

**Institution: University of Manchester**

**Unit of Assessment: 28 (Modern Languages and Linguistics)**

**Title of case study: Informing Government Policy and Public Debate on European Media**

### 1. Summary of the impact

The impact is based on research challenging conventional approaches to state-media relations in multicultural societies, with particular reference to Russia. The body of research has (a) informed the work of policy makers and NGOs by providing them with a more nuanced view of media-state relations in Russia, and of their implications for international affairs, including the rise of new cold war tensions; (b) made these groups aware of the importance of inter-ethnic and interfaith tensions to Russian media practices, and of parallels with media practices elsewhere; (c) contributed to the enhancement of public comprehension of the complexities of the Russian media environment.

### 2. Underpinning research

The impact derives from research conducted in Manchester (2003-2012); the first major publication was in 2009. The key researchers were Professor Stephen Hutchings (2006-date) and Professor Vera Tolz (2004-date).

#### Focus of Research

The research focused on the relationship between television and power in Russia, accounting for the globalised media environment in which Russian television operates. Its main areas of concern were: (i) the role of broadcasting in the post-Soviet nation building project [3.1, 3.2]; (ii) the effectiveness of television as a tool of political consensus management; and (iii) the mediation of multicultural values in the context of the growth of radical Islam within Russia's Southern periphery, and of inter-ethnic tensions in its heartlands, and in comparison with other European broadcasters [3.3]. The time period covered was 2003-2013. Most attention was paid to the main state broadcasters (Channel 1, Russia, and NTV). For 2006-09, BBC1 and France 2 broadcasts were also recorded and analysed.

#### Methods

These included the establishment of a corpus of recordings, digitised, annotated and catalogued according to a typology of news categories, enabling the team to generate datasets analysing volumes of coverage, salience, running orders and changing news agendas. These underpinned detailed discourse analyses centring on the role of post-Soviet television genre formats in 'localising' global meanings, ideological gate-keeping strategies; the framing and representation of voices; lexical choice; narrative structures; the sequencing of images.

#### Key Findings

Established accounts of the changing status of the broadcast media in Russia since 1991 tell of a slow descent into authoritarian state control, including the brutal suppression of facts relating to the crushing of separatist movements in the Islamic North Caucasus. They contribute to the emergence of new cold war tensions between Russia and the West, even as both parties inscribe themselves into the global War on Terror in the context of shared notions of a crisis in multiculturalism, and the growing securitisation of public discourse. The research underpinning this case study challenges these accounts in a number of ways:

1. Far from the top-down 'management' associated with state-controlled media, Russian national television serves as the site of a complex circulation of a plurality of discourses, official, sub-official and unofficial, in which each modifies the other.
2. Project findings enabled the researchers to produce a subtly differentiated 'mapping' of Russian media space revealing that state broadcasters varied their output depending on their position in relation to shifting populist discourses of 'left' and 'right'.
3. This, together with the ability to trace the legacy of Soviet practices, produced further insights into how voices at the extremes of the Russian public sphere (nationalist and liberal) are 'mainstreamed' within/excluded from broadcasting agendas.
4. The team identified parallels linking Russian television representations of Muslims, and those of the BBC and France 2, as well as sharp divergences, including a repression of the Islamic dimension to domestic terrorism.

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Islam's prominent role within the securitisation of European public discourse is less the result of media Islamophobia, than of (a) complex inconsistencies in the national value systems broadcasters represent, and (b) difficulties in assimilating competing transnational flows of meaning surrounding the 'War on Terror' to national idioms.

### 3. References to the research (AOR - Available on Request)

#### Key Outputs

- 3.1 Hutchings, S. & N. Rulyova (2009) *Television and Power in Putin's Russia: Remote Control*. London: Routledge. (Being returned in REF2)
- 3.2 Hutchings, S. & V. Tolz (2012) 'Fault Lines in Russia's Discourse of Nation: Television Coverage of the December 2010 Moscow Riots'. *Slavic Review*, 71.4: 873-99. DOI: 10.5612/slavicreview.71.4.0873
- 3.3 Hutchings, S., C. Flood, G. Miazhevich & H. Nickels (2012). *Islam Security and Television News*. London: Palgrave. (AOR)

