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Abstract

A quarter century after the collapse of Communism in the former Eastern bloc, a wide range of scholarly projects have been undertaken to compare and theorize processes of media change in the region. One question that scholars have sought to address is: what were the factors that crucially impacted how these media landscapes evolved? This essay aims to contribute to this debate by juxtaposing media change in two selected cases: the Czech Republic (as a best-case scenario in terms of convergence with the Western model) and Russia (as a scenario where convergence has been limited). Based on secondary analysis of a wide range of sources, the essay systematically exposes 11 crucial differences between the two countries and illustrates how these have impacted the processes of media change. The conclusion sets out how these findings could serve as a starting point and source of inspiration for future comparative research.

Keywords: comparative media, comparative communication, political communication, global media and social change, Russia, Czech Republic, media history, media change, communism, democratization, media systems, press freedom

Since the fall of Communism in the former Eastern bloc, media landscapes in the region have taken starkly diverging paths of development. In some countries, for instance the Czech Republic, media systems have emerged that closely resemble Western models. These media landscapes rank highly in the Western rankings of press freedom, provided annually by such organizations as *Freedom House* (2013) or *Reporters Without Borders* (2013a). By contrast, the media landscapes of other post-Communist countries, for instance of Russia, appear at the bottom of these lists. Here, media landscapes have evolved that have been labelled 'Neo-Soviet' (Oates, 2007), 'Eurasian' (de Smaele, 1999) or 'statist commercialized' (Vartanova, 2011).

In the scholarly literature, a wide range of projects have been undertaken in the past two decades to compare the media landscapes of the post-Soviet world and to theorize processes of media change (for recent contributions to this literature, consider: Dobrek-Ostrovska and Glowacki, 2008; Downey and Mihelj, 2012; Gross and Jakubowicz, 2013; Jakubowicz, 2004, 2007; Jakubowicz and Süskösd, 2008; Stetka, 2012; Pfetsch and Voltmer, 2012; Örnebring, 2013; Voltmer 2006; Voltmer 2013). One specific question that scholars have sought to address is: what were the crucial factors that impacted how these media landscapes evolved after the collapse of Communism? Mihelj (2012: 67), for instance, has argued that two types of media system emerged in the region, in terms of how they responded to ethno-cultural diversity: integrated media systems (providing minority content mostly within mainstream media) and segmented media systems (divided along ethno-cultural lines). Mihelj concluded that the path which a media system took was 'affected primarily by the ethnic composition of the domestic population, historical factors such as the trajectory of nation-state building, the presence of recent inter-ethnic conflicts, and the presence of a kin-state and kin-state media that are perceived as a threat' (Mihelj, 2012: 82).

Approaching another aspect of the question, Downey (2012) has investigated how the influx of foreign capital impacts the development of political mass media. Referring to Hallin and Mancini's (2004) three models of the press, he concludes that transnational capital has tended to 'operate as a moderator of polarized pluralism', because media companies with foreign capital have typically tried 'to disentangle themselves from a particular political elite' (Downey, 2012: 133). In yet another approach, Jakubowicz and Sükösd (2008: 20-23) point to politics, the economy, and culture as 'key areas of society' that affect media change. However, they do not provide an in-depth comparative analysis of how these factors have

impacted media change in different countries. By contrast, Mungiu-Pippidi (2008) assumes a two-way relationship between media and politics and presents a circular model of media change. She argues that, after the two common initial phases of liberalization and deregulation, post-Communist media systems could take diverging paths towards either 'oligarchization' or 'competitive politics' (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2008: 91).

While important steps in the field have thus been taken, Rupnik and Zielonka (2013: 14) have recently highlighted the mass media as remaining one of the most 'poorly understood factor[s] in the new democracies' of the former Eastern bloc. In a similar vein, Hallin and Mancini (2013: 16) conclude in a literature review that 'research literatures on Eastern European media systems are still in the process of emergence'. As they lament, to date most of the contributions to this field have been made in edited volumes that often lack 'original research, full documentation of particular cases, or unifying theoretical frameworks' (Hallin and Mancini, 2013: 16-7).

This article aims to advance this literature by juxtaposing, within a common theoretical and methodological framework, two selected cases of media transition towards what has been referred to as the 'Western' model (Gross and Jakubowicz, 2013: 7-12). The Czech Republic[1] (as a best-case scenario in terms of adapting to the Western model) and Russia (as a scenario where adaptation has been limited) are selected. In order to facilitate structured comparison, the article suggests a six-area analytical framework that is then employed to guide the search for causal factors. Moving systematically through these six areas, the argument identifies 11 factors that have crucially affected media change towards the Western model in the two countries. The functioning of each of these 11 factors is rendered plausible by presenting empirical evidence from each of the two countries.

By so doing, the essay hopes to serve as a starting point and source of inspiration for future studies, accomplishing both what Mahoney (2008) has referred to as 'population-oriented' and as 'case-oriented' research. To date, population-oriented research based on statistical analysis in particular appears to be largely absent from the literature on comparative media systems in the post-Communist world. While these latter approaches must certainly be applied with great caution (Downey and Mihelj, 2012: 8-10), they could produce compelling explanations, as a recent study by Egorov et al. (2009) on a related topic has illustrated. To work toward these goals, the remainder of the article is structured as follows. A first section develops the research design and suggests a six-area analytical framework.

