

UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE

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За честные выборы – FOR FAIR ELECTIONS

Frame Analysis of the Pro-Fair Elections Rallies
in the Russian Press after the 2011 Duma Elections

Master's Thesis
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Abstract

This Master's Thesis studies the press coverage of the demonstrations that took place in Russia after the Duma elections in December 2011. The parliamentary elections were thought to be a formal test of legitimacy for the leading party, United Russia. However, United Russia suffered a bitter defeat and gained only a bit less than 50 percent of the votes. Despite the obvious defeat, the claims of rigged elections spread quickly, and people began demonstrating against the results. A protest movement demanding for fair elections spread all around Russia.

The goal of this thesis is to analyze how two Russian newspapers covered the rallies. The empirical data consists of articles from two newspapers, *Kommersant* – an independent newspaper – and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* – typically portrayed as a newspaper faithful to the officials. The method for the content analysis is Frame analysis. In a relatively controlled, neo-authoritarian media system the Russian media outlets had to balance between the ideals of objective journalism and the pressures coming from the Russian authorities. This thesis seeks to make visible what kind of coverage the print media produced and how the demonstrations were framed in the newspapers.

My study shows that the newspapers provided various perspectives to the rallies. During the analysis period of one week, framing of the rallies changed dramatically. In the beginning, the rallies were framed as a typical behavior of belligerent opposition and as a threat to Russia. The split between the power and the people was emphasized. Towards the end of the week the framing became softer and more humane, and the rallies were framed as harmless folk festivals and as a celebration of a robust civil society.

On the surface, the coverage seemed to provide multiple angles. However, especially *Komsomolskaya Pravda* framed the rallies in a way that was favorable to the authorities, emphasizing the aspects of threat and the need for stability. Furthermore, the shift in *Komsomolskaya Pravda*'s framing was parallel to the shift in the official rhetoric: when the officials acknowledged the need for dialogue with the protestors, also *Komsomolskaya Pravda* softened its approach towards the rallies. *Kommersant*'s coverage showed some signs of following the official rhetoric towards the end of week, but compared to *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Kommersant* provided a more balanced and pluralist coverage, emphasizing both the uniting nature of the rallies among the protestors and the fundamental split that exists between the power and the people. In addition, *Kommersant* discussed the potential of a political change in Russia and the issue of press freedom.

Keywords: Russia, elections, Duma, demonstrations, opposition, newspaper, *Kommersant*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, framing

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1. Introduction

The State Duma elections in December 2011 were thought to be a formal test of legitimacy for the leading party, United Russia. If everything went according to the plan, United Russia would win the elections by far and the result would secure and consolidate United Russia's position in power. In the elections, United Russia gained 49.32 percent of the votes, and 238 seats of the total amount of 450 seats in the parliament. In addition to United Russia, only three other parties crossed the 7 percent election threshold: Communist Party (19.19%), Just Russia (13.24%) and Liberal Democratic Party (11.67%). The results were a bitter disappointment for United Russia. Compared to the previous legislative elections in 2007, United Russia lost its votes dramatically – from 63.40 percent of votes falling to little less than 50 percent of votes. Despite the loss of votes and of the relatively modest outcome for United Russia, both of which supported the fact that United Russia had not fiddled the figures too much, the accusations of rigged elections started spreading quickly in Russia.

The majority of the Russian population had been publicly living a rather non-political life for the past decade, but that was about to change. After the Duma elections, thousands of ordinary Russians came out to the streets demanding for fair and clean elections. Many of the participants were not politically active citizens; they were people who were participating in rallies for the first time in their life. The movement started as small demonstrations. For example, in Saint Petersburg the first rallies had only few hundred participants. People continued to protest and attend the rallies to show their support to the ones who had gotten arrested in the demonstrations. Already towards the end of the first week after the elections the protest activity had grown into a solid movement.

In the beginning of February 2012, The Central Electoral Committee ЦИК published its report about the alleged falsifications. According to the report, the committee had received 1686 reports on irregularities in the Duma elections. After the investigation, almost 90 percent of the irregularities were said to be groundless. The committee argued that only 11.5 percent (195 irregularities) were confirmed to be true after the investigation. However, the phenomenon of unfair elections goes far beyond claimed irregularities that take place in the polling stations: the unfairness lays in the structures, e.g. the Russian opposition parties have a clear underdog-position compared to United Russia. The report did not satisfy the discontent voters and they continued to protest. For example, on the February 4th 2012 approximately 160,000 people demonstrated in Moscow.

The aim of this thesis is to study the immediate coverage of the post-Duma elections rallies in the Russian newspapers. This thesis seeks to study the phenomenon of pro-Fair elections movement

and how the Russian print media covered the rallies. I became interested in this topic immediately after the elections, when the protests in Russia began. I witnessed the people gathering in front of Gostiny Dvor -shopping mall in the heart of Saint Petersburg. I saw protesters getting arrested, I saw riot police using force and busses full of people been driven to jail. I did not only see the force and confrontation, but I also saw the development of the protest – growing from meetings of few hundred participants into rallies of thousands of people demanding for fair elections. I was lucky enough to witness some of the events and felt that something exceptional was happening in Russia – it was the atmosphere among the people, the sense of anticipation that caught my attention. As a viewer and as a passer-by I got the impression that people had woken up from a hundred years long sleep. The protestors were determinant and not willing to give up before their claims would be met.

The media content in Russia is an important research topic because of the controlled nature of the media environment. Russian media system is often referred to as neo-authoritarian system, in which many of the media outlets are subordinated to the control or at least under the pressure of the state. The media outlets have to operate in a system where self-censorship is an everyday practice, and ideals of good, balanced journalism are not the most important guidelines in the newsroom. However, independent media also exists and the Russian media is a mix of controlled, partly free and free news outlets. In December 2011, The Russian media had the potential of fostering the protest movement, and the media coverage is something that the authorities would wish to control. News outlets have the potential in influencing the audiences: depending on the tone and the ways of framing the rallies, the protest movement can be seen as for example something useful and necessary for Russia, or as something unwanted and dangerous. It is far from self-evident or predictable how the Russian newspapers would cover the rallies. This thesis studies how two Russian newspapers, Kommersant and Komsomolskaya Pravda, framed the rallies.

This thesis is structured into two parts. The first part includes the background and theoretical foundation for the topic. The research problem will be presented. After that the political context of the Duma elections will be provided. These chapters include the discussion of Russia's strong, centralized regime and the living conditions of both the organized and the unofficial opposition. Then, the events of Duma elections 2011 will be presented, and after that the media environment in Russia will be scrutinized in order to create a context for conducting the analysis of the primary research material, the news coverage of the Russian press. The second part of this thesis concerns the analysis and results. After providing the background and the context for the topic, the analysis method, framing and frame analysis, will be presented. In chapter 7, the thesis moves to analyzing the content of the press. Finally, the results will be discussed and conclusions will be presented.

2. Research problem

At the eve of the Duma elections, the Russian political setting seemed relatively stable, and no surprises were expected. The authorities and the population had gotten used to living next to each other, minding their own business, and most of the people expected that the elections will go smoothly. United Russia would win by great figures; majority of the people would not oppose the results. President Vladimir Putin's trademark is that he promotes the idea of stability in Russia. There was no reason why this stability would not continue. However, the discontent had been growing below the surface. The results of the elections caused an unexpected burst of anger, discontent and resistance among part of the population, and the protests were the largest seen in Russia in almost two decades. The Russian opposition had appeared to be somewhat suffocated and suppressed, but suddenly a citizen movement was born: people went to streets and they refused to be silent. The aftermath of the Duma elections was unexpected to many; it was a hopeful uprising of the Russian civil society – even if its extent and significance remain to be argued about.

This thesis aims to answer to question: how were the rallies framed in the Russian press?

The analysis seeks to discover how the rallies are portrayed in the news reports. What kinds of interpretations are raised and provided to the audiences? What is highlighted, what is left out?

The Russian political sphere is a battlefield of ruling elite that has a very established position and the opposition that is fractured and marginalized. The media also had players in this battlefield, part of the news outlets are playing for the winning team, for the rulers, and part of the media are playing as independent player, for the ideals of free, balanced journalism. The December 2011 protests caused an unexpectedly broad turbulence in the Russian society. Suddenly, the group of the discontent did not consist only of organized opposition politics, but of ordinary voters and that concerned the regime that was getting ready for the presidential elections. For the authorities, it was necessary to control to public discourse of the demonstrations and avoid bigger damages from being born.

Different media had a great power of setting the tone for the public discussion. The aim of this thesis is to make visible the coverage of the rallies. The fundamental idea on the background is that the news coverage has the potential to influence the readers, and it is significant how the rallies are presented to the public. An interesting aspect for the study is the press' working conditions in a neo-authoritarian media system, in which freedom is limited. The results of the frame analysis can provide information of how Russian media operates in a turbulent situation that this sensitive topic for the authoritarian regime.

The empirical data of the analysis are newspaper articles. I chose print media for two reasons. First, the print media is a grey area between the controlled main medium television and the free zone of the internet. Newspapers have the possibility of reporting in an unbiased manner. However, there are also print media that support the status quo and do not aim for balanced, objective reporting. This thesis studies two newspapers, representing the both tendencies: independent and state-minded.

The second reason is more practical. I chose to study newspaper content, because that is the most familiar form of media text for me a journalist and my journalistic working experience is from the print media. Another reason was that written language in Russian is easier for me to understand than spoken. Even though I understand and speak Russian, I am not fluent. I believe that I have better chances of analyzing written than spoken media texts.

The coverage of the rallies is an interesting topic of research, because the rallies form an unequalled continuation: despite the massive arrests, people kept on going to streets several days after the elections and did not give up. As the events developed, both the media and the authorities had to re-estimate and re-shape their response towards the protests. Both parties of the protest, the regime and the protestors, had their goals and intentions. The analysis seeks to understand the battle between the protestors and the regime, and the media that played a crucial role shaping the image of the protests.

3. Political context for the elections and rallies

3.1 From the Soviet era to the Contemporary age

The political context for the Russian parliamentary elections of December 2011 was to great extent created during the 2000's. Vladimir Putin became the president of the Russian Federation in 2000, and during the 2000's he strengthened his grip on power. Putin led the country for the maximum two presidential terms, and after the 2008 elections, he continued to lead the country together with Dmitry Medvedev. Putin became the Prime Minister and Medvedev was elected as the President, and this arrangement has been called tandem or tandem democracy.

In this chapter, I will study the roots of the political development and the context that set the conditions for the protests taking place after the Duma elections in December 2011. The events of the past decade are complicated processes that date back to decades, and it would be wrong to think that the current power system is a result of one man: Vladimir Putin. It is necessary to stake a compact glance back to time before the presidency of Vladimir Putin and understand that the contemporary Russian structures proceed long before Putin became president.

In Russia, the 20th century was mostly dominated by the era of Soviet Union and communism, during which elections had only one candidate to vote for and voting was merely an obligation. During Perestroika and after the dissolution of Soviet Union Russia took a spurt towards development of democratic institutions, but slowly and surely Russia has reversed back to the more authoritarian order. The setting for the 2011 Duma elections was a result of long political and social development and circumstances, but I will try to concentrate on the most essential processes. The goal of this chapter is to help the reader to understand the context of the elections and the roots of the rallies.

3.2 The legacy of president Yeltsin

The current Russian authoritarian order has its roots deep in the Yeltsin era and in the first post-Soviet decade. In the late 1980's, Mikhail Gorbachev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and later, the president of the Soviet Union, initiated ideas of Perestroika (rebuilding) and Glasnost (openness). These ideas suggested that Russia might abandon the strict ideals of

communism. During Glasnost, the Russian media faced unexpected freedom and the Soviet Union took steps towards democracy. At a first glimpse, the Yeltsin era appears to be a period of intense democratic development. According to Richard Sakwa (2002), the main theme of the post-communist politics in the beginning of the 1990's was the interaction between continuity and change, between the existing conditions in the society and the process of change reacting with these conditions. It was evident that the 70-years long Soviet period would influence the post-communist period. In the 1991, people who defined themselves as democrats came to power, but it became soon clear that post-communism was far from being synonymous with democracy. Between the collapse of the old order and the establishment of the new order Russia faced a period of disorder. (Sakwa, 2002, 43.)

According to Ambrosio (2009), the dissolution of the Soviet Union was followed by establishment of the Russian Federation, its constitution and order, all of them complicated processes. Right after the collapse of the Soviet order, Russia did not adopt a new constitution but operated on the Soviet document. Yeltsin sought to strengthen his institutional authority by extra constitutional means, and it resulted in legislature's will to strip many of the powers away from the President. The President supported a referendum which aimed to strengthen the president vis-à-vis the parliament. He also illegally dissolved the Supreme Soviet, violating the Russian Constitution. Legislators responded to Yeltsin's deeds by seeking to replace Yeltsin with his vice president, Alexander Rutskoy. As the result, an armed crisis erupted and it ended when Yeltsin ordered the military to shell and forcibly seize the Russian parliament building in October 1993.

Many of Yeltsin's acts were violations towards the Russian constitution and law. Even if Yeltsin justified his actions in the name of democratic goals, Ambrosio notes, non-democratic actions rarely result in a positive outcome. This was also the case with Russia, and the outcome can be even seen in today's Russia. First, Yeltsin had to rely on military to keep him in the power, and this led to the dependence of 'power ministries', i.e. defense, interior, and intelligence services. The reliance to military undermined the civilian control and it fostered the rise of *siloviki*, current and former members of power ministries, in Russian politics. Second, Yeltsin's administration showed that it was scared of democracy. Ambrosio writes that "*the Yeltsin administration immediately hedged its bets against the possibility that a democratic legislature could again contest the power of the presidency. This was done by imposing a very different constitution from the one approved by the July 1993 constitutional Assembly, which was, incidentally, accepted by Yeltsin at the time.*" This draft of the constitution enabled the president-dominant system and the concentration of power to Kremlin to take place. During the period from 1991 to 1999, democratization in the Russian Federation faced several setbacks. Elections became less free and less competitive, the independence of the media was

weakened, and the power became increasingly concentrated in a virtually unchecked presidency. Ambrosio presents few key events that set Russia on an autocratic trajectory: the constitutional crisis of 1993, the subsequent establishment of a president-dominant political system, the 1996 elections, and the selection of Putin as Yeltsin's successor. The roots of the current authoritarian system date back to the Yeltsin era. Ambrosio is quite direct when he argues: *thus, rather than using the crisis to lay a constitutional foundation for democracy, Yeltsin created conditions under which an anti-democratic president like Putin could build an authoritarian system.* (Ambrosio 2009, 30–31.)

Russia had several elections during the 1990's. The parliamentary elections in 1995 and gubernatorial elections 1996–1997 followed the norms and rules of democratic, free elections, but democratic values were not visible in the 1996 Presidential elections. Towards the end of this first term, President Yeltsin lost his popularity piece by piece. The country was struggling with economic problems and losing a war in Chechnya. It was becoming more and more likely that the candidate of Communist Party, Gennady Zyuganov, would win the elections. Experts in Kremlin were encouraging Yeltsin to either rig the elections or cancel them “*outright by declaring a state of emergency*”. Ambrosio claims that it was a positive sign that elections were held in the first place. However, the election campaign itself was all but fair. Even if there were multiple candidates, in order to win the elections at any costs, Kremlin violated the campaign pending and transparency rules, distributed freely financial largesse to regional leaders and sometimes directly to people to fish votes, and reportedly falsified at least some returns. The most serious damage done to the future of Russian democracy was the relationship between Kremlin and the oligarchs, and the oligarchs and the mass media. Top oligarchs and media moguls supported openly Yeltsin's campaign by turning all of their resources toward his reelection. They provided the President with consistently positive television coverage and blatantly demonized his opponent Gennady Zyuganov. This rigged campaign fostered the corruption on high level and blurred the relationship between government and the media. Ambrosio concludes the election process of 1996 by saying, that the election itself was relatively free, but the process leading up to the vote was clearly not fair. The elections in 1996, argues Ambrosio, were not a step towards democracy, but a sign that Russia's illiberal tendencies were laying just behind the surface. Ambrosio (2009, 31–33.)

After the 1996 elections, key posts in government and administration were given to oligarchs and to extreme free-market reformers. The period between 1996 and 2000 elections was mostly characterized by economic crises that begun in 1998. As the elections got closer, Yeltsin got more and more unpopular. The presidential elections of 2000 could have been a turn towards democratic path, if the elections had been genuinely fair and competitive. However, this was not the case. Because

of the constitution, Yeltsin was prohibited from running for a third term. He was unpopular and had serious health problems, and it was unlikely the voters would have voted for him. He needed to find a successor and he appointed Vladimir Putin to be his successor and Prime Minister. Yeltsin allowed Putin to run as incumbent, taking advantage of the president-dominant system. In addition, the elections were moved to March 2000, due to the rules demanding an early election because of the resignation of the President. (Ambrosio, 2009, 33.)

3.3 Towards a centralized state

The Russian political system is closely tied to the position of the President: the president is the foremost and final figure of authority in Russia. This understanding was emphasized even more during the two terms of President Vladimir Putin. During his terms, Putin recentralized control, strengthened the central state and established a solid vertical of power by appointing loyal figures to key positions to implement policy decisions. (Monaghan, 2012a, 1.)

When Putin came to power, he was virtually unknown to the big audience. He had been creating his career and he rose all the way to the post of the head of the FSB. On the 9th of August 1999 Yeltsin surprised Russians and announced that he would support Vladimir Putin as Prime Minister and as his successor. According to Goldman (2005), Putin knew what he was getting into and what kind of problems Russia was struggling with: due to privatization and economic crisis people had lost their savings. Businesses were closed down, people were fired, and market economy was shattering. Also government was facing problems, and during a 12 month period of time Yeltsin's government had four different prime ministers. Putin promised Yeltsin and his daughter legal immunity from any prosecution. (Goldman, 2005, 93.)

Vladimir Putin was a successor of President Boris Yeltsin, whose period had been somewhat chaotic – the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the reforms of the society and Yeltsin's personal problems all contributed to the fact that the 1990's were turbulent in Russia. When Putin stepped into power, he was relatively unknown to the majority of the people, and it seemed like he came out of nowhere, but in fact he was a continuation for Yeltsin's heritage. However, Lukyanov (2009) argues that the post-Soviet period from Yeltsin to Putin has been one transition, even if the rulers want to draw a clear division between the Yeltsin era and the Putin era. The post-Soviet period is marked by the need to create new national identity on the ruins of the lost Soviet superpower status. (Lukyanov, 2009, 118.)

During the early 2000's Vladimir Putin became the savior of Russians who were hungering for stability and continuity. In his first speech, Putin emphasized the stability and greatness of Russia, and he argued that in Russia the state has to have a strong role. Strong state is the guarantor of order and the striving force of change. (Luukkanen, 2008, 72.) Putin came to power, when Russian society was in confusion. In January 2000, Putin said "*Russia is in the midst of one of the most difficult periods in its history. For the first time in the past 200–300 years, it is facing a real threat of sliding into the second, and possibly even third echelon of world states*" (Putin, 2000, cited in Herspring 2009).

According to Herspring (2009), the political and economic systems in Russia were in chaos. Herspring argues that Putin had two goals when he step into the power: to strengthen the state and to make Russian once again superpower. Putin believed that the domestic policies of Russian Federation needed to be created again. The new president started re-creating Russia rapidly. (Herspring, 2009, 151, 159.) Only one month after Putin came to power, he began to tighten his grip of the state. He made Russian troops to return to Chechnya to reassert Russia's authority there. He also started promoting the policy of "vertical of power". (Goldman, 2005, 94.)

One of the reasons for Putin's popularity among the people was that Russia's economy started growing during Putin's term. However, this was not entirely thanks to President's smart policies. Goldman (2005) claims that the rising oil prices and recovering economy would have made anyone look like economic genius. Putin's credit is that he did not hinder economic growth. (Goldman, 2005, 96.)

After the political and economic chaos that Yeltsin left behind, Putin managed to lift Russia again back to its feet. He gave Russians something they had lived without for a decade: predictability and stability. (Herspring, 2009, 166.) The end of the Putin era in 2008 was marked by the growth of the influence of state in all spheres of life: in politics and economy, and in ideology (Lukyanov, 2009, 117).

3.4 Recent developments

Monaghan (2012a) claims that Putin's policies of centralization and of the vertical of power have contributed to the emergence of several debates related to the nature of Russian politics, especially the nature of democracy and its development in Russia. During Putin's presidency the debates were touching upon two questions. First question discussed the nature of post-Soviet Russia's transition

into a democracy or away from it. Russia attempted to promote the idea of democracy with qualifications, i.e. sovereign democracy and managed democracy. Second debate concentrated on the backgrounds of the people that Putin appointed to key positions to establish his policies of the vertical of power. Many came to the conclusion that the late 2000's Russian democracy was in crises and shifting towards autocracy. According to Monaghan, the nature of debate took a turn in 2008, when Dmitry Medvedev was elected as President. The debates of transition, Putin's strength and centralization continued, but at the same time the analytical emphasis started concentrating also on the relationship between Putin and Medvedev, on the so called tandem arrangement, tandemocracy. Some analyzers talked about vertical split, as the Prime Minister and President did not agree about everything. Medvedev was thought to be more liberal and emphasized modernization of Russia, and Putin was focusing on maintaining the status-quo. Despite some of the political distinctions, there was no major split between these two leaders. (Monaghan, 2012a, 1–2.)

According to Monaghan, many observers were surprised that the political tandem lasted all the four years of Medvedev's presidential term. Their each speech was studied carefully to find disagreements or prove of emergence of rivalry. However, the tandem arrangement proved out to be solid and lasting, even in the mid of the financial crises in 2008–2009. The absence of signs of dissonance is explained by many observers by the idea of Putin and Medvedev belonging into a same team: tandem is a mechanism for guaranteeing continuity after Putin's presidency. Both Putin and Medvedev have emphasized the necessity to establish a sustainable state and for that, according to both leaders, Russia needs unified power and a team working together. (Monaghan, 2012a, 5.)

The regime of the Russian Federation has been a hot topic for scholars studying topics related Russian politics and society. Several explanations and interpretations have been provided to explain what exactly is happening in Russia. Often the conversation in media is focused solely on Vladimir Putin. The term *Vertical of power*, according to Monaghan, has its roots in the 1990's, but in the contemporary Russia the term is mostly connected to Vladimir Putin's regime.

According to Monaghan, Putin's announcement in 2011 to run again for President made many believe that the tandem arrangement between him and Medvedev is coming to an end. Monaghan writes (2012a, 16) that *"The re-emergence of a broadly stable ruling group or leadership team – one that draws together the state and big business and blends formal structures with informal networks – is perhaps the most important development in Russia politics over the last few years"*. However, Medvedev has remained to be one of the central and visible figure in Russia's ruling group. He has been a central figure in promoting a more liberal path for Russia, but that seems to be a well-thought strategy by Putin's regime. Medvedev's presence is a balancing factor in a rather authoritarian rule.

Medvedev's presence is also part of the stability that Putin promotes. However, stability can be also seen as stagnation.

In the aftermath of the Duma elections, the political commentators were eager to speculate whether or not the rallies would initiate a process that would lead to development or a change of the political process. Putin and Medvedev had agreed about switching the posts, which caused anger in part of the population. Edwin Bacon (2012) discusses the possible developments of the Russian political system in his article *Electoral manipulation and the development of Russia's political system*. According to Bacon's article, in the near future there are three possible alternatives or paths of political development in Russia. First, the current system of the electoral authoritarianism will continue to exist. However, this kinds of systems have their dangers as they can possibly threaten the stability that Putin's regime has promoted. Bacon reminds that in electoral authoritarianism the balance of protest and acquiescence is delicate. The second alternative is a turn towards even more authoritarian rule. This path became possible due to the events in December 2011, when the blatant manipulation of elections' results lead to street protests. According to Bacon it does not seem that the Russian regime would be willing to forget the formal commitment to democracy and take a more authoritarian turn. Third, Russia can take a decision to move back to active transition towards democracy, which has been Dmitry Medvedev's goal on his speeches. Bacon argues that this alternative is less likely to take place in the near future. However, if this alternative is finally discussed, opposition's persistence with the electoral process could pay off. (Bacon, 2012, 116.)