#### Supplementary Outputs

- 3.4 GRANT 1. AHRC 3-Year Research Grant (2010-13); Value £424,000. PI: Stephen Hutchings; Co-I: Vera Tolz; Project Title: 'Mediating Post-Soviet Difference: An Analysis of Russian Television Coverage of Inter-ethnic Cohesion Issues'. (AOR)
- 3.5 GRANT 2. AHRC 3-year Research Grant (2006-09). Value: £418, 827; PI: Stephen Hutchings; Co-I: Chris Flood (University of Surrey); Project Title: 'European Television Representations of Islam as Security Threat – A Comparative Analysis'. (AOR)
- 3.6 GRANT 3. AHRB 3-Year Research Grant (2003-07). Value: £165,061. PI: Stephen Hutchings; Project Title: 'An Analysis of Post-Soviet Russian Television Culture'. (AOR)

#### Evidence of Quality

[3.6] was evaluated as 'Outstanding' and in 2006 attracted a further 'Project Dissemination' grant which was selected for special monitoring, owing to its high 'knowledge transfer' potential. *Television and Power in Putin's Russia*, its main output, published by Routledge (a reputed media studies outlet), has been positively reviewed in high-profile journals like *Russian Studies* and *Slavic and East European Journal*.

*Islam Security and Television News*, the main output from [3.5], is published by Palgrave, which has a strong reputation in screen studies and in 2012 generated a successful application for follow-on funding in order to carry out impact activities based on its findings (Value: £115,000; Duration: 1 Year).

'Fault lines in Russia's Discourse of Nation', an output from [3.3], is published in *Slavic Review*, a peer-reviewed journal of high standing.

### 4. Details of the impact

This case study's wider impact has been to modify accounts of the changing status of the broadcast media in Russia and Europe more generally (Key Findings, Section 2) by (a) complicating notions of the Russian public sphere held by relevant government agencies; (b) reshaping the approach taken by European policy makers and NGOs to inter-ethnic and inter-faith tensions; (c) changing public perceptions of media, diversity and free speech in Russia.

The work has exerted influence on policy-makers, through a series of (i) consultancy activities and (ii) workshops, (iii) debates and (iv) training:

- (i) In February of 2008 the US State Department commissioned a consultancy with Hutchings about the role of new media technology in promoting the Kremlin's political agenda. The

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consultancy was informed by the work leading up to Hutchings & Rulyova (2009) and improved policy makers' knowledge of about how Russian government communication strategies are responding to the uncertainties of the new media environment.

A consultancy with representatives of BBC Monitoring in June 2009 enabled better tracking of web-based political pressure groups in Russia. This led to further collaboration, including

(ii) two workshops (on the Russian media and the European 'crisis in multiculturalism', in April 2011 and October 2012) which enabled BBC Monitoring to contextualise its work on the reporting of current ethnic tensions in the Russian . One analyst for BBC Monitoring, notes that the collaboration has had a direct impact on his work, and has 'helped inform reports [he has] written on the controversy over illegal immigration and the role of nationalism in Russia's political opposition' [5.1]. In a related workshop based on the article, 'Faultlines', a senior analyst at the FCO's East European Desk commented on insights gained into the influence of inter-ethnic cohesion issues on Russian public discourse. She refers to the research Hutchings and Tolz produced on television depictions of ethnic relations in Russia as 'proving vitally important in enabling the wider world to understand what ordinary Russians think', confirming that it is benefiting policy makers by ensuring that they gain 'a more nuanced view not only of media-state relations in Russia, but also of the implications of how Russia conducts its international policy' [5.2].

(iii) NGOs, journalists and public broadcasters play an essential role in underpinning civil society. The director of the SOVA Centre for Information and Analysis in Moscow, states that Hutchings's and Tolz's research on Russian media coverage of inter-ethnic relations (a core concern of the Centre) has 'deepened our appreciation of its significance for our work' and that the collaboration 'has enabled [...] a fruitful dialogue with journalists, academics and others, thereby enriching our understanding of issues of importance to us' [5.3]. There was a strong journalist presence at a number of policy debates organised by the research team. The topics covered were media freedom in post-Soviet Russia, and European Multiculturalism (Manchester, February 2007; March 2012); new media and democratic culture in Russia and the West (University of Birmingham, March 2007); the roles and responsibilities of the media in reporting the international 'War on Terror', and the Russian media and ethnicity (Frontline Club, London, April 2007; October 2012). Participants included prominent national journalists such as Vladimir Pozner of Russia's Channel One and The Independent's Chief Editorial Writer, Mary Dejevsky. Comments received via questionnaires distributed to the journalists present at the last debate [5.4], and a follow-up interview given to the BBC World Service (5 March 2007), confirm that the sharing of cross-national perspectives on free speech, terrorism and multiculturalism has raised the awareness of journalists working in these sensitive areas. A BBC journalist attending was struck by the extent to which the Russian 'media follow social agendas' set by the public rather than political dictates. Other comments by attending professionals included an Open Society Foundation representative on journalistic ethics and the director of the Equal Rights Trust on free speech and radical nationalism. However, the wider public constituted the majority of the audience in the debates and an AHRC-commissioned Price Waterhouse report on the impact of the media and free speech debates [5.8] confirms that public views on these issues have gained in sophistication as a result.

