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Фрейминг России в интернет-СМИ Эстонии, Германии и Болгарии: освещение двух конкретных событий

Введение. Реальность социально конструируема, а СМИ играют активную роль в ее конструировании. То, как они конструируют реальность, зависит от производителей контента СМИ, т.е. журналистов.

Журналисты должны предоставлять как можно более разностороннюю и взвешенную картину события, но на них влияют различные внутренние и внешние факторы: их собственные убеждения; социальные нормы и ценности, идеологические и политические ориентации; стереотипы; политика и др.

Названные факторы могут быть причинами для использования фрейминга, включая использование фреймов, которые формируют, изменяют или деформируют мнение читателей о субъекте, например, о государстве.

При этом создателями фреймов могут быть не только журналисты. Они могут играть роль актора или посредника для фреймов других акторов, например, партий или организаций, аудиторий.

Цель обнаружения и описания медийных фреймов — показать ограничения в конструировании зарубежных событий в журналистской рабо-

те. В частности, сравнение освещения в СМИ двух российских событий позволяет выявить сходства и различия в конструкциях зарубежных событий в информационной сфере ЕС.

Метод. Авторы применили метод качественного текстового анализа. Они сфокусировали внимание на семантических фреймах в заголовках новостей, подзаголовках и основных текстах, включая эмоциональные и оценочные слова. Рамочный анализ – метод для анализа содержания новостей, который проводится в тесной связи с текстами и их контекстами, т.е. при анализе каждого фрейма рассматривался также контекст.

Акцент в исследовании сделан на самых популярных новостных порталах Эстонии (*ERR, DELFI, Postimees, Õhtuleht*). Порталы Германии (*Deutsche Welle*) и Болгарии (*News.bg*) выбраны для сравнения с интернет-СМИ Эстонии, чтобы найти общие черты и/или различия во фрейминге в связи с доминирующими и менее заметными фреймами. Поскольку исторические, культурные и экономические связи России с Эстонией, Германией и Болгарией различаются, авторы предположили, что освещение России в СМИ этих стран может также различаться.

Для рамочного анализа были отобраны статьи, посвященные двум событиям, которые различаются по охвату и характеру (чтобы определить повторяющиеся фреймы) и которые представляют интерес для стран-соседей и мира в целом: взрыв в Архангельской области 8 августа 2019 г. (далее «Взрыв») и Восточный экономический форум во Владивостоке с 4 по 6 сентября 2019 г. (далее «Форум»).

Результаты. Доминирующие фреймы в статьях о Взрыве:

1. Фрейм «Соккрытие правды», утверждающий, что российские власти скрывают информацию, особенно при инцидентах с оружием.
2. Фрейм «Беспорядок в стране», видящий Россию как «33 несчастья», где царит беспорядок в государстве и/или в отдельных сферах жизни.
3. Фрейм «Ядерная угроза», утверждающий, что Россия опасна из-за своих атомных проектов, что часто ассоциируется с катастрофой в Чернобыле.

Менее заметные фреймы:

1. Фрейм «Путин как магнит», уравнивающий Путина с Россией и наоборот, акцентируя внимание на магнетизме персоналии Путина для новостей — привлечение читателей фамилией Путина в заголовке.
2. Фрейм «Ненужная гонка вооружений», оперирующий аргументами, что разработка новых видов оружия России не нужна.
3. Фрейм «Поиски виноватого», демонстрирующий активные поиски виноватого в России, которые оканчиваются нелепыми выводами.
4. Фрейм о «Конфликтной России», отражающий разногласия между странами.
5. Фрейм «Государство не заботится о своих людях», демонстрирующий равнодушие государства к гражданам.

Авторы отмечают, что у порталов нет фактических знаний о Взрыве, и конструкции о событии тоже не добавляют ясности для читателей.

Внимание аудитории в новостях о Форуме привлекалось известностью участников. Поэтому фрейм «Путин как магнит» был доминирующим. Однако были использованы и другие:

1. «Наклеивание ярлыков» — наложение на кого-либо образа из своего убеждения, с выбором стороны в политическом смысле.

2. «Плохой парень» — Россия как внешнеполитический игрок, с которым не хотят вести дело.

3. «Насилие» — власти РФ используют бессмысленное насилие против протестующих.

Журналисты реже являются авторами фреймов, особенно если основная информация, как следует из анализа, поступает из агентств новостей (в том числе информация российских организаций) или международных медиаканалов, а также из российских СМИ (в том числе оппозиционных).

Заключение. Анализ демонстрирует наличие фреймов о России на всех изученных порталах (меньше на *Deutsche Welle*) и позволяет увидеть некоторые паттерны в трактовке российских событий новостными СМИ Эстонии, Германии и Болгарии. Авторы выяснили, что некоторые фреймы широко использовались при конструировании обоих событий. Доминирующими были: «Путин как магнит», «Соккрытие правды», «Беспорядок в стране» и «Ядерная угроза».

Поскольку фреймы были аналитически выделены из освещения двух конкретных событий, их следует трактовать с осторожностью. Они не репрезентативны в отношении всех событий в России. Для обобщений потребуются дальнейший анализ. Однако выявленные фреймы можно использовать как основу для выстраивания более детальных классификаций.

