

International
Institute of
Social Studies

Erasmus

Working Paper
No. 624

**On President Putin's popularity: Evidence from survey
experiment on the streets of Moscow**

*Margarita Mecheva**

January 2017

* ISS MA Research Paper Award winner for the academic year 2015-2016

ISSN 0921-0210

The International Institute of Social Studies is Europe's longest-established centre of higher education and research in development studies. On 1 July 2009, it became a University Institute of the Erasmus University Rotterdam (EUR). Post-graduate teaching programmes range from six-week diploma courses to the PhD programme. Research at ISS is fundamental in the sense of laying a scientific basis for the formulation of appropriate development policies. The academic work of ISS is disseminated in the form of books, journal articles, teaching texts, monographs and working papers. The Working Paper series provides a forum for work in progress which seeks to elicit comments and generate discussion. The series includes academic research by staff, PhD participants and visiting fellows, and award-winning research papers by graduate students.

Working Papers are available in electronic format at www.iss.nl

Please address comments and/or queries for information to:

Institute of Social Studies
P.O. Box 29776
2502 LT The Hague
The Netherlands

or

E-mail: wpapers@iss.nl

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	5
1 INTRODUCTION	6
2 PUTIN'S POPULARITY	10
2.1 Putin's rating and the "rally-around-the-flag"	10
2.2 Genuineness of Putin's popularity	11
2.3 Some theoretical explanations of people's consent with Putin's politics	12
3 LITERATURE REVIEW	14
3.1 Conceptualization of media effects and existing evidence of their potential strength	14
3.2 Terror Management Theory	17
Meta-analysis study by Burke et al. (2010)	18
Study of presidential support in times of increased threats of terrorism	19
Study of emotional response to death-related primes	21
Study of media effects within a course of Terror Management Theory	22
4 EXPERIMENTAL DESIGN AND EMPIRICAL STRATEGY	23
4.1 Survey experiment	24
Priming conditions and emotional moderator	25
Censorship frames	26
Ex post survey	27
4.2 Econometric model	28
5 DATA AND DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS	29
5.1 Data collection and data sample	29
5.2 Descriptive statistics	30
5.3 Randomization balance	31
5.4 Socio-economic characteristics of TV-viewers	31
5.5 Reported Putin's approval rating	32
5.6 "Rallying-around-the-flag"	33
6 RESULTS	36
6.1 Effectiveness of priming on induction of anxiety-related emotions	36

6.2	Effect of priming and framing on the support for internet censorship	40
6.3	Pro-censorship attitudes as a proxy for Putin's support	43
6.4	Effect of threatening media content on Putin's support	45
	Pro-censorship attitudes as a function of the "Terrorist attack" priming	45
	Interaction of the exposure to "Terrorist attack" image and reported anxiety	47
	Pro-censorship as a function of anxiety (IV)	49
7	DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS	51
8	CONCLUSION	52
	REFERENCES	54
	APPENDICES	58

Abstract

During his sixteen years in power Vladimir Putin has enjoyed high approval ratings. Despite a recent deterioration of Russia's economy the President remains very popular. The research paper studies the possible effect of allegedly threatening media content on the support for Putin using survey experiments conducted on the streets of Moscow. The study explores whether experimentally induced anxiety may influence citizens' support for a controversial internet censorship policy, and that, in turn, can help to understand whether people may alter their attitudes based on the frightening signals from media. The experimental evidence suggests that priming may induce confusion-anxiety emotions. The threatening effect of media content elicited by priming was not detected. The framing of internet censorship policy has merely a moderate effect on tested attitudes, suggesting that the level of Putin's public support may not be that high.

Keywords

Putin, survey experiment, media effects, terror management theory.

On President Putin's popularity¹

Evidence from survey experiment on the streets of Moscow

1 Introduction

During his sixteen years in power as President and Prime Minister of Russia, Vladimir Putin has enjoyed high approval ratings. Despite a recent deterioration of people's living standards influenced by economic sanctions and weakening of the Ruble the Russian president remains very popular. 84 percent of citizens expressed their consent with Putin's performance in October 2016 ('Putin approval Rating' 2016). The independent opinion pollster Levada-Center and think-tank Carnegie Moscow Center suggested some possible explanations for the persistence of Putin's popularity. The sociologists voiced an opinion that as Russian media content was portraying hostilities of "war and terror" in the world around Russia, the "defensive efforts" of Putin's external politics became the stimulating factors of high public support of the president's actions (Gudkov 2016, Kolesnikov 2016). The effect of media coverage displaying a threat on consolidated citizens' support for the leader was conceptualized as a phenomenon of rallying-around-the-flag against a common enemy (Snegovaya 2015, Gudkov 2016, Guriev and Treisman 2015, Kolesnikov 2016).

This research paper examines the possible effect of media content that portrays a threat on the support for President Putin by using a novel experimental strategy. The study aims to find out whether experimentally induced anxiety may influence people's support for a particular issue and that, in turn, can help to understand whether people may alter their beliefs and attitudes based on the frightening signals from media. This investigation can provide insights on how threatening media content may assist in building public support for leaders.

Previous studies have suggested that the media play an important role in forming people's beliefs and attitudes, influencing their political preferences and shaping public opinion (Entman 1989, Gunther 1998, McCombs and Stroud 2014, Shanahan and Morgan 2004). Given the suggested power of the media, various scholars have argued that state-controlled Russian media outlets

¹ This research has been the result of a learning process, which has been encouraged and supported by certain great individuals and intellectuals that I would hereby like to thank:

- Dr. Matthias Rieger, my supervisor, whose genuine guidance helped me greatly to structure my research and motivated me to strive for research excellence;
- Professor Arjun Bedi, my second reader, for his consistent support and critical comments, which guided my final steps in the research process;
- all participants of my survey experiment, for giving me their trust to interview them on a sensitive topic;
- my husband and daughters for the patience and continuous understanding.

Address correspondence to Margarita Mecheva: margarita.mecheva@gmail.com

use a narrative of fear to portray Russia as a “besieged fortress” in order to promote and maintain high public support for President Vladimir Putin and his internal and external policies (Snegovaya 2015, Hansen 2015, Gudkov 2016, Guriev and Treisman 2015).

At the same time a recent deterioration of the Russian economy was expected to have had a negative impact on Putin’s ratings (Guriev and Treisman 2015). This, however, did not happen. The rating has stayed above 80 percent since 2014 and remained strong. The continuously high citizens’ consent with Putin’s politics raised certain concerns about the credibility of Russian public opinion polls in general and their methodology in particular. Some scholars have pointed out the inability of direct questioning methods to elicit truthful answers to sensitive survey questions (Blair et al. 2014, Colton and Hale 2009, Kalinin 2014, Treisman 2011, Treisman, 2014). Frye et al. (2016) however, conducted list experiments and compared measurement of Putin approval rating by direct (opinion poll survey technique) and indirect (experimental) questioning. The researcher found little evidence that the rating was inflated by the so-called social desirability bias, which usually occurs when people either do not answer the sensitive question or hide their oppositional views by providing responses that are in line with the view of the majority. The evidence provided by Frye et al. (2016) suggested that Putin approval ratings are genuine and reflect the real attitudes of Russian citizens.

The psychological foundations of the effects of existential threats on people’s behavior have been studied under the ambit of Terror Management Theory (Greenberg et al. 1997). Terror Management Theory suggests that since humans’ ultimate aim is to survive, a conscious understanding that death is inevitable creates “an ever-present potential for intense anxiety, or terror” (Arndt et al. 2002, Greenberg et al. 1997). People might manage this “terror” by supporting and protecting their in-group values and beliefs (so-called worldviews) and by keeping faith in their leaders (Arndt et al. 2002, Cohen et al. 2004, Cohen et al. 2005, Echebarria Echabe and Perez 2015, Greenberg et al. 1997, Landau et al. 2004).

The effect of existential threats on people’s faith in the shared worldviews and attitudes towards political leaders has been extensively studied (Burke et al. 2010). Following Becker’s suggestion (Becker 1971, Becker 1973) that awareness about one’s own death might explain their search for symbolic protection through attraction to the “great leader, God, and country” in “participating in a heroic triumph over evil” (Greenberg and Arndt 2012: 408), various researchers explored the effects of death-related stimuli on the support for the group’s worldviews and charismatic leaders.

For example, Landau et al. (2004) in a series of laboratory experiments in the USA found that when people were exposed to death-related questions and 9/11 stimuli they demonstrated higher support for President Bush and his counterterrorism policies. The authors of the study suggested that the priming of external threat might play a facilitating role to induce death-related thoughts and to “intensify in-group favoritism and unanimity” in support of a leader and his/her policies, which are said to protect the country (Landau et al. 2004: 1148). However, the study was not able to detect a single effect of rally-round-

the flag against a common enemy on support for President Bush (Landau et al. 2004: 1147).

Another example is the study of the effect of framing of media news on people's support for military action against a hostile country. By conducting an experiment Gebauer et al. (2016) found evidence that threatening news increase the participant's willingness for military expansion independently of the priming that induces death-related anxiety. Based on this finding the scholars suggested that media news, which use threatening framing, has the potential to increase people's willingness to support military deployment in conflicts by producing similar "terror" anxiety effects in laboratory subjects (Gebauer et al. 2016).

The application of Terror Management Theory to the Russian context may help to develop a better understanding of the grounds of President Putin approval ratings. In this respect, the validation of the terror management proposition may suggest that for many Russians the support for President Putin might perform as a cognitive buffer protecting from anxiety, which is not induced by Russia's participation in the war per se, but by the ongoing confrontation with external enemies.

The present study is built on the aforementioned laboratory evidence of the effects of death-related anxiety on the support for leaders and adherence to the cultural worldviews. The paper aims to evaluate the impact of a narrative of threat used by Russian state-control media on Putin approval ratings. The research has three main objectives. Firstly, the study investigates whether experimental priming is able to induce anxiety in the survey respondents. Secondly, the research investigates whether priming affects respondents' attitudes towards controversial policy. Thirdly, the study draws inferences about the potential role of the media in driving citizens' support for Putin.

The research paper makes use of a survey experiment conducted on the streets of Moscow in August 2016 by the author. In the experiment the passer-by respondents were confronted with two priming conditions, asked to evaluate one of three frames of interest and answer other survey questions related to support for President Putin and various common beliefs and attitudes. The random change of priming conditions and frames across respondents, who were unaware of these changes, provided an exogenous variation, which permits estimation of the effect of priming on the response to each particular frame. The choice of the priming conditions was informed by the previous laboratory experiments and consisted of two carefully selected images – a terrorist attack and a person with dental pain. The framing statements were based on a recent anti-terrorism law² and related to state

² So-called Yarovaya's anti-terrorism law was adopted on July 1st 2016. According to this law, mobile and internet providers are required to store records of citizens' communication and to provide assistance to security services to decode encrypted messages. Among other aspects, the law increases punishment for "extremism" and "mass disturbance" (Irina Yarovaya's 'Anti-terrorist' War on Civil Rights: This Friday, Russian Lawmakers Will Vote on Some of the Harshest Legislation in Post-Soviet History' 2016).

control and internet censorship. The pro-censorship attitudes were measured by the agreement with internet censorship per se (general frame), as well as when its necessity is endorsed by President Putin (endorsed frame) and when its implementation is framed as limiting the democratic freedoms (neutral frame).

Thus, the study analyses, how media content portraying a threat, which is elicited through priming, may affect the responses to three censorship frames, which are used as proxies for Putin support. The research paper hypothesizes that if respondents who were exposed to the “Terrorist attack” priming were more likely to support censorship, then high Putin approval ratings may be attributed to the threatening media content. The paper also uses complimentary qualitative data on respondents’ evaluation of various Russian common worldviews, which were obtained during the survey interviews.

The study discovered that threatening priming of the media may induce the confusion-anxiety emotions in its viewers, but may not affect their attitudes towards particular issue. At the same time, the framing effect of the media can be large, especially for certain subsets of population. The study results show that Putin’s public support may not be that high. The evidence suggests that framing experiment may help to infer the actual level of the President’s approval. The research paper concludes that although state-control media played a certain role in driving support for President Putin, his high approval rating might not be due to threatening content of mass communication. Possibly, in Russian context other aspects rather than threatening may assist in building public support for a leader. Putin’s charismatic personality and the perceived reestablishment of the “greatness” of Russia may have a stronger influence on people’s faith in the president than a search for symbolic protection against existential threats.

The research paper makes three main contributions to the literature. Firstly, it contributes to the general discussion of the effects of media on the formation of public opinion. Secondly, the experimentally obtained evidence of threatening priming and framing adds to the literature on terror management. Thirdly, the paper contributes to the literature on experimental economics. It uses the data gathered during the field experiment. By involving actual subjects in their usual life situations rather than students in laboratory settings, this research has a potential to validate findings of previous studies.

The research paper is organized as follows. Chapter 2 provides some contextual background, such as current Putin’s approval rating, its genuineness and some theoretical explanations of the President’s popularity. Chapter 3 reviews the literature on conceptualization of media effects and discusses evidence of their potential strength. It also analyses a few aspects of the terror management research relevant for the topic of present study. Chapter 4 introduces and motivates methodology of the study, describes the survey experiment and the empirical approach. Chapter 5 presents the gathered experimental data and provides a descriptive analysis of respondents’ socio-economic characteristics, media consumption and reported consent with Putin’s politics. Chapter 6 reports the main results of the study. Chapter 7

discusses the results and compares them with findings of previous research. Chapter 8 concludes.

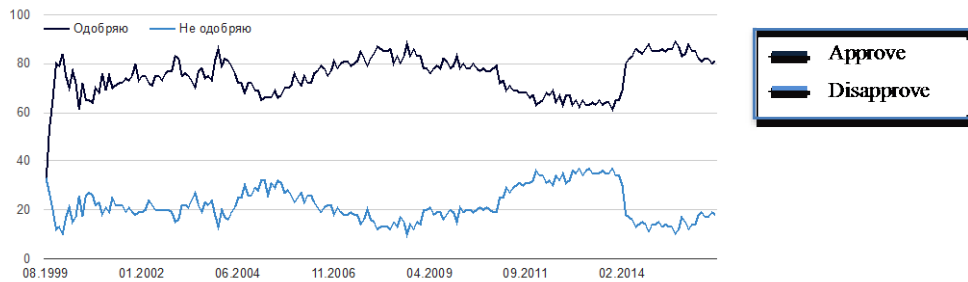
2 Putin's popularity

The chapter provides some contextual background of the studied topic. It inspects the current Putin's approval ratings measured by independent pollsters, and reviews studies of the genuineness, as well as outlines some theoretical explanations of the President's popularity.

2.1 Putin's rating and the "rally-around-the-flag"

During his 16 years in power as President and Prime Minister of Russia, Vladimir Putin has enjoyed high approval ratings. Figure 1 illustrates Putin's popularity since March 2000 when he became President.

Figure 1
Putin approval ratings



Question: "Do you in general approve or disapprove Putin's performance as a president of Russian Federation?" ("Putin's approval Rating' 2016).

The last peak of Putin's popularity may be attributed to the Crimea annexation. Since then, his approval ratings have never fallen below than 80 percent despite a deterioration of the Russian economy in Russia which might be expected to have had a negative impact on his ratings (Guriev and Treisman 2015). This observation has raised some concerns about the credibility of surveys conducted in Russia as well as with the methodology used in opinion polls. The latter issue was related to so-called social desirability bias, which might occur when people are either afraid of persecutions for expressing a lack of support for the regime or tend to provide socially accepted answers. If people are aware that Putin has a high level of acceptance among Russian citizens, they might reinforce this acceptance by agreeing with it. As the President's popularity becomes a norm shared by the majority of society, to elicit a truthful response by asking people directly could well become challenging (Blair et al. 2014, Colton and Hale 2009, Kalinin 2014, Treisman 2011, Treisman, 2014).

2.2 Genuineness of Putin's popularity

Frye et al. (2016) have conducted an experiment to evaluate Putin's approval rating by comparing direct (used in opinion poll) and indirect (used in list experiments) questioning techniques. The authors have included both sets of questions in two waves of national omnibus surveys carried out monthly by Levada-Center. The direct questioning set contained four questions dedicated to reflect opinion towards various Russian political figures. The base of the questions was the same and represented a slightly modified version of the standard approval question used by Levada-Center since 2000 (Figure 1): "In general, do you support or not support the activities of [name]?" (Frye et al. 2016: 6-7).

The indirect questioning set was based on the item-count experimental technique (also known as a list experiment), in which randomly assigned to two groups respondents were provided with the list of political figures. The difference between two lists of names is an inclusion of a sensitive item – in this case, Putin. Interpretation of the results is straightforward: "differences in the mean responses... provide an estimate of the incidence of the sensitive item" (Frye et al. 2016: 7). For both parts of the study – direct and indirect, - authors used two lists of politicians. The first list contained the name of Putin and historical leaders of Russia and the USSR - Stalin, Brezhnev and Yeltsin. The second list included Putin together with other contemporary politicians – Zhirinovskiy, Zyuganov and Mironov.

The study found that Putin was supported by an "overwhelming majority of respondents" (86 percent in January and 88 percent in March 2015) and that signified "a continuation of the [ratings] trend" (Frye et al. 2016). However, the overall attractiveness of the historical figures and the contemporary politicians might have important implications. According to Levada-Center, 51 percent of Russians had a positive attitude towards Stalin, 37 and 17 percent - towards Brezhnev and Yeltsin, respectively ('Эпохи в Жизни Страны: Ельцин, Горбачев, Брежнев (Eras in the Country's Life: Yeltsin, Gorbachev, Brezhnev)' 2011). At the end 2014, Zhirinovskiy was supported by 12 percent of the population, Zyuganov by 11 percent and Mironov by 3 percent ('Октябрьские рейтинги одобрения и доверия (October Ratings of Approval and Trust)' 2016).

