in Ivanov’s comments and mentioned earlier in this summary, the media had moved away from the business of conveying information on a profit making basis to conveying opinion and ideas with little regard to the economic side of business. This was a

⁹⁸⁴ *Russian Security Council Secretary Speaks About Private and Foreign Media in Russia*, Interfax, 29 November, 2000. JRL #4661, 30 November, 2000.

strength, but attached with this was a weakness, mass media were not profitable enterprises in a market economy, which meant that funds were required to sustain them. The euphoria of the early post-Soviet period evaporated when the realisation of having to adapt to a new system was thrust upon the mass media. The media outlets were forced to find funding from a source other than the State, which in practical terms meant the oligarchs as they were among the few with enough financial resources to invest in the media industry. The new owners (the oligarchs) did not seem to learn this lesson after they took over a share of media assets and as stated above, did not run them on a profit making basis. Instead money was borrowed to keep the media branches of the private corporate empires functioning. Due to the proximity of business to politics, money was often sourced from state run or controlled financial or corporate institutions. In times of cooperation, this system worked for both parties, the Kremlin received favourable coverage from privately operated and owned media and the oligarchs were able to keep their media arm of business working.

It is however, during times of conflict that the greatest test of a system's durability comes. The 1999 – 2000 electoral cycle is one such period of tension and conflict. Journalism in the Russian Federation is without doubt a dangerous profession, some 200 journalists have been killed since December 1991. Although a change in methods used to intimidate and manipulate media is taking place. Legal options are becoming a popular tool with which to stifle or silence media content on sensitive issues and topics. The electoral laws provide ample opportunity to control what is being said in the media, framed as an effort to ensure a free and fair election without undue media interference or bias. Russian Civil Law 151 is another example of one of the 'modern' tools of censorship, which can be used to intimidate media outlets from writing about personalities (concerning defamation of character – defence of honour and reputation). The habit of borrowing has come back to haunt private media too. *NTV*, Berezovsky's share of *ORT*, *TV-6* and *TVS* have all been shutdown with the aid of one important common factor, their poor financial performance and weak economic state.

A final point for discussion in this summary is the image of journalists and journalism in Russian society. During the era of *glasnost* journalists were seen as being responsible for the new changes that were occurring in Soviet society, it was an era of many high hopes and expectations for the future. The mass media carried many exposes of the excesses committed in the name of the State. Therefore some seemed to identify journalists as being in an 'opposition' camp to the authorities, although they were an integral part of Gorbachev's

reforms and helped carry his message to the Soviet public. The popularity of leading figures of the media industry was manifested in several of their number being elected to parliament. This 'love affair' with the media continued into the early post-Soviet period, when the nature of journalism in Russia began to change and follow more of a tabloid format. As big business bought into the media and began to use it for their own political and business purposes, by the use of techniques such as 'Black PR' or otherwise known as *kompromat*. With such intrigues being conducted through the media, the audience was not so interested in the content of news stories, but the person(s) behind it and the purpose of the news. Such public cynicism was reinforced by the revelation of the common practice of *zakazukha*, the printing of stories (often hidden advertising) for a price without checking the veracity of the story and the source. Former *ORT* anchor and ally of Berezovsky, Sergei Dorenko nicknamed *Telly Killer*, epitomises what many find despicable in the standards of modern Russian journalism.

CHAPTER V: CHECHEN WARS.

5.0 Chapter Objectives

The Second Chechen War has had a profound impact, both physically and psychologically, upon the Russian Federation. It is the contention of the Kremlin not to let Chechnya secede from the Russian Federation. This may be due in part to a possible 'domino theory' scenario. If Moscow allows one region to leave the Federation, others may quickly follow. The Chechen problem has been internationalised by the authorities, which have sought to tie world problems with events in the Chechen republic. "The situation in the republic has become complicated to such a level that the territory has become a springboard for the expansion of international terrorism into Russia."⁹⁸⁵

The conflict has been termed as an 'anti-terrorist' operation, thus not invoking the necessary protocols that come with the use of the term war. Chechnya has been framed with the use of the a new catch phrase, that of 'national security.' This term has by no means been restricted to or solely used by the Russian Federation.

"One of the most frequent and evocative terms in political discussion is 'national security,' a symbol that generates fear of enemies of the state."⁹⁸⁶

According to some statements, it would appear that Russia's leadership believes that to grant Chechnya its independence would spell the end of the Russian State. The assumption is formed on the basis, that other regions would want their independence too. A mentality, which is similar to the 'Domino Effect,' in which America became embroiled in a 'struggle' to halt the spread of communism, culminating in such events as Vietnam and Grenada.

The nature of contemporary warfare has changed significantly. If public opinion is harnessed effectively enough, it may be able to exert significant pressure upon the political elite. Possibly for this reason, modern warfare is nicely 'packaged' and 'sold' to the public often before hostilities commence. In 1986, American president Ronald Reagan justified the bombing of Libya as "the peaceful mission of America to counter the savagery of the brutal

⁹⁸⁵Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, op. cit., p. 259.

⁹⁸⁶ Edelman, M., *The Politics of Misinformation*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2001, p. 7.

enemy wherever he threatens freedom.”⁹⁸⁷

Social analyst of war Arthur Bullard recognised the need to generate a flood of publicity to generate public support for war.

“First, last and all the time, the effectiveness of our warfare will depend on the amount of ardour we throw into it [...] The prime duty of our government, the first step in any mobilisation, must be the awakening of our interest [...] call to arms, which will electrify public opinion.”⁹⁸⁸

Bullard went further, to create a blueprint for a government to use to accomplish the goal of promoting war. There were two main points to be fulfilled if the government was to be successful.

- Organise a “publicity bureau, which would constantly keep before the public the importance of supporting men at the front.”
- Government must “organise propaganda campaigns to make the struggle comprehensible and popular.”⁹⁸⁹

When the Gulf War conflict occurred, the art of ‘informing’ the public had been revolutionised. Part of this ‘revolution’ was found in the use of language. A specialist technological language was used to soften the image of war. Media / PR aspects were no longer an ad hoc peripheral component, but had become an integral part of the overall strategy for prosecuting a war.

“Warfare planning now builds into its core a media policy. Opposition leaderships are demonised in preparation for the war. In fact such demonisations are usually a good indication that a war is coming.”⁹⁹⁰

One of the methods used to gain public acquiescence to going to war is to create the image

⁹⁸⁷ Gonzalez, A. & Tanno, D. A., Editors, *Politics, Communication and Culture*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1997, p. 15.

⁹⁸⁸ Ewen, S., op. cit., p. 107.

⁹⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁹⁰ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 178.

of vulnerability, which generates fear. If society feels safe in their homes, at their work and social gatherings they will be less inclined to wanting to be committed to war.

“[...] images of enemy were built on a bedrock of fear, invoking an ineluctable climate of xenophobia paranoia. Many images portrayed an inscrutable enemy, lurking around every corner, threatening even the most apparently innocent circumstances.”⁹⁹¹

5.1 The First Chechen War, 1994 - 96

The first attempt at armed Russian intervention in the breakaway Chechen republic occurred in 1991. Yeltsin attempted an invasion of Chechnya late in that year. This was conducted with no specific media strategy pre-empting the military strike, the resulting public outcry resulted in a forced reversal of government action. This in turn, caused the military to place censorship on all campaign coverage. Some leaks of information still occurred after censorship was imposed by the military.⁹⁹² The government’s overall planning, strategy and co-ordination was very poor, which affected the popularity of the conflict with the public and this flowed on to affect the Kremlin’s ability to deal with the republic. They had to take into consideration public opinion, which was firmly against the action. The state was in a weak condition, the Soviet Union was collapsing and along with this the ability of a central authority to assert its will.

In the prelude to the 1994 - 1996 Chechen War, Yeltsin employed a set media strategy prior to commencement of the conflict. The war began covertly at first. This action was partly obscured by large-scale governmental denial over the involvement of Russia’s armed forces in Chechnya.⁹⁹³ The lessons of the abortive attempt to intervene in Chechnya had been learned. How was the Russian public ‘prepared’ for the planned offensive on the republic?

From late 1993, a carefully laid government strategy aimed to vilify all Chechens. High profile examples were held in the public’s full view. The speaker of the Russian parliament, Ruslan Khasbulatov was arrested on the political opposition’s claim that he was linked to the

⁹⁹¹ Ewen, S., op. cit., p. 123.

⁹⁹² Downing, J., op. cit., p. 136.

⁹⁹³ Ibid.

Chechen Mafia. Chechens were rounded up on Moscow's streets and summarily deported. By the time of the invasion, government propaganda had Chechnya as the heartland of organised crime. The propaganda had even gone as far as to influence meaning and usage in the Russian language. Chechens were commonly referred to as 'bandity,' in reference to thuggery rather than acts of banditry. There were similarities in this strategy to those used by the Soviet media to portray Afghani guerrillas during the 1980's.⁹⁹⁴

The strategy seemed to be relatively straightforward. By casting the upcoming conflict in a binary manner, the public may see contest in a simplistic good versus bad scenario. Chechens were typecast as the villains of this particular production, therefore by deduction, the Russians represented the hero figure. It was to be billed as an unruly, mass of banditry against the methodical Russian rule of law.

On the conflict's eve, most Russian media were hostile to the Chechen cause. As a direct result of this bias, Russian TV was banned from Chechnya in August 1994 and the banning of all Russian journalists soon followed in September 1994.⁹⁹⁵ Chechen authorities seemed to have concluded that they would not benefit from having Russian media present, as the news would be highly critical of them. If the news would have been neutral or positive, the Chechens stood to gain a measure of sympathy from the Russian public, as had been the case in 1991.

The Kremlin tried to apply a 'spin' to the war. This marked a shift from the previous tactic of using silence. In 1994 an information centre was established by the military, to provide the public with sanitised information. However, this information centre did not begin to operate until one week after hostilities broke out. Additionally the information provided was very sparse.⁹⁹⁶ An attempt was made to have media coverage of the war orchestrated, which succeeded up to December 1994. However, this media campaign ultimately failed, for a number of reasons.

- public opinion was firmly against the invasion. They did not want to risk the lives of Russian servicemen and Russian civilians living in Chechnya.

⁹⁹⁴ Downing, J., op. cit., pp. 136 - 137.

⁹⁹⁵ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 137.

⁹⁹⁶ Mickiewicz, E. P. (1999), op. cit., p. 244.

- The Kremlin was unable to silence the voices of opposition. Public figures such as deputy defence minister Boris Gromov, General Lebed and Yelena Bonner (widow of Andrei Sakharov) added weight to the anti-war cause.⁹⁹⁷

NTV broke ranks, by running an uncensored story, which contradicted the government's version of events. As a consequence of this 'indiscretion,' they were threatened with the cancellation of their broadcasting licence. Tension between *Media Most* and the Kremlin was strained further on December 2, 1994 when the media group's offices were raided by masked paramilitaries who held staff and assaulted some of the staff members. The official reason given for conducting the raid was the group's alleged criminal connections.⁹⁹⁸

As the federal forces prepared for their final build-up in Chechnya, a vigorous attempt was launched to silence opposition. Use of *kompromat* was employed against political opposition. Gromov was relieved of his authority over the air force. The *Most* group was criticised by *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* (which was controlled by Yeltsin). An article claimed that the *Most* group had seconded staff to Luzhkov's election campaign and claimed that the group was empire building by trying to acquire *St. Petersburg TV*, *Ostankino TV* and *Moskovsky Komsomolets*. The paper went on to accuse *Most* of supporting Luzhkov's political ambitions and for supporting the West against Russia's 'national aspirations.'⁹⁹⁹

Both President Yeltsin and the Defence Minister Pavel Grachev were directly involved in trying to actively discredit *NTV* publicly. Among their allegations against *NTV* were that the network was unpatriotic, *NTV* was making money at Russia's expense and they were in the pay of the Chechen leadership.¹⁰⁰⁰

These allegations are based on seemingly no substantial evidence, being made on the premise of throw enough mud and eventually some will stick. The meaning hidden within the government inspired message seems to play on deep-rooted Russian fears. By reading between the lines, it is possible to interpret the message in the following way;

- *Most* group supports political opposition to the founder of the Russian republic.

⁹⁹⁷ Downing, J., op. cit., pp. 137 - 138.

⁹⁹⁸ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 138.

⁹⁹⁹ Ibid.

They are going to attempt to influence the public by taking over the media. This will lead to a massive propaganda campaign via media controlled by the group.

- Most are working to destroy Russia, by working for the West (the enemy) in an effort to further weaken the Russian State.

The message is high on emotional rhetoric, but would appear to lack any deep substance to the scattering of rumour and allegation. Thus, it seems that the main purpose of this communication is to discredit *Most* in the public's mind. If this is achieved, the credibility of news that originates from *Most* controlled media may be perceived to be tainted.

Use of pressure on state-owned media by the government was common, to ensure that they stayed strictly in accordance with the official viewpoint. The use of pressure issue is normally a difficult accusation to substantiate owing largely to the usual wall of silence from governmental sources. However, Premier Victor Chernomyrdin once admitted to using pressure on state media to stay with the official view.¹⁰⁰¹

Alternative tactics seemed to be the norm when dealing with private media that offered a point of view, differing from the official version of events. The Kremlin seemed to use public denunciations and threats against broadcasting licences in order to receive the desired outcome. In June 1995 the chairman of the Duma Chechnya Committee denounced *NTV*, *Komsomolets* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* for their coverage of an army massacre at Samashki, Chechnya. He claimed that their coverage was “a revolt against the president, the government and the Russian people as a whole.”¹⁰⁰² This rhetoric is very close to the denunciations used during Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930's. In this case, the media were the new enemies of the people, their crime being that they did not do as they were told.

In addition to the rhetoric and threats of licence revocation on the media, a series of physical attacks and intimidation were directed at media personnel in Chechnya. In May 1995, Alexei Simonov of the media watchdog *Glasnost Defence Foundation* released a report on media ‘casualty statistics’ up to that point in the conflict.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Mickiewicz, E. P. (1999), op. cit., p. 246.

¹⁰⁰¹ Downing, J., op. cit., p. 139.

¹⁰⁰² Ibid.

- 105 journalists arrested
- 46 journalists had film or video equipment illegally confiscated
- 8 journalists were beaten
- 6 journalists were killed
- 2 journalists reported missing.¹⁰⁰³

These statistics were compiled less than one year in to the First Chechen War. The fighting for control of Chechnya and the media would continue in to 1996. Reading this list bears testimony to the intensity of the conflict, not only for re-establishing the Kremlin's control over the breakaway republic, but also for control of the nation's media assets.

The Russian Union of Journalists (RUJ) also compiled statistics for part of the First Chechen War. Figures relate to the period November 1994 – December 1995.

- 14 journalists killed, 3 of them from foreign press
- 4 journalists reported missing, 1 from the foreign press
- 146 journalists detained
- 16 journalists had film and video or audio equipment illegally confiscated.¹⁰⁰⁴

By the conclusion of this round of hostilities in 1996, the final statistics for the war made sombre reading.

- 20 journalists killed (11 of these were residents of Chechnya)
- 9 journalists were reported missing
- 36 journalists were wounded
- 26 journalists were assaulted
- 174 journalists were arrested
- 117 journalists were shot at
- 34 journalists were threatened
- 37 journalists were had video equipment, audio equipment, camera equipment,

¹⁰⁰³ Downing, J., *op. cit.*, p. 139.

¹⁰⁰⁴ These figures were supplied to me, via e-mail from Dmitri Muraviev of the Russian Union of Journalists on the 14th of October, 2003.

videocassettes or film illegally confiscated.¹⁰⁰⁵

There is some discrepancy in the two sets of figures. This especially pertains to the figures for equipment that was illegally seized. It is possible, given the different categories used by the two organisations (RUJ, GDF and Centre for Journalism in Extreme Situations – CJES) that different sampling methods or means of collecting and analysing data were used.

Governmental credibility was slowly eroded in the eyes of the public. The contradictions, which began to creep in to the news even from information obtained from different government departments had an effect. Public scepticism that was produced in this environment resulted in the public having little faith in the official view of the First Chechen War.

The Russian government lost the information war during the First Chechen campaign. A major reason for this was, when the government chose a media strategy it was the use of silence. Media access to military sources was banned this forced the media to seek their information elsewhere. Chechen sources were only too willing and ready to relay their version of reality to the Russian public via the Russian media.¹⁰⁰⁶

The Chechen Information Minister Movladi Udugov was credited by some Russians as being responsible for defeating them in the information war that raged between the Chechens and Russians during the First Chechen War. Throughout the conflict he worked closely with foreign journalists covering the war in an effort to disseminate as widely as possible the Chechen side of the conflict.¹⁰⁰⁷

Udugov's success in the information war was acknowledged sometime later in an article written by Kremlin spin-doctor Gleb Pavlovsky. In the aftermath of the events on the American mainland, following September 11, 2001, Pavlovsky identifying himself as a political scientist stated that it was the aim of terrorists to initiate a worldwide war. He linked

¹⁰⁰⁵ Unpublished report on Chechnya by the Director of the Centre for Journalism in Extreme Situations, Oleg Panfilov, destined for the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, p. 8. Sent to me, via e-mail by Oleg Panfilov on the 13th of October, 2003.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Koltsova, O., "News Production in Contemporary Russia: Practices of Power" in *European Journal of Communication*, Volume 16, issue 3, London, Sage Publications, 2001, pp. 315 – 335, p. 332.

¹⁰⁰⁷ Guzman, D., *Chechnya: Rebels use Internet in Propaganda War With Russia*, 30 May, 2000. www.hrea.org/lists/huridocs-tech/markup/msg00516.html, 14 August, 2002.

events and made some comments regarding the First Chechen War and its effect and Russian mass consciousness.

“A strike delivered in one place will not down all the systems. Our mass consciousness is sufficiently stable. It got over numerous strong manipulations. The First Chechen War, when a serious attempt was made to influence the mass consciousness by creating an image of bloody events, included. Movladi Udugov staged his productions staged his productions for the entire Russian mass consciousness rather than Chechnya alone. And was successful enough too.”¹⁰⁰⁸

5.2 UN and NATO Press Operations as a Model

The disastrous results of the First Chechen War humbled Russia and forced her to rethink the military strategy. Their abysmal efforts in trying to maintain control over the flow of information compounded the government's problem. They went into a war without a clear-cut media strategy and ultimately they paid the price.

The assessment of the press strategies employed by the UN and NATO are intended to be a gauge against the originality of the Russian media strategy employed during the Second Chechen War. It has taken the United States some twenty years of development, to arrive at the present tactics. But, has Russia developed its own original means for managing the press, or are they employing or modifying the American model?

5.2.1 A Background

After the loss of public support and the humiliation of the American withdrawal from South Vietnam in 1972, the American authorities began to look for what went ‘wrong.’ And more importantly, to ensure that the same ‘mistake’ is not repeated again. Whether this contention was a genuine belief or just a convenient scapegoat is debatable.

After analysis of the events leading up to 1972, it was deduced that the decline of public

¹⁰⁰⁸ Pavlovsky, G., *Terrorists Aim is World War*, www.strana.ru, 12 September, 2001. JRL #5440, 13 September, 2001.

support in American involvement was a major contributing factor. Those who were blamed for ‘taking away’ the crucial support were the media. The apparently unrestricted filming of the carnage of war and beaming these images into Western living rooms created a mixture of revulsion and anti-war sentiment.

The United States’ governmental apparatus considered the nature of future working relationships between the military and media in future conflicts. An environment with a more controlled release of information and access to the frontlines was envisaged.

It is my intention to briefly investigate how press operations were conducted in the West. Then to compare these techniques with the new information management style used by the Federal forces in the Second Chechen War. For the purposes of comparison, I shall use as examples the 1991 Gulf War and the 1999 NATO campaign against Serbia.

5.2.2 The 1991 Gulf War

Without involving myself in the political complexities, the 1991 Gulf War was fought by a broad coalition of Allied forces against Iraq. The trigger for this war was Iraq’s invasion and annexation of Kuwait. The Allied coalition fought under the United Nations banner.

Since the Vietnam War, technology had enabled the rapid transmission of vast quantities of information by the media. Some in the media industry felt that they were on a ‘quest’ to educate the viewing public. Dr. Morris, controller of BBC Northern Ireland asserted that journalists’ work would involve “putting a context round experience [...] knit together verbal or visual symbols into some semblance of reality.”¹⁰⁰⁹

The 1991 Gulf War events were reported by the international press and worldwide broadcasters. There were two main methods used to disseminate information. News consisted of either ‘instant news’ or commentaries. ‘Instant news’ refers to information, which has been abbreviated and edited to a point bulletin. Commentaries are an in-depth discussion of a key issue (or event) by ‘experts,’ politicians and correspondents.¹⁰¹⁰

¹⁰⁰⁹ Editor Elderidge, J., *Getting the Message: Truth and Power*, London, Routledge, 1993, p. 4.

¹⁰¹⁰ Elderidge, J., op. cit., pp. 10 -11.

Images which, the audience drew from the information supplied during the Gulf War could be categorised in one of several traits. The war was shown as;

- The “war viewed as a ‘high drama.’” As the events unfolded, the situation was packaged to an international audience, in a manner similar to a soap opera.
- “Personalised contest between Hussein and Bush.” This has the effect of making the scenario ‘black and white.’ It is easier to create a situation of perceived binary opposition.
- “A ritual of civil religion that affirms community.” Continuing on from the above mentioned point, this is done in aid of demonising the opposition as the extreme opposite of one’s own ‘good’ traits.
- “Story of American prowess, firmness of American leaders, potency of American technology, and bravery, skill and determination of American soldiers.” These facets introduce an image of superiority over the opposition’s forces. Not only do they have moral ascendancy, but military and technological superiority as well.¹⁰¹¹

During the progression of the conflict, the public was bombarded with a lot of information via satellite communications. Some of this information was at best uninformative and some ‘news’, which was presented, was untrue. Whether these actions were deliberate will not be a matter for discussion in this work. Two of the untrue news stories were sensationalist and alarmist. One report claimed that Iraq had used chemical weapons against Israel. A second report claimed that Israel had retaliated.¹⁰¹² The ‘fog of war’ obscured the extent of untrue stories.

The authorities did not equally rate Media organisations, some had more prestige attached to their name. The broadcaster CNN was the most influential media organisation. President Bush of the United States and President Hussein of Iraq watched CNN. Their reputation was such, that they became a platform for informal diplomatic exchanges.¹⁰¹³ This position potentially placed a lot of power in the hands of this media outlet, giving it an advantage over competitors.

¹⁰¹¹ Gonzalez, A. & Tanno, D. A., Editors, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁰¹² Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁰¹³ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 11.

Information and access to that information was strictly controlled by the United Nations forces. After the bitter lessons, which the American government had learnt in the wake of the Vietnam War, the UN military force hierarchy appeared to take an ‘us versus them’ stance in their relationship with the media. A British journalist, Thomson attempted to obtain a ride with a military convoy in order to get closer to the military action. However, a British Army colonel stopped him and said “get off my land.”¹⁰¹⁴ The incident was ridiculous in itself, an English officer telling an English citizen to “get off his land” in the Arabian desert. But, it certainly illustrates the resolve of the military authorities to maintain the stranglehold of being the sole gatekeeper in the theatre of operations.

The military authorities devised and implemented a cunning strategy, which effectively divided and ruled the media community. Journalists were supplied with information by the military. But, the information that was given to the media was already ‘sanitised’ by the censors. This situation created a dilemma for some journalists, if they were not admitted to the pool and attempted to independently seek information, they were labelled as ‘Unilateralists’ by the authorities.¹⁰¹⁵ This method saw the creation of a system of the ‘haves’ versus the ‘have nots.’ Journalists could be instantly rewarded or punished by their arbitrary inclusion or exclusion from the pool. The outcome may possibly have depended upon the authorities satisfaction, or otherwise, of the content of a journalist’s previously published articles.

“Journalists were formed into ‘pools’ far removed from the battlefield, where military PRs could feed them information. Pool journalists were only granted access to events that were strictly controlled. Censorship was achieved through denial of access to military engagement and news blackouts at the start of the war. All interviews had to be conducted in the presence of military escorts, and all copies and images cleared by the military before transmission.”¹⁰¹⁶

Soon a rift began to develop between journalists admitted to the combat pool and the ‘Unilateralists.’ A situation that was exploited by the authorities. Two incidents in particular highlight a growing division among elements of the media present during the Gulf War.

¹⁰¹⁴ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 12.

¹⁰¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰¹⁶ Louw, P. E., op. cit., p. 178.