It is clear that the opposition does not have much saying about which path Russia chooses, and the opposition's possibilities of having an influence are limited. After the Duma elections, the opposition did what they were used to doing: they went and protested in the streets. In the next sub-chapter, the Russian opposition and its living conditions will be studied in more detail.

3.5 Opposition in the centralized state

In the aftermath of the Duma 2011 elections, thousands of Russians went out on the streets to demand fair elections, and in the public discussion, the demonstrators were often referred to as the opposition. In this sub-chapter, the essence and the living conditions of Russian opposition will be briefly discussed. The goal of this thesis is to analyze the frames of rallies and protesters in the Russian press, and because of that it is necessary to understand the living conditions of opposition in the contemporary Russia. For this thesis it is not necessary to go into too much detail in explaining how

Russian opposition parties and groups could function in the Russian political system. However, I find it important to scrutinize at least a bit the living conditions of the Russian political opposition.

According to White (2011, 658), opposition is an identifiable group, or groups, normally opposed to the policies of the governing regime in a given state. One of the often referred piece of work related to Russian opposition is Vladimir Gel'man's (2005) article "*Political Opposition in Russia: A Dying Species?*". According to the article, in the first half of the 2000's, real political opposition did not exist in Russia. Gel'man seeks to answer why political opposition in Russia has become extinct, and he claims that many explanations provided by observers are insufficient. Defining what opposition is appears to be a challenging task, but Gel'man suggests it is useful to perceive opposition as continuum. In the one end is semi-opposition, i.e. parties outside ruling elite that seek to join the government, but they do not necessarily plan to implement major political changes. On the other end of the spectrum is situated principal opposition, i.e. political parties that are seeking power because they want to radically change the existing political order. Placing Russian opposition to this spectrum is difficult, because during Putin's first presidency opposition parties were moving along this space. (Gel'man, 2005, 227–228.)

According to Gel'man (2005), during Putin's first term, much of the power was concentrated to the elite close to the president and the new elite group around Putin dominated the Russian political scene. As a result, all the remaining elite sections, such as parliamentary factions, other political parties and media, were forced to accept their subordinated role or lose their elite status as such. The political opportunities of the opposition shrunk. (Gel'man, 2005, 233–234.) This phenomenon was visible for the past four years before 2011 Duma elections, based on the consistence of Duma. In 2007 elections, only four parties were elected: United Russia (64.30%), Communists (11.57%), Liberal Democratic (8.14%) and A Just Russia (7.74%).

Lyytikäinen and Salmenniemi (2012) claim that the Russia opposition is dispersed and that different opposition groups have difficulties to agree upon anything. In addition to the political differences, the disagreements are rooted on a more personal level between leaders of different opposition groups. The tradition of a leader-centered way to lead that dates back to Soviet times, and it is continuing strongly in the contemporary politics, not only in the United Russia, but also among the opposition groups. For example, Solidarnost's Boris Nemtsov and Communists' Gennady Zyuganov are defining the parties more than their political programs. Authorities take advantage of this disparity of opposition, and they use the rule and divide -tactic. Lyytikäinen and Salmenniemi provide an example of this tactic related to the rallies in December: the authorities were setting conditions about where the rallies should take place and how many people were allowed to

participate. The opposition groups were not able to agree if they should accept the conditions set by authorities or if they should have an unsanctioned rally according to their own will – the debate was pulling the groups apart from each other. The divide and rule -tactic has been used before, when the opposition wanted to arrange protests, and the opposition groups had fundamental disagreements related to the matter: some of them emphasized that the possibility to protest is the most important thing, and others, the more radical ones, saw that a compromise is the worst enemy of the opposition. (Lyytikäinen and Salmenniemi, 2012, 53.)

Putin's regime, according to Lyytikäinen and Salmenniemi, has also used aggressive rhetoric towards opposition: the groups have been associated to hooliganism. Putin's regime has succeeded in presenting the opposition as a revolutionary movement, reminding the people of the past, of the bloody revolutions. Putin has also warned people of the possibility of new revolutions and he has emphasized that a revolution would be destructive for Russia. In addition, Putin has warned people that the West wants to interfere to politics of a sovereign state. This kind of rhetoric fosters the idea that change in Russia is always towards the worse – and by using this kind of rhetoric Putin is persuading the people to support the status quo. (Lyytikäinen and Salmenniemi, 2012, 53.)

At the moment, due to both internal and personal disputes and due to tactic measures by authorities, Russian opposition remains to be scattered. After the 2011 Duma elections and at the eve of the presidential elections in March 2012 it seemed very unlikely that there would be a person that could unite the disperse opposition groups – unlikely it was, and unlikely it is now in April 2013.

3.6 Growing discontent and shattering social contract

The mass protests came as surprise to many, because for the past two decades Russians had not been politically particularly active. According to Lyytikäinen and Salmenniemi (2012), Russians are often portrayed as politically apathetic and as unwilling to participate into civil society activities. For example, activists in youth organizations have claimed that young Russians are anti-political and cynical, which is even bigger problem than the censorship and suppression of opposition exercised by the authorities. A second reason for apathy is a feeling of powerlessness. According to Levada Centre's opinion poll, 80 percent of Russians feel that they do not have a possibility to have an impact on federal or regional politics. (Lyytikäinen and Salmenniemi, 2012, 50–51.)

During the Putin era and Tandem era, a rather small political opposition existed in Russia, and most of the Russian citizens belonged to a silent and passive majority. According to Koesel and Bunce

(2012), in authoritarian regimes, compliance with the regime is a norm and inaction is typical. Moreover, the leaders in authoritarian societies can be popular, tolerated by the citizens or seen as invincible. Challenging the regime can be risky for personal safety or for losing personal benefits. The existing political opposition can be seen as ineffective and weak, a less tempting alternative for the status quo. (Koesel and Bunce, 2012, 404.)

The growing discontent in Russia has its roots in the economic situation. In 2008, financial crises shook the world and also Russia faced some consequences, as country's economic growth turned down. As a result, for the first time in a decade, the political elite had severe disagreements: Vladimir Putin supported reflationary politics and the minister of finance Alexey Kudrin was in favor of firm fiscal policy. The disagreement ended when Medvedev fired Kudrin. Due to the slow economic growth the officials were no longer able to distribute resources to people and in that way buy popularity from them. On the other hand, part of the middle class had already prospered and the class had split into different groups based on their professional level, such as civil servants in government and municipality positions, and students and intelligentsia.

Kangaspuro (2012) refers to students and intelligentsia as a group who either is not dependent on officials or does not care about the officials. This group of people perceives corruption, inequality in front of law and authoritarian way to rule as something against their values and interests. They do not see the authoritarian regime and the modest malpractices of power as a guarantor of wealth and stability, but as obstacle that is preventing the fully developed middle class from progressing in the society. (Kangaspuro, 2012, 1–2.)

Even though the economy had been growing during the 2000's, the inequality, especially in terms of income level, is massive in the society. Lyytikäinen and Salmenniemi remark that as the radical and deep social stratification was born in Russia, the concepts of social justice, equality and social classes disappeared from the political discourse. (Lyytikäinen and Salmenniemi, 2012, 55.)

According to report published by Carnegie Moscow Center, Putin's regime failed to heed the warning signs for December 2011 post-elections rallies. The discontent among the people had been growing already for two years. The most alerting example of discontent is that in November 2011 Putin had been booed at fighting matching on national television. The final straw were the events in United Russia Party conference, when Putin's and Medvedev's announced that they would swap places. (Rojansky & Balzer, 2011, report online.)

The previous chapter discussed the position of the political opposition in Russia. However, in December 2011 rallies, many participants wanted to make a distinction between political, organized opposition and between voters who were simply annoyed by the Russian political system, unofficial

and unorganized opposition. Some of the participants wanted to emphasize that they are ordinary people without any political ties. For the past decade, most Russians had been passive in participating in political life. Duma elections were getting closer and closer and it looked like they would come and go without any significant dissidence.

According to Makarkin (2011), the order in contemporary Russia is based on social contract between the authorities and the people. The social contract relies on the idea that the state is able to provide and guarantee to majority of its citizens reasonably good quality of life. The politics become relevant to population only when the contract is not fulfilled. The possibility of Russian people going on streets to protests as a huge mass is not likely, because people have low expectations and they do not demand a lot from the authorities, just as during the Soviet Union. Makarkin claims that it would take a strong provocation, such as monetization of welfare benefits, to threaten the contract and provoke protests on streets. (Makarkin, 2011, 1462, 1471.)

When Russians started to go on the streets after Duma elections, scholars and media discussed the meaning of the rallies. Was the amount of people significant? Were the rallies a mass phenomenon or simply marginal protests? Makarkin argued in his article in 2011, that it would take a strong provocation to provoke protests on streets. A reason to provocation is easily spotted in the Russian politics. The source of December 2011 rallies, a provocation, leads to Mr. Putin and Mr. Medvedev. Already in September 24th 2011, it became clear who would be the next President in Russia. Medvedev spoke in United Russia Party congress and declared his support for Putin and said that Putin should run for President in the March 2012 elections. Putin accepted this proposition and suggested that Dmitry Medvedev should be the next Prime Minister of Russia. To public, this announcement came across as if everything has already been decided – which appears to be true. There were no eligible alternatives to the current regime, as the centralized political system had long ago suppressed and smothered the political opposition. In addition, the Russian political opposition was scattered and could not find consensus in most of the matters. It was clear that the new president would come from the United Russia. However, the way in which Putin and Medvedev handled the announcement of changing posts was contemptuous and belittling towards the Russian voters, as the outcome of the elections was announced months before the Election Day. Therefore it is not surprising, that the post-Duma elections rallies grew into a large protest movements.

In the next chapter the essence of the rallies will be discussed. In addition, media's response will be introduced.

4. Pro-fair elections protests in 2011

4.1 Rapidly growing protest movement

Large protests have been a rare phenomenon in Russia during the Putin era. According to Volkov (2012), small, isolated protests and civic activities have taken place in the past years, but they have been actions of small groups. These groups have been faced with the corrupt nature of Russian political elite and government, and in the process these small groups have politicized. Volkov claims that this increased political activism has led to conflict, because the civic groups, due to the nature of Russian political system, have been incapable of addressing Russia's systemic corruption through political or juridical means. Open conflict has increasingly become a regular feature of Russia's political system, and the current system of top-down control is designed to block rather than ease systemic change. In Russia, authorities have tended to ignore the problems until the frustration of citizens has escalated into protest. Then, according to Volkov, officials have "*adopted some mixture of repression plus halfhearted measures to redress grievances, hoping that unrest will subside and the public mood will improve*". (Volkov, 2012, 55–57.)

The extent of the post-Duma elections rallies came as a surprise to many. What started as small protests grew into a larger movement quickly. First the protestors gathered in Moscow and St. Petersburg, but soon the rallies spread to cities all around Russia. The protest movement did not fade away after few meetings, but instead it kept growing and spreading. The main target was the Presidential elections in the beginning of March 2012. In February 4th, protests were arranged in 113 Russian cities and towns.

A.C. Monaghan (2012b) argues that the sense of political and public stagnation and frustration was made explicit by the parliamentary elections in December 2011. United Russia won 238 seats, which was enough to secure a small majority in the Duma. The main focus of attention was not on the elections results, but on the flawed nature of the elections. Monaghan lists that critique was directed into "*blurred lines between the government and United Russia, the use of government and administrative resources slanting the campaign in favor of the ruling party, and the refusal to allow political parties to register*". In addition, there were prove of ballot stuffing, and Russia's only independent election watchdog organization Golos faced obstacles while trying to do its work in observing the elections. (Monaghan, 2012b, 6.)

The outcome of the elections was interpreted as a catastrophe for United Russia, and the result

reflects the decline in United Russia's wider public support. However, Monaghan notes, the election result does not necessarily mean that "*a new opposition movement is spurring a democratic transformation in the country*". Instead, Monaghan binds the result into a wider political context: the economic crises of 2008 that affected strongly Russia's economic and social affairs, the extent of corruption, and the public disenchantment when Putin and Medvedev announced they are switching jobs – these are factors that all influenced the election result. Monaghan emphasizes that the widespread public fatigue, disenchantment, and opposition to the status quo should have not come as a surprise. (Monaghan, 2012b, 7.)

The protest movement that began after the Duma elections made many question the idea of Russians as politically apathetic people. According to Lyytikäinen and Salmenniemi (2012), the most enthusiastic commentators suggested that the protests were a sign that Russian civil society had woken up from hibernation of managed democracy. Before the December rallies, street protests had been a risky small scale activity. For example, the Strategy-31-movement gathered to protest every month that had 31st date, and the goal was to show that the authorities do not respect the 31st article of constitution, the freedom of assembly. The unsanctioned opposition protests were smothered and often turned into arrests and beatings, but despite the violent nature usually they did not get much publicity, as they were marginal and fragmental. However, in December 2011, Putin's and Medvedev's regime had to give in to unofficial opposition's demands and the officials sanctioned mass rallies. Even state television channels showed footage from the protests. (Lyytikäinen and Salmenniemi, 2012, 50–51.)

According to Koesel and Bunce (2012), the rallies were surprising for two major reasons. First, mass protests in Russia were rare, and when rallies took place they were quite contained with geography and their issue focus. Second, Putin has had the support of Russians, opinion polls registering ratings for 60 percent or more giving approval for Putin. Electoral fraud had been widely reported in elections in 2003 and 2007, but back then they did not catalyze mass protests. (Koesel and Bunce, 2012, 412–413.)

The scale and the significance of the demonstrations has been a topic for discussion. The rallies started small, but by time they grew bigger. On Saturday December 10th over 40 000 people protested in Moscow, and in December 24th rallies were organized in 90 cities around the country and altogether over 100 000 Russians gathered to demonstrate. (Monaghan, 2012b, 8.)

It is obvious that the rallies were so large that the authorities could not afford to ignore them. In the next sub-chapters, first the scholarly responses to elections and protests will be presented. Then, the demography of the protests and the authorities' response to protests will be discussed.

4.2 Expert analyses of the rallies and election results

Scholars agree that after the parliamentary elections in 2011, the political situation in Russia changed. The Carnegie Moscow Center, a center for scholars specialized in Russia, published expert comments soon after the Duma elections, in 13th of December 2011. According to Dmitry Trenin (2011), after spending one decade focused on their private lives, people begun to turn towards the public sphere. People have become wealthier than in the entire history of Russia, and the level of their tolerance has changed. The behavior of the authorities has begun to raise resistance. For example, the announcement of Putin and Medvedev exchanging their posts was by many people considered as an insult. However, even if the political atmosphere among people has changed, Trenin argued that the change of the moods of people did not promise regime change yet, instead it was a promise of livelier politics in Russia. For the past decade, Russia had been “*an authoritarianism with the consent of the governed*”, but according to Trenin, this is not the case anymore. (Dmitri Trenin, 2011, Duma Elections: Expert Analysis by Carnegie Moscow Center.)

According to Maria Lipman (2011), the post-Duma elections rallies brought a remarkable change to Russia. After the elections, the political message of the new generation of voters, of young and angry Russians on the streets, was clear: United Russia, the leadership, and Vladimir Putin were not wanted. During the past decade, the discontent had been growing, but it had remained to be discussed in the nongovernmental media and in the internet, not in wider platforms. During the 2000's, political rallies did not manage to attract people and the amount of participants was count in hundreds. What took place after the Duma 2011 elections was something different. In December, thousands of people came out on the streets around the Russia. Russia saw a protest movement that had not been seen in two decades. (Lipman, 2011, Duma Elections: Expert Analysis by Carnegie Moscow Center, Online report.)

During the 2000's, the political scene of Russia was completely cleansed from forces or figures that were not welcome. Public participation was eliminated, and the governance and the people lived in a relationship which Lipman (2011) describes as “*an informal, nonintrusive pact, or a divorce contract: the government made their decisions and people minded their own business.*” The divorce contract was put under a test during the parliamentary elections, when people were voting for the government that many had begun to detest. Especially Putin–Medvedev-tandem's decision to switch positions made people angry and deepened the existing resentment. President Medvedev did not embellish the trading-places process, instead he said straight that “*We decided on this many years ago*”. The moods of people were souring, and the government had to do something to get the wanted

outcome in elections. In order to get the needed high turnout, the administrators resorted into unlawful tricks. The tricks were many, online and in real life: activists and election observers were harassed. Websites that were attempting to unveil the election fraud were cut off by cyber-attacks and this online harassing lasted for the Election Day.

All this resulted in a phenomenon that Lipman describes as “unprecedented antigovernment mobilization”. Young voters rushed to vote and their only purpose was to undermine the party of swindlers and thieves - Партия Жуликов и Воров, i.e. United Russia. In addition to the enthusiasm to vote anyone but United Russia, many people become active, responsible member of the civic society, and they volunteered as elections observers and reported of fraud. In the elections, United Russia got a little less than 50 percent of the vote, when in 2007 elections the party had received 64 percent of the vote. Already the next day after the elections, people started demonstrating and opposing the result and accusing the authorities of elections fraud. The protesters had a clear idea of who was guilty to the elections fraud, and anti-Putin slogans were shouted at the rallies. However, the protesters lacked an alternative that would unite the whole country. (Lipman, 2011.)

Monaghan (2012b) discusses the lack of unifying factor among protest movement. The protest movement has been perceived by many as “*re-politicization of Russian society and as the emergence of a frustrated but increasingly politically active urban middle class led by a new wave of opposition figures*”. However, Monaghan underlines, the rallies have consisted of a wide range of participants – from urban middle class to small unregistered parties. The participants have been both from systemic and non-systemic opposition, i.e. groups that are not in parliament. Even though the opposition has succeeded in organizing large rallies, it has not managed to achieve the important wider goals, and neither has it been able to form a united front. Instead, the opposition leaders have disagreed even with each other, even about falsifications.

Opposition has also failed to find consensus of the form the rallies should take: some proposing more provocative and combative rallies and others refusing such an approach. Monaghan adds that the non-systemic opposition leaders have failed to make the wider electorate to understand that something must be done, and due to this the rallies have not converted into a larger public movement. In addition, the public opinion has not turned in opposition’s favor. (Monaghan, 2012b, 11–12.)

4.3. Demography of protests

The protests got plenty of space in the front pages of newspapers, and thanks to the media publicity they might have seemed bigger and more influential than they were. As discussed in the beginning of the chapter, the consistence of the protest varied from systemic to non-systemic opposition – from opposition politicians to ordinary citizens. Volkov (2012) discusses the demographics of the protestors in his article based on information provided by Levada Centre’s public-opinion polls. Right in the beginning of the protest movement, majority of the participants seemed to be young people who were mobilizing with the help of social networks. However, relatively quickly the movement started growing and people from different ages groups came to rallies. By February 2012, participants from age-groups 18–25 were just a fifth of all, and roughly the same number of people was age 55 or older. Most of the protestors were middle-aged – what started as a youth movement developed into something else. (Volkov, 2012, 56–57.)

According to Levada Center’s data, from 60 to 70 percent of participants identified themselves as liberals or democrats. Practically all participants expressed dissatisfaction with Putin. The motivations for participating in protests included “*dissatisfaction with the current situation in Russia*” (73 percent), “*indignation over electoral fraud*” (73 percent), “*dissatisfaction that key decisions were being made by politicians without citizen input*” (52 percent), and “*disillusionment with President Medvedev’s promises of modernization*” (42 percent). Some expressed *solidarity with opposition parties* (15 percent) or *individual protest organizers* (13 percent).

Participants differed from the average population of Russia. They were atypical Russians in general and even in Moscow. About 80 percent of them had some postsecondary education – only 30 percent of Russians have that much schooling. Almost two-thirds of them were male, while Russia’s population is mostly female. As key sources for information they used mostly internet (70 percent), radio (45 percent), friends and acquaintances (30 percent), television (17–18 percent) and newspapers (15–18 percent). In comparison, 81 percent of Russians in general receive their news from television and only 13 percent read news online. Finally, around 70 percent of the protestors said they are relatively well off – from all Muscovites only half and a quarter of Russians did so. (Volkov, 2012, 57). Based on the data, the participants of protests were more educated and better off than average Russians. It appears that the protestors did not represent Russian population as a whole, but merely a fraction of it.

According to the data, the differences between the privileged, protest-friendly minority and

the patient majority were obvious during and after the Duma elections. Volkov (2012) argues that the silent majority opted for voting the devil it already knew – the majority was afraid of change, because in Russia change has usually made things worse. (Volkov, 2012, 60.) In the next sub-chapter, the silent majority of Russia will be discussed.

4.4 Silent majority and the public opinion

Dmitriev and Treisman (2012) remind that the participants of the protest were only a tiny fraction of Russia's 143 million population. According to them, the outcome of the protests would be defined based on how much support the politicized vanguard would get from the silent majority living outside the big cities, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, where the biggest rallies took place. Dmitriev and Treisman note that the stereotypical picture of a provincial Russian is *“of a politically apathetic conformist who is resentful of pampered Muscovites, socially conservative, generally pro-Putin, suspicious of the West, and nostalgic for Soviet order”*.

This stereotype has been proved to be somewhat inaccurate thanks to new data collected after the Duma elections. From March 2012 to May 2012 the Moscow-based Center for Strategic Research (CSR) conducted a study of 62 focus groups in 16 Russian regions – in small, medium and large cities, in the remote East and West. Discussion leaders asked the participants, who varied in age, gender, education, and social and economic status, about their political values, policy concerns, and assessments of current and potential leaders. According to Dmitriev and Treisman, the answers were surprising, and the study provides more nuanced picture of the Russian mainstream. (Dmitriev and Treisman, 2012, Online version.)

According to the data, Russians outside big cities are not tempted to participate in noisy street protests, shouting abstract slogans. However, the people are far from being content with the current political system that they see as corrupt and incapable to provide basic services. Their support for Putin has been steadily decreasing, and a massive economic crisis could easily tempt them to large-scale street protests. When the metropolitan activists dream of greater freedom and democracy, the mainstream Russians want honest police officers and better health services. Dmitriev and Treisman claim that the biggest challenge for Russian liberal activists is to emerge these two strands of dissatisfaction into one united coalition for change.

Even though the mainstream Russians living outside metropolises share a certain discontent

with citizens of the big cities, some essential differences occurred in the study. Dmitriev and Treisman write that the focus-group members showed little empathy to anti-government protesters and were not eager to join them. Whether or not the participants perceived the Duma and Presidential elections as fair, they accepted the results of the Duma elections as final. Furthermore, they did not want violent or revolutionary challenges to regime. Dmitriev and Treisman argue that *“their responses help explain why the protests against ballot stuffing and other electoral irregularities have not spread to the rest of the country”*. The scholars add that the results of their study are consistent with the figures published by Levada Center’s opinion poll in March 2012. According to the Levada Center, 52 percent of Russians opposed the demonstrations, 32 percent supported them. Only eight percent said that they were willing to march in one. 59 percent of the population surveyed accepted the results of the parliamentary elections, and only 21 percent wanted the government to annul them and call new elections. (Dmitriev and Treisman, 2012, html-version.)