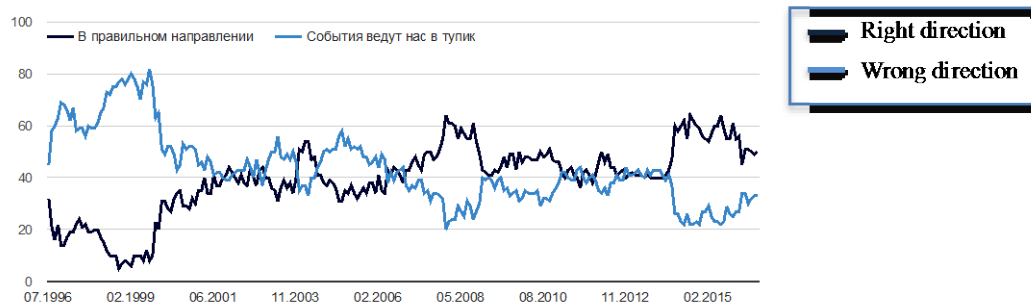
As the sensitive attitude was "*not* supporting Putin", his high popularity could further reduce the attractiveness of his "competitors" and bias the study results (Frye et al. 2016: 7-9). The authors conducted two "placebo" experiments to identify a possibility of artificial deflation bias, which might occur if respondents systematically under report support for non-sensitive items when the sensitive item is included. Artificial deflation might potentially inflate estimates of social desirability bias and underestimate the support for a sensitive item (Frye et al. 2016: 6). The researchers have found a possibility of artificial deflation bias that might yield lower estimates of Putin's support. But the study provided no evidence that the estimates have not been biased upward due to the floor or ceiling effects of non-truthful support responses. The authors suggested that the results of opinion polls may provide only six to

nine percentage points higher approval ratings than surveys that ask the support question indirectly (Frye et al. 2016: 11). The study concluded that Putin's popularity was not affected by a social desirability bias and his approval ratings were genuine as they reflected the real attitudes of Russian citizens.

2.3 Some theoretical explanations of people's consent with Putin's politics

A closer look at Putin's historical approval ratings (Figure 1) suggests that Putin's approval ratings were driven by Russia's involvement in conflict situations. The peaks of President's popularity were documented in 2000 (first Chechen war), 2003 (internal "war with oligarch"), 2007-2008 (second Chechen war and the war with Georgia) and culminated in 2014 (Crimea annexation and Ukrainian conflict). The latter happened after a long decline of public consent with Putin's politics that resulted in a series of mass protests. The Crimea operation has helped not only to bring back President's popularity, but also has re-invigorated the long-forgotten notion of Russia as a "great power" (Volkov 2015). As various qualitative studies by Levada-Center have found, many Russians have started to proudly state that Russia has "showed [its] teeth" and "forced [the world] to respect [it]" (Gudkov 2016). At the same time, despite economic sanctions, a collapse of Ruble and deterioration of living standards, people's satisfaction with the course of Putin's politics remained high (Figure 2).

Figure 2
Assessment of the current situation in Russia



Question: "Are things in the country going in the right direction or is the country moving in the wrong direction?" ('Putin's approval Rating' 2016).

Gurieva and Treisman (2015) have suggested that economic conditions might play an important role in public consent with the leader. The authors have analyzed various authoritarian regimes: Fujimori in Peru; Orban in Hungary; Mohamad in Malaysia; Erdogan in Turkey; and Putin in Russia to propose the determinants of their persistence. Their "competent ruler" thesis was based on the evidence that modern authoritarian regimes survive not

because of ideology or mass repressions, but because the public perceives the leader as “competent”. The competence level of the leader, as suggested, might be reflected in his approval ratings (Guriev and Treisman (2015: 4). The leader might employ various tools to build this “competence”. While a country’s economy is flourishing the leader may have the means to invest in propaganda, censorship and co-optation of elites. Contrary, in case of an economic downturn and lack of resources available for other tools, the “ruler” might only be able to unite citizens in wars (often in only perceived ones) against external enemies. Thus, the ruler’s “perceived competence at securing prosperity and defending the nation against external threats” might become a ground for his popularity (Guriev and Treisman 2015: 2).

The strength of the effect of rallying-around-the-flag on the president’s approval ratings may depend on how united all the public and the state are in their assessment of the country’s development (Zakharov 2015). The monopoly of the state’s voice in media may play a crucial role in determining public opinion. Television remains to be the main mass communication channel in Russia (Volkov and Goncharov 2014). Major national television networks are believed to be control by the Kremlin (Guriev and Treisman 2015, McFaul and Stoner-Weiss 2008, Snegovaya 2015). Some media outlets, such as the TV-channel and online magazine Dozhd’, radio station Echo of Moscow, the business daily Vedomosti, Moscow’s weekly Novaya Gazeta, online magazines Slon.ru and Snob.ru and news site Meduza have managed to keep their independence and continue voicing alternative to Kremlin’s opinion (Snegovaya 2015). However, their penetration is limited and the majority of Russians continue to trust the state television as a main source of information (‘Телевидение остается основным источником новостей (Television Remains the Main Source of News)’ 2016). Information conveyed by the state media outlets is often characterized as propaganda (Guriev and Treisman 2015, McFaul and Stoner-Weiss 2008, Snegovaya 2015). It might be seen as a way to manipulate public opinion by providing an “alternative” viewpoint and by promoting anti-Western (mostly anti-American) sentiments (Guriev and Treisman 2015, Snegovaya 2015). Various researchers of the Russian media and public opinion noticed that the main messages of the state-controlled television and news agencies during at least the recent years of Putin’s presidency has been a message of the hostility of the world towards Russia. The confrontation with the West in general and with the United States in particular might have been the key grounds on which the notion of “external enemies” was created³.

At the same time, the economic development may also affect the citizens’ political attitudes. The negative influence of economy on the support for a leader may depend on the degree of a “blur of responsibility” and the origins

³ There are some “internal enemies” in Russia too. Generally, they can be described as those who aim to “destabilize” the country. Among them the “foreign agents” - various NGOs, which are funded from abroad and the list of which includes Transparency International and recently Levada-Center.

of economic issues (Zakharov 2015). According to Zakharov, these two effects create an ambivalent situation in Russia. On one hand, the vertical structure of the political power implies that the citizens might attribute the deterioration of economy to the actions of President Putin himself. On the other hand, the state controlled media ascribes the sources of economic stagnation to the external factors, such as oil prices and sanctions. The latter is suggested to protect the president from the potential “punishment” of the decline of his approval ratings (Zakharov 2015).

In a situation where Russia could be facing the hostility of the world of “war and terror” around it, the “defensive efforts” of Putin’s actions could be a stimulating factor for people’s support of his politics (Gudkov 2016). As citizens feel united in supporting the leader of the “besieged fortress” of Russia, their “rallying-around-the-flag” may be the major influence on the maintenance of Putin’s popularity (Gudkov 2016, Guriev and Treisman 2015, Hansen 2015, Snegovaya 2015).

3 Literature review

The aim of this Chapter is to motivate the choice of empirical strategy, employed methods and aspects of interest of the present research. The chapter reviews the existing literature on media influence, including conceptualization of media effects and existing evidence of their potential strength. It provides an overview of terror management research and particular experiments relevant for the scope of the present paper.

3.1 Conceptualization of media effects and existing evidence of their potential strength

The review of the literature on media effects has two main objectives. Firstly, it aims to review the conceptualization and differentiation of possible media effects on the formation of public opinion. Secondly, the section provides a brief overview of existing evidence of the potential strength of these effects.

Research of the influence of media on people’s opinion and attitudes towards political issues has a long history. It moves from studies of the media’s ability to reinforce pre-existing beliefs towards theoretical and experimental investigations of more complex relationships of media effects and behavioral outcomes (Entman 1989, Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, Scheufele and Iyengar 2012).

General patterns of modern thinking about media effects can be found in the work of Robert Entman (1989). He was concerned with the previously argued limited influence of media on the formation of people’s political preferences and suggested that media are able to shape attitudes by communicating messages that contain a “partial selection of information for a person to think about” (Entman 1989: 349). For Entman not only the message itself, but also how people respond to it matters. Thus, the significant outcome of media influence on the attitudinal or behavioral change might only be

achieved if the media message is “salient” and rebounded with individual’s existing conceptual “schemas” or beliefs (Entman 1989: 350). In this respect, for a media message to affect people’s attitude and to form a specific public opinion, the selectivity of information and repetition of communication may have a crucial role.

The repetition and frequency of media communication were conceptualized as a “mainstreaming” effect of media in Gerbner’s theory of cultivation (Shanahan and Morgan 2004, Morgan and Shanahan 2010)⁴. The main proposition of the theory and its research interest was to provide evidence that heavy users of television or other media tend to perceive the world in way it was presented to them by the media (Shanahan and Morgan 2004: 4). As media are repeatedly informing people about how the world is constructed and how it operates, the common public opinion, beliefs and attitudes are supposed to be cultivated (Shanahan and Morgan 2004: 15). Although the meta-analysis of various cultivation studies by Morgan and Shanahan were able to establish media contribution on alteration of people’s worldviews, they acknowledge that the effect of frequency of exposure to television messages might not be very large (Morgan and Shanahan 2010: 340). The average effect detected by the authors was around 0.10 ($r = 0.078$ in analyses with the dependent variable related to politics) (Shanahan and Morgan 2004: 125). The researchers concluded that the analysis of 20 years of media research provides evidence that “cumulative exposure to television cultivates absorption of ideas and worldviews congruent with what is seen on TV” (Shanahan and Morgan 2004: 135).

The researchers of agenda setting, priming and framing effects of mass media put forward alternative suggestions of how media may influence political judgments and attitudes. Agenda setting effect of media was suggested by McCombs who found out that the emphasis on a particular political issue put by the media is correlated with the importance of that issue for the public (McCombs and Shaw 1972, McCombs and Stroud 2014). McCombs and Stroud argued that agenda setting affects individuals differently, depending on their attitudinal predispositions and media consumption habits (2014: 85-88). The latter included individual preferences in media selection, personal intentions and ways to process information (McCombs and Stroud 2014: 88). The earlier study of McCombs and Shaw found evidence that voters in the presidential campaign of 1968 “tend to share the media composite definition of what is important” (1972: 182). That finding suggested that agenda setting could have a large and positive effect on public opinion formation (the correlation coefficient may range from $r = 0.80$ to $r = 0.89$), as media may become “the main primary sources of national political information” (McCombs and Shaw 1972: 185). The further study of McCombs and Stroud discovered that the opinions of individuals that use a few media channels and those who use only one may vary (2014: 87). For instance, the probability of

⁴ Although initially the theory was concerned with particular effect of television, Shanahan and Morgan tried to extend it to other media as well: “[a]s the scene changes, the story remains the same” (2004: 219).

agreement with the tested worldview was higher for viewer of both Fox News and CNN ($r = 0.72$) than for viewers of only Fox News ($r = 0.63$), while it was lower comparing to viewers of only CNN ($r = 0.80$) (McCombs and Stroud 2014: 87).

The studies by Iyengar and Kinder (1987) suggested that socio-economic characteristics of media viewers were less significant in determining people's sensitivity to media agenda setting. Assuming that the change in attitude was only possible when a media message is both received and accepted by people, the authors suggested that individual's interest in political issues might play an important role in their responsiveness to media influence in setting political priorities (Iyengar and Kinder 1987: 54-62).

Another media effect is related to the so-called priming, which is defined as change in references people use for judgment and formation of attitudes towards particular issues (Iyengar and Kinder 1987: 62-72). Since both agenda setting and priming aim to make the specific political issue more salient in people's minds, some researchers treat priming as a case of agenda setting (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007: 11). The difference between agenda setting and priming may be assigned to their respective outcome. When agenda setting emphasizes the particular issue to ensure people's responsiveness to it, priming draws attention to specific aspects that people are supposed to take into account while making political judgments. Iyengar and Kinder described a useful example of priming effects: "[w]hen primed by television news stories that focus on national defense, people judge the president largely by how well he has provided, as they see it, for the nation's defense" (1987: 114). As a result, agenda setting and priming may make a joint contribution to media influence on change in people's attitudes: "[b]y making some issues more salient in people's mind (agenda setting), mass media can also shape the considerations that people take into account when making judgments about political candidates or issues (priming)" (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007: 11).

The differentiation of agenda setting and priming effects seems to be crucial in situations when both effects are evaluated. Priming and agenda setting may affect different people in opposite directions. In their experiments Iyengar and Kinder discovered that when the agenda setting had a bigger impact on individuals with lower political involvement, priming was effective for politically engaged people due to their "greater inclination toward performance-based evaluation" (1987: 96).

Framing effects of media are different from its agenda setting and priming influence on people's attitudes (Scheufele and Iyengar 2012, Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Framing refers to the variety of presentations of an issue to the public, which, in turn, forms a particular opinion about it (Chong and Druckman 2007, Scheufele and Iyengar 2012). This concept might be traced back to the experimental work of Kahneman and Tversky, who studied how the equal but differently presented decision-making plots might influence people's preference for a particular outcome (1979, 1981, 1984). The different presentation of outcome choices was called "framing". Tversky and Kahneman demonstrated that "seemingly inconsequential changes in the formulation of choice problem caused significant shifts of preferences" (1981: 457).

In media research framing of media content is a way to present information to the viewers using their existing beliefs and attitudes and to assign to this information a meaningful interpretation (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). The recent findings of the effects of media on the formation of people's political attitudes suggested that those effects might be limited due to their dependence on people's predispositions, susceptibility and ways to process information from media (Iyengar and Kinder 1987, Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007). Nevertheless, those effects persist and media are able to set the public agenda, prime people's political choices and frame mass opinion.

3.2 Terror Management Theory

The potential outcome of the aforementioned media influence can be a power of mass communication to reinforce public acceptance of the leader and adherence to particular worldviews promoted by his politics. By portraying the vulnerability of world peace and stability by informing the public about real and perceived enemies, media may provoke feelings of existential threats (Gebauer et al. 2016, Landau et al. 2004, Lecheler et al. 2013). The psychological foundations of the effects of existential threats on people's behavior have been studied under the ambit of Terror Management Theory (Greenberg et al. 1997). This section reviews key aspects of Terror Management Theory and outlines findings of various studies of effects of anxiety-related emotions on support for political leaders.

Terror Management Theory was developed by Greenberg, Solomon and Pyszczynski, who were inspired by Ernst Becker's interdisciplinary work on human motivation and behavior (Greenberg et al. 1997, Greenberg and Arndt 2012). The theory aimed to explain the role the culture and social behavior plays in people's need for self-preservation caused by understanding of one's vulnerability and inevitable death. According to the theory people are able to control the death-related thoughts by creating a shared world of meaning and by keeping faith in common conception of reality. These cultural worldviews, as suggested, serve two goals. Firstly, they buffer mortality-related anxiety by promising protection through spiritual concepts of immortality and maintenance of culture. Secondly, they provide a motivation for nurturing self-esteem by identification with social group and associated beliefs, attitudes and values.

Years of experimental study in the context of Terror Management Theory have demonstrated that cultural worldviews and self-esteem serve as a defense against death-related anxiety. In this respect, the reminders of death might affect how people react to other individuals or particular ideas that challenge their cultural worldviews (Greenberg et al. 1997, Greenberg and Arndt 2012). Various experiments have shown that when people were reminded about death they responded favorably to the situations and individuals, which were consistent with their group's worldviews, and unfavorably to those, who were threatening them (Greenberg et al. 1997, Burke et al. 2010). These effects of threatening priming (mortality salience) on faith in common beliefs and values (worldviews) were suggested to be exclusively associated with people's

unconscious fear of death (Greenberg et al. 1997). Next section provides a review of the meta-analysis study of terror management research.

Meta-analysis study by Burke et al. (2010)

The study by Burke et al. (2010) provides a useful review of the experiments conducted within 20 years of existence of Terror Management Theory. The authors analyzed 164 up-to-date articles, which empirically tested the mortality salience hypotheses in 277 experiments.

The aim of the analysis was to evaluate the size of the effects produced by mortality salience manipulations and their potential moderators such as the region of the study, respondents' characteristics, type of priming and dependent measurements. 277 studied experiments were conducted with on average 22 years old (a range from 7 to 84) students (90 percent of the experiments). The average experiment had on average 87 participants (a range from 17 to 343). More than a half of experiments was conducted in USA (52 percent), a bit more than one third in Europe (37 percent) and 4 percent in Asia. Some sporadic experiments were carried out in Canada, New Zealand, Iran and Costa Rica (Burke et al. 2010: 157, 177). The authors estimated the overall effect of mortality salience manipulations ($r(276) = 0.35, p < 0.01^5$) (Burke et al. 2010: 179).

The researchers have discovered that mortality salience is manipulated in four ways: (1) answer to two standard death essay questions to describe one's own death and emotions that thought might provoke (80 percent of all experiments used this priming method); (2) answer to 31 closed-ended survey questions about reasons to fear the death (7 percent of experiments); (3) brief exposure to death-related words during a computer-based test of relationship between ordinary words (4 percent); (4) exposure to video materials, pictures or texts related to accidents, diseases, war or terrorist acts (9 percent of experiments) (Burke et al. 2010: 177). The evidence of the analysis suggested that the type of priming has no influence on the strength of the effects of mortality salience (Burke et al. 2010: 182). For instance, the effects of the standard death essays ($r(220) = 0.36, p < 0.01$) were similar to the effects of other mortality salience manipulations such as subliminal death primes ($r(10) = 0.35, p < 0.01$) or death-related videos or slide shows ($r(24) = 0.29, p < 0.01$) (Burke et al. 2010: 182).

For the control condition the majority of experiments (62 percent) used threatening or negative topics such as dental pain or exam failure (Burke et al. 2010: 178). Interestingly, the meta-analysis of Burke et al. (2010) has found that the threat level of the control topic had no influence on the strength of the effect of mortality salience. Manipulations with mortality primes produced effects of similar magnitudes in both types of experiments – those that used

⁵ Burke et al. (2010) calculated r as a difference of means between control and mortality salience condition divided by the pooled standard deviation. Therefore r used in their meta-analysis is the same as Cohen's d .

threats (for example, pain) ($r(171) = 0.36, p < 0.01$) and those that made comparison with the neutral control conditions (for example, leisure and food surveys or exam) ($r(104) = 0.33, p < 0.01$) (Burke et al. 2010: 182). Therefore, the authors have suggested, death might have a unique impact on people's beliefs and attitudes and that impact might not be merely due to its high negativity of threat (Burke et al. 2010: 182).