- Robert Fisk (Independent) tried to report on the Battle of Khafji. Brad Willis (NBC) reported him to the US Marines. Willis had complained that Fisk's behaviour could jeopardise their continued working (all journalists risked having their accreditation revoked by the authorities).
- A French film crew obtained pictures, which differed from the official pool pictures. They were prepared to supply those pictures to other media outlets. An American TV reporter shouted "Hey! They are not members of the combat pool. Arrest them!"¹⁰¹⁷

By creating this division and resulting binary opposition within the media, the authorities also created a climate in which a 'cat and mouse' game was played out between the military and the 'Unilateralists.' This particular game had a certain risk for the journalists involved, they could lose their accreditation and be under threat of expulsion from the country. Another inescapable point, was the fact that journalists relied on the military for information and protection.¹⁰¹⁸ From a professional point of view, it would be hard to assess the effects this could potentially have on the objectivity of reporting.

The 'war' to win over the media's audience was not limited to restricting which information could and could not be seen, but an attempt to 'taint' the legitimacy of information released by the opposing side. It was a concerted attempt to take the moral high-ground, aided by the creation by binary opposition - UN Forces (good) versus Iraqi Forces (bad).¹⁰¹⁹

Generally, information which derived from the Alliance never had its accuracy or authenticity questioned. But, information supplied by Iraq was rigorously examined by other journalists and treated with suspicion by the public.

To illustrate this point I shall use an item aired on *ITV*, on 26 January, 1991. The footage in question was on the effects of the allied bombing of Iraq.

"The pictures were supplied by the Ministry of Information [...] as propaganda it graphically illustrates the suffering [...] (the pictures are) being used as a weapon [...] as a means to influence world opinion [...]"

¹⁰¹⁷ Elderidge, J., op. cit., pp. 12 - 13.

¹⁰¹⁸ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁰¹⁹ Gonzalez, A. & Tanno, D. A., Editors, op. cit., pp. 14 - 15.

Iraqi supplied material draws natural suspicions about its authenticity [...] These people are claimed by Iraq to be recent victims of the bombing, but they have not been independently verified as such.”¹⁰²⁰

With such open scepticism displayed so openly to the viewing public it was little wonder that the viewing public treated Iraqi sourced material with such suspicion. By planting the seed of doubt in the public’s mind, stories that did not follow the official line were dismissed as being Iraqi propaganda.¹⁰²¹ This situation ensured that public support for a ‘just’ war was maintained (in Western nations, at least).

To maintain the Western hegemony in the ongoing information war between the opposing forces, a new, specific language was created to emphasise the righteousness of the allied cause (and the ‘evil’ intent of Iraq, embodied by the persona of Saddam Hussein). A language was needed to influence public opinion and perception of the war. Consequently, a new event specific vocabulary came into being.

An overwhelming emphasis was placed on the technological superiority of the Alliances weapons over those used by Iraq. Numerous references to the use of ‘smart bombs’ created a perception of their widespread use. An inference that may be deduced from this, is a surgically executed aerial bombing campaign. Only 7% of the 88, 500 tonnes of aerial ordinance used during ‘Desert Storm’ were smart bombs. Some 70% of the total figure missed the intended target.¹⁰²²

The vulgarity and horror of modern warfare was also sanitised. For instance, video footage of Iraqi soldiers being killed by bombs was never released. Carnage as witnessed by American viewers during the Vietnam War era was absent in the Gulf War.¹⁰²³ This had the effect of ‘softening’ the war, making the concept more palatable for the public, by removing potentially disturbing images, which might cause them to reconsider the necessity of waging war.

During hostilities, the military authorities used two reasons to legitimise their censoring of information conveyed by the media. The reasons given for banning were;

¹⁰²⁰ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁰²¹ Ibid.

¹⁰²² Elderidge, J., op. cit., pp. 13 - 14.

- endangering the lives of service personnel.
- indirectly or adversely affecting troop morale.¹⁰²⁴

These parameters were liberally interpreted by the authorities, which used them as a means of censorship. To illustrate this point, the media were not allowed to film the flag draped coffins returning to American soil, on the grounds of the second point. However, a more likely effect would possibly be a waning of public support for the war.¹⁰²⁵

Philip Knightley, a reporter aptly summed up the intent and effects of the new language, employed by the UN;

“A soft new language was brought into being to soften the reality of war. Bombing military targets in the heart of cities was called ‘denying the enemy infra-structure.’ People were ‘soft-targets.’ Saturation bombing was ‘laying down a carpet.’ The idea was to suggest that hardly any people were involved in warfare, only machines. This explains the emphasis at Alliance press briefings on the damage ‘our’ machines have caused to ‘their’ machines, and the reluctance of briefing officers to discuss casualties - on either side.”¹⁰²⁶

The way in which information was managed during the 1991 Gulf War, was the successful culmination of some twenty years of fine-tuning by the government and the military. Information was carefully filtered, to take away the unpleasantness of war to make the concept more appealing to the public. Use of force was justified in terms of humanitarianism, to save people from suffering, to enforce international law and to bring a regional ‘bully-boy’ to account for his crimes.

By using a different tactic, a fully conceived plan to manage information from the conflict’s onset, the nature of media coverage changed. Media coverage during the Vietnam War generated much public debate which, eventually impacted upon

¹⁰²³ Elderidge, J., op. cit., pp. 13 - 14.

¹⁰²⁴ Croteau, D. & Hoynes, W., *Media / Society: Industries, Images and Audiences*, Second Edition, Thousand Oaks, Pine Forge Press, 2000, p. 113.

¹⁰²⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰²⁶ Elderidge, J., op. cit., p. 14.

governmental policy, i.e. the American withdrawal. The Gulf War media coverage performed a different function, what was supplied was not designed to comprehensively inform the public on the conflict's progress, but to give the appearance of informing.

The "Gulf War story helped to shift political focus from debate to consensus and from protest to rallying behind the troops."¹⁰²⁷ Through the use of this kind of public appeal the government was able to generate patriotic fervour. Ultimately, the conflict was far removed from the American public's experience and for many, possibly even irrelevant.

5.2.3 NATO's 1999 Kosovo Operation

Russian foreign policy analyst, Vladimir Baranovsky noted Russia's response to the events, which unfolded in 1999;

"It is quite remarkable that Russia's indignation with respect to NATO military operations in Yugoslavia was directed predominantly, indeed almost exclusively against the United States - as if the Europeans did not participate in them at all. The fact that the EU supported the war against Yugoslavia and even contributed to it politically, economically and militarily, passed almost unnoticed in Russia [...] The European states involved in this campaign were basically viewed as operating under American pressure."¹⁰²⁸

NATO's media strategy was absolutely meticulously planned down to the smallest detail. As Colonel P. J. Crowley, spokesman for the United States National Security Council put it, "you have to plan your media strategy with as much attention as you plan your military strategy."¹⁰²⁹

Robert Lichter from the Centre for Media and Public Affairs, Washington noted possible

¹⁰²⁷ Gonzalez, A. & Tanno, D. A., Editors, op. cit., p. 13.

¹⁰²⁸ Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 417.

¹⁰²⁹ Knightly, P., *The First Casualty: The War Correspondent as Hero and Myth Maker From the Crimea to*

reasons for NATO's 'hard sell' to the public. "To sell a war in a democracy when you are not attacked, you have to demonise the leader or show that there are humanitarian reasons for going in. [...] George Bush demonised Saddam Hussein. We did something of the same with Milosevic."¹⁰³⁰ A twin strategy involving the creation of binary opposition and some 'just' causes for waging the conflict began to evolve.

American academic Noam Chomsky gave a possible reason why the conflict in Kosovo occurred in the first instance. "With the Soviet deterrent in decline, the Cold War victors are more free to exercise their will under a cloak of good intentions but in pursuit of interests that have a familiar ring outside the realm of enlightenment."¹⁰³¹

Wartime news could be broken down into two distinct categories; news of the fighting and justification for the fighting.¹⁰³² The main justification given for NATO's intervention is acting to stop Serbian aggression directed at Albanian Kosovars, through massacres, rape and eviction.

Dr. Jamie Shea was NATO's spokesman during the Kosovo Crisis (March - June 1999). Shea and a group of NATO officers were able to gain a 'moral ascendancy' over the press corps by the way briefs were conducted. They gave the briefs from a high standing podium and were equipped with a vast array of technical apparatus, to provide a visual aid to their briefings. Journalists sat below the podium in rows of seats (as in a school classroom). The journalists had to attract the attention of the podium in order to ask questions.¹⁰³³ This situation gave a large psychological advantage to Shea and the other briefing officers.

A certain degree of cynicism has been directed towards Shea's role. Alistair Horne, a war historian stated that Shea relayed "the pre-digested spin that had been chewed over at length by a committee of NATO ruminants." Some war correspondents referred to Shea as "NATO's propagandist-in-chief."¹⁰³⁴

NATO had learned to utilise the power of perception to create their own reality, to great

Kosovo, London, Prion Books, 2000.

¹⁰³⁰ Knightley, P., op. cit., p. 502.

¹⁰³¹ Duffield, M., op. cit., p. 33.

¹⁰³² Knightley, P., op. cit., p. 502.

¹⁰³³ Knightley, P., op. cit., p. 503.

advantage. Lt. Colonel Nick Clissitt, a British Army press officer clearly relayed this sentiment, “we have learnt that perception as just as important as reality.”¹⁰³⁵

Another British officer, the former commander of the UN forces in Bosnia, General Sir Michael Rose, was frustrated and irritated at the level of ‘new speak’ in NATO’s administration. He complained bitterly that at NATO “rhetoric has taken over from reality.”¹⁰³⁶ Complaints concerning NATO information management of the Kosovo campaign were not limited to military personnel.

Kosovo was one of the most widely covered conflicts in the 20th century. When NATO’s ground forces entered the territory, some 2700 media people accompanied them (during the Vietnam War the peak was 500 correspondents).¹⁰³⁷

It was also one of the most secretive campaigns fought. Alistair Horne noted that “Kosovo [...] turned out to be the most secretive campaign in living memory. We were given lots of material but no information.”¹⁰³⁸ From Horne’s comment it seems as though NATO swamped the media with numerous irrelevant accounts and information. This would bypass any possible criticism accusing NATO of withholding information. Additionally, such a vast flow of information would make researching the validity of this information difficult.

There were several unusual aspects to the prosecution of the conflict, which did not always follow the conventional norms;

- No war was declared.
- The Serbian Information Office remained open in London throughout the hostilities. At times, office representatives made appearances on British TV.
- Stated aim from the conflict’s outset was not to defeat the Yugoslavian armed forces, but to ‘degrade’ them.
- Most action taken by high-altitude aerial bombing.
- No NATO troops killed, Yugoslavian army suffered only light casualties. But, 10, 000 -

¹⁰³⁴ Knightley, P., op. cit., p. 502.

¹⁰³⁵ Knightley, P., op. cit., p. 503.

¹⁰³⁶ Knightley, P., op. cit., p. 504.

¹⁰³⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰³⁸ Ibid.

15, 000 civilians killed.¹⁰³⁹

These aspects to the Kosovo crisis gave an almost surreal impression. Publicly, the Serbs were portrayed as enemies of civilised society. Yet, the Information office was allowed to continue its operations uninterrupted. NATO's objective was not to defeat Yugoslav forces stationed in Kosovo, but to 'degrade' them. Was this term considered more palatable for the Western public's consumption, because of possible negative connotations associated with the word defeat? The nature of the conflict, principally high-altitude bombing, removed any human connection with the conflict. Images from the fighting consist of hazy black and white film taken by a gun-camera at high altitude. This has the effect of dehumanising the 'horrors' of war and sanitising the unpleasant aspects inherent in warfare.

As in the 1991 Gulf War, military authorities were able to divide the media community and retain control as the gatekeeper. Veteran war correspondent Robert Fisk identified several types of journalist working on the Kosovo story;

- 'Sheep' - Blindly followed NATO.
- 'Frothers' - Had "convinced themselves of the justice of the war and the wickedness of the other side."
- Independent- travelled to Belgrade and reported the Serbian side of the story. They were a source of irritation to the frothers.¹⁰⁴⁰

NATO utilised a high level of emotional rhetoric and imagery to demonise their opponents. This emotionally charged material was used as a pretext and the maintenance of military action against Serbia. Some of the unsubstantiated claims made include the use of "systematic rape" and "rape camps" by the Yugoslavian armed forces. The few journalists who investigated the validity of these claims concluded that rape did occur, but it was not organised and not large scale.¹⁰⁴¹

The military propaganda machine also tried to revive horrors from recent history and tie these undesirable traits to the Serbs. Images from the Nazi past were used to further demonise

¹⁰³⁹ Knightley, P., op. cit., p. 505.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Knightley, P., op. cit., pp. 505 - 506.

¹⁰⁴¹ Knightley, P., op. cit., pp. 509 - 512.

the Serbs. Terms such as “Gestapo,” “Auschwitz style furnaces” and the “holocaust” were used to bring about NATO’s desired image of the Serbian people in the public’s mind.¹⁰⁴² Although the two events (the Holocaust and Kosovo) have little in common, the earlier stated fact that perception is more important than reality holds true. If you tell a lie often enough, eventually it will come to be held as fact.

Politicians joined the fray as well, British Prime Minister Tony Blair painted a simplistic picture in order to justify British involvement. “It is a battle between Good and Evil, between civilisation and barbarity.”¹⁰⁴³ If someone was to oppose British involvement after such a speech, they would be left open to various criticism for their stance. Accusations such as being anti-humanitarian, anti-civil society or an apologist for Serbian aggression to name but a few of such possibilities.

Tony Blair attempted to create the perception of NATO taking the moral high ground against the Serbs, he stated that NATO was “fighting not for territory but for values.”¹⁰⁴⁴ This implies that no ulterior motives existed and NATO was only enforcing law and order in a new wave of humanitarianism. The moral value aspect to the justification for the conflict was expanded upon by British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook.

“There are now two Europes competing for the soul of the continent. One still follows the race ideology that blighted our continent under the fascists. The other emerged fifty years ago out from behind the shadow of the Second World War. The conflict between the international community and Yugoslavia is the struggle between the two Europes. Which side prevails will determine what sort of continent we live in. That is why we must win.”¹⁰⁴⁵

Robin Cook’s rhetoric is clearly structured, along the lines of binary opposition. Irrelevant, but highly emotive content is entered into his commentary, which revives potent past symbolism of the representation of evil (the Nazis). The ‘contest’ is billed as an almost

¹⁰⁴² Knightley, P., op. cit., p. 507.

¹⁰⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Duffield, M., *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security*, London, Zed Books, 2001, p. 41.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Duffield, M., op. cit., p. 41.

apocalyptic struggle for the very survival of civil society against the abyss. In reality, a confederation greatly weakened by years of civil war was outmatched in terms of manpower and firepower. NATO's resources far outclassed those that could be mustered by Yugoslavia.

Several different methods existed, utilised either separately or in combination, to try and discredit information that contradicted the version offered by the NATO authorities. NATO wanted to retain moral ascendancy in the public's perception, this would make politicians more receptive to seeing the campaign to its ultimate conclusion and on NATO's terms. Some issues existed and arose through the course of events which NATO wanted to see removed or at the very least marginalized to the periphery of public discussion. These issues included; NATO casualties, civilian casualties and damage to civil infrastructure.

When news of civilians, which had been bombed by NATO, reached the organisations bureaucracy they rigorously denied the report. An American officer then suggested that Serbian artillery had deliberately targeted Albanian refugees. The stories and accusations persisted, during a briefing Shea urged reporters to seek the facts and not to be led astray by their Serbian hosts. After some time NATO admitted to killing the civilians, but said that the Yugoslavian army had used the refugees as a human shield to protect a command post. A few journalists investigated the incident further, but were unable to substantiate NATO's claims.¹⁰⁴⁶

NATO and Yugoslavian statistics on collateral damage differed greatly from each other. From NATO's perspective the campaign had been prosecuted with the utmost precision and with minimal collateral damage. Serbian reports stated the contrary, suggesting widespread and indiscriminate damage.

The main gist of NATO's argument revolved around the premise that some 10, 000 sorties had been flown during the period March - June 1999. During this time "only 20 instances of collateral damage" occurred. This figure was stated as being acceptable.¹⁰⁴⁷

The figure of collateral damage given by the Serbian authorities was completely different from NATO's account. They said that 33 hospitals and 340 schools had been hit during the

¹⁰⁴⁶ Knightley, P., op. cit., pp. 511 - 513.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Knightley, P., op. cit., p. 514.

course of the war.¹⁰⁴⁸ Exactly what constitutes as collateral damage may vary between NATO and Serbia, the definition is somewhat inexact.

The true figure of damage to civilian infrastructure probably lies somewhere between the two sets of figures. Certainly, the Serbs would be in a better position to assess the true extent of the damage from the ground, whether they would accurately report these figures are a matter of contention. Professor Anthony Cordesman, an American military analyst asserted that there had been hundreds of instances of collateral damage, some of which was minor. He added that “lying with numbers does not really help NATO.”¹⁰⁴⁹

One of the pretexts of waging the action in Kosovo was because of ‘ethnic cleansing’ allegedly perpetrated by the Serbs on the ethnic Albanians. Originally, the American State Department gave an estimate of 500, 000 killed in such operations. After the war’s conclusion this figure was revised down to 10, 000. These figures were unable to be verified.¹⁰⁵⁰

Generally speaking, the media neglected to highlight inconsistencies in NATO’s story or offer evidence that contradicted NATO. As media and public interest waned in the aftermath of the aerial campaign, some 240, 000 Serbs were driven out of Kosovo by their Albanian neighbours. This reverse variant of ethnic cleansing went largely unnoticed in the Western media, largely relegated to the back pages.¹⁰⁵¹

5.3 The Second Chechen War, 1999 -

When fighting in the Second Chechen War broke out in August 1999, most Russian media outlets cover the war in either a positive or neutral manner. Chechen fighters were commonly branded as ‘bandits’ or ‘terrorists.’ The owners of the private media may have hoped to be rewarded for their support, as was the case when they supported Yeltsin’s re-election bid in 1996. There was no evidence of any real sense of pluralism in the press at this stage.

Unlike the First Chechen War, the government went into the conflict with a deliberate media strategy. The lessons of the previous conflict had been learnt. During an interview Putin

¹⁰⁴⁸ Knightley, P., op. cit., p. 514.

¹⁰⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Knightley, P., op. cit., pp. 523 - 526.

confirmed that the Gulf War media strategy had helped to shape Russian media policy in the Second Chechen War.¹⁰⁵²

Mass media outlets operating in contemporary Chechnya can be divided into three different categories; *state, non-governmental* and *separatist*. The following are a summary of a large proportion of media that are active in Chechnya, which can be found on the *Centre for Journalism in Extreme Situations* website (www.cjes.ru – *The Press and the Chechen Republic*, December 2002). The editor in chief is given, along with the print run and the focus of distribution/dissemination.

State Mass Media: Newspapers

- *Vesti Respubliki* (M. Khadzhiyev, 10, 000) – nationwide weekly
- *Daimokhk* (L. Satuyeva, 10, 000) – nationwide (published in Chechen)
- *Vesti Groznogo* (Sh. Magomayev) – Grozny
- *Gums* (Kh. Borkhadzhiyev, 7000) – Gudermesski district
- *Marsho* (S. Khozhaliyev, 10, 000) – inter-regional general news, Urus-Martanovski district
- *Terskaya Nov* (M. Alazurova) – Shyolkovski district
- *Orga* (A. Barzanukayev, 2000) – Argun
- *Terkyist* (A. Dukhayev) – Nadterechny district
- *Zama* (M. Ilyasov, 7000) – Shalinski district
- *Terskaya Pravda* (A. Damayeva, 5000) – Naurski district
- *Iman* (R. Ezerkhanov) – Achkhoy-Martanovski district
- *Zov Zemli* (A. Sagapiov, 15, 000) – Groznenski district
- *Khalkan Dosh* (Sh. Sarakayev, 10, 000) – Nozhai-Yurtovski and Vedenski districts
- *Vozrozhdenije* (L. Andiyeva) – youth newspaper
- *Za Neftyannyje Kadry* (R. Lalayev) – specialised newspaper of the *Grozny Oil Institute*.

¹⁰⁵¹ Knightley, P., op. cit., pp. 516 - 517.

¹⁰⁵² Ekecrantz, J., "Introduction: Post-Communism and Global Culture" in Ekecrantz, J. & Olofsson, K., Editors, op. cit., p. 24.

State Mass Media: Magazines

- *StelaIad* (I. Dzhannaraliyev) – children’s magazine
- *Vainakh* (M. Berdukayev) – arts and literature
- *Orga* (S. Yusupova) – arts and literature

State Mass Media: Other

- *Grozny-Inform* (A. Batalov) – information and photo agency
- *State Radio of the Chechen Republic* (A. Davletukayev) – resumed broadcasting on 12 November, 2002
- *Chechnya Svobodnaya* – started operating in Spring 2000

All newspapers are state-run and are financed by the government. The newspapers are published on a weekly basis; nationwide press are published on eight A3 pages and regional press are published on four sheets of A3. They are all distributed for free. According to CJES, the real number of copies does not necessarily correspond to the official print run and is often lower. *ORT*, *RTR* and *NTV* can all be received in Chechnya as they have their own transmitters based there.

Independent Mass Media: Newspapers

- *Groznenski Rabochiy* (Musa Muradov, 2000) – oldest newspaper in Chechnya, published since 1918 and became independent in 1995. Published on a weekly basis the black and white newspaper consists of four A2 sheets. Publishing moved to Ingushetia with the outbreak of hostilities in 1999. Regular publishing of the paper stopped in Spring 2001 due to lack of money. But, to start publishing on a regular basis from 2003 due to receiving a subsidy for further operations.
- *Obyedinyonnaya Gazeta* ((Mansur Magomadov) – united several Chechen newspapers published in Moscow. Since 2002 has been published in Chechnya. A black and white newspaper that consists of eight A3 sheets and is published irregularly.

The independence of these newspapers are tenuous at best. Newspapers do not make profits

in Chechnya. This problem combined with the low purchasing power of Chechens and competition from state-run newspapers (free of charge) causes many problems. The newspapers that exist are often published thanks to government subsidies, which can be perceived as coming with strings attached.

Separatist Mass Media: Newspapers

- *Ichkeria* (3000) – newspaper of Maskhadov’s government. Consists of 12 sheets in A4 format
- *Ichkeria* (2nd version, 3000) - newspaper of Maskhadov’s government. Consists of four sheets in A4
- *Sign of Jihad* – wahhabi newspaper printed on 16 sheets in A4 format
- *Way of Jihad* - wahhabi newspaper printed on 16 sheets in A4 format
- *Mekh-Khel* (10, 000) - printed on 16 sheets in A4 format
- *Varis* (2000) – printed in Chechen language on four sheets in A3 format
- *Kavkaz-Centre*, *Chechenpress*, *chechen.org*, *Daimokh* and *Kavkazski Vestnik* – Internet news agencies

Mekh-Khel and *Varis* call for an independent Chechnya and are anti-Russian, rather than Ichkerian in their views. These newspapers are produced ‘illegally’ and refer to the Russians as ‘aggressors’ and ‘occupiers.’ The pro-Moscow administration are referred to as ‘traitors.’ The papers are published on a weekly basis and distributed throughout Chechnya. Rebel sources have said that bribes as low as US\$2 can get them past Russian checkpoints.

As the war dragged on, some media changed their stance. The state owned TV channels, *ORT* and *RTR* continued to support the so-called ‘anti-terrorist operation.’¹⁰⁵³ Pro-Kremlin media reported the steady progress of the campaign and the high morale of the troops. These optimistic images were tarnished in November 1999 when *NTV* and *TV Tsentr* openly questioned official casualty figures and offered more pessimistic reports of the campaign.¹⁰⁵⁴

With the presidential elections looming in March 2000, the government sought to curb media

¹⁰⁵³ The Kremlin has referred to the campaign as an anti-terrorist operation, to use the term war requires certain protocol and obligations to be fulfilled.

¹⁰⁵⁴ Belin, L., “Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 336.

criticism by using pressure tactics. Any bad publicity could have the potential to jeopardise success in the elections, which may have proved costly for Yeltsin after his retirement from politics. If Yeltsin's chosen successor was not chosen, the newly elected president may have decided to bring Yeltsin to account for any discrepancies during his period in office. Where as an heir would be bound by a feeling of moral obligation to overlook any such irregularities which may have been committed by their patron.

