MEDIA PORTRAYAL OF THE SOCHI 2014 OLYMPIC GAMES

Yet another wave of confrontation between Russia and the West

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This study compares how NBC (United States) and RT (Russia) report the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi. It combines framing analysis of news coverage with the contextual interpretation. The study relies on three areas of research literature: political communications, international relations, and media studies. It argues that the Sochi Olympic news reporting is a part of geopolitically situated knowledge and, thus, can provide a new understanding of power relations between Russia and the West.

Analysis of media framing demonstrates how the two media organisations, embedded in different geopolitical contexts, portray the global event in almost opposite manners, differing both in content and valence. RT’s news coverage of the Sochi Olympics is overwhelmingly optimistic and focuses predominantly on celebrating Russia’s great momentum; meanwhile NBC’s coverage shows deep skepticism to the degree of “othering.” The difference in media representations of the Olympic Games is rooted in locational standpoints of the media companies and various historical, political, economic, cultural, and other forces that influence their framing. The study concludes that the Olympic media coverage reveals much greater competition than that of national teams; the competition is between nationalised ideologies.

Sochi Olympics 2014, International Broadcasting, Geopolitics, Soft Power, Framing analysis, RT, Russia, NBC, the United States, East and West.
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1. Introduction

The Olympic Games claim to promote peace and reconciliation around the world through sport. The founder of the modern Olympic Games, Pierre de Coubertin, had a vision that sport competitions would weaken geopolitical ones. Sport, he believed, could embrace the world’s cultures and, therefore, foster amity among the world’s nations (de Coubertin, Müller & Skinner, 2000). Yet de Coubertin's vision has only been partly accomplished. While generating global good will and profound emotional impact, the Olympic Games also serve as the perfect platform for states to play out rivalries, garner recognition, reveal insecurities, and exercise their power, as the Los Angeles, Moscow, Munich, and Berlin Olympic Games have shown. Throughout history, political influence has been strongly felt in the Olympic movement, and this phenomena is widely acknowledged (Allison, 1986; Horne, Tomlinson & Whannel, 2002; Lin, Lee & Nai, 2008). With ever-growing media coverage, this singular event has become a part of the race for soft power (Nye, 2008) between states, which take advantage of the Games’ attractiveness. The Olympic Games and politics are interlocked like the Olympic rings, and their symbolic connection has become persistent over the years.

With the flags lowered over the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games, the atmosphere inside was not so celebratory. Numerous media reported on the controversy surrounding the Olympic Games in Sochi raising financial, political, social, climatic, and other concerns over the Games’ production and execution. The stark contrast between Western and Russian media coverage of the Winter Olympics suggested a tension in Russo-Western relations pushing the two sides to the verge of yet another confrontation.

This study examines media coverage of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games (7–23 February 2014) by global Russian and U.S. English-language broadcasters and tries to understand how the news media’s agenda reflects geopolitical standings of
the two nation-states. My interest in the issue is rooted in my background as a journalist: reporting on the Sochi Olympics was one of my assignments. The Sochi Olympics were the first Olympic Games I have ever covered; so many things were new to me. I worked alongside journalists from different countries, and it seemed those journalists knew in advance which athlete to interview, which story to cover, and which plot to pursue — and their takeaway from the same event peculiarly differed. The events that followed shortly after the Sochi Olympics — Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the Ukraine crisis — reinforced my interest in the subject even more: Both led the West and Russia to impose economic sanctions on one another in what has come to be seen as the most serious geopolitical crisis since the end of the Cold War.

I conduct a media framing research of the pre-Olympic and Olympic coverage from January 2013 to February 2014. My focus is on the biggest Russian and Western mainstream (non-sport-related) media outlets that heavily contributed to the news coverage of the Olympic Games: RT (Russia) and National Broadcasting Company (NBC; United States).

I intend to address the following research questions:

*RQ1*: What are the most popular frames that RT and NBC employ in covering the Sochi Olympic Games?

*RQ2*: Are there any systematic differences in using media frames by these two media outlets?

*RQ3*: How do RT and NBC’s framing of the Olympic Games in Sochi contribute to the understanding Russo-Western relations in terms of geopolitics?

Thus, I examine what kind of stories were given considerable attention in each medium and how those stories were framed. My primary thesis is that media representations are geopolitically situated knowledge and they can increase understanding of the relations between Russia and the West.
This study is structured as follows. The next chapter (Chapter 2) looks at the literature and theoretical background and addresses the influence of geopolitics on media reporting, particularly in the case of the Olympic Games. It also provides detailed accounts of the media organisations in question. Chapter 3 describes the design of the research. Chapter 4 presents the findings on how the two media organisations reported on the Olympic Games in Sochi. The final chapter summarises the results of the analysis, compares differences in media representations and investigates the reason for those differences.

This research seeks to illuminate a global media event, such as the Olympic Games, in light of geopolitics and broaden understanding of Russo-Western relations. The conceptualisation required a comprehensive theoretical framework of three areas of research literature: political communications, international relations, and media studies. I argue that the geopolitical tension between Russia and the West revealed itself with the media coverage of the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi. This tension was clear even before the events in Ukraine. As the Ukraine crisis grew heated, the geopolitical tension has evolved into a larger conflict that is still ongoing.
2. Literature Review

In this chapter, I will address the geopolitical dimension of the Olympic Games and their representation in the media. I will first observe the recent studies investigating the influences of media and geopolitics on the Olympic Games. Second, I will explore the engagement of the Olympic Movement with Cold War tensions and the East-West rivalry in particular that laid out the geopolitical and historical context to the Sochi Olympics in question, which I also examine towards the end of the chapter. Finally, I provide a brief overview of the media companies selected for the study.

2.1 Olympic Games, Geopolitics and Media

Geopolitics and the Olympic Games are intertwined more than one can imagine. From winning the chance to host the Games to topping medal count, the Olympics is a golden moment of opportunity for countries to display their strength and abilities. Host nations invest hundreds of millions in the Olympic Games mobilising international broadcasting as the eyes of the world turn to the greatest sporting spectacle.

The Olympic Games create what Andrew Billings (2008) calls “an incredible juggernaut of mass media power and influence” (p.13). Miah and Garcia (2012) go even further suggesting, “a defining feature of the modern Olympic movement has been its relationship with the media” (p.122). Media reserved its place in the “economic infrastructure” of the Olympic Games on seemingly good terms with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that places the media in a very powerful position.

highlight myth and ritual as important concepts for the understanding of such mega-event (Cui, 2013; Real, 1989), and others point out its postmodern and consumer-driven character (Tomlinson, Young & Holt, 2013). Notably, media do not simply present the reality, but rather construct a version of it in multiple ways. Scholarly works consider identity and nation branding (Ostapenko, 2014; Tomlinson & Young, 2006), many of them are in the context of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games (Cui, 2013; deLisle, 2008; Price & Dayan, 2008). Media play a crucial role in shaping national imaginaries, perception of borders and space, and centre-periphery relations. In addition to this, the media coverage provides a tremendous leverage for political elites in the perspective of soft power, which entered the Olympic discourse with the Beijing Olympics (Manzenreiter, 2010).

This scope of research has demonstrated that holding such a global event as the Olympic Games can inspire pride and solidarity among a country’s population, rebrand the country’s image, and help to create a greater sense of legitimacy for the country hosting the Games. It has also showed that international broadcasters are more willing to explore their countries’ ties with the host nation whether political, economic, cultural, or other. That was the case with NBC in the United States, which in its media coverage of the Seoul 1988 Olympics laid a strong emphasis on the military and economic cooperation between the USA and South Korea (Rivenburgh, 1992). Latin American broadcasters highlighted the importance of cultural, historic, and linguistic relations with the host nation during the Barcelona 1992 Olympics (Moragas, Rivenburgh & Larson, 1995). Real, Mechikoff, and Goldenstein (1989) showed that much of the press coverage on the Moscow 1980 Olympics and the Los Angeles 1984 Olympics drew on Cold War categories and images when representing host nations.

Other cross-national studies investigated differential coverage of the Olympic events and athletes marked by controversy. Bie and Billings (2015) looked into the U.S. and Chinese newspaper coverage of Ye Shiwen, then a 16-year-old Chinese athlete who won two gold medals in the women’s swimming competition and set a
new world record at the London 2012 Olympics. Her performance sparked speculation in the Western media about possible doping use. The scholars found a striking contrast between two media outlets coverage with the U.S. media taking the critical stand and Chinese media employing *us versus them* dichotomy to defend their athlete. The researchers concluded that not only did the stories diverge over questions relating to nationalism, sport and gender but on a grander scale the degree in which the coverage diverged suggested strong ideological influence, even “the superpower rivalry” behind the scenes of the Olympic competition (Bie & Billings, 2015, p.799). Similar events occurred at the Sochi Olympics, when the U.S. and Russian media split over Russian Adelina Sotnikova’s gold winning performance in the women's individual figure skating event. The Western media raised alarms over controversial judging — the narrative was completely absent in, for instance, RT’s reports on the event and many other Russian media. In this regard, scholars seem to reach an agreement that nationalised attitudes and values can strongly influence the way media cover sports news (Denham, 2000).

Nevertheless, there is certainly more to every story. Media scholars clearly point out specific formats and routines the world’s media follow especially in the pre-Olympics coverage when they devote attention to the security, costs, doping, and other stories related to the Games preparation (Rivenburgh, 2004). However, one cannot ignore strong entanglement of the modern Olympic Games with political and geopolitical themes. For instance, in the run-up to the Seoul 1988 Olympics, North and South Korea tension dominated the international media coverage with journalists raising concerns about security and terrorism. The way in which mass media depict the Olympic Games is important, as it tells us what stories matter and in what way. Some other examples include the Berlin 1936 Olympics, which were labelled as the Nazi Olympics; Munich 1972 mired in Middle East conflict; Melbourne 1956 shadowed by the Soviet suppression of the Hungarian uprising; Helsinki 1952, Moscow 1980, Los Angeles 1984 caught in the Cold War rivalry; and, certainly, Tokyo 1964, Rome 1960, Seoul 1988 and,
arguably, Beijing 2008 — as a symbol of the host nation’s return to the world’s stage (deLisle, 2008; Tomlinson, 2010). With such a profound foundation, it was surprising that until recently little research has examined geopolitical dimension of the Olympic Games.

This study defines geopolitics as political relations between the countries based on power in relation to geographical space. The study also relies on the framework of critical geopolitics (Mangan & Hong, 2011) which is concerned with the image of the state, associated ideology and culture. The concept of image increases understanding of the state’s identity. There are different kinds of images. Feklyunina (2008, p. 608) categorizes them as self-images (vision of one’s own country), perceived images (images of the country owned by other actors), and projected images (those the country is promoting either for domestic and foreign audiences). These images are constantly changing in response to internal and external situations. Self-image is probably the hardest to identify as it is more or less a product of competing self-images articulated by different groups in the society, argues Feklyunina. Self-images can be embedded in various policy agendas (Shulman, 2005, p. 68), and if promoted successfully, they become dominant, so-called, projected images. They shape the vision of national interests of the country, in other words, the way this country wants to be perceived by foreign states. Projected images tend to be more positive in comparison to perceived images unless the goal is to scare the opponent away (Kunczik, 1997). My focus is on the projected images because this is where the media commonly interfere.

National image is a prominent topic in the works on the Olympics and the media. For instance, Barnard, Butler, Golding, and Maguire (2006) examined the UK television and press coverage of the Athens 2004 Olympics to uncover the dominance of nationalistic discourse over the ideals of Olympism. John Sinclair (2000) analysed the media coverage of the Sydney Olympics torch relay to reveal the link between projected symbols and the identity of the host nation. Most recently, the London 2012 Olympics received significant academic attention for the
vast use of national imagery during opening and closing ceremonies proving a very strong linkage between the Olympic Games and nationalism (Falcous & Silk, 2010). By embracing sports for political purposes, a state gradually extends its power boundaries turning the mega-events such as the Olympic Games into a *national project*. The major drivers for the hosting nations, according to Grix (2013), are improving the country’s international image and attaining the desired Olympic legacies in political, economic, or social terms. The 1936 Berlin Olympics is one of the most infamous examples, seen by many as a *propaganda event* for the Nazi’s political regime (Petersson & Vamling, 2013a; Rivenburgh, 2004). This demonstrates the continuity of the nation as an ideological entity with its own political and geopolitical goals and aspirations in and out the Olympic discourse (Hui, 2005).

In academic literature, geopolitics and the Olympic Games often appear in the same context on two occasions: in relation to the host country and to the conflict unfolding at the time of the Games. In the first case, scholars explore geopolitical aspirations of the host nations that they trace in the Olympic bidding process, opening and closing ceremonies, torch relay, and host city urban development. For instance, social scientist Immanuel Wallerstein interpreted the victory of Rio de Janeiro’s bid to host the Olympic Games in 2016 as the victory of the South over the North (the United States, Japan and Spain). He quoted a former Brazilian President Lula who said, “(Brazil) went from being a second-class country to a first-class country, and today we began to receive the respect we deserve” (Wallerstein, 2009, October 15). A similar sentiment was earlier expressed in Russia, with the Chairman of the Russian State Assembly stating upon the victorious Sochi’s bid, “Russia is once again becoming a world leader” (“Sochi win hailed as sign of Russia’s revival”, Reuters, 2007, July 5). Thus, one cannot ignore countries’ geopolitical ambitions, which the IOC also takes into account when selecting the host of the Olympic Games, according to Wallerstein.
In the second case, a (geo)political tension shadowing the Olympic Games is reflected in the media coverage. One example is the media coverage of the water-polo competition between Soviets and Hungarians at the 1956 Olympic Games. It became known as Blood on the Water match and the growing valence of both competitors was attributed to the political frustration upon Soviet crushing of the Hungarian Revolution. The language of argument evolved into the media reporting on the event, as one of the headlines illustrates, “Cold War violence erupts at Melbourne Olympics” (“Blood in the water’ — Hungary’s sporting battle against Soviet oppression”, CNN, 2012, March 2). Hence, media not only represent who is in and who is out of the Olympic movement, but they take an active part in managing the conflicts minimizing or maximizing them (Real, 1989, p. 227). This was confirmed in the recent research by Hutchings, Gillespie, Yablokov, Lvov, and Voss (2015) who examined the unfolding crisis in Ukraine in the media coverage of the Sochi Olympics by RT and BBC World News. The scholars showed how a global media event, such as the Olympic Games, could provide a prolific site to negotiate geopolitical interests. It seems the question is no longer if but how geopolitics penetrates the Olympic Games.