The subsequent six sections move through these areas of analysis, identifying 11 crucial factors and illustrating how these have impacted on media change. A concluding section summarizes the line of argument and points to promising paths for future research.

DEVELOPING THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Broadly following George and Bennett's (2005: 73-88) methodological advice on designing case-study research, this section proceeds in four steps. First, it specifies the research objectives. Then, it discusses the selection of cases and the concepts to be observed. Finally, methods of data collection and interpretation are examined.

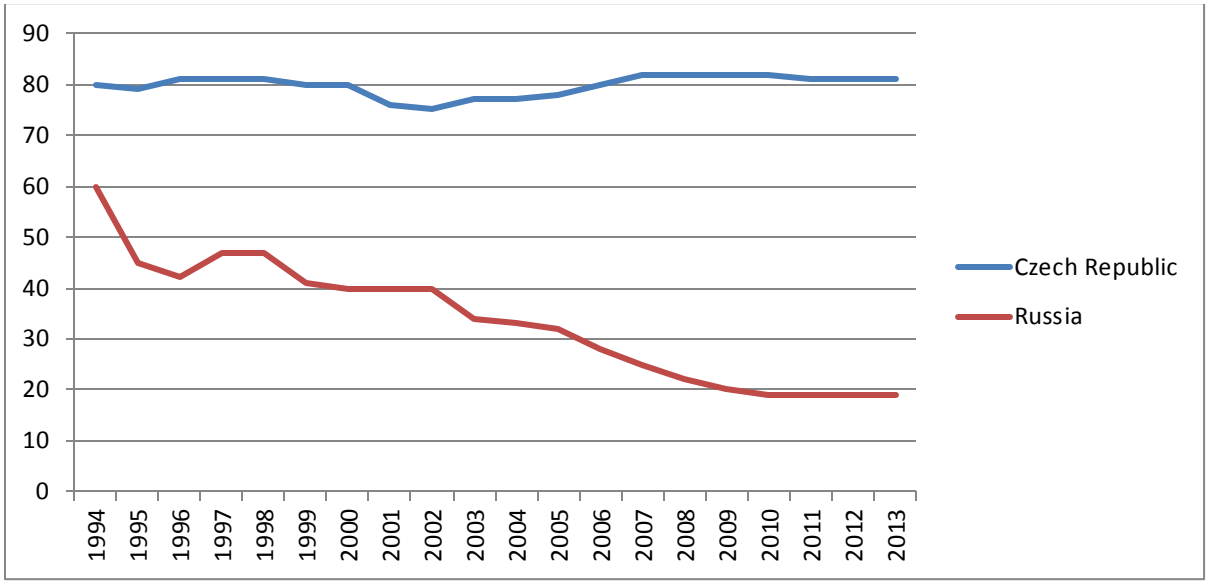
Specification of research objectives

As pointed out in the introduction, this study aims to systematically identify, and to discuss in some depth, a tentative set of key factors that may have promoted or hampered media change towards the Western model in the post-Soviet region after the collapse of Communism in the late 1980s. The article thus aims to generate knowledge primarily of idiographic and heuristic value: it seeks to suggest and render plausible a number of important variables, hypotheses, and causal mechanisms (George and Bennett, 2005: 75-6).

Selecting cases to observe

In order to accomplish these goals, this essay adopts a 'most-different system' design (della Porta, 2008: 214-217) and juxtaposes media transition in the Czech Republic and in Russia. It thus selects two cases that differ widely on what we might refer to as an 'outcome variable': the emergence of 'Western' or 'European' types of media landscapes (Gross and Jakubowicz, 2013: 7-12). The leading 'press freedom' indices provided by *Freedom House* (2013) and *Reporters Without Borders* (2013a) appear to be largely consistent and valid measures for estimating the degree to which different media systems deviate from the Western model (Becker et al., 2007). These indices are presently widely applied in population-based comparative research (cf., for instance, Egorov et al., 2009).[2]

Figure 1. *Freedom House* Press Freedom Scores, from 100 (free) to 0 (unfree)