Government agencies began to act against 'rouge' elements of the media, and 'reliable' people were appointed to key governmental posts to ensure a more predictable outcome. Loyal 'crusaders' from the Yeltsin era occupied two critical positions. They have proved to be very diligent in ensuring that the Kremlin's viewpoint is the sole truth.

Mikhail Lesin was appointed as the minister of press and information in July 1999, one month before hostilities occurred in the break-away republic.¹⁰⁵⁵ In mid-January 2000, Mikhail Lesin summoned the head of Ekho Moskvi radio (part of the *Media-Most* group) and relayed to him his agitation. The source of conflict was over an interview, which the radio station broadcast, with the rebel Chechen spokesman, Movladi Udugov.¹⁰⁵⁶ An earlier call by the Press Ministry had forbade any Russian media organisation from relaying the Chechen rebel's point-of-view. Now, the Kremlin began to enforce this arbitrary demand.

Putin appointed a trusted member of the Yeltsin administration, Sergei Yastrzhembsky to be in charge of managing all government information regarding the Chechen campaign. Upon assuming his position Yastrzhembsky made his position very clear, what he expected of the media community. In an interview he stated "when the nation mobilises its forces to solve some task, that imposes obligations on everyone, including the media."¹⁰⁵⁷ Those journalists who did not fulfil their expected civic duty found gaining access to the frontlines more problematic.

At the same time these key people began to put the pressure on the media, they needed a test case which could be used as an example. Andrei Babitsky of *Radio Liberty* had often quoted Chechen military sources in his stories, which angered the Russian authorities.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 333.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Belin, L., "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media" in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 336.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Ibid.

In January 2000, Babitsky disappeared for a period of two weeks. He ‘mysteriously’ reappeared in the hands of Russian authorities, and was promptly exchanged for Russian POWs. He was handed to Chechens who were pro-Moscow, which was not explained at the time. Babitsky was given false documents and sent to Dagestan. He was later arrested on charges of using false documentation in July 2000. He has since been prohibited from speaking about the nature of what has happened to him during this period.¹⁰⁵⁸

The deputy media minister, Mikhail Seslavinsky put an end to any hopes of pluralistic debate on the Second Chechen War in March 2000, by warning journalists that they broke the law on terrorism by quoting rebel Chechen sources.¹⁰⁵⁹ This act shattered any pre-conception about freedom of the press and clearly defined the expected ‘rules of the game,’ which were now clearly decided by the Kremlin.

Government strategy in the Second Chechen War has involved actively constructing an official version of events in Chechnya combined with the setting of strict conditions for the dissemination of this information by the media. This can be seen in actions such as the establishment combat pools. The idea was borrowed from the 1991 Gulf War, where it is hard for journalists to obtain information from sources other than the press pool.¹⁰⁶⁰ By difficulty, I not only refer to the ‘spoon feeding’ of information by the governmental press centre, but also accessibility to the war zone due to risk of death or injury (brought about from either side involved in the conflict). An important point to note, with regard to the accreditation scheme for foreign mass media representatives, the Russian Foreign Ministry simply denied visas to many of those that had covered the First Chechen War.¹⁰⁶¹

The focal point of the military’s frustrations at the lack of resolution to the Chechen conflict spilled over into the media once more in July 2001. Anatoly Kvashnin, Armed Forces Chief, criticised reporters for focusing purely on ‘bad’ news.

“You are not doing a very good job and therefore we have decided to set up

¹⁰⁵⁸ Belin, L., “Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., pp. 336 - 337.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Belin, L., “Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media” in Brown, A., Editor, op. cit., p. 337.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Koltsova, O., “News Production in Contemporary Russia: Practices of Power” in *European Journal of Communication*, Volume 16, issue 3, London, Sage Publications, 2001, pp. 315 – 335, p. 332.

¹⁰⁶¹ Panfilov, O., *Failure of Information Policy in Chechnya. Official Sources Replace Objectivity With Lies*, Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 11 August, 2003 (BBC Monitoring).

two (media outlets) of our own. [...] We will have a military television station broadcasting here [...] Why are you always so eager to report on military operations? [...] You are working for the sake of war and we are working for the sake of peace.”¹⁰⁶²

Kvashnin’s comments seem to highlight an annoyance over attempts to portray the ‘anti-terrorist’ operation in Chechnya as a successful effort at reconstructing civil infrastructure in Chechnya rather than an on-going effort to suppress rebel activity. His words give the image that the federal forces in Chechnya are engaged in a mission of peace, whereas the media are attempting to stir discontent and conflict.

Officials also talked of further limiting journalists’ ability to travel in Chechnya. Head of the Interior Ministry Press Centre in Khankala, Fyodor Asalkhanov stated that journalists would be, from then on accompanied by press service officials. Asalkhanov refused to be drawn to the question, as to who would decide what was newsworthy or not and gave a somewhat illusive answer.

“We usually agree on this. If our interests coincide, then we go together with the journalists and prepare material on the relevant subject. [...] As far as we, Interior Ministry people, are concerned, if journalists accredited in Khankala prepare materials on police-related topics, they should leave the town accompanied by a member of the staff of the Interior Ministry’s Press Centre.”¹⁰⁶³

Asalkhanov’s comments would seem to indicate that greater restrictions on movement, on top of the current accreditation scheme lie ahead for journalists working in Chechnya. The issues surrounding the remark on police matters are also very open to interpretation. A ‘government friendly’ classification of the suppression of rebel activity in and around the Chechen Republic is that it is a ‘Police’ operation. Thereby rendering the requirement for a press service representative to accompany journalists almost mandatory. The fact that the

JRL #7287, 13 August, 2003.

¹⁰⁶² *Russian Army Cracks Down on Media in Chechnya*, Reuters, from NTV story, 26 July, 2001.

JRL #5367, 27 July, 2001.

¹⁰⁶³ *Russian Army Cracks Down on Media in Chechnya*, Reuters, from NTV story, 26 July, 2001.

JRL #5367, 27 July, 2001.

press centre in Khankala has only three cars at its disposal, only one of which can be driven out of town¹⁰⁶⁴ is another important factor. This greatly restricts the number of journalists in the field at any one given time, which makes them a lot easier to monitor and control.

The events of September 11, 2001 in the USA provided Putin with a unique and valuable opportunity to mute international protest over Russian actions in the break-away republic. In a televised address to Russia Putin made some strong statements on the situation.

“As we see it, Chechen developments ought not to be regarded as outside the context of efforts against international terrorism. [...] As I also acknowledge, there are people in Chechnya to this day who took up arms under the impact of false or misrepresented values. Now that the entire civilised world has determined its stance on the anti-terror cause, it is the duty of every person to determine his or her stance too. The Chechen fighters who have not surrendered to this day also must have their chance to do so. That is why I call all paramilitaries and self-styled political activists urgently to sever whatever contacts with international terrorists and their organisations [...].”¹⁰⁶⁵

In November 2001 Yastrzhembsky revealed casualty statistics for the federal forces in the two years of fighting. 3438 servicemen were reported killed and 11661 reported as being wounded.¹⁰⁶⁶ These figures seem to be relatively costly for the Russians, considering that no end of the conflict is in sight yet. Journalist Dmitri Muratov of *Novaya Gazeta* has suggested that the war continues because it is in the interests of the military leadership. He states that the Generals are making profit from ‘business’ enterprises in Chechnya (such as oil) and a successful conclusion to the conflict will see an end to these money making schemes.¹⁰⁶⁷

On 17 February, 2003 the Northern Caucasus military district headquarters released casualty figures. According to the figures 4739 servicemen were killed, 13, 108 wounded and 29 listed

¹⁰⁶⁴ *Russian Army Cracks Down on Media in Chechnya*, Reuters, from NTV story, 26 July, 2001. JRL #5367, 27 July, 2001.

¹⁰⁶⁵ *Putin Determines Russian Stance on Anti-terror Cause*, RIA Novosti, 24 September, 2001. JRL #5458, 25 September, 2001.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Muratov, D., *Generals Without a Colonel*, *Novaya Gazeta*, No. 81, November 2001. JRL #5534, 9 November, 2001.

¹⁰⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

as Missing in Action for the period 1999 - 2002. Defence Ministry personnel accounted for 2752 of the dead, 6471 wounded and 27 listed as missing. 1257 servicemen from Chechnya were in military hospitals at the time of the report (February 2003), most of them wounded.¹⁰⁶⁸ Some level of suspicion is linked to these figures being accurate as they are released by the government and may be considered as being too low. The above-mentioned report from ITAR-TASS was later retracted and lowered the casualty figures to 4572 killed and 15, 549 wounded after the Ministry of Defence issued an official denial report.¹⁰⁶⁹

An Army News Agency report dated 26 March, 2002 gave an official quote of the number of rebels fighting for the Chechen separatists that had been killed. The figure given for the number of rebel fighters killed was put at 12, 760 since the beginning of the conflict on 8 August, 1999.¹⁰⁷⁰

The official statistics have been questioned, on the basis that they are too low. Valentina Melnikova, chief of the *Soldiers' Mothers Committee*, which bases its figures on information gained from wounded troops and soldiers' relatives estimates 14, 000 federal troops were killed in the 1994-96 war (official figures were 5500 dead and 700 missing) and another 11, 000 killed in the current conflict. To put these figures into perspective, the approximately decade long Soviet involvement in Afghanistan cost 13, 000 dead and 35, 000 wounded.¹⁰⁷¹ In addition to the military deaths and wounded statistics, non-combatants have also suffered significantly, some 600, 000 have been made homeless by the conflict in Chechnya.¹⁰⁷²

In March 2001 a statement was signed by a group of reporters from the local branch of state-owned media, GTRK, complaining about biased coverage and only giving one side of the story. This protest action was the first of its kind, which has been recorded in the Chechen conflict. The journalist's statement was clear and concise. Part of the statement went as follows:

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Russian Troops Casualties in Chechnya Exceed 4700 in 2002*, Prime-TASS, 17 February, 2003. JRL #7065, 17 February, 2003.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Venyavsky, S., *ITAR-TASS Retracts Casualty Report*, AP, 18 February, 2003. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/02/18/014.html, 18 February, 2003.

¹⁰⁷⁰ *Russia's 'New' Strategy in Chechnya: An Update*, Analyst.

RAS Research and Analytical Supplement, JRL #6191, 18 April, 2002.

¹⁰⁷¹ Venyavsky, S., *ITAR-TASS Retracts Casualty Report*, AP, 18 February, 2003. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/02/18/014.html, 18 February, 2003.

¹⁰⁷² Bagrov, Y., AP, 18 June, 2003.

“Since the very start of the anti-terrorist campaign in Chechnya, the Russian media, in particular *ORT* and *RTR* television, purposefully kept quiet about the true number of civilian casualties. [...] The truth, even if it is bitter and not always pleasant, must appear on our TV screens.”¹⁰⁷³

The significance of the slanted coverage was explained by some polling agency representatives. Pavel Pavin of the *Public Opinion Foundation* commented that; “every terrorist act [...] boosts the warmonger spirit.” But, “every time Russian troops seem to fail sparks a fall in the ranks of the war’s supporters,” explained Lev Gudkov of *VTsIOM*.¹⁰⁷⁴

The first public signs that the war may be starting to be considered a liability for the Kremlin also came in November 2001. No immediate response came forth from the Chechen rebel side to Putin’s September 24, 2001 call for finding ways to disarm rebel formations and to reintegrate them into civilian life. The presidential envoy for the southern region in Russia, Viktor Kazantsev announced to a news conference that he held a two-hour meeting with Akhmed Zakayev the Chechen representative (of Aslan Maskhadov, the former Chechen President) near Moscow.¹⁰⁷⁵ However Kazantsev dismissed the rebels’ commitment to ending the conflict, describing Zakayev’s proposals as being;

“[...] more like slogans and stereotypes. [...] If they are not going to propose conversations of a theoretical nature, then it is not clear if there is any point in continuing [...] Let us first wait for real, concrete proposals.”¹⁰⁷⁶

At the same time as the Russian government and the rebels were meeting to discuss a possible solution to the conflict the government downplayed the possibility of another ‘Khasavyurt Agreement’ (which ended the First Chechen War). One of the points in the Russians’ favour was the declining international opposition to the Russian military

www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/06/18/012-print.html, 27 June, 2003.

¹⁰⁷³ *Russian Journalists Protest State Censorship*, www.russiatoday.com/news.php3?id=322101, 27 March, 2001.

European Journalism Centre News Media Digest, 28 March, 2001.

¹⁰⁷⁴ *Russian State Television Ensures Lopsided View of Chechen War*, AFP, 2 October, 2002.

JRL #7350, 3 October, 2002.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Shukshin, A., *Drop Slogans, Do Business, Kremlin Tells Chechens*, Reuters, 19 November, 2001.

JRL #5556, 20 November, 2001.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

involvement in Chechnya. Russian Security Council Secretary Vladimir Rushailo summed up the federal position and the impact of the international community's change of position.

“The only issue currently being discussed is the disarmament of the rebels and the termination of combat operations against federal forces. [...] The rebels and mercenaries fighting in Chechnya now find it extremely difficult to complain to the international community about the federal authorities illegal actions. I must say that the leaders of very many countries have changed their attitude to the developments in Chechnya, especially after the world realised the importance of combating international terrorism. [...] Many are departing from double standards in assessing the terrorists. It is a serious change which we assess very positively.”¹⁰⁷⁷

The website www.pravda.ru announced a victory for the Russian government over how Chechnya was framed by the outside world in January 2002. *Pravda.ru* stated that an *RIA Novosti* correspondent had reported an official spokesman for the US Department of State, Richard Boucher as saying that a link between *Al Qaeda* and the Chechen rebels did exist and that the US described the situation in Chechnya as Russia's internal problem.¹⁰⁷⁸

Russian journalist and author of *Odnako* news programme, Mikhail Leontiev described a possible reason behind the ‘change of heart’ by the Americans.

“Russia has finally understood how to talk about Chechnya with the West. We know the way to send Europe and the rest of the world a message to be read in the letters they understand.”¹⁰⁷⁹

However, is this simply a matter of the Russian authorities becoming more skilled and competent in political communications and PR in an international context? Certainly an influx of foreign PR expertise has helped Russian authorities in the past, such as with Boris Yeltsin's presidential campaign in 1996. But, a convergence of interests between Russia and the West,

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Russia Appreciates West's Change of Heart on Chechnya – Security Chief*, Interfax, 22 November, 2001. JRL #5561, 22 November, 2001.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Litvinovich, D. (Translated by Gousseva, M.), *West Admits: Chechnya is Russia's Internal Problem*, www.pravda.ru, 4 January, 2002. JRL #6006, 5 January, 2002.

¹⁰⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

especially America, occurred with the terror attacks of September 11, 2001. It is a matter of convenience to ignore some aspects to facilitate the prosecution of new foreign policy objectives, as seems to be the case with the US.

January 2002 saw the Russian military publicly renew their convictions that the war would be soon over. Kvashnin claimed that the winter ‘mopping-up’ operations had proved to be successful and “only insignificant pockets of militants now remain in the North Caucasus Republic.” The General went on to spell out the significance of this ‘victory’. “There will be no more mistakes. Our position is clear, no more concessions to bandits.”¹⁰⁸⁰

Kvashnin’s statements seemed to contradict some of the government’s public statements over finding a political solution to the conflict. The military claimed that 100 rebels had been killed in the operations that were launched in late December. Human rights group *Memorial* claimed that the federal forces had “killed several dozen civilians in the process.”¹⁰⁸¹ And when put into a larger context, the claims seem somewhat premature. Official casualty statistics, a figure that has been contested as being too low, list more than 3000 soldiers and policemen as being killed. In addition to this, the military had estimated that some 2000 rebels remained active in the region.¹⁰⁸²

A January 2002 article in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* provides another interesting angle in the apparent contradiction between the rhetoric of the military and that of the Russian federal government. The article alleges that the pretence of wanting to talk peace is made by Moscow to placate international criticism of Moscow’s handling of the conflict. “This was the Kremlin’s way of showing the world that it does not refuse to talk peace.” The newspaper went on to accuse the government of a ‘window-dressing’ exercise, which will not see any tangible results.¹⁰⁸³

An *ITAR-TASS* report in February 2002 appeared to show support for Putin from other Russian political factions, which were as much for an international audience than a domestic one. Former President of the USSR Mikhail Gorbachev gave Putin a message of support for his Chechnya policy.

¹⁰⁸⁰ *Russian Army Claims Final Victory in Chechnya*, DPA, 10 January, 2002. JRL #6015, 10 January, 2002.

¹⁰⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸² *Ibid.*

“[...] (world community) should acclaim President Vladimir Putin’s earnest intention and steps to switch the Chechnya problems to political rails [...] shows that Russia has to deal there both with bandit organisations of Chechen origin and international terrorism. I back President Putin, who, in spite of the present conditions, is not neglecting the main task of restoring normal life to Chechnya. Thanks to the support of the Russian President [...] republican and local administrations are being formed, lessons were resumed at local schools, the refugees are beginning to return home, and work to restore Grozny is under way.”¹⁰⁸⁴

Means to convey the message of a ‘return to normality’ in Chechnya have taken place overseas too. In February 2003 the Russian Consulate-General in New York hosted an exhibition called *Chechnya. International Terrorism. A Thorny Path to Peace*. After New York, the exhibition was intended to be shown in Berlin, Copenhagen, Paris, Brussels and possibly Israel. In an *RIA Novosti* article, the stated aim of the exhibition was to “destroy Western stereotypes about Chechnya, inform the foreign public on both the invigorating positive process of bringing back peace to the republic and remaining obstacles on the way to stability.”¹⁰⁸⁵

The Russian President’s spokesman on Human Rights in Chechnya, Abdul-Hakim Sultygov described the significance of the exhibition;

“For the first time the exhibition reveals the evolution of the Chechen drama since 1991 when extremists violently disrupted the constitutional process in Chechnya and ousted the legitimate authorities. [...] (roots of the crisis lie not in the) relations between Chechnya and Russia, but in the relations between criminals and the Chechen population. The photographs show the evolution of the bandit regime and its so-called self-proclaimed governing bodies, its degradation into a system of infringement on the rights and liberties of over a million Chechens, a hideous denigration of separatists into

¹⁰⁸³ Makskov, I., *Playing at Talks*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 17 January, 2002. JRL #6027, 17 January, 2002.

¹⁰⁸⁴ *Gorbachev Gives Putin Full Backing Over Chechnya*, ITAR-TASS, 23 February, 2002. JRL #6094, 23 February, 2002.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Klimentov, D., *New York Hosts “Chechnya. International Terrorism. A Thorny Path to Peace*, *RIA Novosti*, 19 February, 2003. JRL #7068, 19 February, 2003.

explicitly terrorist organisations, the establishment of terrorist dictatorship, and the foundation of international terrorist bases in Chechnya.”¹⁰⁸⁶

Efforts in the information war intensified in the run-up to the Chechen referendum in March 2003. In a well publicised pre-publication announcement, a brochure was to be produced for foreign media primarily, but also the wider public. The brochure titled *Chechnya: Questions and Answers* was produced in many different languages. *Chechnya: Questions and Answers* focused on a variety of issues including; the two Chechen military campaigns, about current and planned governing bodies, law enforcement reform and rehabilitation efforts that are underway.¹⁰⁸⁷ This action seems to be an pre-emptive attempt to saturate the world ‘information market’ with a government friendly version of events. A demonstration that the Russian information capability is not only reactive, but proactive in their approach to the Chechen information ‘problem’.

Although the Chechen referendum and Chechen presidential elections are very important aspects to the situation in Chechnya, I will not be covering them. There is simply not enough room in this work to devote what I would consider to be adequate coverage for these crucial and complex events. I will state however, that these events are in line with the official comments of the republic returning to ‘normality’ under the ‘careful’ guidance of the federal centre.

Official Russian government responses to the idea of negotiation with the separatists seem to have hardened in opposition to the notion. The public is still being ‘sold’ on the idea of a drawn out conflict, with the twist that the worst of the fighting is over and the republic is slowly returning to a ‘normal’ state of existence. Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov, made some very strong statements regarding the government’s position on Chechnya in July 2003. On the subject of negotiating with Maskhadov, there was no room for misunderstanding on the ‘new’ policy direction.

“I absolutely exclude this – it is really not possible. To those who recommend we launch talks with Maskhadov, I always invite them to start

¹⁰⁸⁶ Klimentov, D., *New York Hosts “Chechnya. International Terrorism. A Thorny Path to Peace*, RIA Novosti, 19 February, 2003. JRL #7068, 19 February, 2003.

talks with Mullah Omar (leader of deposed Taliban regime in Afghanistan).
It is the same thing.

Currently on Chechen territory there are around 1200 to 1300 active rebels, uncompromising bandits, with whom you can only have one conversation – their destruction. If we are talking about the possibility of large battles in Chechnya, I practically exclude this.”¹⁰⁸⁸

Ivanov’s spin on the Chechen war has been echoed by others. During a ‘drive’ to raise finance from European financiers, the Presidential Envoy Plenipotentiary to the Southern Federal District, Victor Kazantsev, told delegates from the *European Bank of Reconstruction and Development* not to be afraid of Chechnya. He reassured them that “the Chechen war is as good as over – it is rather virtual than actual.”¹⁰⁸⁹ Kazantsev’s and Ivanov’s statements closely resemble Baudrillard’s theory of simulation. An attempt to make some concept or theory ‘real’ in the minds of the public and eventually to turn that ‘reality’ into a fact.

Reporter for the new site www.gazeta.ru, Artyom Vernidoub, wrote an article that suggested that there may be a change in the official classification of the conflict. On the 6th of May, 2003 he quoted an unidentified source in the Defence Ministry, who stated that the military was considering a change in classification of the Chechen ‘anti-terrorist’ operation to a less threatening or offensive term. Without elaborating the official said: “possibly, instead of the counter-terrorist operation it will be granted the status of a peacekeeping mission.”¹⁰⁹⁰

The change in the term used seems to be related to a desire by the Kremlin to want a less threatening and hostile association with the events occurring in Chechnya. ‘Peacekeeping’ could imply that the Russian forces would be engaged in keeping two warring sides apart in the conflict and not actively involved. ‘Counter-terror’ operation implies that Russian forces are actively involved in the fighting. At face value this appears to be a ‘window-dressing’ exercise and attempt at bringing to life Kazantsev’s ‘virtual war.’

¹⁰⁸⁷ *World to See Novosti Book on Chechnya: Putin’s Aide*, RIA Novosti, 11 March, 2003. JRL #7099, 12 March, 2003.

¹⁰⁸⁸ *No Talks With Chechen Rebels: Russian Defence Minister*, AFP, 16 July, 2003. JRL #7252, 17 July, 2003.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Brykanova, S., *Chechen War Recedes Into Past: Putin’s Envoy*, RIA Novosti, 23 June, 2003. JRL #7236, 24 June, 2003.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Vernidoub, A., *Generals Suggest New Name for Chechen War*, www.gazeta.ru, 7 May, 2003. JRL #7172, 8 May, 2003.

A serious challenge to the Kremlin's Chechnya stance, on the flow of information and of reintegrating the republic into the Russian Federation, was challenged by *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* in early 2002. The station had planned to broadcast news in the Chechen language. The Russian government response was swift and hard.

The Deputy Head of the Russian Government Administration, Alexei Volin warned of possible negative consequences and manipulation by the rebel Chechens. Volin was interviewed and quoted by various Russian media sources, including *Izvestia* and *Ekho Moskvi*.

"[...] not rule out the possibility that the broadcasts could be used by Chechen radical groups." - *Ekho Moskvi*

"The start of broadcasting in the Chechen language can be considered a step, but not in the direction of stabilising the situation in the North Caucasus. [...] It is fraught with possibilities of encouraging extremism not only in Russia but in other friendly countries due to Chechen terrorists' contacts with international terrorist organisations." - *Izvestia*¹⁰⁹¹

Yastrzhembsky gave a clear warning to the radio station, regarding the decision on the broadcasting of news in Chechen. On 2 April, 2002 he stated that the Russian authorities would closely monitor the station and may revoke its right to broadcast in Russia, should any pro-rebel bias be detected in the programming.¹⁰⁹² The warning seems to be in keeping with Russian government demands upon domestic media outlets. It is however, unusual for such a threat to be directed against foreign media. Objections from the Russian government did play a role on the introduction of the broadcasts, which were scheduled to begin in February 2002, but were delayed as a result of requests from the US State Department (the station receives funding from the US government) on the grounds that it could jeopardise efforts in starting a dialogue on ending the conflict.¹⁰⁹³

FSB Lieutenant-General Alexander Zdanovich was responsible for the 'cleansing' of the

¹⁰⁹¹ Vickery, T., *Radio Liberty Worries Russian Government*, AP, 3 April, 2002. JRL #6167, 3 April, 2002.