There was a wish for change in other groups than liberal activists in big cities, but the goals for the change vary. Whereas the protesters in Moscow marched behind abstract concepts such as fairness and democracy, the majority of the country is not fond of ideological concepts, but cares more about concrete, local issues – across classes the majority of Russians is mostly concerned about the state’s lacking capability to provide basic services such as health care, education, housing and effective courts. According to the study, most of the focus-groups participants would gladly see major changes of the ruling elite, even though they do not wish for revolutionary change. According to Dmitriev and Treisman, the erosion of support for Putin, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, and their party, United Russia, is almost as significant among provincial Russians as among the big-city elites. The results suggest that the Putin brand is exhausted nationwide. (Dmitriev and Treisman, 2012, html-version.)

4.5 Authorities’ response

The first rallies took place right after the elections, in December 5th in Moscow. The comments by the leaders of Russia were expected, but it took a while before the authorities commented on the rallies and the accusations that the elections were rigged. According to Koesel and Bunce (2012), the regime responded with variety of tactics to discredit, co-opt, fragment, and counter the opposition. The way in which Putin responded to the rallies changed in the course of action.

Immediately after the rallies begun, the government adopted several ways of framing to

undermine the opposition and its goals. Putin claimed that the protests were orchestrated by the West and that it was West's attempt to destabilize Russia. He even called the election monitors Judases. At the same time, the regime was drawing parallels between the Russian protests and Color revolutions, warning people about Orange threat. If the protests continued, they could possibly derail the economic recovery, cause political instability and even lead to civil war. (Koesel and Bunce, 415–416.)

Prime Minister Putin commented the rallies in 8th of December, acknowledging the need for dialogue between the opposition and the officials. According to news agency Itar-Tass, at a meeting of the federal coordinating council of the All-Russia Popular Front Putin said that “*With regard to street democracy activities, my attitude is as follows: if people act within the law, they should be entitled to express their opinion*”. Then he added that “*if someone is violating the law, then the law enforcement authorities shall demand compliance with the law by all legitimate means.*” Putin also emphasized the necessity of dialogue, saying: “*We need to engage in a dialogue with those who are oppositionally-minded to give them a chance to have it out, using the constitutional right to demonstrate.*” Furthermore, underlining the need for dialogue, Putin expressed a negative reaction to US State Secretary Hillary Clinton's statement, in which she criticized the Russian elections as unfair. Putin accused Clinton for trying to influence Russian domestic politics and for giving signals to opposition. Putin said: “*We must protect our sovereignty, and we should give thought to increasing the responsibility of those who act on assignments from foreign states to influence political processes*”. (Itar-Tass, 8th of December on its webpage.)¹

Putin's rhetoric concerning the rallies emphasized two matters: the need for dialogue within the boundaries of law, and the fact that foreign countries should mind their own business and keep aside from Russian politics. The first one suggests that the dialogue needs to be conducted under conditions set by Putin and his regime. The latter one is clearly focused on the idea of sovereignty: foreign states should not interfere with Russia's business.

As the protests continued, and regime's tactics seemed to only encourage the opposition movement, Putin's approach to rallies changed into more mediating one. Putin claimed “he was pleased with the protests because they signaled the robustness of Russian democracy and the vibrancy of its civil society”. At the same time, the popular media started writing about what kind of country Russia would be without Putin. Prime Minister Putin and his team responded by launching a slogan *If not Putin, who?* which underlined the lack of prominent alternatives. To counter the protests, several rallies to support Putin were arranged around the country, and the pro-Putin events received plenty of attention in the mass media. (Koesel and Bunce, 2012, 416.)

¹ The article by Itar-Tass is available in <http://www.itar-tass.com/en/c39/292939.html>

According to Monaghan (2012b), Kremlin leadership reacted to the demonstrations quickly also in terms of action. One of the early responses was to dismiss some personnel and emphasize that after the election there would be “rotation” of personnel. After the Duma 2011 election, several city mayors and regional governors resigned or were fired, because of the poor results for United Russia in their region. Medvedev and Putin began to make numerous appointments in the Presidential Administration, in senior parliamentary positions, the governing cabinet, and in ministerial positions. The authorities initiated reforms to meet some of the demands made by the opposition. Monaghan lists three reforms as the most important ones. First, Putin proposed to have video cameras, i.e. closed-circuit cameras, in every polling booth for the presidential election. Second proposal was the possibility to return to direct election of regional governors, instead of the central regime appointing them. Third, Dmitry Medvedev proposed to ease the regulations governing the registration of political parties. This reform was implemented in March 23rd 2012, when the parliament passed legislation that says that parties need only 500 signatures to register. The new law has been criticized, due to the fact that it might cause further fragmentation of the opposition. (Monaghan, 2012b, 12–13.)

At a first glance it can seem that Putin’s regime’s reforms were liberalizing the country. However, Koesel and Bunce (2012) argue that it is not the case. Instead, the reforms helped the preserve the regime’s monopoly of the power. For example, fragmentation of the party system would mean that instead of few important opposition parties there would be multiple small actors. The fragmented party system is easier for the regime to control, because it can confuse and divide the electorate. Furthermore, it can prevent or at least make more difficult the formation of effective, united opposition. (Koesel and Bunce, 2012, 416–417.)

According to Monaghan (2012b, 13), in addition to the reforms, Putin’s most significant response to the rallies and accusations was his presidential campaign. Putin’s campaign was exceptional, since he had not campaigned before. He based his campaign on promoting the stability and elaborating the benefits the stability that Putin and his team had brought to Russia. From the perspective of the focus of my thesis Putin’s campaign is far ahead in the future – but it is interesting to be aware that stability became the central theme in Putin’s campaign.

Dmitriev and Treisman (2012) write that as an attempt to secure the status-quo, Kremlin sought to build a firewall between the urban protestors and their provincial compatriots. It was clear that the Putin team had already lost the urban middle class, and the demotion of Medvedev from the presidential post suggested that Putin acknowledged this fact. The next step for Putin was to stop the erosion of confidence in his rule. The presidential elections were getting closer, and Putin chose to use two tactics. First, he committed to promises such as raising pensions and wages of doctors and

teachers if he was re-elected as president. In addition, in January 2012, he doubled the wages of the military. Second, he chose to exploit the gap between the cultural divisions between big-city liberals and more traditional, blue-collar provinces.

One dimension of the authorities' response to protests was dealing with media publicity. The Kremlin spokespeople sought to portray the mass rallies as entertainment, as amusement for pampered Muscovites, disreputable celebrities, angry anarchists and unpopular minority groups. During the months after Duma elections, the authorities strengthened their grip and introduced new law initiatives: United Russia launched a campaign against gay-rights activists, promoting the idea of punishing for pro-homosexual propaganda. Dmitriev and Treisman argue that the "*the barely concealed goal is to cast the antigovernment protesters as a cabal of feminist punks, church desecraters, and sexual deviants*". Putin also ordered a harsher approach towards the demonstrations, arresting more people and increasing the size of fines. However, these methods did not scare the protestors. According to a sociological survey conducted in a rally, 90 percent of the interviewed protestors (total amount of 112) said that they would continue participating even if the sentences and fines were dramatically increased. (Dmitriev and Treisman, 2012, html-edition.)

It was clear that the authorities reacted and responded to the discontent of the protesting minority on all fronts. They acknowledged the need for a dialogue and initiated reforms. At the same time, the significance and extent of the protests were undermined, and some of the protestors were stigmatized as deviant. Authorities' response was comprehensive and it suggests that the regime could not take the protests lightly. The possible threat for the status quo was recognized. The main concern was to secure the support of silent majority, and that was done by emphasizing the gap between the minority and majority and by marginalizing the protest-movement.

5. Media in the contemporary Russia

5.1 Neo-authoritarian media system

In this thesis, the primary research material are Russians newspaper articles. Despite the fact that the focus of this study is not on freedom of speech or on professional journalistic values, it is necessary to be aware of the circumstances in which Russia media work. Russian journalistic practice is not guided by the same journalistic values as in the Western countries, but reporting is a process of complex rules of a regulated media system, and in the system different media have different rules and restrictions, due to their relationship with the government. This chapter is a background overview of the situation of Russian media. The contemporary Russian media system is a result of developments that have taken place during Putin's era. It has been formed partly due to rules and regulations and have been implemented from above, and on the other hand partly due to the rapid development of new forms of media.

According to Lipman and McFaul (2001), Vladimir Putin's election as president had a significant effect on press freedom. In the beginning of his presidency, Putin's rhetoric emphasised the notion of a free press and the importance of democracy. However, Lipman and McFaul claim that Putin did not fully understand the essence of these concepts. In Putin's Russia, state-media was bound to dominate the information market, since the state was solely capable of providing Russian citizens objective information. (Lipman & McFaul, 2001. 121–123.)

In September 2000 President Putin signed the Doctrine of information security, which established a principle on information security. The content of the doctrine suggested that state was the one calling the shots in the relationship between media and the state. Media should bend under the will of officials in order to preserve informational integrity of Russia. According to the officials, *“The doctrine of information security of the Russian Federation is the sum total of official views concerning goals, tasks, principles and guidelines for ensuring the information security of the Russian Federation.”* (Simons and Strovsky, 2006, 202.) This doctrine limits freedom of speech in anti-terrorist operations. Limitations are justified by arguing that free broadcasting from the sites of terrorist attacks allows terrorists to adjust their plans. (Azhgikhina, 2007, 1255.)

Simons (2010) writes that one of the aims of the doctrine is to guarantee that both Russian and international audience get truthful information about the state policy and Russia's official stands in significant events home and abroad. Simons explains the content of the doctrine by interpreting

that the information coming from non-governmental sources might not be accurate, as only the information from official sources is truthful and reliable. Putin wanted the state-owned media to dominate the media market so that people could get objective information. Putin met with journalists on 13 January 2001, and in the meeting he made it clear that he wanted to see the creation of “single information space” taking place in Russia. The intention of this creation is intended to ensure the integrity of the state, most of all to defence of the state. Putin was quoted as saying “*any talk about unity of the Russian state apparently starts with the formulation of its tasks and goals. A single information space is a priority task. It would be worth noting that the word came first*”. (Simons, 2010, 23–24.)

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, market reforms had stimulated the rise of independent media, and businessmen had understood the potential power and influence of media as a political tool. Businessmen had built media empires in Russia: Vladimir Gusinsky was the head of Media Most and Boris Berezovsky owned shares of Russian television network ORT. However, Russian state remained the dominant actor in both Russian media and politics sectors. After his election, Putin did not attack straight against journalists, instead, he went against the media owners. Media mogul Gusinsky and his Media Most, including NTV, were first on Putin's agenda. Media Most was economically the most independent company, and Gusinsky had not support Yeltsin's party in parliamentary elections in 1999 or Putin in presidential elections in 2000, and Putin remembered that. From the perspectives of Putin, Gusinsky was both the enemy of the state and the enemy of Putin personally. After series of complicated power struggles, the so called media wars, the will of Putin came true and Gusinsky had to give up his position. According to Lipman and McFaul, state's campaign against NTV is an example of what happens to a news organization that gets on the way of Kremlin. (Lipman & McFaul, 2001, 117–119.) Taking into account the history of the media wars, the current media owners cannot afford to ignore the fact that it is a wiser business strategy to support the status quo than to attack against the authorities and official policies in the media coverage. However, when it comes to stepping in the way of Kremlin, the press seems to be enjoying more freedoms than television, and a natural explanation is that television is the main media that reaches most of the Russians. Newspapers have relatively small circulations when compared to the millions of people television broadcasts gather as their audience. Striking exception is an online television channel Rain TV (Dozhd) that is very critical in its content and for example during the 2011 and 2012 elections the television channel was reporting about the elections' falsifications and rallies. However, Rain TV does not have as large audience as the national television channels:

At least in the 2000's, Putin's attitude towards the independent press turned out to be

complicated, even resentful. According to Lipman and McFaul, in Putin's Russia, reporters can be free as long as they don't get in the way of the president and his agenda. (Lipman & McFaul, 2001, 121–123.) According to some estimations among the media industry, the worst censors are the media themselves. Pavel Gutiontov of Russia's Union of Journalists described the pressures on Russian journalists by saying that Russian journalists have an “inner slave” mentality: *‘The sad thing is that it is the press that is readily guessing what the authorities would want it to print... The internal censor is once again becoming the main censor... We have to do a lot of work in eradicating our inner slave from ourselves, from our editing rooms, from television.* (Gutiontov, 2004 in Simons and Strovsky, 2006, 194).

Jonathan Becker (2004) is a scholar that introduced the term “neo-authoritarian media system” in the Russian media studies. He suggests that neo-authoritarian media system has some key features. First, state-owned media have limited autonomy and key posts are given to politically loyal people. Second, access to media might be open and private ownership is accepted, but media content is controlled by other means. The state does not practise direct pre-publishing censorship. Instead, critics of the state are silenced by economic pressure and by legal actions against the owners of the media. In addition to this, journalists might get criminal and civil penalties. Becker compares Russia's current neo-authoritarian media system to managed democracy. It looks like Russia has democratic institutions, but in reality these institutions are rotten. (Becker, 2004, 149–150). Becker claims that Putin's regime did allow a relatively free print media to exist, but the most influential medium, television, was subordinated to state control. However, Becker points out that during Putin's first term the media coverage was not controlled as tightly as during the Soviet Union. Under the Soviet regime, all issues were controlled, but in the 2000's, the state controlled only the most central issues, such as elections and the situation in Chechnya. (Becker, 2004, 157.)

One should remember that Becker's article was published in 2004, when Putin had been president for one term. During Putin's second term press freedom took a turn in the direction of further control. Another thing that should be remembered is the dominance of television during the 2000's. The circulation of most newspapers was and is relatively slow in comparison to the amount of people that got their news from television. Due to the small circulation, the critical newspapers are allowed to exist, as they are not threatening the regime. The truly influential medium, television, remains tightly under control.

Samuel A. Greene (2009) argues that the situation of media in contemporary Russia is quite depressing, especially if one studies political communication. Greene also writes that Vladimir Putin launched neo-authoritarian media system in Russia, and in this system, the state is smothering press

freedom. (Greene, 2009, 56.) Centralising the ownership of television into the hands of the state is an obvious example of this smothering. This sub-chapter has discussed the development of neo-authoritarian media system during the 2000's and during the two presidential terms of Vladimir Putin. In next sub-chapter, the more recent developments of the Russian media environment will be discussed.

5.2. The smothered press freedom

In 2008, Dmitry Medvedev was elected as the President of the Russian Federation, and expectations for liberal developments were high. Medvedev promised reforms in politics and party system, in economy and in fighting the corruption (Sakwa, 2011, 318). The four year period of President Medvedev did not bring significant changes to the Russian media environment: he ruled the country as tandem with Prime Minister Putin and they followed the familiar principles of the 2000's. The state television channels remained the most important sources of information, reaching almost 100 percent of the population in Russia. However, the Medvedev–Putin-tandem faced an information source that was beyond their control. The role of the internet as an alternative information source has grown steadily since the 2000's.

Maria Lipman has written a chapter to book *Return to Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*. The fifth edition of the book was published in 2012, and Lipman's chapter provides more recent evaluations of the contemporary Russian media. Lipman states that there are plenty of sources outside the sphere of tight government control. To name a few, she mentions newspapers Kommersant, Vedomosti and Novaya Gazeta, and a radio station Ekho Moskvyy. Naturally the internet is full of free sources. According to Lipman, during the Tandem era of Putin and Medvedev, most of the Russian media established platforms online. Lipman emphasizes that the problem in Putin's Russia is not the absence of alternative sources of information. She claims that these alternative sources are even necessary to Putin's Russia, where the politics is securely under Kremlin's grip. The existence of alternative media gives a platform for the critically minded to express their opinion and let off steam. The true problem in Putin's Russia is the lack of political competition. Furthermore, the legislature has become a tool of the executive, judicial rulings follow Kremlin's will, and autonomous public activism is marginalised. Under these conditions independent media cannot make a difference in policy making. They simply remain as politically irrelevant. (Lipman, 2012, 135.)

In contemporary Russia, the state media does not provide balanced news even on the state

high-level events and decisions, nor does it provide a platform for open discussion. Instead, the state media attempts to provide the viewers an officially-approved version of what is happening in Russia and in the world. Furthermore, the state media discredits the oppositional voices that are critical of the incumbent powers. The systematic repression has led to lack of independent, local news and to lack of analysis of political relevance. Only some radio programs and limited amount of print press are able to tackle serious issues of politics, corruption and public affairs. Even though Russian consumers of news have access to diversity of information, they do not necessarily have access to meaningful coverage of policy and politics. The authorities aim to block the discussions of the most important matters, such as policy making and budget decisions. (Orttung and Walker, 2013, 2, 5.)

In 2013, on the indices that measure media freedom Russia is doing poorly. For example, on the Reporters without Borders' Press Freedom Index Russia ranked 148th out of 179 countries. The report claims that "*Russia (148th, -6) has fallen again because, since Vladimir Putin's return to the presidency, repression has been stepped up in response to an unprecedented wave of opposition protests*".² According to Freedom House's Map of Freedom (2013), Russia is not a free country in terms of press freedom. Freedom House is concerned about the turn towards worse that took place in Russia after Vladimir Putin returned to the presidency. Freedom House argues that since his inauguration in May 2011, Putin took calculated measures in order to restrain independent political and civic activity. He pushed through several laws that are smothering the societal opposition and restricting social protest, limiting the work of NGO's and attempting to limit the freedom of expression in the internet. (Freedom House Report, 2013, 7.)

As has been showed in the previous chapters, Russian media does not enjoy the freedom of expression. For example, politically relevant topics are often not covered based on journalistic choice, but rather based on the will of the authorities. In this respect, it is important to study the Russian media content and while doing so it is essential to remember that the work of journalists is guided by many pressures, such as the pressure to cover issues in a manner that servers the official agenda. In next sub-chapter, the main focus is the coverage of the rallies in the Russian media.

5.3 Coverage of the rallies

The Russian media, especially state-controlled television, were eager to fall silent and not to cover the post-Duma elections rallies in December 2011. First days after the elections, the main channels

² Reporters without Borders, <http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013.1054.html>

ignored the rallies in their news shows, and the main source for information remained to be internet. For example, according to BBC, one could easily imagine that the Russian national television channels and newspapers were reporting of different countries: Television stations did not mention the opposition protests, but they did mention the pro-Putin rallies that were held in Moscow. The only television channel that reported about the elections on Tuesday was REN TV that is considered to be the only liberal television station on Russia. However, as main national channels are accessible all around the country, REN TV is accessible mainly on urban areas. On the comparison to state television, newspapers were reporting freely of the rallies and of their violent dispersion. BBC reports that newspapers gave a total different picture of the rallies – news of police beating and arresting the protesters.³ As the protest movement grew stronger, state-controlled media had to give in and they started reporting about the protests. Some journalists working on state-controlled television channels insisted that the rallies should be covered. For example, a journalist and news anchor of television channel NTV, Alexey Pivovarov, refused to go on air, if the protests would not be part of the broadcast.⁴ As a result, the prime time news broadcast of NTV in Saturday the 10th begun with a report from the big demonstration, and Pivovarov said that “today Moscow has been the scene of perhaps the most massive rally in decades”. It is significant that the state-channels did not fall silent but continue the rallies. Typically the state-channels would not cover topics unfavorable to the regime.

According to Lipman (2012), the coverage on the federal channels was cautious, restrained and frequently biased. Despite these shortages, Lipman finds something positive in reporting: at least the rallies were covered, and Russians could see people marching with signs saying “*Russia without Putin*”. In addition, many of the controversial figures that had been on a blacklist were suddenly invited to talk shows. However, few remained to be persona non-grata, considered too dangerous by Kremlin, most of all opposition activist Alexey Navalnyi. Even though the grip of the control was loosened and protests made it to the national television, it did not mean that television would have been freer. The national channels remained faithful to the administration, and they were protecting Kremlin’s interest. While some talk shows interviewed political activists, some programmes smeared the activists and portrayed them as “immoral agents of the evil West”. (Lipman, 2012, 138–139.)

Whereas national television was cautious and biased to authorities, another kind of point of view was available online and on cable. Independent internet and cable television channel Dozhd (Rain TV) started covering the rallies right from the beginning. According to BBC, it was the channel that reported most extensively and rapidly about the rallies. The channel soon became famous for

³ See BBC’s (7th of December 2011) article in <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-16067899>

⁴ News article on gazeta.ru http://www.gazeta.ru/news/lastnews/2011/12/10/n_2129454.shtml

their journalists wearing white ribbon, the symbol for fair elections -movement, during the show. This was interpreted as bias, but the owner of the station Natalya Sindeyeva claimed that showing the ribbon was more a mark of sincerity than an act of propaganda. Many urban citizens were following the coverage of Dozhd, but for larger audience it remained marginal source of information. The authorities did not appreciate the pro-protest content by the channel. In December 15th 2011, President Medvedev unsubscribed to Dozhd news feed on Twitter. Dozhd had been the first Russian mass media outlet that Medvedev had chosen to follow on Twitter. ⁵ Later, Dozhd faced problems due to its coverage. Lenta.ru reported that *“the station was subsequently told to provide copies of its broadcasts to Russia’s communications watchdog for “analysis of its abiding by the Russian Federation’s mass media laws”*. In February 2012, Dozhd-channel was investigated due to its protest coverage. The prosecutors said they were investigating where the channel received its funding for live broadcasting the mass rallies in 10th and 24th of December 2011. The probe was initiated by Rober Schlegel, deputy of ruling party United Russia.⁶ Journalist Brian Whitmore of Radio Free Liberty claimed that the investigation was a sign that the Empire was striking back after being on defense for months. *“Putin is trying to get control of the media narrative by reining in independent voices,”* Whitmore claimed and asked, whether or not it is possible in the era of Youtube, Livejournal and rising internet penetration. ⁷

Also radio station Ekho Moskvyy faced problems due to its protest coverage. Few of the leading figures were forced out from the board, and some of them were known for criticizing Vladimir Putin’s government. Later on an interview Putin accused Ekho Moskvyy for serving U.S interest and “smearing him nonstop from dusk to dawn”. The former head of the Russian Union of Journalists, Igor Yakovenko said to CPJ that all these moves – firing Kommersant’s editors, investigating Dozhd, dismissing Ekho Moskvyy's independent directors - were attempts to intimidate the media. ⁸

The media content did not focus only on reporting of the mass protests and discontent. Putin’s supporters went to streets as well, expressing their support for the regime. According to Koesel and Bunce (2012), the pro-Putin rallies were widely reported in the media. They got more attention than the pro-fair elections rallies, and they were reported to have more participants than their counterparts. However, Koesel and Bunce claim, it is unsure if the pro-Putin rallies rehabilitated the image of

⁵ See article on Moscow Times (15th of December 2011)
<http://www.themoscownews.com/politics/20111209/189273084.html>

⁶ Article about the investigation of Dozhd. <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/russian-tv-faces-probe-over-protests-coverage>

⁷ The Empire strikes back. http://www.rferl.org/content/the_empire_strikes_back_-_at_independent_media/24486805.html

⁸ <http://www.cpj.org/blog/2012/03/ahead-of-elections-russian-media-has-been-duly-war.php>

invincibility. The local media claimed that the meetings were being staffed by the regime, and that busloads of people were brought from the countryside to participate the meetings. (Koesel and Bunce, 2012, 416.)

The traditional media, especially television but also to some extent radio and print, were regulated by the regime and by the silent rules of neo-authoritarian media system. However, forms of new media, i.e. social networks online, managed to provide an alternative route for receiving information about the protests. When the rallies began, social media started working as a platform for mobilization. Groups to oppose elections results were created in V Kontakte, in the “Russian Facebook”. People were using Twitter to keep up-to-date about what was happening, where and when. Many of the rallies were arranged with the help of spreading word on social media. There was no official organizer.

The reporting demonstrates the power of media. The battle for dominating frames was fierce, as Putin’s regime was fighting for its legitimacy and the protesting masses were trying to get their message of rigged elections and their claims through in the media. Putin’s regime had the advantage that most important national television channels were supporting Putin and shaping the image of the rallies into one that favored Putin. In this thesis, the empirical data consists of newspaper articles. Newspapers are a grey area between the state-controlled television and free online media. They face pressures by authorities but are much freer than television.