Ключевые слова. Социальный конструкционизм, новостной портал, журналистика.

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Framing Russia in the Estonian, German, and Bulgarian Online Media: Coverage of Two Concrete Events

Abstract. The article provides a short theoretical discussion of framing in news and its role in the construction of reality. They present their approach to frame analysis by showcasing the coverage of two concrete events (the explosion in Arkhangelsk Oblast on August 8, 2019; the Eastern Economic Forum, that took place in Vladivostok on 4–6 September 2019) in Russia by the Estonian, German, and Bulgarian online media, with an emphasis on the Estonian news portals. The analysis rests on the assumption that individual members of society base their actions on the meanings that different events have to them; thus, an analysis of media constructions can explain people's attitudes to specific social phenomena. Journalists play a crucial role in the formation of public attitudes towards the events that take place outside the country borders.

Journalistic framing is based on the choices journalists make guided by their professional standards. It is demonstrated that the journalists working for the news portals under discussion generally use a rather narrow scope of frames in picturing Russia. On the one hand, these frames indicate limited access to information, while on the other hand, the use of frames by the journalists indicates their intention to attract the readership's attention, the need to present the reality in a simplified and easily understandable form, etc.

The authors concluded that their findings indicate certain trends in framing Russia in the traditional EU online media, and argue for the necessity to pay more attention to the selection of information in online media newsrooms.

Keywords. Social constructionism, news portal, journalism.

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Introduction

According to the theory of social constructionism, reality is socially constructed [1]. The media play an active role in the process, which can be compared with other sources of social reality [2, p. 34–35]. However, “mass media do not provide accurate information to create a realistic picture” [3, p. 151] and “cannot be considered as a neutral intermediary between the event and the observer, between the creators and consumers” [4, p. 74]. The way the media construct reality obviously depends on the producers of the media content i.e., journalists.

News journalists should use relevant and verified information sources and select what to publish and disseminate from the information inflow (press releases, news from news agencies, etc.) in compliance with the standards and ethics of professional journalism¹ (see also [5]).

At the same time, journalists are influenced by various internal and external factors:

- their own beliefs [6, p. 74];
- social norms and values, ideological or political affiliations [7];
- stereotypes [8, p. 17; 9];
- the political factor that may influence the selection of frames in some cases, where a journalist loyal to the government or government-controlled media has to adapt to the interests of the state and its leaders [10];

– self-censorship [11, p. 12] and tacit censorship [12] related to the political factor indicated above;

– market pressure for journalists of privately owned media e.g., click-bate news headlines [13; 14];

– organizational pressures and constraints, journalistic routines [7], lack of time (especially in online media) [15, p. 51] and other resources [16];

– desire to reduce the complexity of reality to make it easily explainable by framing [17], so that journalists can use the frames that are well-known both to them and to their readership as regular templates, without a need to create additional content for producing news;

– professional and personal characteristics of the communicator (in our case, the journalist), including his or her perceptions of objectivity and understanding of professional aims and tasks, common and professional “rules of the game”, his or her professional story, etc. [18].

The above-listed factors impact the outcomes of journalists’ everyday work. These factors may be the reasons for the use of emotional and imprecise vocabulary, use of vague words for unreliable news sources, and framing [19], including the use of frames that form, transform or deform the opinion of the readers on the subject, for example, a country [20, p. 62]. In such cases, the media play an important role in how the news is interpreted by using rational and manipulative technologies — and both are realized by using frames [21, p. 414].

¹ Communication Studies: Journalism Ethics and Standards // University of Washington Libraries. URL: <https://guides.lib.uw.edu/research/commstudies/ethics>.

There are many different approaches in explaining the meanings of *to frame*, *a frame*, *framing* and *frame/framing analysis* (for a review, see: Bodrunova [17], Franzosi & Vicari [22], Kazakov [10], Matthes [23], inter alia). We use Entman's classic definition of framing that essentially involves selection and salience: "to frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described" [24, p. 52] (emphasis in original). It means that when certain aspects of an event are presented, other aspects may be ignored; several characteristics of an event remain hidden or will be removed from the construction. Entman claims that frames define problems, diagnose causes, make moral judgments, and suggest solutions [ibid.]. Framing is the concept that asserts the presence of elements in media text(s) that form the frame of perception and interpretation [25]. A frame is the form in which reality is presented by the media. Hence, any frame initially carries not only the imprint of subjective perception of reality, it may also possess some manipulative potential and be used to manipulate the opinions of the audience [10, p. 87; 20, p. 61]. Frames could be identified by the methods at the intersection of psychology, cognitive science, and linguistics, but the existence of frames and their behavioral effects could have political influence [17, p. 128]. News frames carrying an inherent valence — emphasizing positive or negative aspects of an issue — have the ability to influence public support for policies [26]. Hence, news frames [27] can be positive or negative [28], in addition to many other options.