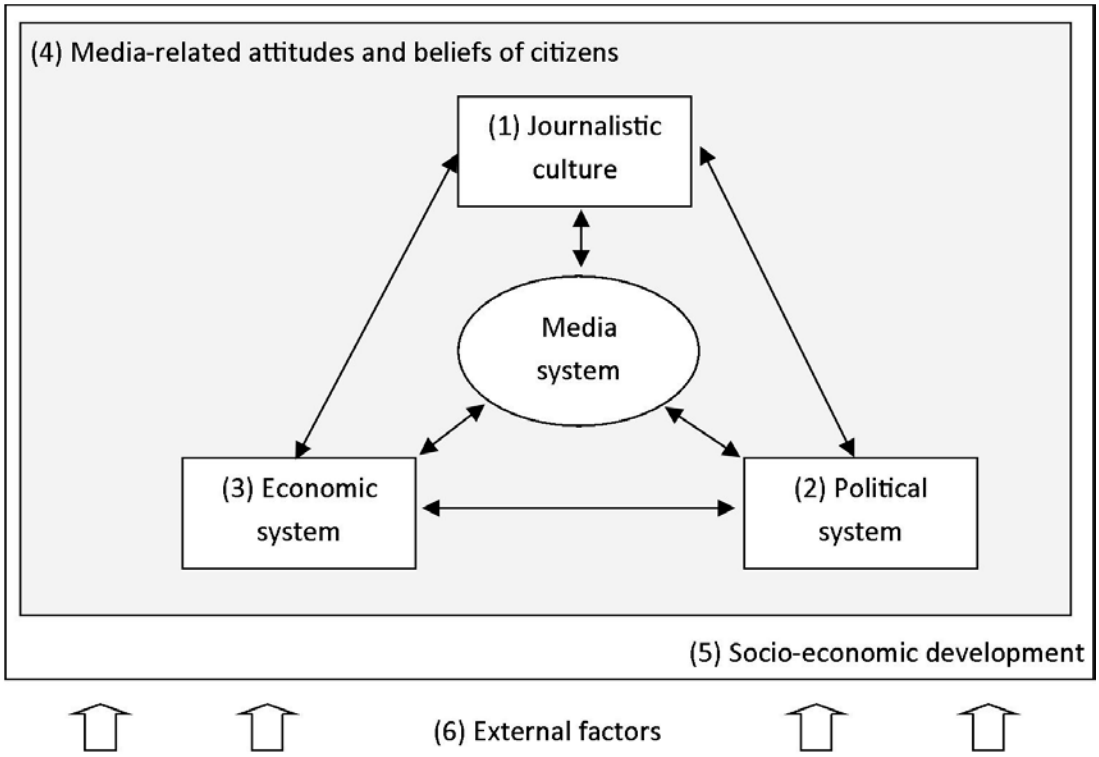
(Source: Freedom House, 2013)

Figure 1 illustrates how the two countries have scored on the *Freedom House Index of Press Freedom* in the past two decades. *Freedom House* classifies media landscapes as free (70-100 points), partly free (40-69), or unfree (0-39). The Czech Republic joined the community of countries with 'free' media systems in the early 1990s, and has not left it since.[3] By contrast, the status of Russian media began as 'partly free' in the early 1990s and deteriorated to 'unfree' in the early 2000s. It is these contrasting developments, and the factors that may have contributed to the two countries embarking on their diverging paths, that this essay will set out to explore.

Specification of the dimensions of comparison

To identify factors that have impacted media change in the two countries, this essay suggests moving systematically through the following six areas: (1) journalistic culture, (2) political system, (3) economic system, (4) citizens' media-related beliefs, (5) socio-economic development, and (6) external factors. This six-area analytical framework (cf. Figure 2) was developed in the course of a larger research project carried out by the author, based on secondary analysis of more than one hundred academic studies of media change across the post-Soviet world (Toepfl, 2011a). As this project found, the vast majority of these studies discussed factors that fell within one of these six areas (cf. Toepfl, 2011a: 48, 66-69).

Figure 2. A six-area analytical framework: Locating factors that impact on media change



(Source: Author; cf. Toepfl, 2011a: 48, 66-69)

The arrows in Figure 2 highlight an epistemological premise of this approach: it assumes that complex processes at the macro level (like media change towards the Western model) are a 'result of complex interaction effects' of factors and 'various forms of multicausality' (Héretier, 2008: 75). Moreover, the approach is rooted in a case-oriented understanding of causality (Mahoney, 2008). It primarily pursues what Héretier (2008: 76) calls 'causal reconstruction'. Explanation is implemented through narrative prose, and causal relationships are rendered plausible by tracing historical processes (Mahoney, 2008: 412; Héretier, 2008; della Porta, 2008; Mihelj and Downey, 2013, 8-10).

As is also visible from Figure 2, this study will not focus on variables that are widely understood as core features of a media system, such as the number of media outlets, their respective audience reach, or specific provisions of media law. These variables can be considered as being captured by what is referred to here as the outcome variable of 'press freedom' or 'adaptation to the Western model'. The outcome variable is regarded as reflected in the scores of a country on the *Freedom House Index* (cf. Figure 1). Moreover, a number of previous studies have already investigated the change in various core features of post-

Communist media systems, for instance regarding ownership structures (cf., for instance, Stetka, 2012) or public service television (Jakubowicz, 2004). By contrast, this essay aims to draw attention to a set of factors that have implicitly impacted media change.

Methods of data collection

To render causal relationships plausible, the essay will draw on the widest possible range of sources available on the two countries and on a larger research project of the author (Toepfl, 2011a). Since the goal of this article is to provide a comprehensive synopsis of factors as they are widely considered influential in this body of academic literature, the space to elaborate on the functioning of each factor is limited. However, in order to mitigate this problem, the essay will reference a range of studies with narrower scope. While most of the cited works are authored by academics, non-academic reports and statistical data will also be considered. In the following sections, the study will move through the six areas of analysis and discuss 11 factors. The next section begins by zooming in on two key factors within the area of journalistic culture.