¹⁰⁹² Ibid.

¹⁰⁹³ Vickery, T., *Radio Liberty Worries Russian Government*, AP, 3 April, 2002. JRL #6167, 3 April, 2002.

Chechen information space. This was explained by Alexander Cherkasov of the human rights group *Memorial*.

“That means making sure the media does not mention any uncomfortable or sensitive topics. Many times, he has voiced things which are not true to reality.”¹⁰⁹⁴

Zdanovich did not conceal his thoughts as to what role should be played by the press and the consequences for media that did not follow what was expected of them.

“[...] the FSB will fight everything that threatens Russia’s interests, including in the world of media.”

And went as far as to threaten publicly releasing a list of journalists who he considered to be engaged “in waging information warfare against Russia.” He equated such journalists as being equivalent to international terrorists except they “have a pen in their hands and sit at a computer.”¹⁰⁹⁵

Information going into and out of Chechnya is subjected to strict measures, which attempt to control its flow. During a visit to Grozny, journalist Fred Weir described the situation faced by foreign journalists operating in Chechnya. The journalists are assigned guides, but in the off-chance that journalists are able to ‘lose’ their guides, they are shadowed by several plain-clothed agents. These agents attempted to tape conversations with people that the journalists were permitted to meet. Weir made some concluding remarks as to the significance of the security precautions.¹⁰⁹⁶

“One must accept the military’s claim that some security precautions were necessary. But many of the measures had the distinct effect of undermining the main claim the Kremlin wanted to make by bringing us to Grozny in the first place: that the war is over and life is returning to normal in

¹⁰⁹⁴ *Former KGB Official to Oversee State TV*, Washington Post, 6 June, 2002. JRL #6292, 6 June, 2002.

¹⁰⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹⁶ Weir, F., *Life Among Grozny’s Ruins*, Christian Science Monitor, 16 December, 2002. JRL #6602, 16 December, 2002.

Chechnya.¹⁰⁹⁷

One of the thorns in the side of the government's attempt to paint a picture of Chechnya returning to 'normality' are the complaints of abuses against Chechen civilians by the Russian military and security services. Human rights groups claim that these abuses usually go unpunished and are ignored by the authorities. The trial of Colonel Yuri Budanov, accused of raping and murdering a young Chechen woman in March 2000, caused a great deal of controversy during its course.

Budanov went to trial at the end of February 2001, initially charged with premeditated murder, abduction and abuse of office. In July 2001 the trial was postponed for a long period of time while psychiatric assessments were made of Budanov and a series of legal technicalities were debated. Court proceedings resumed again in May 2002.¹⁰⁹⁸

A psychiatric report, which seemed to support the defence's case that Budanov was not criminally responsible as he was temporarily insane at the time swayed a court ruling in December 2002. A Rostov-Na Donu military court ruled in favour of Budanov. However, the Supreme Court overturned this decision in February 2003 and ordered a new trial. In July 2003 the Lower Court, on the basis of a new psychiatric report, Budanov was sentenced to ten years in a maximum-security prison for the murder of 18 year old Heda Kungayeva.¹⁰⁹⁹

In an apparent effort to try and stem criticism levelled at a lack of accountability among military and security personnel for their actions, presidential aide Yastrzhembsky wrote on the subject. In his article, he acknowledges the fact that crimes are committed by federal servicemen in Chechnya. But, refutes the accusation that they get away with their actions. Statistics are used to back Yastrzhembsky's claim.

¹⁰⁹⁷ Weir, F., *Life Among Grozny's Ruins*, Christian Science Monitor, 16 December, 2002. JRL #6602, 16 December, 2002.

¹⁰⁹⁸ *Acquittal Looms for Colonel Budanov*, www.gazeta.ru, 15 May, 2002. JRL #6246, 16 May, 2002.

¹⁰⁹⁹ (1) *Supreme Court Upholds Budanov's 10-Year Term*, AP, 7 October, 2003.

www.sptimesrussia.com/archive/times/908/news/n_10556.htm, 7 October, 2003.

(2) Pronina, L., *Budanov Jailed for 10 Years in Retrial*, The Moscow Times, 28 July, 2003. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/07/28/001-print.html, 28 July, 2003.

“Since the start of the counter-terrorist operation the Military Prosecutor’s Office has opened investigations into 162 cases; so far, 97 investigations have been completed, of which 57 (including 14 murder cases) proceeded to a full court martial. At present, 47 servicemen, including seven commissioned officers, have been convicted for offences against the Chechen people.”¹¹⁰⁰

In addition to their accountability for their crimes, Yastrzhembsky also stressed the role played by the military in the reconstruction of the republic, especially in terms of the education system and housing. Yastrzhembsky’s message is one of a republic slowly returning to normality, assisted by the Russian military’s efforts and resources.

In December 2002, Fred Weir a journalist from *Christian Science Monitor* was taken on a government tour of Grozny. During the tour, Colonel Shabanov admitted “some violations” were committed by federal forces, but labelled most of the 1630 official complaints as being “fictitious.” He went on to explain his position.

“We have evidence that these cases (of missing people) are mostly bandits who have died fighting our forces, and their families later claim they were taken by the federals.”¹¹⁰¹

Various sources in the Ministry of Defence have also had discipline problems, especially relating to alcoholism. The problem has been made public in various Russian media outlets and concerns alcohol related problems with contract soldiers and officers serving in Chechnya. In an item broadcast on *Ekho Moskvi* the findings of a Defence Ministry commission on the conduct of contract troops in Chechnya, which found many of them to be “morally degenerate” and were dismissed from service. Among the main infractions committed by these troops was “constantly

¹¹⁰⁰ Yastrzhembsky, S., *International Terrorism and the Crisis in Chechnya: A Russian Perspective*, www.inthenationalinterest.com/Articles/Vol2Issue4/Vol2Issue4Yastrzhembsky.html, 29 January, 2003. JRL #7040, 30 January, 2003.

¹¹⁰¹ Weir, F., *Life Among Grozny’s Ruins*, *Christian Science Monitor*, 16 December, 2002. JRL #6602, 16 December, 2002.

consuming alcohol.”¹¹⁰²

A total of 56 men had been discharged from the military, across Chechnya for breaking their contracts. In Chechnya’s Naursky district, the military commandants office, which normally has a staff of 45 officers, fired 49 officers in the first half of 2003.¹¹⁰³ Such figures represent not only a significant discipline problem for the military, but also an issue concerning the effectiveness of its fighting force is put into question as a result of the Defence Ministry commission report findings.

More recent stories by media outlets that are aligned to the Kremlin, occasionally publish an alarmist story that is designed to ‘show’ the rebels true intentions. One such article appeared in the April 28, 2003 Moscow issue of *Izvestia*. The article’s title was *The Time has Come to Attack Russia* and it alleged that the goals of the rebels have changed.

“They used to fight for liberation from ‘occupiers’ in the past. These days, they fight to physically exterminate the Russians a.k.a infidels.”¹¹⁰⁴

The conflict in this particular article has been framed as a fight for survival. It claims that the conflict is prosecuted on an ethnic basis by the rebels and therefore, it could be concluded is a threat for all ethnic Russians. Such imagery appears to be trying to summon unity, for the continuation of the war on the basis that a threat for all Russians exists as long as the rebels are active in Chechnya.

An article in a June 2003 issue of *Profil* not only provided reasons for Russia’s defeat in the First Chechen War as a result of the “Khasavyurt Capitulation”, but also provided ‘good’ reasons for continuing the fight. The article claimed that “Like the Yankees in Vietnam, we were defeated by our own men, not by guerrillas.”¹¹⁰⁵ The blame for the loss of the 1994 – 96 war is laid on a lack of will to win the war on the part of Russia’s people. Justification for the war is provided, once again a reference is

¹¹⁰² Saradzhyan, S., *Report: 56 Soldiers Sacked in Chechnya*, The Moscow Times, 21 October, 2003. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/10/21/011-print.html, 21 October, 2003.

¹¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹¹⁰⁴ Getmansky, K. & Rechkalov, V., *The Time has Come to Attack Russia*, *Izvestia*, 28 April, 2003. JRL #7159, 29 April, 2003.

made to an American scenario.

“Paradoxically, this war in Chechnya is more just for the Russians than the war in Iraq for the Americans. And yet, the Russian media stopped depicting a romantic image of the criminals but never stopped trying to explain to Russian servicemen that they are committed to a battle ‘for somebody’s capitals.’ Demoralising the army, it only leads to new and new casualties. The goals are anything but unjust, the country needs triumph in the war. Particularly since the Dudayev’s and Maskhadov’s regime cannot be allowed to exist.”¹¹⁰⁶

A major thrust of the work is that, if left alone, the separatists will engage in criminal activity across the Russian Federation, such as kidnapping, killing and other acts of terror. This will leave no one with security and peace of mind in Russia. Therefore, concluding it was better to continue the war. The incursion by Basayev into Dagestan in 1999 was used as evidence for this hypothesis.

One of the notable successes achieved by the federal government over the separatist rebels in the ‘information war’ concerned the death of one of the prominent rebel field commanders known as Khatab. The Kremlin announced on the 25th of April 2002, that its special forces had killed the Arab-born commander of the Chechen rebels and that they would soon provide documentary proof of this fact. Rebel sources at this time denied the Russian claim. Zdanovich said that Khatab had been killed in March 2002 and would soon provide documentary evidence to back his claim. Yastrzhembsky stated to Russian TV that Moscow had firm grounds in believing Khatab to be dead.¹¹⁰⁷

Khatab, the head of the *Islamic Army of Dagestan* and a leading commander of Shamil Basayev was shown on RTR from video footage obtained by the FSB. The body seemed to be that of Khatab, but this was denied by rebel sources who said that it was just Moscow’s propaganda. It was not until 29 April, 2002 that a radical

¹¹⁰⁵ Khramchikhin, A., *Behind the Frontlines*, Profil, No 21, 2 June, 2003. JRL #7207, 3 June, 2003.

¹¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

branch of the Chechen rebel leadership confirmed Russian claims that Khatab was indeed dead, through a statement to the separatist news agency *Kavkaz-Centre*. In a statement from the “Command Headquarters of the Chechen Mujahideen” announced that Khatab was killed by a poisoned letter on March 19, 2002 and that “the death of the Chechen commander has been officially confirmed.”¹¹⁰⁸

An equally fierce ‘information war’ is occurring in tandem with the military operations. *Kavkaz-Centre* has stated that three pro-independence Chechen radio stations exist, two of which are located in Chechnya and one abroad. Russian authorities are engaged in trying to jam the transmission of these stations.¹¹⁰⁹ *Radio Ichkeria*, a rebel radio station uses homemade broadcasting equipment that enable it to transmit as far as 200 kilometres. A network of amateur broadcasters keep each other informed about the presence of Russian interceptors. A mobile broadcasting unit is available to the rebels, located in the mountains *TV Ichkeria* broadcasts irregularly for thirty minutes.¹¹¹⁰

On 2 February, 2003 Maskhadov broadcast a denunciation of the March 2003 constitutional referendum and added a warning that rebels were preparing to launch a new series of attacks. The broadcast reached Chechnya’s western border with Ingushetia. A broadcast at a later date showed footage of Chechen fighters preparing for battle. Musa Khasanov, a journalist with RFE/RL’s Russian Service, who lives and works in Grozny described the broadcast.¹¹¹¹

“The last programme was clearly seen and heard in the Achoi-Martan and Shunzhevski regions of Chechnya. It was a one-hour programme in which Aslan Maskhadov spoke about the readiness of the Chechen resistance forces and the situation among the armed resistance. [He] said that now, on his orders, large detachments of Chechen fighters have split into small groups and are waiting for the end of winter and that with spring big operations against the Russian forces in Chechnya are planned.”¹¹¹²

¹¹⁰⁷ Filipov, D., *Chechen Guerrilla Leader Was Killed, Russia Says, Rebels Dispute Claim; Kremlin Alleges Proof*, Boston Globe, 26 April, 2002. JRL #6210, 26 April, 2002.

¹¹⁰⁸ *Chechen Rebels Confirm Arab Warlord Khatab Dead*, AFP, 29 April, 2002. JRL #6215, 29 April, 2002.

¹¹⁰⁹ *Moscow to Jam Chechen Radio Station*, www.rferl.org/newsline, 30 July, 2001. EJC Media News Digest, 30 July, 2001.

¹¹¹⁰ Mite, V., *Chechnya: An Information War Rages Alongside Military Campaign*, RFE/RL, 7 February, 2003. JRL #7053, 8 February, 2003.

¹¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹² Mite, V., *Chechnya: An Information War Rages Alongside Military Campaign*, RFE/RL, 7 February, 2003.

A May 2003 article appeared in *The Moscow Times*, which gave details of governmental plans to ‘beef-up’ the media assets in Chechnya, so that they could compete effectively against the separatist media. Official sources refer to this idea as building “the national information shield.” In April 2003 the federal Press Ministry dedicated a meeting to the situation of the Chechen media. Vladimir Kozlov, Deputy Press Minister, stated that only 30 million of the planned 54.34 million rubles were spent reconstructing Chechen media during 2002. He announced that the government planned to allocate 115 million rubles in 2003 to various tasks; building a new TV and radio studio, buying printing presses, training journalists (many of whom have little or no experience) and building new antennae.¹¹¹³

Ismail Munayev, Press Ministry representative in Chechnya, described the current situation and what the government planned to do to ‘develop’ Chechen media assets in more detail than that given by Kozlov. As of May 2003, 20 newspapers and 31 television stations were registered in Chechnya. Three of the TV stations had permits to broadcast throughout the republic. But, most of the TV stations have weak signals and can only broadcast capacity to cover a local village. Munayev boasted that new media outlets were due to open in Chechnya; “by the end of the year, we will have at least 10 independent newspapers, three magazines and at least ten television stations.”¹¹¹⁴

However, there appear to be problems in the Chechen media and their ability to conduct their business independently can be hampered by several factors. Currently, according to the May 2003 article in *The Moscow Times*, there are 20 newspapers operating in Chechnya, of these nine are funded by the State and have print runs of approximately 15, 000 – 20, 000 copies. Five of the newspapers are published by State agencies or ministries and six are independent. But, federal money often arrives late and both the Chechen as well as federal authorities are not forthcoming with giving out information.¹¹¹⁵

JRL #7053, 8 February, 2003.

¹¹¹³ Aliev, T., *Moscow has Big Plans for Chechen Media*, *The Moscow Times*, 27 May, 2003. www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/05/27/003-print.html, 27 May, 2003.

¹¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹¹⁵ Aliev, T., *Moscow has Big Plans for Chechen Media*, *The Moscow Times*, 27 May, 2003.

In addition to the problems listed above, faced by media workers in Chechnya, other more potentially lethal problems exist. As a result, a culture of self-censorship has developed as a means to try and saves one's life, but this affects the independence or objectivity that Munayev talked about. Satsita Isayeva, editor of *Golos Chechenskoi Respubliki* stated that; "living here, you simply know what you can write about and what you can not."¹¹¹⁶ The manager of Chechnya's branch of VGTRK, Belkyis Dudayeva echoed Isayeva's concerns:

"We have to cover political news, but we do not know who to expect troubles from afterward. It is dangerous for us during the shooting of a report and afterward."¹¹¹⁷

Since the death of freelance British cameraman Roddy Scott on the 26th of September, 2002, a total of 27 journalists had lost their lives while covering the Second Chechen War. To put this figure into perspective, statistics from other conflict zones need to be examined. 62 journalist were killed covering the conflict in Bosnia, 23 killed in Kosovo in 1999, 9 killed covering events in Afghanistan during 2001-2002 and 4 killed in the 1991 Gulf War. A total of 274 journalists have been killed while in war zones from 1990-2002.¹¹¹⁸

5.4 Language And Symbolism

"[...] human beings are part of an intersubjective linguistic community. [...] the very fact that we are language users means that we are communicatively able to reach an understanding of one another."¹¹¹⁹

Habermas's theory of Communicative Action is a useful tool to apply to this section. This theory stipulates that there are two types of action:

www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/2003/05/27/003-print.html, 27 May, 2003.

¹¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹¹⁸ Byrne, C., *Media Casualties in Other Conflicts*, <http://media.guardian.co.uk/broadcast/story/0,7493,932498,00.html>, 9 April, 2003. European Journalism Centre Media News Digest, 9 April, 2003.

¹¹¹⁹ Stevenson, N., *The Transformation of the Media: Globalisation, Morality and Ethics*, New York, Pearson

- Instrumental action - depends on egocentric forms of calculation and strategy.
- Communicative action - actors are prepared to commit themselves to norms that are the outcome of rational agreement.¹¹²⁰

Of these two variants, communicative action provides the best means of achieving consensus over;

- The objective world.
- social world of institutions, traditions and values.
- own subjective world.¹¹²¹

Three validity claims, which map onto objective, social and subjective worlds, “allows us intersubjectivity to investigate questions of truth, justice and taste.”¹¹²² The three validity claims in question are;

- propositional truth claims.
- normative claims related to appropriateness.
- claims connected to sincerity.¹¹²³

The relevancy of Communicative theory to the Chechen issue is also bound in the larger shifts currently at play in Russian society. Vladimir Putin can be viewed as coming to power due to his representation and association of the person with bringing about law, order and the restoration of Russia’s power.

By voting him into office, the people have committed themselves to a form of agreement, which binds the peoples’ loyalty to the president to enable him to carry out what he has pledged. The first round election victory may also bestow an element of personal power, relating to his sincerity and trustworthiness.

Education Ltd., 1999, p. 13.

¹¹²⁰ Stevenson, N., *The Transformation of the Media: Globalisation, Morality and Ethics*, New York, Pearson Education Ltd., 1999, p. 13.

¹¹²¹ Ibid.

¹¹²² Ibid.

¹¹²³ Ibid.

The effective spread of dominant ideologies depends on the strategic use of image systems. In this particular case, the dominant ideology (the incumbent political structure) wanted to engineer public support for another campaign against the Chechen republic. But, how is the message communicated to the audience?

“Image systems entail articulation of layers of ideological representation and the tactical employment of modern communications technology to distribute the representations, which when successful, encourage audience acceptance and circulation of the dominant themes.”¹¹²⁴

In the above I made mention of image systems, there are two types of image system in existence. These structures are referred to as Ideational and Mediational systems.

Ideational Systems - Representational Units
Internal Organisation
Suggested Interpretations

Mediational Systems - Technological Mediation
Social Mediation.¹¹²⁵

Ideational image systems are projected imagined situations, which are grounded in an overarching value structure, with which the public is already familiar.¹¹²⁶ This may mean that old images or prejudices could be manipulated to achieve political goals. Highly emotive rallying points under the banners of patriotism or nationalism might be used increase the amount of emotion involved in the situation. An audience that is highly emotionally charged may be prone to an increased level of manipulation, because emotion distracts clear and rational thought.

Mediational image systems effectiveness is based in the use and interpretation of language. The success or otherwise, depends on the use of technology and current values at play in society.

¹¹²⁴ Lull, J. (1995), op. cit., p. 9.

¹¹²⁵ Lull, J. (1995), op. cit., p. 10.

¹¹²⁶ Lull, J. (1995), op. cit., pp. 10 – 11.

“Media transmitted ideology in any political – economic – cultural context is represented partly in language and articulated and interpreted through language and other highly elaborated codes and modes – including visual forms and music – which are then further interpreted and used by people routine social interaction. These processes are all part of the ideological effect. They comprise mediational image systems, [...] technological mediation and social mediation.”¹¹²⁷

At this point it is necessary to define two other concepts which have been introduced in the above-mentioned quote.

Social Mediation – the mass media’s ideological representations are recognised, interpreted, edited, and used in audience members’ social construction of daily life.¹¹²⁸

Technological Mediation – is the intervention of communications technology in social interaction.¹¹²⁹

With regard to the functioning of an ideational media system, it is not a difficult task for a sender to communicate to a Russian audience that Chechens are a hostile people. Warfare between the Russian centre of power and Chechen separatists is not a new event. Renowned Russian poet Alexander Pushkin (1799 – 1837) wrote about war in the region. Such a long history of conflict may make the Chechen appear to be a ‘natural’ enemy of Russians.

Connected to Social Mediation’s construction of daily life is the role of the metaphor. The metaphor is a specific part of language that brings members of a specific community together through meaning. “Use of metaphors is another commonality [...] the content of a metaphor in each instance is culture or case specific.”¹¹³⁰

The progress of technology has meant that this, until now, localised war can be broadcast into households across the world. When the apartment bombings occurred in Moscow, the city was sent into a state of panic and then anger. TV coverage was able to highlight various

¹¹²⁷ Lull, J. (1995), op. cit., p. 16.

¹¹²⁸ Lull, J. (1995), op. cit., p. 18.

¹¹²⁹ Lull, J. (1995), op. cit., p. 16.

fragments and inflame sentiment even further.

The current debate over whether Chechen terrorists or the Russian government carried out the bombing shall be a test of the government's credibility in the eyes of its citizens. If the Russian government's version of events is believed, their credibility will remain intact and they will continue to be the dominant hegemony. However, if the conspiracy theory is to be believed by the public, this may initiate a series of events that could rock to survival of the current dominant political elite. A lot is at stake, which is to be decided in a war of words, waged through the media. In this respect, the hegemonic force is fragile in such a challenge requiring further reinforcement and the reassertion of its power.

Ultimately, this contest will boil down to credibility. Who is to be believed will be decided by whom gets the most exposure in the press. As outlined in the beginning of this thesis, I stated that the media represent the views and values of their owners. In contemporary Russian society, the Russian government through ownership and use of law is able to exert an ever-increasing pressure on the editorial content of the domestic media.

Challenges to the Kremlin's gatekeeper role in Chechnya face a rhetoric which is highly emotionally charged, but bare on facts to back up the counter claim by the government. Some elements of the Russian media have hypothesised that the 1999 apartment bombings in Moscow were carried out by Russian Special Forces, seeking to create a suitable public opinion, in which a popular war could be waged. Putin has refuted this claim and has attached a somewhat irrelevant theory to his reply, claiming that it is "nothing but part of an information war against Russia."¹¹³¹

This highly emotive answer seems to be aimed at suggesting that those making the claims want to harm Russia. This stance raises some important questions. Who seeks to wage an 'information war' war on Russia? Why do these people want to wage an 'information war,' what are the end goals? Putin's answer is somewhat enigmatic and open-ended, which leaves a lot of interpretation via innuendo and suggestion. Where is the proof, which supports his contention of an information war? It may be a difficult allegation to refute due to its vagueness.

¹¹³⁰ Gonzalez, A. & Tanno, D. A., Editors, op. cit., p. 15.

¹¹³¹ Putin, V., op. cit., p. 144.

News from official media sources in Russia have gone some way in trying to reinforce existing stereotypes and prejudices held about the ‘other.’ In this particular case the ‘other’ refers to the Chechen people. The parties in the conflict are given value laden mythic identities, the Chechens have been branded as terrorists and bandits. Following on from this given stereotype, it is easier to portray a terrorist as an aggressor, which means that the Russian federal forces are reacting in a defensive manner.

The very specific language that was invoked in describing the Chechens as ‘bandits,’ ‘terrorists’ or ‘kidnappers’ worked to reinforce existing stereotypes and prejudices against people from the Caucasus region. Gudov of *VTsIOM* detailed the consequences of employing this language and the assignment of blame upon the Chechens, in terms of public mobilisation in society.

“These attacks (1999 apartment bombings) sparked fear, aggression and a powerful anti-Chechen sentiment on top of internal insecurities still strong a year after the 1998 economic crisis. [...] nearly 65% of Russians wanted war until victory (end of 1999), and only 20% were for peace talks.”¹¹³²

Further efforts were launched in April 2002, to discredit the ‘conspiracy theory’ approach to the apartment bombings. This coincided with Berezovsky’s showing of a film that he financed *Assassinat en Russie*, described by Sergei Markov, the Director of the Moscow Institute of Political Studies as “a well-made professional example of the propagandist and psychological war that Boris Berezovsky is notorious for.”¹¹³³ Other candidates were sought by *RIA Novosti* to provide credible testimony against the conspiracy theory. They ‘found’ another ‘expert’ in the American publicist Paul Murphy, who laid the blame squarely with the Chechen rebel commanders Khatab and Shamil Basayev, as Basayev had in the fight against Russia allowed the use of “any acts and methods, including terrorism.”¹¹³⁴

By 2001 it was becoming apparent that the expected rapid capture of the rebel leadership

¹¹³² *Russian State Television Ensures Lopsided View of Chechen War*, AFP, 2 October, 2002. JRL #7350, 3 October, 2002.