2.2 Russia and the West in the Olympic Games

East-West rivalry, which was the central dramatic narrative during the Cold War era, gave the Olympic Games an extraordinary global status and influence. It set the pattern that would frame the Olympics and other major sports competitions of the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, providing an important insight into the geopolitical scene of the modern Olympics and Russo-Western relations, in particular.

The East and the West, caught up in the superpower rivalry, were quick to recognise the potential of the Olympic arena. In the East, sport was a way to build the strong state, and the government heavily controlled it. Sport victories were celebrated as national achievements, putting the athletes under tremendous
pressure (Keys, 2012, p.76). Scholar John Soares (2007) showed how the Cold War cultivation of ice hockey changed the perception of sport in the Soviet Union. Ice hockey became a celebration of group spirit built on the idea of devotion to the Soviet society, in contrast to the Western model of individual sport culture. Sport was not a matter of good will: Soviet athletes were expected to win or not go at all (Keys, 2003, p. 432). Sporting nationalism quickly turned into hostile rhetoric reflected in the government policies. One of the most infamous examples is the case of the former East Germany, a satellite state of the Soviet Union that carried out widespread, state-sponsored doping programs (e.g., Franke & Berendonk, 1997). In the height of the Cold War, the Olympic Games were hardly about the sport: East and West were competing to prove superiority of one system over the other.

The new realities were reflected in the media. Olympic scholar Barbara Keys (2012) asserts, if the USSR team was to participate in the Olympic Games hosted by Western cities, communist press provided numerous accounts of miseries and inequities, casting a shadow on the Western societies. Similarly, the Czech press depicted Oslo, the host city of the Winter Olympics in 1952, as the place where “homeless, ill-dressed children roamed the streets, shortages of goods like cigarettes were common, and workers were paid low wages” (p.76). As for the Soviet main antagonist — the United States, it was frequently depicted in regard to racism and violence (p.79).

By contrast, the Soviet press framed the very participation of the Eastern bloc in the Olympic Games as a commitment of the communist world to peace (Keys, 2012, p.76). Medal counts in the Olympics were attributed the utmost importance. For instance, at the end of the 1952 Olympic Games in Helsinki, the official newspaper of Communist Party (Pravda) simply proclaimed the Soviet Union a winner despite its second place in the medals table behind the United States (Parks, 2009, p. 72).
On the other side of the Iron Curtain, the Soviet athletes were often portrayed as puppets at the hands of the Soviet regime’s blatant propaganda, which aimed at boosting Soviet influence around the world and vilifying the West. Keys asserts that Western journalists, writing both for politics and sports sections, frequently employed military language in regard to the Soviet Union, as illustrated in the following quote from U.S. News and World Report of 1956:

> Among millions of people throughout the world, athletic skill carries enormous prestige. It is regarded by many as an indication of national health and vigor. Not only that. Athletes are proving to be powerful propaganda agents, effective ambassadors of good will. A champion athlete can open doors that diplomats cannot unlock. (Cited in Keys, 2012, p. 77.)

The rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States was more or less constant in politics and sport. In extremely tense years in East-West relations, like 1960s with its space race, espionage scandals, and the Cuban crisis, it was hard to imagine how international competitions featuring teams from USSR and USA could be apolitical. Maraniss (2008) wrote, at the Rome 1960 Olympics, apart from Italian phrase books, members of American national team were armed with brochures on American lifestyle and values printed in Russian to spread them among Soviet athletes. The Soviet Union, fearing U.S. espionage, took strict control over its athletes even forbidding them to speak to American sportmen. (p.29.) Both the Soviet Union and the USA attracted significant media and public attention carrying their battle into the Olympic events. A symbol of that time, the Olympic hockey game at Lake Placid in 1980, which is known in the USA as the "Miracle on Ice," revealed the extent of political rivalry between both nations, with the United States saw its victory in geopolitical terms — as the victory for democracy against a totalitarian regime (Soares, 2007). The USA proclaimed “Miracle on Ice” a greatest sports moment of the 20th Century and has praised it ever since — in books, exhibitions and, at least, four films.
The Moscow Olympics in 1980 set a unique opportunity for the Soviet government to project the country’s economic and military strength. As Hazan (1982) puts it, the intention was “to demonstrate the advantages of the Soviet political and socioeconomic system, enhance the Soviet Union’s international prestige (and) consolidate its international status as a leading superpower” (p.85). The Soviet press played a key role in this endeavor. In the build-up to the Games, media launched a huge publicity campaign appealing to both the home crowd and international public. Soviet embassies abroad were actively involved: their task was to monitor the foreign media coverage of the preparations in Moscow, so that the Soviet media could rebut any undesirable arguments in what was known as contra propaganda (Mertin, 2007, p. 239). The efforts came to nothing, when nearly 65 countries led by the United States boycotted the Moscow Olympics shortly after the Soviet Union had brought troops into Afghanistan. However, for the Soviet media it was all the same: press releases would always remind about the Moscow Olympics’ genuine effort to promote friendship, peace, and cultural understanding among nations (Mertin, 2007, p. 239). The selective focus had an ingenious effect: every positive reaction towards the Olympic Games in Moscow was interpreted as the achievement of the socialist system, including the sport results in the Games.

If in the case of the Soviet Union there was no other way for the media except to follow the Communist party official policy, similar propagandistic processes in the U.S. media presented an interesting phenomena. Government sponsored themes became dominant in the news coverage, and alternative voices were lowered. Observing foreign news coverage, Gans (1979) concluded that the prevailing stories of that time covered the countries cooperating with the United States; the communist countries, in contrast, were an easy target for blame, mockery, and arrogance. Deliberate or forced, the media’s efforts significantly reduced the number of sources providing an “official interpretation” by the U.S. government. In this regard, when President Carter’s decision to boycott the Moscow Olympics faced a fierce debate among both the Olympic athletes and the wider public, two
newspapers the New York Times and Los Angeles Times stood in support of the president’s efforts, calling the interference unacceptable. Press nationalism became an ideological glue for the wider public, and, eventually, the boycott of the Moscow Olympics was equated with the patriotic duty, made in the name of America. For example, The Washington Post quoted Robert Kane, the United States Olympic Committee president who stated, “More than anything else, the preservation of our patriotism and support of the President of the United States had to be reaffirmed. I’m completely satisfied it was the right decision” (“Politics and patriotism influenced U.S. boycott vote”, The Washington Post, 1980, April 15).

The Soviet media’s response was not slow to arrive. TASS, the central news organ of the USSR, portrayed American athletes as the victims under constant pressure and blackmail coming from the White House (Moretti, 2013, p. 11). Critical undertones increased, when Los Angeles started to prepare for the 1984 Olympic Games. The focus of the Soviet media was on the problems of the upcoming Olympics including racism, commercialism, and environmental issues. Mertin (2007) quotes the article written by daily newspaper Sovetskij Sport in October 1981: “Problems, problems, problems...The Olympic city of Los Angeles has already, (...) overtaken all other host cities when it comes to problems that have occurred” (p.244). After the Korean plane shoot-down in September 1983 the tensions between USSR and the USA reached their peak: It was no longer a question for the Soviet Union whether or not still to come to the Los Angeles Olympics. The change was immediately reflected in the Soviet media that were consistently demonising the U.S. city with references to anything from ecological problems to murders and security threats including anti-Soviet propaganda. Besides this, the Soviet Union was deeply against any forms of commercialism in the Olympic Games fearing it would undermine the Olympic ideals and antagonise the public from the Games. By depicting and elaborating every possible negative issue related to the Los Angeles Games, the Soviet Union projected the U.S. Olympics as “doomed Olympics” emphasising its anti-socialist intentions and anti-Olympic purposes. As Mertin
(2007) asserts, the Soviet Union practically made the IOC believe that it had no choice but to withdraw from the 1984 Olympics along with other Eastern bloc countries (excluding Romania).

Keys (2012) points out that “the Cold War provided Olympic sport with a rivalry of heretofore unheard-of global significance” (p.72) as the USA and the USSR battled for a spot on the Olympic podium. Even after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, numerous commentaries yet still assert echoes of the past that, as no surprise, featured Russia and the United States. The “new Cold War” debate became prominent in 2014 as the Olympic Games in Sochi approached, putting a spotlight on the repetition of the old tensions.

2.3 The Sochi 2014 Olympic Games

As illustrated in the previous sub-chapters, the Olympic Games are and always have been political. In fact, as Barbara Keys (2012, p.73) argues, the major controversies unfolded between “those who wanted to drag Olympic sport into the political mud and those who wanted to retain its purity and innocence.” The 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi — the first of Russia’s Olympics after the fall of the Soviet Union — were to prove that.

2.3.1 Representation in Research

Recent studies of the Sochi Olympics identify several key drivers behind the Games, shedding light on Russian political and geopolitical ambitions. A substantial body of research examine the Sochi Olympics as the platform to promote Russia’s growing presence and importance in the world. Koorep (2016) draws attention to the massive Sochi 2014 torch relay, which reached the highest mountain, the deepest lake, the Arctic Circle, and even outer space — all meaning to symbolise Russia’s greatness and wide geographical presence. Alekseyeva (2014) stresses a global event such as the Olympic Games helps Russia’s image-building efforts on
the international scene. The Sochi Olympics indeed presented a great international “comeback opportunity,” a chance for Russia to reposition itself globally as a stronger, better, more prosperous state since the previous Moscow 1980 Olympics, boycotted by the Western nations (Ostapenko, 2014). Tsygankov (2012), however, notes that unlike the 1980 Olympiad, the Sochi Olympics did not seek to showcase a particular ideology, rather the purpose was to demonstrate that Russia is succeeding in today’s world as many advanced countries belonging to the Western world.

Some scholars associate Russia’s efforts with those of Japan during the Tokyo 1964 Olympics, as a signal of the country’s return to the international arena (Orttung & Zhemukhov, 2014, p.179), whereas others argue that Russia’s main aim was to promote national greatness and receive international recognition, similar to China and its Beijing Olympics (Müller, 2011; Tomlinson, 2010). This underlines a traditional among scholars great power view of Russia, which has most of its roots in the Soviet past (Lo & Shevtsova, 2012). The phenomena implies that Russia has an ability to influence other states, and that it should be reckoned with (Alekseyeva, 2014; Persson & Petersson, 2014). President of Russia Vladimir Putin acknowledged this in his oft-cited statement, “Russia is not claiming a great power status. It is a great power by virtue of its huge potential, its history and culture” (Putin, 2000b). Thus, “greatpowerness” is perceived to be a significant part of Russian identity (Lo, 2002; Smith, 2014) with some even arguing that its maintenance is equally important for Putin’s regime to stay in power (Pallin, 2009; Petersson, 2014, p. 35). Bo Petersson (2014) pointed out that Sochi, located in the same geographical area as North Caucasus, “unruliest of regions,” was the perfect site for Russia to showcase its greatpowerness, because the location “provided a symbolic victory for the regime, emphatically demonstrating that Russia has put its house back in order” (p.31). This aside, one should not forget that Vladimir Putin has built his political career on a promise to end insurgency in the Caucasus region (Putin, 2000a), so regardless of the motives, the stakes for Sochi were high.
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The Russian President has been mentioned in a number of scholarly works on the Sochi Olympics seen by some as his “pet” project (Müller, 2011, p. 2095; Petersson, 2014, p.31). Persson and Petersson (2014) assert that Vladimir Putin sees the ability of his administration to organise the Olympic Games as the evidence that Russia successfully recovered from the chaotic 1990s and, under his leadership, transformed into a strong and stable state. Other scholarly works regard the Sochi Olympics as an opportunity for Putin to restate his position as Russian leader. The president vocally backed Russia’s Olympic bid, lobbying it at the IOC meetings in Guatemala where the final vote took place. After winning the bid, Putin followed the Olympic preparations closely, visiting the site on a few occasions. Martin Müller (2014) writes, “For Putin, the event presents a chance to shore up his dwindling support, and to divert attention from the stalling economic growth and lack of progress in achieving meaningful reforms” (p.154). Persson and Petersson hold the same opinion adding that the Olympic Games helped Russia’s long-ruling president to restate his image of energy, vigor and resourcefulness. According to the research-based company Gallup, in 2014 Putin’s public approval rating increased from 54 to 83 percent, after the success of the Olympic Games and the Crimea’s annexation (Gallup, 2014, July 18). Vladimir Putin became so closely associated with the Olympic project, that “the unity behind Sochi-2014 was hard to separate from the unity behind the president” (Persson & Petersson, 2014).

2.3.2 Representation in the Media

Almost all media in Russia are either state-owned or closely aligned with the Russian government, thus they provide an important insight into the official narratives and attitudes before the Games. Pre-Olympic coverage in Russia was heavily drawn on the national narrative, creating a vision of a new Russia that is taking its fair place among the great powers as a nation of culture, sport and entertainment. Putin highlighted that winning the right to host the 2014 Winter
Olympics means “not just a recognition of Russia's sporting achievements but (...) a recognition of our growing capability, first of all economically and socially.” Boris Gryzlov, the Speaker of the State Assembly, proudly stated that the Olympics Games in Sochi is “a confirmation that the world is not unipolar” and that Russia “is once again becoming a global leader.” ("Sochi win hailed as sign of Russia's revival", Reuters, 2007, July 5.)

Cornelissen (2010, p. 3022) writes that the discourses that political elites ascribe to global sporting events “embody narratives that blend myth elements about their nation with visions about a realignment of the international order.” Gronskaya and Makarevich (2014) particularly emphasise Russia's narrative of “normalcy and security” in the run-up to the Sochi Olympics as a part of “strong and efficient” state. Arkady Dvorkovich, Russia’s deputy prime minister, said on one of the occasions, “Hosting these international events gives us a chance to show as many people as possible that Russia is a normal country” ("Russia using world stage to prove itself ‘normal’", The New York Times, 2012, November 22).