JOURNALISTIC CULTURE

By journalistic culture, I understand in this essay the professional norms and wider political and social beliefs according to which the journalists of a country process information and interpret social reality. In this respect, a major difference between the two cases resides in the degree of legitimacy that Communist rule enjoyed amongst journalists before the regimes collapse. Czech journalists were far more alienated from the old regime than their Russian counterparts (Kaplan 1991; Olofsson, 2000; Steinsdorff, 1993). In this context, Kaplan (1991) points to the collective historical experiences of Czech intellectuals in the fight for press freedom, which he dates back to the Habsburg monarchy, summarizing their consequences as follows:

> *These historical realities were not lost on the journalists, writers and artists who, during the ensuing years of oppression, both under Nazis and Communists, continued the struggle to regain freedom of expression.* (Kaplan 1991: 32-33)

By contrast, Russian journalists cannot invoke a similar tradition of resistance. Even in the era of *Glasnost* at the end of the 1980s, only a part of the journalistic community called for

unrestricted press freedom and radical democratization, while others remained skeptical and supportive of the old regime (Steinsdorff, 1993: 283-301).

A second difference between the two cases concerns the degree to which institutions of journalism education and their curricula were adapted to Western standards in the years after the collapse of the regimes. In the Czech case, the previous Faculty of Journalism at the Charles University in Prague was dismantled immediately after the collapse of the Communist regime, in 1990. A new Institute of Journalism was created within a newly founded Faculty of Social Sciences, with its professors being elected by students (cf. Kaplan, 1991: 55; Splichal, 1994: 70). By contrast, in Russia, the curricula, training methods and staff of the 30 Faculties of Journalism that operated across the country in the 1990s remained largely unchanged in the first decade after the regime's collapse, as Trautmann (2002: 228) argues. While Vartanova et al. (2010) also highlight the crucial changes that were introduced in many journalism programs in the 1990s and 2000s, the basic principles of journalism education, as presented in their report, appear still to be markedly different from Western standards (cf. Vartanova et al., 2010: 205-6).

These two factors certainly help to explain the vast differences in the professional cultures of journalists as these can be observed today. In Russia, a professional culture emerged that differs substantially, and in complex ways, from those in Western democracies. This culture was rendered visible in the early 1990s in a rather 'hesitant debate on the ethical reorientation and the resistance to reforms within the professional association' (Steinsdorff, 1993: 283; cf. Olofsson, 2000: 31-70). In a similar vein, by the end of the 1990s, a study by Svetlana Pasti (2005: 1) of 30 journalists working in St. Petersburg concluded that:

> *there are two types of professional roles within contemporary journalism, representing two types of professional subculture: the old generation (practitioners of the Soviet era) and the new generation (who have joined the profession since 1990). Despite their polarities, both generations of journalism accept the political function of journalism as a propaganda machine for the power elite during elections and other important events.*

By the end of the 2000s, journalistic culture across Russia seemed still to differ starkly from that of Western democracies. Erzikova and Lowrey (2010: 354) found, in a study of four newsrooms in a central Russian province, that regional journalists had 'retreated from a number of values widely accepted by journalists across democratic systems'. By contrast,

journalistic culture in the Czech Republic adapted rapidly to the Western model. On the basis of a survey of 2,585 Czech journalists carried out in 2005, for instance, Volek and Jirák (2007: 372-373) concluded that the professional self-image of Czech journalists was more or less comparable to that of their Western European colleagues. The study identified four different approaches to the role of a journalist: educational, advocate/adversarial, neutral/objective, and career/pragmatic (Volek and Jirák, 2007).

The more comprehensively Western norms of information processing and interpretation are adopted among the journalists of a country, the better a media system will perform, obviously, on a series of criteria monitored in the questionnaires of *Freedom House* and *Reporters Without Borders*. This holds, for instance, for items tapping into concepts such as 'self-censorship' among journalists or media coverage that 'reflects a wide range of viewpoints' (Freedom House, 2011; Reporters without Borders, 2013). The two widely different journalistic cultures that developed in the two countries can thus be seen as immediately impacting media change towards the Western model.

POLITICAL SYSTEM

By political system, I understand in this essay the complex of institutions that is concerned with making and implementing authoritative decisions for a society (cf. Easton, 1957). At the top of these institutions, after the collapse of the old regime, the new political decision-makers turned out – in both countries under investigation -- to be rather reluctant to unleash the media from political control (Trautmann, 2002; Kettle, 1997). In the literature, similar tendencies amongst new political elites are reported from across the post-Communist world, and substantiated by a great deal of evidence. Mungiu-Pippidi (2000: 12), for instance, finds in her study of *The Failed Reform of State Television in Central Eastern Europe* that 'political groups both on the right and the left of the political spectrum share[d] a common conception of the media as an instrument of political power.' She suggests interpreting these tendencies as a 'rational strategy' of political actors under the given circumstances (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2000: 12). In the case of Bulgaria, Tzankoff (2001: 79) makes a similar point, exposing how the influential position of Head of Television was reshuffled eleven times in the years between 1989 and 2000, for political reasons. In the same vein, Kettle (1997: 52) laments the fact that political decision-makers in the Czech Republic showed a clear 'lack of respect' for the independence of the media. Even the former dissident and newly elected

president Vaclav Havel, for instance, caused a stir when, as early as 1990, he stated publicly that journalists who disclosed state secrets needed to be imprisoned (Prevratil and Perkner, 1991: 81).

