Examining the Existence of Narratives in News Reporting

An Investigation of the Stories Told by Russian Media Within the Frame of the Crimean Crisis

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Abstract

This essay has as its aim to investigate articles deriving from the two news organisations the Moscow Times and Russia Today. The articles examined are treating the Russian inbreak on the Crimean peninsula taking place in March 2014, and the purpose of the examination is to see what narratives are emerging when the news corporations repeatedly are covering the event, and if the two narratives are similar to each other. The analysis will be founded on a mix of theories, on the one hand treating the relationship between media and conflicts on the whole, and on the other discussing how narratives are created and how they are connected to conflicts. Different aspects of what has to be considered when you investigate narratives as well as the implication of different media procedures on conflict reporting will be treated.

The analytical finding is that there are two different stories emerging withing the covering of the news corporations, which focus on different aspects of the conflict. One has as its focus mainly the Crimean people and their opinions and relations with Russia, whereas the other story is located on an international level and focuses on the relation between Russia and the West. The last section of this paper discusses the dissimilarities between the narratives and their possible causes, together with a brief summary of the narratives' content.
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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Introduction
Since the end of the year of 2013 and during the first months of 2014, the world has with great curiosity and also with some anxiety followed the development of some violent events in Ukraine, resulting in a mildly described insecure environment in the country, a milieu characterized by fierce protests and demonstrations. The cause of these hostilities is the abandoning in November 2013 by former Ukrainian President Yanukovich of a trade agreement with the European Union, in favor of closer ties with neighbouring super power Russia. The forsaking of the relationship with the EU was the beginning of the following months' violent events, such as fatal demonstrations, street clashes between protesters and the police, and the highly questionable capturing and imprisoning of dissenters. During the ending days of February 2014, Ukrainian President Yanukovich was removed from his post, and a new administration was formed in Kiev with a pro-European Union orientation, something which sparked protests by pro-Russians in Crimea where the situation is now highly unstable. These protests also lead to clashes between adherents of the new Kiev administration and Russian supporters in the region.

As the situation in Crimea escalated, Russia as well as the United Nations took greater interest in the district. In the very beginning of March, the Russian upper house of the parliament approved of President Putin's request to use military power in Ukraine, a power directed towards the capital town of Crimea, causing the new Prime Minister of Ukraine to accuse Russia of declaring war on Ukraine. Even though this use of force became grossly criticized and condemned internationally by a large number of countries, Russia defended its right to use military force as Putin declared Russia's "right to use all means to protect its citizens in eastern Ukraine". In response to Russia's move, the Crimean regional parliament adopted a declaration of independence and stated unanimously that the district wished to join Russia, followed by a referendum which enhanced the parliament's decision. Shortly after, President Putin signed a bill which annexed Crimea into Russia, although this annexation is deemed illegal by the United States and the United Nations, as was the Crimean declaration of independence and the referendum.

It is the situation described above, where Russia made the decision to move its troops over the border to Ukraine and to actually use military force without international consent, which is of interest for this essay. This was a highly controversial action, which was due to get a lot of attention from the media, from Russian news corporations as well as foreign ones. As the Russian inbreak has been of political interest to many parties around the world, parties which have different perceptions of what has to be done in this case and also want to spread their own perceptions and opinions as much as possible, it is probable that the media will follow this track and try to foster different viewpoints and understandings. It is therefore an event that is of interest for the analysis that is to take place in this essay, an analysis based on the theories of conflicts, media and narratives more thoroughly explained later on in this paper.

1.2 The Aim and Purpose of this Essay

As can be understood by the brief introduction above, this paper will be founded on the current situation in Ukraine, and more particularly on the events concerning Russia's much criticized invasion in Crimea. The aim of this essay is to take a closer look upon how this intrusion has been portrayed in media, namely in those texts presented on the subject by the two grand news enterprises the Moscow Times and Russia Today. This will be done from a perspective based on theories of the relationship between conflicts and the media, together with theories of how narratives are created within texts, both perspectives explained in detail below.

The purpose of this investigation is furthermore to see in what way the Russian invasion is portrayed, as to see what kind of narrative is created when these two news organisations are covering the event. Hopefully, we will be able to see if these corporations are fostering similar narratives, or if the stories appearing within their reporting diverge in different directions. The intent can thus be said to be to examine what kind of narrative is emerging in the news covering and to explore to what extent these tales resemble each other.

The bigger overall purpose of this paper is at first hand to make readers aware of how their understandings of major world event may be affected by media reporting. I also hope to discover how Russian media picture the events in Crimea as it is a conflict where Russia is almost alone in its understanding, although I realise that this essay will not provide the whole picture.

From these aims we can also develop one or several research questions which will be following the analysis performed during this essay, although the questions will at large liken the essay's purpose: What do the narratives about the Russian intrusion in Crimea developed within the Moscow Times' and Russia Today's covering of the event look like? Are these narratives similar to each other, or can we find differences between them?

In order to meet these goals and fulfil the purpose of the essay, this paper will be divided in three parts. This first introductory section will treat the essay's theoretical and methodological approach, as well as it will discuss limitations of the primary material used together with possible consequences of these restrictions. It will also briefly take a look upon previous research accomplished in this area. The next section will focus on the first research question, as we are here going to begin our analysis of the news articles chosen. Finally, we are in the third paragraph going to answer the second research question, in a discussion and comparison between both news corporations. The last section will as well contain a brief summary of the analysis together with some concluding thoughts.

1.3 Secondary Material and Previous Research

In order to fulfil the aim and purpose of this essay, I have focused on two different theories treating the relationship between the media and conflicts as well as narratives, their importance to conflict analysis and resolution, and how they are created.

As to examine the way in which media and different types of conflict interact with each other, I have mainly relied on three larger writings on the topic, as well as some smaller articles. Susan L. Carruthers provides in her book The Media at War a most useful explanation of how
conflicts are interrelated with the media. Carruthers not only discusses how the media and violences are affecting each other in different types of situations, she also carries an overall discussion of how this relationship has evolved during the course of the 20th century and onwards. She begins her journey by exploring how media may affect situations of war and conflict by for example manipulating public opinion and direct the decisions of states. Thereafter, she continues her historical travelling by investigating how the role of the media has changed from the first and second world war, through the Vietnam war were television reports first became of importance to state justification of violence, ending the trip with an analyse of how the “war on terror” as well as the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been influenced by media presence. At the end, Carruthers also briefly pores over how the media may help in postwar construction and reconciliation. In my analysis, I am mainly going to use Carruther's theories of how media affects conflicts by for instance influencing political decision-making and how traits of journalists affect how the conflict is reported. Her historical analysis is unfortunately of smaller importance here, as our analysis is very limited in time.

These theories are also repeated in Simon Cottle's book Mediatized Conflict. Cottle even more than Carruthers emphasizes the background of media procedures and standards and how these have an impact on the outcome of conflict reporting. Cottle discusses for example how the organisation of the process of news gathering will influence the covering, and he furthermore discusses how media reporting both can contribute to the escalation of conflicts and instigate violence as well as work in a deteriorating way and take the edge off of certain grievances. The author also make a first attempt at connecting conflict reporting to the art of storytelling, when he stresses what difference lexical style, pictures, and discourse may make to a readers understanding of a particular event.

The actualities debated above seem almost self-evident when we take a look upon stories of the relationship between media and conflict in real life. In the book Media in Situations of Conflict: Roles, Challenges and Responsibility, Adolf E. Mbaine put these theories to test by collecting a number of reportages about how situations of violence have been affected by media presence or absence. Most stories treat intensities situated in Africa, and underlines amongst other things the role media may bear when it comes to Peace-building and conflict transformation.

As to the other part of this essay's theoretical foundation, I have principally relied on Mieke Bals book Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative, which carefully evaluates every part of the narrative. The discussion carefully takes a look upon the different aspects and elements that together make up the foundations of a narrative. Here is mentioned the importance of time, namely what meaning for instance the sequential ordering and rhythm of the story has to the narrative. The roles of actors and characters, as well as how the description of locations and events influences the storytelling is also investigated. It is mainly this writing that I have relied on when investigating how the narratives in the reporting of Russia Today and the Moscow Times are created. I have also been assisted by the book Disorderly Discourse: Narrative, Conflict and Inequality edited by Charles L. Briggs, where the relation between narratives and discourse are more thoroughly outlined.

Narratives exist in many a milieu, though, from short stories in news articles like the ones I have examined, to lengthy novels. In order to understand the role that narratives has in times of
conflict, therefore, I have also taken a closer look upon some literature treating the subject of conflict analysis, where the analysis of narratives play a prominent role. Amongst other smaller writings, I have examined relevant chapters of Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution written by John Winslade and Gerald Monk, as well as Conflict Analysis: Understanding Causes, Unlocking Solutions by Matthew Levinger and Conflict, edited by Sandra Cheldelin, Daniel Druckman and Larissa Fast. Although I may not have used these writings a lot in my creation of the theoretical base of this essay, they have been of importance as they have provided me with a deeper understanding of the context around narratives treating conflicts.