Journalists are not the only creators of media frames, since in a specific country the media can play the role of an agent or a mere mediator of other agents' frames [21, p. 409]. Hence, there is a difference between framing through media and framing by media [29]. Frames can be created by strategic communicators (political parties, organizations), journalists, and audiences [20, p. 60]. A journalist can play the role of conduit for the source's frame (frame-sender) or the role of the agent responsible for frame selection (frame-setter) [30]. E.g., German, Estonian, and Bulgarian journalists represent different journalistic cultures, and while German and Estonian journalists have acquired an accommodative role in society, according to the study of journalistic cultures around the globe [31], the role of Bulgarian journalists is interventionist-monitorial.

Media framing is like a "dynamic process driven by the journalistic dealings with sources and news values" [32]. Hence, framing in the media allows the journalist to interpret news information according to his or her plan [33, p. 44], whereas journalistic selections, especially when it comes to foreign news, depend heavily on the availability of information from international press agencies or on personal international contacts journalists have. Frames are informed by and, to some extent, subordinated to the social structures that govern the journalistic profession [34, p. 96]. When journalists possess great social and cultural capital, it enables wide use of different sources, including posts by bloggers and social media users, and access to powerful and culturally distinct sources in foreign countries.

We see that the above-mentioned factors may influence the use of fram-

ing by journalists. Published frames may conflict with journalism ethics and standards, because they may have ideological and political influence on audiences in the interests of stakeholders — the government of the journalist's state, other states, politicians, business elites, etc. Hence, the aim of detecting and describing media frames is to show the limits of constructing foreign events in journalistic work. More specifically, the comparisons of media coverage of two events in Russia enables us to emphasize the commonalities and differences in the construction of foreign events in the European infosphere.

Method

In our research, we have used the method of qualitative textual analysis. We focus on the semantic frames in the news headlines, subheadlines, and body texts, including emotional and evaluative words, etc. Frame analysis is a method of analyzing the news content, and it will be developed in tight connection to the texts and their contexts [35, p. 149]. While analyzing each frame, we considered it as a whole (in the context), taking into account all the agents, activities, highlighted problems and proposed solutions involved. We detected who are these agents and how are they labeled, what the problem is and how it is presented in the article.

The focus of our research was on the Estonian news portals, based on the assumption that, being a close neighbor with a significant Russian-speaking population, the country's treatment of events in Russia could be somewhat more sophisticated. The Estonian information space is integrated with the European information space; thus, the German and Bulgarian news

portals were selected for comparison with the Estonian online media in order to see if there were common trends and/or differences in framing in the EU online media in the case of both dominant and less visible frames.

For data collection, four most popular Estonian news portals were selected: the public service media *ERR*² (we analyzed the Estonian language publications; there are also English and Russian versions); a private news portal, *DELFI* (in the Estonian language; there are also English and Russian versions)³; the news website of the oldest Estonian newspaper, *Postimees* (in the Estonian language; there is also a Russian version)⁴; and the news portal of the Estonian tabloid newspaper *Õhtuleht*⁵.

For comparison, the study also included the Russian version of the German news portal *Deutsche Welle* (DW), *dw.com*⁶ (it has 30 versions in different languages), and the Bulgarian news portal *News.bg*, part of the Web Media Group AD⁷.

² In Estonian Eesti Rahvusringhääling (ERR) : official information about Estonian Broadcasting. URL: <https://news.err.ee/584393/about-err-news-staff-and-contacts>; Estonian Public Broadcasting Act // Riigi Teataja. URL: https://www.riigiteataja.ee/en/compare_original/530102013075; funded from the state budget, have incomes and other funding sources (see paragraph 7, (5), 1).

³ Ekspress Media. URL: <https://www.exm.ee/tegevusalad/veebimeedia/delfi/>.

⁴ Postimees Group. URL: <https://www.postimeesgrupp.ee/about-us>.

⁵ Õhtuleht Kirjastus. URL: <https://www.oh tulehtkirjastus.ee>.

⁶ A part of the same name "Germany's international broadcaster", "regulated by public law and financed by federal tax revenue" // DW. URL: <https://www.dw.com/en/germanys-international-broadcaster/a-15703993>.

⁷ Web Media Group. URL: <https://wmg.bg/projects>.

As Estonia, Germany, and Bulgaria have different historical, cultural, and economic relations with Russia, we hypothesized that framing Russia by the media of these countries may also be different.

We chose two specific events which are of interest to the neighbouring countries and the world at large. The aim was to select events that are different in scope and nature, in order to identify recurring frames. These events are:

1. The explosion in Arkhangelsk Oblast on August 8, 2019 (hereinafter "the Explosion")⁸.

According to the official statement of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, there was an explosion followed by fire during a test of a liquid propellant jet engine at the military test site in Arkhangelsk Oblast, and there was no increase in the usual levels of radiation⁹.

Five men died on site and two died later from the consequences of acute radiation sickness as reported by some media channels (the total of five scientists and two military personnel), six were injured¹⁰.

⁸ От скачка радиации до наград медалям: всё про инцидент у Нёноксы. Год спустя // 29.ru. URL: https://29.ru/text/world/2020/08/07/69408802/#card_26.