The Sochi Olympics also presented a unique chance to unite Russia’s population and increase loyalty to the country’s leadership. Alekseyeva (2014) as well as Persson and Petersson (2014) assert the Sochi project has indeed helped boost Russian national pride and self-esteem, especially after the admittedly unsuccessful performance of the Russian team at the Vancouver Olympic Games in 2010. Russian media stirred nationalist sentiment over the country’s great achievements in sport and other spheres. News stories also highlighted the importance of a healthy lifestyle for the nation, Sochi’s impact on regional development and mobilisation of the society for a common cause — all in line with Putin’s rhetoric (Putin, 2014). The national unity theme was often linked with the challenges the Russians had to deal with. In an interview, the head of the Sochi 2014 organising committee Dmitry Chernyshenko expressed his confidence that the Sochi Games as well helped the nation to overcome the consequences of the global economic crisis, “Do you remember, at that time the entire world was shaking in its
fundaments, but Russia largely endured the shock quite well? And the Sochi project played a distinct role in this” (Cited in Persson & Petersson, 2014, p.199).

Russian media rarely brought up social, political, and economic issues in relation to the Olympic Games. As it was noted in the special report issued by the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), “The majority of news outlets, particularly those controlled directly by the state, prefer to cover Sochi the way they would cover a deceased man: in a positive light or not at all” (CPJ, 2014). The press freedom climate has always been generally poor in Russia, the fact that international non-profit organisation Reporters Without Borders never failed to prove¹.

Outside Russian borders, pre-Sochi coverage was far less optimistic. Articles on the topics such as LGBT rights, security threats, and corruption appeared along athletes profiles and other Olympic-related reports in leading newspapers and magazines. The New York Times, for instance, headlined the article “Terrorism and Tension, not Sports and Joy” (2014, February 4) in which one of the Olympic arenas was described as “Soviet-style dystopia.” The constant references to the Soviet Union became a popular pastime for foreign journalists. Cohen (2014) argued in “The Nation,” the U.S. weekly magazine, “American media coverage of Russia is less objective, less balanced, more conformist and scarcely less ideological than when they covered Soviet Russia during the Cold War” (Cohen, 2014). The international media has portrayed Russia as an antagonist since the Cold War era responding to Russia’s history of severe control. The Russian government was particularly criticised for the deliberate spreading of misleading information through media. The U.S. Government speakers, for instance, referred to Russian state media no other than “propaganda” (“Graham: U.S. should consider Olympic boycott over possible Snowden asylum”, NBC, 2013, July 17).

¹ In 2015 Russia ranked 152 out of 180 countries in the Reporters Without Borders' Press Freedom Index (index.rsf.org)
Russian President Putin indeed seemed to enjoy undivided attention from the Western media: Putin keeps corrupt regime in power, Putin the persecutor of the “Pussy Riot” civil rights group, Putin the oppressor of sexual minorities, Putin the abuser of human rights, Putin puts personal prestige at stake — these are just some of the narratives dominated the Western media discourse. Herbert Meyer, former special assistant to the CIA director during the Reagan Administration, was especially explicit in his article, “Without Putin in power Russia won’t be a threat to world peace,” he said, referring to Russia as a “one-man show” (Meyer, 2014). Cohen (2014), in contrast, argues Vladimir Putin was swallowed up by “demonisation,” a strategy that aims to dehumanise or “other” the adversary presenting him as deviant in any way. Cohen’s argument was echoed by Katrina vanden Heuvel, the editor of “The Nation” magazine, who said, “The media in this country has so demonized Putin” (Democracy Now! 24 July 2014). Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (2014) saw the demonisation of the Russian leader as not a media trend alone, “For the West, the demonization of Vladimir Putin is not a policy; it is an alibi for the absence of one,” he wrote in the column for the Washington Post.

According to Alekseyeva (2014), the global competition, in which all nations engage, makes them more sceptical towards each other. In addition, when it comes to mega projects, Western countries are more reluctant to accept emerging forces into their political circle of advanced nations that have traditionally hosted all global events including the Olympic Games. This is not just a matter of power distribution on a global scale. As Manzenreiter (2010) argues, the entire Olympic Movement is based on the appropriation of the Western version of universal values with human rights and modernisation being at the core. To host the Olympic Games, alternative societies have to adopt these universal values and that has proved to be increasingly problematic, as the Beijing Olympics have showed. (p. 43.) Thus, the nature of the Olympic Games implies relational sovereignty – the ability and willingness of states to engage in international processes. Yet, in the case of the
Sochi Olympics, the international discourse and Russia’s intentions came into tension, when the country embedded the image of national strength into the purported Olympic values. (Alekseyeva, 2014, p.164.) Many have linked Russia’s Olympic discourse to the country’s strategy of soft power adopted a year earlier.

2.3.3 A Major Source of Russia’s Soft Power

The Sochi Olympics provided a valuable soft power opportunity for Russia. The term *soft power* was coined by political scientist Joseph Nye to characterise the ability of the states to affect others “through attraction rather than coercion or payment” in order to achieve favorable outcomes (Nye, 2008, p. 94). Soft power is founded on nation’s values and culture that are used as leverage to win the hearts and minds of diverse publics. The significance of the Olympics as a soft power resource has recently received attention among scholars: Müller and Steyaert (2013) assign soft power goals to the emerging countries in particular, which thus are trying to win their “rightful place among the leading powers as nations of culture, sport and entertainment” (p.141). Berg (2008) offers a more critical perspective suggesting that oppressive governments particularly often seek to leverage the Olympic Games to “repurpose the publicity accorded to sport for the benefit of the state and its ideology” (p. 17). In a similar vein, some scholars argue the Olympics provide a distraction from the “real” problems plaguing society (Orttung & Zhemukhov, 2014, p.175; Waitt, 1999, p. 1065).

The Sochi Olympics revealed a far more problematic discourse of the soft power. In 2013 Russia grounded its foreign policy strategy on soft power, presenting the latter as “a comprehensive toolkit for achieving foreign policy objectives building on civil society potential, information, cultural and other methods and technologies alternative to traditional diplomacy” and “an indispensable component of modern international relations” (MFA RF, 2013, February 18). The same year President Putin dissolved Ria Novosti agency into Rossiya Segodnya (*Russia Today*), a new
state owned news agency with the aim to promote Russia abroad. As Sergey Ivanov, the Kremlin chief of staff, commented, “The changes were about saving money and making state media *more effective*” (“Head of new Kremlin media agency bids to boost Russia’s image”, Sputnik News, 2013, December 10). Another government-funded media RT, which previously operated under the brand of Russia Today, launched its first radio station in Sochi to broadcast entirely in English language. The subsequent shutdown of Dozhd, Russia’s only actually independent TV channel, resolved all doubts about the Kremlin’s desire to polish Russia’s image abroad. Although the media have become heavily regulated in Russia, especially after Vladimir Putin’s return to the presidency in May 2012, the change in media landscape occurring just prior to the Sochi Olympics was difficult to overlook. Scholars concluded that if there had been an attempt to build soft power at an international level, it was largely unsuccessful – “if the content of a country’s culture, values, and policies are not attractive, public diplomacy that ‘broadcasts’ them cannot produce soft power. It may produce just the opposite” (Nye, 2008, p. 95).

Seeking to pursue the soft power for influence and prestige in the global stage, Russian political elites failed to meet Nye’s principal criterion. Joseph Nye’s discourse has gained remarkable prominence in the academic world with only a few scholars attempting to go beyond Nye’s rationalist understanding. One of them is Yulia Kiseleva (2015) who looks at soft power as not something one has or has not, but as a relationship, which, in the case of the Sochi Olympics, played out in the interaction of the Russian discourse on soft power with the more prominent one of the West. This definition of soft power is particularly intriguing as it helps to shed light on the geopolitical divide in the Western and Russian coverage of the Olympic Games.

The official relations with a global organisation such as the IOC was a chance for Russia to project its soft power internationally. As Kosachev (2012a, 2012b) asserts, Russian soft power discourse projects into the external world and safeguards its domestic sphere, as the holder of sovereignty. The diplomat argues
that Russian soft power is rooted in its great power identity and it differs from the Western concept of attraction. Rather than focusing on political sources of soft power (human rights and democracy), the Russian elite highlights the prominence of Russian culture abroad believing that to be a solid foundation of soft power (Kiseleva, 2015, p.323). However, while preparing to host such a cosmopolitan event as the Olympic Games (Gronskaia & Makarychev, 2014, p. 42) Russia could no longer separate itself from the hegemonic discourse of soft power, represented by the West and the United States in particular. Hence, the Sochi Olympics became the “battlefield” where Western and Russian concepts of soft power finally collided (Kiseleva, 2015, p.325).

In Russia, the discourse of power has adopted a hostile and antagonistic tone years before the Olympic Games in Sochi. In 2007, a new cold war rhetoric slipped into the media after Putin’s speech at the Munich Conference on Security Policy in which he publicly accused the United States of seeking a monopoly on global power. What followed were — Russo-Georgian war in 2008, disputes over territorial claims in the Arctic, the failure to “reset” the US-Russian relations, and the global reaction on Russia’s declining civic and political freedoms after Vladimir Putin was re-elected as president in 2012 — all of which has made the international community less receptive to Russia (Arnold & Foxall, 2014). In the run-up to the Sochi Olympics, Russia granted political asylum to Edward Snowden, the former U.S. intelligence analyst who leaked classified documents to the media, seen by some as a personal insult to the U.S. President Barack Obama. Then Russian government passed legislation criminalising LGBT propaganda provoking an avalanche of criticism from human rights organisations and even several calls for boycott of the Sochi Olympics. Besides this, there was a close association of Circassian genocide with Sochi, which marked the 150 year anniversary in 2014. This already negative image of Russia in the West exacerbated further when Sochi became surrounded by normative issues including security (proximity to the unstable North Caucasus), high costs, corruption, displacement of Sochi residents.
by Olympic construction, worker’s rights, environmental protection, and mild climate for the Winter Olympics (Petersson & Vamling, 2013b). Such a political cocktail of events secured the tone of international media coverage towards Russia long before hosting the Olympic Games, making it far more difficult for the country to promote its own agenda.

It should be noted that Russia views the West not only as a recipient of its soft power, but also as Russia’s Other (Neumann, 1996). The identity of the Self (in this case, Russia) cannot be fully understood outside of a relationship to the Other (in this case, the United States). Identities of individuals, nations or states are dynamic and pliable; they constantly construct, reconstruct and deconstruct themselves in relation to each other (Jepperson, Wendt & Katzenstein, 1996, p. 59). The Other has a key role in identity construction: Wendt (1992, p. 404) depicts Other as a mirror through which the Self can discern itself properly. In addition, the question of recognition by the Other is essential: the lack of it leads to the deterioration in relations between the Self and Other. With that in mind, I will return to the Russo-Western tension in the Sochi Olympics discourse.

Ongoing Western criticism of Russian domestic policies in the run-up to the Sochi Olympics led to sense of insecurity with Russia’s viewing the West and its “hegemonic” ideals of good as a threat to its interests and the state in general (Kiseleva, 2015, p. 325). Even before the Olympics, in his assessment of colour revolutions in the post-Soviet countries, Putin stated that under the guise of democracy and universal rights, the West was promoting its own interests, thus equating Western hegemonic soft power, advocated by Nye, with propaganda, if not to say, information warfare. In other words, Russia turned tables on the West, attempting to shift the global balance of power in its favor, including the soft power. By reaching out to the international broadcasting (and creation of RT in 2005 in the first place), Russian leadership sought to project a “truthful image” of Russia (Hutchings et al., 2015; Kiseleva, 2015) and explained the nation’s view on
international and domestic issues as a counterforce to the West and its “poisonous hegemonic tendencies.”

In this regard, Konstantin Kosachev (2012b) notes that the negative perception of Russia in the West dates back to the Soviet times and that it still shapes the attitudes towards Russia depriving it of the possibility of having positive attraction. According to him, as soon as the “objective” image of Russia is restored “things will get better immediately” (Kosachev, 2012b). The argument does not, however, justify Russia’s underplaying of the Western soft power attributes (e.g., bringing human rights violation in the West to the media attention during the Sochi Olympics). As Kiseleva (2015, p. 323) observes, constant “dressing-down” of the Western soft power makes the Russian one look better in comparison and, thus, it gives Russia a better chance to pursue soft power on its own terms.

Notably, Russia’s status of a great power, discussed earlier in the chapter, has also been asserted through opposition to the West (Pipes, 2009). In this regard, Kiseleva (2015) notes, “Russia effectively reverses the logic of ‘soft power’: instead of earning great power status as a result of acquiring soft power, it lays claim to soft power automatically, as a consequence of its ostensibly obvious great powerhood” (p.322). However, as the Sochi Olympics progressed, it became clear that Russian endeavors were denied recognition, revealing the deepening divide between the Self and the Other.

To summarise the media play an important role in forming perceptions of the Olympic Games globally. For the majority of the audience the Olympics is an exhibition event displaying social, political, and cultural information from different parts of the world. Rather than present the reality, media constructs numerous versions of it along with inevitable “distorting effect” (Real, 1989) in forms of misrepresentation, nationalism, othering etc.

The Sochi Olympics were important to Russia’s perpetual quest for power and international recognition. The two resurrecting themes — internationalism and
national unity — were used by Russian authorities to increase Russian political, social, and economic attractiveness both inside and outside the country. The Games boosted pride and patriotism among the country’s population: a survey conducted by Russian non-governmental research organisation Levada Centre in 2007 showed that 64 percent of Russians believed that hosting the Olympic Games would raise Russia’s international prestige (Levada Centre, 2007, February 21). In spite of huge public support in Russia, the West was largely critical about the Sochi Olympics. Some scholars attribute the criticism to Russia’s failing transition from the sovereign state to the cosmopolitan and receptive to others, as implied by the Olympic Movement. While others refer to the more critical geopolitical reasoning, speaking about the clash of soft powers, vital indicators of the nation strength, between Russia and the West as well as their long-term great power rivalry for the influence in modern world politics — coming to the fore at the Sochi Olympics. Failing to promote its attractiveness, Russia switched to the counterforce mode directed against the West and kept it on even after the Olympics were over, as the course of events later showed.

2.4 Media Organisations: Background

Political and economic systems in Russia and the USA are fundamentally different, thus it is not surprising that the media systems also differ in many ways. In this subchapter, I introduce NBC and RT as media organisations and discuss their approach towards journalism and event coverage.