The news coverage of the rallies in the Russian newspapers will be studied in detail with the help of frame analysis. The focus of this thesis is to how the protests are covered in Russian newspapers. The mass protests on the streets were something unexpected and unprecedented in the context of Russian political sphere of the Putin era. Such an unexpected event posed a challenge to media that had been balancing between demands of professional journalism and of pressure for censorship and self-censorship by authorities.

The next chapter will present and discuss framing as a tool used by journalists, and frame analysis as a methodology will be presented in more detail.

6. Framing

6.1 A fractured paradigm

The concept of a frame is a constructionist one. It is based on the idea that media do not simply reflect reality, they also actively participate in creating it. (Akhavan-Majid & Ramaprasad, 2000). The constructive idea of media's role is the starting point for the analysis in this thesis. I believe that media and journalists do not only reflect the reality, but by covering news events and choosing certain angles they are active subjects who construct the images of the reality. In this thesis, journalists are not passive bystanders.

The origins of framing are in the fields of cognitive psychology (Bartlett, 1932) and anthropology (Bateson, 1955/1972) (Van Gorp, 2007, 60), and the concept of frame was created by sociologist Erving Goffman in 1974. During the past decades, especially in the 1990's, framing has become a popular approach in the media studies. In this thesis, framing is used as understood by a media scholar, Robert M. Entman, who is one of the leading scholars in studying how media framing works.

Framing has become a popular research method in media studies over the past decades. However, it has remained a fractured paradigm. Entman (1993, 51) writes that "*Despite its omnipresence across the social sciences and humanities, nowhere is there a general statement of framing theory that shows exactly how frames become embedded within and make themselves manifest in a text, or how framing influences thinking.*" Because of the fractured way of understanding framing, the ways of conducting analysis vary. Scheufele (1999) argues that framing as a media theory is full of theoretical and empirical vagueness. Van Gorp (2005, 485) emphasizes that the way in which a frame is understood by a scholar affects the results, the scope and the comparability of the findings.

Paul D'Angelo does not agree with Entman that the study framing is incoherent. According to D'Angelo, Entman's argument is based on the presupposition that framing should be a single paradigm. Unlike Entman, D'Angelo argues that "*theoretical and paradigmatic diversity had led to a comprehensive view of framing processes, not fragmented findings in isolated research projects*". (D'Angelo, 2002, 871–873.) D'Angelo claims that there is not neither there should be a paradigm of framing. Instead, he suggests that framing is more a research program than a paradigm, and that inside

this research program are three paradigms: Cognitive, Critical and Constructionist. (D'Angelo, 2002, 876.)

In journalism studies, framing can be used to study content, production, and reception. In this thesis, I concentrate on analyzing the content. According to D'Angelo (2002), the core of news framing research is based on four empirical goals: 1) identifying thematic units called frames, 2) investigating the previous conditions that produce frames, 3) examining how news frames activate, and interact with, an individual's prior knowledge to affect interpretations, recall of information, decision-making and evaluations, and 4) examining how news frames shape social-level processes such as public opinion and policy issue debates. (D'Angelo, 2002, 873.) In this thesis, the goal is the first one, to identify the thematic units called frames and to analyze them. In next sub-chapter, the nature of frames will be discussed.

6.2 Frames are tools

Framing is based on the idea of social constructivism – mass media actively set frames and audience actively use them to interpret and discuss the events. (Scheufele, 1999, 105.) The notion of frames was introduced in media studies by Tuchman (1978) and Gitlin (1980). According to Tuchman (1978), frames are essential so that people could understand world that is complex and unorganised. The news frame organizes everyday reality and the news frame is part and parcel of everyday reality. (Tuchman, 1978, 193.)

Välvirronen (1995) writes that frames help us to observe, recognize and name events. One could say that the starting point for framing is to understand what is happening in the world. The concept of frame helps us to grasp the continuity that is typical for journalism. Journalism does not tell about single item of news, but that in fact this single news are a part of wider process. (Välvirronen, 1995, 9.)

During the past decades, the concept of frame has been developed widely. One of the leading contributors is media scholar Robert M. Entman. According to Entman, framing implies selection and salience. Selection is made by the news media – they decide to emphasize certain elements. In his well-known article of framing, Entman (1993, 52) writes: *“To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment*

recommendation for the item described”. Frames are located in four levels in communication process: the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture. In all these locations frames fulfill similar functions: they select and highlight elements to construct an argument. Frames are not universal, but it is not insignificant how issues and events are framed. Frames set the guidelines for readers, and they determinate how people understand and remember the issue in focus. The meaning of the message is created in the interaction between the mediator and the receiver, and because of that it is impossible to say how the frames effect the reader. (Entman, 1993, 53–54.)

Frames consist of reasoning and of framing devices. Fully developed frames typically have four functions: problem definition, causal analysis, moral judgment, and remedy promotion – these are so called reasoning devices. According to Entman, framing works through priming. Frames introduce ideas that are important. The goal of this is to encourage the target audience to think in certain way. (Entman, 2007, 164).

Karina Horsti (2005) conducted a frame analysis on her dissertation. Horsti emphasizes that the construction of frames is based on selection – some aspects are promoted, some are dispelled. Points of views, sources, words, expressions and visual images used in the articles are all a result of selection. One should not ask only what is included in the research material, but also what might have been left out. (Horsti, 2005, 71.) In her dissertation, Horsti presents framing devices that help the researcher to define frames. She divides devices into four categories: Metaphors, examples and comparisons, catch-phrases and nominations, descriptions and images. When conducting a frame analysis, Horsti writes, recognizing and interpreting metaphors is a crucial tool in understanding the cultural and social meanings of a text. Metaphors help to concretize abstract and complicated phenomena. Examples and comparisons help to create contexts. Horsti argues that the way in which an event is combined to other, previous events defines how this event is being discussed in the public. Catch-phrases and nominations are influential ways of defining events and issues. When giving a name to an event, one reasserts a certain perspective and its legitimacy. A name makes an event more concrete and more visible. Finally, frame analysis studies also images. Images can have metaphoric functions – do they support what is being said in the text or are the pictures saying something different? According to Horsti, one should also analyze the content of images, i.e. who are in the pictures, what are the people doing? (Horsti, 2005, 71–76.)

6.3 Journalists select and highlight

Framing studies concentrate on defining and analyzing the frames embedded in media texts. But how do journalists frame articles? Van Gorp (2005, 485) poses a question of whether a frame is an objectively observable news characteristic used or created by journalists, or whether it is a heuristic tool constructed by the frame analyst who imposes it on the news story.

According to Entman (2004, 5), the standard definition of framing in media studies can be the following: “*Selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issues, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation and/or solution*”. This refers to the fact that journalists actively create frames – journalists select and highlight certain aspects of reality.

Karvonen (2000) says that the concept of framing is closely connected to how journalists process the flood of information. In communication, one can by choosing a certain frame make events look as wanted. In his article, Karvonen presents a thought of Todd Gitlin: With the help of frames, journalist can process a large amount of information very quickly. Reporter can recognize that something has news value and after that he/she can quickly transform this event into a news form. Karvonen also presents the idea of William Gamson, who claims that a journalist who is working on a news story is guided by a frame. For example, elections can be seen as a horse race. Because of this frame, an experienced journalist has already in the beginning of a news process a structure of news article in his/her mind. In this structure, there are certain gaps that vary, such as actors and places, which need to be filled. Both journalist and the audience recognize these frames, and because of this journalist only has to activate a wanted frame in the minds of audience. Karvonen says that with the help of framing journalists can make people think in a certain way of different events. (Karvonen 2000, 78, 80–82.) The proposition made by Karvonen is supported by results of studies that will be presented later, in a chapter discussing studies framing controversial issues.

Scheufele (1999) argues that based on the previous research, five factors may potentially have influence on how journalist frame issues: social norms and values, organization pressures and constraints, pressures of interest groups, journalistic routines and ideological or political orientations of journalist. (Scheufele, 1999, 109.) In Russia’s case the journalists face plenty of pressures that can influence their work and the way how they are framing news stories. There is a pressure to cover the stories in favorable way for the authorities, so that the personal safety and benefits of the journalist and newspaper would not be jeopardized. At the same time, there can be the pressure for objective

reporting: large masses of people are rallying all around Russia, and it is something the country has not seen in years. Journalists and media should naturally cover this, if they serve their audience and not the rulers. The pressure for self-censorship can be a dominating factor in shaping the framing process.

Van Dijk (1985) suspects that the way in which journalists frame stories depends on social and professional routines. According to Horsti (2005), a journalist does not come to a reporting situation with empty frames. A journalist already has his or her own ways of interpreting the world: professional and personal frames and wider, social and cultural frames. Furthermore, journalist faces frames produced by different sources and institutions. (Horsti, 2005, 53.) News texts and the frames embedded in them are influenced by these factors.

Van Gorp (2005) refers to a frame as a media package. It includes all the framing devices by which a frame can be identified, i.e. metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, lexical choices, selection of sources, graphics, stereotypes, dramatic characters. Van Gorp also refers to reasoning devices, presented by Entman - defining a problem, assigning responsibility, passing a moral judgment and reaching possible solutions. These devices can be manifest. However, framing theory suggests that if the device is not manifest but explicit, it will still be evoked by the frame message during the interpretation process of the reader. Frame gives advice and instructions to reader of how to understand the message included in the frame. (Van Gorp, 2005, 486–487.)

Scheufele (1999) refers to Gamson and Modigliani when explaining how journalists frame stories: framing can be explained by interaction of journalists' norms and values and the influence of interest groups. (Scheufele, 1999, 110.) Van Dijk (1985) recognizes the importance of social and professional routines in news work. He claims that "*It seems plausible that the structural forms and the overall meanings of a news text are not arbitrary, but a result of social and professional routines of journalists in institutional settings, on the one hand, and an important condition for the effective cognitive processing of news text by both journalists and readers, on the other hand.*" (Van Dijk, 1985, 70.)

As already mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, D'Angelo (2002) presents three paradigms of framing: Cognitive, Critical and Constructionist. Journalist's role in frame building varies in each paradigm. According to critical paradigm, journalists consciously collect information and frame events in a certain way in order to support status quo, or journalists omit information to make sure that a specific frame will not exist. These frames are thought to dominate the news coverage. Cognitive paradigm claims that journalists strive to frame events in several ways. They

routinely collect information and meaningfully frame single event in different ways. In constructionist paradigm, journalists are seen as information processors: they build “interpretative packages” of the positions of politically invested sponsors. (D'Angelo, 2002, 876–877.)

The division into paradigms is interesting but it raises some questions about categorizing the ways of framing into isolated blocks. Because the ideas and rules guiding journalists are diverse and complex, each of the paradigms seems to be too isolated and narrow to work and explain framing process individually. D'Angelo (2002, 878) reminds that many researchers use the synthesis of different paradigms. Content analysis of the media coverage does not answer to the question of how journalists have frames their stories and what have been the guiding principles behind the framing process. However, it is necessary to be aware of the paradigmatic distinctions to understand that framing processes are influenced by several factors, such as norms and values, and pressures coming from outside the newsrooms.

6.4 Examples of framing studies

There have been several studies on how different frames affect people's conceptions of different issues. Thomas E. Nelson, Rosalee A. Clawson and Zoe M. Oxley (1997) have studied the effects of framing on people's attitudes in the article *Media framing of a Civil Liberties Conflict and its Effect on Tolerance*. Their article presents the results of a study on how different ways of framing Ku Klux Klan demonstration can effect on people's tolerance towards the organisation in question. In the study, research participants were shown two different kinds of frames of Ku Klux Klan demonstration. Nelson & al. (199, 567) write that “*Framing is a process in which a communication source, such as a news organization, defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy*”. In the first frame in the study, the demonstration was defined as an issue of freedom of speech, and the second frame presented the demonstration as disruption of political order. The research was conducted in a laboratory. As a result, the scholars claim that different ways of framing can have influenced people's tolerance. They argue that the choices reporters make in covering the story, such as choosing words and phrases, can have significant effects on how the readers perceive the issue. (Nelson et al. 1997, 576.)

Frames can affect and guide the way in which people's opinions about the controversy are developed. Two studies completed by Nelson et al., verify the assumptions. Different ways of framing Ku Klux Klan activities influenced the attitudes participants' in different way. When Ku Klux Klan

demonstration was framed as an issue of free speech, the attitudes of people were much more tolerant in comparison to framing the demonstration as a potentially explosive clash between two angry groups. Nelson et al. argue that *“Participants in this experiment, who witnessed news reports about the very same event, expressed significantly different opinions depending upon the media framing of that event”*. (Nelson et al. 1997, 568, 574.)

Also Patti M. Valkenburg, Holli A. Semetko and Claes H. De Reuse (1999) have studied the effects of different ways of framing controversial issues. In their article *The Effects of News Frames on Reader's Thought and Recall*, they argue that framing has significant importance to the interpretations that people make. In their research, the participants were asked to read one story about crime and about the introduction of the Euro. They were assigned to four different framing conditions: conflict, human interest, attribution of responsibility, and economic consequences. Scholars claim that, according to literature, news is often framed in these four ways. Valkenburg et al. state that according to their study, the way in which the stories were framed had remarkable effects on people's thoughts on both issues, crime and Euro. They argue: *“News frames give the audience direction on how to conceive of a specific issue or event.”* They make the conclusion that, as many studies have suggested, the news media can have the capacity to not only tell public what issues to think about, but also how to think about them. (Valkenburg et al. 1999, 551, 565–567.)

These studies presented above suggest that framing is an influential tool used by journalists. Decisions and choices, conscious or not, may affect people's attitudes towards the issue in question. This thesis is going to define, with help of frame analysis, the frames in which the outcome of Russian Duma elections was portrayed in the Russian press. The aim of this thesis is not to study what kind of effects the frames may have on audience's point of views. However, based on the studies presented above, it is justifiable to argue that different ways of framing may, and most likely do, have an influence to readers' attitudes.

By studying the frames, one can make visible the underlying meanings that shape public opinion. It is likely that different newspapers frame the elections outcome in different ways, which means that the readers of various newspapers form different images of the topic. Entman has studied framing as part of bias. He (2007, 164) suggests that *“We can define framing as the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation.”* The fundamental assumption while completing the analysis will be that different ways of framing conflict most likely has some influence in readers' attitudes – and due to this it is crucial to research this topic. Only by making visible the ways of

covering elections, one can start to understand the possible effects that frames can have on the audience. The intention of frame analysis in this thesis is to find out what kind of a reality is being constructed in the pages of newspapers.

6.5 Criticism of framing studies

As a fractured paradigm, the vagueness of frame has raised questions of reliability and validity of the frame analysis. After reading several articles of framing, it can be said that very few of them tell in detail how the research result, the frames, were defined.

Media scholars Jorg Matthes and Matthias Kohring (2008) criticize the vagueness of frame analysis, and propose a more solid way of conducting a frame analysis. They read an extensive amount of framing studies and separated five methodological approaches to conducting a frame analysis: a hermeneutic approach, a linguistic approach, a manual holistic approach, a computer-assisted approach, and a deductive approach. Common to all these approaches is that within each one of them are studies that are vague in explaining how the frames were defined. According to Matthes and Kohring, there is a great risk that a researcher finds the frames they are consciously or unconsciously looking for. Matthes and Kohring develop and propose their own methodological way to conduct frame analysis. Their method combines both manual and computer coding. However, they admit that other approaches can be valid as well, but to ensure validity one should in detail explain the steps taken in defining the frames. (Matthes and Kohring, 2008, 259.)

Horsti (2005) conducted a frame analysis on her dissertation. Horsti writes that that separating frames from the text is an interpretation and it is not always unambiguous. According to Horsti, one of the problems of frame analysis is whether or not the frames actually are frames or rather themes. In her research, Horsti solved the problem by calling her subject matter, immigration, as the theme. In this thesis, Horsti's solution will be utilized, and the outcome and the reactions to the elections, will be perceived as the theme of a study. As said, separating the frames is an interpretation, and because of this full objectivity is impossible to reach. Horsti reminds that by its nature frame analysis is open to various interpretations, and researchers should accept this. More emphasis Horsti gives to predominance and repetition of frames: the more dominant the frame is the smaller is the possibility of multiple interpretations. (Horsti 2005, 51.) In some framing studies, researchers have preliminary hypothesis and frames that they seek to find in news texts.

However, for example Väliverronen has used a material-based method in his research. Instead of looking for preliminary frames, he defined the frames based on the research material. Väliverronen emphasizes that interpretations do not rise from vacuum – they are connected to theoretical and methodological approaches that researcher is using. (Väliverronen, 1995, 11.)

Väliverronen (1995, 20) emphasizes that defining the frames is highly subjective. One has to also remember, that one cannot be fully objective, when defining the frames. Previous knowledge of the topic will affect to how the researcher understands the material. The writer of this thesis is conscious of reliability and validity problems of conducting a frame analysis. In addition, language poses a great challenge, especially concerning understanding nuances and metaphors. In order to overcome the validity question, I have attempted to make my reasoning as visible as possibly in the analysis part of this thesis. In next chapter, I will present the material of the frame analysis.

7. Material

7.1 Selection of material

The material for content analysis consists of rally coverage in two newspapers: Kommersant and Komsomolskaya Pravda. I chose to analyze newspapers, because it is a form of media that is situated between the zone of free internet and of the more controlled medium, television. Russia has a long tradition of being a reading nation, despite the fact that circulations of newspapers have decreased in the post-Soviet era due to the increase of prizes and due to the changes in media use, i.e. people using more often internet for source of news.

The selection criterion for the material was following: the main theme or focus of the article should be reporting of/from a rally or analysis of the rallies. The goal was to study and analyze in particular news coverage, i.e. reports from the rallies or reports of the upcoming rallies. The analysis period was from 6th of December to 12th of December, i.e. one week after the first post-Duma elections rallies. That week was the most intense one, and the protest movement grew during the week, culminating in the big rally on Saturday December the 10th.

I used the Integrum Profi database to collect the primary material. The database provides access to most Russian newspapers. I searched the database using key words such as rally (митинг and демонстрация), elections (выборы), opposition (оппозиция) and unauthorized action (несанкционированная акция). After searching with key words I double-checked the material by browsing through the newspapers during the research period. I collected the material from pdf-editions of the newspapers to be able to analyze the articles as a whole, seeing the pictures and layout, as they all construct a journalistic entity. In the beginning, I searched material in several Russian newspapers. The amount of articles varied a lot from a newspaper to another. For example, state-minded Rossiiskaya Gazeta only had two articles during the period. Based on a preliminary reading it was clear the newspaper was following the official Putin-oriented way in its reporting. As I came to realize that analyzing Russian newspaper text would be a challenging task, I narrowed down the data to two newspapers.

For the content analysis I chose Kommersant and Komsomolskaya Pravda, because they are identified as different kinds of newspapers: one of them independent and the other state-minded, and because they had quite an even amount of articles during the research period. I found that to be important for the comparison of how the framing processes of rallies proceed.

The total amount of articles in this study is 18 – Kommersant 8 articles and Komsomolskaya Pravda 10. Kommersant followed the events more regularly and evenly during the week, whereas Komsomolskaya Pravda published articles on three days, typically several small articles during the same day. The material is listed in more detail in appendix 1.

7.2 Kommersant

Kommersant is a Russian nationally published daily newspaper. The newspaper was originally started in 1909, but later in 1919 it was banned by Bolsheviks. After a break that lasted for decades, journalist Vladimir Yakovlev re-established the newspaper, and now Kommersant has been published since December 1989. Kommersant is often referred to as business newspaper, because in the early 1990's it focused on business and economics. Quite quickly after the newspaper had been launched it started to develop towards a newspaper without any specialty – and nowadays it covers business, politics, crime, culture and sports.

According to Koikkalainen (2009), during the period of dissolution of the Soviet Union, Kommersant was launched as a project of reformist journalists and it searched for new ways of doing journalism.

The establishers of Kommersant understood that Russia needed a newspaper that would provide information from the spheres of economy, politics and enterprise, now that the private ownership was permitted in the country. Kommersant led the way in showing what quality journalism is, and it was the first newspaper in the post-Soviet Russia that claimed to be neutral in its reporting. (Koikkalainen, 2009, 115–117.)

Vladimir Yakovlev was the main owner of the newspaper until 1999. Russian oligarch Boris Berezovsky bought the newspaper in 1999. Allegedly Berezovsky bought the newspaper in order to strengthen his position as a background force in the 2000 presidential elections (Koikkalainen, 2009, 120).

In 2006 Berezovsky sold Kommersant to a businessman Badri Patarkatsishvili, who relatively soon sold the paper to current owner, Russian billionaire Alisher Usmanov. According to magazine Forbes, in 2012, he is the richest person in Russia, with a 1,8 billion dollars fortune and in the entire list he is the 28th richest person in the world. Most of his fortune is tied to his company, iron ore and steel producer Metalloinvest. (Forbes, 2012.) According to Finnish Embassy in Russia, Kommersant had remained a relatively independent actor in the Russian press, despite the fact that the owner

Usmanov, according to Russian media, has close connections to the Russian leadership and to the company Gazprom.⁹

In addition to daily Kommersant, the publishing house also publishes Ukrainian edition of Kommersant, and a weekly edition of Kommersant Vlast – Power, Kommersant Dengi – Money and Kommersant Avtopilot about cars. In December 2011, the editor in chief of Kommersant Vlast Maxim Kovalsky and the head of the publisher's holding company, Andrei Galiyev were fired by the owner of Kommersant Company Alisher Usmanov. The weekly edition has published claims that Duma elections had not been fair. According to Usmanov, there had been an ethical breach. Usmanov underlined after firing Kovalsky that he has no intentions to intervene in the content of his newspapers. According to Committee to Protect Journalists, Kovalsky's removal angered dozens of journalists working in Usmanov's newspapers. They published an open letter, titled "We are forced into cowardice". (CPJ, <http://www.cpj.org/blog/2012/03/ahead-of-elections-russian-media-has-been-duly-war.php>). Even though Kommersant Vlast is not part of analysis in this thesis, it is useful to be aware of what kind of outcome the elections' coverage resulted inside Usmanov's media company.

According to several internet sources, Kommersant is the one of the biggest daily newspapers in Russia. Circulation Audit Bureau (Бюро тиражного аудита) provides relatively fresh figures of Kommersant's circulation. Within the borders of the Russian Federation, the Monday edition has on average a circulation of total 82,768 copies. All in all, 28,290 copies were subscribed and 52,747 were sold as newsstand copies, the rest, and 1,731, were free copies. From Tuesday to Saturday the circulation is on average 96,395 copies; 38,367 subscribed, 55,787 bought and 2,241 free copies. The data was published on 23th of April in 2013, and it is based on the fourth quarter of the 2012.¹⁰

During the analysis period of this thesis, Kommersant published articles on five days: the 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th and 12th on December.

7.3 Komsomolskaya Pravda

Komsomolskaya Pravda was founded in March 1925. During the Soviet Union, it was the official newspaper of the Communist Union of Komsomol Youth. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union the paper became a national newspaper. Tabloid-formatted newspaper comes out daily except on

⁹See more on Finnish Embassy report on Russia <http://www.finland.org.ru>.
<http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?nodeid=31125&contentlan=1&culture=fi-FI>

¹⁰ See Circulation Audit Bureau <http://www.press-abc.ru/>

Sundays, and it is claimed to be the largest daily newspaper in Russia.

Currently the newspaper is owned by Media Partner, which in turn is owned by businessman Grigory Berezkin's oil company ECN. Berezkin and his energy company are claimed to have connections to Kremlin and to Gazprom. The newspaper has been accused of bias, and Echo Moskvy radio station criticized the newspaper for been "a propagandist newspaper", because they do not publish criticism of the government.