Finally, I have complemented these readings with some shorter articles, treating for example narrative theory, the structures of narratives and media behavior.2

1.4 Limitations and Demarcations of the Primary Material

The material used as foundation for the analytical part of this essay has been restricted in several ways in order to give the analysis a clear purpose and to keep the extent of the primary material within reasonable limits. The material chosen as basis for examination derives from the online news site of the Moscow Times as well as articles found on the website of the globally reaching network Russia Today, and consists of news articles treating the Ukrainian crisis that developed during the course of 2014. More particularly, the articles picked out concentrate on the Russian inbreak in Crimea conducted during spring this year.

Simply looking at the origin of the articles chosen implies that the scope of this writing has been reduced in a number of aspects. First of all, we can tell how the material has been limited to articles deriving from Russian news organisations, more specifically organisations which produce a vast majority of their material in English. The Russian perspective was chosen because of the prominent role played by this actor in the Ukrainian crisis, especially since this superpower made the decision to march into and occupy the Crimean peninsula, a decision which has been highly criticized and debated internationally. Hence, Russia is a country that is very much involved in this conflict and will most likely influence the way in which it will persist. It is therefore of interest to examine which picture of these events Russian news organisations may want to depict, in contrast to for instance the understandings promoted by the Americas and the European Union. Regrettably, though, I have not had the opportunity to investigate any Russian speaking newspaper (as I do not speak Russian), which is why the upcoming analysis will be concentrated on English language articles only. However, this may not necessarily be of disadvantage to the inquiry. The Moscow Times itself states that one of its missions is to “provide foreigners and internationally oriented Russians with balanced, well-researched journalism and practical information that helps them

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2 For example: Harding, S-A., How Do I Apply Narrative Theory?: Socio-narrative Theory in Translation Studies, Target, 24 (2), 2012
understand Russia”.

Likewise, Russia Today describes itself as a media corporation which “acquaints international audience with the Russian viewpoint” of things. Both enterprises seemingly wish to appeal to a wider international audience whilst fostering the Russian aspect of major world events. As we are looking for the preferable image that Russia wants to promote of the events in Ukraine, it may be a good idea to take a closer look upon news organisations whose purpose is to provide foreigners with an understanding of Russian ideas and opinions. In this way, we get an idea of how Russia is trying to affect other countries and their understandings of the happenings in Ukraine.

Secondly, the material examined has been restricted to articles originating from two media organisations only, namely the Moscow Times and Russia Today. As there are in Russia only three English speaking newspapers with a distribution worth mentioning, we need here only briefly adress the grounds on which the other newspapers have been neglected in favor of the Moscow Times. Other newspapers considered as basis for analysis were the online independent newspaper the Moscow News, as well as the weekly St. Petersburg Times. The Moscow News has been deselected simply because of the fact that it since march 2014 temporarily has ceased to publcate any new material or to update its website, due to “liquidation process and reorganization of its parent company”. The newspaper hence provides an unsufficient amount of material treating the Crimean capturing, which makes it unsuited for further examination. Quite the contrary applies to the St. Petersburg Times, where a non manageable quantity of material is to be found. However though, the St. Petersburg Times and the Moscow Times are described as sister newspapers, and are both owned by the same corporation. As the newspapers share the same mission of purpose and ideological standpoint, and therefore likely would report about the events in Ukraine in a similar way, I have deemed it unnecessary to examine both papers. Avoiding a comparative analysis of both newspapers will also allow me to perform a more in-depth analysis when reading the articles found in the Moscow Times, something which I believe will benefit the analysis as a whole.

As to the fact that Russia Today has been chosen as a counterpart of examination in relation to the Moscow Times, this site has been chosen for a series of various reasons. This corporation has a global reach of several hundreds of millions of viewers and readers, which implies that its news covering has the ability to impact a large number of people's understandings and opinions. Furthermore, Russia Today states that it “delivers stories often missed by the mainstream media to create news with and edge, and that it “provides an alternative perspective on major global events”.

It hence seems that Russia Today wishes to provide its followers with a different understanding of covered events than traditional news organisations do, which makes makes its news covering interesting from the point of view of investigating narratives in media. Possibly, if the news covering differs from other corporations', there will also emerge a distinct kind of narrative.

Finally, as already outlined above, I have chosen to limit this essay to the Russian controversial inbread on the Crimean peninsula, as opposite to examining narratives in relation to

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the whole Ukrainian crisis. This restriction has been made in order to make the amount of material that has to be examined manageable. It is also an interesting incident which has drawn much international attention and which has intensified discussions about questions such as the relationship between sovereignty and human rights, or to what extent mighty countries may intervene in smaller conflicts and elaborate with their outcomes. Moreover, it is easier to try and find a narrative when the real life event used as basis for the narrating is restricted like this, rather than if we were to examine all news reporting with a connection to the hostile atmosphere in Ukraine.

Since the material has been limited to the Crimean crisis, it also logically follows that the extent of the essay has been limited in time. The timespan chosen goes from the very moment when the Russian upper house of parliament approved of President Putin's demand to use his military forces within the Ukrainian territory (which would be the first of March), until the instant when Russia was reported to make a “partial withdrawal” of its troop from the Ukrainian border (31st of March). The choice of departure for this analysis is logical, as it is the fact that before President Putin got things his way and was allowed to use military force in Crimea, one cannot clearly say that Russia had made an inbreak on Ukrainian territory and thus possibly violated the country's sovereignty. The concluding point however, possible requires more explanation. I have chosen this event because it in some way frames the Russian operation in Crimea, as Russia after this date stated that it would remove some of its forces from the territory. This restriction has also been made in order to make the amount of material that has to be examined manageable. One could otherwise easily continue the analysis, since the events in Crimea sparked protests and conflicts in other parts of Ukraine, where Russia possibly has been involved in one way or more.

At last, it has to be said that a fair amount of articles have been examined for the purpose of this essay. Roughly 50 articles have been read in order to figure out the narrative in the Moscow Times, while nearly twice the amount of material deriving from Russia Today have been investigated. Evidently, this paper does not provide enough space for all of these articles to be represented, wherefore I have chosen quotes and examples from a smaller amount of articles to illuminate my standpoints. It should be said, however, that the rest of the material does not contradict the findings I present here, and they do forward the narrative in the same direction.

So, to sum up, the primary material used for this essay is restricted to articles published between the 1st and the 31st of March 2014, deriving either from the news sections of the Moscow Times or Russia Today, clearly concerning the Russian invasion of Crimea and the direct aftermaths of this action.

1.5 Possible Consequences of Material Limitations
As may seem evident, all restrictions made referring to the primary material examined in an essay will accordingly affect the content of the analysis. In the case of this essay, the major drawback of the material demarcations is that the analysis solely will be limited to two news corporations. It can

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8 Here, I just wish to clarify some minor issues regarding the referencing to the articles used that were found in Russia Today. The first time these sources appear, they will be referred to as usual. The following times an article appears as a source, it will be referred to as follows: "Russia Today, YYYY-MM-DD, “First and second words of title”", this is because of the fact that Russia Today does not provide any information on the authors of their articles.
thus not be said to be a representative content analysis of Russian media, as the Russian media
sphere consists of far a larger number of news corporations, English language ones as well as
Russian language ones. However though, to make an analysis representative in nature which would
do justice to Russian media news reporting would require far more time and resources than
available for the purpose of this essay. Possibly, this could be the basis of further research, if not to
put conflict representations made by Russian media corporations in contrast to representations made
by for example American or European media.

Of further concern is the fact that the analysis has not been made basis of Russian language
articles. Just as the fact that the analysis has been limited to two news organisations, this further
affects to what extent the analysis can be said to be representative of the Russian media. However
though, this restriction is justified by the fact that we wish to examine the view of the events in
Ukraine that Russia prefers to mediate to the rest of the world, just as described above.

I am also aware of how my own reading may affect the outcome of the analysing of articles
in both the Moscow Times and Russia Today. This is because all reading is subjective, and my
previous experiences and understandings are due to affect me. My own understanding of the
conflict as well as of the different parties present within the reporting may influence the conclusions
I draw regarding the storytelling when analysing these writings.

1.6 Theoretical Approach

This essay will be based on a mix of theories of how media and conflicts are interrelated, together
with a thinking of how narratives are created as an outcome of extensive news covering of conflicts.
Even though the major focus of this writing will be on the narratives created when Russian media
reported about the Russian take over of the Crimean peninsula, it is also of importance to have an
over all understanding of the relationship between the media and the conflicts covered. In order to
establish such an understanding, the interrelation of conflict and media will first briefly be
investigated, and thereafter a more comprehensive theory of how narratives are created and what
different parts they consist of will be outlined.

1.6.1 Examining the Relationship of Media and Conflicts

Almost everyday, the average citizen is being lavished with all sorts of impressions originating from
different kinds of media, incessantly keeping us up to date about various events and situations. We
are for example reading the morning newspaper while eating breakfast in order to schematically
gain an understanding of what is happening around the world, we watch diverse news broadcasts on
television available at basically any time during the day, and we can easily browse the internet as to
get hold of the latest information and news. Some of these impressions served us pass quickly by and are soon forgotten as if they were of no particular importance, while we pay greater attention to others and almost devour every piece of information accessible about certain events. The desire to be constantly updated and to keep track of nearly all major occurrences, whether they be political, social, economic or catastrophic in nature, seems to be significant to this society of information that we are living in. Sure is though, that media in general and news in particular appear to be of great importance to us and that they play a prominent role in our lives and are present almost everywhere in society.