2.4.1. NBC

NBC is a commercially funded broadcast television network that operates in the United States with supporting bureaus in Canada, Germany and South Korea. It has headquarters in New York and two other major offices in Los Angeles and Chicago.
NBC was found in 1926 by the Radio Corporation of America (RCA) and it is the oldest broadcasting network in the United States. It is currently a subsidiary of Comcast Corporation, one of the largest broadcasting and cable companies in the world by revenue (“The world's largest media companies of 2015”, Forbes, 2015, May 22). Observing the changing economic structure of the television networks in the United States, Frank (1991) pointed out the emerging culture of financial responsibility that took over three major television networks NBC, ABC, and CBS relying on the interests of their holding companies and stakeholders.

News reporting has long been a significant part of NBC's operations since the company was established. NBC News productions consist of Today, NBC Nightly News, Meet the Press, and other programmes. It also owns MSNBC cable news service (originally a joint venture with Microsoft) which mostly features news and political debates. During the Olympic Games, those platforms carried the related sports content alongside general news with some of the staff reporting on site from Sochi.

NBC has been the subject of research, especially prominent among Olympic scholars. The network has held the American broadcasting rights of the Olympic Games over the last few decades, and recently extended them up to the 2032 Olympic Games. Previous studies have shown that NBC's Olympic telecast is drawn on American narrative, emphasising the U.S. athletes' participation in the events (Billings & Angelini, 2008). Rivenburgh (1992) speaks about NBC's approach as largely Western-centered that significantly reduces the potential for understanding of the host countries, which are not a part of the Western world. NBC's coverage strategies sparked controversies over the Seoul and Atlanta Olympics that contributed to the surge of Anti-NBC and Anti-American sentiment (Larson & Park, 1993; Lu, 1999). On the other hand, expectations for NBC are high as it is the only broadcaster at the Olympic Games representing the United States.
In regard to the Olympic Games, NBC’s focus is beyond simply “feel-good” event. It has a long track of covering “extracurricular issues” surrounding the Olympics such as bid-rigging scandal at the Salt Lake City Olympics in 2002, security concerns at the 2004 Athens Olympics, and criticisms of China’s human rights record during Beijing Olympics in 2008. The coverage of the Sochi Olympics was no exception. Ahead of the Games, chairman of NBC Sports Group Mark Lazarus said in a news conference that NBC “will cover any social issues or political issues as they are relevant to the Games from a sport perspective.” Commenting on the network’s reporting, NBC Sports executive producer Jim Bell added, "I think our approach is to do a thorough explanation (…) to talk about President Putin really being a driving force behind the games, gay rights, whatever else" ("How will NBC cover gay issues during Sochi Olympics", NPR, 2014, January 13).

Being the largest media company in the United States, NBC is in a certain way accountable for serving the public interest. Nevertheless, as argued above, it is also the largest media conglomerate and can determine the extent of its duty of accountability.

2.4.2. RT

Year 2004 marked a turning point in the Russian government’s efforts to advance the country’s agenda, when Vladimir Putin called on to Russia’s ambassadors to improve Russia’s international prestige abroad. The Russian state has put some considerable efforts in advancing the country’s image — from strengthening foundations of Russian culture and language abroad (e.g., Russkiy Mir) to media projects. Russia Today (renamed “RT” in 2009) became arguably the largest and most expensive state image projects of all. RT was launched as an English-language satellite TV channel in 2005 by the Russian government. Two Kremlin officials oversaw the project: the presidential press secretary Alexey Gromov and media advisor Mikhail Lesin. The funds to support a new media project were allocated from the state budget. According to Bruk (2013), the amount of funds
provided to RT was $30 million that increased subsequently over the following years: $90 million in 2007, $150 million in 2008, and in 2012 — more than $200 million. In 2016, the funds reached over $300 million (RT website). RT today is a global television news network with broadcasts in Russian, English, Spanish, and Arabic with French and German to be added soon. From the very beginning, RT was set to compete with such global networks as CNN, BBC World News, and Al Jazeera to bring a Russian perspective in global news reporting. RT quite excelled in this task with its global reach over 700 million people in more than one hundred countries, as reported on its corporate page. RT’s headquarters are in Moscow with 21 broadcasting centres in 16 countries including those in Washington, D.C., New York City, London, Paris; Kiev, Delhi, Cairo, and Baghdad. RT also distributes content via many video sharing websites such as YouTube, making it accessible for anyone with internet connection. As such, it became the first TV channel to have 1 billion subscribers on YouTube (RT website).

Research acknowledge RT’s potential to function as a Russian soft power tool with some highlighting its “contra flow” tendencies particularly apparent at the times of crisis (Hutchings et al., 2015). Some see RT as an extension of Russia’s foreign policy (Ioffe, 2010) with the goal to counter the US-led unipolarity. RT indeed takes a confrontational stance when it comes to the U.S. as exemplified by some of its notoriously known news accounts such as RT’s experts predicting the imminent demise of the United States or Boston Marathon bombing reported as a U.S. government conspiracy. In this regard, many scholars criticise RT for its conspiratorial ethos and conflicting information that leave the audience with more questions than answers (O’Loughlin, 2014). Other critics compare RT with a Soviet-era propaganda machine that portrays global events in a dramatic “black and white” fashion. Here is how RT’s narratives are described in the US media, “USA bad — USSR good; …shale gas bad — Gazprom good; …Turkey bad — Syria good” (“Kremlin TV channel to US: No reset”, Voice of America, 2012, April 21). Margarita Simonyan, RT’s editor-in-chief and a former pool reporter for Kremlin, remains
unappalled. “Our goal is still to provide unbiased information about Russia to the rest of the world, to report about our country,” she said (Cited in Ioffe, 2010).

In Simonyan’s perspective, the purpose of RT is to provide an alternative to the mainstream news sources. In other comments, she presented RT as an important tool, which Russia needs to use in information war, so it would not be lost to the West, as it was the case during Russo-Georgian conflict when Russia was widely framed as an aggressor (“Ne sobirayus’ delat’ vid, chto ya ob’ektivnaya”, Lenta.ru, 2013, March 7). In fact, RT was given such a chance during the Ukraine crisis: the study by Hutchings et al. (2015) demonstrated RT’s striking transformation from a global media to increasingly pro-Kremlin outlet.
3. Methodology

Having examined fundamental approaches in the theoretical framework of the thesis, I now turn to the discussion of the study design and implementation. This chapter will establish the hypothesis, research questions, and the overview of the research methods employed. Finally, it will indicate how the results of the study will be processed and formulated.

3.1 Study Design

This study investigates the media coverage of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Russia and the United States in light of geopolitics. For the purpose of the research, I chose two mainstream (non-sport-related) media: the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) of the United States and RT of Russia. Both media are also considered the world's biggest international broadcasters, thus their reporting is projected to the entire world. The aim of the study is to develop general insight about the influence of the media organisation and the geopolitics of its national location on the representation of the Sochi Olympics.

I conducted a framing analysis of articles published in NBC and RT that referred to the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games with the dominant focus on non-sport-related content. Thus, score and result's reports as well as technical descriptions of any sport were excluded from the sample. The body of coverage for this research is composed of 329 online articles (160 from RT and 169 from NBC) published from January 1, 2013 to February 28, 2014. The framing analysis tracked themes, quoted sources and looked at the tone of coverage in order to examine the way in which both media organisations portrayed the Olympic Games in Sochi. The ultimate goal of the framing analysis was to identify the dominant frames in the NBC and RT's news coverage of the Sochi Olympics and determine how they compare
with each other, and how such framing reflects the geopolitical context in which each of the media organisations is embedded.

The study will address the following research questions:

*RQ1*: What are the most popular frames that RT and NBC employ in covering the Sochi Olympic Games?

*RQ2*: Are there any systematic differences in using media frames by these two media outlets?

*RQ3*: How do RT and NBC’s framing of the Olympic Games in Sochi contribute to the understanding Russo-Western relations in terms of geopolitics?

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses were drawn:

*H1*: Pro-Western frames and frames with negative valence towards Russia are dominant in NBC’s articles.

*H2*: Anti-Western frames and frames with positive valence towards Russia are dominant in RT’s articles.

I used a mixed approach to studying frames, similar to the one of Van Gorp’s (2010). First, I ran a quantitative content analysis in order to determine generic frames throughout the coverage of the Sochi Olympics. Generic frames emerged from the hypotheses and were defined as generally favorable of either Russia or the West and generally unfavorable. Second, I employed a qualitative framing analysis to break these generic frames into particular, theme-specific frames that regularly appeared in the coverage of the Sochi Olympics. In other words, I first scanned news coverage for a predefined set of generic frames and then I looked for dominant themes that reside within the news narratives to determine how those themes are framed. The frames discovered were analysed contextually in light of the research paradigm.

Thus, this study integrates deductive and inductive strategies of analysing news stories for frames. By identifying frames for major domains under discussion, I hope
to develop a simple and yet comprehensive way to compare the frames different media employ.

The study also seeks to demonstrate how media framing of the Sochi Olympic Games reflected early stages of what later developed into the most serious geopolitical conflict between Russia and the West since the end of the Cold War. In the study, I argue that the tension emerged long before the crisis in Ukraine. In fact, it was already there when the torch was lit.

3.2 Data Collection and Processing

In order to conduct my framing analysis study I first had to collect the data. It drove me to the selection of two research methods: contextual analysis of the state of political-media relations and quantitative content analysis.

3.2.1 Contextual Analysis

An understanding and appreciation for context was highlighted early in the works of Leymore (1975) and Nimmo and Felsberg (1986) who used contextual analysis to uncover the underlying meanings in advertising. In this particular study, contextual analysis is a method that enriches understanding of environment in which media organisations operate. Thus, it considers media texts to be a part of broader political, economic, historical, geographical, socio-cultural, and other settings. By applying this method, I hope to shed light on the reasons for differences in NBC and RT’s coverage of the Sochi Olympics.

The working assumption was that each media organisation belongs to a distinct geopolitical context that shapes its representation of the Sochi Olympics. The previous studies showed that variation in media representations of the same event is influenced by three factors: geopolitical location and national interest in the occasion, ownership of a media organisation, and the nature of the audience (Mody,
2010). In light of the present study, I analysed the geopolitical context and related ideologies in which each media organisation is embedded, the influence of ownership, and the media’s intended audience (domestic or foreign) on the selection and presentation of particular topics (Chapter 2). The information for each media organisation was obtained from academic works, websites of the respective media, and general web search. In addition, the study took good consideration of the broader flow of global developments that could substantially influence media framing during the Sochi Olympics.

3.2.2 Content Analysis

The study views the content analysis as “the systematic assignment of communication content to categories according to rules, and the analysis of relationship involving those categories using statistical methods” (Riffe, Lacy and Fico 1998, p. 18). Thus defined, the method of content analysis is the attempt to break media content into separate units, which can be sorted, categorised, and counted to broaden understanding of the content. The research combines quantitative and qualitative techniques to produce a rich and comprehensive picture of the media content. Scholars usually employ quantitative techniques in content analysis to count the number of times certain categories: themes, subthemes, keywords, lexical choices, sources etc. appear in the content. These categories are very helpful and can be viewed as indicators of frames or framing devices (Entman, 1991; Pan & Kosicki, 1993). The frequency of occurrence of each framing device is a powerful form of framing, which would help the researcher to determine dominant frames in each media. Nevertheless, sometimes the very important concepts need not to be repeated the most in order to assert the frame. Therefore, I also used qualitative technique of content analysis in which I looked for indicators of frames in the articles after they were sorted into generic categories. Qualitative approach is useful when one considers both the text and the issues of which it speaks. The
mixture of quantitative and qualitative techniques of the content analysis responds to the nature of the frame and its openness to multiple interpretations.

A total of 329 articles were selected for this study. All articles were taken from the NBC and RT’s English-language news websites and were published during the period from January 2013 to February 2014. The number of stories was not equal but the difference was insignificant: 160 stories were collected from NBC and 169 stories from RT.

*Figure 1. Comparison of Distribution of NBC and RT’s Articles, January 2013-February 2014*

Articles were selected by entering the word “Sochi” into the search engine for each media’s website. In order to access all articles from the given period, I drew an additional sample through web search engine. Only articles exclusively produced by the media in question were considered, articles borrowed from news agencies did not make it to the sample. The following questions were asked in order to determine whether an article could be selected into the sample: (1) Does the article have at least half of its paragraphs on the Sochi Olympics? (2) Has this article already
occurred in the sample? Articles with solely sports content were excluded from the sample such as sports scores and results reports, schedules, sports experts analyses, detailed descriptions, announcements and others. Some articles contained a minimal focus on the Sochi Olympics elaborating instead on athletes’ personal lives, and some were just wrap-up articles that summarised the results of particular competitions. These articles were removed from the sample. Additionally, articles that contained only video materials did not make it to the representative sample because visual data analysis is out of scope of the current research.

Characteristics of news were coded manually at the level of each individual article. Coding is an essential activity in media research by which the researcher increases his or her understanding of the media content. A codebook (Appendix 1) was developed that describes a set of codes and instructions, which guides the analysis. However, even the most prominent works on content analysis (e.g., Krippendorff, 2004) have little information on how to develop code and codebooks in a systematic way. Nevertheless, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and Mody (2010) seem to tackle the issue quite well. Semetko and Valkenburg, for instance, prepared a checklist consisting of 20 items for coders nullifying their need to interpret the material, whereas Mody provided definition of every category and subcategory to ensure accurate coding. Good coding directions allow the researcher to achieve a greater level of reliability of the study; thus, much effort was put into the developing of the coding procedures.

An article was used as the coding unit. Each article was analysed for its generic frame, defined as the prevailing sentiment of the news story. In this study, the sentiment of the news frame was an important indicator of the broader geopolitical context.Generic frames included Pro-Russian, Pro-Western, Anti-Russian and Anti-Western. To ensure each frame is coded accurately, the coding instructions provided a set of questions to determine each frame. During the analysis, it appeared that not all media texts could fit into the four above-mentioned generic frames, so two more “borderline” frames were created, namely, Mixed frame Russia
and *Mixed frame the West* for those articles with the focus on either Russia or the West but with no vocal generic frame. In addition, the articles were analysed for the presence of the following themes: LGBT, Sochi Problems (weather, heritage, political conflict, infrastructure problems, stray dogs etc.), Putin, Security/Terrorism, Costs/Corruption, Human rights, Critique of the West, and Olympic preparations. If an article contained multiple themes, all of them were coded. Articles were also coded for the presence of direct quotes from the following sources: Russian government, other Russian leaders and experts (former leaders, prominent figures, religious leaders, businessmen in Russia that are not directly connected to the current government), Team Russia, Russians (People or volunteers), U.S. government, other U.S. leaders and experts, Team USA, Americans, IOC, NGO’s and human rights organisations, other foreign leaders, and the media.