According to BBC, Komsomolskaya Pravda has built its reputation on "*a gentle nostalgia for the Soviet period, firm backing for Kremlin policy and a keen interest in celebrity news and scandal from home and abroad*".¹¹

Based on Circulation Audit Bureau's figures, Komsomolskaya Pravda's circulation in the Russian federation in the fourth quarter of 2012 (published 23rd of April 2013) was the following: Monday edition had a circulation of 413,126 copies: 52,918 were subscribed, 268,502 were bought on newsstands and 91,707 were distributed as free copies. Unfortunately the statistics do not provide an explanation to the high amount of free copies distributed on Mondays. The edition published from Tuesday to Saturday has a circulation of 435,532 copies; 110,357 subscribed, 315,404 sold in newsstands and 9,771 free copies. The weekly edition of Komsomolskaya Pravda has a circulation of total 1,597,484 copies within the borders of the Russian Federation.¹²

Komsomolskaya Pravda published articles about the December 2011 rallies on three days: 7th, 9th and 12th of December.

¹¹ BBC's report on Russian media, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/4315129.stm>.

¹² See Circulation Audit Bureau <http://www.press-abc.ru/>

8. Frame analysis

The empirical research of this thesis consists of a comparative analysis of two newspapers – Kommersant and Komsomolskaya Pravda. The starting point of frame analysis was a material based approach. I studied the empirical data closely by reading and studying the content, marking down expressions and connotations, studying the structure of the article and how it was constructed.

The analysis chapter moves on step by step, analyzing each article one by one. I chose this way of moving to help the reader to understand how I have reached the interpretations of the articles and to make the research as transparent as possible.

As mentioned in the previous chapter about framing, continuity, selection and salience are the common features for framing. In my analysis I attempt to trace the process of framing the rallies by analyzing what has been emphasized, and what has been faded away and left out. Important reason for presenting the analysis step by step is to make visible the development of framing and how it changes and evolves during the analysis period. I argue that by presenting only the results, i.e. the frames, an important aspect – the process – would be left out and the outcome would be inadequate.

I begin the analysis by studying the coverage of Kommersant.

8.1.1 Kommersant

8.1.1.1 Kommersant, 6th of December

It is the first day after the rallies, and Kommersant lifts up the rallies on its front page. The title and subtitle say: *Elections were brought to Chistye Prudy – Riot police dispersed the march of discontent people*. The article starts by saying that non-parliamentary opposition came to streets to protest the results of the elections. The key themes in the article are people's discontent in elections and the unexpected large amount of people coming to rallies. The estimates of the amount of participants vary from 500–4,000, but all in all it's more than anticipated.

According to the article, the amount of participants grew because people understood that the Monday rally is the only sanctioned meeting where people can express their unhappiness – this would be their only chance. Opposition figure Alexey Navalnyi is cited saying that the official organizer of the meeting is Solidarnost, but that in the end it does not matter who organizes the event – it concerns everyone. Navalnyi is promoting the idea that the demonstration is not a meeting of organized political opposition and that the meeting is not based on political or party division. Instead, everyone

should participate no matter what kind of political stand one supports.

Navalny comes across as a person who wants to unite the dispersed political opposition and ordinary people who have earlier been passive bystanders into one movement demanding fair elections. At this point, in the beginning on the demonstration week, the people coming to streets are defined as non-parliamentary opposition, as a large faceless group of people.

The large amount of participants is strongly emphasized in the article: Police had to take the metal detectors away, because the amount of people was so big. Some people were standing 200 meters away from the stage, because it was impossible to get closer. Both of the examples are in a concrete manner underlining the size of the rally. Some participants admitted that they came to the rally for the first time in their life, and the presence of first-timers raises a question if the rally is a beginning for a larger movement.

An essential component of the article is the juxtaposition between the discontent people and the ruling power group. Musician and critic Artem Troisky is cited saying that everyone should vote in the upcoming presidential elections “*for Russia without goons, cowards and scoundrels*”. All in all, slogans of participants are present in the coverage. People have been shouting “*Russia without Putin*”, “*We won't forget, we won't forgive*” and “*We want different President*”. The demonstrators are seen a “*tolpa*”, as one big mass of people, and ordinary citizens are not interviewed. Portraying the rally as a faceless mass of people mediates the idea of participants as united force protesting against falsifications. A quote by “The Poet and the Citizen” Dmitry Bykov supports this interpretation: he says that he has never seen such unity of opposition-minded people.

A strong interpretation rising up from the text is the opposition as united force. Picture is of the article a crowd of people, and the caption says that there were too many people to fit the area. Little details paint a picture of a unified mass protest.

Kommersant's article is chronological – the arrests are not lifted to the main focus, to the immediate beginning of the article. Instead, the article's emphasis in the beginning is on the amount of people and on the fact that a rally this large is something that takes place rarely in Russia. A clear development in the chain of events is present in the article: the rally turns from a sanctioned meeting into a non-sanctioned one. Based on the narration, police seem to be cooperative in the beginning of the rally, but suddenly things change. The article describes how riot police have shields, but yet some people manage to break through the cordon. A commander gives an order “to catch everyone” and the crowd starts to push. A woman with crutches was pushed to ground by policemen, and people shouting slogans were arrested. The reporter is describing the situation: little fights took place, OMON was beating demonstrators. As a conclusion, the article states that the amount of

demonstrators arrested was something around 200. Police continued to arrest people and people on the streets continues to shout slogans such as “Russia without Putin”.

The first rally article in Kommersant appears to be a on the scene -story reporting from the events relatively chronologically. This is a choice that the journalist has made. One could have chosen to lift something to the beginning instead of proceeding on a chronological manner. One of the dominant things is the fact that ordinary people are participating to the article and several quotes are emphasizing the unity of the participants. In Kommersant’s coverage, I distinct two frames. The first one is **protests as uniting Russia**, the second frame emphasizes the conflict between people and authorities – **a split society**.

8.1.1.2 Kommersant, 7th of December

Second day of the rallies brings a clear shift to Kommersant's coverage. The article it titled *Central beating station – Центральный избивательный участок*. The expression is a word play twisted from an expression Центральный избирательный участок, which means Central polling/electoral station. The title itself is full of emotion and takes clear stand to events. The subtitle of the article is “*Protests against the result of the elections were suppressed in Moscow*”. As a whole, the main title and the subtitle guide the reader to understand the wordplay. This cooperation of title and subtitle can awake in reader's mind the question of, first, who were the people who were beaten, and second, the question of who was the one beating. Even without mentioning the actors – demonstrators and riot police, one can very fast figure out who are the main actors in this article. Based on the idea of continuity in reporting, one can assume that Kommersant's readers can already have some kind of model to interpret these events. As Entman (2007, 164) argues, framing works though priming: framing presents ideas that are important in order to encourage the audience to think in a certain way. Kommersant's article sets the scene clearly: the main focus is that a protest turned in to mass arrests and that the police are using force, one might even say unnecessary amount of force in the rallies.

After the title, Kommersant moves onto informative recap of the events. Opposition continued to protest against the elections results, and the meeting ended in mass arrests and beatings. Kommersant's journalist Alexander Chernykh was arrested and beaten up in the meeting and his experiences are included in the article. The citation of Chernykh supports the idea that Kommersant it highlighting the senseless violence of riot police. Chernykh says: “*I was approached by two policemen wearing helmets and batons. One of them suddenly hit me on my leg. I said I am a journalist working in a newspaper. They grabbed me from hands and threw me to a car (автомобиль).*”

One of the policemen put his feet on my chest, the other came and jumped on me. Then they left, the car drove me away and I was sent to jail.” This quote continues the emphasis set already in the beginning of the article – the arrests and violence by riot police are presented as senseless and even needless way of acting. The problem definition in the article is targeted to the unbalanced relationship between the power and the people: the authorities, in this case the riot police, are subjects that are subordinating and oppressing objects, i.e. the protesters. The unbalanced relationship is a result of fundamental disagreements and of a disability to understand each other.

After Chernykh's quote, Kommersant proceeds to telling that the information about the meeting spread on social networks and that the organizer of the rally remains unknown. The article also mentions that supporters of the regime gathered on Victory square, for instance members of Nashi movement and young supporters of the United Russia. They were beating their drums, shouting Russia. Kommersant casts a shadow on the motives of United Russia's young supporters to gather to a meeting. The newspaper provides a quote of mother of 17-years old boy. According to the mum, the classes were cancelled at her son's school and the teacher ordered the students to leave. This quote is clearly suggesting that this is how the young people have been persuaded to come to the pro-Putin rally.

According to my interpretation, Kommersant's article is constructing juxtaposition between the people participating in protests against the elections results and meeting supporting the United Russia. People protesting the results of the elections are there on their own will, despite the threat of getting arrested and beaten up. The people supporting United Russia are there because of some kind of pressure or at least encouragement by teachers and school – not because of their own initiative. In reality, this might not be the case at all, as there are surely people who genuinely want to support the existing power. However, what is important, is the fact that the article is construction this image of juxtaposition and possibly awakening this interpretation in reader's mind. There are people who genuinely want to attend rallies and there are people who have been pressured into participating. A split exists not only between the rulers and the ruled, but between citizens supporting the status quo and opposing the status quo. As a result, the dominant frame is juxtaposition between the supporters of status quo (including both authorities and pro-government minded people) and of people wanting a change. I name this frame as the **split society** –frame.

A second frame of the rally coverage rises from all the violence committed by the police. Beatings and unnecessary violence can raise strong emotions in the reader, and the article is highlighting the senseless violence committed by arbitrary authoritarian rule. The order in Russia appears to be against its own people. I name this frame as the **frame of arbitrary violence**. It is

closely connected to the split society –frame, because in a way arbitrary violence is a result of juxtaposition and split. The split between the government and anti-government-minded people has become so wide, that the officials feel a need to suppress the resistance. Kommersant has chosen to lift the violent conflicts into its coverage, which is interesting, because for the officials this kind of coverage is definitely unwanted: it makes Russia appear as a police state. I get the impression that Kommersant is not concentrated on pleasing the authorities and reporting according to the official governmental line. On the other hand, it is possibly that the authorities wish to give a signal that any unsanctioned resistance will be smothered and this kind of coverage can work as an exemplary, attempting to prevent future rallies. Kommersant’s coverage could possibly mediate the warning signals to people who consider participating in the protest movement. However, I interpret that Kommersant’s way of framing the protests is more favorable to the protestors than the regime, as the acts by the authorities are being portrayed as senseless, unnecessarily hard violence. The protestors appear as victims, who have to suffer simply because they want to express their discontent.

8.1.1.3 Kommersant, 8th of December

Kommersant’s article on Wednesday 8th of December is a recap of the two rallies and the amount of people that have been arrested. The newspaper article starts by saying that police has made a record in how many people they have arrested during past two days - almost thousand people have been taken into jail. Breaking a record is often seen as something positive, but in this case the expression turns against itself and loses its positive meaning. Instead, the large amount of people been arrested appear to have initiated by arbitrary acts of authorities. A deeper interpretation suggests once again juxtaposition between the rulers and the ruled, the authorities and the people participating to rallies. The juxtaposition is so extreme that conversations cannot solve it. Instead, the authorities resort to forceful methods.

This article does not have a picture and its language is quite administrative with long sentences – it is an informative recap with few feelings embedded in it. The news story includes some comments by human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human rights Watch. According to representatives of Human rights watch, the massive arrests that took place in a peaceful meeting do not speak in favor of the government. The organizations express their concern that people have been arrested despite the fact that they have not caused any provocations against the police. They demand that the arrested people should be freed from the jail.

In the article, the arguments presented by human rights groups and the figures of amount of

people been arrested clearly suggest a point of view that the authorities have been using unnecessary hard means to suppress the rallies.

The article does not provide any reasons for why it was necessary to arrest protesters in the rallies. On the contrary, the story tells about how people participating in a peaceful meeting have been taken into police busses and then to jail for 15 days.

As a result, the selection and salience of the facts and events presented suggests that the arrests have been unnecessary and over scaled. On the other hand, the article does not give face to the protestors and their goals either. The main emphasis is on the acts of authorities that are a result of juxtaposition, and the frame is **arbitrary violence**. This frame emphasizes the senseless nature of the arrests and the behavior of the riot police. Below the surface it promotes the idea of Russia as an authoritarian state that has features resembling a police state. The rights of ordinary citizens are secondary, and the control of the dissent is the main goal for the regime.

8.1.1.4 Kommersant, 9th of December, article 1

In Thursday 9th of December, Kommersant continues to cover the topic of post-elections rallies. The newspaper has two articles related to the topic – the first one talking about how Putin and Medvedev have admitted the need for regime to have a dialogue with the opposition, and the second article writing about arrangements for the upcoming rally in 10th of December.

For the first time during the rally coverage, Kommersant lifts up positive and developing comments by the leaders. Both Putin and Medvedev acknowledge the need for more open, politically more competitive society in Russia. However, the article continues, representatives of the regime doubt the sincerity of these statements, because the development of genuine dialogue would need reform of the political system, and according to the sources the leaders are not ready for that. Experts fear that the government underestimates the changes that have taken place in the political consciousness of the society and people. Right from the beginning of the article – once again – juxtaposition between the regime and the opposition is present.

Kommersant explains that people's discontent towards elections and their result has influenced the way in which the tandem Putin-Medvedev thinks about their political opponents. Formerly they were in dialogue mostly with parties that are in Duma, but now the tandem acknowledges the need to be in dialogue with all the opposition, parliamentary and non-parliamentary. The leaders emphasize that all the opposition-minded people need to be entitled to gather to meetings and express their opinions.

After presenting the noble comments of the leaders, the article continues to tell that opposition is not convinced about the genuineness and sincerity of these statements. According to Kommersant, it is unclear who the regime sees as opposition and what kind of dialogue the regime wishes to have. The identity of opposition is one of the key questions, since not all the discontent people that are rushing out to streets are members of political groups, but merely politically unorganized people that have gotten tired of the current political system.

The photograph and the caption of the article support the existing juxtaposition. In the photograph, people are standing on a street and one of them has a sign saying “*While you are thinking about yourself, he decides everything for you*”. The caption of the photograph says that “*the activities of street democracy are a risk to current government*”. The juxtaposition is crystallized in this sentence: there are two camps – people and ruling government – that have different goals. This caption helps to interpret and develop frames of juxtaposition and of arbitrary violence further. It becomes clear that people participating to street rallies are seen as a threat to the rulers: by going to streets people threaten the existing order. In order to maintain the stability and order in Russia, authorities have no choice but to smother the street rallies. The rallies in fact are a threat to the authorities. It seems that the leaders of Russia have chosen a twofold tactic to deal with the rallies: On the one hand, they use force, mass arrests and violence to smother the protests. On the other hand, they use more conciliatory approach, admitting that a dialogue between the government and the opposition is necessary. According to the article it seems that even the authorities are not sure how they should handle the unexpected mass rallies and maintain the existing order. They have no choice but to tiptoe and retell the claims of the protestors, but at the same time they attempt to suppress the protest movement. The twofold tactic suggests that the regime is doing everything in its power to secure its own position in the power. The rallies come across as **a threat to Russia’s stability**.

Kommersant reminds that social order in Russia has changed. Alexander Auzan, the leader of the national institute of Social Order, says that the participants of the rallies are people who do not belong to any parties and they do not have any leaders. According to Auzan, it remains to be a question how the power can build dialogue with the people, because most of the feedback channels are blocked. Due to this, Auzan explains, the authorities have failed to notice that the social contract between the power and people does not hold anymore. The social contract in Russia was based on the idea of mutual understanding: we (the people) give you political freedom, we (the leaders) give you stability (вы нам — политические свобо-ды, мы вам — стабильность). The social tension that has arisen after the reported elections’ falsifications causes distress among the authorities that see the mass protests shaking the stability of the country. As a conclusion, the article states, the power needs

to do something quickly or otherwise they are in danger of losing the public's support and confidence. The threat is tangible – the authorities need to find a way to overcome the threat.

8.1.1.5 Kommersant, 9th of December, article 2

Side by side to the previous article, Kommersant has a second story related to the rallies. The article is titled “*The second round of the Elections – the mayor and the opposition negotiate on the place of protests*”. The headline proposes that the Duma elections are not over – people are willing to fight for their rights. Right from the beginning it becomes clear that the city governance and the opposition do not see eye to eye, as they have failed to agree on the place where the pro-fair elections rally should be held on Saturday 10th of December. The city governance and the opposition have failed to reach compromise of the place where a large rally against elections' falsifications would take place. The article continues by saying that the police are ready to ensure the safety of the participants, but in case the opposition tries to start marching police will rigidly prevent the march. Once again the emphasis is on the **split between protesters and the power – a split society**. Authorities do not give sympathy for the protesters.

The article is looking into the future rally that will take place on Saturday. Expectations are high: the Saturday rally might be the first mass rally that has been put together with the help of social networks such as Vkontakte, Facebook and Twitter, and tens of thousands of people are expected to participate. Especially significant is the fact that participants “*are not professional opposition, but ordinary intelligentsia, managers, who have not attended to rallies ever before*”. According to Kommersant, the protesters will demand the annulment of elections' results and immediate release of people who were arrested in the rallies after the elections. A lawyer Vadim Prokhorov says that in his experience the police might arrest anyone without any grounds, even people simply passing by the scene of the rally. Prokhorov also gives advice for people attending rallies: keep calm, help people near you, if police officer tries to arrest you, ask him to introduce himself.

The idea of ordinary people being the essential component of the protest starts to rise in this article. Advice is given to ordinary people who are inexperienced in participating rallies. It becomes clear that not only professional opposition is going to the streets, among them will most likely be lots of “ordinary people”. It seems that the reporter wants to emphasize the identity of the protesters – the fact that many of them identify themselves as ordinary people rather than a part of established, professional opposition. The second frame in this article is the frame of **rallies as people's grass root movement**. The frame emphasizes that many of the protestors citizens who have had enough of the current rule. It becomes clear that the protest movement is different from the rallies that Russia has

seen past decade: this time the participants are not all politically organized people, but merely average voters.

8.1.1.6 Kommersant, 12th of December, article 1

The rallies demanding fair elections gathered tens of thousands of Russians to streets around the country on Saturday 10th of December. The protests were clearly the hot news topic that one could not ignore. Kommersant's title and photograph play well together forming a symbolic unity. The title says "*Only once in a lifetime*" and the picture shows just married couple enter the demonstration area through metal detectors. A connotation that arises in my mind is that you only get married once – it is a unique moment. Same kind of uniqueness is embedded in the idea that many protesters were coming to street rallies for the first time in their life – first and only time is memorable, there is something solemn in it. According to the analysis of Kommersant's reporter, the mass rally indeed was unique – it was a protest by satisfied people.

The article begins by describing disagreement between leading opposition figures that are having a dispute about the place where the rally should take place – in the sanctioned square or in the square where opposition wanted to gather. Part of the opposition figures have left the Revolution square and headed to the sanctioned Bolotnaya square. The dispute comes across as petty and secondary, but in a symbolical way it manifests a split inside the so called professional, institutionalized opposition. However, the dispute constructs a contrast between the uniqueness of first-timers coming to the rally and the experienced opposition-politicians that are used to protesting. It seems this is a conscious goal of the writer: to promote the one of a kind protest movement that is being born in Russia.

The subtitle turns out to be the dominant theme of the article: Moscow attended the meeting like a party. The reporter scrutinizes what kind of people have come to the rally, and he divides the participants into two: into first-timers "who for the first time have become subjects of street democracy" and into "everyone else". The reporter notes that the participants are "sincere, not homeless, not stupid, people who have eaten breakfast. But they are sick and tired". I interpret that the reporter suggests that the people coming to rally are content with their living conditions but they have had enough of the political situation, of the reported elections' fraud and of how the country is being led. Their private lives are satisfactory, but now they are starting to become politically aware and active as well.

The journalist describes the rally as a fashionable party that everyone wants to attend, a high society party (светская вечеринка). Women are dressed up nicely, according to fashion. Presenting

the rally as a fashionable party is a clear example of framing. The obvious denotation of “party” is that it is something fun and positive, but demonstration as a party provides connotations. The reason for the demonstration – people being angry because of the elections’ falsifications – is serious, not at all uplifting. However, the atmosphere at the meeting is party-like, and people appear to be more hopeful than angry. Presenting the rally as a party makes the protest seem as not marginal. It seems that the reporter wants to emphasize that ordinary citizens, in addition to the professional opposition, are tired of the rigged elections and they have come to express their opinion publicly. The article is highlighting two ideas: lot of people participating for the first time in their life and the rally being as something unique, a party-like meeting. All in all, Kommersant’s article is portraying the rally in a positive way – no violence, no beatings, but hopeful first-timers expressing their opinions in a sanctioned meeting, in which also police is behaving well.

Uniqueness and first-timers are a dominant theme in the article, but also professional opposition gets their message published in the newspaper. The reporter is citing several opposition politicians that have spoken in the rally. The main message by the speakers is targeted against Putin and United Russia, and people are shouting slogans “*Russia without Putin*” and “*Russia will be free. “The party of thieves and crooks – it’s magic. It has united us. Everybody hates party of thieves and crooks”*”, says Konstantin Krylov, leader of Russian Civil Movement. The main demand is that the results of the elections should be annulled. This clearly is connected to the ongoing theme of juxtaposition between protesters and authorities: **the frame of split society** is present in this article.

Kommersant’s coverage is a combination of positive and negative. The positive is connected to the participants and their goals, the negative is connected to the rulers and to rigged elections. Once again juxtaposition between the power and the people is present. In addition to the continuous frame of juxtaposition, I distinct a second frame that is the dominant one in this particular article – I name this the frame **the frame of rallies as harmless folk festival**.

8.1.1.7 Kommersant, 12th of December, article 2

In addition to the demonstration article, Kommersant also provides analysis of the rallies taking place all over Russia. The article consists of a large graphic map of Russia, pinpointing all the demonstrations and the amount of participants according to police and according to media. The map has several details: at what time the rally started, what was the temperature, whether the rally was sanctioned or unsanctioned. The temperature is an important detail: in December in can be very cold in Russia. For example, in Novosibirsk the temperature was -20. The map also provides information

of how many participants were arrested. In addition, the map shows protests that have taken place abroad. The map is an essential tool constructing the meanings – it demonstrates how people have organized rallies around the country, promoting idea that Russia is experiencing a civic movement all around the country.

The title of the article “Россию забюллетенило” was difficult expression to translate. I consulted a professional translator, who suggested that the meaning of the headline is “Russia had to go on a sick leave”, embodying the idea that Russia is somehow ill. The headline seems to be constructed in a manner that it can potentially awake connotations: the verb in the title reminds the word “Бюллетень” which can be associated to expression Избирательный бюллетень – a ballot. I interpret that headline as wordplay: Russia had to go to a sick leave because of the elections. Being sick means that something is wrong and one needs to be cured, and interpreting this thought further one can say that Russia needs to be cured from all the falsifications that took place during elections. Who will cure Russia? The doctor can potentially be the thousands of Russians who have participated to protests against rigged elections.

In this article, the dominant the interpretation is that **Rallies are uniting Russia**. This frame is a result of a week long process of protests and Russians coming to streets. It is a result of journalistic process of striving to understand what is happening in the country, and promoting a certain point of view and interpretation for the events. The emphasis on this article is on the uniting force of the rallies. In the very first article of the Kommersant the rallies were frames as uniting Russia, and this article has the same focus as in the beginning of analysis week. This frame works together with the split society –frame that occurred in an article on the previous page. The split society –frame portrays the enormous gap that has been born between the rulers and the voters. The feeling of injustice is so strong that the angry citizens need to experience something that unites them – the protests. They cannot get acceptance from the authorities, but they need consolation from somewhere. They rely on each other, with the congenial people.