Seemingly being of particular interest to us, one can easily establish that various forms of crisis, violence and different sorts of conflict make us particularly curious and inquisitive, and hence events of those kinds are allowed to take place and spread out within media. Close to everyday of the week are we being fed images, reportages or articles describing or analysing various violent situations, ranging from isolated occasions of violence taking place in the nearest neighbourhood to fullscale wars happening across the sea. The attentionspan varies as some conflicts or crises are only hastily mentioned, whereas other situations fill up our newsfeeds day after day, week after week.

For most of us, this constant flow of news and covering of conflicts is part of the daily routine and the majority of people taking interest in news spend little or no time analysing the content or background of the news reportages or writings they are being served. We usually skim the newspapers quickly without further investigating what it is we are actually reading. However though, as this essay will be tackling precisely this aforementioned task as we are going to analyse the relationship between media content and the creation of narratives within the sphere of one particular conflict, it is of importance to us to have some knowledge about how news are created, how they are affected by the state of conflict, and how news in some situations even may foster conflict and violent behavior. As Susan Carruthers describes this relationship, conflict and wars ”not only creates a supply of news but a demand for it”\(^9\), hence it is of value to comprehend how these two phenomena are affecting each other.

So, if we are to understand the way in which media and conflict are intertwined, we may as well begin with the basics and take a further look upon the process of transforming information into news and the underlying factors that can affect for example which events or situations are allowed to circulate in media, how these events are reported or interpreted, and the bias which may follow

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by these interpretations and analyses made by the media.

One key aspect of conflict reporting is event orientation, that is which events are regarded as important and accordingly offered place and time in media, and likewise which situations are seen as unimportant and are thus neglected and excluded from the media sphere. Self-evidently, the media cannot cover all aspects of all situations at all times, and hence certain happenings or viewpoints are given greater attention whilst others remain uncovered, this depending on a range of reasons. For example, the tendency for media to disengage in a situation is more pronounced when events are taking place far from home, or when situations of violence are considered protracted or are of uncertain outcome. The outcome of this kind of biased news covering may seem evident; the result is lack of information and a biased (even though unconsciously) presentation of the situations covered. What situations are reported in what way affect our understanding of what is important and also how we interpret and make decisions about the events discussed in media. One example of this kind of bias is how the media seem to favor the covering of military force instead of methods of conflict resolution that do not include violence. According to Susan Carruthers, this preference for covering military force is dependent on the fact that society at large places less value on non-violent methods such as negotiation or diplomacy, and thus we can see not only how news covering is affecting society values, but also how this connection works the other way around. Furthermore, news reporting often concentrate on basic facts and tend to displace from public view the underlying causes and conditions of a violent situation, which may result in an inaccurate and shallow understanding of the events covered.

Other factors affecting the content of our newsfeeds are the commercial environment in which most media organizations exist and work, competition between different sources of news, and the effect that political elites may have on the covering of certain events. As most media corporations exist in a competitive milieu where the goal for each day is to sell as many copies or gain as many viewers as possible, they are also presumably going to cover the situations that will attract the most readers or viewers. Moreover, news will be presented in a way as to make them seem interesting and meaningful, once again to appeal to a wider audience. Regarding the influential effect of political leaders or elites, it is the case that these individuals and their opinions

10 Carruthers, 2011, p 6
11 Carruthers, 2011, p 26
12 Carruthers, 2011, p 36
14 Ibid., p 36
15 Ibid., p 36
and ideas tend to find privileged media access. Elite sources are often seen as “primary definers of news”\(^\text{16}\), both because their opinions are seen as significant to many people and hence are listened to, as well as because of the capability they have to restrict journalists access to for example certain areas or particular information. Because of these reasons, these elites often hold the privilege to publicly define or interpret events of major importance. The risk is that this access to media attention will result in few and narrow interpretations of events of conflict, where there may be persons having a perception of the events distinct from the ones presented in media.

Additionally, journalists desire for objectivity influence the choice of event and method chosen to cover said occasion. Other aspects that may further contribute to a distorted understanding of a conflict are reporters' experience in the field, individual ignorance due to the facts that journalists seldom spend enough time on the ground in order to develop an appreciation of local conditions, or some journalists' desire for professional advancement.\(^\text{17}\)

From the brief explanation outed above, we can draw the conclusion that the news found in newspapers, featured in television broadcasts or on the internet are not always trustworthy. What the media reports and how conflicts or crisis are presented does not have to be in connection with the real events. All of the aforementioned factors are thus of significance to keep in mind when we are moving forward to investigate the articles chosen for the purpose of this writing. Media representations can never be seen as being politically innocent as well as media organisations cannot be regarded as independent actors, seeing that they are in many ways affecting society's perceptions of the events they cover. For example, how the media chose to define or label certain events, groups or individuals may “position them within a semantic field of meanings and these meanings can have political charge and consequences”.\(^\text{18}\) The images chosen to illustrate certain situations, as well as lexical choices and discourse all contribute to the readers comprehension of a text. It is impossible to rely on the belief that a real event and its mediated representation would at all be related. Events represented in media “have ther own reality”\(^\text{19}\) and it is at times impossible to say which interpretation is more important or more “true” than the other.

The above mentioned factors (together with many others) are also all examples of how the news process affects the resulting text or broadcast, and we should be aware of this while reading or watching all sorts of news. But as we have stated before, conflicts and violence seem to be of particular interest to us and are thus incessantly occuring in everyday media. How are then media

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\(^{16}\text{Carruthers, 2011, p 42}\)
\(^{17}\text{Ibid., p 100, 172}\)
\(^{18}\text{Cottle, 2006 p 42-43}\)
\(^{19}\text{Ibid., p 59}\)
and conflicts affecting each other, and what may be the result of this relation?

Simon Cottle mentions several ways in which media representations may contribute to escalating violence in conjunction with conflicts. Besides the fact that media can entrench expectations of situations of violence, polarize social groups into enmity or precipitate certain forms of behavior, Cottle also means that media may contribute to public disorder by for example failing to highlight or address the underlying grievances of an ongoing conflict, by denigrating dissenters and their demands for justice, or by labeling the same dissenters as a direct threat to society, as well as calling for resolute response from the state or police.\footnote{Ibid., p 40} Furthermore, the escalation may continue if for example media in its representations of the clash is underemphasizing, excusing or justifying police aggression or praising police heroism. The same effect may also be reached if the violence taking place is in fact exaggerated or dramatized, decontextualized or depoliticized, or if the ulterior causes of the conflict are distorted or oversimplified.\footnote{Ibid., p 40} Susan Carruthers describes additionally how journalists and media may play a part in affecting the public's opinion for war; for example extensive news covering may heighten the sense of imminent threat or limit the debate over non-military responses to the insecure situation.\footnote{Carruthers, 2011, p 17} There are as we can see many ways in which the media can contribute to further violence, if they are not careful when judging how they will be reporting an already delicate situation. Not to mention the fact that media writings or transmissions often reach worldwide, and that their representations may influence third parties to take action, something that can further worsen the situation.

But the presence of the media is not only of disadvantage in a violent situation. In many aspects, the media can also work to prevent conflicts from escalating or even to break out from the beginning. In the brief essay Media, Peace-building, and the Culture of Violence by George W. Lugalambi some means in which the media may work in a preventive way are spoken of.\footnote{Mbaine, Adolf E. (red.), Media in Situations of Conflict: roles, Challenges and Responsibility, Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 2006, p 115} For instance, Lugalambi mentions how media can work to “nurture public interest” as well as “cultivate public consensus”. In this way, media can help by fostering a common vision around which citizens can unite at the same time as the citizens' attention is focused on issues of collective concern instead of the grievances different groups may hold against each other. Focus is removed from the conflict and cooperation between hostile groups is promoted. Lugalambi also suggests how media can help by “identifying points of tension before they break”\footnote{Ibid., p 115} as well as they can assist by articulating the
concerns of those who may disagree with the dominant way of thinking, and so help relieving tensions. Additionally, media presence can also be helpful by facilitating the exchange of views among conflicting parties or by favouring the communication between the government and the public.25

Media may also work to alter the outcome of conflicts by influencing political agendas or political leaders in their decision making, simply because instantaneous and extensive coverage is a part of the decision environment for a variety of interests and audiences. For example, media may lure leaders to engage in distant conflicts without any clear national interest by comprehensive news covering (in part because comprehensive news covering can arouse public interest and thus put pressure on decision makers), they may undermine public or elite support for ongoing or planned military operations (also this can be explained by how the media affects public interest and opinion), or frequent reporting may hasten decision-making in crisis situations. So the media can impinge conflict outcome in this way as well, simply by affecting the decisions taken in relation to the situation.