This “qualitative” difference of death also addressed a main critique of Terror Management Theory (Burke et al. 2010: 178). Some competing explanations of the drivers of people's adherence to common worldviews postulated that other factors, which could threaten people, might produce effects on people's attitude and behavior similar to mortality salience (Burke et al. 2010: 182). Burke et al. have tested some alternative threats - such as “uncertainty” and “loss of meaning” (2010: 182). On one hand, the authors found limited evidence in favor of “loss of meaning” type of explanations. On the other hand, mortality salience primes produced similar strength of the effects in experiments, which used “uncertainty” as a control topic, and in experiments that used, for example, “dental pain” primes. This finding allowed the authors to argue in favor of the mortality salience proposition (Burke et al. 2010: 184).

Regarding the types worldviews used in studied experiments, the meta-analysis by Burke et al has found that death related priming had significantly bigger impact on attitudes towards particular persons than other attitudes (towards a country or a text, for example) (2010: 184, 186). The authors suggested that personalization of threat or support of people's worldviews might have a stronger effect due to the social orientation of people's behavior (Burke et al. 2010: 186).

The last but not least aspect noticed in the study by Burke et al. (2010) was the specific of the selected samples. The majority of experiments (90 percent) used students as their subjects. Young people during the period of college study might be different from the studied populations both in their socio-economic characteristics and in the ability to be persuaded by experimental manipulations (Burke et al. 2010: 181). The effects on non-students were significantly smaller – $r(25) = 0.25, p < 0.01$ (Burke et al. 2010: 181). As the age range of most of the studies was 17-27 years old, the reviewed meta-analysis could not define the effects of mortality salience manipulation on older adults.

Study of presidential support in times of increased threats of terrorism

The present research investigates the effects of threatening media on the support for President Putin. Nowadays, the threat of terrorism is one of the main issues that Russia faces⁶. Therefore, the studies that use manipulations

⁶ Levada-Center reported that 82 percent of their respondents felt anxious about potential threats of terrorism in October 2015 (before October 2015 the share of those was 48 percent) (Kolesnikov 2016).

with terrorism-related primes to offer explanations about the grounds of the support for political leaders are of a greater interest. Among those studies in the ambit of Terror Management Theory is the study by Landau et al. (2004).

In a series of experiments Landau et al. (2004) have tested the effects of mortality salience priming on support for President Bush and his antiterrorism policies. The previous studies have suggested that increased level of awareness about own death, facilitate people's support for powerful leaders, who are supposed to provide security and protection (Cohen et al. 2004, Cohen et al. 2005, Pyszczynski et al. 2003). On the one hand, Terror Management Theory suggested that mortality salience manipulations might activate people's faith in cultural worldviews and own valued participation in the society. On the other hand, people might seek to transfer a defensive role to a charismatic leader, who, in turn, might be seen as a protector of the group's prosperity and worldview superiority. Landau et al. (2004) have hypothesized that heightened approval rating of President Bush just after 9/11 terrorist attacks in USA might be derived from the needs of American citizens for such symbolic defenses.

A particular aspect of the paper by Landau et al. (2004) is of interest to the present research. The authors used terrorism-related frames and primes to infer support for Bush and his anti-terrorism policies. As Landau et al. (2004) reported, in their experiments 9/11-related stimuli produced similar effect as mortality salience primes traditionally used in the terror management research. The authors have found the evidence that terrorism-related priming and death reminders equally resulted in higher support for President Bush and his counterterrorism policies. Comparing to the exam control condition, manipulations with 9/11-related primes had a large effect on the support for Bush ($t(72) = 9.31, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.55$) (Landau et al. 2004: 1143). That finding allowed Landau et al. (2004) to suggest that when people are reminded of their own mortality (either by the standard mortality salience manipulations or by 9/11-related primes) they might seek the protection of the familiar world order by the leader, and that, in turn, might be supportive evidence for Terror Management Theory.

The experiments by Landau et al. (2004) have yielded another observation, interesting for the present study. The authors have found that death-related primes activated support for Bush but not for his counterpart Kerry. Some explanations have been suggested – three related to specific qualities that Bush might possess and one related to in-group unanimity. Firstly, Bush' status as the president of United States might make him more appealing when common American worldviews were under a threat. Secondly, Bush' self-confidence and patriotic rhetoric might characterize his leadership style as charismatic, and that, might make his candidacy more preferable under existential threats, as evidence of other studies tried to establish (for example, Cohen et al. 2004). Thirdly, security and military defense promoted by Bush' policies might also give rise to his attractiveness. Fourthly, the effect of “rally-around-the-flag” might increase in-group unity under the threat of external enemy and justify higher approval rates for the president. The latter aspect did not get a strong support by the empirical evidence of the reviewed experiments since terrorism-

related priming and induction of an external enemy threat have not been consistent across conducted experiments and groups under treatment.

Study of emotional response to death-related primes

The previous terror management research had suggested that accessibility of death-related thoughts triggers anxiety, which people buffer by sticking to common worldviews (in-group values and beliefs) and by exhibiting defensive attitudes. This sub-section reviews a study that has investigated the role of emotions in transmission of the effects of existential threats on people's support for various worldviews. A novel approach suggested by Echebarria Echabe and Perez (2015) may be a convenient alternative for measurement of death-thoughts accessibility in field experiments.

The reviewed paper has used emotions as mediators of priming effect on the outcome of interest. Similar to the traditional word-completion test (Burke et al. 2010), measurement of emotional response might allow to compare the effect of different procedures to induce death-related anxiety on the variety of common worldviews through the emotional response it might produce. Additionally, the paper provides a useful overview of the effects of different stimuli, which might have different influence on people's support for particular worldviews.

In the laboratory experiment with undergraduate university students, Echebarria Echabe and Perez assigned 39 male and 103 female participants to six experimental conditions – control (dental pain) and 5 treatments (suicide of young woman, self-suicide, young woman killed in the car accident, dying old man in a hospital room and running people and bodies of victims in the terrorist attack in the railway station in Madrid) (2015: 394). All groups⁷ were exposed to particular images, asked to express what they felt physically and emotionally and requested to evaluate the extent of their emotion. Next, the researchers conducted a word-completion test, in which the participants were supposed to fill the letters in incomplete words⁸ Echebarria Echabe and Perez (2015) also measured self-esteem as a potential mediator along with emotions and death-thoughts accessibility, but this aspect of their study is not covered in the current review. The outcomes of interests consisted of 19 worldviews, including European identity, superiority of European culture, incompatibility of Arab culture, government spending on immigrants and others (Echebarria Echabe and Perez 2015: 394).

The experiment by Echebarria Echabe and Perez has allowed the authors to suggest that only terrorist attack priming has been able to directly affect people's inclination towards Eurocentrism and xenophobia attitudes,

⁷ Excluding self-suicide condition in which participants were asked to imagine that situation happening to them.

⁸ Six of those words could be filled in both “positive” and “negative” way as per analogy with traditional “death access measures” suggested by Terror Management researchers. For example, S K _ _ L could be both SKILL and SKULL ('Research Materials: Mortality Salience (MS) Manipulation' 2008).

$\beta = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$ (2015: 395). Comparing the emotional response to the primes, the study provided evidence that anxiety feelings have had both a direct and an indirect influence on xenophobic attitudes⁹. The authors have concluded that, as they had expected, different death-related priming conditions might have different effects on various dimensions of people's worldviews. Emotions might have a considerable influence in that process.

Study of media effects within a course of Terror Management Theory

The paper reviewed in this sub-section combines a study of media framing effects (section 3.1) with the classical approach of terror management research (section 3.2). Gebauer et al. (2016) have questioned the ability of media framing to induce explicit existential threats that could have a similar effect on people's attitudes as classical terror management's death-related anxiety.

The authors were interested whether threatening news coverage might be comparable to the existential threats induced by the classical terror management priming in their influence on people's support for military engagement in the conflict. The study used the data obtained in the laboratory experiment with 112 German students (77 females) (Gebauer et al. 2016). The participants were exposed to two priming conditions – treatment (classical two death essay questions to describe one's own death and emotions that thought might provoke), and control (“dental pain” in same “imaginary” format as a treatment condition). The authors have used two versions of the article from Der Spiegel magazine to evaluate the effect of media framing – one version was the original one and provided explicit calls for NATO expansion at the Russian border, another version was edited to mute potential threats. The participants of the experiment were assigned to four groups and asked to read either the original or the neutral article being under either “dental pain” or “mortality salience” priming.

The study by Gebauer et al. (2016) suggested that threatening media coverage might influence people's willingness to military engagement in the conflict ($t(110) = 2.27$, $p = 0.025$), and that effect ($d = 0.43$) might be comparable to the one produced by mortality salience primes used in the classical Terror Management research. The classical effects of mortality salience manipulations were observed only in non-militant article as the participants showed an increased willingness for military deployment only after manipulation with existential threats ($t(52) = 2.48$, $p = 0.016$, $d = 0.70$) (Gebauer et al. 2016: 6). The latter finding is similar to the previous terror management research, in which the classical mortality salience effects were

⁹ To compare direct and indirect effect of primes on outcomes of interest Echebarria Echabe and Perez (2015) used a mediation model suggested by Hayes and Preacher (Hayes et al. 2016). This model provides a way to analyze an impact of treatment conditions on outcome directly and indirectly through intervening effect of a mediating variable – in the discussed case it was the variable measuring the emotional response.

observed only in experiments with neutral, not explicitly threatening frames (Burke et al. 2010).

The reviewed experiential evidence of previous studies informed the strategy and methods of the present research. The experiment presented by the paper used “Terrorist attack” and “Dental pain” priming conditions as suggested by the papers by Landau et al. (2004) and Echebarria Echabe and Perez (2015). Similarly to the approach of the experiment of Gebauer et al. (2016) the “Terrorist attack” priming might represent the potentially threatening media effects. In order to evaluate the degree of the threat induced by the priming the present experiment employed the measurement of emotional response, as suggested by Echebarria Echabe and Perez (2015). Moreover, the participants of the experiment were evaluating terrorism-related frames, which potentially could have an influence on the tested attitudes (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, Scheufele and Iyengar 2012). The paper of Landau et al. (2004) informed the choice of the terrorism-related topic of the frames. The main difference of the current research is that it uses data obtained in field experiments. Although a laboratory experiment with motivated subjects may help to allocate enough time for priming exercise, ensure attention focus on subtle cues, and provide insightful results, it may potentially hamper external validity of the results (Levitt and List 2007).

4 Experimental design and empirical strategy

This research paper makes use of a survey experiment, ex post survey and econometric analyses to study the effect of threatening media content on support for President Putin and adherence to common Russian worldviews. The decision to use field experiment as a main approach of empirical strategy was motivated by the potential sensitivity of the topic related to evaluation of a popular leader in an authoritarian context. As the approval rating of Putin is very high, asking explicit questions is unlikely to yield truthful answers (Blair et al. 2014, Frye et al. 2016).

Moreover, people may support Putin, but still be against some of his policies, and the other way around – not support Putin but endorse particular policies. To address this concern, the experiment uses three frames related to controversial internet censorship policies. The choice of internet censorship was motivated by two considerations. Firstly, potential threat of terrorism is a salient issue in Russia. 61 percent of Russians reported that they were afraid of terrorism in March 2016 (‘Россияне Боятся Терракттов, но Верят в Свои Спецслужбы (Russians are Afraid of Terrorist Acts But Trust Their Intelligence Services)’ 2016). At the same time a threat of terrorism is used by Russian legislature to justify the restrictions in internet sphere (see Chapter 1). Secondly, internet censorship satisfies the characteristics of the question of framing or endorsement experiment suggested Blair et al. (2014). The topic itself is a well-known issue in Russia and it generates a variety of attitudes (‘Интернет-Цензура (Censorship of Internet)’ 2014). According to the survey of WCIOM (‘Чего Желает Общество: Стремление Россиян к Контролю

Интернета (What the Society Wishes: Intention of Russians to Control Internet)' 2015), half of Russians supports the censorship of internet (49 percent of total population and 43 percent of the internet users). Moreover, 31 percent of respondents agreed that internet may have a "harmful influence" (55 percent of non-users) and 41 percent supported the statement that restrictions in internet affect their personal freedom ('Что Желает Общество: Стремление Россиян к Контролю Интернета (What the Society Wishes: Intention of Russians to Control Internet)' 2015).

Therefore, to elicit responses that permit a credible analysis of the effect of threatening media content on the support for President Putin, the survey experiment used three internet censorship frames, which were randomly assigned to the respondents under priming conditions. Importantly, the respondents were not aware of randomization and in all other aspects they were treated in the same way, including additional survey questions and methods of data analysis. The following sections provide the details of the experimental design.

4.1 Survey experiment

331 face-to-face interviews were conducted on Moscow streets in August 2016. The locations were selected based on the following criteria: proximity to metro stations, residential areas, shopping centers, and office buildings (see Picture 1 in Annex I). The potential respondents all met the following criteria: were alone and did not use mobile telephone or other digital devices. The recruitment of respondents was conducted right before the experiment by random selection among potential respondents. For it, every fifth person satisfying the criteria of a potential respondent in the field of vision of the researcher was contacted. In cases when the approached person refused to participate in the survey, the next fifth person was approached.

The questionnaires were printed and mixed in advance to ensure randomization of allocation of priming conditions and three frames of interest. Therefore, under which priming condition and which one of the frames the particular respondent was supposed to evaluate has been determined by random assignment. In all other aspects, the respondents were treated in the same way, including all other survey questions and following methods of data analysis.

The minimum required sample size of 330 observations was calculated assuming 80% power at 5% significance level and using estimation of minimum detectable effects based on the evidence suggested by the previous studies. Thus, considering the minimum detectable effect of 28 percentage points from the paper by Landau et al. (2004), 33 percent of the current support for censorship from the recent survey by WCIOM ('Что Желает Общество: Стремление Россиян к Контролю Интернета (What the Society Wishes: Intention of Russians to Control Internet)' 2015), and 20 percent of the maximum attrition rate suggested by Blair et al. (2014) for direct questioning, a minimum required sample size for each sample cell (priming condition and one of the censorship frames) is estimated to be 55

observations. Assuming the same variance of the outcome means for priming conditions, the respondents were allocated to treatment and control cells equally as illustrated in Table 1.

The survey consisted of three parts. In the first part, the respondents were randomly exposed to two priming conditions. In the second part, they were asked to evaluate one of three randomly assigned frames of interest. In the last third part, the respondents answered additional survey questions.

Table 1
Number of respondents for priming and frames allocation

Outcome / Condition	“Terrorist attack” priming	“Dental pain” priming
Frame 1: <i>“Internet censorship to fight against the terrorism”</i>	55	55
Frame 2: <i>“President Putin endorses internet censorship to fight against the terrorism”</i>	55	55
Frame 3: <i>“Internet censorship limits freedom of expression”</i>	55	55

Source: author’s estimation

Priming conditions and emotional moderator

Respondents were randomly assigned to the existential threat condition “Terrorist attack” (Picture 2 in Annex I) or the control condition “Dental pain” (Picture 3 in Annex I) before they were asked to evaluate the censorship frames. Intuitively, the choice of the “Terrorist attack” priming could strengthen the effect of followed it terrorism-related framing. At the same time, previous studies suggested that terrorism-related images provided explicit existential threats and attempted to activate death-related thoughts in participants (Echebarria Echabe and Perez 2015, Landau et al. 2004). The choice of the “Dental pain” as a control condition was adapted from papers by Echebarria Echabe and Perez (2015) and Gebauer et al. (2016), as it provided non-existential threats and potentially could remove death-related thoughts from consciousness.

For both priming conditions the study used photographs, as images may have a stronger influence than text (Powell et al. 2015). A verbal short description of the photograph followed after the respondent expressed her first thoughts and feelings. The pictures for both priming conditions were taken from open internet sources. For the “Terrorist attack” condition participants looked at the photograph of the terrorist act in the trolley bus in Volgograd in 2013. The photograph pictured a damaged trolley bus surrounded by policemen. For ethical reasons, the photograph did not explicitly show corpses as a photograph used in the experiment of Echebarria Echabe and Perez (2015). The photographs for the “Dental pain” condition showed a man or a woman of a Slavic appearance with a hand on the cheek.

Both priming conditionings followed a three-step procedure (Echebarria Echabe and Perez 2015): exposure to the picture, answer to the open question about the image and feelings it evokes, and prompt on the extent to which the respondent felt worried, confused, befuddled, perplexed and puzzled¹⁰. The conditions of a field experiment limited possibility to conduct other procedures to induce death-related thoughts in subjects. Due to limitation of time for interview as well as due to the ethical concerns the standard death-essay questions or word-completion tasks, which have been used in previous studies, were not appropriate.

Censorship frames

For the purpose of this study the following frames were developed:

Frame 1 (general) - "Internet censorship to fight against terrorism":

"Strengthening of the state control and censorship of the internet sphere and access of law enforcement authorities to private correspondence of the ordinary Russian citizens, are intended to contribute to the fight against extremism and terrorism".

Frame 2 (endorsed) - "President Putin endorses internet censorship to fight against terrorism":

"The President of Russia Vladimir Putin calls for the strengthening of the state control and censorship of the internet sphere, and for providing access of law enforcement authorities to private correspondence of the ordinary Russian citizens. This is intended to contribute to the fight against extremism and terrorism".

Frame 3 (neutral) - "Internet censorship limits freedom of expression":

"Strengthening of the state control and censorship of the internet sphere, and access of law enforcement authorities to private correspondence of the ordinary Russian citizens, limit freedom of expression and provide legal grounds for the repression of nonconformists".

Since the study was interested to evaluate whether respondents support or not the frames, non-responses ("don't know" answers) were excluded from the analysis. Those responses accounted for approximately 8 percent (28 observations) of the total sample ($N = 331$). For the remaining observations the dummy variables were created, in which 1 gathered responses [absolutely agree/rather agree] and 0 [rather disagree/absolutely disagree].