¹¹³³ Orlov, A., *Russian Political Scientist Calls “Assassinat En Russie” an Example of Propagandist and Psychological War*, RIA Novosti, 25 April, 2002. JRL #6209, 26 April, 2002.

¹¹³⁴ Orlov, A., *American Publicist Paul Murphy Says: The Explosions of the Houses in the Autumn of 1999 were Organised by Chechen Militants*, RIA Novosti, 25 April, 2002.

had failed and the campaign was proving to be stressful for Russian commanders. Rash comments began to be expressed in the Russian media, quoted from high-ranking Russian officers. Lieutenant-General Gennady Troshev, commander of the North Caucasus military district made one such comment, which was quoted in the newspaper *Izvestia*.

“Here is what I would do, collect them all in a square, string the bandits up and let them hang, and let everyone see them. The word bandit is too good for them. They are scum.”¹¹³⁵

Troshev dehumanises the rebel Chechens even further when he states that the word ‘bandit’ is too good for them. His new term, ‘scum’ removes every trace of humanity from their persona. It appears as though the change in the term, from ‘bandit’ to ‘scum’ justifies may be a justification to hang the rebels.

The emotional nature of the conflict and the interests involved make the Chechen conflict a very volatile war that is accompanied by emotionally charged rhetoric. The rhetoric is aimed at justifying the beginning and the continuation of the military operations in Chechnya. In June 2001 Putin stated that the war was a battle to stop international terrorism from invading Russia.¹¹³⁶

On the eve of the war in 1999 when he became Prime Minister, Putin vowed to crush the ‘rebellion’ within two weeks. However, the war still drags on. Approximately one year after this declaration, Putin declared victory. A further six months after this declaration he announced victory again and large scale troop withdrawals in the near future.¹¹³⁷ Such claims have now been dropped in favour of preparing the Russian public for a protracted war in Chechnya.

Government spokesman on Chechnya Sergei Yastrzhembsky echoed this change in information policy concerning the Chechen conflict.

JRL #6209, 26 April, 2002.

¹¹³⁵ Traynor, I., *Russia Prepares to Draw More Blood in Chechnya*, The Guardian, 8 June, 2001.

JRL #5289, 8 June, 2001.

¹¹³⁶ Glasser, S. B., *Putin’s War Persists as Sentiment Shifts Kremlin Likens Chechnya to Northern Ireland*, Washington Post, 27 July, 2001. JRL #5369, 28 July, 2001.

¹¹³⁷ Glasser, S. B., *Putin’s War Persists as Sentiment Shifts Kremlin Likens Chechnya to Northern Ireland*, Washington Post, 27 July, 2001. JRL #5369, 28 July, 2001.

“The historical parallel is Northern Ireland. [...] It would be naïve to forecast the finish of this situation in some foreseeable future. It is necessary to prepare public opinion for quite a long period of time. There is no medicine for a quick treatment of this crisis.”¹¹³⁸

The Chechen rebel factions have been continually lumped together as a collective group, rather than as individuals belonging to one of a number of different clans. If a distinction is made, it can be on the basis of vilifying the rebel leadership a little more than the rank and file members. ‘The evil genius leading the mindless masses’ type of scenario is painted for the audience. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov expressed part of this sentiment, in addition to the characteristic dehumanising aspect of the ‘other’ in a vow he made to the Russian public on TV on 6 December, 2001.

“This winter we will seek to finish off the remaining bandit groups, and capture or destroy their ringleaders. This I promise you.”¹¹³⁹

An ‘indignant’ response was the Russian government answer to allegations over the shooting of villagers in Starye Atagi, Chechnya in March 2002. General Alexander Zdanovich of the FSB described these allegations as “a pre-planned provocation against the federal forces.”¹¹⁴⁰ Instead, Zdanovich blamed the rebels for planting ‘evidence’ of ‘atrocities’ committed by government forces. He claimed that federal forces had ‘destroyed’ a group of ‘bandits’ the night before and these were the bodies used for the evidence of the ‘atrocities’. To back his claims, Zdanovich stated;

“I was personally present in this operation. [...] I wholly confirm the correctness and legality of actions by the federal units. [...] Village elders thanked for the destruction of the bandits, which terrorised villagers.”¹¹⁴¹

Zdanovich’s words would seem to reveal several underlying assumptions. Firstly, that the

¹¹³⁸ Glasser, S. B., *Putin's War Persists as Sentiment Shifts Kremlin Likens Chechnya to Northern Ireland*, Washington Post, 27 July, 2001. JRL #5369, 28 July, 2001.

¹¹³⁹ *Russia Vows Winter Campaign Against Chechen Rebels*, Reuters, 6 December, 2001. JRL #5585, 7 December, 2001.

¹¹⁴⁰ *Reports on Shot Starye Atagi in Chechnya is a Provocation Against Federal Force*, RIA Novosti, 13 March, 2002. JRL #6133, 14 March, 2002.

federal forces are the ‘righteous’ side in the Chechen conflict. And conversely, the Chechen rebels seek to spread conflict, terror and chaos. Another point is that Zdanovich is considered to be a reliable and ‘impartial’ observer in this incident. Yet, there may in this instance appear to be a conflict of interest between Zdanovich’s official duties as a high-ranking FSB officer in Chechnya and his imparting ‘neutral’ information regarding this act of ‘disinformation’.

Raw emotion on the part of officials who deliver public statements, does at times manage to make headlines in the media, Putin is no exception to this observation. Putin’s language has been interweaved with criminal and/or military slang on occasion, two incidents in particular highlight this point. He is prone to using the slang when pressed by journalists over the Chechnya issue. The first occasion under consideration occurred in October 1999, when he threatened to “waste (the Chechens) while they sit in their outhouses.”¹¹⁴²

During Akhmad Kadyrov’s swearing in as the Chechen republic’s new President on 19 October, 2003, he echoed Putin’s words from 1999. He made a firm and clear statement on the direction that the republic will take.

“I am not a religious leader, or the head of an Islamic state [...]. We shall hit the terrorists in the outhouse and nip terrorism in the bud.”¹¹⁴³

Kadyrov’s statement seems to indicate that he will not change the course of events in Chechnya. His statement would appear to underline a possible escalation of anti-rebel activity by the government forces. The language used is very specific in its reference to non-religion and the piece pertaining to the separatists denigrates them as ‘terrorists’ who are to be found in unsavoury places, which should be destroyed before being allowed to fully establish themselves. An emphasis of strength is given to the federal side, “we shall hit [...].”

One of the first official acts of the new Chechen President has been to initiate an inquiry into the events of 1991 – 92. Kadyrov has created a nine member commission, whose task is to analysing the events that lead to the separatists rise to power and declaration of independence

¹¹⁴¹ *Reports on Shot Starye Atagi in Chechnya is a Provocation Against Federal Force*, RIA Novosti, 13 March, 2002. JRL #6133, 14 March, 2002.

¹¹⁴² *Putin Tells Reporter to ‘Get Circumcised’*, www.abcnews.com, 12 November, 2002. JRL #6548, 12 November, 2002.

¹¹⁴³ Page, J., *Security Measures Extreme as New Chechen President Sworn In*, Reuters, 19 October, 2003.

from the Russian Federation. The primary focus being to “establish a legal assessment of events that built up to the First Russo-Chechen war in 1994.”¹¹⁴⁴ According to Rudnik Dudayev the commission head and head of the republic’s Security Council, the work of the commission would not lead to legal action being taken against office-holders.

“It will be virtually impossible to prove the guilt of office-holders at the time, as such an approach would involve taking action against several people who held high office in the country subsequently and are still influential.”¹¹⁴⁵

Kadyrov explained the purpose of the commission further. He also emphasized the no repercussions aspect to the commissions findings.

“My purpose is not to set off legal action against anyone. However, it is necessary to know what was behind all of that, who inspired it and what it was exactly.”¹¹⁴⁶

However, in spite of the pledge of no repercussions from the commission findings, some do not believe the official line and this was expressed in an article that appeared in *Izvestia*. The Chechen Minister for Nationalities Affairs, Information and Foreign Relations, Taus Dzhabrailov, saw matters differently than the initial official explanations.

“This commission is a serious business. Not only will names be named. There is the judicial system [...]. People who are guilty are now making statements in the name of the people. An assessment must definitely be made. Kadyrov has stated that the Chechen most guilty of this is Ruslan Khasbulatov.”¹¹⁴⁷

Other political figures from the Chechen republic also point to the possibility that Ruslan

JRL #7374, 19 October, 2003.

¹¹⁴⁴ *New Chechen Leader Orders Inquiry into 1991 Independence Bid*, AFP, 21 October, 2003.

JRL #7380, 22 October, 2003.

¹¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴⁷ Maksakov, I., *New Extraordinary Commission Being Set up in Chechnya*, *Izvestia*, 22 October, 2003.

JRL #7382, 24 October, 2003.

Khasbulatov could become a victim of the commission. A senator from Chechnya Akhmar Zavgayev also hinted at the prospect.

“Everywhere today we are naming only the perpetrators – the gunmen and Basayev. But nobody is speaking about those who brought them into being, fund them, and ideologically support them. We must make an assessment of all the events of the last 12 years. For instance, Khasbulatov was behind this.”¹¹⁴⁸

On another occasion that provoked a strong response from Putin, which was broadcast by *TVS*, republished in several major Moscow newspapers and appeared on Internet sites happened in November 2002. A Danish reporter asked Putin why Russia was using mine warfare and killing civilians in Chechnya during a press conference. Putin’s response was somewhat undiplomatic.

“They (the Chechens) talk about killing non-Muslims and if you are a Christian, you are in danger. And even if you are an Atheist, you are in danger. [...] If you decide to become a Muslim – even then you are not safe, because traditional Islam contradicts the conditions and goals that they (the Chechen rebels) set. But, if you are prepared to become the most radical Islamist and prepared to get circumcised – I invite you to Moscow. We have specialists that deal with this problem. I suggest that you do such an operation that nothing grows out of you again.”¹¹⁴⁹

Realising the PR damage done by Putin’s remarks, some Kremlin ‘friendly’ media outlets started to try and rationalise the answer to the Danish journalist’s question. The Duma owned *Rossiiskaya Gazeta* attempted to portion some of the blame on the journalist, whose question the newspaper described as having been “formulated rather provocatively.”¹¹⁵⁰ The article then deals with the ‘correctness’ of Putin’s answer.

¹¹⁴⁸ Maksakov, I., *New Extraordinary Commission Being Set up in Chechnya*, *Izvestia*, 22 October, 2003. JRL #7382, 24 October, 2003.

¹¹⁴⁹ *Putin Tells Reporter to ‘Get Circumcised’*, www.abcnews.com, 12 November, 2002. JRL #6548, 12 November, 2002.

¹¹⁵⁰ Tretyakov, V., *Why was the Russian President so Angry?*, *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, 14 November, 2002.

“If it comes up in conversation with him, then he answers aggressively, but extremely concisely. However, on this occasion the President gave not only an aggressive answer, but also a very long one. He does this when the answer to the question is crystal clear to him, right down to the last detail. [...] The aggression came from the fact that Putin is irritated by openly or intentionally stupid questions though camouflaged as the search for truth. Putin considers that stupid questions, like stupid answers to important problems, should not come from the mouths of people who form public opinion.”¹¹⁵¹

5.5 Chapter Summary

The American government and military learned a very important and valuable lesson regarding information strategy during the Vietnam war. In the various small wars that followed a careful and calculated strategy was worked out. The belief was that the media had lost the Vietnam war by sapping the American public’s will to be engaged in the conflict. In the 1991 Gulf War, the information strategy employed by the Coalition Forces, fighting against the Iraqi forces employed a set-piece series of manoeuvres long before the first shots of the war were fired. The campaign began with the demonisation of the Iraqi leadership, this was an attempt at creating the ‘Other,’ which could be readily identified and hated by the public, thus providing a moral justification for prosecuting hostilities. Media personnel were also given restricted access to the area, on the grounds of safety and not impeding the military operations. The media that were allowed into the war-zone were shepherded around in groups, which allowed the military better control over access to information and what could be written/broadcast.

The 1999 Kosovo operation by NATO saw the pinnacle of information control, thus far attained by a side during the course of a conflict. Saturation coverage of events was designed to not only bewilder the viewing public, but was also used to convince them that they were being kept fully informed of events. The vast majority of the coverage was however, relatively meaningless in terms of its newsworthiness. Media were kept under tight control by the

JRL #6552, 14 November, 2002.

¹¹⁵¹ Tretyakov, V., *Why was the Russian President so Angry?*, Rossiiskaya Gazeta, 14 November, 2002. JRL #6552, 14 November, 2002.

authorities, who scrutinised the media's every move and removed what could be construed as being potentially detrimental material. A very deliberate strategy in the language and images used was designed to demonstrate that NATO was engaged in a just and 'clean' war where human casualties (unless they were refugees fleeing from the Serbs) did not occur and precision high-tech weaponry was used by the 'good' side.

Russian observers watched the 1991 Gulf War with interest and duly noted the information strategy that was employed by the Coalition forces. Prior to the Russian intervention that was to culminate in the First Chechen war (1994-96), the government began to launch its attack against the enemy 'other.' An information campaign was waged against Chechens, who were identified as being the enemy and given distinct characteristics that set them apart from Russians. Chechens were branded as 'bandits' and criminals, a 'mass society' (collective) in a sea of chaos and lawlessness. Moral ascendancy was assigned to the federal forces, whose duty it was to restore law and order to this land.

Russian media was generally considered to be hostile to the separatist Chechen cause and were banned from rebel controlled Chechnya by September 1994. In a shift from methods used in the past, namely using silence, the Russian authorities decided to apply a 'spin' to the war. The Russian military, as had been done in the Gulf War, decided to open an information centre before the outbreak of military action. However, for reasons unknown this centre was not operational until one week after the fighting broke-out. Additionally, unlike the tactic of overwhelming the media and public with a vast amount of information, the information provided by the Russian military information centre was sparse.

The Kremlin's 'control' of the information war was short-lived. Media organisations started to break rank from the official position of events in the war and public opinion started to turn firmly against the war. One of the notable cases of this was *NTV*, which had their offices raided by armed masked men. The use of blunt and brutal methods by the authorities, such as the use of physical force was complemented by the use of *kompromat* in an effort to try and discredit 'rogue' media in the eyes of the Russian audience. Journalists were still free to travel in and around Chechnya without restrictions.

A combination of Russian government incompetence, media outlets breaking from the official view and capable Chechen separatists working on counter-information saw the federal

efforts in the information war fall apart. The lack of federal credibility in terms of technical competence and in telling the truth saw them discredited and public opinion turn firmly against the war. Upcoming elections in the Russian Federation and Yeltsin's low poll ratings saw a humiliating withdrawal of Russian forces from Chechnya in 1996.

Experiences of the First Chechen War were taken in by both the military and the government, additional lessons were absorbed by the events of the 1999 Kosovo campaign. As in the previous campaign, the coming of the Second Chechen War was heralded by an information war against the Chechen people, who were identified as being criminals, 'bandits' and religious extremists bent upon the destruction of Russia. The incursion into Dagestan and the Moscow apartment bombings were used by the government to back up their claims that it was not just the military who were the target, but Russian people in general.

The government operated a military information agency by the time of the Russian offensive against the Chechen rebels. Media generally supported the Russian government's point of view on the Chechen campaign. As in the NATO and UN operations, media coverage of this early stage of military operations showed Russian military forces as being modern, competent and winning. The war was shown in a clean and clinical manner, as in the NATO and UN missions, which kept the image of 'friendly' human casualties to the bare minimum.

Language employed by both sides in this conflict is very specific and emotional. The rhetorics of the conflict focuses on demonising the opposition as the 'evil other' that is bent upon the destruction of 'their' people. Language usage, in the way it is employed is also designed to assign blame to the 'other' and absolve oneself of any guilt or wrongdoing in the conflict. A lot of emotional and patriotic cues are used to heighten public feeling and encourage attachment to the continuation of the war. These cues are designed to instil a sense of collective identity, which is necessary to remain committed to continuing the struggle and to psychologically survive the rigors of this conflict. The latest indications from the Russian military is that there may be a change in the language employed, which is designed to make the conflict seem less violent and push the image of Russian neutrality. In doing this, it may be easier for the authorities to 'sell' the war to the Russian public and to neutralise any opposition to the war.

Unlike the First Chechen War, media personnel in the Second War face restrictions on

freedom of movement in and around the Chechen republic. The so-called accreditation scheme allows the government to vet journalists entering Chechnya and block those journalists that have written 'unfriendly' views and may be a potential threat to the government monopoly on the flow of information from Chechnya to the outside world. Press representatives were taken to areas approved by the military for 'battle-zone' tours and were not allowed to undertake independent travel. A method that was taken from the Gulf War.

One of the most prominent and significant aspects of political communications that are sent from the Russian federal government or sources controlled by them is the expectation that these communications will be believed. It seems to revolve around the concept that predominates within the pro-Kremlin circles, that what they say should be taken as the truth and nothing less. Pro-Kremlin state and media workers feel or publicly demonstrate that the 'bandits' have been thoroughly discredited and their strategy is centred on a spiral of misinformation, deceit and lies that are designed to trick 'ordinary' Russians and sap their will to fight and win the Second Chechen War. As a result of this, some communications from government sources have been, to say the least, a little bizarre. At the beginning of the Second Chechen War, the state-owned news agency *ITAR-TASS* cited a leader of the North Caucasus Military District as saying "the Chechen bandits themselves mine residential buildings and blow them up when federal aviation appears in the sky."¹¹⁵²

The authorities are locked in another information war with the rebels. All forms of media are involved in the conflict on both sides, that have seen the conflict internationalised by both sides. The separatists want to internationalise the conflict to highlight Russian atrocities and bring about pressure from the international community against the Russian government. On the other hand, the Russian authorities want to internationalise the conflict to demonstrate that the Chechen rebels have links to international terrorist organisations and that Chechnya is returning to a state of 'normality.' The events of September 11, 2001 have a major influence on this internationalisation of the Chechen war. Russia's contention that the rebels have links to international terrorists has been accepted by the international community and international criticism of Russian actions has all but stopped. This is also linked with American foreign policy goals, which requires a measure of either support or neutrality from the Russians while prosecuting the 'War against Terrorism.'

¹¹⁵² Panfilov, O., *Failure of Information Policy in Chechnya. Official Sources Replace Objectivity With Lies*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, 11 August, 2003 (BBC Monitoring). JRL #7287, 13 August, 2003.

At the outbreak of the war, government information focused on a quick war that would see the rebels defeated and thus removing the threat by re-establishing Russian law and order. As the conflict dragged on, the focus shifted to counting rebel losses in terms of manpower and material. There has been yet another shift in the spin on the war, which now centres on the Chechens return to a normal society that is greatly assisted by the help of the Russian forces and authorities. This last change takes attention away from the combat aspect to the conflict and instead looks at things from a point of view of restoration.

CHAPTER VI: FRAMING THE NEWS.

6.0 Chapter Objectives

Media, the language they use and the topics that are covered give an important clue as to the government's 'official' position on events in society. Language is a particularly powerful tool when utilised properly and effectively. By using a very specific language, an image or version of reality is created through narrowing public discourse. The process's entirety is bound within the existing dominant power relations.

As such, discourse analysis is useful because “[...] examining how language reflects its cultural origins and serves as a tool in constructing particular versions of social reality. [...] All discourse is rooted in power relations.”¹¹⁵³

Changes in the way news was conveyed in the media was a useful indicator to the public that wider changes in society may be about to be initiated by the government. This was especially the case during the Soviet era, when the media were the bearers of the official view only. Earlier in this thesis I have used quotes from renowned academics such as Mickiewicz, whose studies seem to indicate that the Russian public is very perceptive in recognising these subtle cues.

“The Soviet press played a critical role in Soviet society historically and was the vehicle through which changes in the political climate were most clearly reflected.”¹¹⁵⁴

The case of the news agency *Novosti* illustrates the important role played by the media in attempting to build a particular version of reality. *Novosti* was created in 1961, with the intention of supplying other countries with information about the Soviet Union. *TASS* was considered inadequate for the task due to the close association with the Kremlin and their bureaucratic style of journalism being inappropriate for overseas markets.¹¹⁵⁵ This case clearly illustrates the Kremlin's astute observation of the need to 'create' an 'untainted' media source to disseminate their information. *Novosti* was a purpose built creation with a specific goal in mind, to exert some measure of credible influence on the international information market by conforming to norms of journalism that differed from the domestic market.

In this chapter, I shall begin with a comparative analysis of news from *Soviet Life* in two

¹¹⁵³ Turpin, J., op. cit., pp. 1 – 2.

¹¹⁵⁴ Turpin, J., op. cit., p. 24.

¹¹⁵⁵ Turpin, J., op. cit., p. 19.

different periods in the Soviet era. The first period looks at the characteristics of this magazine during the Brezhnev era, then I shall take a look at the same publication during Gorbachev's period of reforms. This section is designed to give the reader a broad understanding of the concept of framing and not an in-depth analysis in its own right. There is simply not enough space available to enable it.

The two following sections of this chapter will look at the structure and content of news on *ORT* and *NTV*. I will look for similarities and differences between the two channels in terms of news content and the importance associated with various individual news items. The importance of news items can be reflected by how often a particular news item is referred to and its position in a news programme (if it is the leading item, great importance is associated with that particular story).

Debate has emerged over the extent to which news is independent of governmental interference in the Russian Federation. Some leading academics have argued that a measure of continuity from the Soviet State has survived and exists in the modern broadcasting industry. A leading mass communications academic, Colin Sparks has argued this point.

“The old state broadcasters of the Communist epoch have survived as institutions and many of their staff remain the same. Their legal positions have been transformed [...] In reality, however, they are everywhere subordinated to the government of the day, and this is reflected in their programming, in particular their news and current affairs.”¹¹⁵⁶

6.1 Framing Soviet News, Brezhnev Era Versus Gorbachev Era News.

Brezhnev's reign as Secretary-General of the Communist Party is generally seen as a period of conservatism and Gorbachev's era as a period of liberalism and reform. How were these changes reflected in *Soviet Life*?

When Gorbachev came to power in 1985 he initiated a series of reforms that were designed to simulate the Soviet Union. The change came with a rigorous PR campaign, which was designed to give the outward impression of the great changes that were to occur. The messages were designed for foreign as well as domestic audiences.

“To captivate foreign readers and show them that the Soviet Union was truly

¹¹⁵⁶ Vartanova, E., “Media Structures: Changed and Unchanged” in Nordenstreng, K., Vartanova, E. & Zassoursky, Y., Editors, *Russian Media Challenge*, Helsinki, Kikimora Publications, 2001, p. 43.

changing, the media required a new face. The new image was developed not simply through strategic impression management; but rather by adopting Western styles of media presentation [...].¹¹⁵⁷

The 'Western' styles of media presentation that were adopted by the Soviet media included changes such as;

- Snappier headlines
- More vibrant photos
- Controversial stories
- Investigative reporting.¹¹⁵⁸

The Brezhnev era of Soviet politics, sometimes referred to as the period of *zastoi* (stagnation) was marked by inertia and arguably even the beginnings of the Soviet Union's decline. During the period, the role of the media was to support and sustain the status quo by encouraging the view of the system being in good working order.

Media stories featured certain dominant themes, encouraging the public to work for the betterment of socialism. A stress was placed on an idealised collective society. During Brezhnev's epoch some hero stereotypes came to dominate the magazine *Soviet Life*.

- The worker who toiled for the betterment of the state and not for material gain.
- Responsible youth.
- Elderly citizens who had fought for Bolshevism, survived World War Two and were dedicated patriots striving for the common good.
- A superwoman figure, shown as liberated and equal to men in her field of employment.
- A common worker who also served on the Supreme Soviet. This was meant to depict the Soviet government as being truly representative of society by including all elements of society.¹¹⁵⁹

Soviet Life was designed to influence a foreign audience, but was done so in a manner that was not overly different from the way in which the domestic audience was 'educated.' The advent of the hero figures was designed to demonstrate the superiority of Soviet society over the West. Framing (establishing the topic) organised the above-mentioned heroes into five media categories.

¹¹⁵⁷ Turpin, J., op. cit., p. 127.

¹¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁵⁹ Turpin, J., op. cit., pp. 37 – 38.