So, now we have briefly run through how media content may be biased or represent an event in an incorrect way, as well as we have mentioned how the media can affect a violent situation in good or bad ways by for example accelerating or slowing down escalation. Without doubt this relationship is a complex one, a relation which requires a far more detailed examination and explication than is possible in this brief essay. Sure is though, that mediatized conflict always need to be theorized and situated within a broader context than solely the conflict or the media itself in order to be understood in a proper way. Here again, Susan Carruthers makes a point when she writes that “news making is a process that cannot be explained in the singular. What counts as news and who counts as newsworthy differs according to context”.26 When reading the news during breakfast or while watching television broadcasts covering the latest conflict, one should always be aware of this fact and try to critically examine the text being read. As text analysis is what we are going to deal with in this work, it is important to have an elemental understanding of how conflicts are not always correctly reported and interpreted in media writings, and to not blindly believe everything that is written in the newspapers or reported on television.

25 Ibid., p 5
26 Carruthers, 2011, p 41
1.6.2 When Media Turns Conflicts into Narratives

So what happens exactly when the media over a long time covers a certain event or subject, for example an ongoing conflict or violent crisis? Is it solely innocent reporting of news and facts, or can we as readers read out other information from the texts published in the papers and the reportages shown on TV, maybe information that was not even intended by the producer?

When an event is reported over and over again, it begins to take part in a story, a kind of narrative mediated through the journalist, whether this is intended or not. This is because, as has been shown above, the words, lexical style and images chosen to cover a story are not without meaning, and they may be interpreted in numerous ways. Every epithet chosen to describe an actor, every description of a location or of a series of events adds to the reader’s understanding of what is really going on. This depends on the fact that the words and terms that we utilize are “not just tied to the setting in which they are produced or received but to other discourses, texts and settings”.

Hence large-scale reporting about an event will foster a certain interpretation and viewpoint of that event, and suddenly we have the foundation of what may become a narrative. And as different news organisations likewise have various standards and routines for reporting and writing, there can simultaneously exist several “narratives” referring to the same conflict. Briggs describes this way of creating narratives as he states that “the manner in which stories are presented or used is often contingent upon their being framed as embodiments of shared beliefs and understandings”.

How we construe the text presented to us by the journalist then has to do with our earlier perceptions and appreciations of similar events. Briggs further talks about the relation between conflicts and narratives, when he says that “narrative constitute crucial means of generating, sustaining, mediating and representing conflict”.

Narratives can then be said to be closely tied to conflicts and conflict management.

Wars and conflicts in particular can be rendered into powerful narratives as they are packed with nationalistic feelings such as identity affiliation, pride and patriotism, together with present feelings of “us” and “them” possibly underlying the conflict. In conflicts narratives may be used for example as a way of “telling your story” in an attempt at reconciliation, or it can simply be a means of convincing your enemy or a third party that there are different ways of reading the same conflict. Whatever the purpose may be though, narratives are often constructed along certain lines,

28 Ibid., p 14
29 Ibid., p 3
30 Cottle, 2006, p 77
and there are methods for examining the various pieces of the narrative. Important to remember, is that “reading is an activity of a subjective nature”\textsuperscript{31} and thus every narrative will appear different in the eyes of the reader.

There are, however, some crucial points to keep track on while reading narratives concerning the connection between the story told and the real events which contain the foundation of the narratives. First of all, the events in the narrative can be arranged in a sequence chronologically different from how they happened in real life.\textsuperscript{32} This may depend on the fact that different happenings are not attributed the same value, and the writer wants to draw attention to or emphasize a certain situation. This attention drawing may also determine the space and scope given to the description of an event in a text.\textsuperscript{33} The chronological order of the narrative versus reality may also depend on the producer's desire to bring about certain effects or to indicate that there exist different interpretations of the event.\textsuperscript{34} This explains in part why some incidents are only briefly summarized while other occurrences are presented in an extensive way. Another way of drawing attention to particular happenings is the frequency with which they are mentioned; if the author wishes to emphasize something, he or she is likely to mention or describe it numerous times.\textsuperscript{35}

Second of all, one has to be careful when discovering how a journalist is describing actors or locations of meaning to the story. As Mieke Bal introduces it “the fact that profession, sex, external factors or quirks of personality are mentioned creates an expectation”\textsuperscript{36} of the actor. All of these factors as well as the adjectives selected when presenting for example a witness, a politician or an expert determine how we construe these persons and their roles in the narrative. The same goes for the locations in the story, also they are provided with distinctive traits which turns them into specific places, affecting the reader in one way or the other.

Finally, when reading a story, if so only the morning news, one always has to keep in mind who is doing the narrating. It is possible that the producer wishes to promote a certain understanding of an event, and therefore chooses to depict it in a specific manner. Bal again is on it, when she states that “the point of view from which the elements of the fabula are being presented is often of decisive importance for the meaning the reader will assign to the fabula”\textsuperscript{37} So to say, the point of view from which the author describes an occurrence will affect the sense one reads into the

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p 8, 79
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., p 98
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., p 81
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., p 109
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., p 125
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., p 76
narrative. It is also crucial to understand that “a story a person remembers is not identical to a story a person experiences”38, which means that the story for example a witness tells may not always be reliable if one wants to understand what has really happened. Of further importance is also the fact that “participants seldom enjoy equal access to the discursive resources that shape who can talk, when, in what ways and with what effects”39, meaning that even if we were to interview witnesses, they most probably would not promote an understanding of the event witnessed that is of justice to all parties involved.

All the matters referred to above can be of use when we are to move forward and investigate the content of Russian media alongside with matters of the Crimean peninsula. Are certain actors, for example politicians, allowed more media time than others, and what may be the outcome of this favoritism? How are actors, locations and events in general described? Does the author chose certain adjectives or tries to describe the happenings from a certain point of view in order to influence the readers perceptions and opinions? Those are questions that you can easily ask a media narrative, as to try to get a grip on how the events in Ukraina actually are represented.

1.7 Methodological Approach

We have now layed out the theoretical foundation of this essay, an essay which will focus mainly on how narratives are created within a small part of the Russian media, and examine what kind of narrative is produced. Now it is time to take a closer look upon what method is appropriate in order to fulfil this somewhat difficult assignment.

In a book treating the subject of conflict analysis40, Matthew Levinger writes about how one may approach the problem of analysing narratives. Levinger writes that narrative analysis in part “examines the ways in which various parties depict the key actors in a conflict and the relationship among them”41. The author talks mainly about how one should start with the six “Ws” and proceed from there: who, what, why, when, where and how.42 When examining Russian media content it is thus useful to ask questions such as: Who is doing the narrative, who is allowed to take place in media and accordingly explain their point of view, and which may the consequences of this be?

38 Ibid., p 150
39 Briggs, 1996, p 13
40 Levinger, Matthew, Conflict Analysis: Understanding Causes, Unlocking Solutions, United States Institute of Peace, Washington DC, 2012
41 Ibid., p 117
42 Ibid., p 115
What was it that really happened and in what way are the media trying to represent an event? Why is the media trying to foster a certain interpretation of an occurrence, if this seems to be the case? When did the event take place, and where? How are persons, locations, crucial events and major happenings described?

We will hence take on a highly investigative approach when examining the content of the articles chosen, as to really perform a profound analysis of the primary material. Narrative analysis is about reading between the lines, and about both trying to keep in mind what message an author really wants to send out with the help of his material as well as at the same time see beyond the authors intention in order to pick up the information that may be hidden in the narrative and within the readers interpretation of a text. In order to do precisely that, one has to carefully examine what discourse is used, what lexical style is dominating the writings, and which words are used in descriptions and depictions. Besides this, one can also take a look upon how often certain actors, happenings or locations are frequented in the text, and try to draw conclusions about their given importance from this. We are thus gong to use a mix of different methods when reading about how Russia Today and the Moscow Times are portraying Russia's taking over of Crimea. I will be borrowing methodological tools from content analysis, discoursive analysis as well as narrative analysis.

Furthermore, this essay will be examining the material picked out in a comparative way, as stuff deriving from both the Moscow Times and Russia Today will be looked upon. The idea is to try to outline if these news corperations have a similar view of the Russian intervention in Crimea, so to say if their narratives are resembling each other or if they to the contrary present different apprehensions of this intrusion. If these organisations were to present two entirely distinct narratives, this essay will also contain a brief pondering of what the reasons for these differences may be. Likewise, if the narratives are very akin to each other, I will make an attemt at shortly outline what the effects may be when the media is dominated by a certain interpretation in this way (although I am aware of the fact that just because the narratives found within the reporting of these corporations are similar to each other does not automatically entail that they are representing a predominating interpretation, as there are numerous other news coronperations in Russia and the world which may foster alternative views).

In short, the methodological part of this essay boils down to critical and investigative analysis of texts with a news content, based upon the kind of questions that are asked when examining narratives on the whole.
2.0 Analysis

This part of the paper will treat the analysis of the narratives found in the reportings of the Moscow Times and Russia Today. It will also contain a summarizing and concluding section.