The evaluation of the responses to each of the frames under the priming conditions was supposed to indicate whether threatening priming was able to increase the approval of internet censorship per se and when its necessity was explicitly endorsed by Putin. The neutral Frame 3 is used to contrast the findings related to first two frames. These responses to three censorship frames are used as proxies for Putin's support. Since the survey respondents at

¹⁰ The list of the emotions was reduced to anxiety and confusion since others showed to be not very appropriate (with a very few exceptions) and received mostly "not all" answers.

this stage were not asked about support for the President directly, but rather anonymously assessed hypothetical frames, this approach was less likely to yield social desirability bias. The aim of the analysis is to establish how the threatening media content elicited through priming may affect the responses to three censorship frames as proxies for Putin's approval. The study hypothesizes that if respondents who were exposed to the "Terrorist attack" priming were more likely to support censorship, than high Putin approval ratings may be attributed to threatening media content. The paper also uses complimentary quantitative and qualitative data on respondents' evaluation of various Russian common worldviews, which were obtained during the survey interviews.

Ex post survey

After evaluation of the censorship frames, the respondents answered additional survey questions to obtain social-demographic characteristics as well the respondents' attitudes towards various Russian common beliefs and attitudes (worldviews). The responses to the ex post survey questions were supposed to provide an insight in relevant to the phenomenon of rallying-around-the-flag attitudes of Russians. The questions (Questionnaire in Annex II) had a similar formulation as the questions Levada-Center uses in their ongoing surveys and could be grouped as follows:

1. *Closed and open questions about support for Putin and worldviews (things go right in Russia, feeling proud, feeling ashamed, Russia has enemies)*
2. *Socio-demographic characteristics: age, gender, income, level of education, occupation and family composition (children and parents), years lived in Moscow*
3. *Media consumption habits: viewership of the state TV-channels and use of "alternative" sources such as the radio "Echo of Moscow" and internet sites slon.ru ("Slon"), tvrain.ru ("Dozhd") and medusa.io ("Meduza").*

For the question on Putin's approval non-responses ("don't know" answers) were excluded from the analysis. These responses accounted for approximately 9 percent (30 observations) of the total sample ($N = 331$). For the remaining observations the dummy variable was created, in which 1 gathered responses [absolutely approve/rather approve] and 0 [rather disapprove/absolutely disapprove].

The possible answer categories for questions about whether things go right or wrong and Russia is better than any other countries ranged on a Likert scale from 1 [absolutely disapprove/wrong way/disagree] to 4 [absolutely approve/right way/ agree]. For the purpose of analysis they were further coded either 1 [positive answer] or 2 [negative answer]. The questions about pride, shame and enemies had possible answers ranged from 0 [no] to 1 [yes].

The income was measured by the categories 1 [need to save to buy food and clothes], 2 [enough for food and clothes but need to save to buy a new fridge or television], 3 [enough to buy a new fridge or television but need to save to buy a new car], 4 [enough to buy a new car]. The survey also included

questions about family composition (children, parents) and years lived in Moscow.

4.2 Econometric model

In order to examine whether exposure to the threatening media content may alter people's attitudes, the study uses the effect of priming and framing of stimuli as a proxy for the effects of the Russian state media content and experimentally obtained attitudes towards internet censorship as a proxy for Putin's support. The econometric analysis aims to analyze whether the "Terrorist attack" priming affects the propensity to support internet censorship and through which channel the effect may occur.

The first step of analysis estimates a model, which specifies pro-censorship attitudes as a function of the exposure to the "Terrorist attack" priming. The linear probability model is estimated using ordinary least squares technique with heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors and looks as follows:

$$Pro_censor_{if} = \beta_0 + \beta_t terror_{if} + \begin{bmatrix} soc_dem \\ media \end{bmatrix}_{if} * \begin{bmatrix} \beta_{soc_dem} \\ \beta_{media} \end{bmatrix} + \varepsilon_{if} \quad (1)$$

where the outcome variable Pro_censor_{if} corresponds to the respondent's i support for censorship as it was expressed in the frame f . The dummy variable $terror_{if}$ takes on a value of one for the "Terrorist attack" condition and zero otherwise. The matrix soc_dem_{if} and $media_{if}$ represent a set of socio-demographic and media consumption dummy variables that capture observable characteristics of respondents. These characteristics include participants' gender, age, education, income, family composition (children and parents) as well as viewership of the state television and usage of an alternative internet sources and radio station "Echo of Moscow".

The second step of analysis investigates whether induced by the priming anxiety drives the priming effect on pro-censorship attitudes:

$$Pro_censor_{if} = \gamma_0 + \gamma_t terror_{if} + \gamma_a anxiety_{if} + \gamma_{ta}(terror * anxiety)_{if} + \begin{bmatrix} soc_dem \\ media \end{bmatrix}_{if} * \begin{bmatrix} \gamma_{soc_dem} \\ \gamma_{media} \end{bmatrix} + \varepsilon_{if} \quad (2)$$

The equation (2) includes interaction term between exposure to the "Terrorist attack" priming image and reported anxiety captured by the dummy variable $anxiety_{if}$ that measures emotional response coding one for feeling anxiety and zero otherwise. The inclusion of interaction term aims to detect the effect of threatening media content elicited through priming on support for internet censorship and, thus, Putin.

The potential concern is that the regressor $anxiety_{if}$ is endogenous and may be correlated with the regression error term. To address endogeneity issue and to obtain consistent parameter estimate, the $anxiety_{if}$ is instrumented

with the variable terror_{if} capturing exposure to the “Terrorist attack” image, and demographic and media consumption covariates. Therefore, as the third step, the paper estimates the following model that consists of a pro-censorship equation (3) and anxiety equation (4):

$$\text{pro_censor}_{if} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_a \text{anxiety}_{if} + \begin{bmatrix} \text{soc_dem} \\ \text{media} \end{bmatrix}_{if} * \begin{bmatrix} \alpha_{\text{soc_dem}} \\ \alpha_{\text{media}} \end{bmatrix} + \epsilon_{if} \quad (3)$$

$$\text{anxiety}_{if} = \delta_0 + \delta_t \text{terror}_{if} + \begin{bmatrix} \text{soc_dem} \\ \text{media} \end{bmatrix}_{if} * \begin{bmatrix} \delta_{\text{soc_dem}} \\ \delta_{\text{media}} \end{bmatrix} + v_{if} \quad (4)$$

where for each individual i , pro_censor_{if} is capturing a propensity to agree with internet censorship as expressed in the frame f , soc_dem_{if} and media_{if} represent a set of demographic and media consumption variables. The anxiety_{if} represents reported emotion and terror_{if} is a dummy for exposure to the “Terrorist attack” image. The variable terror_{if} captures exogenous experimental treatment that is hypothesized to induce anxiety. The model is exactly specified (one endogenous regressor and one instrument). The instrument terror_{if} is assumed to be uncorrelated with unobserved factors, which may influence pro-censorship attitudes. Presumably, the error terms ϵ_{if} and v_{if} are normally distributed with zero means and positive variances.

5 Data and descriptive analysis

This chapter presents a dataset obtained from the survey experiment. Firstly, it describes the data collection process and composition of the data sample by allocated priming conditions and tested outcome frames. Secondly, the chapter presents the descriptive statistics of socio-economic indicators of respondents. Thirdly, the chapter provides information on media consumption of the survey participants. Fourthly, it presents the current Putin’s approval ratings recorded during the survey. Fifthly, the last section investigates the rallying-around-the-flag phenomena by providing the respondents’ attitudes towards various aspects of Russia’s development.

5.1 Data collection and data sample

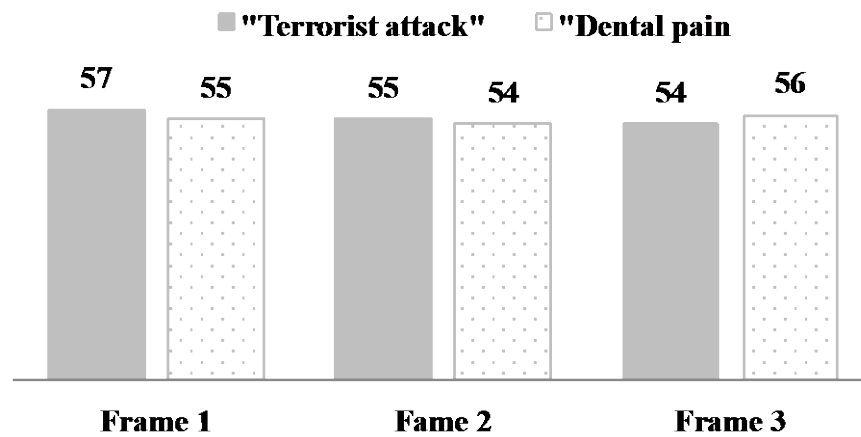
The data were gathered during the survey experiment, which took place in Moscow in August 2016. The experiment was conducted during consequent 9 days from 8 a.m. till 8 p.m. The detailed map of the experiment locations is provided in the Annex I (Picture 1). In order to avoid the repetition of respondents and the decrease of the traffic during particular hours, every day the experiment was conducted in 3-4 different places, moving from distant city areas to city center and back during the day. As it was indicated in Chapter 3,

the priming conditions and three outcome frames were allocated randomly and independently of the city area, day, hour and weather conditions.

On average every second approached person declined to participate in the survey and was not recorded as an observation. Nine people (less than 3% of the full sample) dropped out during the interview for a variety of reasons. Three of them declined to answer to “*these type of questions*”¹¹, others had to rush to the meeting. The responses of these respondents were included in the data set, although answers to some questions are missing.

The dataset consists of 331 observations. Figure 3 presents the number of observation per priming condition and allocated frame:

Figure 3
Number of observations by sampling unit



Source: Author's estimation

5.2 Descriptive statistics

Overall, the sample consists of 146 men (44 percent) and 185 women (56 percent) of 18-80 years old. On average the respondents are 40 years old and lived in Moscow for 28 years. A little bit more than half (56 percent) was born there. Half of respondents have a middle income (can afford to buy a new fridge or television but need to save to buy a car). The majority of respondents (68 percent) reported to have a high education, among them more women (71 percent), which is 9 percentage points higher than among men and the difference is significant at the 10 percent level ($p = 0.079$). 58 percent of respondents have children and 21 percent live with their parents. Almost a half of youngest respondents (48 percent of 18-25 years old) live with their parents. 43 percent of respondents watch only state TV-channels (Pervy, Rossia, NTV).

¹¹ Author's interviews with 30 years old woman, 65 years old woman 30 and 65 years old man (the age is approximate).

57 percent in addition to the state TV listens to the radio “Echo of Moscow” (17 percent of the total number of respondents) and uses some of prompted internet sites (12 percent). The difference across groups in both cases is insignificant. Table 2 (in Annex III) displays the demographic statistics of the sample.

5.3 Randomization balance

Descriptive statistics by allocated priming conditions (Table A, Annex III) confirm that randomization is balanced across socio-economic characteristics of respondents. Equality of means cannot be rejected at the 10 percent level for all comparisons across priming groups.

Some inter-group differences were observed in comparison of groups randomly assigned to different frames. The last column in Table A (Annex III) presents p -values of difference-in-means test. The group assigned to the Frame 2 (“*President Putin endorses internet censorship to fight against the terrorism*”) was a bit younger and had significantly less Moscow-born respondents than the group assigned to the Frame 1 (“*Internet censorship to fight against the terrorism*”). The respondents in the group assigned to the Frame 3 (“*Internet censorship limits freedom of expression*”) on average had significantly higher level of education than those assigned to the Frame 2. The group assigned to the Frame 2 also has significantly fewer respondents with children than the groups assigned to the Frame 1 and 3. The lowest share of listeners of the radio “Echo of Moscow” was found among respondents of the group assigned to the Frame 2 (8 percent), the highest – among those assigned to frame 1 (23 percent). The difference is significant at 1 percent level. Group differences are small and insignificant for gender, age, number of years lived in Moscow, income, living with parents, state TV and usage of alternative Internet sources.

5.4 Socio-economic characteristics of TV-viewers

57 percent of respondents used both TV and alternative media sources. Wherein 43 percent of the sample watched only state TV-channels and 11 percent of respondents used only alternative media such as radio “Echo of Moscow” and internet sites Slon, Dozhd’ and Meduza. The details of TV-viewership and socio-economic characteristics are presented in the Table B (Annex III).

The average state TV-channel viewer is a middle age woman with children, who has graduated from high school or college and has some financial constraints. Overall, the share of school or college graduates and people with middle-low income among users of alternative media is significantly low than of people with higher educational ($p < 0.01$) and income ($p < 0.10$) levels. The lowest TV-viewing was found among youngest respondents. Only 33 percent of 18-25 and 45 percent of 26-35 age clusters reported that they watched TV. The pattern remained similar for both men and women. The difference with other respondents is significant at the 1 percent level.

To some extent unexpectedly, living with parents did not make any difference in media consumption as respondents either watch TV together with their parents or “*get an update*” from them: “*my parents can watch TV the whole day... our dinner time often remind me a ‘political information’ class at school*”¹². Being born in Moscow or being moved there from another region does not influence media consumption either.

5.5 Reported Putin’s approval rating

78 percent of the survey respondents stated that they support President Putin and 21 percent of them absolutely approve his activity. The level of Putin’s approval among male and female respondents is almost equal (77 and 79 percent, respectively). The young respondents (18-45 years old) support Putin more than the older group (46-80 years old). The difference-in-means is 11 percentage points ($M_s = 0.83, 0.72$) and significant at a 5 percent level.

Correlation between Putin’s approval ratings and socio-economic characteristics of respondents are presented in Table C (Annex III). No difference in rating among respondents of various income level and family composition (having children, living with parents) was observed. Being born in Moscow or move to the capital might not influence the support for president either. However, the level of education matters. More educated respondents tend to approve Putin’s politics less than school and college graduates. His rating among university degree holders is 75 percent and the difference with 83 percent for other group is significant at 10 percent level ($p = 0.09$). Interestingly, some respondents motivated their support for Putin by his already high approval rating (“*80 percent of people support him*”¹³) or by expressing an opinion that there is no alternative (“*who else?*”¹⁴). This finding may suggested that, as discussed before, the direct questioning might lead to socially acceptable responses.

Media consumption habits are also related to Putin’s support. Thus, television viewers approve his politics significantly more than non-viewers (85 and 69 percent, respectively, $p = 0.001$). Contrary, only 50 percent of the alternative media’s consumers reported that they support the president. Interesting, that the share of Putin’s supporters among listeners of radio Echo of Moscow is higher than the share among users of Dozhd’, Slon, Meduza online magazines (68 and 58 percent, respectively). Snegovaya has noticed that the radio station dedicated almost a half of its air-time to the discussions with the “pro-Kremlin pundits” and that sort of “compromise” allowed the station to continue conveying independent content during another half (2015: 32). That co-optation of the station, however, might have a negative effect on its penetration. Some respondent mentioned that the used to listen to the station in the past, but stopped doing it some time ago as its “*content worsened*”¹⁵.

¹² Author’s interview with 28 years old woman.

¹³ Author’s interview with 47 years old man.

¹⁴ Author’s interview with 24 years old woman.

¹⁵ Author’s interview with 58 years old woman.

5.6 “Rallying-around-the-flag”

As discussed in Chapter 2 a high level of Putin’s approval rating could be associated with a patriotic consolidation. As Russian citizens are united in the assessment of the current country’s development, the effect of rallying-around-the-flag on Putin’s approval rating may be observed. Table 5 presents correlation coefficients of the president support and various worldviews that respondents of the survey hold nowadays.

Table 2
Correlation of Putin approval rating and worldviews

	Things go right	Proud	Russia is the best	Shame	Enemies
Putin’s approval rating	0.636 ***	0.365 ***	0.227 ***	-0.193 **	0.104
Things go right		0.311 ***	0.239 *	-0.262 ***	0.087
Proud			0.360 ***	-0.102	0.054
Russia is the best				-0.113	0.147
Shame					-0.007
<i>N</i>	263	272	270	269	288

Notes: Bonferroni adjustment for multiple-comparison procedures. */**/*** p <0.1/0.05/0.01, respectively.

Source: Author’s estimation

Seeing Russia’s development in the right direction, being proud about the country and agreeing with the statement “Russia is the best” are strongly and positively related to Putin’s approval ratings. More than a half of the survey respondents agreed with the statements that “things in Russia go the right way” and “Russia is better than any other countries” (58 and 62 percent, respectively). 78 percent of respondents are proud of modern Russia. The positive attitudes towards Russia’s development and the performance of Putin were mostly driven by the notion of the *“correct external politics”*¹⁶, which allowed to make the country *“stronger”*¹⁷ in the eyes of its rivals (*“good that they are afraid of us now like it was in USSR”*¹⁸). As respondents were satisfied with the *“comfort”* of living in Moscow¹⁹, they were also grateful to the President that he kept the peace despite all worrying international news²⁰. The respondents with negative sentiments about thing going on in Russia were referring to the overall destabilization of economy²¹ bad politicians in Putin’s team²², a continuous

¹⁶ Author’s interview with 61 years old woman.

¹⁷ Author’s interview with 51 years old woman.

¹⁸ Author’s interview with 63 years old man.

¹⁹ Author’s interview with 70 years old woman.