- Effectiveness of socialism, increased literacy and decreased poverty were used to support this claim.
- That the Soviet Union was a democracy and was humanitarian and fair.
- The co-operative nature of the Soviets was emphasised, evidenced by the importance of East-West co-operation.
- That foreign policy differences between the Soviet Union and the West, firmly established the Soviets as having taken the moral high ground.
- The so-called ‘hail Lenin’ frame, Lenin’s words were used in an effort to lend credibility to the articles.¹¹⁶⁰

The recurrent topics consist of themes with a positive spin on topics about the Soviet Union. There is no hint of any impending political crisis, it was a ‘business as usual’ approach. This differed greatly from the content of *Soviet Life* under Gorbachev. Gone were the days of heroes only, the media was now being used to try and purge obstacles from the path of reform and the news featured a more dualistic approach to its stories. New actor stereotypes featured in the magazine, which included;

- The entrenched, who were resistant to change and are responsible for bringing about the crisis in socialism in the first place.
- Those striving for change and the betterment of society, with in the framework provided by the policies of perestroika and glasnost.¹¹⁶¹

News had transformed from a solely positive spin approach, to a more confrontational approach that featured ‘good’ citizens versus ‘bad’ citizens. The media frames were in keeping with the role of the media in the late Soviet Union (see chapter 4.8). Seven basic media frames existed in *Soviet Life* under Gorbachev.

- The continuous nature of the revolutionary process. This was achieved through improving socialism and returning the ideology back to its roots (away from the Stalinist ‘perversions’).
- Catharsis, the process of de-Stalinisation.
- The purging of elements of the Brezhnev era from society.
- Highlighting of rampant social problems, which had been a taboo topic previously.
- Urging that reforms are needed to rescue the Soviet Union from its ills.
- Promoting the policy of glasnost.
- The new culture frame. The idea that the Soviet society was evolving, re-emerging with

¹¹⁶⁰ Turpin, J., op. cit., p. 39.

¹¹⁶¹ Turpin, J., op. cit., p. 56.

old forms mixed with new ideas from the West.¹¹⁶²

The new frames stressed the need to reform Soviet society, this was to be done through a mixture of purging the past and looking to the future. By blaming the past for the current problems Gorbachev may have wanted to distance himself from the crisis should it spiral out of control. He urged new reforms to help bring about a 'pure' form of socialism. Through engaging in this tactic he ran the risk of shouldering personal blame should the reform programme not bear visible results within a short span of time. The public may not have 'seen' the crisis, therefore saw no need to change something that appeared to be working.

6.2 Framing News Content on *ORT / TV 1*

TV 1 (previously known as Public Russian Television – *ORT*) was established in 1995. It broadcasts a wide variety of local and foreign programmes for 19.5 broadcast hours daily. The station's signal reaches some 98.8% of Russia's population and in terms of audience and ratings it is ranked number one in Russia. Konstantin Ernst is the General Director of *TV 1* and is a close ally of President Putin.¹¹⁶³

The source of the news material for *ORT / TV 1* has been provided by the Luba Schwartzman a Research Analyst and Moscow Office of the *Centre for Defence Information*. It consists of daily summaries of news items broadcast on the *ORT / TV 1* programme. Transcripts were received during the period 2001 until 2003. However, transcripts have not been received for every day during this period.

Due to the length of the period covered, approximately three years for the *ORT / TV 1* news coverage, graphs in this section will be for a three month period. This is to minimise the number of graphs to; correspond with the number in the section on *NTV* news coverage and to save on space in the thesis.

Graphs are used that have a list of topics, some of which are broad in nature. Each category has a score of the number of times it was raised in the month under assessment. The final part of the graph then places the general slant of the topic as positive, neutral or negative. This refers to whether the news topic concerned is pro-government (positive) or according to the official line or policy. Negative, in other words, that the topic is generally presented in a manner that is contra to the official line. Or the news is generally presented in an impartial manner (neutral). When I add a combination of two classifications, for example

¹¹⁶² Turpin, J., op. cit., p. 60.

¹¹⁶³ *Russian Broadcasting at a Glance*, National Association of TV and Radio Broadcasters of Russia. www.nat.ru/eng/rb/tv.php, 17 June, 2003.

POSITIVE/NEUTRAL, this signifies that the news is split relatively evenly between these two groupings. The rating that comes first, states that there are fractionally more of this category than the other stated group.

During the months of **January to June 2001**, news transcripts were received for the following days; **June – 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 26, 27, 29.**

ORT/TV 1 NEWS FOR JANUARY - JUNE 2001.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	4	POSITIVE
COURTS AND LAW	7	NEUTRAL
CRIME	31	POSITIVE/NEGATIVE
CHECHNYA	42	POSITIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	14	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0	N/A
FOREIGN NEWS	16	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	8	NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	11	POSITIVE
HUMANITARIAN	1	POSITIVE
LIFE AND ECONOMY	57	POSITIVE
MILITARY	11	POSITIVE
PUTIN	14	POSITIVE
POLITICS	18	NEUTRAL
SCANDALS	2	NEUTRAL
SPORT	1	NEUTRAL

Comments:

- Crime – a lot of mention is made of violent acts against government officials, especially police and the consequences for those who do (often death).
- Chechnya – an image of support of the Russian Federal forces in destroying the rebel groups is painted. Clearing operations and measures designed to limit or destroy the rebels are also announced.
- Foreign News – much of the foreign news is from areas within the former Eastern

Bloc and the bulk of these stories are from countries in the CIS.

- Life and Economy – Governmental successes in the area that affects the civil population is popular. Such as the halting of the price increase of electricity and an increase in income.

During the months of **July to September 2001**, news transcripts were received for the following days; **July** – 2, 3, 5, 6, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31.

August – 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 29, 30.

September – 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 28.

ORT/TV 1 NEWS FOR JULY - SEPTEMBER 2001.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	1 + 2 + 1 = 4	NEUTRAL
COURTS AND LAW	3 + 12 + 6 = 21	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
CRIME	8 + 24 + 22 = 54	POSITIVE
CHECHNYA	27 + 36 + 40 = 103	POSITIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	35 + 51 + 31 = 117	POSITIVE
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0 + 1 + 0 = 1	NEUTRAL
FOREIGN NEWS	11 + 16 + 33 = 60	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	2 + 5 + 9 = 16	POSITIVE
GOVERNMENT	13 + 6 + 15 = 34	POSITIVE
HUMANITARIAN	0 + 0 + 1 = 1	POSITIVE
LIFE AND ECONOMY	62 + 71 + 37 = 170	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
MILITARY	5 + 18 + 15 = 38	POSITIVE
PUTIN	28 + 29 + 44 = 101	POSITIVE
POLITICS	40 + 30 + 47 = 117	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
SCANDALS	1 + 1 + 0 = 2	POSITIVE
SPORT	0 + 1 + 1 = 2	NEUTRAL

Please note: four sets of figures in tally column – first set for July, second for August, third for September and the final is the total count for the three month period.

Comments:

- Crime – prison escapes and talk of the need to tighten security around strategic installations are the focus of the news.
- Crises and Disasters – weather related disasters in the Russian Far East and the lifting of the Kursk form the bulk of the items covered. Coverage is more focused on the efforts by the authorities to facilitate a speedy clean up operation and not so much about the magnitude of the disaster. The government is seen in an energetic mode of action.
- Putin – is shown to be actively involved with all areas of government activity, ensuring that everything runs smoothly and the interests of the Russian people (both nationally and internationally) are upheld.
- Politics – much attention has been paid to the law making activities of the Duma and the Federation Council. During the month of September, discussions on the effects of the September 11 attack on the U. S. and its aftermath are widely debated (such as the American military's use of bases in the Central Asian Republics).

During the months of **October to December 2001**, news transcripts were received for the following days; **October** – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31. **November** – 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14, 15, 16, 19, 21, 26, 27, 28, 29. **December** – 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 27, 28.

ORT/TV 1 NEWS FOR OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2001.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	0 + 1 + 3 = 4	POSITIVE
COURTS AND LAW	15 + 10 + 9 = 34	POSITIVE
CRIME	15 + 17 + 10 = 42	POSITIVE
CHECHNYA	20 + 25 + 19 = 64	POSITIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	41 + 10 + 15 = 66	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0 + 0 + 0 = 0	N/A
FOREIGN NEWS	40 + 21 + 10 = 71	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	9 + 3 + 6 = 18	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	13 + 8 + 6 = 27	POSITIVE

HUMANITARIAN	4 + 4 + 3 = 11	POSITIVE
LIFE AND ECONOMY	42 + 42 + 56 = 140	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
MILITARY	20 + 12 + 19 = 51	POSITIVE
PUTIN	41 + 26 + 33 = 100	POSITIVE
POLITICS	34 + 31 + 33 = 98	POSITIVE
SCANDALS	0 + 0 + 0 = 0	N/A
SPORT	1 + 1 + 0 = 2	NEUTRAL

Please note: four sets of figures in tally column – first set for October, second for November, third for December and the final is the total count for the three month period.

Comments:

- Foreign News – the political situation in Georgia and tensions between Georgia and Abkhazia are closely followed in the news. These themes form the bulk of the foreign news stories. The news is biased against Georgian President Edvard Shevardnadze with accusations of his efforts in supporting the rebel Chechen cause and working against Russia's national interest.
- Government – the work of the government in passing laws and performing other 'governmental' duties are highlighted.
- Military – news focus on new technology entering service in the Russian armed forces, international defence agreements and the military draft. The news gives the impression of a progressively modernising organisation with an international perspective.
- Putin – a lot of attention was paid to the President's discharge of professional duties during the month of October. He is portrayed as a very dedicated and energetic worker.

During the months of **January** to **March 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; **January** – 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21, 22, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31.

February – 1, 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28. **March** – 1, 4, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22.

ORT/TV 1 NEWS FOR JANUARY - MARCH 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	1 + 1 + 0 = 2	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
COURTS AND LAW	13 + 9 + 7 = 29	NEUTRAL
CRIME	20 + 13 + 11 = 44	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE

CHECHNYA	$25 + 26 + 14 = 65$	POSITIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	$28 + 15 + 8 = 51$	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	$1 + 0 + 0 = 1$	NEUTRAL
FOREIGN NEWS	$13 + 22 + 18 = 53$	POSITIVE
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	$10 + 7 + 6 = 23$	NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	$13 + 10 + 6 = 29$	POSITIVE
HUMANITARIAN	$6 + 2 + 0 = 8$	POSITIVE
LIFE AND ECONOMY	$30 + 37 + 25 = 92$	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
MILITARY	$12 + 28 + 7 = 41$	POSITIVE/NEGATIVE
PUTIN	$30 + 41 + 24 = 95$	POSITIVE
POLITICS	$24 + 33 + 31 = 88$	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
SCANDALS	$0 + 0 + 0 = 0$	N/A
SPORT	$1 + 5 + 6 = 12$	POSITIVE

Please note: four sets of figures in tally column – first set for January, second for February, third for March and the final is the total count for the three month period.

Comments:

- Courts and Law – the progress toward establishing a comprehensive legal framework is closely monitored, in terms of the discussion and passing of laws especially. Additionally, the verdicts of major trials are and legal decisions are followed.
- Military – the modernisation and integration of the Russian armed forces into the world community is still the focus of attention. But there are also stories on conscript deserters and some technical failures in the sector of military aviation.
- Putin – positive comments are made about Putin’s activities in office, his contacts with overseas nations and organisations, domestic politics and his helping people who made personal requests to him in a televised show. It seems to be oriented toward demonstrating that Putin cares for everyone, including the average citizen with his or her local problem.
- Sport – controversy at the Salt Lake City Olympic Games are highlighted, a possible anti-Russian sentiment at the Games is aired. The reports are nationalistically oriented, that is touting the achievements of Russian athletes and explaining failure in terms of conspiracy theory.

During the months of **April to June 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; **April** – 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 15, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29. **May** – 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 13, 14, 15, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 28, 30. **June** – 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26.

ORT/TV 1 NEWS FOR APRIL - JUNE 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	3 + 0 + 1 = 4	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
COURTS AND LAW	8 + 2 + 7 = 17	POSITIVE
CRIME	21 + 19 + 21 = 61	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
CHECHNYA	18 + 30 + 21 = 69	POSITIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	6 + 19 + 27 = 52	POSITIVE
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0 + 0 + 0 = 0	N/A
FOREIGN NEWS	17 + 13 + 14 = 44	POSITIVE
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	5 + 7 + 6 = 18	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	9 + 9 + 17 = 35	POSITIVE
HUMANITARIAN	1 + 3 + 0 = 4	POSITIVE
LIFE AND ECONOMY	39 + 45 + 62 = 146	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
MILITARY	16 + 12 + 12 = 30	POSITIVE/NEGATIVE
PUTIN	31 + 30 + 48 = 109	POSITIVE
POLITICS	27 + 31 + 36 = 94	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
SCANDALS	0 + 1 + 0 = 1	NEUTRAL
SPORT	1 + 5 + 8 = 14	NEUTRAL/NEGATIVE

Please note: four sets of figures in tally column – first set for April, second for May, third for June and the final is the total count for the three month period.

Comments:

- Crime – in addition to criminal acts that have been perpetrated, such as murder, hostage taking, robbery and poaching, inter-departmental and international cooperation efforts receive a lot of attention.
- Freedom of Speech and Media – a lot of mention is made of professional and academic conferences taking place on Russian territory. Anniversaries of media organisations and media awards are also a popular topic. Little mention is made of conflict or tension in the media community.

- Putin – is shown to be hard working by the amount of time he spends meeting members of the government and foreign dignitaries and the agreements and work priorities that arise as a result of the meetings.
- Sport – Russian involvement in the soccer world cup is the popular issue covered in this particular category.

During the months of **July to September 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; **July** – 1, 2, 8, 9, 10, 12, 16. **August** – 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 31. **September** – 1, 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 25, 26, 28, 29.

ORT/TV 1 NEWS FOR JULY - SEPTEMBER 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	0 + 3 + 1 = 4	POSITIVE
COURTS AND LAW	9 + 6 + 2 = 17	POSITIVE
CRIME	5 + 15 + 18 = 38	POSITIVE/NEGATIVE
CHECHNYA	6 + 61 + 42 = 109	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
CRISES AND DISASTERS	25 + 35 + 28 = 88	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	1 + 0 + 0 = 1	NEUTRAL
FOREIGN NEWS	3 + 17 + 16 = 36	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	2 + 0 + 3 = 5	POSITIVE
GOVERNMENT	3 + 10 + 9 = 22	POSITIVE
HUMANITARIAN	1 + 1 + 1 = 3	POSITIVE
LIFE AND ECONOMY	15 + 41 + 32 = 88	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
MILITARY	4 + 19 + 5 = 28	NEGATIVE/POSITIVE
PUTIN	20 + 31 + 25 = 76	POSITIVE
POLITICS	12 + 13 + 23 = 48	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
SCANDALS	0 + 0 + 0 = 0	N/A
SPORT	1 + 6 + 3 = 10	NEUTRAL

Please note: four sets of figures in tally column – first set for July, second for August, third for September and the final is the total count for the three month period.

Comments:

- Chechnya – increased rebel activity is publicised as are the increasing tensions with Georgia over rebel activity in the Pankisi Gorge. References are also made to successes by the federal forces in killing and capturing rebel groups and infrastructure.
- Crises and Disasters – a series of natural and man-made disasters occurred, both in Russia and abroad (involving Russian citizens). Such as the highly publicised air crash over Southern Germany in July, involving a group of Russian schoolchildren.
- Life and Economy – many professional holidays were announced and celebrated as well as other ‘feel-good’ news as anniversaries of artists, actors and other renowned Russians.
- Military – some ‘bad news’ concerning the military was covered, which included prosecutions against high-ranking officials for theft and desertions by conscripts. This was balanced somewhat by news of international cooperation and joint exercises.

During the months of **October** to **December 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; **October** – 7, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 21, 22, 29, 30, 31. **November** – 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 13, 14, 18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 28, 30. **December** – 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25.

ORT/TV 1 NEWS FOR OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	2 + 6 + 1 = 9	POSITIVE
COURTS AND LAW	3 + 2 + 4 = 10	NEUTRAL
CRIME	6 + 22 + 12 = 40	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
CHECHNYA	56 + 58 + 25 = 139	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
CRISES AND DISASTERS	16 + 16 + 14 = 46	POSITIVE
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0 + 1 + 1 = 2	NEUTRAL
FOREIGN NEWS	14 + 12 + 10 = 36	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	2 + 11 + 4 = 17	POSITIVE
GOVERNMENT	8 + 6 + 12 = 26	POSITIVE
HUMANITARIAN	1 + 0 + 0 = 1	POSITIVE
LIFE AND ECONOMY	25 + 37 + 66 = 128	NEUTRAL/NEGATIVE
MILITARY	7 + 8 + 11 = 26	NEGATIVE/NEUTRAL

PUTIN	28 + 30 + 36 = 94	POSITIVE
POLITICS	26 + 31 + 28 = 85	POSITIVE
SCANDALS	0 + 0 + 0 = 0	N/A
SPORT	7 + 7 + 6 = 20	POSITIVE

Please note: four sets of figures in tally column – first set for October, second for November, third for December and the final is the total count for the three month period.

Comments:

- Orthodox Church and Religion – some stories on other religions, such as Buddhism, appeared in the news. But, the Russian Orthodox Church received the most coverage, which was overwhelmingly positive for the Church.
- Chechnya – after the October 2002 crises at the Dubrovka Theatre in Moscow, news items on the incident and its after effects came to dominate the news. ‘Good news’ stories on Russian successes in tackling the insurgency problem continued.
- Life and Economy – December saw a significant increase in the number of these stories, this may be as a result of the saturation coverage of the terrorist attack in Moscow in October, to give the viewers some ‘softer’ or less depressing news and to negate the effects of ‘news fatigue’. There were many examples of upbeat cultural news in addition to coverage of strikes over the non-payment of wages.
- Politics – various international meetings and agreements between Russia and other nations formed an important part of this category. Various local elections and the Russian Central Electoral Commissions statements and decisions were also covered.

During the months of **January** to **March 2003**, news transcripts were received for the following days; **January** – 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 27, 28, 30. **February** – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27. **March** – 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 31.

ORT/TV 1 NEWS FOR JANUARY - MARCH 2003.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	2 + 5 + 3 = 10	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
COURTS AND LAW	3 + 3 + 4 = 10	POSITIVE
CRIME	10 + 15 + 11 = 36	POSITIVE
CHECHNYA	23 + 33 + 33 = 89	POSITIVE/NEGATIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	11 + 26 + 17 = 54	POSITIVE

EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	$0 + 1 + 1 = 2$	NEUTRAL
FOREIGN NEWS	$5 + 11 + 8 = 24$	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	$7 + 1 + 2 = 10$	POSITIVE
GOVERNMENT	$3 + 14 + 6 = 23$	POSITIVE
HUMANITARIAN	$0 + 0 + 5 = 5$	POSITIVE
LIFE AND ECONOMY	$50 + 58 + 34 = 142$	POSITIVE
MILITARY	$11 + 9 + 10 = 30$	POSITIVE/NEGATIVE
PUTIN	$25 + 51 + 43 = 119$	POSITIVE
POLITICS	$30 + 30 + 31 = 91$	POSITIVE
SCANDALS	$0 + 0 + 0 = 0$	N/A
SPORT	$5 + 6 + 1 = 12$	POSITIVE

Please note: four sets of figures in tally column – first set for January, second for February, third for March and the final is the total count for the three month period.

Comments:

- Orthodox Church and Religion – a focus that was almost primarily dedicated to Russian Muslims attending the Hajj in Saudi Arabia. This may possibly be an effort to divert any accusations of bias against the authorities towards Muslims (and Chechens).
- Crime – a lot of news on crime prevention and the breaking of organised crime in various parts of the Russian Federation and smugglers entering Russian territory.
- Military – a mixture of good news and bad. The military image was somewhat further tarnished by a series deaths in training accidents, desertions and charges being laid against officers. This was offset a little by stories concentrating on the ‘success’ of training exercises and an increase in conditions and wages of service personnel.
- Politics – the main points of political discussion revolved around the issues of the Iraq War and the new visa regime for Russian citizens travelling to and from the Kaliningrad enclave. Political congresses and political party events, especially involving the *United Russia* party are well covered.

During the months of **April to June 2003**, news transcripts were received for the following days; **April** – 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24, 26, 27, 28, 30. **May** – 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 31. **June** – 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29.

ORT/TV 1 NEWS FOR APRIL - JUNE 2003.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	1 + 0 + 4 = 5	POSITIVE
COURTS AND LAW	5 + 3 + 5 = 13	POSITIVE
CRIME	17 + 10 + 15 = 42	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
CHECHNYA	25 + 12 + 35 = 72	POSITIVE/NEGATIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	33 + 24 + 25 = 82	NEUTRAL/NEGATIVE
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0 + 0 + 0 = 0	N/A
FOREIGN NEWS	12 + 5 + 14 = 31	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	4 + 1 + 1 = 6	POSITIVE
GOVERNMENT	5 + 6 + 10 = 21	POSITIVE
HUMANITARIAN	3 + 0 + 0 = 3	POSITIVE
LIFE AND ECONOMY	57 + 37 + 83 = 177	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
MILITARY	13 + 8 + 18 = 39	POSITIVE
PUTIN	41 + 24 + 46 = 111	POSITIVE
POLITICS	28 + 16 + 31 = 75	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
SCANDALS	0 + 0 + 0 = 0	N/A
SPORT	0 + 0 + 5 = 5	NEUTRAL

Please note: four sets of figures in tally column – first set for April, second for May, third for June and the final is the total count for the three month period.

Comments:

- Crime – most of the crime stories concern cases solved, suspects apprehended or efforts to crack down on crime. It would seem as though a picture is being portrayed along the theme that ‘crime does not pay.’ The use of specific real-life examples in state-owned or controlled , in order to try and discourage criminal activity was used during the late Soviet Union.
- Crises and Disasters – a lot of attention was focused on the threat posed by SARS to

Russia and the best ways to prevent this from occurring. There were stories concerning natural disasters associated with spring, such as floods and forest fires as well as 'man-made' accidents.

- Life and Economy – many of the stories featured the preparations for and the celebrations of victory day (against the Axis powers in the Second World War). This category also featured numerous stories of cultural value, such as the birthday celebrations of renowned actors and artists, galleries, shows and exhibitions.
- Putin – is shown as being a very active and energetic leader. Many reports refer to his busy schedule of meetings across the entirety of Russia and around the world. Some attention is focussed on the criticisms and goals, which Putin levels at various members of the government and ministerial and departmental heads of the government bureaucracy.

During the months of **July to September 2003**, news transcripts were received for the following days; **July** – 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 30, 31. **August** – 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27. **September** – 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16.

ORT/TV 1 NEWS FOR JULY - SEPTEMBER 2003.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	3 + 3 + 3 = 9	POSITIVE
COURTS AND LAW	6 + 4 + 2 = 12	POSITIVE
CRIME	15 + 19 + 3 = 37	POSITIVE/NEGATIVE
CHECHNYA	20 + 43 + 22 = 85	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
CRISES AND DISASTERS	17 + 33 + 18 = 68	POSITIVE/NEUTRAL
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0 + 0 + 0 = 0	N/A
FOREIGN NEWS	10 + 18 + 3 = 31	POSITIVE
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	4 + 6 + 5 = 15	NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	5 + 10 + 10 = 25	POSITIVE
HUMANITARIAN	0 + 0 + 0 = 0	N/A
LIFE AND ECONOMY	39 + 59 + 28 = 126	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
MILITARY	15 + 12 + 7 = 34	POSITIVE/NEGATIVE
PUTIN	25 + 31 + 25 = 81	POSITIVE

POLITICS	16 + 21 + 19 = 56	POSITIVE
SCANDALS	0 + 0 + 0 = 0	N/A
SPORT	1 + 4 + 3 = 8	NEUTRAL

Please note: four sets of figures in tally column – first set for July, second for August, third for September and the final is the total count for the three month period.

Comments:

- Crime – July 14 was the first indication of the approaching public conflict between *Yukos* and the government. Surveillance and eavesdropping equipment were allegedly found in the *Yukos* building. This quickly spread to investigations of financial irregularities. This has the striking similarity with the opening of the highly publicised conflict between *Media-Most* and the government in May 2000.
- Chechnya – August 2003 saw the suicide bombing of the Mozdok hospital, during which the hospital was extensively damaged and many Russian servicemen wounded in the Chechen campaign lost their lives. The terrorist act and the aftermath are extensively covered, including the sacking of the local administrator, the naming of heroes and the search for those who planned and perpetrated the act. The Chechen presidential elections and the reopening of schools in the republic also received a lot of attention during this period of review.
- Putin – Putin is seen to be very active in his civic duties, such as urging greater achievements from state bodies (for the benefit of the citizens) and initiating investigations into the disasters/crises that took place (for example the Mozdok bombing and the continuing problems with a possible energy crisis). He is shown to be in charge of the situation by being firm, resolute and decisive.
- Politics – in the run-up to the December 7, 2003 State Duma elections, the pro-Kremlin *United Russia* party is beginning to be given a lot of airtime. Although, the category of the news items is often varied, such as financing the refit of a navy destroyer and talking with small businesses on creating mechanisms to protect them from petty officials and organised crime.