⁹ Два человека погибли при испытании реактивного двигателя под Архангельском // Интерфакс. URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/672041>; Russia: 2 dead, 4 injured by rocket explosion at navy nuke base // Military Times. URL: <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-navy/2019/08/08/russia-2-dead-4-injured-by-rocket-explosion-at-navy-nuke-base>.

¹⁰ На полигоне в Архангельской области погибли сотрудники Росатома и Минобороны // Интерфакс. URL: <https://www.interfax.ru/russia/672243>; «Короткоживущие техногенные радионуклиды». Росгидромет подтвердил появление сразу трёх радио-

According to Rosatom (State Atomic Energy Corporation of the Russian Federation), its engineering and technical team had been working on the "isotope power source" for the propulsion system¹¹.

In Severodvinsk, 30 km away from the site of the explosion, a short-term increase of the radiation level was detected from 11:50 to 12:20 Moscow time (to 2 mSv/h — with the normal level of 0.11 mSv/h), but, according to a representative of Severodvinsk Administration, it posed no danger to health¹² [36; 37].

Entries to port were banned for a month [38] and prolonged many times [39].

As can be seen from the references above, the event received a lot of coverage in the neighboring countries' media (for instance, Norway detected an increase of radiation level in Russia) and in the international media because of its potential impact. US Officials and some experts suspected that the explosion was connected to the testing of the new Russian rocket 9M730 Burevestnik (SSC-X-9 Skyfall, by NATO classification)¹³ [40].

активных изотопов в атмосфере после ЧП в Белом море // Фонтанка.ру. URL: <https://www.fontanka.ru/2019/08/26/019>; СМИ: двое пострадавших при взрыве в Архангельской области умерли не от травм, а от радиации // Коммерсантъ. URL: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/4075000>.

¹¹ Official statement of Rosatom on its site // Rosatom. URL: <https://www.rosatom.ru/journalist/news/zayavlenie-departamenta-kommunikatsiy-goskorporatsii-rosatom/>.

¹² Official statement of Greenpeace Russia on its site. URL: <https://greenpeace.ru/news/2019/08/08/greenpeace-trebuuet-proverka-skachka-radiacionnogo-fona-v-arhangelskoj-oblasti>.

¹³ Trump says US learning from Russia nuclear missile test blast // The Time of Israel. 2019. URL: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-says-us-learning-from-russia-nuclear-missile-test-blast>.

2. The Eastern Economic Forum (hereinafter “the Forum”), aiming to find more investors for the Russian Far East, took place in Vladivostok between the 4th and the 6th of September 2019 and hosted over 8,500 participants from 65 countries¹⁴. The key event of the business program took place on 5 September: a plenary session of the Forum featured Vladimir Putin, the President of the Russian Federation, Shinzō Abe, the Prime Minister of Japan, Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, Mahathir Bin Mohamad, the Prime Minister of Malaysia, and Khaltmaagiin Battulga, the President of Mongolia¹⁵.

Findings

During the analyzed period, the selected news portals published 123 articles about the Explosion and the Forum (Table 1). The latter received sig-

nificantly less attention from the media, whereas the former got almost equal attention from all the news portals (except the tabloid news portal *Öhtuleht*). Most of the articles were news-style publications. Some were opinions of observers or interviews with experts, but even these included news components.

The publication dynamics show that the Explosion was being covered over a longer period of time, from August to November, while the Forum only during the particular days of the event in September (see Figures 1 and 2).

The frames of Russia were analyzed in all these texts. A frame was operationalized as a coherent view on Russia’s actions, characteristics, aims and relations to others. Each detected frame was categorized by the basic meaning and described in detail for better understanding, with examples from the articles. We tried to find the salience of frame in the headlines, leads, body texts that are published for the “promoting a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” [24, p. 52]. Our aim was to detect the presence of elements in the media texts

¹⁴ Eastern Economic Forum. URL: <https://forumvostok.ru/en/archive/2019/outcomes-of-the-eef-2019>.

¹⁵ LIVE: Putin, Modi, Abe and other leaders participate in Eastern Economic Forum plenary session // Youtube. 2019. URL: <https://youtu.be/SFvSoGdfzmE>.

Table 1

Number of articles about the selected cases in the sample.
News portals are listed in the order presented above

News portal	Articles about the Explosion	Articles about the Forum	Total
ERR	16	2	18
DELFI	13	3	16
Postimees	25	4	29
Öhtuleht	5	1	6
DW	21	7	28
News.bg	22	4	26
<i>Total</i>	102	21	123

Figure 1. Number of articles about the Explosion by the news portals during the analyzed period

Figure 2. Number of articles about the Forum by the news portals during the analyzed period

that form the frame of perception and interpretation [25]. We also focused on the elements of the news that emphasize positive or negative aspects of an issue [26]. These are thematic and stylistically colored vocabulary, stylistic techniques based on a pragmatically motivated deviation from the linguistic norm and its stylistically neutral version, [20, p. 61], clickbait headlines [13; 14], tropes and figures [22] in the news, etc. Very often the headlines of the articles summarized the core elements of a particular frame — in such cases the article headlines are given as simplifying examples of frames.