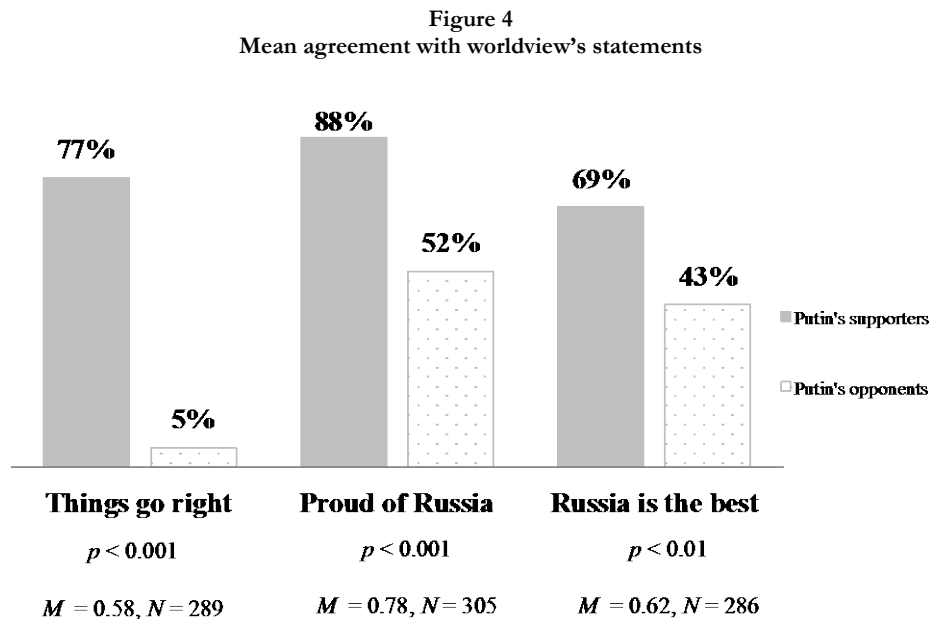
²⁰ Author’s interviews with 25 and 30 years old women.

²¹ Author’s interview with 39 years old woman.

²² Author’s interviews with 37 and 64 years old women.

fight with the entire world²³ and the lack of politicians who could be an alternative to Putin²⁴.

Majority of the respondents, who agreed that things going right, also reported that they were proud about modern Russia. Figure 4 illustrates the differences of attitudes expressed by Putin's supporters and opponents. The differences in means agreement with each of tested statement are large and statistically significant.



Source: Author's estimation

Most of the arguments had the same grounds – a “strong” Russia’s position in the international arena²⁵, “rightful” Crimea annexation²⁶ and overall “greatness” of the country reestablished by Putin²⁷.

At the same time, 78 percent of respondents confessed that they feel shame about things going on in Russia. Corruption, social security issues, low income of pensioners, incompetent politicians and continuous fights with other countries were the main reasons of that feeling (almost all respondents noticed these aspects). This feeling is more common among Putin’s opponents (92 percent), as Figure 5 illustrates.

²³ Author’s interview with 40 years old man.

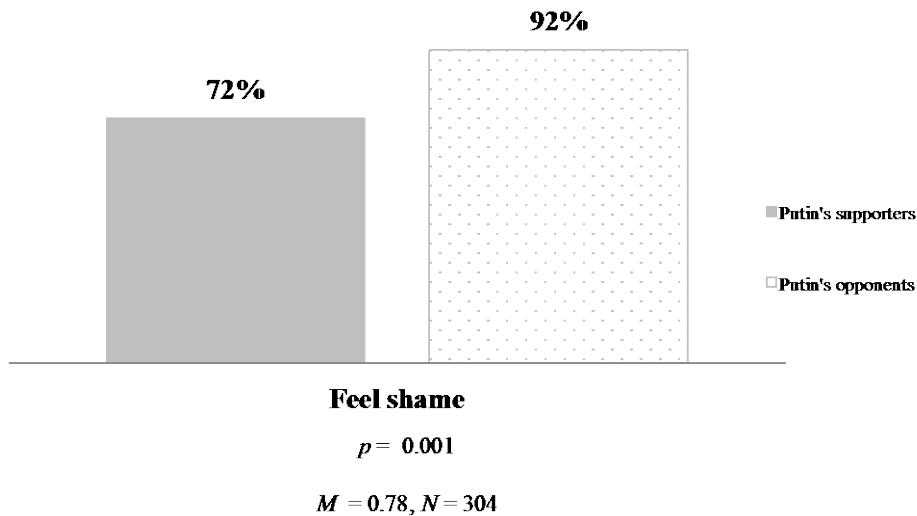
²⁴ Author’s interview with 37 years old man.

²⁵ Author’s interviews with 26 years old woman and 70 years old man.

²⁶ Author’s interview with 24 years old woman.

²⁷ Author’s interview with 63 and 36 years old women.

Figure 5
Feeling shame



Source: Author's estimation

The majority of respondents (84 percent) were absolutely convinced that Russia has enemies (Figure 6). Although a few respondents did not agree that Russia has enemies, some noticed that those enemies “*were created*” by the state media²⁸, many named both internal (politicians, oligarchs, Putin’s opposition) and external enemies (USA, Ukraine, ISIS, Turkey, Europe).

Overall, the opinion that Russia has enemies is weakly related to overall support for the president, but those who endorse Putin’s politics on average were more inclined to describe the world around Russia as “*full of enemies*”²⁹. The difference in mean agreement with this statement among Putin’s supporters and opponents is 9 percentage points and statistically significant ($p = 0.08$).

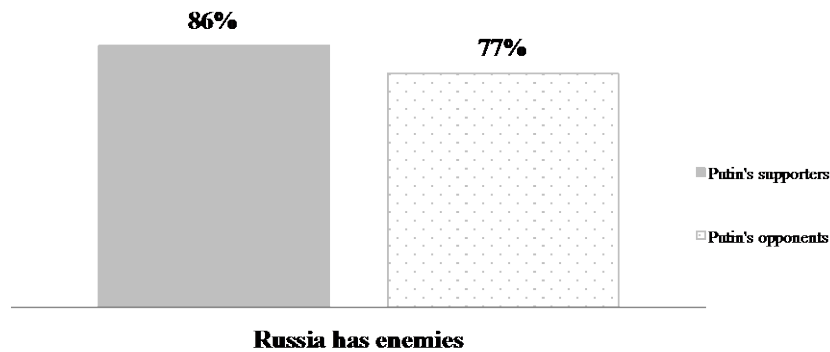
The reported high patriotism and idealization of Putin’s intentions and actions were strongly related to his high approval ratings measured by direct questioning. This finding suggests that there is, indeed, a consolidation of rallying-around-the-flag in Russia. A deterioration of economic situation was mostly attributed to the negative influence of actions of other countries and to the weakness of Russian government to tackle the issues. Only Putin’s opponents mentioned the role of Putin in the decline of people’s living standards. But even for them, his ongoing war with external and internal enemies seemed to justify the economic decline. Interestingly, the respondents did not link the threat of terrorism with Russia’s involvement in conflicts. While some mentioned that the government itself might stage terrorism attacks in order to threaten the citizens, others were anxious that the same government might not be capable to protect them. If Russians were afraid,

²⁸ Author’s interview with 60 years old woman and 47 years old man.

²⁹ Author’s interviews with 45 years old man and 57 years old woman, respectively.

they would probably consider that the defensive role of Putin is limited by the actions of his team.

Figure 6
Russia has enemies



$p = 0.08$

$M = 0.83, N = 304$

Source: Author's estimation

6 Results

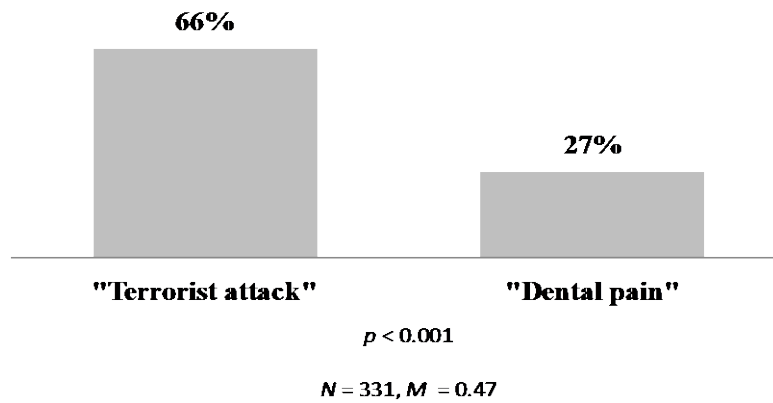
This chapter reports the results of the experiment and the statistical analysis of the obtained data. The main objective of the study is to find out whether the effects of threatening media content drive high approval rating of Putin. The chapter is structured as follows. The first section presents the obtained experimental evidence on the effect of priming on feeling anxiety. The second section evaluates the effect of priming and framing on attitudes towards censorship of internet. The third and fourth sections explore the potential role of the media in driving support for President Putin. Section 6.3 discusses the use of the support for internet censorship as a proxy for Putin's approval. Finally, section 6.4 provides estimates of the media effects on Putin's support.

6.1 Effectiveness of priming on induction of anxiety-related emotions

The study found out that the level of anxiety of Russian citizens is quite considerable as 47 percent of respondents of the survey reported that they have fear-related emotions, regardless of the particular priming condition. As expected, the results of the experiment provide evidence that the "Terrorist attack" priming was able to induce the confusion-anxiety emotions, and the

effect of the priming was large (Cohen's $d = 0.86$)³⁰ and significantly higher than the effect of the "Dental pain" priming ($M_s = 0.66$ and 0.27 , respectively, $t(329) = 7.84, p < 0.001$) (Figure 7). The result is comparable to 30 percentage points of the direct effect of the "Terrorist attack" conditioning on anxiety found by Echebarria Echabe and Perez in their laboratory experiments (2015).

Figure 7
Induction of anxiety by priming condition



Source: Author's estimation

In their comments to the images most respondents were concerned about protection of their relatives, rather than about their own safety: "...*I am not afraid about myself, but what if something happens to my parents, children...*"³¹. For some, terrorism became a "*usual thing*"³². Overall, in the experiment women were more emotionally affected than men ($t(329) = 3.59, p < 0.001$). The Figure 8 displays the emotional response by female and male respondents under each priming condition. However, the difference in feeling anxiety between men and women is only significant under the "Terrorist attack" priming ($t(164) = 3.33, p < 0.001$).

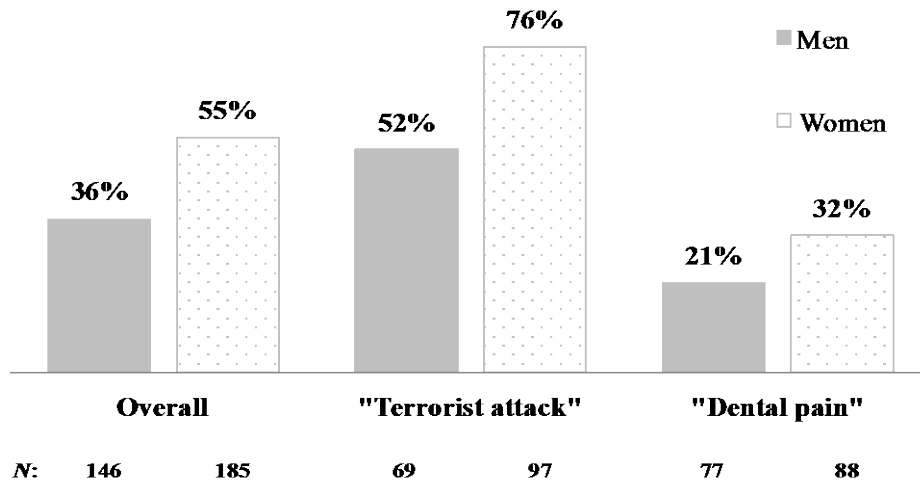
³⁰ Cohen's d was calculated using the formula: $d = \frac{M_1 - M_2}{\sqrt{((n_1 - 1)s_1^2 + (n_2 - 1)s_2^2) / df}}$

(Cohen 1992).

³¹ Author's interview with 43 years old man.

³² Author's interview with 20 years old woman.

Figure 8
Feeling anxiety by gender



Source: Author's estimation

As expected, regardless of priming condition, the respondents with children were feeling some sort of fear more often than those who do not have children (50 and 43 percent respectively) but the difference is not significant. These respondents also followed the general pattern of the emotional response to priming: among people with children 70 percent of those exposed to the "Terrorist attack" priming reported fear-related emotions, comparing to 28 percent of respondents with children under the "Dental pain" condition. Other socio-economic characteristics were not related to the propensity to feel anxiety either. The associated *p*-values are provided in Table 3.

Table 3
Mean Emotion by socio-economic characteristics

Variable	N	Mean	<i>Diff. in means p-value</i>
Female (=1, Male=0)	185	0.55	0.001
46+ years old (=1, Young=0)	113	0.48	0.741
Born in Moscow (=1, Not=0)	184	0.47	0.758
High education (=1, School/College=0)	221	0.46	0.848
Middle-high income (=1, Middle-low=0)	155	0.44	0.186
Have children (=1, no children=0)	178	0.44	0.200
Live with parents (=1, with parents=0)	69	0.54	0.230

Notes: Mean emotion total sample = 0.47, *N* = 331.

Source: Author's estimation

The general pattern of the emotional response to priming conditions, in which the “Terrorist attack” image induced higher feelings of confusion-anxiety than the “Dental pain” image, was observed across all socio-economic characteristics.

Another expected finding is that those who watch state TV-channels were feeling anxiety more often than non-viewers (52 and 41 percent, respectively), $t(320) = 1.82, p = 0.07$ (Table 7). Moreover, the difference in means of anxiety feeling between viewers of only state TV-channels and others is statistically significant at the 5 percent level, $t(320) = 2.02, p = 0.04$. This finding suggests that viewers of the state TV-channels, especially those who do not use any other media sources, are more prone to anxiety-related feelings than respondents with more diverse media consumption habits.

Emotional responses among users and non-users of alternative mass medias were not different, suggesting that listeners of the radio “Echo of Moscow” and users of internet magazines Slon, Dozhd’ and Meduza were not different from the average respondent of the survey in their propensity to feel anxiety. The associated p -values are provided in Table 4.

Table 4
Mean Emotion by the consumed media

Variable	N	Mean	<i>Diff. in means p-value</i>
Watch state TV-channels (=1, don't watch=0)	182	0.52	<i>0.069</i>
Watch only state TV-channels (=1, don't=0)	142	0.54	<i>0.044</i>
Listen to Radio "Echo of Moscow" (=1, don't=0)	54	0.46	<i>0.884</i>
Use Internet (any Slon, Dozhd', Meduza)	38	0.53	<i>0.477</i>
Use only alternative media	34	0.50	<i>0.731</i>

Notes: Mean emotion total sample = 0.47, $N = 331$

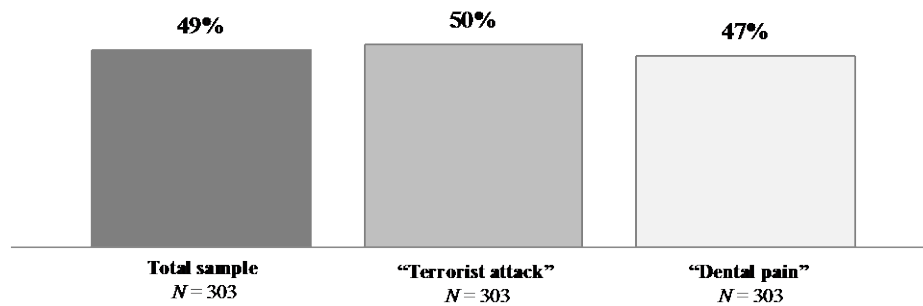
Source: Author's estimation

The priming was able to produce a high level of anxiety across groups with various media consumption habits. Interestingly, the emotional response of users of only alternative media to the “Terrorist attack” priming was lower than of viewers of only state TV-channels (mean emotion 0.53 and 0.74, respectively). However, the difference is not precisely estimated ($p = 0.12$), and the sample size of users of only alternative media under the threatening priming is very small ($n = 15$). Therefore, it is not possible to draw a credible conclusion.

6.2 Effect of priming and framing on the support for internet censorship

The results of the experiment suggest that the state control and censorship of internet and access of intelligence service authorities to citizen's correspondence was accepted by 48.5 percent of respondents, regardless of priming condition ($M = 0.49$, $N = 303$). Figure 9 reports pro-censorship attitudes for the total sample by priming conditions.

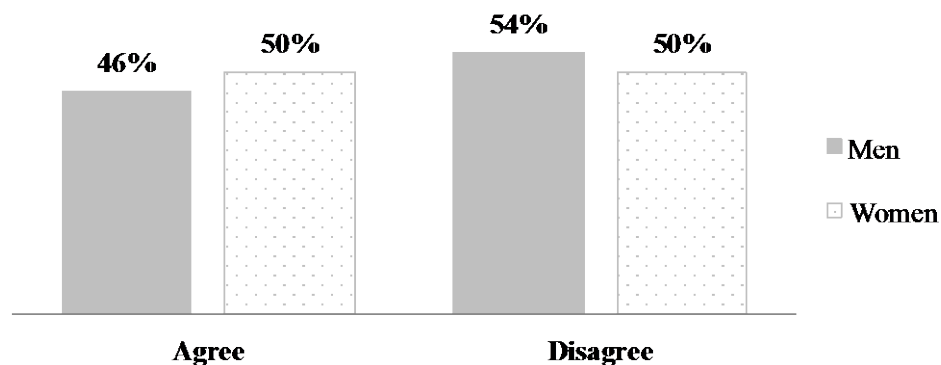
Figure 9
Pro-censorship attitudes by priming condition, total sample



Source: Author's estimation

The pro-censorship attitudes did not vary between male and female respondents ($M_s = 0.46$ and 0.50 , respectively, $p = 0.49$), as Figure 10 illustrates, but men tend to be against the state control more than women.

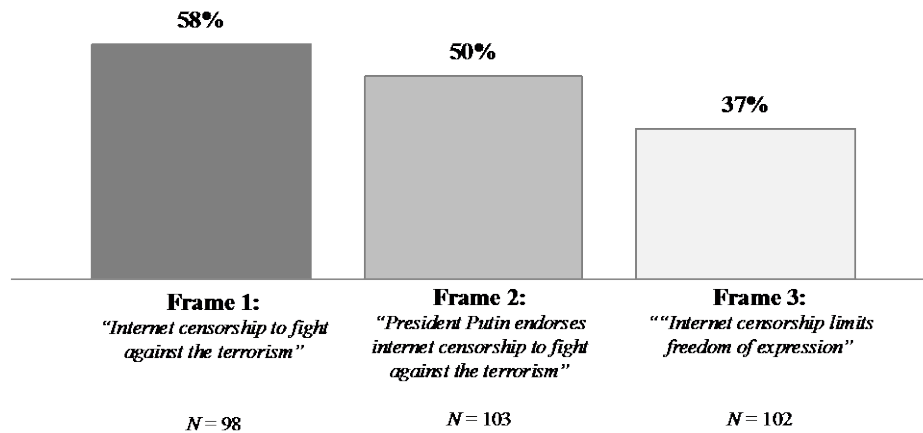
Figure 10
Pro-censorship attitudes by gender



Source: Author's estimation

Figure 11 illustrates the effect of framing on the attitudes towards censorship.