8.1.1.8 Kommersant, 12th of December, article 3

The third article of Kommersant focuses on the media coverage of the rallies. The title of the article is “*Television went to Bolotnaya (Square) – The Federal Channels reported from the demonstrations as they could*”. According to the article, the Russian state television channels had changed their approach to covering the rallies. In the beginning of the week, the viewers did not hear a word about the demonstrations, but towards the end of week the state-channels could not fall silent anymore. They had to cover the rallies – in detail.

The reporter of the article explains that she spent a large part of the rally observing the work of the television channels: All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company VGTRK (owning the important state-channels: Rossiya 1, Rossiya 2 and Rossiya K) had the biggest amount of staff in the rally, but also NTV and REN TV were present. The reporter of Kommersant had spoken to many of the journalists from the federal channels and asked them what kind of coverage the channels would broadcast. Many of the journalists did not want to comment officially. Unofficially, many of them told to Kommersant's reporter that they did not accept the decisions earlier that week of the not reporting from the rallies. According to them, the strict ban of not covering the rallies had come from above, from the presidential administration. However, Kremlin would not comment these claims. Now the television channels are at venue, with big teams of journalists and cameramen.

In the article, the reporter of Kommersant also analyzes the content of the television broadcasts. According to her, the coverage of the federal channels in December the 10th was surprisingly balanced. The news reports from the demonstrations begun around 4pm and continued all evening on different television channels. In addition to Moscow protests, the other demonstrations around the country were also mentioned. According to the reporter, the amount of participants was underestimated, but based on the footage the scale of the rallies was obvious. REN TV and NTV were the most accurate in covering the rallies, saying that the rallies were largest in a decade. All in all, the main federal channels show panoramic footage from the rallies, celebrated the peaceful nature of the protests, the correct behavior of the police and the absence of provocation. The news reports emphasized that the rallies took place because people wanted to protest against the rigged elections and falsifications. However, not once was the name of Vladimir Putin mentioned. According to the sources of Kommersant, the leadership in all the three main TV channels had fought hard in order to have the permission to cover the December 10th rallies. The article ends when the reporter of Kommersant asks a source how the administration has reacted to the coverage. The answer is *“Well, what do you think? It is sure that no one there [in the administration] said thank you”*.

This article is the first and the only article in Kommersant's coverage that is discussing the complicated situation in which the Russian media operated. It provides a relatively detailed analysis of the coverage of the federal channels, discussing the pressures coming from above and the battle that the media has to fight in order to be able to report from the rallies. It also points out that the state media has come to a situation where they do not automatically obey the orders from above. Furthermore, Kommersant is acknowledging the successful outcome of the reporting.

Publishing this article is a sign that Kommersant is not afraid to report about standpoints that are sensitive, such as the work of the federal media. They have chosen to analyze the coverage of the state-channels, well knowing that the coverage of these channels, at least to some extent, has been dictated and influenced from the above. The coverage of the rallies in state-media is an important news topic, because usually the state media does not cover topics that are not in the interest or in the advantage of the highest administration. It is clear that this article is discussing, not straightforwardly but nevertheless, the freedom of press in Russia. The beginning of the article sets the dominant tone for this news story: at first, the viewers of the state channels were not able to receive information about the demonstrations, but now that has changed. The state media is more open and more balanced than before, it is historical. Based on the evaluation of Kommersant's reporter, it is because the journalists and the leadership of the channels have fought for this open approach, it is thanks to the professionals of journalism. The article is clearly speaking on the behalf of the professional values and competence of the journalists: they have taken the decision-making into their own hands.

Based on my analysis, this article frames the rallies as **small victory for the press freedom**. The article suggests that the extent of the rallies is so massive that it has even influenced the way in which state media operates. The frame is constructed on two facts. First, typically Russian federal channels obey official guideline in their coverage. This was the case in the beginning of the rally week, when the protests were not covered and the viewers could not receive balanced – or any – information. Second, now a change has taken place – the federal channels have come to the protest venue and they produce relatively balanced information, and this is a news worthy story. Combined these two facts form an entity that focuses on the issue of press freedom that is struggling in Russia. The article does not issue the problems of media control and press freedom explicitly but it constructs the frame in a very convincing manner. The reader is left with a feeling that the state media went against their superiors. They did not receive praises, but who cares? Covering the rallies is a small victory for the freedom of the press.

8.1.2 Overview of Kommersant's frames

As a result of analysis, I separated 8 frames in Kommersant's coverage. Some of the frames are continuous and present in several articles. Some of them are present only once during the analysis period.

Table 1. Overview of Kommersant's frames

The frame	Date
1. Protests uniting Russia	6.12, 12.12
2. Conflict between protestors and authorities	6.12
3. Split society	7.12, 9.12, 12.12
4. Arbitrary violence	7.12, 8.12
5. Threat to Russia's stability	9.12
6. People's grass root movement	9.12
7. Harmless folk festival	12.12
8. Small victory for the press freedom	12.12

While analyzing the articles I sketched frames. Typical for frame analysis is that in the beginning several themes and frames arise as a result of close reading and interpretation. Earlier in the thesis I presented Van Gorp's (2005, 468–487) idea of a frame as a media package that includes all the framing devices by which a frame can be identified, i.e. metaphors, catchphrases, visual images, lexical choices, selection of sources, graphics, stereotypes, dramatic characters. According to Nelson & al. (1997, 567), framing is a process in which a communication source defines and constructs a political issue or public controversy. One should remember that frame analysis, such as any content analysis, is by its nature subjective. To some extent researcher is like any reader, making his or her own interpretations of the content. During the analysis process I struggled with the question of validity. I have attempted to make my process of analysis and interpretation visible to overcome the issues of subjectivity and validity.

Karina Horsti (2005, 51) talks about the dominance of frame: the more dominant the frame is,

the smaller the possibility for multiple interpretations is. By studying the table of Kommersant's frames one can notice that few frames appear few times, and some are present only once. However, the dominance of the frame is not only connected to the whole process of one week, but a frame can be dominant in a single article. That was the case for example with the frame of conflict between the authorities and protestors.

Next, I will analyse Kommersant's framing process – how the framing developed and proceeded during the analysis period.

8.1.3 Kommersant's framing process

Kommersant's framing process reflects the course of the events that escalated from small rallies into a mass rallies all around the country. In the beginning of the week, the protests were portrayed as quite normal post-elections behavior by the opposition, and the dynamics between the opposition and the authorities were familiar already from the past.

However, as the protests continued, the newspaper begun to show the bigger picture. The whole week, clear continuity of juxtaposition was present in Kommersant's coverage – I call this frame the split society -frame. I argue that the frame of juxtaposition is the most dominant frame in Kommersant's coverage. The aftermath of the Duma elections and the chain of events captures in the idea that a portion of Russians are disagreeing with the regime and the authorities. Even if reporting about the controversy may seem self-evident, I claim that it is not. In the beginning of the protest week, the topic of post-Duma elections rallies was excluded from the national state television channels. It was by no means self-evident, that all media outlets would cover the rallies.

In Russia, newspapers enjoy more freedom than television, and in this respect newspapers have a possibility to cover the topic more independently, without exercising as much as self-censorship that takes place for example in state television channels. I interpret that the continuous juxtaposition is in fact a result of journalistic process of framing, of selection and salience. Instead of serving as a mouthpiece of authorities, Kommersant attempts to portray the large gap that has spread between the ruling elite and ordinary citizens. The newspaper does not talk too much about how big the amount of people is participating on rallies, and it does not provide the other point of view – the people who are happy with current rule. Instead it emphasizes on the fact that people do participate and go to streets to express their discontent; they are a unified mass, people who have been unified

due to the feeling that they have been deceived. For Kommersant, it is irrelevant how large portion of Russians demand the annulation of election results. Kommersant is promoting the rallies as mass movement – the expression “mass rally” is used continuously.

In the beginning of the analysis week Kommersant was not too favorable towards the authorities, instead, it was clearly underlining the split in the society and the forceful measures taken by the police. The coverage of the newspaper suggested that the riot police was taking measures that were over scaled and too violent. The articles manifested the deep split that exists between the rulers and the ruled. The mass arrests were also a good news story – dramatic and unexpected, and that can be a reason why the harsh measures were the main focus.

Frame of arbitrary violence suggests that the protesters have a right to come to streets and express their opinion and discontent. Police’s and authorities’ response appears to be excessive. In the beginning of the post-elections week I used the frame of arbitrary violence as its own frame. However, as a result of analyzing one week’s content and following the ongoing process of reporting the frame of arbitrary violence integrated into the frame of rallies being a threat to the existing order. During the week it became clear that what in the beginning appeared to be senseless violence was in fact motivated by the authorities’ fear that rallies and protests are posing a threat to the status quo, to the stability of the country. Violent mass arrests are the way in which Putin’s regime has sought to suppress the discontent and uprising.

A shift in the coverage shows its first signs in 9th of December, and by 12th of December the tone and the emphasis of reporting had developed into something quite different than in the beginning of the week. From threats and violence the emphasis has moved to people – people who are organizing the rallies as a grass root movement and the atmosphere that is a party like. The frame of a split society is still present, but towards the end of the week it ceases to be the dominant frame.

On Monday 12th of December Kommersant has a whole spread about the large Saturday rally but only one article is showing the disagreements and conflict. For some reason, the newspaper has chosen to fade out the whole reason for the rallies – the conflict that has arisen from elections falsifications and injustice. The main focus is now on positive – on the growth of Russian civil society. However, Kommersant does not proportion the amount of participants to the population of Russia, and the paper does not analyze how significant the rallies are in their size and influence. Leaving this kind of speculation out of the content, the newspaper is promoting the frame of rallies as people’s movement and as movement unifying the country. The silent majority of content Russians is not on the focus, as more important is the smaller minority that acts and protests. One possible reason to this way of framing is that the smaller minority of protestors is far more interesting than

then passive majority. The protest movement is something new and unexpected, and it is natural to emphasize those features and leave the estimation of the significance on the background. The time for in-depth analysis of the protests will be later.

On Monday the 12th, Kommersant presents a whole new approach to the rallies as it lifts to focus the freedom of press and the controlled nature of the television channels. It is discussing the coverage provided by the main federal television channels. In this article, the dominant frame is *A small victory for the press freedom*. The frame is a reminder of the nature of the Russian society – vertically ruled by a few. By lifting the limited coverage, the press freedom and the media environment to the focus, Kommersant is reporting in a manner that is not favorable to the authorities. The newspaper promotes the idea that the state media has rebelled against the instructions coming from above. It is unexceptional and highlights the potential for something changing in the society.

Based on the analysis, Kommersant was striving towards objective and balanced coverage. Especially in the beginning of the week it was clear that Kommersant did not serve as a mouthpiece of the authorities. Instead, it portrayed the rallies in a manner that was more favorable to the protestors. Kommersant's coverage suggested that the measures taken by the police were too harsh. At the same time, the protestors were portrayed in a positive light, demanding for civil rights, such as right to express discontent publicly. Towards the rest of the week the rallies were portrayed more as a party and celebration. The development in the coverage towards the end of week make me wonder whether or not the shift in coverage was somehow connected to the change in official rhetoric – the mass rallies in the big cities were sanctioned. Sanctioning the rallies was authorities' way to show for the rest of the world that Russians are allowed to protest, and that freedom of assembly and freedom of speech have not been smothered in Russia. However, simultaneously with the positive party coverage Kommersant provided media criticism, when it analyzes the broadcasts of the federal television channels. That is a sign that it does not attempt to please the authorities.

It is impossible to estimate if the newspaper was genuinely excited about the rise of civil society and wanted to emphasize the celebration of blossoming civil society, or whether the way of covering the rallies as party was connected to the wish to adapt to official rhetoric. However, based on the knowledge of the newspapers reputation as an independent actor I suspect that it was more the first reason than the second. All in all, especially in the beginning of the analysis period, Kommersant used quite subtle ways in framing the events, and it left space for the readers to draw their own conclusions.

8.2.1. Komsomolskaya Pravda

In this sub-chapter I will analyze the content of Komsomolskaya Pravda. The newspaper published articles on three days during the study period. Each article will be studied individually.

8.2.1.1 Komsomolskaya Pravda, 7th of December

Komsomolskaya Pravda's first article is on the first glance almost invisible, since it has a small headline and no pictures from the demonstration. Nothing in the layout persuades the reader to stop and read the article, but below the surface the article is full of controversial expressions. The reporter includes himself partly in the article, and the story seems to be either a mix of news article and opinion text or an analysis of the events. I find it problematic that nothing guides the reader to understand what kind of genre the article presents, and as a result it is complicated for the reader to decide how to regard reporter's opinions. The article seems to be of a column or opinion text, but it is situated in the news sections and the layout suggests it is a news story.

Komsomolskaya Pravda's story explains that a rally in Moscow ended in unprecedented mass arrests, and police arrested 300 people - Полиция «свинтила» 300 человек. The article states that both the opposition and the human rights fighters accused authorities for being "stranglers of freedom", and they claimed that Alexey Navalnyi and Ilya Yashin, arrested in the rally, are prisoners of conscience. By choosing this kind of words and expressions the newspaper is clearly providing a set of interpretation possibilities to readers: Russia is smothering human rights and freedom of assembly.

Right after these sentences the journalist steps in personally and expresses his opinion by saying "I do not personally understand..." He writes that he does not understand the accusations towards police, since in his opinion the police has done their best to cause as little discomfort to the protesters as possible. Police had only "asked, not demanded" that protesters would stop assaulting police officers. Clearly the reporter marks that he does not agree with the accusations made by human rights groups.

The reporter also questions the acts of the opposition leaders (Yashin especially) by asking why they had to call an unsanctioned march, when there already was rally that was peaceful and sanctioned. The reporter claims that opposition politicians as experienced such as Yashin must have known what will be the result of encouraging people to unsanctioned march and what will be the reaction of police officers. The reporter suspects that the opposition in fact wanted to provoke

authorities, they wanted beatings and mass arrests; the liberal democratic fight wanted to own the slogan used by Bolsheviks: The worse, the better - чем хуже, тем лучше. According to the journalist, opposition did not choose a wise way to fight against falsifications: they broke the law in order to supervise that law is being adhered, and that is a road that leads nowhere or to an impasse and to bloodshed.

In this particular article, opposition is presented as belligerent, trying to catalyze the peaceful demonstration into a battle between the authorities and protesters. The article highlights the opposition leaders as a mischief-maker. The idea of “you get what you ask for” is embedded in the text: “the prisoners of conscious” were sent to jail for 15 days, but only because they did not settle for sanctioned meeting, but wanted an unsanctioned march that was bound to provoke the authorities. It is clear that the opposition is the guilty one, and the accusations made towards the riot police are groundless.

It is visible in this article that the first rally after Duma elections was seen as typical rally organized by organized opposition. The anger against rigged elections is not present, it seems to be left aside in the article. Instead, the story is concentrating on opposition figures that want to rock the boat and clash with the riot police. The article has a traditional point of view of established opposition groups causing problems to authorities, and idea of the rallies potentially spreading and growing into larger movement is absent. As said before in the framing chapter, journalism seeks explanations to events, and framing is a way to categorize, interpret and name events in the massive information load. This particular article is situated in a continuation – it is connected to the fact that opposition has organized rallies before and it is natural response by the opposition to demonstrate the elections’ results. As a result of selection and salience, the article takes a stand. Based on my analysis, the rally is framed as **typical behavior by belligerent opposition**. It is seen as one time protest that most likely will not result in new protests.

8.2.1.2 Komsomolskaya Pravda, 9th of December, article 1

In 9th of December, Komsomolskaya Pravda published several articles related to the rallies. They have a whole page that is divided into smaller entities. Komsomolskaya Pravda continues to report from the rallies in a quite a different way compared to Kommersant, choosing its own personal ways to frame the events – emphasizing on the role of social media.

The article on Wednesday 9th of March starts by saying that the *“rebellion of social networks is been tested on Russia soil, and the Russian protesters are copying the methods that were used in*

uprisings in Moldova, Egypt and Tunisia. According to the report, the scenario is one and the same in these countries – people are not happy with how the elections went, and that is why they started protesting in blogs and in Twitter. The events in Russia have raised interest abroad, “among our lovely foreign partners”. The last sentence can be interpreted in ironic way, since it is well known that Russia does not want foreign actors and countries interfering with its domestic politics, and several times Russian leaders have accused the West for trying to influence domestic politics. Taking into account this context, I interpret the sentence of lovely foreign partners as some kind of a warning: foreign countries are following the Russian events and rallies closely, and they might try to get in the middle of the events, for example by donating money to Russian opposition. The reference to uprisings in other countries draws a connection to revolutions: the Russian protestors are behaving in the same way as people in countries of the Arab Spring.

The reporter writes that there is nothing illegal in post-Duma elections’ actions, if the protests do not break the law. It becomes clear that the article looks at the protesters and rallies as a threat: *“Can the generation of bloggers become a battering ram that will batter down the Russian authorities?”* The article uses rich and solemn language in describing how this could take place: By making the power tremble, forcing the authorities to new concessions and finally turning them into a handful of weak-willed people who could be whisked away from the political arena with one click. There is anticipation and even fear that for example a scenario such as the revolution in Egypt will repeat itself in Russia. Based on the previous uprisings and revolutions in the near past, there is in fact evidence suggesting that this kind of scenario is possible – and this potential gives the perfect chance for the West to interfere, or at least so the reporter implies.

“People went to their homes from the Victory Square – and no one understood whether the young generation, having taken a breath of fresh air, went back to their computers; whether something had changed irrevocably.” This part of the article describes the unknown – in the past people demonstrated on the streets, took part to rallies. Today, the protests do not take place only in public - instead, they continue online.

The article repeatedly mentions the foreign actors. According to the article, in the West, the main question is: Is it time to start help the opposition to rock the boat which has an uncompromising captain, who does not want to play by the Western rules? The article ends in saying that both Hillary Clinton and Catherine Ashton have expressed their concern due to the violations that took place during the Duma elections. The reporter makes his own interpretations and argues that the statements by the Western politicians are giving a clear signal both to the authorities and to the protesters: *“Hold*

on, we are with you (with the protesters). And the color of the Russian democratic revolution – that we will choose later.” Especially interesting is the verb form of choosing – *we will choose* refers to the fact, that the West will be part in choosing the color. As I mentioned before, Russian authorities oppose foreign influence strongly, and presenting the topic in this manner can provoke resistance among citizens. It is possible that this way of framing can guide the readers into seeing the rallies in solely negative way, because they could possibly shake the Russian regime and result in the increase of foreign influence in the country. Russia does not need West’s help in choosing the color of democratic revolution.

This article was so far the most stand-taking article during this content analysis, and it is strikingly different from Kommersant’s content. It supports the official rhetoric’s of the authorities, the idea of the West interfering into Russian politics is clearly embedded it: rallies give the West a strategic weapon to destabilize Russia. The article is in favor of Russia and national interest. In the analysis, I distinct two frames for the rallies: First, **Rallies as a threat to Russian stability**. Second, opposition is seeing as an ally of the West and **Rallies as West’s possibility to destabilize Russia**.

Both these frames support the official rhetoric’s of Russian authorities, and the frames are connected to the attempt to prevent revolutionary movement in Russia. Robert Horvath (2011) has written about Putin’s preventive Counter-Revolution: about how in his second term Putin began rejecting the threat of colored revolutions that had taken place for example in Georgia and in Ukraine. The active phase in preventing the threat of velvet revolution began in 2005, and included several pillars to regime: Nashi youth supporting Kremlin, managed NGO sector, propaganda on television and the concept of sovereign democracy. Horvath claims that the struggle against velvet revolution is connected to the consolidation of an undemocratic regime in Putin’s Russia. According to Horvath, *“In their public utterances, the Kremlin’s political technologists presented the revolutionary threat as a Western conspiracy. For them, the essential facts about the ‘colored revolutions’ were that they were financed by Western foundations, they utilized Western political technologies, their activists were coached by Western trainers, and their outbreak was coordinated by Western diplomats and intelligence agencies.”* Horvath adds that the sincerity of evaluations considering West’s role is questionable and gives an example of a comment of one mouthpiece of authorities: in a television broadcast this Kremlin propagandist was strongly accusing West, but after the cameras were turned off he had said: *“the crisis situation in the country is being produced by the actions of the regime itself, and not from abroad”*. (Horvath, 2011, 21–22.)

Horvath’s example is useful for analyzing Komsomolskaya Pravda’s frames and content,

because it clarifies the newspaper's position and role in the aftermath of the Duma elections and connects it to wider perspective of media serving as authorities' mouthpiece, and promoting official points of views. By presenting the rallies as a threat to Russian stability and as West's possibility to destabilize Russia, the newspaper's way to supports the official propaganda and current order. The rallies are connected to a larger entity of Russian sovereignty and official rhetoric: the Russian rulers do not want outsiders intruding into Russia's politics. Portraying the rallies as a threat and as part of West's conspiracy the coverage introduces negative connotations to readers. The rallies are not simply a movement of angry, disappointed Russians, but West's chance to hit Russia below the belt.

The post-Duma elections rallies were bound to alert the regime: large amount of people running to streets all around Russia protesting could have been a sign of an upcoming color revolution and the fears of the leaders' had suddenly come true. No wonder the rhetoric aimed against West, and the rallies were presented as a threat and as something unwanted, even harmful to Russia's stability.

8.2.1.3. Komsomolskaya Pravda, 9th of December, short articles 2 and 3

In December the 9th, Komsomolskaya Pravda published two small articles that are comparing Russia's situation to the West. A short article (article 2) is telling how in the United States during the Occupy Wall Street –protest the police has been using tough measures in arresting the protesters. There is a picture of riot police arresting a person in Moscow, with caption that says *“The Moscow police is being accused of excessive use of force. But if you look at the picture down on this page...”* And the picture on the lower part of the page has American police officers arresting a protester in Wall Street protest, with a caption saying *“...Then it turns out that participants of the action Occupy Wall Street are facing even tougher response. But there no one is worrying...”* The captions of the pictures are guiding reader's interpretation into believing that the claim is true. By looking at the pictures it is difficult to understand why the protesters in USA would face tougher response from the police than in Russia. The captions of the pictures are purposeful, attempting to frame the West as negative and showing that things are actually worse in the West than in Russia.

Another short article reports (article 3) of how American television channel “has organized” rallies in Moscow: thousands of discontent people are marching on the streets, people are throwing Molotov cocktails towards police, windows have been broken, there are small fires and then suddenly palm streets are visible in the picture. By using the expression “organize” Komsomolskaya Pravda implies that the television channel has constructed, framed, the events to look in a certain way, and that they really have done. It is revealed that the Fox News has used footage from Athens riots when

reporting about Moscow rallies, and the idea of a revolution starting is being spread to American homes. According to Fox New it was an embarrassing error, but Komsomolskaya Pravda is keen to see the underlying meanings: that the Western audience has seen that the Orange revolution has begun in Russia, the streets of Moscow are in flames and that the representatives of OSCE and US government condemn Kremlin. This article continues framing the events **as West's chance to destabilize Russia**. It is the evil West that is attempting to influence Russia's domestic politics by encouraging interpretations of revolution to audiences. Covering these two incidents – comparing the US and Russian rallies and using wrong footage – is trivial, but the meaning of both incidents comes from the way in which they are portrayed. They are framed in a purpose-oriented way, and the articles seek to present that the enemies come from outside Russia

8.2.1.4. Komsomolskaya Pravda, 9th of December, article 4

On the same page with previous article Komsomolskaya Pravda has another story reporting about the upcoming large rally and about how social sites in internet are playing a great role in gathering people together: several protest groups have been created online. The article tells that large rallies will be organized in Russia Saturday 10th of December. In Moscow, the police has sanctioned a protest for 300 people, but based on internet's social groups tens of thousands of people plan to participate. The article is titled *"We will take with us flowers and balloons"*, and the title emphasizes peace and violence free protest – the social groups online encourage people to peaceful fight. The moderators of internet groups tell people to paint a picture or tie white ribbons to clothes. However, as the reporter claims, people's answers are not that lyrical: members of the protest groups anticipate that the rallies will turn into beating. *"People are on an aggressive mood, and because of that there will be beating"*, writes one person. Peaceful, pro fair elections-oriented people get some space on the article with balloon and flowers, but they are blended into the ideas of rallies turning into violent clashed and of anti-West propaganda. The West and the USA are mentioned in this article as well: the threat of West interfering is mentioned, and that seems to be the continuous theme on the whole page. The goal of the people, demanding fair elections, drowns into the sea of threats and negative sides of the rallies: even the possibility of civil war is mentioned.