The body of articles about the Explosion was rich with different frames (see Appendix). Nevertheless, some of

them appeared dominant while others did not. The predominant treatment of Russia in relation to the Explosion constructed the event as “Hiding the truth”, “Disorder in the country” (or simply “Disorder”), or through the lens of the “Nuclear threat”.

The frame “Hiding the truth” claims that authorities of the Russian Federation try to hide some or many facts every time, especially in the context of incidents with weapons. This frame is mostly negative when journalists need more exact information about the situation. Also, they can use it for clickbaiting [13; 14] solely with such words as “mysterious explosion”, “mysterious accident”. Certainly, hiding information by the authorities always attracts read-

ers. The clearest example of this frame can be found in the *News.bg* headline referring to the other media:

*Novaya Gazeta: There are 7 victims in Arkhangelsk, the authorities are hiding information*¹⁶

News.bg, probably, showed the source (Russian newspaper in opposition to the government) in the headline for two reasons: they did not have access to the original information from the authorities and other agents that participated in the event, and the mediation of other media texts allowed them to avoid responsibility for the framing of the event.

The frame “Disorder in the country” shows Russia as the master of disaster, because disorder rules in the state and/or in various spheres of life. This frame, by definition, has a negative connotation. Disorder in Russia is an often-used stereotype in the news media. Accidents may happen in any country with a large stock of weapons and complex military technologies. Again, an example can be found in the headline of an article in the “yellow news” portal *Öhtuleht*. The article is very expressive:

ACCIDENT AFTER ACCIDENT: Seven people died at a Russian naval training ground [41]

Two other accidents, on July 1 and August 5, are mentioned in the text, but they are not in the *DELFI* portal’s article with the same frame in the headline:

In Arkhangelsk another Russian military object caught fire, two people died [42]

The third dominant frame used for describing Russia with reference to

the Explosion, is the frame “Nuclear threat”: Russia is dangerous because of its nuclear projects often associated with the nuclear disaster in Chernobyl in 1986 in the USSR. By deliberately exaggerating the danger, journalists often aim to scare the readership by the headlines and body texts. These are usually clickbating solutions. Consider the following example:

Rosgidromet reported 16 times increase of radiation in Severodvinsk [43]

It was explained in the article that the increase was “4–16 times”; however, it was not dangerous for people [44]. The same frame was used by some other news portals.

Less visible frames in the articles about the Explosion were the frames “Putin as a magnet”, “Needless arms race”; or even less often the constructions about “Blame game”, “Conflicting Russia”, and the frame that claims that “The state doesn’t care about its people”.

The frame “Putin as a magnet” likens Putin to Russia and vice versa. This frame is very close to the human interest frame presented by Semetko and Valkenburg [45], when the accent is on the magnetism of Putin’s personality as a news magnet for foreign journalists — if this name is in the headline, the site visitors are more likely to read the article. The frame could be positive, neutral or negative depending on the context.

It is worthy of note that the frame “Putin as a magnet” was the dominant frame in the case of the Forum. Many headlines opened with the name of the President of the Russian Federation. Vladimir Putin was considered the main newsmaker of the Forum; he commented on many different issues (not solely related to the Forum) that caught the attention of the news portals

¹⁶ «Новая газета»: Жертвите в Архангелск са 7, властите крият информация // *News.bg*. URL: <https://news.bg/world/novaya-gazeta-zhertvite-v-arhangelsk-sa-7-vlastite-kriyat-informatsiya.html>.

analyzed in our study: the peace treaty between Japan and Russia, the exchange of prisoners between Ukraine and Russia, youth protests in Russia, etc. Totally, 14 out of the 21 analyzed articles that covered the Forum had Putin's name in the headlines, e.g.,

According to Putin, Russia would welcome restoration of the G8 [46]

Putin: Negotiations on a large-scale Russian-Ukrainian prisoner exchange are nearing completion [47]

*Putin tried to sell hypersonic missiles to Trump*¹⁷

PUTIN: The exchange of prisoners with Ukraine will be large-scale [48]

Putin announced the imminent exchange of prisoners between the Russian Federation and Ukraine [49]

*Putin: Russia and China coordinate international affairs*¹⁸

The frame "Needless arms race" in an article about the Explosion combines the arguments that the development of new weapons by Russia is needless. Here is an example from the headline:

Explosion near Severodvinsk: "Why is the Burevestnik needed at all?" [50]

The interviewed expert thinks that this arms race is needless, that this is the wrong direction to take.

The frame "Blame game" deals with the intensive search for the guilty by Russia that ends up with nonsensical conclusions. This frame carries a negative connotation or is used as satire in clickbait headlines [14; 15]. Con-

sider the following headline from the Estonian news website *Postimees*:

*Russian officials blame the radiation on Fukushima crabs*¹⁹

The news source for this headline frame was CNN [51], but the Estonian version was more satirical, and an "illustrative" picture of a crab was added. As a matter of fact, only one sample had Cesium 137 in its muscular tissue after the tests had been taken, and the specialists who ran the tests suspected that Cesium 137 might have come from bad sea food.

The frame "Conflicting Russia" reflects disagreement between countries:

*Russia has blamed the United States for a failed missile test near Severodvinsk*²⁰

In fact, Russian official Karpov blamed the US not for the failed test but rather for "unilateral withdrawal from the Treaty on the limitation of missile defense systems in 2002". Thus, conflict frames in the news may be also the result of active journalistic intervention in the frame-building process [52].