Figure 11
Pro-censorship attitudes by frame, total sample



Source: Author's estimation

Putin's endorsement did not influence overall support of pro-censorship, as the difference in means versus original frame is 8 percentage points and not significant ($p = 0.28$). However, the endorsement by the President created a larger group of opponents of the censorship than the original frame (disagreement responses accounted for 50% and 42%, respectively). Some explanations might be found in respondents' comments to this survey question. For example, some participants suggested that *"the state should employ other methods than censoring internet"*³³ and *"intelligence services must do their job better"*³⁴. Still, although slightly lower, the support for censorship in the frame endorsed by Putin was considerable. One young woman pointed out that she would have argued with the necessity of internet censorship to fight against terrorism, but since it was endorsed by Putin, she agreed with it as *"he [Putin] knows better what to do because he worked in intelligence services himself"*³⁵.

Another finding of the study is the effect of framing on pro-censorship attitudes of the respondents. Thus, when censorship of internet was framed as a potential loss of freedom of expression it got less approval. The difference in means between Frame 1 and Frame 3 is 21 percentage points and statistically significant ($p = 0.003$) at 1 percent level. Similar effect is observed comparing agreement with pro-censorship between endorsed by Putin Frame 2 and 3 (13 percentage points, $p = 0.057$). The lower support for censorship in Frame 3 implies that Russians may consider censorship of internet as limiting democratic freedom.

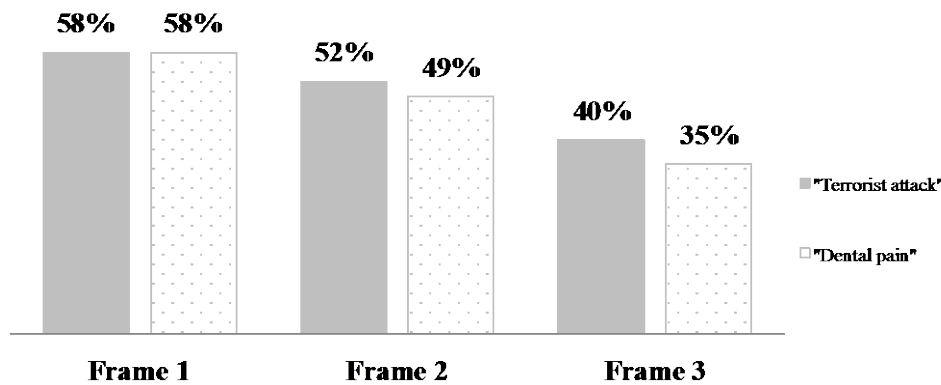
Does existential threat induced by priming condition alter pro-censorship attitudes? The results of the experiment suggest that it might not be the case.

^{33, 34} Author's interviews with 34 years old man and 51 years old woman, respectively.

³⁴ Author's interview with 36 years old woman.

Figure 12 illustrates that across three tested frames, the censorship of internet per se had a strong support among respondents, regardless of having been exposed to the “Terrorist attack” or “Dental pain” priming ($p = 0.61$). Existential threats induced by the “Terrorist attack” condition did not affect pro-censorship attitudes of the respondents exposed to the original frame (Frame 1), as the mean support is equal in both conditions (the details are provided in Table D in Annex III). This finding is similar to the results obtained by Gebauer et al. (2016). In their experiment the willingness to employ military forces was not influenced by the threatening priming because, as they suggested, the threatening effect of the tested article itself was already quite high and “comparable to an acute existential threat” (Gebauer et al. 2016: 1). In like manner, the threatening effect of the frame’s wording, which included words “fight” and “terrorism”, might be already substantial for respondents to agree with the necessity of the state control and censorship of internet.

Figure 12
Effect of framing and priming on pro-censorship attitudes by frame



Source: Author's estimation

The support for censorship endorsed by Putin was not affected by priming either. The difference in means between groups under the “Terrorist attack” and “Dental pain” primes is only 3 percentage points and not significant ($p = 0.77$).

A very small effect of existential threats on the support for the censorship was observed when respondents evaluated the neutral Frame 3. The mean support under the “Terrorist attack” was a bit higher than under the “Dental pain” priming ($M = 0.40$ and $M = 0.35$, respectively). That could suggest that Russians may trade off their democratic freedoms if the security of the state is at stake, but the difference in means is not significant ($p = 0.58$).

Additionally, the results suggest that the effect of priming was weaker than the effect of framing. Comparing the “Dental pain” conditions from Frame 3 and the Frame 1, t -test revealed a moderate effect of framing on the support

for censorship: $M = 0.35$ (Frame 3) and 0.58 (Frame 1), $t(98) = 2.42$, $p = 0.02$, $d = 0.49$. Similarly to findings of Gebauer et al. (2016), the frames' wording could influence the tested attitude.

6.3 Pro-censorship attitudes as a proxy for Putin's support

The present study hypothesized that the attitudes towards internet censorship might serve as a proxy for overall support for President Putin. Based on the suggestion made by Blair et al. (2014) the evaluation of the respondents' agreement with a controversial policy might help to infer the actual level of the leader's approval. The data gathered in the present experiment suggest that pro-censorship attitudes are strongly related to Putin's approval rates recorded from the direct questioning (Table 5).

Table 5
Correlation of Putin approval rating and pro-censorship attitudes

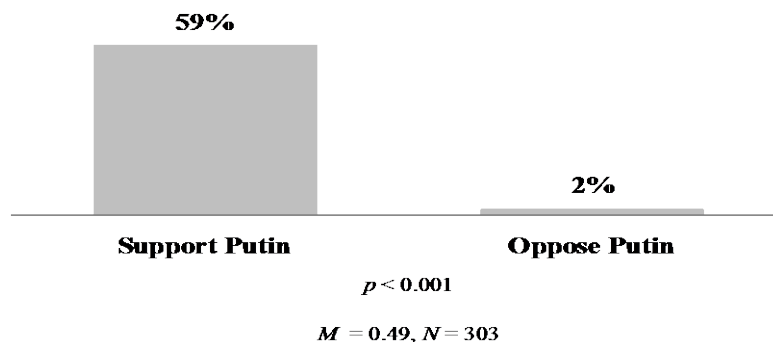
	Pro-censorship (total frame 1-3)	Frame 1	Frame 2	Frame 3
Putin's approval rating	0.328 ***	0.319 **	0.378 ***	0.309 **
<i>N</i>	275	87	96	92

Notes: */**/** $p < 0.1/0.05/0.01$, respectively

Source: Author's estimation

More than a half (59 percent) of Putin's supporters agreed with the necessity of the state control and censorship in internet as an instrument to fight with terrorism. Only 2 percent of those who said that they did not endorse the president could accept this policy (Figure 13).

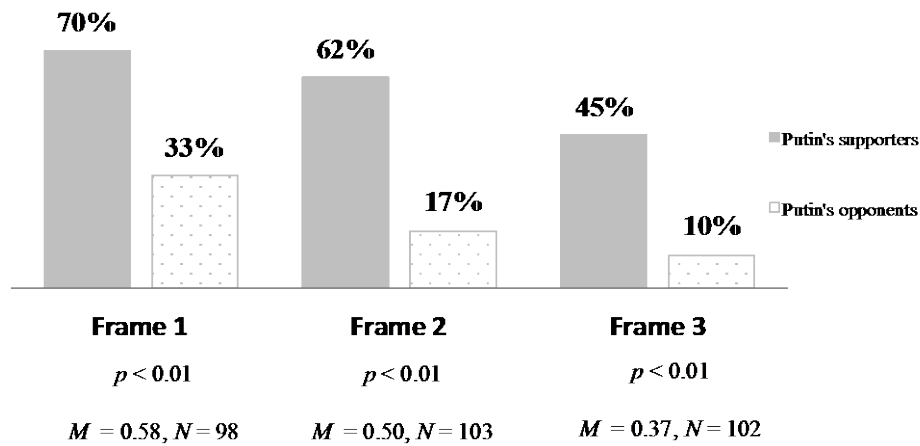
Figure 13
Pro-censorship attitudes, cumulative for Frame 1-3



Source: Author's estimation

Interestingly, as Figure 14 demonstrates, the censorship endorsed by Putin (Frame 2) obtained slightly less (8 percentage points) support among Putin's proponents than the general frame (Frame 3), although the mean Putin support was not different across frames ($M = 0.79$; 0.76 and 0.79 , respectively).

Figure 14
Pro-censorship attitudes by frame



Source: Author's estimation

Unexpectedly, the effect of the endorsed frame on pro-censorship attitudes of Putin's supporters is much smaller than the effect of the general frame (Cohen's d s = 0.17 and 0.51 , respectively), as Table 6 presents.

Table 6
Effect of framing on pro-censorship attitudes of Putin's supporters

	Frame 1	Frame 2	Frame 3
Mean support for censorship	0.70	0.62	0.45
Effect of framing	$t(135) = 2.98, p < 0.01, d = 0.51$		
		$t(142) = 2.01, p = 0.05, d = 0.33$	
	$t(137) = 0.99, p = 0.32, d = 0.17$		
N	66	73	71

Source: Author's estimation

Additionally to the effects of framing and priming discussed in the Section 6.2, this finding offers an interesting insight on possible alteration of Putin support. As censorship gets less public consent when Putin voices its necessity, Putin's endorsement of a controversial policy may potentially decrease his support among the citizens.

This finding also contributes to the general discussion about the strength of the framing and priming effects. As discussed in Section 6.2 the framing had a moderate effect (Cohen's $d = 0.49$) on pro-censorship attitudes. Under the same priming condition ("Dental pain") the effect of framing on pro-censorship attitudes of Putin's supporters was large ($t(67) = 3.28$, $p < 0.01$, $d = 0.79$). This finding may suggest that individuals that endorse Putin's politics are more susceptible to media framing. Table E (Annex III) provides mean censorship support among Putin's supporters by priming condition.

6.4 Effect of threatening media content on Putin's support

This section provides the results of econometric analysis of experimentally obtained data. The aim of the analysis is to investigate whether threatening media content may influence the approval ratings of President Putin. Threatening media content is elicited through the "Terrorist attack" priming. Consequently, three censorship frames are used as proxies for supporting Putin. The paper hypothesized that if those who were exposed to the "Terrorist attack" priming were more likely to support censorship, then Putin's high approval ratings may be attributed to media content.

Firstly, the section presents estimates of pro-censorship attitudes as a function of the exposure to the "Terrorist attack" priming. Secondly, the analysis investigates whether induced by the priming anxiety drives the priming effect on pro-censorship attitudes. The latter analysis is based on estimation of interaction between exposure to the image and reported emotion using estimations of a model with interaction term and an instrumental variable model. The descriptive statistics is provided in Table F (Annex III).

Pro-censorship attitudes as a function of the "Terrorist attack" priming

The econometric analysis showed that exposure to the "Terrorist attack" priming has small and insignificant effect on pro-censorship attitudes of the respondents. Table 7 presents the results of regression analysis.

The coefficient associated with viewership of only state TV-channels (Column 1) suggests that the respondents who watch only state television have 18 percentage points higher probability to support internet censorship, keeping other aspects constant. This effect can be driven by the male part of the sample as the effect of TV-viewership for men is larger and statistically different from the effect it has on women ($p = 0.06$). As expected, coefficients of living with parents and having children are also associated with support for censorship. As the respondents that live with parents are on average younger

(65 percent of those who live with parents are 18-35 years old), they tend to support censorship in internet less. Opposite, having children may increase the support for censorship as a means of child protection. Middle age (46 years old and older) and usage of alternative media may decrease the support for censorship, though only for male respondents.

Table 7
Pro-censorship attitudes as a function of “Terrorist attack” priming, cumulative for Frames 1-3

	Total (1)	Female (1a)	Male (1b)	<i>p</i> - values Δ estimate (1a) vs. (1b)
Exposure to "Terrorist attack" image	0.026 (0.057)	-0.011 (0.078)	0.089 (0.087)	0.38
Female	0.016 (0.058)			
Middle age (46-80)	-0.103 (0.072)	0.035 (0.101)	-0.247 ** (0.112)	0.05
Born in Moscow	0.010 (0.059)	-0.032 (0.082)	0.058 (0.084)	0.43
High education	-0.028 (0.064)	-0.053 (0.090)	0.037 (0.093)	0.47
Middle-high income	-0.044 (0.059)	-0.094 (0.082)	-0.018 (0.086)	0.51
Have children	0.132 * (0.069)	0.079 (0.097)	0.191 * (0.102)	0.41
Live with parents	-0.136 * (0.075)	-0.262 *** (0.096)	0.029 (0.115)	0.04
TV (only)	0.177 *** (0.064)	0.055 (0.088)	0.287 *** (0.094)	0.06
Alternative media only	-0.139 (0.091)	-0.054 (0.139)	-0.190 * (0.115)	0.43
<i>constant</i>	0.422 *** (0.091)	0.583 *** (0.118)	0.242 * (0.134)	
R-squared	0.09	0.10	0.18	
N	296	163	133	

Notes: Estimates of Specification (1) - (1) for the total sample, (1a) for female sub-sample, (1b) for male sub-sample.
Robust standard errors in parentheses. * / ** / *** $p < 0.1/0.05/0.01$, respectively

Source: Author's estimation

According to Terror Management Theory, the fear of death and related to it anxiety may increase people's faith in leaders (Greenberg et al. 1997, Landau et al. 2004). To check whether exposure to the “Terrorist attack” image and induced by it anxiety had an additional effect on pro-censorship attitudes, the analysis estimates a model with their interaction.

Interaction of the exposure to “Terrorist attack” image and reported anxiety

Table 8 provides results of regression of the cumulative support for internet censorship on exposure to the “Terrorist attack” image, reported anxiety, their interaction and a set of socio-demographic and media consumption covariates (Table G in Annex III provides additional details).

Table 8
Pro-censorship attitudes and exposure-anxiety interaction, cumulative for Frames 1-3

	Total (1)	Total (2)	Female (3)	Male (4)	<i>p</i> - values Δ estimate (3) vs. (4)
Exposure to "Terrorist attack" image	0.018 (0.062)	-0.018 (0.085)	0.187 (0.130)	-0.103 (0.116)	0.08
Anxiety	0.022 (0.063)	-0.019 (0.091)	0.167 (0.116)	-0.274 ** (0.126)	0.007
Interaction term: Exposure x Anxiety		0.078 (0.126)	-0.345 ** (0.170)	0.526 *** (0.179)	0.002
Middle age (46-80)	-0.103 (0.072)	-0.101 (0.072)	0.035 (0.100)	-0.231 ** (0.103)	0.05
Have children	0.131 * (0.069)	0.128 * (0.069)	0.099 (0.097)	0.179 * (0.097)	0.55
Live with parents	-0.137 * (0.075)	-0.141 * (0.075)	-0.247 ** (0.097)	-0.024 (0.114)	0.12
TV (only)	0.174 *** (0.064)	0.176 *** (0.064)	0.035 (0.089)	0.286 *** (0.089)	0.04
Alternative media only	-0.142 (0.093)	-0.132 (0.095)	-0.107 (0.141)	-0.145 (0.117)	0.83
<i>constant</i>	0.418 *** (0.092)	0.434 *** (0.095)	0.539 *** (0.127)	0.341 ** (0.138)	
R-squared	0.09	0.09	0.12	0.24	
N	296	296	163	133	
Demographic covariates	X	X	X	X	

Notes: Estimates of Specification (2) - (1) for the total sample, (2) for the total sample and includes interaction term, (3) for female sub-sample, (4) for male sub-sample. Robust standard errors in parentheses. */**/** $p < 0.1/0.05/0.01$, respectively.

Source: Author's estimation

The additional effect produced by interaction of the exposure to the priming image and reported anxiety looks substantial but statistically significant only for gender sub-samples. Addition of interaction term between exposure and anxiety does not change the coefficient associated with viewership of only state TV-channels. Other coefficients repeat the patterns of the previous estimation.

However, the difference in estimates for female and male sub-samples suggests that women may be more sensitive to the threatening priming, but the additional effect of priming and fear-related feelings may have a negative influence on the supportive attitude. Among other variables that might have a positive influence on Putin's approval – young age, high education and viewership of the state television, only the latter had an effect on increase of pro-censorship attitudes. The viewership of only state TV-channels has large

and significant effect, accounting for 18 percentage points increase in probability to support control and censorship in internet.

The analysis by frame reveals that framing may also contribute to the effect of threatening priming on pro-censorship attitudes. Table 9 illustrates the results obtained for each tested frame.

Table 9
Pro-censorship attitudes and exposure-anxiety interaction by frame

	Frame 1	Frame 2	Frame 3
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Exposure to "Terrorist attack" image	0.121 (0.151)	-0.205 (0.166)	-0.043 (0.133)
Anxiety	-0.195 (0.149)	0.018 (0.154)	0.038 (0.177)
Interaction term: Terror x Emotion	0.013 (0.209)	0.210 (0.216)	0.157 (0.240)
Middle age (46-80)	-0.106 (0.117)	0.077 (0.132)	-0.233 * (0.136)
Have children	0.247 ** (0.121)	0.135 (0.121)	0.064 (0.128)
Live with parents	0.049 (0.136)	-0.264 ** (0.125)	-0.161 (0.139)
TV (only)	0.209 *** (0.125)	0.197 * (0.106)	0.143 (0.113)
Alternative media only	-0.289 ** (0.141)	-0.066 (0.244)	0.044 (0.175)
<i>constant</i>	0.538 (0.198)	0.494 *** (0.153)	0.357 ** (0.153)
R-squared	0.21	0.167	0.114
N	97	100	99
Demographic covariates	X	X	X

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. */**/** $p < 0.1/0.05/0.01$, respectively.