2.1 The Moscow Times

This paragraph will treat the narratives found within the reporting of the Moscow Times. In total some 50 articles have been analysed from the theoretical perspective of this essay, some of them brief notes and some of them far longer articles. When reading through the reportings, it seems to me that two parallel narratives are emerging within the timespan chosen, narratives which together form a picture of the situation in Crimea. First of all, many articles focus on the relation between Crimea and Russia, how this relation is portrayed and what the Crimean citizens really think of the Russian annexation of the peninsula. This reporting is characterized by how reporters let Crimean residents speak their minds about the current situation, as well as by how the Moscow Times problematizes other Russian state-owned newspapers' reporting about the conflict. Secondly, a fair amount of space is given the discussion of how the Ukrainian struggle affects the relation between Russia and “the West”. The effects of sanctions and how the sides are responding to each others actions are reported about repeatedly as to indicate that these factors are of great importance to the situation in Ukraine.

2.1.1 The Story of the Crimean Residents and their Relation to Russia

As said, one of the most characterizing traits of the Moscow Times' reporting is how they focus on Crimean habitants and what these think about their relation with Russia and how they picture their future, both as individuals and as part of a greater collective of Crimeans. When reading about how Crimean residents perceive their relation with Russia and how they think the events in Crimea will develop, it strikes me that when you try to read between the lines, two things appear with clarity.

The first thing I find remarkable is that the covering mediates that Crimeans and Russians do not seem to have the same perception of their relationship as neighbouring countries. When reading, you get the idea that Russia in some way look upon themselves as a benevolent older brother of their fellow Crimeans, that the peninsula has always had and will continue to have a close relationship with the Russian Federation, and that Crimea and Russia should basically be seen as
one entity. One journalist, situated in Port Kavkaz, one of the few places in Russia from where you can see the Crimean area, writes that “the two entities look as close as they can possibly be”\textsuperscript{43}, in an attempt to portray some kind of propinquity between the two territories. The Russians interviewed in the article seemingly depict Crimea and Ukraine as lost countries, asking the journalist if he is afraid to cross the water and enter Crimean territory, and furthermore stating things as “Ukrainians all run from there like rats from a sinking ship”. The Russians look upon their annexation of the region as a favor they have done the Crimesans and they truly believe that the Crimean residents are nothing but relieved to once again be part of Russia. This perception also becomes clear when we take a quick look upon how the Moscow Times writes about Russian state-owned news corporations and their reporting of the conflict. Here we can find statements such as “Russia will never give Crimea away again”, “Crimea has returned home”, or “Crimea has always associated itself with Russia”.\textsuperscript{44} Although these statements do not contribute much to the narratives created in the reporting of the Moscow Times as they belong to other newspapers, it can still be of interest to see how the Moscow Times stand against its competitors concerning the objectivity of their reporting.

Yet, there are Ukrainians and Crimesans who think that the Russian perception of their relationship is somewhat distorted. For example, there is critique against how Russian media is portraying the situation in Crimea. One Ukrainian school teacher states how he thinks that “it is insulting to see how Russian media is portraying the conflict”, whereas a Ukrainian photographer express concern about how the conflict is reported and about how “people are starting to believe things that are false because they see it on TV”.\textsuperscript{45} Another article states that “Russian media is misrepresenting what is happening in Crimea”.\textsuperscript{46} The opinion thus seems to be that Russian reporting of the Ukrainian conflict according to some Ukrainians is false and misleading, perhaps implying that state-owned media tries to provide Russians with a picture of the conflict that is preferable to Russia. These two last interviewees are moreover part of a group of Ukrainians currently residing in the Russian capital, a section who furthermore are described as being torn between their identities as Russians and Ukrainians. The article starts with the statement that “the prospect of an armed conflict between two brotherly nations has shaken Moscow's Ukrainian community, torn between their homeland and country of residence” and continues with the

\textsuperscript{43} Nechepurenko, Ivan, Crimean Residents Expect Drastic Change, The Moscow Times, 2014-03-04, retrieved 2014-05-25
\textsuperscript{45} Tétrault-Farber, Gabrielle, Ukrainians in Moscow Torn over Crisis, The Moscow Times, 2014-03-06, retrieved 2014-05-25
\textsuperscript{46} Nechepurenko, Ivan, Crimea Residents Divided Over Referendum, The Moscow Times, 2014-03-14, retrieved 2014-05-25
pronouncing that “Moscow's Ukrainians feel that they are caught in the middle of a family feud” together with further statements made by interviewees, who declare that “your heart can be both in Ukraine and in Russia” and that they “do not support either side of this conflict”. Here one can clearly see how the articles portray Crimeans somewhat as victims, caught in a conflict and plagued by the fact that they have several national affinities. Of particular interest here is also how the relationship between Russia and Ukraine is labelled as “brotherly”, and the conflict between the countries as a “family feud”, further promoting the aforementioned Russian perception that the countries are closely tied together.

The perception that Crimean residents are worried about their future is fostered additionally in an article named “Crimean Residents Divided Over Referendum”, referring to the referendum about national affinity, a referendum which often is depicted as an unanimous decision made by the Crimean citizens (or as described in one article: “Crimea voted overwhelmingly in favor of joining Russia”). It is here stated that most Crimean residents “seem to have no illusions about the outcome of Sunday's vote to determine the peninsula's future” and the overall picture given is that Crimeans feel irresolute and insecure about their future. Another article describes how some of the residents “are keen to join Russia”, while others “oppose Moscow's decision to annex Crimea and intend to remain Ukrainian citizens”. Together with the remarks mentioned above about how Crimeans seem to be torn between their different identities, these promotes a picture of the Crimean people as lost and slightly hopeless when it comes to thinking about the future.

Second of all, I have found it noteworthy that most interviewees in the article are pro-Russian and thus foster a certain perspective and viewpoint, whilst few dissenting voices are to be heard. As we have discussed in the theoretical section earlier in this essay, one important factor of how narratives are formed is who is allowed to do the narrating and who is allowed to speak their mind. Even though it is likely that many Crimeans hold pro-Russian feelings as a majority of the peninsula's habitants are of Russian ethnicity, and that the interviews represent these people in a fair way, there are surely a large number of dissidents who's opinions sink into oblivion when they are not allowed space in media. Assertions such as “I would be very happy if we become independent of Ukraine”, “look at how strong Russia is”, “what are we going to get in Europe” or “Kiev has already abandoned us, there is no place for us in Ukraine” fill up the reporting, creating a narrative

47 Tétrault – Farber, 2014-03-06
49 Ibid.
50 Nechepurenko, 2014-03-04
51 Reuters, 2014-03-21
where the Crimeans seem overwhelmingly pro-Russian and almost none harbour warm feelings for the European oriented administration in Kiev. This perception is furthermore described in the covering, as it is described how “those who are against accession into Russia have no way to make their voices heard” and I is also said that “no alternative campaign materials can be found, all tents and leaflets promotes becoming part of Russia”.\textsuperscript{52} So it is not only the case that pro-Europeans have a hard time to make their voices heard in their communities, but it is also the case that their voices are not favored in media covering of the events. Hence the suppression of their voices is doubled, something which may have consequences for how onlookers and third parties are perceiving the grievances in Crimea and Ukraine. The one exception seems to be the Tartars, an ethnic section which is not very aroused by the Russian intrusion in Crimea. These residents tend to not trust their pro-Russian co-citizens, it is pictured that they are somewhat afraid of Russia on the whole and the group is described as helpless as they are in minority.\textsuperscript{53} They are though to some extent allowed to make their voices heard in media, and are by one or two exceptions the only persons interviewed who express that they are not in favor of a Russian annexation of Crimea.

To sum up this first paragraph, we can in the storytelling of the Moscow Times find a picture of a Ukrainian region who seem to long to belong to Russia, although they sometimes seem to be insecure about their feelings of the Russian inbreak in Crimea, and some of them even feel that they are torn between their double identities as Russians and Ukrainians.

\textbf{2.1.2 Ukraine – A Conflict Between Russia and the West?}
The other feature of the narrative created in the Moscow Times reporting is how the question of the conflict in Crimea and remaining Ukraine is departed from, and instead the disagreements are turned into an issue between what is frequently referred to as “the West” (meaning the United States and the European Union) and Russia. A fair amount of the articles (approximately 20 percent) takes up the question of how these two sides are treating each other, by for instance imposing different forms of sanctions, implying that this is an important issue that the distributor wishes to illuminate. Furthermore it is often implied that the Ukrainian conflict and the situation in Crimea is a problem that the West and Russia has to agree on and solve, in some way taking away the ability from Ukrainians to solve their own problems. Even in the articles not directly treating the relation between these two powerful entities, the violences are described as a “political tug-of-war” between

\textsuperscript{52} Nechepurenko, 2014-03-14
Russia and the West, which shows how the writer wants us to believe that this is really a problem that has to be solved by greater powers than the Ukrainian administration. As an example, Ukraine is in one of the first articles written directly after the Russian inbreak in Crimea described as a center of war between Russia and the European Union. So, one part of the story actually wants us to remove focus from the center of Ukraine and widen our perspective and look upon the clashes from an international point of view.