Another frame in the articles about the Explosion appeared only once and had a negative connotation: "The state does not care about its people":

*The accident of the "special unit" at the test site in the Arkhangelsk Oblast showed that the Russians are still heroes, but **for the state they are cannon fodder**, Ivan Preobrazhensky believes* [53] (emphasis added).

¹⁹ Venemaa ametnikud süüdistavad kiirguses Fukushima krabisid // Postimees. URL: <https://maailm.postimees.ee/6761961/venemaa-ametnikud-suudistavad-kiirguses-fukushima-krabisid>.

²⁰ Русия обвини САЩ за неуспешния ракетен опит край Северодвинск // News.bg. URL: <https://news.bg/world/rusiya-obvini-sasht-za-neuspeshniya-raketen-opit-kray-severodvinsk.html>.

¹⁷ Путин üritas Trumpile hüpersoonilisi rakette müüa // Postimees. URL: <https://maailm.postimees.ee/6771386/putin-uritas-trumpile-hupersoonilisi-rakette-muua>.

¹⁸ Путин: Русия и Китай координират международните си позиции // News.bg. URL: <https://news.bg/world/putin-rusiya-i-kitay-koordinirat-mezhdunarodnite-si-pozitsii.html>.

DW informs readers that: “The comment expresses the personal opinion of the author. It may not coincide with the opinion of the Russian edition and Deutsche Welle in general”. This article also has other frames: “Hiding the truth”, “Disorder” and “Putin as a magnet”.

Summarizing the frames used in the articles about the explosion in Arkhangelsk Oblast on August 8, we can conclude that the media did not have factual knowledge about what was happening, neither did the constructions of the event add clarity for the readership.

As compared to the Explosion, the September 2019 Forum was an event of a different type. Its coverage was coherent, it lasted for a short period of time in the media news flow, and it did not have any dramatic aspects. The readership’s attention was secured by the particular criteria for newsworthiness — the prominence of the Forum participants. Thus, the frame “Putin as a magnet” was dominant to the extent that it almost hid all other frames in the articles. Nevertheless, the other frames used in relation to that event were “Label-sticking”, “Bad boy”, and “Violence”.

The frame “Label-sticking” is used when anybody is named with evaluative words, labeling him or her according to the journalist’s own belief [6, p. 74] or opinion by choosing a side in the political sense [10], for example:

*Video: In Russia, exchanged prisoners carried their bags themselves, in Ukraine they were received as national heroes*²¹

²¹ VIDEO | Venemaal tassid vahetatud vangid oma kotte ise, Ukrainas võeti nad vastu rahvakangelastena // DELFI. URL: [https://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/valismaa/video-venemaal-tassid-vahetatud-vangid-](https://www.delfi.ee/news/paevauudised/valismaa/video-venemaal-tassid-vahetatud-vangid-oma-kotte-ise-ukrainas-voeti-nad-vastu-rahvakangelastena?id=87366521)

The original headline in the news source, RTVI, is neutral and gives the readership an opportunity to think:

*Watch how the exchanged prisoners were met in Moscow and Kiev*²²

The frame “Bad boy” pictures Russia as a bad boy with whom nobody wants to have any business. This frame carries a negative connotation. Consider the following example from the body text of an article:

*After the annexation of the Crimea other members of the union **threw away** Russia from G8 and renamed it the G7 under the pandering of the US President Barack Obama* (emphasis added) [54].

Naming the annexation of the Crimea as such can indicate the ideological or political orientations of the journalists [7], because the official statement of Estonia and the EU is that the Crimea was annexed by Russia. Nevertheless, without knowing the opinion of particular journalists about the event, it can be interpreted as an example of self-censorship [11, p. 12] and/or tacit censorship [12].

Another frame found in the articles about the Forum is that of “Violence” — Russian authorities use needless violence against the protesting people. This is a frame with a negative connotation, since it presents Russia as not supporting the basic human right to participate in political protests and demonstrations. When no reference to the source is given, it looks like fake news [55], because the reader should not have to seek out the source by himself. Consider the following example from the body text of an article:

oma-kotte-ise-ukrainas-voeti-nad-vastu-rahvakangelastena?id=87366521.

²² RTVI Twitter. URL: [https://twitter.com/RTVi/status/1170303453412954112.](https://twitter.com/RTVi/status/1170303453412954112)

OMON and Rosgvardia officers acted harshly, beating up activists and even bystanders [56].

No source is specified in the article, thus it leaves open the question about who created the frame and reproduced it in the media.

Usually, frames are connected to particular agents in the public field. Journalists, personally, are rarely the authors of frames, especially when key information comes from press agencies or from other international media channels. The articles analyzed in this study often use international (*AFP, Reuters, Bloomberg*) and Russian news agencies, both state (*TASS*) and privately held (*Interfax, Belomorkanal*) as their sources. News portals usually get information from Russian organizations and authorities through news agencies. *ERR* and *Postimees* have often used the local press agency *BNS*²³ as a news source. *BNS* belongs to Postimees Group and cooperates with *AFP* and *Interfax* — that is why *ERR* and *Postimees* get information from them.