Source: Author's estimation

Thus, the substantial but different in sign effects of exposure to the "Terrorist attack" image and reported anxiety on pro-censorship in Frame 1 contribute to the relatively small additional interaction effect. It seems that the more frightened the people are, the less they might support the state interference in their private life. This finding might suggest that people do not trust methods the Russian intelligence services employ or have low confidence in their capacity to protect the citizens. This notion has some qualitative evidence as

some respondents suggested that the state (or Putin) might employ other methods to fight with terrorism rather than “*breach people’s privacy*”³⁶.

The additional effect of the interaction term is still insignificant but substantial in Frame 2 and Frame 3. The negative sign of coefficients associated with effect of the exposure to threatening image and relatively small coefficients of anxiety variable could possibly be attributed by the certain “*threshold of negativity*” - the more people are exposed to the threatening news, the less they feel frightened, as some respondents noticed.

Moreover, some of included covariates also contribute to the formation of pro-censorship attitudes but their effect might be different for different frames. Having children could increase pro-censorship attitudes but only in Frame 1. The coefficient associated with living with parents is substantial and significant only in Frame 2. The variation may also be explained by the differences in socio-demographic characteristics of respondents assigned to the frames. The respondents appointed to evaluate Frame 1 on average had children more often than respondents evaluated Frame 2. The latter group was a bit younger – the respondents were on average 38 years old comparing to 41 years old in Frame 1 and 3. Therefore, more of them lived with parents and had no children. Viewership of state TV-channels and usage of alternative media may have an offsetting effect on each other (Frame 1).

The findings presented in these two sections suggest that viewership of state television may affect respondents’ attitudes towards a political issue or a leader. However, the role of the threatening priming in this process is not clear, as the study was not able to detect its effect. The concern about endogeneity of anxiety-related feelings and its influence on the robustness of the estimates remains. The following section presents the results of instrumental variable estimation.

Pro-censorship as a function of anxiety (IV)

The potential concern is that feeling of anxiety is endogenous and may be correlated with unobserved characteristics of the respondents. To address the endogeneity issue and to obtain consistent parameter estimate, the variable recording the reported anxiety is instrumented with the variable capturing exposure to the “Terrorist attack” image and demographic and media consumption covariates. The exogenous experimental priming of an exposure to the “Terrorist attack” image was supposed to induce fear-related emotions in respondents but be uncorrelated with unobserved factors influencing pro-censorship attitudes. Table 10 presents results of the estimation (the detailed Table H is in Annex III).

³⁶ Author’s interviews with 43 years old man and 27 years old woman.

Table 10
Pro-censorship attitudes, instrumental variable specification

Dependent variable:	Instrumental Variable Specification		OLS Specification
	Anxiety	Pro-censorship	Pro-censorship
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Exposure to "Terrorist attack" image	0.382 *** (0.054)	-	-
Anxiety	-	0.069 (0.146)	0.029 (0.059)
Middle age (46-80)	-0.036 (0.065)	-0.101 (0.071)	-0.103 (0.072)
Have children	0.035 (0.063)	0.129 * (0.068)	0.132 * (0.069)
Live with parents	0.050 (0.068)	-0.139 * (0.073)	-0.137 * (0.074)
TV (only)	0.107 * (0.058)	0.169 (0.064)	0.174 *** (0.064)
Alternative media only	0.163 (0.103)	-0.150 (0.093)	-0.144 (0.093)
<i>constant</i>	0.175 *** (0.080)	0.410 *** (0.098)	0.423 *** (0.090)
N	296	296	296
Demographic covariates	X	X	X

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. */**/** $p < 0.1/0.05/0.01$, respectively

Source: Author's estimation

The first stage regression reveals a high degree of correlation between an exposure to the "Terrorist attack" image and the reported anxiety, conditional on the other covariates. F -statistics is large and statistically significant ($F(1,285) = 50.67, p < 0.01$), suggesting the instrument is not correlated with disturbance error and strongly related to the reported anxiety. However, the results of the second stage regression show that the IV coefficient associated with anxiety is not different from zero ($p = 0.64$). The finding suggests that conditioning on other factors, anxiety may not play an important role in determining pro-censorship attitudes. The estimation of the equation with linear regression (Column 3) yields consistent results.

The results of the data analysis presented in this chapter suggest that state-control media plays a role in driving support for President Putin. In line with previous findings on media influence (Entman 1989, Shanahan and Morgan 2004), the direct effects of media influence may be not very large. However, the evidence of the present study could not support the hypothesis that Russian state media outlets use threatening content to reinforce citizens' approval of the president's actions.

7 Discussion of the results

The present research paper aimed to evaluate the effects of state-controlled media on the persistence of high approval ratings of President Putin. The study examined whether the threatening media content elicited through terrorism-related priming may alter respondents' attitudes towards a controversial policy of internet censorship. The latter was used as a proxy for the President's support. The study used data gathered during the survey experiment. The methodological choices were informed by previous research on media effects and psychological foundations of the effects of existential threats on people's behavior studied under the ambit of Terror Management Theory.

The study has four main findings. The first set of results is related to media effects elicited through "Terrorist attack" priming. The experiment provided evidence that the "Terrorist attack" priming was able to induce the confusion-anxiety emotions, and the effect of the priming was large (Cohen's $d = 0.86$) and significantly higher than the effect of the "Dental pain" priming ($M_s = 0.66$ and 0.27 , respectively, $t(329) = 7.84$, $p < 0.001$). The result is comparable to 30 percentage points of the direct effect of the "Terrorist attack" conditioning on anxiety found by Echebarria Echabe and Perez in their laboratory experiments (2015). At the same time, analogous to the results obtained by Gebauer et al. (2016) the study found out that threatening priming might not affect tested attitudes. The threatening effect of the frame's wording, which included words "fight" and "terrorism", might be already substantial for respondents to agree with the necessity of the censorship policy.

The second finding further clarifies the influence of message framing. The study found evidence that framing effect the media could be stronger than the effect of priming. Comparing pro-censorship attitudes under the "Dental pain" condition in neutral (Frame 3) and general (Frame 1) frames, the analysis revealed a moderate effect of framing on the support for censorship ($d = 0.49$). This finding is comparable with previous research on media influence, which suggested that frames could affect the tested attitudes (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007, Scheufele and Iyengar 2012). The framing effect was stronger for Putin's supporters ($d = 0.79$) suggesting that individuals who endorse Putin's politics may be more susceptible to media framing. Moreover, the effect of the endorsed frame on pro-censorship attitudes of Putin's supporters was much smaller than the effect of the general frame (Cohen's $d_s = 0.17$ and 0.51 , respectively). This finding offers an interesting insight on possible alteration of Putin's support. As censorship gets less public consent when Putin voices its necessity, Putin's endorsement of a controversial policy may potentially decrease his support among the citizens.

The third finding is related to the conceptualization of proxy for Putin's approval. The analysis of the data suggested that pro-censorship attitudes might serve as proxy for Putin's support due to their strong correlation with his approval rates recorded by the direct questioning. The study found evidence that Putin's public approval may not be indisputable as his supporters

could be against some of his policies, while his opponents could endorse his actions. The evaluation of the respondents' agreement with a controversial policy helped to illustrate the actual level of Putin's approval, as suggested by Blair et al. (2014).

The fourth finding corresponds to the overarching goal of the study to evaluate effects of the threatening media content on a persistence of high approval ratings of President Putin. The results of the present research suggest that state-control media play a certain role in driving support for President Putin. In line with previous findings on media influence (Entman 1989 Shanahan and Morgan 2004), the direct effects of media, though, may be small. The present research found out that the viewers of the state TV-channels, especially those who do not use any other media sources, could be more prone to anxiety-related feelings than individuals with more diverse media consumption habits. However, the study was not able to detect the effect of threatening priming on tested attitudes. That led to the conclusion that the evidence obtained by the present experiment could not support the hypothesis that Russian state media outlets use threatening content to reinforce citizens' approval of the President's actions.

8 Conclusion

This research paper studied the effects of the media on the support for a leader. The study had three main objectives. Firstly, it investigated whether experimental priming is able to induce anxiety-related emotions in the survey respondents. Secondly, the research analyzed how priming affected respondents' attitudes towards controversial internet censorship policy. Thirdly, the paper drew inferences about the potential role of the media in driving citizens' support for Putin. This chapter summarizes the main findings of the current research and compares them with the results of previous studies. The study used data obtained during survey experiment conducted on the streets of Moscow with randomly selected respondents. The dataset consists of 331 observations (146 males and 185 females of 18-80 years old).

The results of the study suggest that while threatening media priming may induce the confusion-anxiety emotions in viewers, its effect on their attitudes is not obvious. The framing effect was stronger, especially for Putin's supporters. The evidence of the study implies that the Putin's support among Russians could be disputable and the framing experiment may help to infer the actual level of his approval. The paper shows that while state-control media played a certain role in driving support for President Putin, his high approval ratings need not be because of threatening media content. The study results suggest that in Russian context other aspects rather than threatening may assist in building public support for a leader. Possibly, Putin's charismatic personality and the perceived reestablishment of the perceived greatness of Russia may have a stronger influence on people's faith in the President than a search for symbolic protection against existential threats.

The study adds to the existing literature on priming and framing effects of media on the formation of public opinion (see, for example, Entman 1989 and Shanahan and Morgan 2004) and contributes to terror management research (see Greenberg et al. 1997 and Gebauer et al. amongst others). Though the present experiment provides some insights on peculiarities of the behavioral research outside lab, it would have been expanded by use of panel data as it may provide a supportive evidence of the effects of media on alteration of particular attitudes. Additionally, the content analysis of media messages could address the issue of relatively small media influence by detecting the cultivation effects of various media and narratives. Moreover, experimentation that includes investigation of various psychological traits may improve understanding of cognitive barriers that can potentially limit respondents' susceptibility to treatment. Future research can enhance understanding of what drives people's faith in political leaders by assessing his or her personality traits and leadership style and by comparing experimental results from various countries and cultures.

References

- ‘Irina Yarovaya’s ‘Anti-Terrorist’ War on Civil Rights: This Friday, Russian Lawmakers Will Vote on some of the Harshes Legislation in Post-Soviet History’, (2016) Meduza. Accessed 01 November 2016 <<https://meduza.io/en/feature/2016/06/22/irina-yarovaya-s-anti-terrorist-war-on-civil-rights>>.
- ‘Moscow Metro Map’ (Image) (n.d.) Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://img.artlebedev.ru/metro/map2/vector/moscow-metro-map-en-ru-2.1.2.pdf>>.
- ‘Original 482649’ (Image) (n.d.). Accessed 01 November 2016 <http://kirov24news.ru/images/sampled/482649_original.jpg>.
- ‘Putin approval Rating’ (Last updated 2016) (a webpage of Levada-Center). Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://www.levada.ru/en/ratings/>>.
- ‘Октябрьские рейтинги одобрения и доверия (October Ratings of Approval and Trust)’ (Last updated 2016) (a webpage of Levada-Center). Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://www.levada.ru/2016/10/26/oktyabrskie-rejtingi-odobreniya-i-doveriya-4/>>.
- ‘Россияне Боятся Террактов, но Верят в Свои Спецслужбы (Russians are Afraid of Terrorist Acts but Trust their Intelligence Services)’ (Last updated 2016) (a webpage of Levada-Center). Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://www.levada.ru/2016/04/05/rossiyane-boyatsya-teraktov-no-veryat-v-svoi-spetssluzhby/>>.
- ‘Телевидение остается основным источником новостей (Television Remains the Main Source of News)’ (Last updated 2016) (a webpage of Levada-Center). Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://www.levada.ru/2016/08/12/televidenie-ostaetsya-tem-istochnikom-novostej/>>.
- ‘Bolit-Zub’ (Image) (n.d.) Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://dentozub.ru/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Bolit-zub.jpg>>.
- ‘What if a Tooth Gets Knocked Out in an Accident’ (Image) (n.d.) Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://ibreket.ru/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/what-if-a-tooth-gets-knocked-out-in-an-accident.jpg>>.
- ‘Что Желает Общество: Стремление Россиян к Контролю Интернета (what the Society Wishes: Intention of Russians to Control Internet)’ (Last updated 2015) (a webpage of WCIOM). Accessed 01 November 2016. <http://wciom.ru/fileadmin/file/reports_conferences/2015/2015-08-03_internet.pdf>.
- ‘Интернет-Цензура (Censorship of Internet)’ (Last updated 2014) (a webpage of Levada-Center). Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://www.levada.ru/2014/10/14/internet-tsenzura/>>.
- ‘Эпохи в Жизни Страны: Ельцин, Горбачев, Брежнев (Eras in the Country's Life: Yeltsin, Gorbachev, Brezhnev)’ (Last updated 2011) (a webpage of Levada-Center). Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://www.levada.ru/2011/01/25/epohi-v-zhizni-strany-eltsin-gorbachev-brezhnev/>>.
- ‘Research Materials: Mortality Salience (MS) Manipulation’ (Last updated 2008) (a webpage of Cathy Cox & Jamie Arndt, University of Missouri-Columbia). Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://www.tmt.missouri.edu/www/materials.html>>.

- Arndt, J., J. Greenberg and A. Cook (2002) 'Mortality Salience and the Spreading Activation of Worldview-Relevant Constructs: Exploring the Cognitive Architecture of Terror Management', *Journal of Experimental Psychology: General* 131(3): 307-324.
- Becker, E. (1973) *The Denial of Death*. New York: The Free Press.
- Becker, E. (1971) *Birth and Death of Meaning. An Interdisciplinary Perspective on the Problem of Man*. (2nd edn) New York: The Free Press.
- Blair, G., K. Imai and J. Lyall (2014) 'Comparing and Combining List and Endorsement Experiments: Evidence from Afghanistan', *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4): 1043-1063.
- Burke, B.L., A. Martens and E.H. Faucher (2010) 'Two Decades of Terror Management Theory: A Meta-Analysis of Mortality Salience Research', *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 14(2): 155-195.
- Chong, D. and J.N. Druckman (2007) 'Framing Theory', *Annual Review of Political Science* 10: 103-126.
- Cohen, F., D.M. Ogilvie, S. Solomon, J. Greenberg and T. Pyszczynski (2005) 'American Roulette: The Effect of Reminders of Death on Support for George W. Bush in the 2004 Presidential Election', *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy* 5(1): 177-187.
- Cohen, J. (1992) 'A Power Primer', *Psychological bulletin* 112(1): 155-159.
- Cohen, F., S. Solomon, M. Maxfield, T. Pyszczynski and J. Greenberg (2004) 'Fatal Attraction: The Effects of Mortality Salience on Evaluations of Charismatic, Task-Oriented, and Relationship-Oriented Leaders', *Psychological Science* 15(12): 846-851.
- Colton, T. and H. Hale (2009) 'The Putin Vote: Presidential Electorates in a Hybrid Regime', *Slavic Review* 68(3): 473-503.
- Echebarria Echabe, A. and S. Perez (2015) 'The Impact of Different Procedures to Arouse Mortality Awareness on Various Worldview Dimensions', *European Journal of Social Psychology* 46(3): 392-399.
- Entman, R.M. (1989) 'How the Media Affect what People Think: An Information Processing Approach', *The journal of Politics* 51(2): 347-370.
- Frye, T., S. Gehlbach, K.L. Marquardt and O.J. Reuter (2016) 'Is Putin's Popularity Real?', *Post-Soviet Affairs* : 1-15.
- Gebauer, F., M.H. Raab and C. Carbon (2016) 'Imagine All the Forces. The Impact of Threatening News Coverage on the Willingness to Military Engage in the Resurgence of the East Versus West Conflict', *Journal of Media Psychology*: 1-7.
- Greenberg, J. and J. Arndt (2012) 'Terror Management Theory', in P. Van Lange, A. Kruglanski and E.T. Higgins (eds) *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, Vol. 1, pp. 398-415. London: SAGE Publications.
- Greenberg, J., S. Solomon and T. Pyszczynski (1997) 'Terror Management Theory of Self-Esteem and Cultural Worldviews: Empirical Assessments and Conceptual Refinements', *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 29: 61-139.
- Gudkov, L. (Last updated 2016) 'Имморализм посттоталитарного общества в России (Immorality of Post-Totalitarian Society in Russia)' (a webpage of Levada-Center). Accessed 29 October 2016
<<http://www.levada.ru/2016/07/26/immoralizm-posttotalitarnogo-obshhestva-v-rossii/>>.

- Gunther, A.C. (1998) 'The Persuasive Press Inference Effects of Mass Media on Perceived Public Opinion', *Communication Research* 25(5): 486-504.
- Guriev, S. and D. Treisman (2015) 'How Modern Dictators Survive: An Informational Theory of the New Authoritarianism', NBER Working Paper Series, No. 21136. Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Hansen, F.S. (2015) 'Framing Yourself into a Corner: Russia, Crimea, and the Minimal Action Space', *European Security* 24(1): 141-158.
- Hayes, A.F., K.J. Preacher and T.A. Myers (Last updated 2016) 'Mediation and the Estimation of Indirect Effects in Political Communication Research' (a webpage of Kristopher J. Preacher). Accessed 01 November 2016
<http://quantpsy.org/pubs/hayes_preacher_myers_2011.pdf>.
- Iyengar, S. and D.R. Kinder (2010) *News that Matters: Television and American Opinion*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Kahneman, D. and A. Tversky (1984) 'Choices, Values, and Frames', *American Psychologist* 39(4): 341-350.
- Kahneman, D. and A. Tversky (1979) 'Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision Under Risk', *Econometrica* 47(2): 263-291.
- Kalinin, K. (2014) 'A Study of Social Desirability Bias in the Russian Presidential Elections, 2012', paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 12 January. Social Science Research Network.
- Kolesnikov, A. (Last updated 2016) 'Do Russians Want War?' (a webpage of Carnegie Moscow Center). Accessed 29 October 2016
<<http://carnegie.ru/2016/06/14/do-russians-want-war-pub-63743>>.
- Landau, M.J., S. Solomon, J. Greenberg, F. Cohen, T. Pyszczynski, J. Arndt et al. (2004) 'Deliver Us from Evil: The Effects of Mortality Salience and Reminders of 9/11 on Support for President George W. Bush', *Personality & Social Psychology Bulletin* 30(9): 1136-1150.
- Lecheler, S., A.R. Schuck and C.H. de Vreese (2013) 'Dealing with Feelings: Positive and Negative Discrete Emotions as Mediators of News Framing Effects', *Communications* 38(2): 189-209.
- Levitt, S.D. and J.A. List (2007) 'What do Laboratory Experiments Measuring Social Preferences Reveal About the Real World?', *The Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21(2): 153-174.
- McCombs, M.E. and D.L. Shaw (1972) 'The Agenda-Setting Function of Mass Media', *Public Opinion Quarterly* 36(2): 176-187.
- McCombs, M. and N.J. Stroud (2014) 'Psychology of Agenda-Setting Effects: Mapping the Paths of Information Processing', *Review of Communication Research* 2(1): 68-93.
- McFaul, M. and K. Stoner-Weiss (Last updated 2008) 'Myth of the Authoritarian Model. How Putin's Crackdown Holds Russia Back' (a webpage of ResearchGate). Accessed 01 November 2016
<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Michael_Mcfaul/publication/265630359_The_Myth_of_the_Authoritarian_Model_How_Putin's_Crackdown_Holds_Russia_Back/links/54acce420cf23c69a2b84a5c.pdf>.
- Morgan, M. and J. Shanahan (2010) 'The State of Cultivation', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 54(2): 337-355.