I rated the tone of the coverage as positive, negative, or neutral. Positively-toned stories that devoted more than half of their content describing positive events or presenting the events in an optimistic perspective, had more use of positive, emotion-bearing words, such as “promise,” “hopeful,” “heroic” etc.; and had photographs that reinforced the argument in the article. Negatively-toned articles that mostly provided descriptions of the events which involved accidents, crime, corruption, human rights violation, severe weather conditions, and other problems; used words with negative connotations such as “crisis,” “abuse,” “discrimination”; and had photographs that added weight to the article. Neutrally-toned articles provided a fairly balanced perspective on the issue, referring equally to negative and positive aspects. Articles that had no clear stance were also coded as neutral.

Finally, the articles were coded for their publication date, length (short, medium, long), presence of author byline, and article type (news, feature article, or opinion column). All coded units were subsequently reviewed for additional connections between them. Frequencies (Appendix 2) were calculated for all research variables, some of the results are graphically displayed in Chapter 4.
3.3 Data Analysis Methods

After data was collected and categorized, I conducted a qualitative framing analysis. The working principle was the one of Bowen’s (2009) who argues that rather than concentrating on the quantity of documents examined, the focus of qualitative analysis “should be about the quality of the documents and the evidence they contain” (p.33). The advantage of the qualitative approach is that it lays greater emphasis on the cultural and political content of the news frames.

3.3.1 Framing Analysis from a Theoretical Perspective

This study examines the media coverage of the 2014 Olympic Games in Sochi through the lens of framing theory. Framing theory and analysis have become an important part of the news analysis tradition over the past few decades. In fact, Entman (1993) argues that framing is the paramount concept that could become a general theory to explain how communication texts work. The development of framing analysis was influenced by “linguistic turn” (Bergmann, 1967) in social science research. Scholars realised that simply studying the content of mass media is not enough: It became important to understand the meanings, processes, and emphases of this content (Altheide & Schneider, 2013). In his encompassing definition, Reese (2001) refers to frames as “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to structure the social world” (p.11; emphasis in original).

Erving Goffman was among the first who contributed to theoretical foundations of framing research. Goffman is perhaps the best-known sociologist of the second half of the 20th century; even today, many of the academic articles are still predicated on his original insights. Since Robert Entman (1993) applied framing theory to mass media analysis, scholars have used this method to understand how media constructs “reality.”
First, the difference between *frame* and *framing* should be established. Previous studies have offered a variety of conceptual definitions of these terms (Entman, 1993; Gitlin, 1980; Pan & Koski, 1993; Scheufele B. & Scheufele D., 2010; Tankard, 2001). A suitable stance from which to integrate those diverse definitions is the work of political communication researcher Jim Kuypers (2010) who calls a frame “a central organizing idea” through which issues or events are viewed, whereas he regards framing as a *process* of constructing this particular point. Although one frame or several frames promote a certain interpretation of an event, they, at the same time, omit other interpretations, as all of them cannot exist and still foster the status quo (D'Angelo, 2002). As Entman (1991) argues, “For those stories in which a single frame thoroughly pervades the text, stray contrary opinions (...) are likely to possess such low salience as to be of little practical use to most audience members” (p.22).

Entman views media framing as a process by which media “select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text in a way that can promote a certain definition, interpretation, moral evaluation or treatment recommendation” (1993, p. 52). In other words, framing looks at how media organises the context through which the audience will view the news. News frames in media research represent *choices* made about what parts of a story should be maximized or minimized (Palmeri, 2001).

According to Scheufele B. and Scheufele D. (2010), in media research one can examine cognitive frames of journalists (cognitive level), the frames emerging and changing in newsroom (discursive level), and the media frames in, for instance, online news broadcast (textual level). This study discusses frames on the textual level in accordance with its vision of frames as an indicator of a broader public discourse and not of an individual journalist. This approach is discussed in a number of academic works (Mody, 2010; Scheufele B. & Scheufele D., 2010; Snow & Benford, 1988).
A growing body of literature focuses on mapping the various partisan and news frames in public discourse. For instance, Baysha (2010) looked at media framing of the Russo-Georgian war of 2008 in Ukrainian and U.S. media to explain growing animosity of Pro-Russian media in Ukraine towards the United States. Tovmasyan (2015) researched framing of sanctions against Russia in Rossiiskaya Gazeta, Russian government’s official newspaper, to shed light on the public discourse promoted by Kremlin. The frames discovered in the research were often ascribed to political goals of societal actors targeting the news media to convey their preferred frames to the public, often intact.

In the foreign policy and national security context, for instance, research indicates that media organisations are less independent in their framing and most of the time publish the frames promoted by the government uncritically. Bennett, Lawrence, and Livingston (2007) point out the one-sided framing of the Iraq invasion story, in which the Bush administration’s rhetoric dominated major U.S. media, while questions about the necessity of invading Iraq were hardly raised. This is not an isolated study: Zaller and Chiu (1996) looked into 35 U.S. foreign policy crises between 1945 and 1991 to find that the U.S. media tended to align themselves with the government’s perspective. However, this is not the case of the United States alone. Scholars found that the reporters covering an event overseas in the UK, China, Russia etc. mostly used their own national lenses, speaking on behalf of their country’s national interests (Mody, 2010). In the case of U.S. journalists, Bennett (1996) suggests that the reason might as well be rooted in reporters’ understanding of the U.S. government as a representative democracy where public officials receive power from the people. The main voices, according to Bennett, are those with the greatest power over the issue. As well as this, by focusing on “official voices” media thus try to avoid any allegation of personal bias. Or maybe, the nature of reporting has simply changed, as Sigal (1973) noted, “For the reporter, in short, most news is not what has happened, but what someone says has happened” (p.69).
Entman (2010) argues to study framing is to study power. Much of the power of framing comes from its ability to shape and distort public perceptions. However, framing is not only about promoting certain perspectives; it is about promoting certain perspectives *over others*. For example, Entman (1991) found that the Soviet shoot-down of Korean Air 007 in 1983 was framed in the United States as a brutal attack, a murder, whereas the U.S. downing of Iran Air 655 in 1988 was reported by the U.S. media as a technical problem. Media frames are likely to reflect the frames favored by the powerful political elites, particular in the context of reporting on extra-national events.

Conflict is central to framing. History knows many examples where frames revolve around a particular conflict, for instance, the Iraq invasion (Bennett et al., 2007) or the Cold War. One way to determine the key conflict is to look at the choice of arguments, speakers and sources that structure the discussion in a text. Conflict frame is powerful because it encourages the public to interpret events as being the result of a struggle between different sides. The Cold War frame, observed in Chapter 2, formed a set of arguments that endorsed one side or another as they competed for global influence. Once the conflict ended, this frame became mostly irrelevant. Nevertheless, at times journalists take incoming facts to fit into the frames that existed in the past. Jameson (1984) refers to the use of history as “pastiche” arguing that original meanings are lost when they are applied to frame present events.

Framing theory is subjective in nature and inherently connected with bias and persuasion. Framing analysis has often been used to illustrate the existence of bias in the media. Nevertheless, in this study, I argue that framing is not simply a study of objectivity and bias; it dives into the depth of news coverage to uncover underlying processes and interpret them within a broader context. As Hackett (1984) points out, framing concept allows researchers to approach ideology — an intriguing subject that was mostly handled by critical theorists until recently. Foss (1996, p.291) described ideology as “a pattern or set of ideas, assumptions, beliefs,
values, or interpretations of the world by which culture or group operates.” The media organisations in question operate from Russian and American ideological perspectives and, therefore, reflect the dominant ideas and beliefs of their location. Researching ideological stance makes perfect sense as it helps to understand social processes behind media framing. Additionally, framing is not effective in measuring explicit bias, because issues are usually framed in favour of a particular side without one’s knowledge. Consciously or unconsciously journalists frame an issue in a certain way and thus shape the public’s opinion on an issue simply due to the frame used. Similarly, Sniderman and Theriault (2004) argue that today it is “widely agreed that citizens in large numbers can be readily blown from one side of an issue to the very opposite depending on how the issue is specifically framed” (p. 133).

As has been shown, framing is a highly influential tool that can be vulnerable to manipulation of advocates of particular frames. I already observed the government officials as newsmakers, however, there is at least one more group one should keep in mind when engaging in the framing analysis, called news shapers. Here is how Soley (1992) identified an essential difference between the two, “News makers, such as government officials, are individuals who are the legitimate focus of the news. They are distinguishable from news shapers, who provide background or analyses for viewers, but not the focus of the news” (p.14). In media articles, news shapers are known as experts: analysts, interest group leaders, scholars, grassroots movement’s spokespersons etc. The framing of news stories depends on a news sharper quite as much as on a news maker; with one important (and sometimes dangerous) difference: news sharper’s opinions are often seen as objective, thus, ultimately become legitimate.

Because framing is linked to the salience of a work, one might wonder how different it is to agenda-setting and agenda extension – theoretical concepts that deal with the transfer of the saliency of issues from the media agenda to the public agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Whereas agenda-setting takes place when media select
to cover certain events or issues, agenda extension fosters a certain understanding of those issues and events (Denton & Kuypers, 2008, p. 111). Scholars often draw the line between framing and agenda-setting theories, with some exceptions, though highly debatable. McCombs (1993), for instance, one of the founders of agenda-setting theory, argues that framing is just a second dimension of agenda-setting research, namely — above-mentioned agenda-extension. To demonstrate his argument, McCombs (p.62) wrote that through agenda-setting the media tells us what to think about, whereas through framing media tells us what to think about it.

So, agenda-setting scholars actually say frame is just one of many characteristics of an object (Ghanem, 1996; McCombs, 1993). Framing researchers do not agree, highlighting the importance of the context of a media text and the influence of the framer. Gerald Kosicki (1993), for instance, argues that framing starts with explicit cognitive premise on the part of a framer, whereas agenda-setting does not — thus, framing is not agenda-setting, nor agenda-extension. Kosicki’s view has found further confirmation among researchers: Iyengar and Simon (1993) measured framing and agenda-setting as different concepts in their research. In other words, framing researchers view news stories not as objects but as socially constructed evolving (not static!) structures (Entman, 1989; Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1997), which are influenced by the framer. Thus, it is media framing which organises the meaning of issues, and not the other way around, as argued by agenda-setting scholars (Reese, 2001).

Nevertheless, the present study is, to some extent, inspired by agenda-setting approach, in two ways at least. First, each media’s agenda was closely examined in relation to the Olympic Games in Sochi — a year before and during the Games. Second, as a list of issues is conceptualised in agenda-setting (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), I also thought of framing as a certain list of frames — not only generic ones, which I defined in preliminary work, but also those theme-specific frames which I was to identify in my study. This schema provided a basis for the study design, as I
looked for main themes contained in news narratives and then explored how those themes were framed.

3.3.2 Framing Analysis from a Practical Perspective

My approach to framing analysis is based on the one advocated by Kuypers (2010), who suggests first to look for common themes in examined news coverage and then identify how these themes are framed in each media. Thus, I rely on themes to understand news framing. Every news story has a theme, but not every one has a frame, as most scholars agree with some notable exceptions. For instance, Pan and Kosicki (1993, p. 59) argue that the frame of a news story is equal to its theme. This study, however, shares the prevailing understanding that frame is a “more encompassing concept” (Aday, 2006, p. 768) than a theme. The frame is built across a series of news stories, and not all its characteristics are present in a single article.

A theme is a set of words and phrases that are connected in a certain way. Themes in media texts “can be minor, significant, or central to the unfolding story” (Holtzman, 2000, p. 45). In order to find a theme, I took a closer look at various elements of a news story (description of an action or an actor, direct quotes, background information etc.). Themes were discovered prior the content analysis through close reading of the entire set of text — the procedure, which, according to Anderson (2012), has to be done at least three times to ensure against self-fulfilling conclusions. Additionally, some information could be overlooked during the first reading.

Once the themes were established, the study looked at how they were framed across media texts. There are many ways to determine frames. News stories are often told as narratives, based on facts, but they bond with each other through framing techniques. Some scholars provided a detailed account of such techniques. Gamson and Modigliani (1989, p. 3), for instance, suggest to look at metaphors,
exemplars (i.e. historical examples from which lessons are drawn), catchphrases, depictions, and visual images regularly used in media texts. Other scholars (e.g., Entman, 1991) advise to focus on the frame's vocabulary, from repetition of particular words to pattern of their usage — all can help the researcher to identify the frame. However, rather than focus on lexical choices, in this research I use Hertog and McLeod's (2001) master narratives approach, which view frames as “comprehensive structures of meaning made up of a number of concepts and the relations of those concepts” (p. 140).

Master narratives determine how those concepts relate to each other. This network of concepts is not visible; to identify the nodes and links one should look beyond manifest content, into the latent message that holds all the parts together. This approach to framing stems from Hackett’s (1984) concept of ideology which regards framing as the application of rooted beliefs in society about what goes together. In a similar vein, Van Gorp (2010) calls for more close examination of widely shared political and cultural mythologies that are taken for granted by members of society. These archetypes might function as a frame or contribute to one, for instance: villain and victim, villain and hero. Such patterns of thoughts are present in almost any form of communication “because they embody the fears, hopes, and prejudices of the cultures in which their audiences live” (Bennett & Edelman, 1985, pp. 157-158).

By assigning roles to the key actors of a news story, as trivial good or bad, the media already set the scene: what is the problem and who is responsible — making an emotional connection with the public and deepening it further through dramatisation. Edelman (1988) notes the media evoke a spectacle to attract larger audiences mostly due to their economic priorities.

Hence, my approach to framing was to consider the totality of information associated with a particular frame with a focus on word choice, cause-and-effect assertions, valence, use of sources, and any additional details. Identified frames were checked against Van Gorp’s “suitability” criterion that is “(a) the thickness of
the frame description, (b) the degree of abstraction; and (c) the applicability of a frame to define other issues” (Van Gorp, 2010, p.97).