The international media like *BBC* and *CNN*, and the Russian media, like *The Moscow Times*, a neutral Russian newspaper published in English or the oppositional *Novaya Gazeta*, are often used as sources. Also popular is the *Meduza.io*, an oppositional news portal based in Latvia; it was used both by the Estonian *ERR* and *Postimees* (two times), and the Bulgarian *News.bg*.

Thus, a frame may be created by the news sources — news agencies, international media or the Russian media (especially, the oppositional media), but may also be modified by the Estonian, German, and Bulgarian journalists

before publication, transforming from “frame-sender” to “frame-setter” [30].

DW often uses its own resources, and *News.bg* used *DW* as its information source on one occasion.

Conclusion

The framing analysis allowed us to see some patterns in how events in Russia are covered by the Estonian and other European news media. As our analysis of two concrete events has shown, certain frames are widely used in their media construction. The most frequent frames are “Putin as a magnet”, “Hiding the truth”, “Disorder”, and “Nuclear threat”.

As the undertaken analysis has shown, certain frames about Russia were employed by all the news portals from our sample. Only the German public broadcaster’s news portal had fewer frames than the articles in the Estonian or Bulgarian online media. *DW*, the German public broadcaster, had more original news about the events. This can be put down to the stronger position of *DW* on the European media landscape, at least in comparison to the Estonian and Bulgarian media. *DW* has a broader network of news sources for getting information, access to high-ranking officials in the Russian Federation, and more general resources such as higher and stable financing and a bigger editorial board with qualified personnel, including Russian-speaking journalists.

There may be multiple reasons for the use of frames. On the one hand, it may be a need to simplify the complicated reality for the readership’s sake and make particular events readily understandable. On the other hand, framing may be the result of journalistic work and everything that comes with it: the journalist’s wish to attract the reader’s attention

²³ Baltic News Service. URL: <https://www.bns.ee/en>.

by clickbait headlines (with commercial goals in mind) under market pressure conditions, organizational pressures and constraints, lack of time and other resources, his or her beliefs (including ideology), stereotypes, political preferences, self-censorship (tacit censorship), etc.

Our findings demonstrate certain framing trends related to Russia in the EU online media. Since these frames were analytically distilled from the media coverage of two specific events — the explosion in Arkhangelsk Oblast on August 8, 2019, and the Economic Forum in Vladivostok in September

2019, they should be treated with caution. They are not representative of the treatment received by all the various events that take place in Russia. Before any generalizations can be made, further thorough analysis of the frames used in the media is needed. However, the frames analyzed in the present study can be used as a solid basis for building a more detailed classification.

Another interesting venue for further research would be an analysis of information flows between media channels to bring us closer to answering the question, “Who is the creator of the frame?”

Appendix

Frames and news sources in the analyzed articles

Link to article	Media channel	Frame(s)	Source 1	Source 2	Source 3	Source 4
err.ee/970141	ERR	Hiding the truth	Yle	Bloomberg	Rosgidromet	ERR
err.ee/970167	ERR	Hiding the truth, Putin as a magnet	Bloomberg	Rosgidromet	WNA	ERR
err.ee/972168	ERR	Hiding the truth	CTBTO			
err.ee/975433	ERR	Hiding the truth	CNBC	USA intelligence	RFE/RL	
err.ee/976535	ERR	Disorder	Belo-morkanal	Meduza.io	Greenpeace	Rosgidromet
err.ee/1006044	ERR	Hiding the truth	Reuters	BBC	Daily Mail	Rossia 24
err.ee/977475	ERR	Label-sticking	BNS	AFP	“Ukrainian source”	“Russian and Ukrainian media”
err.ee/977547	ERR	Bad boy, Label-sticking, Putin as a magnet	BNS			
delfi.ee/87077675	Delfi	Disorder	Interfax	TASS	Russian Ministry of Defense	Greenpeace

Continuation of the table

Link to article	Media channel	Frame(s)	Source 1	Source 2	Source 3	Source 4
delfi. ee/87157571	Delfi	Hiding the truth	The Moscow Times	DELFI		
delfi. ee/87206859	Delfi	Hiding the truth	BBC	Rosgidromet	Russian Ministry of Health	
delfi. ee/87084755	Delfi	Nuclear threat	29.ru	Administration of Severodvinsk	Russian Ministry of Defense	
delfi. ee/87344871	Delfi	Putin as a magnet	Unian	DELFI		
delfi. ee/87366521	Delfi	Label- sticking	RTVI Twitter	AFP	Anna Islamova in Facebook	Attorney General of Ukraine, Facebook
postimees. ee/6752672	Postimees	Nuclear threat	Echo Moskvy	PM	Rosgidromet	
postimees. ee/6753724	Postimees	Hiding the truth, Disorder, Nuclear threat	Bloomberg	Russian Ministry of Defense	NYT	DNA
postimees. ee/6758029	Postimees	Nuclear threat	AFP	BNS	The Moscow Times	CTBTO
postimees. ee/6760117	Postimees	Nuclear threat	AFP	BNS	PM	
postimees. ee/6761961	Postimees	Blame game	CNN	PM	Meduza.io	BNS
postimees. ee/6763260	Postimees	Nuclear threat	Interfax	PM	Rospotrebnadzor	
postimees. ee/6763467	Postimees	Hiding the truth	Meduza. io	Business Insider	Rosgidromet	
postimees. ee/6768969	Postimees	Disorder	Novaya Gazeta	Belomorkanal	PM	Russian Ministry of Defense
postimees. ee/6769716	Postimees	Putin as a magnet	AFP	BNS	Interfax	
postimees. ee/6770672	Postimees	Putin as a magnet	Interfax	BNS		
postimees. ee/6771005	Postimees	Putin as a magnet	AFP	BNS		

