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## MEDIA TRANSFORMATIONS

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# INTRODUCTION: THUCYDIDES AFTER THE POST-COLD WAR

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The Greek historian Thucydides (c.460-c.400 B.C.) introduced his account of the Peloponnesian War by offering a blueprint for writing the first version of history – a phrase often used as metaphor for modern Western journalism:

“In recording the events of the war my principle has been not to rely on casual information or my own suppositions, but to apply the greatest possible rigour in pursuing every detail both of what I saw myself and of what I heard from others. It was laborious research, as eyewitnesses on each occasion would give different accounts of the same event, depending on their individual loyalties or memories” (Book, One, 22 passage) (Thucydides, 2009).

Fast forward almost two-and-a-half millennia: as this volume goes to press, Europe is the throes of the greatest challenge to its peace and stability since the Cold War. Russia’s annexation of Crimea and its meddling in eastern and southern Ukraine has been accompanied by massive propaganda churned out by state-owned and Kremlin-friendly media. Little on the Russian side resembles Thucydides’ model: reporters pursue rumour instead of detail, laboriously mis-speak the facts, and seldom offer different accounts of the same event.

Meanwhile, Western media struggle “to give the other side a fair hearing, so those lies being reported on ‘Russian television news’ are often used to create a sense of balance” (Applebaum, 2014).

Lev Gudkov, head of Levada-Center, a Moscow-based polling organization says the scale and tone of Russian propaganda are unprecedented since the fall of the Soviet Union: “For intensity, comprehensiveness and aggressiveness, this is like nothing I have ever seen over the whole post-Soviet period” (Leonard, 2014).

Alan Yuhas, who writes for the British newspaper *The Guardian*, notes that the Russian government has moved on three fronts in pursuit of its information goals:

“By shutting down independent press, Russia controls more of the story; by spreading half-truths and rumors, the Kremlin not only confuses opponents but also sows unwitting support for its cause; finally, by pushing the boundaries

with its version of events, Moscow's leadership can force other countries to play by its own very pliable rules" (Yuhas, 2014).

Russia's use of media as a weapon of war has already led to policy changes in some neighbouring countries. Even before the Ukrainian crisis erupted, Latvia and Lithuania suspended broadcasts by the Russian television station RTR (Estonia did not) and the three Baltic States are exploring the possibility of a joint television channel as a way of countering propaganda aimed at Russian speakers in their respective countries (Collier, 2014). Although such moves are subject to debate regarding their effectiveness and raise issues of freedom of access to information, the threat is not mere perception. Former United States ambassador to Russia Michael McFaul warns that „the Kremlin has both the intention and capacity to undermine governments and states, using instruments like the military, money, media, the secret police and energy“ (McFaul, 2014).

Russia's efforts have sparked renewed interest in the efficacy of propaganda. Paul Goble, who served in the U.S. State Department before the fall of the Soviet Union and maintains a blog "Window on Eurasia" remembers the late Natalie Grant Wraga, a Russian-born expert in Soviet disinformation and deception. Goble says she "frequently argued that one of the reasons disinformation is so successful is that it is mostly true and its audiences are unwilling or unable to make distinctions between what they know to be true and what they would discover is false" (Goble, 2014).

The consequences of such low news literacy may be catastrophic and Crimea is a case in point. In an early analysis of Russia's information war in the peninsula, Polish security expert Jolanta Darczewska notes there was no resistance to Russian actions "because Russian-speaking citizens of Ukraine who had undergone necessary psychological and informational treatment (intoxication) took part in the separatist coup and the annexation of Crimea by Russia." She warns that such dangers are not specific to Ukraine: rather "the ideological newspeak based on disinformation falls on fertile socio-cultural ground in the East" throughout the Russian-speaking diaspora (Darczewska, 2014).

Although few doubt Russia's use of military force to redraw the map

of Europe has ramifications beyond the immediate crisis, there is no consensus among the continent's political elites about how to respond. Meanwhile, some Western business leaders do not bother to conceal their hope the problem will go away. That is not likely. According to Bulgarian political scientist Ivan Krastev, Russia's actions in Ukraine signal a deep shift, long in the making, "an attempt to politically, culturally, and militarily resist the West" (Krastev, 2014). In the implausible event the crisis in Ukraine is resolved, large issues will linger for generations to come.

In light of these developments, this issue of "Media Transformations" could not be timelier. Each of the six articles examines strengths and weaknesses of news media in Central and Eastern Europe, a region in the forefront of the new reality in Europe.

Auksė Balčytienė explores the region's media environments which have been affected by changes in civic society, cultural norms, media performance and the ebbs and tides of market economics, as well as profound changes in the consumption of news that have resulted in media fragmentation. She examines how these forces have played out in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and to what extent their experiences may be useful for the rest of Central and Eastern Europe.