However, the final paragraph clarifies the idea of the rallies, citing opposition. *"Stop talking about civil war. That is when a brother is against brother. What is happening here with us is the people uniting – it has not happened in a long time. In Europe due to any reason people go on streets, expressing their discontent. Our laws do not work, what remains? How else can we force them to*

have a dialogue with us?” The final paragraph underlines the goal of the opposition, which is to have a dialogue with the authorities.

The articles published 9th of December in Komsomolskaya Pravda form an interesting entity. Mostly the page highlights negative sides of the protests, emphasizing the destabilizing effects and West’s role in the equation. However, in one of the articles opposition can expression their opinion, and the emphasis is on the fact that social media is to great deal influencing the development of events and how people are being mobilized. Naming the frame was challenging, because the dominant ideas seems to be a mix of, on the one hand, people being mobilized with the help of new technologies and, on the other hand, the emphasis is on the peacefulness that the organizers are seeking. I name the frame of this article **Rally as people’s grass root movement**.

The essence of this movement and frame is captured in the white ribbon emerged that as a symbol of political opposition in Russia, and after the elections it became a wide-spread symbol for people who were demanding fair elections. The white ribbon is a symbol of the violence-free meetings, of forming a dialogue between the power and the people. Komsomolskaya Pravda’s article has traces of the ideology behind the simplistic symbol, white ribbon. Even though the article discusses possible clashes emerging and Western influence, the article is constructed in such a way that the peaceful opposition point of view remains to be the dominant frame – the beginning and the end are owned to the statements of people who are pro fair elections. The dominant interpretation is that people want to go to streets to show their discontent, but they want to do it in peaceful manner, wearing white ribbons, carrying flowers – wanting to reach their goal which is to have a dialogue with the authorities, not to fight with each other or be beaten up by riot police. The rallies are meetings by ordinary people, not by organized opposition groups. The rallies are foremost peaceful meetings.

8.2.1.5. Komsomolskaya Pravda, 12th of December, article 1

After the big rally in Saturday 10th of December, Komsomolskaya Pravda has a whole spread for articles related to the protests. I will analyze each article as individual pieces of text.

The first article is titled “*Omon (riot police) were given flowers and journalists could rent balconies*”. The tone of the article is very much different than the other articles I analyzed from Komsomolskaya Pravda. The report from Bolotnaya Square starts by saying that people from different groups gathered to the rally: communists and democrats, liberals and anarchists, monarchists, nationalists, football fanatics and simply Muscovites – it felt like all the offended ones

had gathered to the rally. The emphasis of the article is clearly on people: what kind of people came to the protest and what is their reason for participating? The article provides multiple answers, demonstrating that the participants are from different social groups and age groups: young boys at age 14, politically savvy and all-knowing grandmothers, young girls shivering because of the cold weather. The participants have few things in common, but the uniting factor is the demand for annulling election results and the demand for fair elections. *“All the crooks, every one of them should retire, and return the voice back to people”*.

The organized opposition groups have been the ones negotiating with the city officials about the arrangements of the rallies, but other than that the role of the organized opposition seems to be minor. The article is clearly highlighting the significance of ordinary people from different spectrums of society gathering to express their discontent. The rally is framed as **people’s grass root movement**. Reporting the rallies as people’s movement is a clear shift in Komsolmoskaya Pravda’s coverage. Unlike some of the previous news articles that were focusing on the idea of rallies as typical acts of the organized opposition, this kind of reporting emphasizes the unexceptional nature of the protests: in two decades Russia has not seen such big rallies. The reporter and the newspaper have chosen to acknowledge that something unique is happening in Russia. The rallies are frames as people’s movement, as activity of normal citizens, not only political activists.

The second emphasis of the article is on the peaceful nature of the rally. People are giving flowers to the riot police, who are behaving themselves accordingly and politely, some even smiling. There are no arrests, no beatings – the difference to the beginning of the protest week is striking. The peaceful nature of the protest is of course at least partly a result of the path chosen by authorities: they have sanctioned the rally, and the riot police has most likely been told to act politely and peacefully. If a rally that gathered tens of thousands of people turned into mass arrests and violent clashes between the protesters and the riot police, the outcome would be unpredictable and it could lead the country from stability to instability. The article is saying how the riot police is behaving well, but the reporter does not talk about the role of the authorities in this equation. There are no questions of the strategy of authorities, but I believe that the sanctioned mass rallies were a smart move from the authorities – they were the only way to control the discontent.

The article emphasizes that the rally is approved by the authorities. Based on this I distinct a second frame, in addition to people’s movement -frame, the article has a frame of **rally as protest approved by the authorities**. The Saturday rally gave discontent people a feeling that they can openly show their dissatisfaction, that they can demand a change in the country – and possibly their

voice can be heard by the leaders. I believe that is was a strategy chosen by the officials, a message that the authorities, the leaders of Russia, wanted to give to the people.

In a way these two frames are opposite of one another: the discontent people have unified and gathered into mass protest, but at the same time this process of protesting is regulated by the officials. The officials have sanctioned the rally and let people protest, because it might be the only way to control the growth of the protest movement: smothering the movement would only make people demand their rights louder. The news coverage in this article is on a first glance promoting the idea that freedom in Russia is doing well. People are protesting happily, the policemen smile and receive flowers. However, this way of framing the rallies portrays the fact that authoritarian rule is strong in Russia: a peaceful rally can only take place when it's sanctioned by the officials. In Russia, political grassroots movements can only exist with the permission of the rulers.

8.2.1.6. Komsomolskaya Pravda, 12th of December, article 2

The second article is more analytical than the previous one, digging deeper into analyzing the reasons to participate to rallies. In the beginning of the story, the rally is tied to the context of Ukrainian Orange Revolution, The journalist is asking from other protesters if they want revolution, and they answer *"We are not here for that reason. If we would not come, we would lose all self-respect"*. The color revolutions have been an ongoing theme in the rally coverage, and it is understandable: the sudden mobilization of people could lead to scenarios such as Orange revolution in Ukraine, and it is a natural for the journalists to introduce this possibility. In the previous articles in Komsomolskaya Pravda, the possibility of revolution seemed higher than in this article, and the revolution was connected to Western influence and West trying to interfere with Russian politics.

In this article, the ordinary Russians, participants of the protest, are saying that they do not want a revolution. I argue that this is a typical process of framing, choosing a certain quote from people and lifting it to the beginning of the article, highlighting it as important fact that represents a larger opinion. I am sure the journalist could have found in the crowd people who would have said that they want a revolution – maybe the revolutionary-minded protesters would have been in the minority, but nevertheless that would have been a possibility. It seems that the newspaper wants to emphasize that the pro-fair elections movement is not that big that it would turn into a revolution, and neither is a revolution a goal of the protestors.

Unlike the previous article, which showed the rally as people's movement, this news story

provides a different angle, emphasizing the somewhat disorganized nature of the protest and the feeling that the first-timers have. The first-timers are not sure how to behave in the rally, and they are even a bit afraid, that the protest would escalate from a peaceful meeting into something else. The journalist writes that the participants are not fans of those opposition parties that organized the rally. The audience was not too responsive to the speeches given by the people on the stage, but it could be due to the fact that they did not hear them: there were no big plasma screens or amplifiers. People are not too shouting slogans but they have started to think, the reporter writes. The article makes the rally seem as somewhat unorganized and not led by anyone: it comes across as a mix of but then the reporter reveals the reason for that: many of the participants are first-timers and because of that they are careful: they are doing everything consciously, being suspicious when someone in the crowd asks people to shout slogans – what if the people encouraging to shout have ulterior motives?

The article describes the rally has turned into народное гулянье – folk festival. People are drinking shampanskoe, “because the atmosphere is like in New Year, or even better”. The people shout that they will come again, but the reporter is bit skeptical about that. “*After all the shampanskoe has been drunk and all the leaflets have been read, people leave from the Square, feeling good about themselves*”. The article suggests that maybe one time is enough for the protesters and that no more big rallies will follow. The reference to New Year supports this idea, as you only celebrate New Year once a year and then you are content for a while.

Based on the article I argue that the rally does not threaten the status quo in anyway – the story is emphasizing this in subtle and less subtle ways. I name the frame **rally as harmless folk festival**. I argue that this kind of reporting is beneficial for the officials. First, it becomes clear that people are allowed to express their discontent in Russia – no one in the West can say that Russians are forbidden to demonstrate. Second, the rally does not seem to pose any threat to the existing order: many of the participants are first-timers, insecure in their demands, mostly observing and trying to understand how to behave in the mass rally. The movement is not organized to its roots; people do shout slogans and demand fair elections, but concrete actions and goals are missing. The protest is as a big party – people have harmless fun.

8.2.1.7. Komsomolskaya Pravda, 12th of December, article 3

On the next page the rally coverage continues. The dominating piece of a puzzle is a large photograph taken in Moscow. The picture is taken in bird’s eye view, from somewhere high, possibly from a helicopter or from a roof of a high building – it makes the protesters look like ants and the rally looks

like ant's nest. The powerful picture manages to capture something that words are not able express. The picture shows the protest-area and the latitude of the rally: there are tens of thousands of protesters, people as far as the eye can see. The caption of the picture says: *"These kinds of mass rallies Russia has not seen since 1993. Based on different evaluations, 25,000 to 50,000 people came to the rally."* This picture itself captures very well the frame of rally as people's movement, a frame that the previous article had. The emphasis is on people, and the picture portrays the people as one unified mass, and looking from high up, all the people look the same and ideological and political differences do not matter. The main message embedded in the picture is: the protesters are unified.

The article below the picture reports about rallies that have taken place across the country – it is a short overview of the events taking place in Russia. It becomes clear that in many cities the protesters have tried to avoid using the word rally (МИТИНГ), and instead they have referred to the rallies as public meetings or meetings with the deputies. The reason for avoiding a certain word is that authorities have not sanctioned the rallies everywhere. For example, in the city of Perm, the protesters stood in the street two meters away from each other, showing signs as a way to avoid being accused for organizing a rally.

In this Twitter-account, the Kirov gubernator called the demonstration as a test for the power and for the society. According to him, the country needs to pass this test without blood, abuse, hysterics and violence. And so it did, says the article. People gathered to shout slogans demanding fair elections and after that they left. The first part of the article resembles the frame of rally as folk festival – people gathered, protested peacefully. Sophisticated music was played, by Schubert, Boccherini and Tchaikovsky. This part of the article is telling about the sanctioned meetings. But then the reporter reminds that in some cities the protesters and the local authorities could not reach a mutual understanding about how to organize protest, and people got arrested in unsanctioned rallies – for example in Kazan' out of 700 protesters 100 got arrested.

The protest meetings and their outcome vary, depending on if the rally was sanctioned or unsanctioned one. The sanctioned ones are peaceful, resembling folk festivals, and the unsanctioned ones turn easily into violent chaos and mass arrests. The article does not tell in detail why the local officials and opposition have not reached a mutual understanding in organizing the rally, and the justification hangs in thin air, leaving the reader a bit confused. The test, about what the governor or Kirov talked in the beginning of the article is both passed and failed – in cities of sanctioned rallies, the people and officials passed the test, in unsanctioned rallies the test was failed.

The article is constructed on the idea of the Saturday rallies as being as test for the country,

and the coverage shows both sides of the outcome. In this respect, the coverage is balanced, not emphasizing one side more than the other, not been guilty of the typical media sin of exaggeration. The reader can draw the final conclusion whether or not the country passed the test.

Three frames of the rallies are dominating in the same article – **the rallies as harmless folk festivities, the rallies as threat to the stability of Russia** and **split society**. The inability to agree about the place to organize rallies is an example of the split society -frame. The article is presenting the situation all around Russia, and it becomes clear that the split is not present only in big cities such as Moscow and Saint Petersburg, but also in other parts of the country – and this emphasizes the strong nature of the split society –frame.

8.2.1.8. Komsomolskaya Pravda, 12th of December, article 4

A journalist Maksim Kononenko has written a short analytical commentary of the rallies. He is drawing it all together, providing the reader an evaluation of the events and their significance. He starts the commentary straightforward, arguing that the main reason for the largest mass rallies since 1993 is that people have gotten sick and tired of what they see every day. He claims that Kremlin has the ball now – it is obvious that people are unhappy, and they (the officials) need to negotiate with the people so that these rallies would not become a habit. According to the author, it is part of human nature to want changes, and that people believe that thanks to changes the life will get better – but that is not always the case.

Kononenko says that that is the scenario that is taking place in Russia – people want to get rid of the current authorities, believing that the new ones will be better – but in the end people will understand that nothing has changed. Nevertheless of the outcome, the genuine wish for change was present in the Saturday rallies, Kononenko argues. As a result of the rallies, demands were made by the opposition, demands such as annulling the results of the elections and changing the electoral law. Kononenko concludes his commentary by saying that the authorities should at least notice such mass protests. The commentary is short and because of that quite superficial, typical for newspapers. It is simply presenting few key points.

Kononenko is trying to open up the complicated nature of the rallies and the fact that it is difficult to estimate how significant for the country's future the protests actually are – whether or not they matter at all. Instead of answering questions he is making the readers think about the real

meaning of the rallies – would the change of rule change anything? The question remains to be answered, but the conclusion is that a dialogue between the power and the people is necessary, and that the authorities cannot afford to ignore the people anymore. Because of the discontent of the people and the protests, the relationship between the power and the people need to change somehow, or that is at least the only way for the current leaders to keep their position.

This commentary article is framing the rallies as a factor that influences the relationship between the officials and the citizens, despite the fact that the latitude of the influence remains to be a question. However, it is clear that these large rallies are influencing the country somehow, possibly as a growth of civil society and growth of citizens' activity in participating in public life. On the other hand, the effects could be destabilization of the country, escalating into larger mass movement and in the end even into revolution – or the rallies could be suppressed and life would continue as it was. I name this frame as **rallies as unpredicted factor in Russia's development**.

8.2.1.9. Komsomolskaya Pravda, 12th of December, article 5

The last piece of Komsomolskaya Pravda's coverage is also a commentary, written by a journalist who was reporting from the Saturday rally. The commentary is discussing the unity of the protesters, a point of view that has been talked about quite little in the coverage so far. The reporter is saying that it would be naive to believe that all the protesters are soul mates – единомышленники. The protesters have not been able to even agree about the arrangements of the rally. Despite the disagreements between different opposition groups, the reporter claims, on Saturday rally they all – patriots, liberals, communists and even gay – thought about one same thing: that there is too much injustice. That it is no longer possible to fall silent. That despite everything a civil society in Russia exists.

The reporter emphasizes that people came to the rally without having been paid to come. This is a clear reference to pro-Putin rallies, because often the participants of the pro-government rallies have been accused of participating only because they have been paid or pressured to participate. Then, the journalist continues describing the participants: they are young people who care about how things are, people who are afraid of revolution, people who understand that it is not possible be silent anymore. Strong emphasis is on the diversity of the participants, people have come for different reasons. But what is next? The reporter argues in the near future nothing changes and effects won't be big, but that it is difficult not to notice such a big crowd of people. The professional opposition

only had a technical role, organizing the protest, but people did not come to support the opposition groups but their own rights.

The reporter argues: *“The authorities of course understand this. And so do they understand that in Russia there are not only inhabitants, but also citizens”*. Just like the previous commentary, this article also evaluates the meaning of the rallies, inspecting them from slightly different perspective – from the point of view of civil society. The quote of Russia having not only inhabitants but citizens suggests that Russians are beginning to be politically and socially active. The article is framed in the same way as the one on the previous page, as **people’s grass root movement**. This frame portrays the rallies in a very positive and joyful way, and emphasizes the growth of civil activity in Russia. In addition to people’s movement frame, a second frame existing below the surface is **the rallies as threat to the Russian stability**. It appears that in a way these frames coexist. Russian authorities have gotten used to living with the organized, established opposition, but pro-fair elections movement is something different, because it has gathered a large amount of ordinary people to streets. Rallies as people’s movements have possibility to turn even into larger rallies, and in that way they can shake the status quo, and as such this possibility threatens the current rule.

8.2.2 Overview of Komsomolskaya Pravda's frames

In Komsomolskaya Pravda's coverage I separated 8 frames. One can notice the shift in the coverage taking place after the big rally in Saturday, as the news coverage becomes more diverse in content: the articles published in 12th of December had more frames than the ones published earlier during the analysis period. The following table shows a summary of Komsomolskaya Pravda's frames. In Monday the 12th of December the newspaper had several articles related to the rallies, and that is why some frames occur more than once during one day. Those cases are indicated by use of *x* (i.e. 12.12 x 2). The framing process will be analyzed in next sub-chapter.

Table 2. Overview of Komsomolskaya Pravda's frames

Frame	Date
1. Typical behavior by belligerent opposition	7.12
2. A threat to Russia's stability	9.12, 12.12 x 2
3. West's chance to destabilize Russia	9.12
4. People's grass root movement	9.12, 12.12 x 2
5. Protest approved by authorities	12.12
6. Harmless folk festival	12.12 x 2
7. Split society	12.12
8. Unpredicted factor in Russia's development	12.12

8.2.3 Komsomolskaya Pravda's framing process

In the beginning of the analysis week, Komsomolskaya Pravda was more upfront than Kommersant in providing interpretations to readers, and supporting the status quo and the leaders. First, they introduced the rallies as typical behavior of opposition – the framing was clearly a continuation from the past. Unsanctioned opposition rallies have taken place regularly, for example the Strategy31-rallies supporting the freedom of assembly. It was quite a natural way to cover the rallies in this

manner, since it was impossible to predict the future and foresee that the protests will continue and grow into a larger movement, where not only organized opposition but also ordinary citizens participate. The frame “Rallies as typical behavior of belligerent opposition” is a good example of how journalists process information and connect it to a larger context. I argue that framing the first rally as typical behavior of belligerent opposition is a classic example of news framing: It is a process in which one does not only highlight certain aspects and fade out others, but where one also attempts to find the historical context and put the events into a continuum.

Progressing towards the end of the week Komsomolskaya Pravda started to change its way of reporting into direction that was more favorable for the protesters than the authorities. The frames and framing of events developed in the course of action, by small changes in tone – from rallies being framed as a threat to the society to being framed as more human, as people’s movements. In the article published on 9th of December two frames were dominant on the coverage: split society and people’s grass root movement.

According to Korteniemi (2012), the rallies followed by the elections effected on Putin’s rhetoric: he mentioned several times political competition and he highlighted that political competition is a necessary part of democracy, its driving force. Putin emphasized that the authorities need to listen to people and their wishes, and they need to respond to these wishes. However, Putin believed, the changes should not come true through revolutionary actions, but through evolution and development. As a result of the demonstrations, Putin also started to speak more about the opposition. According to him, protests are a normal phenomenon and the existence of opposition is essential. However, Putin’s rhetoric was connected to law and norms: opposition needs to act according to law, and opposition’s acts and rallies can be acceptable only if they are obeying the constitution. (Korteniemi, 2012, 62.)

As a result of my analysis, I argue that the shift in Komsomolskaya Pravda’s coverage is connected to the change in official rhetoric. At first the officials ignored the rallies, and state television did not mention them at all. However, as it became clear that the officials could not afford to ignore the events, the authorities stopped ignoring the protests. I claim that the shift in Komsomolskaya Pravda’s coverage is the newspaper’s way to adapt to the official rhetoric. It would be necessary to compare in detail the comments and speeches given by authorities in order to say for certainty how much the newspaper is attempting to adapt to the official rhetoric.

Based on Korteniemi’s (2012) examples on Putin’s rhetoric and on several newspaper articles where Putin has been said to want a dialogue with the opposition, I dare to estimate, that framing the protests as people’s movement, as folk festivities and as rallies approved by authorities are reflecting

the idea of opposition as necessary part of democratic order. The frame of rallies as harmless folk festivities can be seen as example of opposition of following law and order, just like Putin's rhetoric emphasizes. However, simultaneously the articles include frames that show rallies as possible threat to sovereign Russia's stability and as unpredicted factor for the country's future. For example, the threat-frame clearly suggests that the current rule and rulers are the best choice for Russia and its stability. The unpredicted factor -frame supports this idea by implying that if the current rule is dethroned Russia will most likely face turbulence and disorder.

As a conclusion, the overall interpretation is that the coverage works in favor of the officials: on the one hand, Russia is shown as free country, where the opposition can gather and express their discontent, and it is even encouraged to do so. On the other, the rallies and opposition's growing influence could shake Russia's stability, and that is why it is better to have the current leaders in charge of the country. The coverage in *Komsomolskaya Pravda* was diverse in content but based on the analysis it was uni-lateral in its outcome: none of the articles were challenging the outcome of the elections; instead they were supporting the status quo.

9. Discussion and critique

The protest movement that began after the Duma elections in December 2011 sparked a hope of both political change and rise of a strong civil society in Russia. Now year and a half has passed since the protest movement began. Looking back, one can recognize the contradictory feelings of fear and hope that were present after the elections and in the demonstrations. The citizens participating to rallies appeared to believe that the protests could make a difference, and the claims of annulling the elections results could be met. The atmosphere in the rallies was anticipatory, as if something unique could happen. The week after the Duma elections was full of political turbulence, as the authorities understood that they have to react to the accusations made by the protestors. During one week of content analysis, the framing of the protests developed a great deal in the newspapers. Earlier in this thesis I have analyzed the framing processes of Kommersant and Komsomolskaya Pravda individually. In this chapter, the frames of both media outlets will be discussed in parallel.

In the beginning of the analysis week the strongest frames were rallies as typical behavior or belligerent opposition (Komsomolskaya Pravda) and rallies as conflict between protestors and authorities (Kommersant). Both of the newspapers understood the rallies as part of a continuum of opposition' protest movement. The Russian opposition had regularly organized small, unsanctioned protests that often resulted in clashes between the protestors and the riot police. In the December 5th rally the amount of participants was bigger than usually, as several thousands of people protested. However, nothing else than the amount of people suggested that the first protests would be only a beginning for the rapidly growing protest movement.

The coverage of the first rally was a typical process of framing. The reporters were seeking continuations and they connected the individual event into a larger entity. The protests were put into a historical context: Russian opposition had a habit of going out to the streets after the elections and accusing the authorities of rigged elections and falsifications. The first rallies were portrayed as activity of small group of people, a group that for long had been dissatisfied with the policies of officials. At this point, Putin and Medvedev had not yet commented the rallies in any way. They did not have the reason to believe that the rallies would continue and grow larger. Furthermore, the national television did not cover the first, unexpectedly large rallies. Instead they remained silent, which was a typical way of reacting to the opposition protests. All in all, the first articles and their framing was very expected and ordinary way to cover the demonstrations.