- Powell, T.E., H.G. Boomgaarden, K. De Swert and C.H. de Vreese (2015) 'A Clearer Picture: The Contribution of Visuals and Text to Framing Effects', *Journal of Communication* 65(6): 997-1017.
- Pyszczynski, T., S. Solomon and J. Greenberg (2003) 'In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror', 'In the Wake of 9/11: The Psychology of Terror', In the Wake of 9/11: Rising Above the Terror, pp. 189-198. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Scheufele, D.A. and S. Iyengar (2012) 'The State of Framing Research: A Call for New Directions', *The Oxford Handbook of Political Communication Theories*. New York: Oxford University Press: 1-26.
- Scheufele, D.A. and D. Tewksbury (2007) 'Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models', *Journal of communication* 57(1): 9-20.
- Shanahan, J. and M. Morgan (2004) *Television and Its Viewers: Cultivation Theory and Research*. Cambridge University Press.
- Snegovaya, M. (Last updated 2015) 'Stifling the Public Sphere: Media and Civil Society in Russia' (a webpage of National Endowment for Democracy). Accessed 29 October 2016 <<http://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/Stifling-the-Public-Sphere-Media-Civil-Society-Egypt-Russia-Vietnam-Full-Report-Forum-NED.pdf#page=26>>.
- Treisman, D. (2014) 'Putin's Popularity since 2010: Why did Support for the Kremlin Plunge, then Stabilize?', *Post-Soviet Affairs* 30(5): 370-388.
- Treisman, D. (2011) 'Presidential Popularity in a Hybrid Regime: Russia Under Yeltsin and Putin', *American Journal of Political Science* 55(3): 590-609.
- Tversky, A. and D. Kahneman (1981) 'The Framing of Decisions and the Psychology of Choice', *Science* 211(4481): 453-458.
- Volkov, D. (Last updated 2015) 'Настроения Российских Элит после Крыма (the Mood of Russian Elites After Crimea)' (a webpage of Carnegie Moscow Center). Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://carnegie.ru/2015/11/10/ru-61925/ildv>>.
- Volkov, D. and S. Goncharov (Last updated 2014) 'Российский Медиа-Ландшафт: Телевидение, Пресса, Интернет (Russian Media Landscape: Television, Press, Internet)' (a webpage of Levada Center). Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://www.levada.ru/2014/07/18/rossijskij-media-landshaft-televidenie-pressa-internet-2/>>.
- Zakharov, A. (2015) 'Эффект 'консолидации вокруг знамени' (Effect of the 'Rally-Around-the-Flag'), Discussion 'Russia 2014: Puzzles of Public Opinion' at the Liberal Mission Foundation' Levada-Center. Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://www.levada.ru/2015/02/05/rossiya-2014-zagadki-obshhestvenno-gomnieniya/>>.

Annex I

Picture 1
Moscow metro map and interview locations



- *interview locations*

Source: 'Moscow Metro Map' (Image) (n.d.) Accessed 01 November 2016
<<http://img.artlebedev.ru/metro/map2/vector/moscow-metro-map-en-ru-2.1.2.pdf>>, Author's
modification

Picture 2
Image for “Terrorist attack” priming



Source: ‘Original 482649’ (Image) (n.d.). Accessed 01 November 2016
<http://kirov24news.ru/images/sampled/482649_original.jpg>.

Picture 3
Images for “Dental pain” priming

(male image was used for men, female image was used for women)



Source: ‘What if a Tooth Gets Knocked Out in an Accident’ (Image) (n.d.) Accessed 01 November 2016
<<http://ibrek.ru/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/what-if-a-tooth-gets-knocked-out-in-an-accident.jpg>>.

Source: ‘Bolit-Zub’ (Image) (n.d.) Accessed 01 November 2016 <<http://dentozub.ru/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Bolit-zub.jpg>>.

Annex II

Questionnaire

1. **Priming (randomized) (Emotion 1-4: totally disagree – absolutely agree)**
 - 1.1 Please look at the picture and tell me what you see
 - 1.2 Can you please tell me which physical or emotional feeling you have at this moment?
 - 1.3 Which emotions?
 - 1.4 Does the picture provoke feeling of anxiety, confusion... (*top-of-mind response*)

2. **Framing (Censorship (1-4))**
 - 2.1 I will read you one sentence. Please listen and tell me to which extent you agree with it
 - 2.2 *Censorship frame (randomized)*
 - 2.3 *If agreed:* Since you agreed, will you sign a (hypothetical) petition to stop internet censorship?

3. **Survey**
 - 3.1 Do you in general support Putin as president of Russia? (1-4)
 - 3.2 Do you think in Russia things are going right or wrong way? (1-4)
 - 3.3 Are you proud about modern Russia? (0-1) (no – yes)
 - 3.4 To which extent you may agree/disagree with the statement that Russia is better than any other country? (1-4)
 - 3.5 Is there anything in internal or external affair that makes you feel shame for the country? (0-1)
 - 3.6 What exactly?
 - 3.7 Do you think that Russia has enemies?
 - 3.8 If so, who?
 - 3.9 Did you hear about Yarovaya's anti-terrorism law?
 - 3.10 If yes, do you support it or you think the law should be repealed?
 - 3.11 How old are you?
 - 3.12 How can you define the level of you income (*income statements*)
 - 3.13 You graduated from university, right? *If not, what level of education?*
 - 3.14 Do you have children?
 - 3.15 Are you parent live together with you?
 - 3.16 Which TV-channels, radio stations and internet sources you normally use? (*prompt*)

Table B: Socio-economic characteristics and TV viewership

Variable	TV ($M = 0.57, N = 322$)			Only TV ($M = 0.43, N = 331$)			Only Alternative media ($M = 0.11, N = 322$)		
	Obs.	Mean	Diff. in means <i>p-value</i>	Obs.	Mean	Diff. in means <i>p-value</i>	Obs.	Mean	Diff. in means <i>p-value</i>
Female (=1, Male=0)	179	0.61 (0.037)	0.077 ↑	185	0.45 (0.037)	0.301	179	0.09 (0.021)	0.291
46+ years old (=1, Young=0)	109	0.77 (0.037)	0.000 ↑	109	0.57 (0.041)	0.001 ↑	109	0.11 (0.026)	0.851
Born in Moscow (=1, Not=0)	179	0.59 (0.037)	0.276	184	0.44 (0.037)	0.646	179	0.11 (0.023)	0.971
High education (=1, School/College=0)	216	0.55 (0.034)	0.330	216	0.41 (0.034)	0.080 ↓	216	0.14 (0.024)	0.002 ↑
Middle-high income (=1, Middle-low=0)	173	0.51 (0.038)	0.048 ↓	173	0.39 (0.037)	0.037 ↓	173	0.13 (0.026)	0.086 ↑
Have children (=1, no children=0)	188	0.67 (0.034)	0.000 ↑	188	0.52 (0.037)	0.001 ↑	188	0.12 (0.024)	0.248
Live with parents (=1, without parents=0)	69	0.51 (0.061)	0.275	69	0.36 (0.058)	0.138	69	0.07 (0.031)	0.314

Note: Standard errors in parentheses

Annex
III

Table C: Correlation of Putin's approval rating and socio-economic characteristics

	Gender	Age	Income	Education	Have children	Live with parents	Watch TV	Listen to "Echo of Moscow"	Read Dozhd, Slon, Meduza online magazines
Putin's approval rating	0.02	-0.09	0.00	-0.12	-0.08	-0.02	0.19 *	-0.10	-0.18
Gender		0.11	-0.10	0.09	0.04	0.06	0.10	0.03	-0.04
Age			-0.16	0.23 ***	0.64 ***	-0.31 ***	0.33 ***	0.19 **	-0.02
Income				0.20 **	-0.08	-0.04	-0.13	0.02	0.16
Education					0.17	-0.23 ***	0.01	0.09	0.18 **
Have children						-0.22 ***	0.25 ***	0.19 **	-0.02
Live with parents							-0.06	-0.03	0.00
Watch TV								0.07	-0.07
Listen to "Echo of Moscow"									0.30 ***

Notes: Bonferroni adjustment for multiple-comparison procedures. */**/*** $p < 0.1/0.05/0.01$, respectively.

Table D: Means and standard deviations for the outcome variables as a function of experimental conditioning (exposure to images)

Outcome	"Terrorist attack"		"Dental pain"		<i>t(df)</i>		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Emotion	166	0.66	165	0.27	329	7.84 ***	0.000
Pro-censorship (total for 3 frames)	152	0.50	151	0.47	301	0.52	0.61
Censorship	50	0.58	48	0.58	96	-0.03	0.97
Censorship endorsed by Putin	52	0.52	51	0.49	101	0.29	0.77
No censorship (reversed)	50	0.40	52	0.35	100	0.56	0.58

Note: */**/*** $p < 0.1/0.05/0.01$, respectively.

Table E: Means and standard deviations for the outcome variables as a function of experimental conditioning (exposure to images), Putin's supporters only

Outcome	"Terrorist attack"		"Dental pain"		<i>t(df)</i>		Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Emotion	117	0.68	116	0.28	231	6.46 ***	0.000
Pro-censorship (total for 3 frames)	105	0.63	105	0.54	208	1.26	0.21
Censorship	36	0.67	30	0.73	64	-0.58	0.56
Censorship endorsed by Putin	37	0.65	36	0.58	71	0.57	0.57
No censorship (reversed)	32	0.56	39	0.36	69	1.73 *	0.09

Notes: */**/*** $p < 0.1/0.05/0.01$, respectively

Table F: Descriptive statistics for analysis

Variable	Label	Obs	Mean
female	Dummy, Female = 1	331	0,56
age_4680	Dummy, 46+ years old = 1	331	0,34
edu_univer01	Dummy, University graduate = 1	331	0,67
income01	Dummy, Middle and high income = 1	331	0,54
child	Dummy, Have children = 1	322	0,58
parents	Dummy, Live with parents = 1	322	0,21
tv	Dummy, Watch state TV channels = 1	322	0,57
echo	Dummy, Listen "Echo of Moscow" radio station = 1	322	0,17
internet	Dummy, Use Slon, Dozhd, Meduza = 1	322	0,12
terror	Dummy, Exposure to "Terrorist attack" image = 1	331	0,50
emotion_new01	Dummy, Reported anxiety = 1	331	0,47
tv_only	Dummy, Watch only state TV = 1	322	0,44
altern_media_only	Dummy, Use only alternative media = 1	322	0,11
pro_censor_nodk	Dummy, Pro-censorship (cum.) = 1	303	0,49
censor_nodk	Dummy, Pro-censorship (Frame 1) = 1	98	0,58
censor_putin_nodk	Dummy, Pro-censorship (Frame 2) = 1	103	0,50
no_censor_reverse_nodk	Dummy, Pro-censorship (Frame 3) = 1	102	0,37
putin_rating_nodk	Dummy, Putin's approval = 1	299	0,78
right_way01_nodk	Dummy, Things go right = 1	289	0,58
proud01_nodk	Dummy, Proud of Russia = 1	305	0,78
rus_best01_nodk	Dummy, Russia is the best = 1	286	0,62
shame01_nodk	Dummy, Feel shame = 1	304	0,78
enemy01_nodk	Dummy, Russia has enemies = 1	304	0,84

Note: 331 respondents

Table G: Pro-censorship attitudes and exposure-anxiety interaction, cumulative for Frames 1-3

	Total (1)	Total (2)	Total (3)	Total (4)	Total (5)	Female (6)	Male (7)	<i>p</i> -values Δ estimate (6) vs. (7)
Terror	0.018 (0.062)	0.010 (0.062)	-0.028 (0.085)	-0.038 (0.088)	-0.018 (0.085)	0.187 (0.130)	-0.103 (0.116)	0.08
Emotion	0.022 (0.063)	0.051 (0.063)	0.008 (0.091)	-0.031 (0.092)	-0.019 (0.091)	0.167 (0.116)	-0.274 ** (0.126)	0.007
Interaction term: Terror x Emotion								
			0.081 (0.126)	0.117 (0.127)	0.078 (0.126)	-0.345 ** (0.170)	0.526 *** (0.179)	0.002
Female	0.012 (0.060)			0.020 (0.061)	0.009 (0.060)			
Middle age (46-80)	-0.103 (0.072)			-0.071 (0.073)	-0.101 (0.072)	0.035 (0.100)	-0.231 ** (0.103)	0.05
Born in Moscow	0.011 (0.059)			0.017 (0.061)	0.014 (0.059)	-0.056 (0.082)	0.059 (0.081)	0.30
High education	-0.027 (0.064)			-0.073 (0.065)	-0.030 (0.064)	-0.053 (0.093)	0.015 (0.091)	0.59
Middle-high income	-0.043 (0.059)			-0.068 (0.060)	-0.046 (0.060)	-0.091 (0.082)	-0.045 (0.084)	0.68
Have children	0.131 * (0.069)			0.135 ** (0.069)	0.128 * (0.069)	0.099 (0.097)	0.179 * (0.097)	0.55
Live with parents	-0.137 * (0.075)			-0.162 ** (0.076)	-0.141 * (0.075)	-0.247 ** (0.097)	-0.024 (0.114)	0.12
TV (only)	0.174 *** (0.064)				0.176 *** (0.064)	0.035 (0.089)	0.286 *** (0.089)	0.04
Alternative media only	-0.142 (0.093)				-0.132 (0.095)	-0.107 (0.141)	-0.145 (0.117)	0.83
constant	0.418 *** (0.092)	0.456 *** (0.044)	0.468 *** (0.048)	0.524 *** (0.090)	0.434 *** (0.095)	0.539 *** (0.127)	0.341 ** (0.138)	
R-squared	0.09	0.003	0.004	0.047	0.009	0.12	0.24	
N	296	303	303	296	296	163	133	

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. *, **, *** $p < 0.10, 0.05, 0.01$, respectively

Table H: Pro-censorship attitudes, instrumental variable specification (by gender)

Dependent variable:	FEMALE						MALE					
	Instrumental Variable Specification			OLS Specification			Instrumental Variable Specification			OLS Specification		
	Anxiety	Pro-censorship		Anxiety	Pro-censorship		Anxiety	Pro-censorship		Anxiety	Pro-censorship	
Exposure to "Terrorist attack" image	0.382 *** (0.054)	-	-	0.486 *** (0.070)	-	-	0.267 *** (0.087)	-	-	0.267 *** (0.087)	-	-
Anxiety	-	0.069 (0.146)	0.029 (0.059)	-	-0.022 (0.155)	0.002 (0.078)	-	0.333 (0.331)	0.051 (0.088)	-	0.333 (0.331)	0.051 (0.088)
Middle age (46-80)	-0.036 (0.065)	-0.101 (0.071)	-0.103 (0.072)	-0.002 (0.084)	0.035 (0.097)	0.036 (0.101)	-0.045 (0.107)	-0.232 ** (0.110)	-0.249 ** (0.113)	-0.045 (0.107)	-0.232 ** (0.110)	-0.249 ** (0.113)
Have children	0.035 (0.063)	0.129 * (0.068)	0.132 * (0.069)	0.010 (0.085)	0.079 (0.094)	0.078 (0.097)	0.049 (0.097)	0.174 * (0.103)	0.202 ** (0.100)	0.049 (0.097)	0.174 * (0.103)	0.202 ** (0.100)
Live with parents	0.050 (0.068)	-0.139 * (0.073)	-0.137 * (0.074)	-0.016 (0.093)	-0.262 *** (0.094)	-0.261 *** (0.096)	0.189 (0.107)	-0.034 (0.142)	0.034 (0.114)	0.189 (0.107)	-0.034 (0.142)	0.034 (0.114)
TV (only)	0.107 * (0.058)	0.169 (0.064)	0.174 *** (0.064)	0.036 (0.075)	0.056 (0.087)	0.053 (0.088)	0.165 * (0.089)	0.232 (0.102)	0.267 *** (0.093)	0.165 * (0.089)	0.232 (0.102)	0.267 *** (0.093)
Alternative media only	0.163 (0.103)	-0.150 (0.093)	-0.144 (0.093)	0.084 (0.149)	-0.052 (0.134)	-0.053 (0.139)	0.223 (0.139)	-0.265 ** (0.134)	-0.198 * (0.118)	0.223 (0.139)	-0.265 ** (0.134)	-0.198 * (0.118)
constant	0.175 *** (0.080)	0.410 *** (0.098)	0.423 *** (0.090)	0.417 *** (0.102)	0.593 *** (0.146)	0.580 *** (0.125)	0.168 *** (0.113)	0.186 (0.160)	0.271 ** (0.125)	0.168 *** (0.113)	0.186 (0.160)	0.271 ** (0.125)
N	296	296	296	163	163	163	133	133	133	133	133	133
Demographic covariates	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. */**/*** $p < 0.1/0.05/0.01$, respectively.