By looking at some of the previous work that used framing analysis, one can notice little research goes beyond merely describing the frames found in the media. The present research not only described dominant frames in each media, but also compared them with each other to determine the prevailing discourse of the Sochi Olympics media coverage. In addition, framing is fundamentally about the differences in the ways news stories are presented, by comparing news coverages of the same event one can clearly see what is included and excluded from either of the coverages. Future research could consider various influences on news construction in media (social, institutional, structural etc.) to deepen understanding why the media employ certain frames over others.

3.4 Validity, Reliability, and Ethics

It is important to acknowledge a number of limitations that are usually associated with the research methodology used in the study. A great effort is devoted to meeting the standards of reliability and validity that are strongly expected from an academic work. One could think validity is concerned with accuracy and reliability is concerned with consistency. For instance, reliability in qualitative research is understood as replicability of findings. Thus, other researchers should be able to replicate the results of the current study when using the same set of procedures to examine the same phenomena. Although findings of a framing research, as other qualitative studies, are mainly impossible to replicate, one can still argue that the findings are reliable when the exact information is provided on the research methods (Burnham, Grillard, Grant & Layton-Henry, 2004, p.8). To ensure reliability of the research, Tankard (2001), for instance, advises to focus on as few frames as possible to ensure they are mutually exclusive, suggesting even to limit the research to two frames. By contrast, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) propose to
elaborate, instead of reducing, by developing checklists for frames and detailed coding manuals.

As far as validity is concerned, the study setting must ensure correct and precise results. For instance, this study uses multiple methods (contextual analysis, quantitative content analysis and qualitative framing analysis) to check and crosscheck the research findings. Moreover, it relies on a number of secondary sources, including scholarly works that directly correspond to the subject studied.

The issues of validity and reliability become more apparent when scholars deal with meaningfulness of the text, as it is the case with framing research. Scholars often express their concern about the content analysis (e.g., Tankard, 2001). Frames are abstract, but they are presumed to have certain characteristics so the researcher can identify them. The challenge is to demonstrate the relationship between the abstract frame and those characteristics, which help the researcher to determine the frame. Given the fact that no common understanding on the frame’s characteristics and elements emerged from the literature, one might wonder what exactly should these elements be and how many (per frame)? To address the challenge, I designed the research methods and procedures in a certain way and adhered to it, rigorously and systematically.

Although some level of subjectivity was hardly escapable. After all, the researcher alone links elements of the media text to the central framing idea in terms of her own background and experience. As far as the background is concerned, one may ask if the researcher should be a member of any of the cultural groups in question. Born in Ukraine and raised in Russia, I am certainly familiar with the cultural heritage I am researching and I believe this is a great advantage because the aim of the study is to reconstruct the politically and culturally embedded frames. Yet I strive to maintain some distance from personal thinking patterns to reach new understanding of the matter. For that purpose, the analysis procedures are designed in a way that would limit the subjectivity, such as a priori codes and
checklists. This approach aims to identify frames systematically by outlining a set of characteristics anyone can recognise and agree upon. However, the paradox is, by coding only quantifiable content the researcher sacrifices some reliability. In my attempt to measure the content, I risked overlooking “hidden meaning structures” which frames contain, too (Van Gorp, 2010, p.99). With the latent content, preliminary coding makes little sense, because all codes are developed in the researcher’s interaction with the text that inevitably involves a degree of subjectivity. Therefore, I treated the body of text with equal respect to manifest and latent content, so the final argument would fairly represent the complexity and contradictions of the text in question.

The scope of articles provided both a weakness and a strength to the study. Weakness in the sense that the sample is quite broad for the researcher who is the sole coder. Additionally, there are many factors in relation to the selected texts that were not considered such as political leaning, entertainment nature, commercial appeal etc. Traces of power relations can occur in response to a variety of factors (political, economic, ideological, cultural etc.) and it is usually hard to establish where exactly the influence comes from. To overcome this weakness, I chose to narrow my focus to those factors with the most impact on the research phenomena in order to be consistent with the overarching paradigm of the study. The strength of the sample is that all texts selected met the research criterion. Elimination of a single one would be seen as a move towards pre-drawn conclusions and would compromise credibility of the research. One should also acknowledge inevitable bias in selection of articles for framing analysis because only one third of the articles was included in the final sample and the remainder didn’t meet the research criterion. One can argue, however, that dominant frames, which the study seeks to identify, should be prominent throughout the news coverage. Thus, if one news story, which has traces of a dominant frame, is absent from the sample, there is always another one, which made it into the sample.
The present research tries to be as transparent as possible (statistical data is openly available and all cited references are sourced). The idea is that by improving the transparency, audience can trace the logic behind the analysis and compare with the research data.
Given a significant number of news media accounts, one of the main challenges was to come up with a systematic measurement scheme for the framing analysis. The analysis had to be designed in a way that helps examine how each media covered the Olympic Games in Sochi, how they compare with each other, and how those findings can be applied to a broader geopolitical discourse. As mentioned in the previous chapter, I looked for two types of frames: generic frames and theme-specific frames. Generic frames are based on positive-negative sentiment, and in this study it is an important indicator of the broader geopolitical context in which both media organisations operate. On the other hand, theme-specific frames deal with the content of news coverage helping to determine prevailing media discourse at the time of the Games. The study examines firstly news articles for generic frames, then following it looks for the theme-specific frames.

My early hypothesis was that most of the articles would contain references to any of the following generic frames: Pro-Russian, Anti-Russian, Pro-Western, and Anti-Western and, therefore, would have certain characteristics. For example, the story within the Pro-Russian frame would more likely correspond with the position of Russian government and project a positive view of the Sochi Olympic Games, whereas the article within the Anti-Russian frame would have negative sentiment towards the Sochi Olympics and Russia in general. For convenience of analysis, mixed frames were introduced to encompass the articles with a balance of positive and negative references to Russia and the West. In order to identify theme-specific frames, I first looked for the dominant themes, which reside within the news narratives, and then examined how those themes are framed in each media.

Thus, the analysis for each media organisation proceeds in the following order: first, I describe sampled articles according to the following characteristics: timing and duration, length and authorship, quoted sources, and tone of coverage towards
Russia and the West. Second, I determine the generic frame depending on the frequency obtained from the qualitative content analysis. Finally, I identify theme-specific frames in two steps: I collect the results for the theme variable (LGBT, Sochi Problems, Putin, Security/Terrorism, Costs/Corruption, Human rights, Critique of the West, and Olympic preparations) from the content analysis and then I select those themes with the highest frequency for each media and explore how they are framed in the sampled articles using qualitative framing analysis. Both generic and theme-specific frames are equally valuable in answering the research questions.

When I began this project, my initial goal was to investigate Russo-Western geopolitical agenda in the Sochi Olympic Games media coverage. As I researched the subject, I discovered substantial differences in Olympic narratives and media agendas, in such a way that I was getting the impression that two different media events were portrayed.

4.1 NBC’s Olympic News Coverage

From January 2013 to February 2014, the word “Sochi” occurred in 493 articles on NBCnews.com (also retrieved through msnbc.com and today.com). Deleted and duplicated articles as well as those containing video files were eliminated. Articles about particular competitions and other sport-specific materials were also excluded, so the sample resulted in 160 articles. Of these articles, 72 percent were news stories, feature and background articles constituted 27 percent, and opinion columns amounted to 1 percent. The majority of articles (60 percent) were published during the Sochi Olympics from 7 to 23 February, 2014.

4.1.1 Timing and Duration

NBC’s first article on the Sochi Olympics appeared on February 6, 2013 — precisely one year to the day of the Olympic Games opening ceremony. This 1066-word
article described the content of the just-released Human Rights Watch report on human rights violation at the Olympic construction sites in Russia. Of all articles published in 2013, 86 percent appeared in the second half of the year, when President Vladimir Putin signed federal law, which prohibits propaganda of homosexuality to minors, and when the first terrorism threats to the Olympics were reported. One third of the Olympic-related coverage in 2013 focused on the controversy over Russia’s anti-gay propaganda law with the only opinion column appearing in the wake of the mounting calls for boycotting the Olympics Games in Sochi. The column, written by Cyd Zeigler (co-founder of leading gay-sports publication Outsports) opposed the idea of boycotting the 2014 Winter Olympics. The author suggested instead banning Russia from participation by the example of South Africa, which was excluded from most international sporting events during the time of apartheid.

In December 2013, two suicide bomb blasts in two days claimed 34 lives in the Russian city of Volgograd. The terrorist attacks, which happened a month before the start of the Sochi Olympics, raised fears about the security of the Games. NBC’s coverage of Sochi increased dramatically: the media published a security-related article every two days, on average.

4.1.2 Length and Authorship

Of NBC’s 160 articles, 72 percent were news stories with an average length of 311 words. For features, the average length was 863 words, and the length of the only opinion column was 779 words. Many articles used the lines or quotes from the previous news stories, linking the stories together and, at the same time, reinforcing the arguments.

70 percent of the articles on NBC had author bylines. Nearly a third of these articles was attributed to Erin McClaim, a senior writer at NBCnews.com. Before joining the company in January 2013, he covered economics and markets at Associated Press.
What was striking about his reporting was frequent reference to the Soviet Union and the Cold War in the context of the Sochi Olympics. Sometimes his references appeared unforeseen and were hardly justified, as illustrated in the examples: "Putin has staked the safety of the games on the same strategy the Soviet army used to defeat Hitler" ("Let the Games begin! Sochi sets stage for power and glory", NBC, 2014, February 7); "T.J. Oshie [US hockey player], barely out of diapers when the Cold War ended, slipped the puck past a Russian goalie Saturday" ("Oshie fever: Hockey player beats Russians in Sochi, becomes a star", NBC, 2014, February 15); or "Sidney Crosby tries to lead Canada to the first back-to-back men’s Olympic hockey gold since the end of the Cold War" ("The best, worst and weirdest moments from the Sochi Olympics", NBC, 2014, February 16). Other articles were authored by numerous NBC’s contributors, including Moscow- and Sochi-based correspondents, producers, business, political, and investigative journalists. Only 9 percent of news articles were based on reports credited to various media sources.

4.1.3 Quoted Sources

The people or groups that contributed a direct quotation to the articles were counted to determine which sources NBC relied on when covering the Olympic Games in Sochi. The 160 articles made references to the studied sources 207 times, so the average number of sources quoted was under two per article.

The most frequently quoted sources in articles were Russian government and the Sochi 2014 Organizing Committee (no difference was made between the two, because their positions aligned; 14 percent), then Russian non-governmental leaders and experts (11.5 percent of quotes). U.S. non-governmental leaders and experts provided 11 percent of quotes, followed by Team USA and the IOC with 10.5 percent each. The U.S. government and U.S. Olympic Committee provided only 8 percent of quotes. (Figure 5.)
It is not surprising that the sources above were the most used: apart from Russian powerful elite with the most authority over Olympic affairs, the prevalence of non-governmental sources is important for the understanding of NBC’s media framing. Russian non-governmental sources were generally represented by local activists commenting on gay rights, animal rights, environmental, and political issues in Russia. There were also Russian scholars (mostly from a Western-oriented Carnegie Moscow Centre) and experts who covered what was not mentioned by the activists — Olympic costs and security threats — and, finally, business elite, managing directors, and TV personas who commented on events as they occurred. As for U.S. non-governmental community, it split almost equally between LGBT rights activists and experts in the field of security — the latter were employed as NBC analysts. Experts on Olympic Games spending consisted mostly of academics in the field of Olympic studies; however, they contributed to one article only.

Human rights organisations provided 6 percent of quotes, were, in most cases, the source of news on human rights violations in Russia, “Human Rights Watch has also posted a collection of shocking video clips of homophobic violence that are actually used as propaganda for violent anti-gay groups” (“Brutal attacks on Russian gays revealed in documentary”, NBC, 2014, February 5).

Sources quoted 4.5 percent of the time or less included Russian and American people, leaders and officials from other countries. Surprisingly, Team Russia, which eventually topped the Sochi Olympics medals table, was quoted only once. It came from one of Russia's most famous athletes who injured his back during the figure skating competition. His quote was, “I'm not able to skate” (“The best, worst and weirdest moments from the Sochi Olympics”, NBC, 2014, February 16).

Among other sources, which did not fit into any categories above, were hackers and terrorists. In some cases, there were no other quotes provided, so those groups’ opinions were exclusive to the articles. NBC, for example, quoted terrorists saying in a video address to Russia, “Today, one mujahid could destroy dozens or even
hundreds of people in your cities. And do not think that these are isolated cases and that you will not feel the losses" (“Militants tell Russians: rebel against Putin, or else”, NBC, 2014, January 26).

Overall, 64 percent of quotes were from sources outside Russia, as compared with 30 percent from inside the country. NGO and human rights group, mainly from organisations outside Russia, accounted for the remaining 6 percent, as mentioned above.

4.1.4 Tone of Coverage towards Russia and the West

The tone of coverage of NBC’s articles was determined as positive, neutral, and negative based on valence of the information and frequency of positive and negative terms in an article. The majority of NBC’s articles were perceived to be negatively-toned towards Russia (51 percent) describing terrorist attacks and human rights violation, and specifically problems related to the Sochi Olympic such as costs, weather conditions, poor accommodation, stray dogs etc. 33 percent of articles were rated as neutral and 16 percent were of positive tone towards Russia.

As for the tone of coverage towards the West, it was predominantly neutral (69 percent), illustrated by the example, “White House spokesman Jay Carney told reporters Wednesday that the U.S. government is continuing to work with Russia and hopes to see Snowden returned to the United States” (“Graham: U.S. should consider Olympic boycott over possible Snowden asylum”, NBC, 2013, July 17). Because the majority of the events were less related to the West and, in particular, the United States, than they were to Russia, neutrally-toned articles outnumbered the rest. Positively-toned articles came second (28 percent) and 3 percent of articles were of negative tone.
4.1.5 Focus of Framing

Of all generic frames investigated in the study, Anti-Russian frame was predominant, used in 31.5 percent of the articles (Figure 6). The second most frequent focus was on both positive and negative aspects of Russia and Sochi Olympics (Mixed frame Russia) — 31 percent. The possible explanation might be that the Russian government and President Vladimir Putin were frequently opposed to the Russian people especially in the context of human rights, LGBT, terrorism, and corruption — more than half of articles with Anti-Russian frame referred to Putin (54 percent). Pro-Western frame was used in 21 percent of the articles; Anti-Western frame was not used at all.