As the rallies continued, it became evident that mass arrests and harsh measures would not stop the protestors from expressing their discontent publicly. It started to be apparent that the rallies

can threaten the current rule, and that the authorities have to respond to the events and claims made by the protestors. After completing the analysis I understood that several frames are connected to the same entity, to the idea of rallies being a threat to current regime. My analysis was very detailed, and I separated several frames that are connected to the same theme. The first signs of the threat are seen in 7th of December, when Kommersant's article highlights the split in the society. Later that week, the frame is also present in Komsomolskaya Pravda's coverage. (*Split society* -frame was present in Kommersant 7th, 9th and 12th of December, Komsomolskaya Pravda 12th of December). The most obvious frame of threat is the frame of rallies as *threat to Russia's stability* (Kommersant 9th of December, Komsomolskaya Pravda 9th and 12th of December.) Other frames connected to this entity are *West change to destabilize Russia* (Komsomolskaya Pravda 12th of December), *Arbitrary violence* (Kommersant, 7th and 8th of December) and *Unpredicted factor for Russia's development* (Komsomolskaya Pravda 12th of December).

The idea of a threat was present from the beginning to the end of the analysis week, and it developed in the course of actions. Even though all of these frames are connected to the same entity, I argue that there is no sense to merge them into one frame. All of these frames have distinct features that emphasize different angles of threat, and by merging the frames into one I would simplify matters too much. Different frames have different sources of threat: the threat can be exterior (*West's chance to destabilize Russia*), it can be something unpredictable that is beyond control (*Unpredicted factor for Russia's development*), but the largest threat is the discontent people, the voters who are seen as a ticking time bomb (*Split society* and *threat to Russia's stability*). I argue that diverse ways of framing the threat are advocating and promoting the idea that protests will most likely shake Russia's stability. The idea of stability is connected to President Vladimir Putin, who has continuously during his terms as President and Prime Minister promoted the idea *stability* in Russia. Putin has been the guarantor of Russia's secure future. The frames underlining the threat suggest that rallies and turbulence will influence Russia's secure future in a negative, destabilizing way.

Most of the frames connected to threat portray the threat from the perspective of the ruling elite. Only one frame emphasizes the threat from the perspective of opposition and protestors: the frame of *Arbitrary violence* in Kommersant underlines the senselessness of contemporary rule and the violent measures exercised by the riot police. A difference between Kommersant's and Komsomolskaya Pravda's coverage is that only Kommersant portrays the threat from both perspectives: from the authorities' and the protestors' perspective. True, the authorities' perspective is more dominant also in Kommersant's coverage, but it is not the only viewpoint. The sources of threat are so various – interior, exterior and erratic, that authorities struggle to control the situation.

Authorities did take measures, such as mass arrests, in the first rallies, but this approach was not sustainable to control the threat. Suppressing the discontent could not be done only with force. That is why the officials were forced to find new means to control the threat.

According to Shevtsova (2012), the December protests had roots in the incapability and reluctance of the authorities to undertake necessary reforms that would prevent mass explosion. Furthermore, the power system personalized into one man is suicidal and has hastened the chance of revolution, as the revolution appeared to be the only way for change of power, since the ruling elite was not willing to step down voluntarily. (Shevtsova, 2012, 215.) Exactly the threat of revolution worried authorities: they were concerned that the protest movement would grow so strong that the current rulers would be unseated. The Russian authorities had legitimate reasons to worry, because the most important elections were yet to come. The Duma elections were originally seen merely as formality, as a test of United Russia's support before the Presidential election in March 2012. However, the outcome of the Duma elections made President Medvedev and Prime Minister Putin understand, that they could not afford to take the victory in upcoming Presidential elections for granted. The authorities had to choose carefully their response to angry citizens.

Framing the protests as threat may have served the interests of authorities. The protestors were seen as the source of instability, and Putin was the one that could lead the country back to the secure, stable path. However, the threat frame should not be seen only as negative factor, as the negative perspective is the viewpoint of status quo. Shaking the stability can be seen from a positive perspective, if we think the goals of the protestors. In fact, destabilization of the current system was the goal of at least some of the protestors, who strived for political change. In a relatively centralized country such as Russia political change is not likely to take place without turbulence and flux.

Based on the analysis I argue that at in the middle of the analysis week Komsomolskaya Pravda's framing is favorable to the status quo than Kommersant's. The dominant standpoints of Komsomolskaya Pravda's coverage emphasize the negative outcomes of the rallies. Furthermore, enemies are seen everywhere: the West is trying to force Russia into a democratic revolution, the opposition is trying to cause mayhem on purpose and the protests can throw Russia into chaos. On the contrary, Kommersant provides more balanced coverage: they frame the rallies as split in the society, which demonstrates the gap between the rulers and the ruled. In addition, the frame of arbitrary violence is negative towards the authorities, as the harsh measures are been questioned. Simultaneously, the frames of threat and people's grassroots movement are present. During the mid-week, the coverage of Kommersant provides multiple interpretations. It can be seen as a sign of attempts to cover the rallies in balanced way, giving the readers various points of views.

The officials responded on several ways to the protests: In the beginning of the protest week they discredited the demands of opposition and accused the West of orchestrating the rallies. Putin warned people about the Orange threat of the revolutions. On the other hand, Putin soon publicly recognized the need for dialogue, but he added that people should express their opinions within the boundaries of law. He implied that unsanctioned rallies were not an acceptable way to express discontent. Towards the end of the protest week Putin's approach changed into more mediating one, as he stated that he was pleased about the rallies, and they were a signal of a robust civil society. In addition, the Kremlin spokespeople attempted to portray the mass rallies as entertainment of spoiled Muscovites, as a marginal phenomenon of small group of people.

During the first protest week, the media was full of mixed signals. The official rhetoric developed from undermining the rallies to acknowledging the importance of dialogue, and later seeing the protests as entertainment. Putin's rhetoric during the first protest week was a mix of authoritarian rule and mediating conciliator, and his approach could appeal both to the silent majority and to the loud protestors, and it did seem he was trying to please them both. It is clear that the battle of dominant point of views was fierce. Putin and his administration wanted to promote their standpoints, and protestors had their own agenda. In the middle of this battle were the media, balancing between different camps.

The key finding of this thesis is the connection between media coverage and official rhetoric. It is striking how especially the framing by Komsomolskaya Pravda resembles the development of official rhetoric. Komsomolskaya Pravda's coverage developed from framing the rallies as threat to highlighting the party-like atmosphere of the rallies. The focus shifted from rallies being something unwanted and dangerous to protests being a celebration of active civil society. Also Kommersant has similarities with the official rhetoric, but not as strongly as Komsomolskaya Pravda, which has been accused of being a propagandist newspaper that promotes official standpoints and does not criticize the contemporary rule. Kommersant reported about the statements made by Putin and Medvedev, but it also reported about the concern of opposition: the opposition questioned the sincerity of the official statements. The split in the society was made visible in the coverage, and showing the both sides was a sign of unbiased reporting.

A significant change in the framing process took place towards the end of the analysis week, as the framing process changed into more positive tone, and rallies were seen more and more as harmless activities and as folk festival. Frames connected to this theme are *People's grass roots movement* (Kommersant 9th of December, Komsomolskaya Pravda 9th and 12th of December), *Harmless folk festival* (Kommersant and Komsomolskaya Pravda 12th of December) and *Protests*

uniting Russia (Kommersant, 6th and 12th of December). These frames support the need to show that Russia is a democratic country, whose citizens can express their opinions and even discontent. The rallies become a celebration of civil rights.

In the articles published after the big December 10th rallies, the threat frame became far less dominant. This can be explained by the fact that the large rallies were sanctioned. I argue that Russian authorities needed these kinds of peaceful rallies. During the protest week, the spirits of people were determinant and events were escalating fast. Sanctioning the mass rallies in December 10th was a smart move from the officials, because it provided the unhappy people a chance to express their frustration towards the elections results and towards the ruling elite. Sanctioning the rallies was also a sign to foreign countries: Russia's citizens are allowed to express their discontent, which is a sign of democracy.

In the media coverage, the shift from something dangerous and threatening to something fun and positive was both obvious and underlining. Both Kommersant and Komsomolskaya Pravda framed the rallies as harmless folk festivities and as people's grass roots movement. Simultaneously other frames were present but the idea of harmlessness was the most dominating one in the coverage in the 12th of December. Komsomolskaya Pravda published five articles about the rallies on Monday the 12th, and that explains the large number of frames during one day. Different articles were seeking different angles and undeniably the amount of articles provided a feeling of versatile coverage. However, on a closer look it appears that the different ways of framing work in the advantage authorities, supporting the official rhetoric. First of all, the rallies framed as folk festivals and people's movement supports the idea that the need for democratic order is acknowledged in Russia. Furthermore, the rallies are also framed as protests approved by authorities: sanctioned rallies clearly demonstrate that democratic order exist in Russia, as thousands of people can go to the streets and peacefully express their opinions, and the participants have the consent of officials to do so. Earlier during the week, Putin had commented, that opposition should demonstrate within the boundaries of law. In December 10th rallies the people protested within the boundaries of law as they should, and based on the coverage in sanctioned rallies the atmosphere is like in a big happy party. Portraying the protests as happy party-like meetings undermines the significance of them. There are no legitimate demands or genuine alternatives to contemporary rule, instead the coverage is focused on mediating the feelings and the atmosphere.

Simultaneously with the festivities-frame also threat-frame continued to exist in the coverage. Komsomolskaya Pravda continued to present the rallies as a threat to Russia's stability and also the split in society was emphasized. I argue that the frames of threat and festivities as a combination were

working in the advantage of officials. On the one hand, the frames emphasized the democratic nature of Russia and the fact that Putin and Medvedev were willing to have a dialogue with the discontent people. This kind of framing gave hope to the discontent people, as it seemed that genuine dialogue was possible. On the other hand, the articles underlined that rallies were threatening Russia's stability and that only the Putin-Medvedev-rule could secure stability on the country. There were no eligible alternatives, and revolution would throw Russia into chaos. The split inside the society could be stitched up by dialogue, but change of the leaders was not an option.

What on the surface seemed like pluralistic way of reporting, proved on a closer look to be quite accommodating to the official rhetoric. Putin and his team adopted the slogan *If not Putin, who?* and Komsomolskaya Pravda's coverage supported the idea of this slogan. No alternatives were introduced, and rallies were portrayed as useful channel to express discontent, but they were not seen as channel for political change. The coverage portrayed that it was fun to participate in a celebration of civil rights. But parties always come to an end and the next day what is left is not much, merely a hangover.

Also Kommersant emphasized the party-like atmosphere of the rallies. It portrayed the December 10th rallies as unique, as something you do once in your life, and emphasized that rallies are like high class parties, that all the fashionable people attend. However, at the same time The split society -frame was present in Kommersant's article. In December the 12th, the frame of threat is not present in Kommersant's coverage. On the contrary, the coverage was full of positive connotations. It became fashionable to be part of the protest movement. Whereas Komsomolskaya Pravda did not promote the idea of political change as something positive but as something unwanted, Kommersant was more eager to discuss the possible positive effects of the protests. Throughout the coverage Kommersant portrays the hope of change and the significance of mass protests, and based on Kommersant's articles one can start to believe that by protesting the people can make a difference. The frame of rallies as people's grass roots movement was relatively upfront in suggesting that the protests could change something. It is an important finding that out of the two newspapers only Kommersant sees the possibility for change and provides the idea of political change taking place in Russia. Komsomolskaya Pravda, more oriented to obeying the officials, did not present any alternatives and portrayed the change as something unwanted and bad.

As has been showed, based on the analysis it appears that the framing processes of threat and folk festivities in Kommersant and Komsomolskaya Pravda were to some extent connected to the developments in official rhetoric. The changes in the tone of coverage correspond to the changes in Putin's statements. I was surprised to find this connection between official rhetoric and media

coverage to be so obvious and strong. Based on the empirical analysis it is not possible to speculate how deliberate these connections are. However, knowing especially the fact that Komsomolskaya Pravda has a reputation of serving the interests of the officials, one can assume that the newspaper staff has followed the officials' statements closely and adopted the coverage into a tone favorable to official rhetoric.

Additional explanation to the shift in the coverage is that the nature of rallies changed towards the week. The Saturday 10th rallies were large by size, but peaceful and there was nothing obviously threatening in them. It was in the advantage of authorities to sanction the protests and to do everything in their power to make sure that the rallies would be peaceful. Mass arrests, seen in the demonstrations in the beginning of the week, would not have been a choice in rallies of tens of thousands of people, as they would have resulted violent clashed and chaos beyond anyone's control. Furthermore, the peacefulness of the protests demonstrated that the discontent of the people was not threatening the status quo. I argue that Komsomolskaya Pravda was listening to the subtle signals from the authorities and adapting its coverage to the official rhetoric. I do not find it likely that the similarities between official rhetoric and press coverage would be purely coincidental.

The coverage of Komsomolskaya Pravda appears to solely support the discourse of the authorities, but Kommersant is more pluralistic in its coverage. Throughout the analysis period Kommersant seeks to present different angles to the rallies, not only the threat but also the uniting potential that the rallies have. The frame of split society is present systematically during the week, emphasizing the conflict between two camps. Kommersant also frames the rallies as movement uniting people, and the potential of rallies uniting people present throughout the analysis week.

A noticeable similarity between Kommersant and Komsomolskaya Pravda is the lack of certain perspectives: neither of the newspaper takes stand in the actual outcome of the elections, and neither of them evaluates the claims of the protesters – are the people entitled to demand annulation of the results? Were the elections rigged? The significance and latitude of the rallies is not on a focus either. They frame the rallies first as threat, then as folk festivals and as movements uniting Russia, even though the amount of people participating to opposition rallies is a small portion of the population of Russian federation. This fact is not discussed. Both Kommersant and Komsomolskaya Pravda portray the split in the society, between the power and the people. But they fail, possibly on purpose, to notice the important third party – the silent majority, who is not opposing results and participating to protests.

The validity and reliability problems of frame analysis have been discussed earlier in this thesis. Matthess and Kohring (2008) have criticized the vagueness of frame analysis methods and

they have emphasized that there is a danger that the researcher finds the frames he/she is consciously or unconsciously looking for. The key result of this thesis is that the press coverage had similarities with the official rhetoric. The validity of the conclusions connected of official rhetoric is supported by the fact that the background subchapter of authorities' response to rallies was written only after I had conducted the empirical analysis. As I did not know in detail the comments made by authorities while I was analyzing the content, I did not have a preconception which would have guided my interpretations. Only after conducting the content analysis I became interested in comparing the results to statements made by officials, and I quickly understood that the framing processes in news articles resembled the official rhetoric. As has been shown, Komsomolskaya Pravda was more observant to official rhetoric than Kommersant, but both of them had the development of rallies being a threat to rallies being a harmless folk festival. I argue that the similarities demonstrate the features of press coverage in neo-authoritarian media system. Whether or not deliberate and conscious, the analysis results do show that to some extent Komsomolskaya Pravda and Kommersant advocated those viewpoints that also authorities were advocating.

Frame analysis proved out to be useful method for the analysis, because the empirical data consisted of clear continuum that also had a clear past. Framing is a useful tool especially when one does not try to analyze article only as individual piece of text, but also as part of a larger entity. The rallies formed a continuum with a clearly defined starting point, and in this thesis, only the first part of that continuum was studied. It was necessary to narrow down the amount of material, so that the analysis would be detailed and thorough. During one week of analysis it was possible to see continuum and changes in framing, but at the same time the material was not too extensive. The analysis period chosen for this topic was the most intense period right after the Duma elections. After the first, most hectic week, rallies were organized more rarely, but they grew bigger by the amount of participants. The protest movement continued all the way to the Presidential elections in March 2012 and even after the elections. As the amount of material was incessant, it was necessary to narrow down the focus of the research. There are plenty of angles to continue the research of Russian protest movement and its media content. An interesting topic would be to study the post-Presidential elections rallies that took place in March 2012, and one could also compare to the post-Duma elections rallies that has been studied in this thesis. One could also widen to work and include more newspaper or other media into the analysis, for example compare the content of national television to the newspaper coverage.

Frame analysis was a useful tool for studying the media coverage, but the content-based empirical approach made me question the validity and reliability of the analysis. As has been

explained in the method chapter, frame analysis is a method that has raised discussion of the validity of the analysis. Empirical analysis is by its nature subjective. I attempted to battle the nature of subjectivity by making the analysis as visible to the reader as possible. Because of that I chose to show in detail not only the results but also the analysis process, article by article.

Furthermore, the previous knowledge of the researcher can influence the outcome of the analysis. As I witnessed several rallies on the scene, I had certain ideas and opinions about the events. I saw the harsh measures used by the riot police, and I saw busses full of people sent to jail. I was not total stranger to the events that the news texts were reporting about something that I had seen on real life. On the other hand, this could be also seen as an advantage. I was familiar with the events and developments, and because of that I could solely concentrate on analyzing the way in which the events were portrayed. I was able to compare the picture portrayed by the media to the experience that I had. I believe my own experiences gave me perspective for the analysis, but it also influenced the interpretations I made. Empirical analysis is always to some extent subjective, but subjectivity does not necessarily have to be a hindrance.

10. Conclusions

The first week after the Duma elections started a protest movement that continued all winter until the presidential elections in March 2012 and has continued ever since. In this thesis I have analyzed the coverage of the fair elections rallies in Kommersant and in Komsomolskaya Pravda. Both Kommersant's and Komsomolskaya Pravda's coverage of the rallies developed towards diverse reporting, providing plenty of perspectives. All in all the reporting of Kommersant and Komsomolskaya Pravda was trying to balance between the protestors and authorities: during the analysis period, juxtaposition between the demonstrators and the authorities was present, and it became clear that Russia is divided into two camps. Furthermore, the rallies were framed as a threat to Russia's stability and current rule. Towards the end of the analysis week the juxtaposition, threat and the split society -frames became slightly less dominant in the coverage, as the necessity for dialogue had been recognized by the authorities and the official rhetoric towards opposition and the protestors has changed into more favorable direction.

Despite the diversity in content, Komsomolskaya Pravda's coverage was favorable to the authorities, clearly advocating the advantages of the stability and supporting the status quo, and emphasizing the destabilizing effects of the rallies. Towards the end of the analysis week, Komsomolskaya Pravda appeared to be adapting to the change in official rhetoric, starting to emphasize the softer sides of the rallies – the party-like atmosphere and the idea of a robust civil society. On the surface the coverage appeared to be pluralist but on a closer look the newspaper's coverage was in fact favorable to officials. Komsomolskaya Pravda's coverage appeared to follow the twofold tactics of the authorities: on the one hand the threats of the rallies were emphasized and the idea of stability promoted. On the other hand, the rallies were framed as folk festivals and the necessity of dialogue was acknowledged. Based on the empirical content analysis it is impossible to speculate how deliberate these similarities are, but whether or not deliberate, parallels exist. In a neo-authoritarian media system, in which the journalists can be very receptive to officials' signals, these parallels should not come as a big surprise.

Kommersant was focused on the split and juxtaposition in society. The frame of arbitrary violence underlined the extent of the split – it had become so wide that the authorities felt necessary to suppress the rallies with force. In addition to emphasizing the split, Kommersant framed the rallies as people's movement and activity: the emphasis was on the possible rise of more an active civil society and political change. The newspaper was promoting the idea of something good coming out of the rigged elections and their aftermath, of the protest movement.

The various frames are connected to two large entities: rallies as threat and rallies as harmless folk festivities. The threat-frame works in the advantage of the authorities, underlining the need for stability in Russia. Towards the end of the week the focus of the framing changed, and the threat-frame moved slightly to the background. The rallies were portrayed as something positive and necessary for the Russian society. This frame works in favor of both the authorities and protestors. Based on the shift in the official rhetoric, the authorities wanted peaceful rallies that appeared as a celebration of free society and civil rights. The differences between *Kommersant's* and *Komsomolskaya Pravda's* coverage remind of the fact that in Russia both independent and more state-oriented print media exists. The liabilities are dictated most of all in the level of ownership, and journalists should follow the official line of the medium in order to keep their position.

In the aftermath of the Duma and the Presidential elections, Putin has once again tightened his grip of power. Several law has been introduced, laws that restrict the activity of non-governmental organizations and limit opposition's possibility to protest. During the first week of the Duma elections it seemed that people's demands could be met and the vertical of power might develop slowly into a more horizontal one – that people's demands would be met and more power would be given to a wider circle of people. However, this is not the case. Since the presidential elections in March 2012 and his re-election, Putin has made sure he has a solid position as the leader of the Russian Federation.

For future research I suggest a follow-up study to analyze the protests that took place after presidential elections in March 2012. The protests continued all winter and participants were committed to make sure that the presidential elections would be fair. The post-Duma elections rallies started a development that has had significant effects for Russian legislation. A law was initiated to restrict unsanctioned rallies: people have to pay fines, and they might end up in jail. The rallies right after presidential elections were not sanctioned and they were suppressed with force and mass arrests. It seems that after Putin's victory the authorities' accommodating rhetoric towards the opposition had become unnecessary, as the Russian rule had reinforced its position. This gave a possibility to return towards more authoritarian rhetoric. In a follow-up study I would compare the results of this thesis to the rally coverage after the presidential elections. Was the optimistic coverage of folk festivals and uniting people's movement only a temporary phenomenon? Did the result of the presidential victory depress and smother the awakening, socially active part of the population? The coverage of post-Duma rallies protests suggests that unpredictable development, in good and in bad, has begun in Russia. The negative is the threat to Russian stability and status quo, the positive side is of the rallies the shy blossoming of Russian civil society. Based on one week coverage the conclusion is clear: In Russia's near future – anything is possible.

11. Bibliography

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Empirical material of the frame analysis

The empirical data was collected during one week study period, from 6th of December to 12 of December 2011. The material was collected in Integrum Profi database.

Kommersant, 8 articles

6.12.2011. *The Elections were taken to Chistye Prudy – Riot Police dispersed a March of the discontent.* Front page, article and two photographs of the protestors in a rally.

7.12.2011. *Central Beating Station – A protest against the elections' results was smothered in Moscow.* Front page, article and one photograph of a riot police in a rally.

8.12.2011. *The police made a new record in arresting protestors – during two days of protesting the police has arrested almost 1,000 people.* Article. No photographs.

9.12.2011. *The power is ready to negotiate with the opposition – the opposition does not believe that the conversation will be useful.* Front page, article and one photograph from a rally.

9.12.2011. *Second round of the elections. The Mayor and the opposition agreed about the place where the rally will take place.* An article and a picture a women in wheelchair talking to riot police.

12.12.2011. Article 1. *Only once in a lifetime. Moscow went to the rally like to a party.* Front page and picture of a newly wedded couple walking through metal detectors. Inside a whole page article and two photographs: crowd of protestors; close-up of protestors.

12.12.2011. Article 2. *Russia had to go on a sick leave. The protests against rigged elections were organized in dozens of cities.* Article and a graphic map of all the rallies organized in Russia.

12.12.2011. Article 3. *Television went to Bolotnaya (Square) – The Federal Channels reported from the demonstrations as they could'.* Article, no photograph.

Komsomolskaya Pravda, 10 articles

7.12.2011. *New Yeltsins or Gaponis?* Article and a photograph of trucks of the military.

9.12.2011. Article 1. *Protests in Moscow: Looking for a fight.* Article and a photograph of the riot police dragging a protestor.

9.12.2011. Article 2. *Double Standards: Our answer to liberals.* Short article and a photograph of American policemen arresting a protestor.

9.12.2011. Article 3. *American television channel mounted protests in Moscow.* Short article.

9.12.2011. Article 4. *Opposition in the internet: We will take with us flowers and balloons.* Article, no photograph.

12.12.2011. Article 1. *“Omon (riot police) were given flowers and journalists could rent balconies.* Article and a close-up photograph of protestors shouting.

12.12.2011. Article 2. *The rallies – not bad, but no dirty tricks?* Article, no photograph.

12.12.2011. Article 3. *The sounds of Schubert and the March of Santa Clauses.* A big photograph of the rally in Moscow, second picture of group of Santa Clauses walking.

12.12.2011. Article 4. *“We need to find a solution, so that the rallies won’t become a habit.”* Short analytical commentary.

12.12.2011. Article 5. *There were no provocations. Thank god!* Analytical commentary.