(iv) Research team members' skills have been effectively transferred. The Research Associate on [3.4], was appointed as Programme Manager for Research (Social Science) at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) in Vienna in 2011. Ongoing collaboration with him ensures that research team findings are embedded in the policy of the Agency; reference to key output [3.3] is made on pp. 21 and 33 of the FRA's annual report of 2012 [5.5]. His letter of support [5.6] states that the Islam project led by Hutchings 'had a great impact on' his work with the FRA, 'enhancing [his] ability to tease out important nuances and subtleties in a broader analysis of issues relating to inter-ethnic cohesion', a skill he confirms as 'particularly important in an EU context'. He further acknowledges the 'invaluable' contribution of Hutchings's project to his own key role in 'coordinating and working on all aspects of the FRA Annual Report'. Another Research Associate on [3.4] was selected as one of the AHRC's 'New Generation Researchers' in 2012, and made two Nightwatch and Free Thinking programmes for BBC R3 (July and November 2012), drawing on the

underpinning research to reflect on the Beslan tragedy, and issues of migrant identity respectively. She has subsequently been invited by BBC television to make a short film on her own work.

The research has also informed public debate through a series of media interviews to national and international broadcasters and contributions to BBC current affairs programme-making. Interviews with the BBC and Al Jazeera on the 2006 Litvinenko murder and the 2011 Moscow airport bombing deepened the British public's understanding of the complex cultural roots of terrorism. A Today Programme interview on January 25, 2011, on the Moscow bombing was broadcast at peak time (7.50 am), extending its reach to 6 million listeners, as was an appearance on BBC Breakfast (8.10 am) in connection with the Boston Marathon bombing on April 27<sup>th</sup> 2013, with ratings of approximately 1.5 million viewers [5.7]. Contributions to other programmes and broadcasters include Radio 4's four-part 'Islam, Mullahs and the Media' series (20 & 27 August, 3 & 10 September 2009: 9.30 a.m. slots) indicating producers' perceptions of the likely benefit to audiences.

Three reports [5.8, 5.9] corroborate the benefits to users, including policy-makers and researchers, of the impact and dissemination strategies of this composite project. A report on GRANT 2 [3.5] highlights its 'impact on non-academic constituencies' and how Hutchings's 'consultancy work with the BBC and the US State Department might be thought to provide a model of 'impact'.

#### **5. Sources to corroborate the impact.** All claims referenced in section 4.

5.1. Letter from the Russian Media Analyst, BBC Monitoring confirming value of User Report on implications of long-term trends in the coverage of security and inter-ethnic cohesion issues for Russian media-state relations.

5.2. Letter from the Senior Analyst, FCO confirming usefulness of research carried out in Grant at [3.4]

5.3. Letter from the Director of the SOVA Centre for Information and Analysis in Moscow, confirming benefits of Hutchings's and Tolz's research to SOVA's understanding of ethnic relations in Russia

5.4. Audience questionnaires relating to the October 2012 Public Debate

5.5. Annual Report of the EU's Fundamental Agency for Human Rights, Fundamental Rights: Achievements and Challenges in 2012 (Vienna: FRA, 2012)

5.6. Letter from the Programme Manager for Research (Social Sciences) at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, confirming benefits of the Islam project led by Hutchings to his current work.

5.7. Audience figures from Today Programme and BBC Breakfast.

5.8. Price-Waterhouse-Cooper Report commissioned by AHRC on outcomes of Dissemination Grant (no. 3) corroborating the benefit the activities brought to research users. Scanned copy.

5.9. AHRC Evaluation Report on 'An Analysis of Post-Soviet Russian Television Culture', and AHRC Evaluation Report on 'European Television Representations of Islam as Security Threat: A Comparative Analysis' (1/11/2006-31/10/2009). Scanned copy.