As for major themes, Putin-led theme was predominant, used in 64 articles, which is 40 percent of NBC’s coverage of the Sochi Olympics. In the present study, an article could contain up to eight themes, therefore the frequency of each theme was counted not in relation to the number of articles, but in relation to the number of themes used in these articles, which resulted in total 306 themes for NBC (almost 2 distinct themes per article on average). Therefore, Putin theme is accounted to 21 percent of total number of themes used in NBC’s news coverage. Articles also focused on security/terrorism issue (15 percent), Sochi Problems (13.5 percent) and LGBT rights (12.5 percent). The least used theme by NBC was Critique of the West; it resulted in 2.5 percent of all themes discussed.

Figure 2. Comparison of Frequency of Themes in NBC and RT’s Olympic News Coverage, January 2013–February 2014
Below I will discuss in detail only the main themes identified in NBC’s Olympics coverage:

Putin-led theme

A total of 64 articles made reference to Vladimir Putin (40 percent of NBC’s coverage) where only 7 articles quoted him directly. Putin was exclusively mentioned in 8 percent of these articles, and another 32 percent discussed him in combination with several other themes: security/terrorism, LGBT rights, and costs/corruption. The frequency of Putin-led theme is 21 percent (Figure 2).

Notably, half of all articles with a negative tone towards Russia were aimed against Putin (40 out of 81 articles). Putin-led theme was also mentioned in 4 articles with positive tone towards Russia, which is 15 percent of all positive stories about Russia.

Putin featured in 29 out of 54 articles with the generic Anti-Russian frame (54 percent). In comparison, his name appeared only in 6 articles with the generic Pro-Russian frame (26 percent) and they related to opening and closing ceremonies, figure skating event, which Putin attended, and Olympic torch relay in space.

The centrality of Russian President Vladimir Putin to NBC’s coverage is beyond doubt: his name was mentioned 222 times in 160 articles. Qualitative framing analysis revealed two prominent theme-specific frames, in accordance with which
Putin was presented, *Putin is behind the crackdown on freedom in Russia* and *Sochi Olympics are Putin’s personal project*.

This theme-specific frame “Putin is behind the crackdown on freedom in Russia” pins sole responsibility for emerging negative trends in Russia on Vladimir Putin. It can be summed up as follows: the current situation in Russia is a reflection of Putin’s regime with the restrictions on political and personal freedoms being its natural progression. Putin wants to strengthen his control over the country and maintain his base of power and support in society. The frame was used when referring to LGBT and human rights violation, security measures, and high costs of the Sochi Olympics. Here are some examples of the typical claims made within the frame: “Their persecution [migrant workers], activists fear, indicates a rising tide of nationalism and xenophobia that has swept the country since Vladimir Putin regained the presidency in 2012, enacting a series of restrictive policies on the press, non-government organisations, and LGBT rights, to name a few” (“Migrant workers at Sochi faced unpaid wages, deportations”, NBC, 2014, January 28); and “since reclaiming the presidency in 2012, Vladimir Putin has advanced several initiatives that seem to favor the Russian Orthodox Church (Moscow Patriarchate) while restricting other religions” (“The bumpy road to the Sochi Olympics”, NBC, 2013, November 2).

The second theme-specific frame “Sochi Olympics are Putin’s personal project” was widely used in regard to security concerns and high costs of the Winter Olympic Games. The main arguments were the following: the Olympic Games in Sochi is a matter of national pride for Vladimir Putin, with not only Russia’s but also his own personal reputation emerging from the Games. The project is intended to appeal to people abroad as well as in Russia. Here are some examples of the basic claims of this frame: “But these are the Olympics of President Vladimir Putin, who is spending a reported $50 billion on the games, including a purportedly impenetrable “ring of steel” around the Olympic city, and who sees the games through a prism of national pride” (“How US will rescue Olympians if terrorists strike the Sochi Games”, NBC,
2014, January 22); and "it is the area of greatest concern as President Vladimir Putin tries to protect his Olympics from terrorism" ("Sochi Olympics terror threat: 3 more 'black widows' identified", NBC, 2014, January 21). Remarkably, the two frames used by NBC in regard to Putin are opposite in their stance towards Russia: one presents Putin as "Russia’s enemy," whereas another — as "Russia’s chief lobbyist."

Security-led theme

Security/terrorism, alone and in combination with other themes, was mentioned in 46 articles, which is 29 percent of NBC’s Olympic-related coverage. The frequency of occurrence of security-led theme is 15 percent (Figure 2). The theme first made its appearance in July 2013 following the video address of North Caucasus insurgency leader Doku Umarov to his militants in which he called for maximum efforts to stop the Sochi Olympics. Afterwards there was a two-month hiatus (August and September 2013) in articles with security-related coverage of the Sochi Olympics. The coverage intensified at the end of December 2013 after Volgograd terror attacks that heightened security fears in the run-up to the Olympic Games in Sochi: On 30 and 31 December 4 articles were published, in January there were 12 articles and in February — 25 articles, with 11 of them published during first week, before the Games opened. That week the topic reached its peak height: An average of two articles was published daily.

Figure 3. Security Theme in the NBC’s Olympic News Coverage, January 2013–February 2014
NBC’s tone of coverage towards Russia was heavily negative (59 percent), mostly because of frequent references to security fears amid Volgograd bombings and other insurgencies in the country of Russia. 7 security-related articles (15 percent) were tagged as “Russia terror” giving the insight into the frame employed. There were also 3 positively toned stories when Russian police terminated the suspected mastermind of Volgograd terrorist attacks, when athletes’ safety was assured by the IOC, and when U.S. volunteers at the Sochi Olympics dismissed any security concerns.

The tone of coverage towards the West was predominantly neutral (72 percent). Articles that used positive language towards the West amounted to 22 percent. The stories included United States’ readiness to rescue American citizens if terrorists were to strike the Sochi Olympics; cooperation with the Russian government in the field of security with two U.S. warships positioned in the Black Sea just in case. Negatively-toned stories were accountable for 6 percent, reporting, among other issues, on those warships, which accidently ran aground.
61 percent of security-related articles were linked to Vladimir Putin who was widely seen as a guarantor of security at the Sochi Olympics. 52 percent of the security-related articles provided mixed reports on Russia (generic Mixed frame Russia) discussing both security concerns and measures taken by the Russian government for the safety of the Sochi Olympics; the generic Anti-Russian frame was accounted for 35 percent. The West also looked to relate itself towards the matter: the generic Pro-Western frame dominated in 9 percent of the security-related stories and 4 percent provided mixed reports on the West (generic Mixed frame the West).

There was one common frame prominent throughout the coverage of this theme: *Russia faces heightened security fears and vowed that the Olympic Games will be safe*. This theme-specific frame acknowledged Russia’s responsibility, as host nation, to ensure safety of everyone attending the Sochi Olympics with all the consequences that come with it. The frame was first introduced by U.S. military officials via NBC who repeatedly stated that Olympic security is a sole responsibility of Russia, but the United States is ready to provide any support if needed. Here are some of the typical claims made within this theme: “Russia has the main responsibility for protecting the Olympics, but recent deadly suicide attacks have heightened worries about militant attacks” (“U.S. ready to ‘extract’ Americans from Sochi: Hagel”, NBC, 2014, January 25); and “Russia has promised to protect Sochi within a ‘ring of steel’” (“Olympics terror dragnet: Russia hunts ‘black widows’”, NBC, 2014, January 22). The phrase “ring of steel” was a strong indicator of the frame, used 14 times in NBC’s coverage. From NBC’s coverage, it was unclear who used this term first in relation to Sochi. Notably, RT did not use it once in its coverage.

Sochi problems-led theme

Sochi problems theme won over LGBT theme by a narrow margin resulting in 13.5 percent (Figure 2). This theme implies everything wrong attributed to Sochi, to name a few: worker’s rights violation, displacement of Sochi residents by Olympic
construction, proximity to the conflict zones, poor media accommodation, unsafe Olympic courses, stray dogs, mild winter temperatures, Sochi’s association with Circassian genocide – all in all, 15 different problems were identified in NBC’s news coverage. Sochi problems were discussed in 41 articles (alone or in combination with other themes) which is equal to 26 percent of Olympic-related coverage of NBC. More than half of these articles were solely dedicated to the Sochi problems theme. If other themes were present, Putin was mentioned the most, with costs and security themes following after.

73 percent of the articles on Sochi Problems had a negative tone towards Russia. Only one article took a generally positive tone making a passing mention of the weather while listing all highlights for Day 5 of the Olympic Games. In comparison, there was no negative rhetoric towards the West on Sochi Problems; the articles were either positive (24 percent) or neutral (76 percent).

The source most frequently quoted in the articles was Team USA – 16 percent of all quotes in the articles on Sochi Problems. Russian officials and non-governmental experts accounted to 13 percent each, the IOC and media (including journalists working at the Sochi Olympics) – 9 percent each.

As for the generic frame, the articles on Sochi Problems referred to Anti-Russian frame (46 percent) or provided mixed reports on Russia (44 percent). The rest was attributed to the generic Pro-Western frame, 8 percent, and one article (2 percent) to the generic Pro-Russian frame. The generic Anti-Western frame was never used in the articles on Sochi Problems.

The common theme-specific frame was *Olympic host city with ever-growing problems*. The problems were frequently set against the backdrop of high costs as if highlighting the gap between the investment and actual delivery. NBC reporters also tried to generate hype around the topic by citing nicknames the problems received on social media, for instance, “nightmare bear” in regard to one of Sochi’s mascots or “snow whisperer” to refer to a Finnish company hired by the organisers to store
snow for the Sochi Olympics. NBC reporters heavily emulated social media buzz, at times mocking “less serious” problems the Olympic host city encountered. For instance, mild temperatures, poor accommodations, and stray dogs were mentioned six times more often than violation of worker’s rights, displacement of Sochi residents, or the Circassian genocide associated with Sochi. The following headline by Erin McClam presents a typical claim of the frame: “Fog Forces Delays in Sochi, Latest Weather Problem to Dog Games” (NBC, 2014, February 17). Some other examples include “The Sochi Olympics have had their share of problems. This is the funniest” (“The most adorable #SochiProblem yet: Mascot can't fit in car”, NBC, 2014, February 15); and “The latest of a long string of problems to beset the Winter Olympics” (“Sochi’s latest drama: Were stray dogs killed to prepare for Games?” NBC, 2014, February 4).

LGBT rights-led theme

LGBT rights were discussed in 39 articles (alone or in combination with other themes), which is equal to 24 percent of NBC’s Olympic coverage. The frequency of the theme is 12.5 percent (Figure 2). The most frequently used combination was with human rights, second most popular was a combination of LGBT rights and Putin-led themes with the Russian president set either as the man behind Russia’s controversial anti-gay propaganda law or a direct opponent to gay rights. One article within LGBT context even mentioned Russian civil rights group “Pussy Riot”, which openly opposes President Putin. That was questionable because the group has nothing to do with the gay rights movement.

Overwhelming in these articles was the negative tone: 77 percent of the articles on LGBT had negative tones towards Russia with almost third of them directed against Vladimir Putin. Only one article took a generally positive stance towards Russia when Johnny Weir, an openly gay former U.S. Olympian, told NBC that after living in Russia for extended periods of time he never had any homophobic experience. In
comparison, there was no negative rhetoric towards the West on LGBT rights, the articles were either positive (31 percent) or neutral (69 percent).

The sources most frequently quoted in the articles were U.S. leaders and experts (including U.S. prominent gay advocates) and the IOC — each source provided 16 percent of all quotes in LGBT-related articles, Russian officials — 14 percent; NGO and human rights organisations accounted for 11 percent.

The generic Anti-Russian frame was prominent in more than a half of articles on LGBT, 56 percent. 36 percent of articles provided mixed reports on Russia, with sympathetic references to Russian gay community and condemnatory — to Russian government. Notably, Pro-Russian and Anti-Western frames were never used in the articles on LGBT rights.

As mentioned earlier, criticism on gay rights in Russia first arose in summer 2013, almost half a year before the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, over Russia’s ban on propaganda of homosexuality. However, a peak in media coverage occurred on 6 February, a day before the Olympic opening ceremony. That day Google gave its search page a rainbow makeover quoting Principle 6 of the Olympic Charter that calls for no discrimination of any kind. The step was received by NBC as if Google had finally made it clear where it stands on the controversial law. At the same time, the Principle 6 campaign (P6) was under way to show support for the Olympic principle of non-discrimination and protest against Russia’s ban on propaganda of homosexuality calling for relocation of the Olympic Games to a country where the laws are compatible with the Olympic movement and the sixth principle in particular.

LGBT rights-led theme was framed primarily in two ways Crackdown on gay freedoms in Russia and the IOC is bowing to Russia and not doing enough. In the latter case, the word “Russia” was frequently replaced with “Putin”.

The typical theme-specific frame “Crackdown on gay freedoms in Russia” can be crystallized in the following way: When Russia passed the law banning the promotion of “non-traditional” sexuality, it created a hostile environment toward
LGBT individuals living in Russia, thus, it discriminated against gay people and violated human rights. Here are some examples of the claims made within this frame: “Gay rights groups are using the P6 campaign to get the word out about repression of Russian gays” (“Gay rights push at Olympics gets backing of Rihanna”, NBC, 2014, February 16); and “diving champion Greg Louganis urged the International Olympic Committee to ‘wake up’ to Russia’s anti-gay laws and enforce its own rules against discrimination” (“Greg Louganis: Olympic Games must follow own discrimination policy”, NBC, 2013, August 14). NBC contributors usually referred to Russian federal law, which concerns Russian LGBT community, as “anti-gay law”—34 mentions in 39 articles. The phrase “anti-gay propaganda law” was used only 3 times.

According to another theme-specific frame “the IOC is bowing to Russia and not doing enough”, the IOC should have put more pressure on Russia. The frame implies that the IOC’s position as bystander towards Russia, which undermines gay and human rights, is disappointing. The typical claims are the following: “Human rights advocates remain suspicious of the government’s check, and disappointed with the IOC’s deference to Russian authorities” (“Migrant workers at Sochi faced unpaid wages, deportations”, NBC, 2014, January 28); and “Weir believes the IOC lacks the authority to demand change from the Russian government” (“Russia’s anti-gay crackdown raises concerns for Olympics”, NBC, 2013, August 30). The frame was echoed in almost every IOC official comment regarding the issue.