Continuation of the table

Link to article	Media channel	Frame(s)	Source 1	Source 2	Source 3	Source 4
postimees.ee/6771386	Postimees	Putin as a magnet	News-week	PM		
ohtuleht.ee/973039	Õhtuleht	Disorder	TASS	Rosatom	Russian Ministry of Defense	Administration of Severodvinsk
ohtuleht.ee/973358	Õhtuleht	Hiding the truth	Baza	Rosatom	Administration of Severodvinsk	Russian Ministry of Defense
ohtuleht.ee/973826	Õhtuleht	Nuclear threat	CNN	DNA	Rosgidromet	
ohtuleht.ee/975866	Õhtuleht	Putin as a magnet	Unian	Anna Islamova in Facebook	„The media“	Attorney General of Ukraine, Facebook
https://p.dw.com/p/3Ngyo	DW	Hiding the truth	Reuters	Russian Ministry of Defense	Administration of Severodvinsk	Rosatom
https://p.dw.com/p/3Nn3o	DW	Hiding the truth, Disorder, State does not care, Putin as a magnet	DW	Rosatom		
https://p.dw.com/p/3Np4k	DW	Nuclear threat	Rosgidromet	DW		
https://p.dw.com/p/3O2HR	DW	Needless arms race	DW	Rosatom	Donald Trump Twitter	
https://p.dw.com/p/3Oi7Y	DW	Needless arms race	DW	Russian Ministry of Defense		
https://p.dw.com/p/3P2ev	DW	Putin as a magnet	TASS	DW	Administration of the President of Ukraine	Attorney General of Ukraine, Facebook
https://p.dw.com/p/3P4Ft	DW	Putin as a magnet	DW			
https://p.dw.com/p/3P50w	DW	Putin as a magnet, Violence	DW			

Continuation of the table

Link to article	Media channel	Frame(s)	Source 1	Source 2	Source 3	Source 4
https://news.bg/world/novaya-gazeta-zhertvite-v-arhangelsk-sa-7-vlastite-kriyat-informatsiya.html	News.bg	Hiding the truth	Novaya Gazeta	Newsader	Rosatom	Source of Newsader
https://news.bg/world/tramp-sasht-pritezhat-po-dobri-raketi-ot-ruskiya-burevestnik.html	News.bg	Nuclear threat	News.bg	Donald Trump Twitter	“Russian media”	
https://news.bg/world/skrili-ot-lekarite-v-arhangelsk-che-im-vodyat-oblachenie-s-radiatsiya.html	News.bg	Nuclear threat	The Moscow Times	Meduza.io	Severnye Novosti	“Sources” of The Moscow Times”
https://news.bg/world/rusiya-obvini-sasht-za-neuspeshniya-raketen-opit-kray-severodvinsk.html	News.bg	Conflicting Russia	Novaya Gazeta	Official representative of Russia in Wien	Rosatom	The Government of Arkhangelsk Oblast
https://news.bg/world/uchen-burevestnik-nyama-dade-na-rusiya-nikakvo-voenno-prevazhodstvo.html	News.bg	Needless arms race	DW	Russian Ministry of Defense		
https://news.bg/disasters/ruskite-vlasti-priznaha-za-radioaktivni-pontoni-na-brega-kray-nyonoksa.html	News.bg	Disorder	RFE-RL	BBC	The Government of Arkhangelsk Oblast	Belomor-kanal

End of the table

Link to article	Media channel	Frame(s)	Source 1	Source 2	Source 3	Source 4
https://news.bg/int-politics/putin-usavarshenstva-raketa-ot-nyonoksa-nezavisimo-ot-vsichko.html	News.bg	Needless arms race, Putin as a magnet	BBC	Rosatom	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russian Federation	Russian Ministry of Defense
https://news.bg/world/putin-rusiya-i-kitay-koordinirat-mezhdunarodnite-si-pozitsii.html	News.bg	Putin as a magnet	„The local media“			
https://news.bg/world/putin-sryaza-abe-zamiren-dogovor-poiska-kitay-indiya-i-turtsiya-vav-formatikato-g-7.html	News.bg	Putin as a magnet	Reuters			
https://news.bg/int-politics/putin-obeshtamashtabna-razmyana-nazatvornitsi-s-ukrayna.html	News.bg	Putin as a magnet	AFP			

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ДЛЯ ЦИТИРОВАНИЯ

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