What is furthermore evident, is how the language chosen when describing this conflict risks exaggerating the problem and thereby also people's expectations of it, and how the lexical style also tend to move our focus to the relation between Russia and its western counterparts. For instance, it is written that the conflict has “given way to warnings of a world war III” and there are several attempts to resemble this situation to the atmosphere existing during the Cold War. For example, it is written how the crisis has “pitted Moscow against the West in a Cold War-style standoff”. These terms are both powerful tools which undoubtedly makes the readers think about an unstable world situation as well as hard times of war. As we have already discussed, how you describe events, locations and actors add to our understanding of them, and the use of such forceful terms as WWIII and Cold War are likely to affect the readers' perceptions of what is really going on in Ukraine, and how dangerous this conflict really is. Other examples of the use of meaningful terms like the ones above is how the pro-Europeans in Ukraine often are connected to the word “Nazi”, if possible an even more value loaded term. This term immediately makes us think about the pro-Europeans in a certain way, and perhaps gives us a preconceived understanding of these groups.

In conclusion, the reporting of the relations between the West and Russia removes valuable focus from the actual violences taking place within the borders of Ukraine, and instead makes us believe that this conflict also have implications on an international level. The repeated talk about sanctions back and forth, and the quoting of Russian as well as American politicians commenting the issue also label these opposed powers as prominent actors in the story told by the news covering.

54 Krainova, Natalya and Quinn, Allison,, Russia's Move to Send Troops to Ukraine Spurs Talk of War, The Moscow Times, 2014-03-03, retrieved 2014-04-25
55 Reuters, 2014-03-21
56 The most outstanding example of the use of this article perhaps being in the article treating the wearing of orange and black striped ribbons, long being a symbol for the Soviet Union defeat of the Nazis, a symbol that has now been adopted by “Russians who oppose the Western-backed regime in Kiev”, implying that they would rooted in the Naziorganisation.

2.1.3 Further Remarks about the Narratives Found in the Moscow Times

Besides the emerging narratives described above, there are some further interesting remarks to be made about how the Moscow Times is covering the events in Crimea. They have to do with for example which kind of actors are allowed to do the narrating and take up space in the articles as well as the use of certain words and choice of lexical style, and how the story is kept together.

Regarding how the narrative is created through the different articles that the Moscow Times is presenting on the question, it is not very coherent and continuous. The different articles are creating small stories by themselves, and some are fairly easy to connect into a bigger narratives, but on the whole the storytelling is not very compact and requires a lot of reading behind the lines. Some of the articles describe events that do not contribute much to the narrative, as when for example Kyrgyzstan and Belarus are expressing their views upon the Russian decision to walk into Crimean territory. These articles however, are not without importance as they are contributing to an understanding of the context within which the story is created. And as we have discussed, narratives as well as the relation between media and conflict always have to be put into a specific context in order to be understood correctly.

When discussing the narrating actors, these are not very many and are often perceived as groups and not as individuals. We can here find two different kinds of actors: we have the “acting” actors such as Russia, the West, pro-Russians and pro-Europeans, and we have the “telling” actors through whose eyes the story about the conflict is told. The prominent actors in these stories are labelled as “pro-Russians”, “pro-Europeans” or “Tartars”, as well as “Russia” and “the West”, something which makes us see them as whole entities and not as single persons. The possible danger of when the actors are presented as groups in this way is that we tend to think that their opinions and understandings are all alike, instead of realising that there may be different views within one single group. Most of the people interviewed have also asked to be anonymous in their commentaries, or at least that their last names are not written out in the articles. Moreover, most actors mentioned are labelled as “residents”, and in general the people in the narratives are rarely if never described thoroughly. At the most, the gender affinity of the interviewees is mentioned, and sometimes also which profession they exert. This further promotes the perception that the Crimeans are not talking as individuals, but as representatives of groups and brings with it that the voices heard in the covering seem to belong to quite an anonymous group, even though their opinions are

strong. The sections are also described in quite a dichotomous way, which even more makes us believe that there are only two sides to the story, hence erasing all the different nuances of opinions and viewpoints that may exist.

Noteworthy regarding the persons who are included in the storytelling is also that a majority of them are regular Crimean residents (at least when the situation on the Crimean peninsula is described). Few politicians are present except for Russian President Putin and his American match President Obama, and a few higher politicians. These, however, are mostly talking about sanctions and how the relation between Russia and America will develop, and rarely figure in the narrative told about the Crimean residents.

When it comes to locations, there are overall were few descriptions of the places were the journalists are situated or where certain events take place. The depictions available though, are all fairly similar in their nature. Focus is on how Crimean cities and villages are overloaded with pro-Russian messages, symbols and slogans. One journalist describes a situation were “a few well-organized people chanted pro-Russian slogans”, and in the next sentence was depicted how in a café “men in dark suits at the next table discussed how to leave the country and were to go”. Another writer mentions how “dozens of pro-Russia billboards can be seen throughout the city” and a third how “residents in Crimea rushed to apply for Russian passports and drop their Ukrainian citizenships”. All these descriptions of locations add to our perception of the Ukrainians as mainly pro-Russians, as if there would be a complete absence of folks sympathizing with the European side.

### 2.2 Russia Today

If we in the reporting made by the Moscow Times were able to find two types of reporting, then the covering of Russia Today provides us with quite another story. The news channel shows us a narrative where the Russian presence is strongly felt, and were focus is almost completely on the relations between the Federation and the West and their opinions on the matter. The storytelling is coloured by Russian opinions, statements andquotings, and the whole story is almost completely told from a Russian point of view. The two features that distinguish themselves the most are firstly

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58 Nechepurenko, 2014-03-04
59 Nechepurenko, 2014-03-14
60 Reuters, 2014-03-21
how the Russian inbreak on the Crimean peninsula is described as some kind of liberation for the Crimean people, and the writings describing cheering Crimeans as well as supporting Russians are many. Almost no type of criticism against this Russian act can be found, and the voices of dissenters are absent. The only deviant voices heard belong to American officials and some European politicians who does not agree with Russia in this question. This type of telling also entails a lot of hidden “justifications” for the Russian actions on the Crimean peninsula.

Secondly, when dealing with the connections between Russia and the West, the comments, quotas and statements in the reporting build an image of a West reluctant to solve the crisis in Crimea, a West who turns mainly to threats and ineffectice sanctions, whereas Russia repeatedly is allowed to declare how it is more than willing to solve the conflict in Crimea by peaceful and lawful means. By the way Russia Today is telling the story about the Crimean conflict, there appear different images of both the Federation as well as US and the EU.

2.2.1 Russian Justifications for Acting in Ukraine
In the writings of Russia Today, a lot of focus (although not entirely obvious, one has to search between the lines) is on justifying Russia's actions in Crimea as well as attempting to promote a picture of the European-friendly administration in Kiev as illegal and somewhat radical. This legitimation is created by inter alia repeated statements of how it was Crimea who begged for assistance and urged Russia to help cope with the the crisis, and how it is frequented that over 50 percent of the Crimean inhabitants are of Russian origin. Russia carefully declares how it interfered at the request of the Crimean parliament, as to distinguish its acting from unlawful interventions. These two features are to be found in almost every article published directly after the Russian inbreak and are repeated frequently also later during the reporting.

Focus is also on the Crimean referendum, and it is over and over again mentioned how a majority of the Crimean politicians and resident are in favor of joining Russia, illustrated by for example statements as “78 Member of Parliaments said yes to Crimea joining Russia, while 8 abstained from voting” followed by a description of how the Crimean people “welcomed the news with cheers and screams of “Russia!””. Other positive figures concerning the referendum are also mentioned several times, in an effort to show how trula Crimeans wich to be part of Russia. If we are asking the story told in the reporting of Russia Today, then, the decision made by Russia to cross

61 Russia Today, Sevastopol and Crimean Parliament Cote to Join Russia, Referendum to be Held in 10 Days, Russia Today, 2014-03-07, retrieved 2014-05-25
the border into Ukraine was not a rash one, but a resolution that took the desire of the Crimean people into consideration.

It is also often emphasized that the decision was made in order to protect Russian citizens living on Crimean territory, and to “help ensure peace and calm on the territory of the autonomous region”.

Russia's troops were solely there to “ensure peace and order in the region”. Interesting to note here is also how Crimea almost always is described as “autonomous”, perhaps in an attempt to separate the region from the rest of Ukraine and facilitate the connection to Russia. Another way the covering of Russia Today is creating a vindication for the presence of Russian troops in the area is by for example reporting of the Crimean and Russian deals concerning the legality of the existence of the Black Sea Fleet, mentioning how many Russian troops are allowed to be there etc.