At the most general level, measures that would strengthen the political independence of the media were thus typically introduced at times when those in power came under pressure from external actors. The two countries under investigation here, however, differed greatly in the degree to which the political decision-making centre was put under pressure during various periods after the regime change. A first important source of pressure located within the political system was the political opposition. The impact of this factor can be easily traced in the course of Russian media transition. The privatization of the Russian television sector, for instance, was ushered in between 1992 and 1993, a time that was dominated by a struggle for power between parliament and the presidency (Zassoursky, 2004: 3-34; Trautmann, 2002). During the same period, in 1992, the Russian parliament attempted to enact a new press law aimed at restricting press freedom. However, then-President Boris Yeltsin refused to sign the law (Steinsdorff, 1993: 228). A decade later, in the early 2000s, a similarly fierce political competition or strong opposition did not exist. It was in these years that President Vladimir Putin was able to push through a series of measures that tightened the control of the political leadership over the mass media, and in particular over television (Koltsova, 2006: 192-204). By comparison, in the Czech Republic power was far less centralized and alternation of power between different political groups occurred regularly. In this political environment, new media laws could be passed, and even reasonably unpartisan public service media could be established (cf. Jirak and Köpplova, 2008).

A second important source of pressure is the judicial system (which I conceive of here, in a broader sense, as part of the political system). The two countries under investigation differ greatly also with regard to this factor. In the Russian case, the dependence of legal courts on political elites has been widely criticized in the literature ever since the collapse of Communism. The perpetrators of violent crimes against critical journalists, for instance, have often been prosecuted only hesitantly, if at all (Trautmann, 2002: 227). Lipman (2010: 104) even argues that ‘if the Kremlin should not be held directly responsible for masterminding murders, it certainly bears responsibility for the atmosphere of lawlessness in which contracted assassinations are commonly practiced as a way to get rid of adversaries or competitors.’ In sharp contrast, Czech courts have typically prosecuted those responsible for

politically motivated violence against journalists effectively and sentenced even the sponsors of these crimes (Freedom House, 2004). To summarize, the independence of courts and the extent of political competition can be seen as features of a political system that have heavily affected the processes of media change in the two countries. As illustrated above, differences in these two factors impacted rather straightforwardly on a series of normative criteria monitored in the questionnaires of *Freedom House* and *Reporters without Borders*, assessing for instance the appropriateness of the 'legal environment' or the levels of 'violence' and 'intimidation' of journalists (Reporters without Borders, 2013; Freedom House, 2011; cf. Toepfl, 2011b).

ECONOMIC SYSTEM

The economic system is understood here as a complex of institutions aiming to produce goods and services for a society, consisting most importantly of enterprises and banks. The two countries under investigation also differ crucially with regard to a number of key variables in this area of analysis. A first and highly impactful difference resides in the differing volumes of the advertising markets. In studies of media change in the Czech Republic, with growth rates in some years in double digits, the size of advertising markets has typically not even been mentioned as a potential factor impacting media change (Smid, 2005: 668; Jirak and Köpplova, 2008). By contrast, studies of the Russian case regularly highlight the lack of advertising revenue as severely hampering media change throughout the 1990s (Steinsdorff, 1993: 295; Koltsova, 2006). In 2000, a commission of experts estimated the total advertising budget of the Russian media at between USD 1.1 billion and 1.4 billion. By contrast, profits (including state subsidies and sales) were gauged at USD 7 billion (Koltsova, 2006: 37). In other words, the Russian media received 70 per cent of their income from unknown sources. It was only in the early 2000s that the Russian advertising market skyrocketed. In the years between 2000 and 2005, its size quadrupled to reach USD 4.65 billion (Seferova, 2006: 3). By this time, however, Russia's leading TV stations had already been taken over either by the Russian state or by state-owned companies. Thus it was actors close to the state who benefited most from the surge in the markets. The assumed causal mechanism that links weak advertising markets with slow media change towards the Western model is obvious: a lack of advertising revenues leaves media outlets vulnerable to the influence of key political actors, which is widely regarded as problematic by the measurement tools of Western press freedom NGOs (cf. Reporters without Borders, 2013;

Freedom House, 2011).

A second important economic variable also differs crucially in the two cases: the share of foreign ownership in the media market. In the Czech Republic, print media were in the 2000s almost exclusively in the hands of foreign investors (Lambrecht, 2001: 174-175; Šmid 2005: 662; Jirak and Köpplova, 2008). By the same token, the country's most widely watched private television channel, *TV Nova,* was owned by an American enterprise (Open Society Institute, 2005: 529). This 'selling-off' of media companies to foreign companies was frequently criticized by Czech commentators, who feared a 'loss of sovereignty' and denounced these developments as 'legal theft' of Czech property (Čelovský, 2001: 22). And yet, the Western investors also introduced new technologies and brought with them large amounts of capital. Moreover, they were typically not closely intertwined with local political elites but acted mainly from profit-oriented motives (Jirak and Köpplova, 2008; Downey, 2012). By contrast, in Russia, in the two decades after the collapse of the Communist regime, foreign capital was largely absent from the realm of political media. Here, wealthy local elites acquired media outlets. However, these local elites did so mostly not for the sake of making a profit, but in order to use their media outlets as resources in the struggle for political power (Koltsova, 2006: 73-85; Zassoursky, 2004). A high share of foreign ownership in the media market can thus be expected to promote media evolution towards the Western model, since it reduces the power of the local government to 'determine […] news and information content' (Freedom House, 211; cf. also Downey, 2012)