6.3 Framing News Content on *NTV*

NTV was founded in 1993. Until 2001 *NTV* was part of the oligarch Vladimir Gusinsky's media empire, but was subsequently taken over by the state-controlled *Gazprom*. The station transmits through 86 of its own transmitters and 103 local partner stations. *A potential audience of 112 million viewers can receive NTV in Russia, the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic States*. Daily broadcasting hours of the station amounts to 18 hours.¹¹⁶⁴

The source of the study material has been provided by the newsroom at *NTV*. It consists of daily summaries of news items broadcast on the *Segodnya* programme, which screened daily at 19:00 hours. Transcripts were received during the period January 2002 until January 2003. However, transcripts have not been received for every day during this period.

Material will be divided into months, January 2002, February 2002, March 2002 ... etc. I will list the dates for material that has been received. Summaries will be made of the main topics that were raised in each of the months. This is done with the aim of 'discovering' which agenda were raised in each month studied, this will enable at a quick glance, to see what news was considered important and 'worthy' by the *NTV* news team and their owner.

During the month of **January 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31.

NTV NEWS FOR JANUARY 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	4	NEUTRAL
COURTS AND LAW	16	NEUTRAL
CRIME	24	NEUTRAL
CHECHNYA	29	NEGATIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	22	NEUTRAL
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	2	NEUTRAL
FOREIGN NEWS	48	NEUTRAL

¹¹⁶⁴ *Russian Broadcasting at a Glance*, National Association of TV and Radio Broadcasters of Russia. www.nat.ru/eng/rb/tv.php, 17 June, 2003.

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	24	NEGATIVE
GOVERNMENT	2	NEUTRAL
HUMANITARIAN	2	NEUTRAL
LIFE AND ECONOMY	17	NEGATIVE
MILITARY	9	NEUTRAL
PUTIN	11	NEUTRAL
POLITICS	16	NEGATIVE
SCANDALS	9	NEGATIVE
SPORT	4	NEUTRAL

Comments:

- Chechnya – news relating to foreign involvement in or about Chechnya was pro-official line. However, inefficiencies and incompetence in the Russian effort in the republic were highlighted.
- Foreign News – most was neutral. Some items were not necessarily pro-government, but were pro-Russian, such as the problems faced by ethnic Russians living in the Near Abroad.
- Life and Economy – much has been made of the increasing hardships faced by ordinary Russians, such as the increased cost of living, the degradation of utilities and social services.
- Military – for the most part neutral. However, the appalling social conditions of servicemen are discussed, such as the condition of military housing.

During the month of **February 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28.

NTV NEWS FOR FEBRUARY 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	2	NEUTRAL
COURTS AND LAW	8	NEUTRAL
CRIME	5	NEUTRAL
CHECHNYA	13	NEGATIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	15	NEUTRAL
EXCHANGE RATE AND	0	N/A

MONEY		
FOREIGN NEWS	41	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	13	NEGATIVE
GOVERNMENT	0	N/A
HUMANITARIAN	0	N/A
LIFE AND ECONOMY	10	NEUTRAL/NEGATIVE
MILITARY	17	NEGATIVE
PUTIN	5	POSITIVE
POLITICS	13	NEUTRAL
SCANDALS	11	NEGATIVE
SPORT	13	POSITIVE

Comments:

- Foreign News – some of the foreign news was reported in a neutral manner, especially news relating to the U. S. involvement in Afghanistan and the ‘War on Terrorism.’ News such as the deteriorating situation in Moldova was reported in a pro-government manner. This is perhaps due to the threat against ‘fellow Russians’ and is not strictly pro-government per se.
- Military – coverage relating to problems within the armed forces, especially issues relating to morale. Cases where desertions have been made public and the incompetence of the military hierarchy in dealing with this are highlighted.
- Putin – comments made about the President paint a picture of him working tirelessly for the benefit of the people.
- Sport – the focus of the increased sport coverage was the Salt Lake City winter Olympic games.

During the month of **March 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28.

NTV NEWS FOR MARCH 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	0	N/A
COURTS AND LAW	10	NEUTRAL
CRIME	8	NEUTRAL

CHECHNYA	19	NEGATIVE/POSITIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	15	NEUTRAL
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	3	NEUTRAL
FOREIGN NEWS	38	NEUTRAL
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	9	NEGATIVE
GOVERNMENT	0	N/A
HUMANITARIAN	0	N/A
LIFE AND ECONOMY	19	POSITIVE
MILITARY	12	NEGATIVE
PUTIN	4	POSITIVE
POLITICS	16	NEGATIVE
SCANDALS	8	NEGATIVE
SPORT	3	NEUTRAL

Comments:

- Foreign News – the news focus has shifted away from ‘injustices’ being committed against Russians in the Near Abroad to American involvement in Afghanistan and the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.
- Life and Economy – news is not so much pro-official line, but more nationalistically oriented. This is so in the case of the trade war with the U. S. over tariffs.
- Crises and Disasters – the theme of natural disasters (fire, floods earthquakes ... etc) and the Kursk tragedy are the main events raised.
- Scandals – a focus has been on political scandals in the month of March 2002.

During the month of **April 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 29.

NTV NEWS FOR APRIL 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	3	POSITIVE
COURTS AND LAW	13	NEUTRAL
CRIME	20	NEUTRAL
CHECHNYA	16	NEUTRAL

CRISES AND DISASTERS	5	NEUTRAL
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0	N/A
FOREIGN NEWS	54	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	5	NEGATIVE
GOVERNMENT	2	NEUTRAL
HUMANITARIAN	1	NEUTRAL
LIFE AND ECONOMY	37	NEGATIVE
MILITARY	11	NEUTRAL
PUTIN	9	POSITIVE
POLITICS	30	NEUTRAL/NEGATIVE
SCANDALS	10	NEGATIVE
SPORT	3	NEUTRAL

Comments:

- Crime – skinhead attacks on non-white Russians (from the Caucasus region for example) and foreign nationals were reported.
- Life and Economy – hunger strikes and work strikes over wage arrears are covered.
- Politics – the discussion on the move to outlaw the Communist Party and the possible repercussions were the subject of much discussion.
- Scandals – voting irregularities in the provinces has become the centre of attraction in the news.

During the month of **May 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 14, 20, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 30.

NTV NEWS FOR MAY 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	4	NEUTRAL
COURTS AND LAW	6	NEUTRAL
CRIME	11	NEUTRAL
CHECHNYA	11	NEUTRAL/NEGATIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	6	NEUTRAL
EXCHANGE RATE AND	0	N/A

MONEY		
FOREIGN NEWS	54	POSITIVE
FREEDOM OF SPEECH	2	NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	1	NEGATIVE
HUMANITARIAN	0	N/A
LIFE AND ECONOMY	29	NEUTRAL
MILITARY	4	NEUTRAL
PUTIN	2	POSITIVE
POLITICS	23	POSITIVE
SCANDALS	4	NEUTRAL
SPORT	10	NEUTRAL

Comments:

- Orthodox Church and Religion – a focus on the activities of the Roman Catholic Church, especially visits by the Pope to the CIS (such as Azerbaijan).
- Foreign News – substantial attention was paid to the activities of U. S. President George W. Bush and the War on Terrorism. Another important news item was coverage of May Day parades throughout Europe.
- Politics – coverage of political in fighting in the Communist Party continued.
- Sport – increased coverage of sport was due to the World Cup Championship in soccer.

During the month of **June 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; 3, 5, 6, 10, 14, 17, 19, 24, 25.

NTV NEWS FOR JUNE 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	1	NEUTRAL
COURTS AND LAW	7	POSITIVE
CRIME	15	NEUTRAL
CHECHNYA	5	NEUTRAL
CRISES AND DISASTERS	11	NEUTRAL
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	1	NEUTRAL
FOREIGN NEWS	21	NEUTRAL

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	4	NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	1	NEUTRAL
HUMANITARIAN	0	N/A
LIFE AND ECONOMY	22	NEGATIVE
MILITARY	2	NEUTRAL
PUTIN	6	POSITIVE
POLITICS	17	POSITIVE
SCANDALS	3	NEUTRAL
SPORT	11	NEUTRAL

Comments:

- Courts and Law – much attention was centred on the trials of oligarchs, such as Berezovsky and Anatoly Bykov (Aluminium oligarch) and the possible outcomes of the trials.
- Crime – the Moscow soccer fan riots and booby-trapped anti-Semitic posters appearing around Russian cities are two of the most prominent incidents dealt with in the news.
- Chechnya – the trial of Colonel Yuri Budanov, accused of murdering a Chechen teenager was still receiving a lot of attention in the news.
- Life and Economy – the rapidly increasing cost of living via the rise in prices is focussed on. One of the main issues is the increased cost of petrol.

During the month of **July** and **August 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; **July 1, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 19, 23, 25, 29, 30** and **August 1**.

NTV NEWS FOR JULY AND AUGUST 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	2	NEUTRAL
COURTS AND LAW	17	NEUTRAL
CRIME	15	NEUTRAL
CHECHNYA	11	NEGATIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	49	NEUTRAL
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	4	NEUTRAL

FOREIGN NEWS	26	NEUTRAL
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	3	NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	1	NEUTRAL
HUMANITARIAN	0	N/A
LIFE AND ECONOMY	30	NEUTRAL/NEGATIVE
MILITARY	3	NEUTRAL
PUTIN	4	POSITIVE
POLITICS	9	NEUTRAL
SCANDALS	4	NEUTRAL
SPORT	5	NEUTRAL

Comments:

- Crime – the wave of booby-trapped anti-Semitic posters is focused on and is coined with the expression *Poster Terrorism*.
- Chechnya – renewed fighting was covered in the news as well as investigations into the 1999 apartment bombings.
- Crises and Disasters – a lot of negative news of natural disasters occurring in Russia and the ineptitude of the authorities to deal with them. Also, findings of the Kursk disaster inquiry are made public. The air crash over Switzerland is also of high news value.
- Putin – although much has been made of the authorities inability to deal with disasters occurring in Russia, Putin distances himself from blame by publicly criticising the efforts of the authorities involved.

During the month of **September 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; 5, 9, 16, 17, 18, 24, 25, 26.

NTV NEWS FOR SEPTEMBER 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	1	NEUTRAL
COURTS AND LAW	4	NEUTRAL
CRIME	9	NEUTRAL
CHECHNYA	16	POSITIVE/NEGATIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	16	NEUTRAL

EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0	N/A
FOREIGN NEWS	30	NEUTRAL/POSITIVE
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	4	NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	3	NEUTRAL
HUMANITARIAN	0	N/A
LIFE AND ECONOMY	7	NEUTRAL
MILITARY	4	POSITIVE
PUTIN	6	POSITIVE
POLITICS	17	NEUTRAL
SCANDALS	0	N/A
SPORT	2	NEUTRAL

Comments:

- Chechnya – increasing tensions between Russia and Georgia over alleged Chechen rebel activity in the Pankisi Gorge is covered.
- Crises and Disasters – the peat bog, forest fires and the effects of these incidents around Moscow are discussed in detail.
- Foreign News – increasing tensions between Iraq, U. K. and the U. S. are a topical issue. The Ukrainian election results and the uncertainty of the true nature of the end result are featured.
- Putin – extensive coverage of Putin discharging his duties as President in an international capacity with leaders of other CIS states, especially the proposed Russian-Belarussian union and negotiations with Georgia. Putin is shown as holding moral ascendancy over his counterparts.

During the month of **October 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 22, 23, 24, 28, 29, 30, 31.

NTV NEWS FOR OCTOBER 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	5	NEUTRAL
COURTS AND LAW	4	NEUTRAL
CRIME	18	NEUTRAL

CHECHNYA	73	POSITIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	22	NEUTRAL
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0	N/A
FOREIGN NEWS	73	NEUTRAL
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	3	NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	1	NEUTRAL
HUMANITARIAN	0	N/A
LIFE AND ECONOMY	30	NEUTRAL/NEGATIVE
MILITARY	4	NEUTRAL
PUTIN	9	POSITIVE
POLITICS	42	NEUTRAL
SCANDALS	5	NEUTRAL
SPORT	6	NEUTRAL

Comments:

- Crime – the murder of Magadan governor Valentin Tsvetkov made the headlines on many occasions.
- Chechnya – renewed fighting and the search for traitors and defectors from the pro-Moscow administration form the centre of attention. The terrorist act in seizing hostages at the Dubrovka Theatre in Moscow was given saturation coverage. Putin was shown to be cool, calm and ‘in control’. Chechen separatists are demonised.
- Crises and Disasters – the actions of the Emergencies Ministry in North Ossetia are focused upon.
- Politics – the elections of the regional governors and the outcomes of those elections were discussed.

During the month of **November 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; 1, 5, 6, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29.

NTV NEWS FOR NOVEMBER 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	4	NEUTRAL
COURTS AND LAW	6	NEUTRAL
CRIME	9	NEUTRAL
CHECHNYA	43	POSITIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	21	POSITIVE
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0	N/A
FOREIGN NEWS	77	NEUTRAL
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	5	NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	3	NEUTRAL
HUMANITARIAN	3	POSITIVE
LIFE AND ECONOMY	25	NEUTRAL
MILITARY	5	NEGATIVE
PUTIN	11	POSITIVE
POLITICS	20	NEUTRAL
SCANDALS	0	N/A
SPORT	1	NEUTRAL

Comments:

- Chechnya – news about the hostage taking at the Dubrovka Theatre, which was showing the musical *Nord Ost* continued. Additionally, a lot more coverage of fresh government action in the Chechen province is shown.
- Military – the ever present problem of desertion of conscripts from the Russian armed forces is discussed in detail.
- Putin – is shown in several capacities as Head of State; hosting international dignitaries, discussing terrorism and pledging swift action on the problem and discussing and comforting victims of natural disasters.
- Politics – the deteriorating diplomatic relations between Russia and Belarus are focused on.

During the month of **December 2002**, news transcripts were received for the following days; 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27.

NTV NEWS FOR DECEMBER 2002.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	3	POSITIVE
COURTS AND LAW	10	NEUTRAL
CRIME	10	NEUTRAL
CHECHNYA	27	POSITIVE
CRISES AND DISASTERS	9	NEUTRAL
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0	N/A
FOREIGN NEWS	72	NEUTRAL
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	2	NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	3	POSITIVE
HUMANITARIAN	0	N/A
LIFE AND ECONOMY	57	NEUTRAL/NEGATIVE
MILITARY	15	NEGATIVE
PUTIN	10	POSITIVE
POLITICS	22	NEUTRAL
SCANDALS	1	NEUTRAL
SPORT	10	NEUTRAL

Comments:

- Chechnya – ‘good news’ stories about the death of prominent rebel figures and the government’s attempts to restore a ‘normal’ life in the break-away province form the basis of the news. An increasing tendency to attribute crime to Chechen people is also noticeable. This is contradicted by the end of the month when the Chechen Administration Headquarters in Grozny was bombed.
- Foreign News – items about politics in the CIS and a possible war to occur in Iraq occupy news in this category.
- Life and Economy – problems with work strikes due to poor working conditions and non-payment of wages common. Also covered is the problem of energy companies discontinuing service in winter due to municipal authorities not paying the bill.

- Military – stories concerning desertion in the armed forces continues to dominate news about the military.

During the month of **January 2003**, news transcripts were received for the following days; 8, 9, 10, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

NTV NEWS FOR JANUARY 2003.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURENCES	POSITIVE, NEGATIVE OR NEUTRAL
ORTHODOX CHURCH AND RELIGION	2	NEUTRAL
COURTS AND LAW	7	NEUTRAL
CRIME	3	POSITIVE
CHECHNYA	9	NEUTRAL
CRISES AND DISASTERS	4	NEUTRAL
EXCHANGE RATE AND MONEY	0	N/A
FOREIGN NEWS	50	NEUTRAL
FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA	3	NEUTRAL
GOVERNMENT	1	POSITIVE
HUMANITARIAN	0	N/A
LIFE AND ECONOMY	18	NEGATIVE
MILITARY	3	NEGATIVE
PUTIN	4	POSITIVE
POLITICS	15	POSITIVE
SCANDALS	1	NEUTRAL
SPORT	2	POSITIVE

Comments:

- Life and Economy – reporting on the energy problem, that is heating switched off to towns due to non-payment of energy bill by city authorities, features in headlines.
- Foreign News – a lot of news concerning conflict and fighting, such as the coming Iraq War, tension between Israel and the Palestinian Authorities and the North Korean nuclear dilemma.
- Putin – the President enters the energy supply debate personally and publicly.
- Politics – political actors and factions also join in the energy supply debate, seeming to

be actively trying to do something about the situation.

6.4 Chapter Summary

ORT/TV 1 and *NTV*, both capable of nation wide transmission, represented two very different styles of conveying the news to the Russian public. Both of these electronic broadcasting organisations went through a series of radical structural and ownership changes during the years of 2000 to 2002. *NTV* was initially a privately owned station, the only private station with national broadcasting coverage. The company was taken over by a state-owned company *Gazprom* after a very public battle between the authorities and the owner/workers of *NTV*. Subsequently, there was a reshuffle of the hierarchy at *Gazprom* after the take-over of *Media-Most's* assets was successful. This ultimately gave the government greater control over what was shown on *NTV*.

ORT/TV 1 also went through a series of upheavals during this time frame. Prior to the 2000 presidential elections, the government owned 51% and the oligarch Boris Berezovsky owned 49% (given as a reward for his support of Yeltsin during the 1996 presidential elections) of the station. However, a gulf developed between the interests of the government and the interests of Berezovsky that resulted in conflict. Although the government maintained a controlling stake, Berezovsky was able to control the content of the station due to the fact that he paid the salaries of the top executives and was able to nominate some of the executives.

Debts owed by Berezovsky were called in, after a lengthy battle he lost control and had 'his' people removed. The government installed their choices for executives, thereby restoring editorial control over the station. This was further cemented by changes to the structure in which state owned media and media assets were placed and arranged. Broadcasting media became subordinate to the trusted state channel *RTR* and all broadcasting facilities were put under the direct control of *RTR*. This affects privately owned media equally as state owned media.

Bearing in mind the above-mentioned similarities and differences, differences should also appear in the manner in which the news is framed by the two stations. Both stations have a national broadcasting capability, which also extends to areas of the Near Abroad and the Baltic States. But, do these differences narrow to some extent after the government is able to

exact some measure of control over both *NTV* and *ORT/TV 1*? Is it possible to observe if the news is aimed toward a similar audience or a different one, based upon the content of the news?

I will begin by summarising the results of my findings derived from the *ORT/TV 1* data. This will be done by summarising some of the dominant themes that have emerged from the study of the news briefs. Additionally, I will give the reader an idea of the most common types of story that the news programme begins with, which hints at the relative importance of the topic. The same will be done for the *NTV* news programme.

As the period of the *ORT/TV 1* news briefs progressed, from 2001 – 2003, the nature of the message was slightly altered and modified. This is probably an indication of Berezovsky slowly losing control of the station. Over the period assessed during the year 2001 (June – December 2001) some key topics emerged, in which the station maintained a constant stance. These topics included *Orthodox Church and Religion*, *Chechnya*, *Government*, *Putin* and the *Military*. They were all portrayed in a positive manner and could be regarded as being important or key topics. The topics *Exchange Rate and Money*, *Scandals* and *Sport* were almost entirely neglected by *ORT/TV 1*. This would appear to denote the relative lack of importance attached to this particular topic by those who decide what topics to cover.

The topics of the leading news stories tended to change over time and depended to an extent upon the prevailing political ‘hot’ topic or political objectives. There were some consistencies though, news stories concerning the President are often placed among the leading news stories. Another topic that has seen a disproportionate share of the leading stories is news concerning events in Chechnya, these stories are not always negative in nature (such as deaths of Russian servicemen and acts of terrorism).

During the course of the *ORT/TV 1* news briefs in 2001, some certain kinds of deliberate stereotyping became observable.

- *Chechnya* – the thrust of the news was directed toward demonstrating Russian success in ‘liquidating’ the forces and resources of the Chechen ‘terrorists’. An international dimension, which links the Chechens with international terrorist groups is floated.

These alleged links are pushed more intensely following the events of September 11 in the United States.

- *Crises and Disasters* – a lot of attention was paid to the raising of the Kursk. The initial apparent lack of interest by the military and political elite in the interest of the trapped submariners is replaced by a stated official determination to do right by those lost on the Kursk and their families left behind.
- *Life and Economy* – a greater attention and focus is made of the ‘achievements’ of Russian culture and technology. Those involved in the arts and culture are celebrated and commemorated. The ‘marvels’ of Russian technology are also heralded as being world leading.
- *Putin* - the President is portrayed as being a hard-working and diligent leader who only has the nation’s best interests at heart. He is also used as a role model too, in much the same manner as leading by example cases were used in the Soviet Union to modify the behaviour of the people.

During the year of 2002 noticeable trends emerged that suggested that the topics of *Courts and Law, Crime, Chechnya, Crises and Disasters, Foreign News, Government, Life and Economy, Military, Putin, Politics* were critical or important subjects. Subjects or topics, which seemed to be ignored during the same period included *Scandals and Exchange Rate and Money*. There were two topics that seemed to gain greater prominence during 2002, these were *Sport and Orthodox Church and Religion*.

Topics seemed to fluctuate in terms of relative importance at a given point in time. The manner in which the topics were broached seemed to reflect the official view of the incident or accident, be it at a national or an international level. A good example of this concerned *ORT/TV 1*’s reporting of news concerning Georgia. Tensions between the Russian Federation and Georgia increased in 2002. This was driven by several factors; the war in Chechnya and Russian accusations that Georgia was in some way aiding and abetting the rebels, Georgia’s stated desire to close all Russian military bases in Georgian territory and to send those troops back to Russia and Georgian debts (energy debts for example) owed to Russia.

ORT/TV 1 presented the image that Georgia was a weak and corrupt state that was working against Russia’s national interests and was aiding Russia’s foes. Many stories that slated

Georgia for her handling of the situation in the Pankisi Gorge. Russia accused Georgia of allowing Chechen rebels to move freely between Chechnya and Georgia through the Pankisi Gorge (in Georgian territory), thereby offering the rebels some measure of protection by the rebels being able to shelter in Georgian territory and out of reach of the Russian forces.

This criticism was accompanied by attacks on Georgia's political leadership. The main accusations were that the leadership was weak, ineffectual and corrupt. Shevardnadze came in for some sharp personal criticism, accusing him of being out of touch of reality and being anti-Russian. 'Evidence' used to back up this claim included the demand of withdrawal of Russian peacekeeping forces from Georgia and the closure of all Russian military bases located there.

The main angle of the news seems to be directed at creating and perpetuating what the Russian academic Ivan Zassoursky refers to as *Great Russia*.¹¹⁶⁵ That is the perception and the effort to create a strong Russian state. It seems that the first step in the process is for the political elite to try and convince the public that Russia has the foundations for creating a leading nation in the world in terms of resources (human, natural and technological) at its disposal. It is a matter to persuade the Russian public to believe this, in order to motivate them and bring this perception to reality.

Certain images and stereotypes with selected news topics became observable in the 2002 *ORT/TV 1* news programme.

- *Courts and Law* – high profile court cases are followed in the news, such as the prosecution against the military journalist Grigory Pasko and those involved in the Tsaritsino riots. The consequences of those caught and convicted of breaking the law or threatening the interests of those with power (Pasko) are held up for an example to others. A lot of attention is also paid to the passing of new laws, which gives the impression of an attempt to make the Russian state more 'modern' based upon the notion that it will be governed by a comprehensive (and impartial) set of laws and not the interests of those with political or economic power.

¹¹⁶⁵ Zassoursky, I., *Media and Power in Post-Soviet Russia*, New York, M. E. Sharpe, 2003, pp. 156 – 59.