Furthermore, we can also depict how the reporting is creating a supportive atmosphere for Russian opinions and deeds by including reports of cheering Russians and Crimeans in their covering. For instance, a fair amount of space is given the reporting of rallies and demonstrating in Russian cities, demonstrations who all declare their support for Putin's decision to let military forces into Ukrainian territory, and who proclaim how Crimea should be part of the Russian Federation. Headlines such as “Thousands rally in Russia's southwest to support Russians speakers in Ukraine” or “Tens of thousands hit streets in Russia ahead of Crimea vote” adds to this understanding. In these articles, the Russian feelings for their Crimean equals appear with clarity. Various Russian citizens are allowed to speak their minds and chant things such as “Crimea we are with you”, “Russia doesn't ditch its people”, “Russia should help its brothers in a difficult situation” or “Russia and Ukraine are together against Fascism”. One demonstrator declares that “we give hope to all the citizens of Crimea that Russia doesn't abandon them. We are ready to help them” and banners carried by others stated inter alia “No to extremism” and “Russia and Ukraine: The same roots, the same faith”. Overall the story that is mediated is that Russians and Crimeans belong together, and that Russia refuses to abandon their Russian fellows living on Ukrainian territory. It also seems that most Russians are supportive of the fact that the Ukrainian region appears to be

62 Russia Today, Gunmen from Kiev Attempted to Seize Crimea's Interior Ministry Overnight – Russia, Russia Today, 2014-03-01, retrieved 2014-05-25
63 Russia Today, Russian Senators Vote to Use Stabilizing Military Forces on Ukrainian Territory, Russia Today, 2014-03-01, retrieved 2014-05-25
64 Russia Today, Thousands Rally in Russia's Southwest to Support Russian Speakers in Ukraine, Russia Today, 2014-03-04, retrieved 2014-05-25
66 Ibid.
67 Russia Today, 2014-03-04, “Thousands Rally...”
joining the Federation, at least in the absence of other, dissenting voices. To further the understanding of this decision as a popular one, Russia Today also chooses to incorporate reports of President Putins popularity in its covering. It is described how Putins “rating climbs to a 5 year peak” and how the possible reason for this vogue may be the inbreak in Crimea in order to protect residents of Russian ethnicity. Voices criticizing Putin or Crimea's joining Russia are very rare (the only critique forwarded against Putin is perhaps the one he gets from western leaders, exacerbating the to opposing images of the West and Russia that emerge within the writings).

If we care to take a closer look upon the statements chanted by Russian demonstrators above, we can also see how they contain references to the new government in Ukraine as “facists” and “radicals”. This seems to be a common trick used by Russia Today, to sneak in degrading tags of the Kiev administration every now and then in their texts. The government is more than often referred to as “self-imposed”, “self-proclaimed” as well as “coup-imposed”, it is described as being of “questionable legitimacy” and as lacking “both credentials and power” and it is said that it “was put in power by people by baseball bats”. Besides, the “self-imposed” new Prime Minister of Ukraine is one time referred to as a possible “war criminal”. Trying to describe ones opponent in an unfavorable manner like the one just illustrated is a way of opposing yourself to it and try to depict youself as the opposite, and may be another way in which Russia Today by its telling is creating a justification for the acts of Russia.

In conclusion, we can see how a large part of the story told creates a apparently waterproof justification for the Russian acts. This is made for example by emphaisizing how the Crimeans really wish to belong to the Russian Federation, by stating that Russian troops solely is on the ground to ensure peace and calm, and by paying great attention to how Russians are supporting both Putin and Crimea in this question.

2.2.2 The Dichotomous Images of Russia and the West

In the tellings of Russia Today, the reporting has almost totally departed from what is happening in

68 Russia Today, Putin's rating at Two-year high for secong Consecutive Week – Pollsters, Russia Today, 2014-03-06, retrieved 2014-05-25
Russia Today, Putin's Rating Climbs to 5-year Peak, Russia Today, 2014-03-20, retrieved 2014-05-25
69 Russia Today, Will be a War Crime to Use Force against Ukraine Civilians, Russia Warns Self-Proclaimed President, Russia Today, 2014-03-02, retrieved 2014-05-25
71 Ibid.
72 Russia Today, 2014-03-02, “Will be a War Crime...”
Crimea and how Crimean residents are experiencing this crisis. Focus is instead as we have seen above on the feelings and ideas of the Russian people, and, as we will see in the following section, on the relations between Russia and the West. The reporting has abandoned the stories of the Crimean people in advantage of a narrative located on the international arena, a narrative whose emphasis lie in questions of sovereignty and national integrity as well as the lawfulness of interventions. We can also see how two different images of Russia and the West are created by whom is allowed to pronounce themselves in the articles. Mostly Russian politicians and experts are commenting the events, which on the whole gives us an understanding of the Federation as patient and willing to resolve the crisis in Ukraine in a peaceful manner, whilst the US and EU together are shown as reluctant to contribute to an effective resolving of the dissonances.

First, we can take a look upon how the image of the Russian decision to let its troops walk into Ukrainian territory is established. It is said that “Russia did not intervene for a long time, counting on its Western partners”, and that “Russia has so far been careful in its assessment of the Kiev administration”. Moreover, it is stated that “Russia has for a long time urged the situation to be resolved by lawful means”. Later on, it is declared that “Russia assures that there will never be a war between them and Ukraine”, also described as “there will never be a war between our brotherly people”. Here, we are offered a description of the Russian character as patient, abiding of international law, while it is suggested that the West has abandoned its responsibilities and neglected the situation in the European country. It is mentioned that Russia has a long time wanted to do something in order to ameliorate the situation in Ukraine, while it has had a hard time to turn western attention to the problem.

The question of acting in the case of Ukraine has also turned into a debate of international law. Here the two sides hold completely opposite views. While Russia assert that its acts are in accordance with international law and that it “will apply the necessary measures within the framework of international law”, the American and European opinion is quite another. For instance, it is repeatedly announced that the referendum in Crimea violated international law, and American diplomat Samantha Power declares that Russian actions are “violating the sovereignty of Ukraine and threaten international peace”. The Russian annexation of the region is furthermore referred to as nothing more than a “land grab” by the American vice president, one of few

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75 Russia Today, 2014-03-01, “Putin: Russian Citizens...”
Americans quoted in the Russia Today reporting. On the other side, Russia deems American acts illegal when it for example says that the US is violating its own laws by financially aiding Ukraines coup-installed government. Both sides are using national and international law to deligitimize each others opinions and justificate their own. Attention is also drawn by Russia Today to other referendums of the same character as the Crimean one, where the west has refused to act or not acted in accordance with international law. Even the Crimean parliament refers to the Charter of the United Nations when deciding to hold a referendum.

There are also differences in the images of both sides that are created by how the media is covering the series of events. In general, the image mediated of Russia is that the country works hard to come to a conclusion considering the problems in Ukraine. It is amongst other examples described how the Russian Foreign Ministry has offered the US and the EU to form an international support group for Ukraine and it is also mentioned how Russia eagerly seeks cooperation with Ukraine, the EU and the US. American acts and statements however, are described as “agressive”, as insults to the Russian people, and as “direct threats”. Nor the American use of sanctions to change Russian behavior is regarded as diplomatic efforts, they are looked upon as menaces, and Russian spokespersons utter their dissapointment over how America turn to ineffective sanctions which hinder positive cooperations instead of trying to find common grounds with Russia. To further foster the understanding of the West as unwilling to cooperate, it is in one text written how “Moscow finds it hard to talk to the west, which is detached from reality” and American officials are said to be unable to back their allegations with facts and explanations.

There also exist some interesting lexical choices made by the journalists which show that the tale told in Russia Today is mainly a Russian one, as for example the intriguing beginning of one article, where an American official is talking about “the unacceptability of invading a sovereign country on phony grounds”. The response written by the journalist goes as follows: “But no, she...”

77 Russia Today, 5 Referendums that the West has not Taken Issue with, Russia Today, 2014-03-14, retrieved 2014-05-25
79 Russia Today, Russia Proposes Creating International Support Group to Resolve Ukrainian Crisis, Russia Today, 2014-03-17
80 Russia Today, “Upper House...”
81 Russia Today, Senators Suggest Recalling Russia's ambassador from US over Obama Speech, Russia Today, 2014-03-01, retrieved 2014-05-25
83 Russia Today, US Official Accuses Russia of Firing at Ukrainian Troops, Refuses to Explain Herself, Russia Today, 2014-03-20, retrieved 2014-05-25
was not speaking of the United States, as one might have thought”. 84 Another one is when the naming by American Vice President of the Russian annexation as a “land grab” is considered as “a kind of political Oscar from America for best male supporting act”. 85

2.2.3 Further Remarks about the Narratives in Russia Today
As in the case with the Moscow Times, there are some complementing observations to be made concerning lexical style, choice of words, descriptions of actors etc.

Looking upon the story as a whole, we have already detected how it departs from the story told about the Crimean residents and instead lifts itself to the international level. Focus is on questions of the lawfulness of different actions, on sovereignty and territorial integrity, as well as the relation between East and the West and how these sides picture each other. The story is dense, with frequent reporting about almost every little occurrence and with numerous iterations. It is easy to see what facts and happenings the producer wants us to focus on, as these are described and mentioned repeatedly. As mentioned in the theoretical sections, repetitions of events is one way a narrator can draw attention to what he or she finds important, and thus let other occurrences fall into oblivion.

The narrating is also for most of the time let over to other narrators than the journalist. A great part of the writings are made up by quotas and statements by different politicians and officials, and hence the narrative is created by these and what opinions and perception these may express, rather than, for example, simple delineations of actors, locations and events. This also implies that the telling becomes value loaded, as politicians rarely express themselves without trying to forward a certain understanding about what is going on. In these texts, therefore, it is of great importance to be aware of who is saying what, whom is quoted and with what purpose. For instance, one can easily pay attention to the fact that Russian officials far more often than their western or Crimean counterparts are allowed to speak their minds. One can thereafter draw the conclusion that the overall story told will be one influenced by the Russian perspective.