But how could a situation emerge in Russia where economic elites were wealthy, but advertisement markets weak? A third economic variable that differs widely in the two cases helps to explain this ostensible paradox: the share of natural resources in gross domestic income. In the 2000s, this indicator fluctuated around the 30 per cent mark for Russia, while it was around 1 per cent for the Czech Republic (World Bank, 2013). Russia's natural resources were exploited by a small number of large companies which, in turn, generated the billions of USD in political subsidies that flew into the media system each year in the early 2000s (cf. above). By the mid-2000s, for instance, the state-owned gas-monopolist Gazprom was amongst the four biggest media owners in the country (Vartanova and Smirnov, 2009: 129-130). Even non-state primary sector companies that owned mass media outlets typically aimed to cultivate their relationships with political elites in order to secure their revenues – if not their existence (cf. Koltsova, 2006; Vartanova, 2011). Obviously, these companies

depended much less on advertising their products to consumers. Against this backdrop, the existence of a small number of large primary-sector companies can be considered as detrimental to rapid media change towards the Western model, since these can easily be leveraged by state authorities to 'influence and manipulate' media content (cf. Freedom House, 2011). The causal mechanisms here, obviously, must typically be analysed in close interrelation with the factors rooted in the political system (cf. previous paragraph).

CITZIZENS' MEDIA-RELATED ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

The two countries also differ markedly with regard to a number of relevant media-related attitudes and beliefs, as widely shared among the population. A first issue here is the approach to the Western idea of a 'free press' or 'press freedom'. In the Czech Republic, by the end of the 1990s, as many as 89 per cent of citizens believed that press freedom was important for a well-functioning democracy (cf. Druker, 1999: 76). In sharp contrast, even by the mid-2000s, 46 per cent of Russians still stated in opinion polls that the country could benefit from tighter control over the media (Levada, 2004). This latter survey from Russia is all the more remarkable since it was conducted after President Vladimir Putin had pushed through in the early 2000s a series of measures curbing media freedom (cf. above).

Similar differences exist with regard to how much citizens in the two countries 'trust' their political mass media. By the mid-2000s, 59 per cent of Czech citizens said they trusted their mass media. The media thus achieved the highest level of trust amongst all political institutions, with political parties ranking last (Eurobarometer, 2004). While these results appear to be relatively persistent over time, Russian opinion polls measuring the complex concept of 'trust' in the media are more difficult to interpret. Their findings can range anywhere between 5 and 75 per cent, depending on the manner in which the question is formulated (Mickiewicz, 2006; White and McAllister, 2006; Wyman, 1997: 79; Trautmann, 2002: 229). Most importantly, these polls are evidence that Russians have developed rather complex patterns of attitudes towards their mass media. In qualitative studies, many respondents have been found to consider on principle any belief in 'objectivity' as naïve. Many have stated that mass media outlets function inevitably, and in any society, as tools of those in power (Mickiewicz, 2006: 206-7; Toepfl, 2013, forthcoming; White, 2006: 213-14).

These stark differences in media-related beliefs have impacted strongly and in a variety of ways on the process of media change towards the Western model. For instance, these media-

related beliefs heavily affect the decisions of citizens on which media sources to follow and which news products to buy. In Russia, popular magazines like 'Cosmopolitan', 'Playboy', or 'Good Housekeeping' were highly profitable even in the 1990s, while opposition political newspapers hardly ever reached a circulation of more than several tens of thousands (vgl. Toepfl, 2011a: 228). Citizens' consumer preferences thus certainly steer the allocation of advertising revenue, and can thus work in close interaction with the factor of 'size of advertising markets' discussed in the previous section. In combination, these two factors can greatly enhance the state's abilities 'to dominate the country's information system' (Freedom House, 2011).

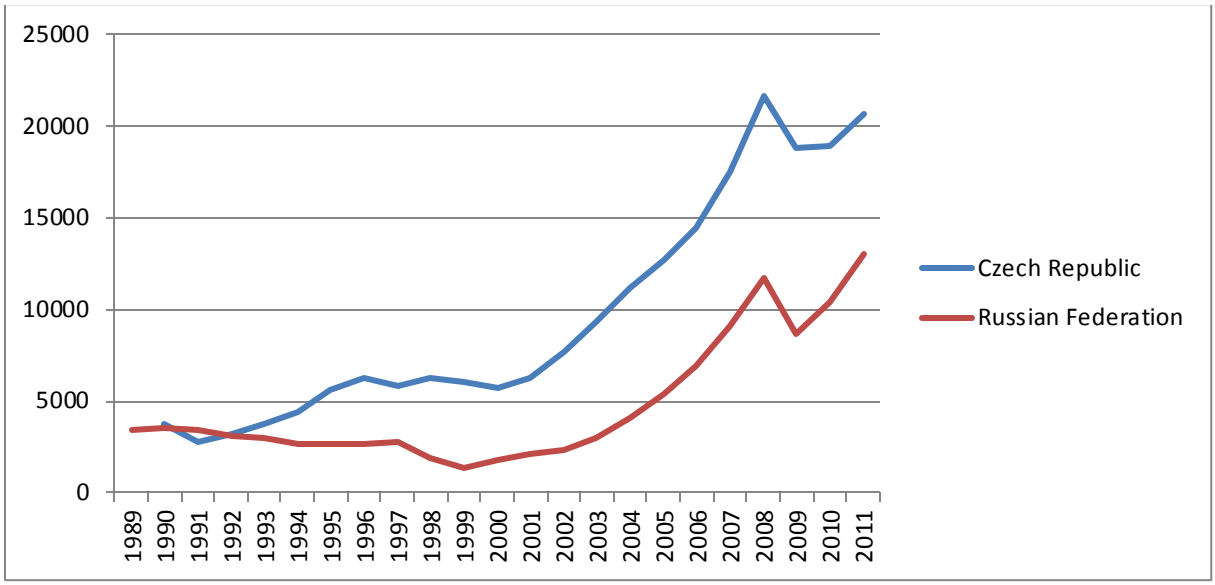
In addition, media-related attitudes have affected the extent to which protest could be mobilized in situations where political elites set out to curb media freedom. In the Czech Republic, for instance, 50,000 protesters took to Vaclav Square in Prague in 2000, when political elites attempted to reshuffle leading positions in public TV all too obviously in accordance with political considerations (Smid, 2005: 665). The Russian media could hardly count on similar support from civil society. In 2001, for instance, when the state company *Gazprom* took control of *NTV*, one of Russia's leading TV channels, no wave of public protests arose (Koltsova, 2006: 192-204). While the demonstrations in the Czech Republic resulted in the removal of the director general of *Czech Television* (Jirak and Köpplova, 2008: 20), the journalists at Russian *NTV* lost their fight for independence. In these ways, the media-related beliefs of citizens have been closely linked with the degree to which state authorities or other powerful societal actors are able to accomplish 'excessive concentration of media ownership' in their own hands (Freedom House, 2011).

SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

By socio-economic development, I allude here to a highly disputed set of macro-indicators developed against the backdrop of Western-centred modernization theories in the early 1950s (cf. Fischer et al., 2004). The set is typically seen as including items such as level of education, degree of urbanization, or availability of new communication technologies. In this brief analysis, I shall focus on gross domestic product (GDP), which is one of the most widely studied indicators within the highly disputed set. Figure 3 traces the development of GDP per capita in the two countries after the regime collapse. All data quoted in the following are retrieved from the World Bank (2013) database. As Figure 3 illustrates, GDP

per capita in the Czech Republic grew persistently from 1992 until the financial crisis of 2008, from USD 2,780 (1992) to USD 21,627 (2008). There was only a brief phase of stagnation in the second half of the 1990s. By contrast, Russian GDP decreased, after the collapse of the old regime, from USD 3,485 in 1991 to a low of USD 1,338 in 1999. Since 2000, the figure has increased nearly tenfold to USD 12,995 in 2011.

Figure 3. GDP per capita after the regime collapse (in current USD)



(Source: World Bank, 2013)

Figure 3 clearly shows how Russian society went through a phase of severe economic depression in the 1990s. In the same decade, the country tried to open up politically and strive towards Western ideals of democracy. The attempted introduction of democratic elements of government thus occurred alongside a severe economic depression and a time of social 'chaos', as perceived by many Russian citizens (cf. Koltsova, 2006: 22-44; 60-72; Trautmann, 2002: 226). In this decade, the media fell into the hands of competing power groups; terms like 'media wars', 'information wars' and 'killer journalism' emerged (Koltsova, 2006: 38). By providing highly unreliable, sensational and corrupt reporting, the media fully discredited themselves in the eyes of citizens. The impact of this collective experience of 'democratic chaos' in the 1990s on Russian political culture can hardly be over-estimated.

As this interpretation of the data in Figure 3 suggests, the development in GDP can be interpreted as an important factor that needs to be considered when explaining processes of

media change. However, there seems to be no straightforward correlation between growth of GDP and development towards western-style media landscapes. In the Russian case, in the 1990s the economy shrank while scores on the *Freedom House* indicator of press freedom remained at a relatively high level (cf. Figures 1 and 2). By contrast, in the 2000sthe economy grew while scores on the press freedom indicator deteriorated sharply. The impact of socio-economic development on media change seems thus to be more complex. In the Russian case, the occurrence of an economic depression alongside a free – or even anarchic – media landscape deeply discredited the idea of media freedom among the Russian population. This is an excellent example of the complex interaction of causal factors pointed out in the methods section: the socio-economic depression of the 1990s resulted in negative attitudes amongst citizens towards press freedom, which in turn had a strong impact on media change in the subsequent decade (cf. previous paragraph).

EXTERNAL FACTORS

Under the heading of external factors, I suggest scrutinizing all factors here that originate outside the nation-state but interact with the factors discussed in the previous paragraphs. In this area, one of the most impactful differences between the two countries can be seen in what Levitsky and Way (2010: 23) conceptualize as 'linkage to the West'. By this term, Levitsky and Way understand 'the density of ties (economic, political, diplomatic, social, and organizational) and cross-border flows (of capital, goods and services, people, and information) between particular countries and the United States and the EU' (2010: 23). As they point out, at the most general level, linkage to the West has been extensive in Central and Eastern Europe, while it has been low in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Where linkage is high, external actors can exert 'democratizing pressure' (Levitsky and Way, 2010: 23).