- *Chechnya* – the image of Chechnya as delivered to the Russian public is also developed over the course of 2002 from what was given in 2001. Limited reporting of casualties suffered by the security forces continues and the reporting of acts of terror in and around the Chechen Republic are covered. Possibly as an attempt to stifle any concern for why the Federal forces have not managed to bring the Chechen ‘problem’ to a successful conclusion, several new news angles are being developed. One of these concerns the restoration of ‘normality’ in Chechnya, such as the opening of schools, resumption of education, transportation and government services. An attempt is made to shift some blame for not being able to ‘liquidate’ the Chechen rebels to Georgia, as outlined above.
- *Putin* - as with the style of portrayal in 2001, the President is presented as a hard-working and honest man who strives for the best for Russia and her people. A more paternal role seems to be in the process of being developed through the use of health and social messages, conveyed via Putin. An instance of this occurred in the area of health. One of the news stories featured the Prime Minister, Mikhail Kasyanov’s pledge to quit smoking after being constantly pressed by Putin to do so.
- *Politics* – extensive coverage is devoted to high level political meetings between Russian officials and between Russian and foreign officials. These meetings are concerned with a variety of issues and tend to give an impression of Russia’s importance (with regards to the meetings with foreign officials) and general good standing in the world community. Elections at the regional and local level are also covered.

The year 2003 (January – September inclusive) saw the topics/issues of *Chechnya*, *Putin*, *Politics* and *Life and Economy* retain their position as top news stories. The issue/topic of *Crises and Disasters* was rated as a significant news item in the spring of 2003. This could be due to the seasonal nature of natural disasters in the Russian Federation, such as spring floods and forest fires. Topics/issues that received the least attention in the above mentioned period of time includes *Exchange Rate and Money*, *Humanitarian*, *Scandals* and *Sport*. *Orthodox Church and Religion* received very little coverage during the period April – June 2003 (*Crises and Disasters* and *Life and Economy* increased its share markedly during this period).

Certain topics/issues retained their position as either a 'hot' topic or one that was ignored or deliberately omitted. As stated before, this would appear to be dictated by the incumbent political elite, who dictate what is to be shown and what is to be left out. The issue of gate keeping seems to be driven by critical and sensitive topics. Topics can be sensitive or critical, especially if they have the potential to affect the effectiveness of the rule of the incumbent power, either positively or adversely. To this end, the filtering of information can be used to either suppress damaging information or to use information to highlight successes or as a form of motivation. Consequently some news topics serve to motivate or inhibit some forms of behaviour, which has been seen in the news of 2003 on *ORT/TV1*.

In an international context, a change of strategy has been initiated in dealing with the triangular relations between EU, USA and Russia. The latest Iraqi war has provided the Russian government some opportunities. The split between USA on the one side and France and Germany on the other, over American involvement in Iraq appears to have seen the Russian government into a game, playing one side off against the other.

Russia stands to gain by being seen to be aligned with the power centres of the EU, France and Germany. Not only is a lot of trade involved, such as energy supplies to the EU, but also other issues of importance to Russia. The eastward expansion of the EU may see the Kaliningrad enclave surrounded by EU nations. If this occurs, Russia needs to be mindful of issues arising from this, such as the current debate on a visa regime with Lithuania and Russian minorities in the Baltic States. This is balanced with what Russia can get from the US for 'supporting' American operations, for instance aid money, and admission to international bodies. It is possible that Russian 'loyalties' will continue to fluctuate until a favourable outcome (for Russia) is achieved or the EU or USA end the diplomatic confrontation.

2003 began with many items relating directly or indirectly to the situation in Iraq. This has changed as the year has progressed and new more urgent matters need attending to. Stories continued along the *Great Russia* theme, extolling Russian virtues and successes in the fields of technology and sport. Crime reporting seemed to lean toward a deterrent message to those who break the law, especially in the field of corruption in the government service. But, by the last period of assessment in 2003 (July – September) the main emphasis had switched. A definite shift to an election mode had been initiated. A variety of stories, which show both

Putin and the pro-Kremlin *United Russia* party in a favourable light are saturating the news. Other political parties receive very little if any coverage in the state owned channel.

Certain images and stereotypes with selected news topics became observable in the 2003 *ORT/TV 1* news programme.

- *Chechnya* – the Second Chechen War is already into its fourth year now. Putin used this issue to help get him elected in March 2000. But, with no end in sight to this war of attrition, it may become Putin's millstone. The fact that currently no realistic viable alternative to Russia's current President exists, may save him from a defeat at the ballot box. The war is framed along the lines that it is part of an international war on terrorism. Chechen rebels are denounced as bandits and terrorists and are dehumanised in the language used, for instance a popular usage of '*5 bandits were liquidated in special operations ...*' (for example) is found in the language of the news.
- *Life and Economy* - the theme of *Great Russia* is alive and well in this category. Russian cultural, sporting and scientific/technological abilities and achievements are very well highlighted. These may be designed to inspire other Russians to strive for similar or better accomplishments or perhaps to instil a sense of pride in being Russian. Either way, it appears as though the target result is to motivate greater achievements from Russian society.
- *Putin* – the President's image as a strong, patriotic and decisive leader continues. He is shown to be making decisions which favour both the Russian State and ordinary Russians. An important aspect to Putin's public image is the continued lack of association with a specific political agenda. By doing this, Putin appears 'colourless' and therefore has a wider appeal in the public because a broader range of people can identify with him. This is due to the effect that people will more easily read into him what they want.
- *Politics* – a shift in political news from stories about political meetings between international and national leaders, stories about domestic political meetings/debates to news concerning the activities of *United Russia* (*Unity* and the *Fatherland/All Russia* party alliance). This would appear to be timed to coincide with the scheduled State Duma elections. The party is shown in a very favourable light – compassionate and concerned about the plight of the 'average' Russian.

NTV news bulletins were received during the period January 2002 – January 2003. As stated previously, a number of significant events, such as ownership changes, took place during this time frame. By the time that the period of study began, *NTV* was already facing significant government pressure over the way in which the news stories were presented. In other words, the government wanted a more ‘government friendly’ framing of news stories. By the finish of the study, it is very noticeable that the government had for the most part succeeded in toning down the news stories on *NTV*. This is especially noticeable with the manner in which significant and critical issues were conveyed.

The following is a brief description of a general noticeable trend in the telling of news on the *Segodnya* news programme. *Foreign News* remained an important (numerically speaking) part of the news, although it was generally conveyed in a neutral manner. News categories that lost importance and status in the course of the takeover included; *Exchange Rate and Money*, *Scandals* and *Sport*. A news item that gained a more prominent role and place in the news was *Orthodox Church and Religion*.

The critical and/or significant news categories that I mentioned before include; *Chechnya*, *Crises and Disasters*, *Freedom of Speech and Media*, *Life and Economy* and *Scandals*. From early to mid 2000 *NTV* took a strong stance on these categories, which countered the government’s position. However, a transformation in the way this news was told began in mid-2000 and by the end of 2000 the news was presented in either a neutral or positive manner. The basic or underlying values and philosophy of the station had been altered by the new financial owners of the station, which adds weight to Altschull’s contention that the media relay what their financial owners want them to. The financial owner is effectively the gatekeeper and the final arbiter of what can and can not be shown.

An important point to note at this stage is the fact that in spite of an initially negative stance toward the government, no such stance was ever directed at Putin. *NTV* news stories portrayed him as an industrious and energetic leader of the nation.

During the study of *Segodnya*’s news programming in the year January 2002 – January 2003, there were noticeable trends in some of the categories. Certain types of image and stereotyping occurred and this changed along with the companies ownership.

- *Chechnya* – the period of study began with harsh criticism of the government's handling of the Chechen 'problem'. Losses, setbacks and incompetence was given airtime. By the end of the period of analysis, the tone of the news was neutral and consisted of mainly the straight telling of selected stories. The new items referred more to federal 'clearing' operations and acts of terror that were perpetrated by the Chechen rebels.
- *Freedom of Speech and Media* – initial news focused on the attempts of the authorities to stifle the freedom of speech and control the media. High profile cases involving what appeared to be violations against freedom of speech and a free press were given a lot of attention, such as the trial of the journalist Pasko. The category had changed the nature of news in this category by January 2003, when news items concerned mainly media events, such as conferences, seminars and award ceremonies.
- *Life and Economy* - early news items featured many stories about negative events in Russian society. Among the popular themes picked up by *NTV* were news concerning the non-payment of wages, the energy crisis and ineffective/incompetent government handling of the problem and industrial action/strikes. There was a change in the way news in this category was told too. By 2003, a lot more cultural news was featured, such as birthdays of Russian celebrities, upcoming exhibitions of art and music.
- *Politics* – early political news involved a significant number of stories involving political incompetence and misbehaviour. Political figures, especially members of the government, were shown involved in political squabbles and not doing much in the way of constructive work. Political intrigues and fighting was a favourite target of the news. Later on, news featured news that gave a more positive impression of political life in Russia by centring on political events such as Duma sessions, foreign and domestic political meetings.

CONCLUSION.

Two of the problems that I encountered in the writing of this work include; the vast amount of information that was relevant to the project and the hectic pace of change occurring in the Russian media over the three years in question (2001-2003 inclusive). These factors necessitated that I approach the topic, *Ideology, Image-making and the Media in Putin's Russia* in a slightly different manner to compensate. I will begin by explaining my approach to the first problem, concerning the amount of available information.

An enormous volume of information is generated in the media (nationally and internationally), disseminated by media rights groups (both in Russia and abroad), NGOs and by interest groups. For instance the Russian government and those aligned with it are taking a much more active approach to the dissemination of the 'official' position on various matters, such as information regarding Chechnya and the Yukos affair, through the use of *infosuasion* tactics. Opposition figures, such as the self-exiled oligarch Boris Berezovsky, are also very actively trying to 'sell' their angle on the contemporary political situation. By taking in all of these diverse elements of information it is possible to get a reasonably good understanding of events, which can be quite complex, especially when the intrigues are taken into account. The volume of information available also means that some events, which seem and are important, have to be omitted to keep the project within manageable guidelines.

The mass media industry in the Russian Federation has undergone an enormous transformation, a process that is still at play today. A variety of challenges and opportunities have been instrumental in shaping the nature and direction taken by the Russian media industry. In the writing of this work, the continual process of change has maintained its hectic pace. Prior to 1985, mass media in the Soviet Union were subservient to the interests of the State and provided ideological and informational support to Marxism-Leninism. They were expected to fill the role of educator and motivator of the masses. Some ten years later, a completely different media, ideologically and structurally, existed in the Russian Federation. Private media empires were being created by the oligarchs, to carry their business and political battles into the headlines of newspapers, airwaves of radio and screens of TV. It was an era of tabloid journalism in many cases, the lesson was learned – sensation sells, the more sensational the story the better. And now, less than ten years on from the mid-1990's, it seems as though the State is once again becoming the pre-eminent player in the media industry.

Ideology is making a 'come-back' in the mass media. In the Soviet era, the ideology was Marxism-Leninism, which was the official ideology of the Soviet Union. The mass media were expected to not only support the ideology, but to propagate it as well. Even during Gorbachev's reforms, where socialism was given a 'human face,' the transformations were meant to fall within the guidelines and principles that were established by the Soviet Union's founder Vladimir Lenin. By the time the Soviet Union was dissolved in December 1991, Marxism-Leninism was a discredited ideology. The possible return of the communist spectre was used by Yeltsin as a mechanism to garner votes and to gather political support. No organised State ideology existed during Yeltsin's terms as President, an era that was dubbed *bezpredel* (without limits). Yeltsin's strategy was to survive politically, which required forming political alliances to fend off rivals to power, these were often acquired by a mixture of offering concessions or mutual interests.

If the term *ideology* can be broken down into the simplest possible form and described as being a system of ideas, then it can be said that a new State ideology is coming into existence. New values and ideas are being diffused from the political centre to the regions and the Russian citizenry. A new focus was initiated during Putin's accession to power and centred upon the notion of recreating a strong, centralised State. A call was made to Russians to work together in a cooperation, to rebuild Russia and make her a great nation once more. This theme has been developed further by creating and reinventing a series of cultural symbols and ideas, which Zassoursky refers to as the notion of *Great Russia*.

Image making has been shaped by a mixture of the use of both 'carrot and stick'. In the past, the use of force or the threat of its use against person or property. Media freedom in the regions is in even greater peril than the plight of the mass media in the main centres, such as St. Petersburg and Moscow. Local and Regional authorities, business interests and organised crime seem to be much more willing to use force or violence in order to suppress unwanted attention of their activities being publicised in the media. Since December 1991 over 200 journalists have been killed in the Russian Federation. Other, less lethal methods of curbing unwanted publicity seem to be becoming more favoured by the central government, namely legal methods – the making and enforcing of laws. One of the manifestations of the upcoming government intentions with the role that they envisaged the mass media should play was found in the Doctrine on Information Security in the year 2000. The State wanted and needed

to harness of image-making power of the media to bring about the vision of the reinvigorated centralised State.

During the 1999 – 2000 electoral cycle there were two distinct sets of images being cycled in the state owned or controlled media, the images that related to Russian identity and statehood that was going to be something to be proud of once more. A second set of images that was cycled in Russia during this time was the creation of Putin and his public personality. Putin needed to have his identity established and for any associations with his predecessor and patron Yeltsin, to be removed from the mind of the Russian public. For this to be successful, Putin needed to be perceived as an opposite to some of Yeltsin's well known qualities. To fulfil this requirement Putin was portrayed as being physically active and leading a healthy lifestyle (does not smoke or drink and is an active sportsman), sophisticated and educated (has a law degree and speaks foreign languages) and came from a relatively trusted Soviet institution (KGB were perceived as being among the least corrupt of Soviet institutions).

These images can be divided into Putin the leader and Putin the person. As a leader of a nation such as Russia, some expectations exist relating to certain necessary stereotypical images for the 'job' to be done well. The position of President, places a person in charge of politics of a large and diverse nation and in control of the considerable military forces (as Commander-in-Chief of the defence forces). With the exception of the Kursk incident in August 2000, Putin is seen to be active and in control of crises and political life. *TV I* news sends images of Putin directing government ministers actions and publicly demanding answers and holding them to account for the handling of crises. An example of this is the annual winter energy crisis. In autumn of each year a focus is made upon the problem of municipal authorities not paying their energy supply bills to energy companies. The energy companies respond to this by shutting off the energy supply to towns for non-payment during the winter. As a result, the situation can cause deaths as a result of hypothermia. This has become an important political issue that has been present for some time. During early autumn 2003, Putin was shown summoning government ministers in an effort that seemed to be aimed at minimising the effects of this looming crisis. The Emergencies Ministry minister was given tasks, which included ensuring that adequate reserve supplies were available. In this light Putin is seen to be active and interested in the welfare of ordinary people and to be directing governmental resources to resolving this problem. He is also seen as being intolerant of no or poor responses by the government and bureaucracy to societal problems.

Putin's ability to relate to and mix with foreign guests and travelling abroad to conduct Russia's business are the focus of media attention too. As mentioned previously, Putin's knowledge of foreign languages gives him a certain educated and sophisticated air, a public display of this was his addressing the German parliament in German and his use of English language in his recent trip to the UK. A paternal aspect is played by Putin too, such as his message that a healthy body leads to a healthy mind when urging citizens to engage in physical exercise or the case where the Prime Minister is lectured by the President to quit smoking on the national news. Some of his publicly displayed characteristics that seem to appeal to the female constituency are; non-smoker, non-drinker, hard working, cultured, sophisticated, caring and compassionate (listens to ordinary peoples' problems – reinforced by the annual December TV call-in question sessions). The First Lady, Lyudmila Putina is also taking a greater role in political life and has had her profile raised in a supporting role of Russian culture (especially pertaining to the language debate).

Great Russia refers to the use of image and symbols that are significant or invoke meaning in the realm of Russian identity. The break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 also meant that some 280 million people needed to search for or establish an identity that was not Soviet. This is not a new question for the Russian people and has been in the process for centuries. During Yeltsin's presidency there was no concerted effort to search for 'Russianess' apart from the sporadic use of some aspects, such as the Russian Orthodox Church. The focus of the administration was on its own political survival, therefore the use of symbols was used to garner support. As a consequence of this focus, societal cohesion and direction was woefully lacking. Matters changed in the 1999 – 2000 electoral cycle, when Yeltsin needed a nominated successor to win the elections, which would also secure his legacy when he was President. The selected use of symbols and meaning was initially executed as an election ploy to lift Putin's appeal to the voting public. However, this aspect has matured and developed to embrace broader goals and objectives for Russian society.

With the passing of more time in office, the Putin administration has become more experienced and entrenched. The centres of cultural production are in the process of being mobilised; beginning with the media, then extending into other branches such as religion, the armed forces and the education system. This process is using a mixture of symbols and meaning from both the Soviet and Imperial period, selective periods of history and symbols that have great achievements associated with them are being recycled in contemporary society

in the manner of Baudrillard's theories of simulation and simulacra, where the distinction between image and reality becomes blurred. Life for the majority of Russians has been very difficult, officially some 30 – 40 million people live below the poverty line. The *Great Russia* phenomena is not about nostalgia for the Soviet Union or about attempting to recreate the Soviet Union, but about forging the will of the nation's people toward strengthening the State and as has been said so often before, about once again making Russian capable of making great achievements. This is being done by firstly attempting to re-establish a collective mentality in society, which makes the process of motivating and directing politically designed goals for society. A process that is realised by creating a common heritage, so that the people have something in common to bind them together, such as culture, religion and history to name a few of the possible elements. State media provide support in this sphere, state TV devotes a lot of time to Russian achievements in the areas of the arts, medicine, technology and sport where an emphasis is placed upon Russian superiority or competitiveness in these and other fields.

As the Putin administration has become more established and felt more secure with their political position, a new wave of images started to be directed toward both the Russian public and a wider international audience. A technique that has been dubbed as *Managed Democracy* was launched, the appearance of pluralistic politics. This facet of contemporary Russian politics has been executed most notably through the media. Allies of the administration and those who appear to have close links have established NGOs and media organisations, Gleb Pavlovsky founded the *Foundation for Effective Politics* (which had a significant media branch at one point), *Media Soyuz* was founded with governmental funds and was heralded as a worthy alternative to the *Russian Union of Journalists*. On the surface, the impression is that pluralism of opinion exists and flourishes in all aspects of society – the media and politics especially. Elements of pluralism do exist in the media, this is evidenced by conflict, there would be no conflict if all media were under total control of one interest group. There is less pluralism in some forms of mass media than others, for instance national TV is state controlled. Once again, the informal rules (and unwritten) that are understood by media workers and were a feature of the Soviet system (in the pre-*perestroika* era) are returning. The issues that are raised or debated in the mass media appear to be non-critical issues, critical issues that could affect the survivability of the dominant political force are left alone as a rule. It has become a question of freedom of opinion and not information, it could be argued that

opinion is based on information, so therefore there could be an eventual convergence between information and opinion in the future.

Internet usage is on the increase in Russia, but the current rate is still well below many other countries in the Central and Eastern European region. This is due in part to the Soviet legacy, which concentrated on heavy industry and neglected the high technology sector. A result of this is a poorly developed communication infrastructure that is in need of massive investment. The majority of Internet usage is found in the main urban centres, however, recent studies have shown a rapidly increasing rate of use in the regions. Some political opposition that has been squeezed out of the conventional media (papers, TV and radio) have relocated and found themselves a niche in cyberspace. Such growth and potential, which can be found on the Internet has caught the interest of the government who are both trying to increase the rate of use and control what is on the Internet.

The media business has become more focused on broadcast and electronic media. Falling readership of national newspapers has been highlighted by studies conducted by academic and media industry researchers. In 1990 national newspapers had runs of 8-14 million. The weekly *Argumenty I Fakty* reached a peak circulation of 32 million copies. By 1994, although the number of newspapers was approximately constant, total print run had almost been halved. The number of different national newspapers grew from 43 in 1990, to 222 in 1992 and 285 in 1999. However, many of these new papers have little or no serious political content. National newspapers did experience some growth in readership in the second half of the 1990's. Local newspapers faced another fate. The print run for local newspapers declined until 1993, but by 1997 the print run was 2/3 above the 1990 level.¹¹⁶⁶

Recent research appears to show that newspaper readership is continuing to decline, with some notable exceptions in the newspaper industry. A Gallup Media National Readership Survey showed that daily newspaper readers were declining. In 1999 the dailies had 4.7 million readers, but by July 2003 this figure had dropped to 3.3 million. *Izvestiya* suffered the greatest readership loss in this period, dropping from 843, 000 to 319, 000. *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, the most popular federal daily readership declined from 2, 147, 000 to 1, 778, 000. *Sovetski Sport*, on a more cheerful note actually increased its readership base by 27% during

¹¹⁶⁶ Dubin, B. V., *The Changing Shape of Russian Media*, Research and Analytical Supplement, JRL #6309, 15 June, 2002.

this period.¹¹⁶⁷ Broken down into a year by year basis the gradual decline is more easily appreciated.

YEAR	READERSHIP	AS % OF RUSSIANS OVER 16 YEARS OLD
1999	4, 795, 400	8.9
2000	4, 178, 000	7.9
2001	3, 838, 200	7.2
2002	3, 517, 400	6.6
2003	3, 324, 100	6.3

NOTE: 2003 figures cover the period from March – June 2003.¹¹⁶⁸

Differing views have been put forward to explain the decline in newspaper readership. The Managing Director of the Russian Academy of Sciences Sociology Institute *Sotsioekspertiza* Research Centre, Mikhail Chernysh told *Kommersant* the reasons why he thought the decline has occurred.

“General stabilisation within the country, the reduction in the number of risks which people could find out about in the press, the increased level of competition with other mass media, mainly television and the emergence of the Internet. The young generation increasingly prefers using the Internet as its window on the world, and when we ask young people why they don’t buy newspapers, they reply that everything that they need is on the Net.”¹¹⁶⁹

Yelena Vartanova, Deputy Dean of Moscow University’s School of Journalism holds a different opinion on this matter.

“The tradition of reading newspapers on the Internet is helping the revive newspapers, and not to attract increasing numbers of people to the Internet. The daily press readership in Russia is declining because such is the global

¹¹⁶⁷ *Russia: Main Newspapers Readership Falling*, *Kommersant* (BBC Monitoring), 17 October, 2003. JRL #7377, 21 October, 2003.

¹¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶⁹ *Russia: Main Newspapers Readership Falling*, *Kommersant* (BBC Monitoring), 17 October, 2003. JRL #7377, 21 October, 2003.

trend, added to which are our country's special peculiarities – the tradition of newspaper reading has died out, no efficient newspaper delivery system has been created, and newspapers have not finalised their formats.”¹¹⁷⁰

Other forms of print media have faced a similar decline to the national newspaper category. Magazines are a category that has been even more adversely affected by a downturn than national newspapers. Between 1990 and 1999 the total number of different magazines more than doubled to 2546. By 1995 though, the total print run was 6% of the 1990. There was a slight improvement in the print run in the later part of the 1990's, but it was still only 20% of the 1990 level. Books are another form of print media that has faced the problem of increasing diversity, but reducing print runs. According to *VTsIOM* the number of titles in 1990 was 41, 234, which increased to 50, 085 in the year 2000. The average print run fell drastically in this time period, from 38, 000 in 1990 to 8000 in 2000.¹¹⁷¹

The number of radio stations during the period 1997-2002 increased significantly, over 900 radio licences were granted during this period. There were some 30 radio stations in Moscow alone.¹¹⁷² An urban survey that was conducted in October 2000 showed that 68% of respondents listened to the radio and 91% watched TV every day. Other results that emerged were; only 2% watched TV less than twice a week and 1/3 of respondents leave their TV sets on all day long.¹¹⁷³ An advantage, for the sender of a message is that TV provides a medium where a uniform message can be broadcast simultaneously across a vast area. As a consequence of this asset, the battle for control of the mass media has started and centred around broadcasting media in particular. Broadcast media are considered to be the most influential medium of communication by the political and economic elite. The struggle for control of *NTV*, *TV 6* and *TVS* exemplify the importance attached to the perceived power of persuasion of information that is disseminated by TV.

¹¹⁷⁰ *Russia: Main Newspapers Readership Falling*, Kommersant (BBC Monitoring), 17 October, 2003. JRL #7377, 21 October, 2003.

¹¹⁷¹ Dubin, B. V., *The Changing Shape of Russian Media*, Research and Analytical Supplement, JRL #6309, 15 June, 2002.

¹¹⁷² *ORT TV News Review*, 7 May, 2002. JRL #6231, 8 May, 2002.

¹¹⁷³ Dubin, B. V., *The Changing Shape of Russian Media*, Research and Analytical Supplement, JRL #6309, 15 June, 2002.

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