The main personages present in the telling is evidently Russia and what is referred to as “the West”. It is their actions that are examined, their relationship which is investigated. They are portrayed as the main actors who will determine the future of this crisis. They are sometimes also voiced by different politicians and officials, whereof American President Obama as well as Russian President Putin are the most prominent. There is an almost complete absence of commentaries from

84 Russia Today, 2014-03-04, “Seriously What?!...”
85 Russia Today, West Furious as Crimea Accepted into Russia, Russia Today, 2014-03-19, retrieved 2014-05-25
“regular” citizens, the one exceptions being the Russian demonstrators cited in some articles. As these officials are well-known people to many of us, there has had to no descriptions of these personages.

The articles are also scarce of descriptions of locations. Most sites are depicted in a way similar to the descriptions found in the Moscow Times. We are provided with a picture where there is a strong Russian presence, and people are for example described as “carrying Russian flags and wearing black and orange ribbon”\(^\text{86}\). Another event is described as follows: “thousand of people are flooding the streets of major cities, carrying Russian flags and urgin local authorities to disobey Kiev’s orders. The local population is calling the government in Kiev illegitimate”.\(^\text{87}\)

It also has to be said that the reportings of Russia Today contain a fair amount of short videos illustrating certain events as well as numerous photos. Examining these would be a workload large enough to provide material for a whole essay and would take more time than is available for this essay, and therefore I have avoided this task in order to focus on the texts and writings. As it is hard to completely avoid it though, I have glanced at the photos and can conclude that most of them are supporting the Russian narrative otherwise emerging from the articles.

2.3 Summary and Concluding Thoughts

In the very beginning of this essay, we were pondering about how the narratives in the Moscow Times and Russia Today would look like, and whether the stories found would resemble each other or not. What we can tell now, is that we have two stories that look quite like each other when it comes to structure and construction, but diverge from each other when we look upon their content. By stating that the stories are similar in structure, I refer to the fact that they both are lacking a milieu or locations were the events are taking place (although implicitly they are obviously taking place in Ukraine and Russia, as it is there where the conflict is situated), and that there is almost no actors that perform any actions. Both tales are event orientated and pay greater attention to forwarding the story through reporting of what is happening rather than devoting a lot of time to detailed descriptions of places and characters. This finding could quite easily be explained by the fact that the primary material examined has been pure news articles deriving from two great news corporations. Texts dealing with news are due to be event orientated – the primary readers are often interested in getting a quick overview over an event to get a grasp over what has happened rather than delving deep into the background of the conflict.

\(^{86}\) Russia Today, 2014-03-04, “Thousands Rally...”
\(^{87}\) Russia Today, 2014-03-02, “Will be a War Crime...”
than reading lengthy descriptions of what a landscape looks like, as would be suitable in for example a novel. Due to the shortness of the articles and the limited space offered by newspapers there is also not enough room to incorporate these delineations, and hence the writer choses to focus on other things. One could also argue that descriptions are of minor importance and that this is one of the minor reasons why they are not often incorporated in the news reporting, but as we have seen in the theories upon which this essay is built, it is rather the contrary that is true. How we describe characters and places will affect our perceptions and our understanding of a story. Therefore, for example, the few descriptions that exist of how the cities are filled with pro-Russian slogans and colours become meaningful when we are to create an understanding of the atmosphere in Crimea.

Other than resembling each other in structure like this, we can from the analysis above actually tell that the Moscow times and Russia Today are providing us with two narratives that do not look a lot like one another. If we are to summarize the two narratives, we can easily see how they diverge from each other. The narrative created by the reporting of the Moscow Times is mainly the one of the Crimean people, a people who at a first glance appear to be consistent in their wish to belong to the Russian Federation. If we are to take a closer look though, we can see that beneath the surface there are traces of insecurity and anxiety, that there are sections of people that are not so sure about their feelings of the Russian annexation of the region and who actually are concerned about their future. There are also two competing views about whether Crimea and Russia indeed belong together; the Russians asked seem to be sure that the Crimeans are happy to be “saved” from the rest of Ukraine, but on the other side numerous Crimeans are critical of the way in which Russian media portrays the crisis. This complex story is furthermore spiced up with the parallel tale of the antagonisms between Russia and the West.

When summarizing the tale told by Russia Today, we notice how the segment treating Crimean views and opinion has completely fallen off and instead has made room for a larger story involving western and eastern giants. The story is now almost entirely set on an international level, and the quarrels have shifted focus from questions about ethnic and geographic affiliation to queries of whether certain actions can be defended by international law and if the national sovereignty of Ukraine has been threatened. We can also see how the image-building of the opposing parties is stronger than before – when connecting the dots we observe how two different understandings of Russia and the West are emerging, images created by the way Russia Today depicts the situation.

So, there seems that there is not much that connects these different stories. To be fair, it is
difficult to see that they are actually covering the exact same event. But as we have already discussed in the theoretical part, there can simultaneously exist different narratives even though the narratives are founded on the same happening in reality. It is also said that there need not to be any logical connection between a “reality event” and a “media event”, which may in part explain why these narratives are so dissimilar. However though if we put the narratives in a grander context we can see that they resemble each other a little. For example, the overall story told by both papers together is on the one side that Crimea is a region that truly belongs to Russia, both for historical and ethnical reasons (for example, the relation is in both narratives depicted as a “brotherly” one, as if they were of the same family). On the other side we also find in both stories an antagonism between Russia and the West, a narrative that perhaps worsen the preconceived meanings that many readers already have of the relation between these two entities.

Besides the actuality that the stories are very different, there are some other things to be noticed about the reporting of Russia Today and the Moscow Times that may be of interest to discuss and that has without doubt affected the outcome of the analysis. First of all, there is a great difference in the amount of articles that are to be found on the topic. Russia Today has produced nearly twice the amount of articles the Moscow Times has published, which implies that it has been easier to find a consistent thread through the covering. Though, this finding could be explained by the fact that Russia Today is far a larger news corporation than the Moscow Times is, having more resources and thus a greater ability to cover the subject and publish more articles. It is also a possibility that Russia Today for some reason might have a peculiar interest in reporting about the conflict in order to, perhaps, foster a certain understanding of the crisis that it wishes to mediate to its readers all around the world.

Secondly, we have a difference in “level” of reporting. If we look upon it as if the Moscow Times' reporting is situated mostly on a “ground level”, interviewing residents that are very much involved in the conflict, with violences around the corner, then the stories of Russia Today is located on a higher level, where contact with the actual violences is not so present. It is difficult to say what these distinctions devolve on, but once again possible explanations likely has to do with what story the producers want to mediate to its followers. For instance, the Moscow Times maybe wants to focus on residents of the Crimean peninsula to draw attention to questions of ethnicity or because they find it important to bring about minorities rights to decide their own faith. This may also be the exact reason why Russia Today avoids talking to the regular citizen, perhaps it is afraid that if Crimean people were allowed to express their views in their articles this would destroy the
image of Russia that it is trying to create.

This also illuminates a third difference between the narratives, namely by whom the narrating is forwarded. As we have seen above, the narrating in the Moscow Times is created by letting Crimean citizens tell their stories, whereas the storytelling in Russia Today is made up mostly by announcements by politicians and officials. In the theoretical section of this essay that treats the relationship between the media and conflicts, one of the issues dealt with describes how political elites often easier have access to the media and thereby also may influence the political and social discussion in a way that “normal” citizens cannot. Politicians are often listen to and treated as if they have something important to contribute to the ongoing debate, therefore their assertions often are (even if this may be subconsciously) loaded with value and affect the readers opinions about the topic discussed. For that reason, we should be especially aware of the amount of space that are given (mostly Russian) politicians to proclaim their views in articles published by Russia Today. Influential politicians as Putin and Obama will without doubt affect the readers in one way or another.

The discussion above also lead us to the question of who is the writer and the producer of these texts and what their intentions are. During the analysis, we have come to realise how the reportings of Russia Today create a story that is in favour of Russian beliefs, opinions and standpoints. Both the hidden justifications for Russia's behavior in Crimea and the image of Russia that evolved between the lines in the articles are of advantage to the Russian realm, whereas this trait is not so clear within the covering of the Moscow Times. To explain this difference, we can search for reasons in the background of both news enterprises. Whereas the Moscow Times is owned by an independent news organisation established by a group of Dutch investors, Russia Today is founded by a Russian state-owned news corporation. Russia Today has also several times been criticized for writing in favor of the Russian government, which may be one of the reasons why we find a Russia-friendly story within its reporting.

To sum up, we have through the analysis and this last concluding section answered the two research questions set up in the beginning of this paper. We have delineated what two stories are emerging when reading the articles, as summarized above. We have also come to the conclusion that these narratives are not similar to each other, and we have discussed some of the major differences between them and possible causes of the dissimilarities.
3.0 Bibliography

3.1 Primary Material

3.1.1 The Moscow Times


3.1.2 Russia Today


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88 As Russia Today does not reveal the authors of its texts, and it hence is impossible to place these sources in alphabetical order after the name of the author, these sources are stated in the same chronological order as they appear in the paper.


3.2 Secondary Material


3.3 Other Sources