In the Russian case, linkage to the West remained limited throughout the 1990s (cf. Levitsky and Way, 2010: 186-7). Russia's strategic and economic potential did not allow for external pressure. The country possessed massive oil reserves and was the world's largest supplier of natural gas. Furthermore, it was a nuclear power and had a vote on the United Nation's Security Council. In the 2000s, rising energy prices further strengthened its position. As Levitsky and Way (2010: 187) summarize, 'if vulnerability to external democratizing pressure [in Russia] was low in the 1990s, it was almost nonexistent in the 2000s.'

By contrast, linkage to the West has been extensive in the Czech case. Most importantly, Western European states had the power to grant – or deny – the country accession to the European Union (EU). Particularly in the years prior to the country's entry to the EU in 2004, the old EU member states had a strong potential to pressure for reforms. This pressure was immediately visible in the media sector. In 2000, for instance, the Czech law on broadcasting transposed the EU directive on 'Television Without Frontiers' into national law (Smid, 2005: 661). Furthermore, the EU's influence was also pivotal in a wide range of areas that crucially affected media change, i.e. the economy, civil society, and politics. To summarize, linkage with the West has probably been one of the most powerful factors in terms of impact on media change in the region. It has heavily shaped the overall 'legal', 'political' and 'economic' environment within which media outlets operate (Freedom House, 2011). If we look at *Freedom House's* map of press freedom today, a divide seems to separate the 'free' and 'partly free' media landscape of EU-member countries from the 'unfree' post-Soviet countries further to the East.

CONCLUSION

This essay has juxtaposed media change in the Czech Republic, as a best-case scenario in terms of convergence with the Western model, with media change in Russia, as a scenario where adaptation to the Western model has been rather limited. To guide the search for factors that have impacted media change, an analytical framework was suggested that envisaged six areas: (1) journalistic culture, (2) political system, (3) the economy, (4) media-related attitudes, (5) socio-economic development, and (6) external factors.

Why, then, has a pluralistic media system emerged in the Czech Republic, but not in Russia? Proceeding along the six areas of analysis, this essay systematically highlights a nexus of 11 interacting factors and illustrates how crucially these have affected media change in the two countries. This set of factors comprises: (1) the degree of legitimacy that Communist rule enjoyed amongst journalists before the collapse of the old regime; (2) the degree to which institutions of journalism education were adapted to Western standards; (3) the strength of the political opposition; (4) the degree of independence of the judicial system; (5) the size of advertising markets; (6) the share of foreign ownership in the media market; (7) the share of natural resources in gross domestic income; (8) citizens' attitudes towards press freedom; (9) citizens' trust in the mass media; (10) the development of GDP; and (11)

the degree of linkage to the West.

What can we conclude from the findings and conclusions of this study about media change in other post-Communist countries, or in other regions of the world? Clearly, there are some limitations in this regard. The set of factors discussed here cannot be considered either as comprehensive or as applying in the same way in all countries across the region. Some highly impactful causal mechanisms at work in neighbouring countries may have been overlooked in this essay, while others may be specific to the two countries under investigation. Mungiu-Pippidi (2008: 90), for instance, has argued that the Czech Republic is an exceptional case in the sense that none of the other East European countries had 'a serious democratic tradition'. To the extent that the roots of Czech journalistic culture were traced back here to the early 20th century, this feature may thus be rather unique to the Czech case.

However, despite these obvious limitations, I believe that the findings of this essay can advance the academic debate in at least two ways. Firstly, both the six-area analytical framework and the set of 11 factors suggested in this article can serve as a point of reference and inspiration for future 'case-oriented research' on media change in the post-Communist world (Mahoney, 2008). Scholars working on conditions of media change in other countries may find it intriguing to discuss the way these factors have worked out in these specific cases. They could modify, extend and refine the conclusions of this study and, by so doing, contribute to the accumulation of knowledge about media change in the post-Soviet world. Secondly, the set of factors discussed here could also serve as a starting point for future population-oriented research. Some factors presented in the previous sections could easily be quantified; this holds, for instance, for GDP per capita, the size of advertising markets, or the degree of political competition. It might certainly be an intellectual challenge to operationalize these variables in ways that facilitate meaningful comparison across different sets of countries. However, this appears viable, as Egorov et al. (2009) have compellingly demonstrated.

Both of these lines of inquiry seem to open up a whole range of intriguing opportunities for future research. Against this backdrop, it is hoped that this explorative essay has made a modest contribution to advancing the academic body of literature on media change in the post-Soviet region – a body of literature that may, as Hallin and Mancini (2013: 16) have recently argued, currently be only in the 'process of emergence'.

[1] The Czech Republic emerged on 1 January 1993 after the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. Where the analysis refers to the 'Czech case' prior to 1993, this means the situation in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia.

[2] The author is fully aware that working with these concepts suggests a highly normative, Western-centric perspective. He also agrees that it is important to deconstruct Western perspectives and to generate deeper understandings of non-Western contexts (Curran and Park, 2000). However, for the specific purpose of this study, and taking the view point of European policy-makers, why some media landscapes in the post-Soviet region today comply to a considerable extent with European standards and others less so appears a highly pertinent and relevant question.

[3] The Czech Republic achieved the best score amongst all Central and Eastern European countries in 1994, when *Freedom House* published its first set of detailed data on the region. Even though other countries such as Latvia, Estonia, or Slovenia achieved slightly better scores in later years, the Czech Republic clearly remained in the top-performing group in the following decades (cf. Jakubowicz and Sükösd, 2008: 30).

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