Péter Bajomi-Lázár and Ágnes Lampé assess the status of investigative journalism in Hungary as seen through the eyes of seven critical practitioners. Semi-structured interviews reveal that most believe their work falls short of investigations by journalists in Anglo-Saxon countries. The participants question the overly pessimistic assessments by Hungarian media scholars about the lack of journalistic independence, but admit that in Hungary the impact of investigative journalism is limited.

Anastasiia Grynko investigates the mind-set of journalists in Ukraine, one of the most challenging places in today's Europe for gathering and disseminating news. She combines traditional with unconventional (in journalism inquiry) methods, including arts-based research techniques involving the production of collages to glean the attitudes of journalists towards their profession, freedom of expression, ethics, external and internal pressures, and other issues. One hundred media professionals participated in the study.

Anda Rožukalne evaluates external and internal factors affecting the editorial freedom of news media in Latvia after the financial crisis and the contraction of its media market. Notably, of the 265 media professionals surveyed nearly half of the respondents said business interests places limits on editorial freedom. Journalists also evaluated political interests, internal restrictions, including the role of editors and self-censorship, and assessed editorial independence in media other than their place of employment.

Matei Gheboianu reviews the privatization of Romanian media after the fall of the Ceausescu regime, including changes in ownership and the entrance of foreign investors. Privatization occurred in several stages over three years starting in 1989. She also examines in detail how change came about at the two largest national newspapers, *Adevărul* and *România liberă*. This includes in-depth interviews with five journalists who were instrumental in the privatization process.

Finally, Andres Jõesaar, Salme Rannu and Maria Jufereva look at Russian-language media in Estonia over the past two decades. After independence was restored Russian-language press found it difficult to survive in a free market system and entered a period of steep decline: no Russian-language daily newspaper was published in Estonia in 2013. Meanwhile, Estonian public broadcasting did not step in to fill the information gap and today many Russian speakers rely on television programs from Estonia's eastern neighbour.

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## GUIDELINES FOR AUTHORS

**Media Transformations** (ISSN 2029-865X) is a peer-reviewed academic journal of media and journalism studies, particularly focusing on the comparative aspects of media transformations. We invite papers addressing a wide range of topics around the global and local transformations of media and journalism, including technological diffusion and convergence of media industries, commercialization and homogenization of journalism, changing media values and policies, journalism training and media education. Contributions which address the above mentioned topics from the conceptual, empirical and methodological point of view are welcome.

Manuscripts should be submitted electronically as e-mail attachments to the Editors ([media@pmdf.vdu.lt](mailto:media@pmdf.vdu.lt)) in *MS Word* format. If you are using another word-processing program, please save the file as Word for Windows documents. To facilitate blind review, names and affiliations of authors should be listed on a separate file.

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- \* Name, position, degree, institution and e-mail address of the author(s) (on a separate sheet)
- \* Title of the article
- \* Abstract in English of no longer than 250 words
- \* Keywords including no more than 6 words
- \* Body text of the article should not exceed 50.000 characters 8000 words
- \* References should be listed alphabetically in the following standard form
- \* Acknowledgements may include information about financial support and other assistance in preparing the manuscript (indicate them at the end of the manuscript).

Manuscript should be single-spaced, 12 pt, typed in Times New Roman and justified on the left and right margins. All tables, figures and photos should be clearly described, indicating the source. Tables and figures should be numbered consequently with an appropriate caption, e. g. Table 1, Table 2, Figure 1, Figure 2, etc. Footnotes should be indicated consequently through the text. Do not lay out (design) your

manuscript. Do not format text beyond the use of italics or, where necessary, boldface.

Headings in articles should be concise and descriptive and should not exceed 100 characters. A few basic formatting features (larger font, bold) should be used to make clear what level each heading is. Major sub-heads should appear on a separate line; secondary sub-heads appear flush left preceding the first sentence of a paragraph. Do not number headings and subheadings.

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## REFERENCES, NOTES, AND CITATIONS

The basic reference format is (McNair, 2002). To cite a specific page or part – use (McNair, 2012: 125). Use “et al.” when citing a work by more than three authors. The letters a, b, c, etc. should be used to distinguish different citations by the same author in the same year. Use “n.d.” if the publication date is not available. When you include more than one reference use a “semicolon” to separate references (Castells, 2009; McNair, 2002). All references cited in the text should be listed alphabetically and in full after the text.

### *For books:*

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Hume, E. (2007). *University Journalism Education: A Global Challenge. A Report to the Center for International Media Assistance*. Retrieved September 10, 2010, from <http://www.ellenhume.com/articles/education.pdf>.

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