4.1.6 Other Themes and Observations

Less popular themes in NBC’s coverage included human rights (11 percent), Olympic preparations (10 percent), Olympic costs (6.5 percent) and Critique of the West (2.5 percent). Human rights theme was mostly used in the context of LGBT rights, with only 5 articles (15 percent) discussing worker’s rights, censorship, and other non-LGBT related violations of human rights in Russia. Olympic preparations
theme included articles describing Olympic opening and closing ceremonies, torch relay, medals’ design, uniforms, volunteers, athletes’ Olympic experience — in other words, all that makes the Olympic Games the world’s major sporting event. Articles about Olympic-related costs presented the Sochi Olympics as the most expensive in history raising the bar for Russia’s delivery on that substantial investment. Notably, most of the cost-related articles mentioned President Putin with some of them attributed Olympic spending directly to him (see the typical claims of the Putin-led theme). The last and the least popular theme was Critique of the West, which was used in the articles criticising the IOC’s stance on LGBT rights. As discussed in Chapter 2, IOC is generally considered to be a part of the Western world.

At times, NBC reporters invoked narratives from the past to frame contemporary meanings, referring, among others, to the Soviet Union (11 percent of the coverage) and the Cold War (3 percent). *None of the above* category (8 percent), for the most part, was represented by wrap-ups’ of the day’s action, interviews with national teams and athletes, and other Olympic-related reports. Notably, one article interviewed the Ukrainian Olympic team on the protests in Kiev with other two articles giving a passive mention of the Ukraine crisis at the time of the Olympic Games.

4.1.7 Summary

American commercial broadcaster, NBC has had exclusive broadcast rights in the USA for the Olympic Games since 1972. Before the Sochi Olympics, NBC’s news division announced that it would “cover any social issues or political issues as they are relevant to the Games from a sport perspective.” According to the present study, non-sport related content was central to NBC’s news coverage.

Articles with substantial coverage of the Sochi Olympics appeared in NBC a year before the Games started. Coverage increased in December 2013, when two terrorist attacks happened in nearby city of Volgograd. 72 percent of articles were
news reports of daily happenings with an average length of 311 words; the remainder were feature articles and opinion columns. Russian government provided most of quotes, though the generic frame employed was Anti-Russian with negative tone towards Russia and generally neutral towards the West. That means that my first hypothesis is only partly correct: Negative valence towards Russia and Anti-Russian frames, not Pro-Western, were dominant in NBC’s articles.

Half of the articles with Anti-Russian frame referred to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Putin-led theme was predominant, used in 40 percent of NBC’s articles on the Sochi Olympics. Other much-debated topics included security/terrorism, Sochi Problems, and LGBT rights. All themes were further investigated using framing analysis. In regard to the first research question (RQ1), there were several major frames identified: Putin is behind the crackdown on freedom in Russia and Sochi Olympics are Putin’s personal project – in relation to Putin; Olympic host city with ever-growing problems – in regard to Sochi Problems; crackdown on gay freedoms in Russia and the IOC is bowing to Russia and not doing enough – when LGBT rights were in question, and Russia faces heightened security fears and vowed that the Olympic Games will be safe – in relation to security.

Despite a substantial amount of in-country field reporting, 64 percent of sources cited were from outside Russia, as the discussions were mostly held in the USA. The second (RQ2) and third (RQ3) research questions are answered in the final chapter.

4.2 RT’s Olympic News Coverage

The English website of RT mentioned “Sochi” in 222 articles in the thirteen-month period of study. Of these articles, only 169 were relevant in terms of the research criterion, averaging 13 articles per month. The majority (76 percent) were news articles, followed by 18 percent feature and background articles and 6 percent opinion columns. RT started to report on the upcoming Olympic Games more than a
year ahead, so the articles published during the Sochi Olympics (7–23 February 2014) amounted to 40 percent of RT’s coverage.

4.2.1 Timing and Duration
The upcoming Olympic Games in Sochi were the prominent topic in RT’s headlines, with an average of 4-5 articles per month starting from January 2013. However, with the Olympic torch relay beginning in Russia, RT launched a special website 2014.rt.com which it used as a platform to report on the Sochi Olympic-related activities such as the Olympic flame’s journey around Russia, Sochi preparations, Olympic competitions, updates on medal counts, and other highlights of the day leaving the political and social side of the event for the main website rt.com, but not always.

In 2013, RT’s articles highlighted preparation for the Winter Olympics, in both Sochi and the rest of Russia, dominated by general interest stories and domestic affairs. Russia’s federal law banning LGBT propaganda (passed in June) and strong response from the West changed it. RT joined the debate and replied with a series of articles endorsing the government perspective. Over August 2013, 11 articles were published (Figure 4), each of them touched upon the controversial topic. Three opinion columns, appeared at the time, conveyed the same message: Boycotting the Sochi Olympics would be wrong.

Figure 4. Comparison of LGBT Theme Timeline (both NBC and RT) and RT’s Critique of the West, January 2013–February 2014
Volgograd terrorist attacks were linked to the Sochi Olympics in only one article from December 30, 2013 headlined: “Olympics, Int’l Events are Attractive Targets for Terrorists,” likely in the attempt to remove focus from security threats in Sochi. Overall, 37 percent of articles were published in 2013.

RT’s coverage increased the following year, with almost half the amount of articles for the previous year published in January alone, at times with two articles daily.

4.2.2 Length and Authorship

Most of the stories sampled from RT were news articles with an average length of 487 words. The average length for feature articles was 944 words and 1943 words for opinion columns. Views and statements in 7 out of 10 opinion columns were marked as solely those of the authors’ and not RT’s. Two commentaries were written by RT’s personnel, others – by activists, scholars, and experts.

18 percent of articles and almost all (90 percent) opinion columns had author bylines. The authors of articles containing bylines were either RT correspondents reporting from the field or anchors, in most cases bylines were discouraged for
general news. No stories from RT’s Olympic Games website (2014.rt.com) had author bylines. Over one-quarter (26 percent) of articles cited other media. This relatively high use of news agencies likely explains the dominance of news articles over longer features.

4.2.3 Quoted sources

A total of 240 quotes appeared over the course of 169 articles about the Olympic Games in Sochi. The most frequently quoted source was Russian government (20 percent), followed by Russian non-governmental leaders (13 percent) and the IOC (10 percent). Two percent of quotes came from NGOs and human rights organisations, which were mostly of Russian origin. American and other sources outside Russia were accounted to 13.5 percent (Figure 5).

*Figure 5. Comparison of Quoted Sources in NBC and RT’s Olympic News Coverage, January 2013 –February 2014*
4.2.4 Tone of Coverage towards Russia and the West

Out of 169 articles, over half were positively-toned towards Russia (56 percent) as illustrated by the following: “Twelve new sports, medals with meteorite fragments and a tortuous torch relay are just part of what makes the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics a truly unique event” (“Sochi by numbers: A numerical guide to Winter Olympics”, RT, 2014. February 7). 39 percent of articles were of neutral tone and only 5 percent were rated as negative, mostly in the context of corruption and human rights.

The majority (66 percent) of RT’s articles were neutral towards the West, managing to find a balance between arguments for and against. 20 percent of articles were negatively-toned towards the West, including half of the opinion columns; the main theme of these articles was Critique of the West. 14 percent of articles took a positive tone toward the West and almost all of them related to Olympic competitions.

4.2.5 Focus of Framing

The generic Pro-Russian frame was the most frequent in RT’s articles (50.5 percent) and exclusive in most of them (Figure 6). 20 percent of articles provided mixed reports on Russia (Mixed frame Russia) with the events involved corruption, human rights violation, severe weather conditions, accidents, and other occurrences, criticised elsewhere. The generic Anti-Western frame featured in 12.5 percent of RT’s articles with a quarter of them directed particularly against the United States. The least popular generic frame was Anti-Russian frame where only one percent carried it.

*Figure 6. Comparison of NBC and RT’s Generic Frames, January 2013–February 2014*
The highest frequency (26.5 percent) was attributed to the Olympic preparations theme (Figure 2). Putin-led theme was accounted for 15.5 percent, and stories criticising the West (Critique of the West theme) received 12 percent of coverage. Sochi problems and Olympic-related corruption and costs received the least coverage, 6.5 percent and 6 percent accordingly. The sum of references to the themes studied was 321 for RT (almost two distinct themes per article on average).

Below I will discuss in detail only the most central themes found in RT’s Olympic news coverage:

Olympic preparations-led theme

The significant amount of RT’s coverage of the Sochi Olympics was not related to the topics hotly debated by the world’s media. Olympic preparations theme dominated the news coverage amounting to 26.5 percent (Figure 2). Those articles typically described Sochi’s and the whole of Russia’s preparations for the Olympic Games. The dominant theme-specific frame identified was “Russia’s great Olympics” which provided a positive outlook of Sochi 2014, reporting on the torch relay, new sports and venues, athletes’ backgrounds, and highlights of the day. It
also strongly focused on Russia with emphasis on Russia’s progress in both sports and Olympic preparations. It was common to refer to Russian government along with members of the IOC: “[IOC President] Bach was upbeat about the quality of anti-doping tests at Sochi” (“Sochi Olympics doping tests are ‘toughest-ever’ – IOC chief”, RT, 2013, November 21); “Senior International Olympic Committee member Gian-Franco Kasper has praised preparations and the quality of the sporting venues” (“Sochi Olympics venues, sports infrastructure most modern in the world – IOC official”, RT, 2014, January 28); and “[Former IOC President] Jacques Rogge responded on Friday saying that he is ‘comforted’ by Russia’s assurance” (“Sochi, sport and security: Russia bans protests during Winter Olympics, limits access”, RT, 2013, August 24).

Putin-led theme

In total, 50 articles mentioned Vladimir Putin and accounted for 30 percent of RT’s Olympic-related coverage. Putin appeared exclusively in 7 percent of these articles, and another 21 percent referred to him in combination with other themes, mostly represented by LGBT rights and Critique of the West (40 percent each). These themes — LGBT rights and Critique of the West— were tied together in most of RT’s articles and Putin rhetoric seemed to match this well, “Homosexuality is a criminal offence in 70 countries… It is still a criminal offence in some states of the United States, for instance in Texas, and may be in other three states,” Putin said. “Why does nobody speak about this and why do they speak about us, though we do not have criminal liability for this?” (“Putin on Sochi: I would very much like sports not to be marred by politics”, RT, 2014, January 19). Interestingly enough, Putin’s name hardly ever appeared in the context of Sochi Problems, only two articles gave a passive mention of him in that context. The frequency of Putin-led theme in RT’s articles is 15.5 percent (Figure 2).
Generic frame of the articles that featured Putin was Pro-Russian. The tone of the articles was generally neutral towards the West and equally positive and neutral towards Russia. Putin was mentioned in 8 percent of negatively toned articles towards Russia and in 22 percent of articles negative towards the West.

Qualitative analysis of RT’s coverage revealed the following theme-specific frame in relation to the Russian President: *Putin as the man of authority*. Vladimir Putin was often portrayed as a man of action with a hands-on way of doing things. On one occasion, he inspects Olympic venues and infrastructure; on another — he puts his skis on and hits Sochi’s slopes. He criticises construction delays, fires corrupt officials, guarantees security and non-discrimination against homosexuals, and strokes a Persian leopard to put the spotlight on the endangered animals. It is as if he oversees every Olympic effort, as a protective parent, to ensure the success of Sochi 2014.

Critique of the West-led theme

*Critique of the West* was the theme discussed in 38 articles (22 percent of RT’s coverage), mostly in combination with other themes. Solely critical articles towards the West amounted to less than 2 percent. The theme occurred with the frequency of 12 percent (Figure 2).

Although Critique of the West theme was mostly related to LGBT rights (58 percent), it was also seen in combination with Putin and human rights-led themes. The least it was concerned with was cost/corruption discourse. As expected, the tone of coverage towards the West was predominantly negative (59 percent) and the generic Anti-Western frame prevailed as a full half of the coverage. The second most frequent generic frame was Pro-Russian, 42 percent. There was no sign of Anti-Russian and Pro-Western frames. Most articles were obviously negatively-toned towards the West (60 percent), and neutrally toned towards Russia, as illustrated, “The Western media’s response to Russia’s law banning gay
propaganda among minors is ‘heavy-handed’, members of Sochi’s gay community have told RT. They worry excessive media attention may lead to Russian society blaming them for “spoiling the Olympics” (“Media hype around propaganda law has ‘negative effect’ on Russian LGBT community”, RT, 2014, February 4). Russian government was the most vocal speaker on the issue: it provided 47 percent of all quotes. IOC was the second most quoted source and contributed 29 percent of quotes. Of all quotes, 78 percent were from inside Russia, including human rights organisations.

Most of the articles criticising the West were framed as “Us vs Them” and can be summed up as follows: Russia is a sovereign state with its own values, which may not be shared by others; Russia has the only right to regulate its internal affairs. Here are some examples of typical claims within this theme-specific frame: “A senior Russian diplomat has blasted as unacceptable the ongoing attempts of Western nations to impose their values on other countries, while at the same time infringing on the socio-economic rights of their own citizens” (“‘Western promotion of LGBT values a concern’”, RT, 2013, September 13); and “Putin said he was perplexed by the fact that while homosexuality was a criminal offence in 70 countries around the world, Russia, where it was not, there were attempts to give Russia the reputation as the most anti-gay country on the planet” (“Putin on Sochi: I would very much like sports not to be marred by politics”, RT, 2014, January 19).

The frame indeed echoed some of Putin’s statements: “Why does nobody speak about this and why do they speak about us, though we do not have criminal liability for this [homosexuality]. What is this, if not an attempt to restrain? This is a remnant of the previous, old way of thinking and this is bad” (“Putin on Sochi: I would very much like sports not to be marred by politics”, RT, 2014, January 19). Notably, this is the only frame of all mentioned in the study that was relevant after the Sochi Olympics, as the Ukraine crisis has shown.
4.2.6 Other Themes and Observations

Other themes discussed at the time of the Sochi Olympics included LGBT (10 percent), security (8 percent), human rights (7 percent), Sochi problems (6.5 percent), and costs (6 percent). Security-related articles can be generally divided into two groups: the first assured of top-notch security at the Sochi Olympics and the second criticised the attempts to antagonise security fears. In addition, articles in the security context reminded the audience that *terrorism is a global threat*.

It was no less remarkable how RT tackled negative news on Russia. For instance, when reporting on the corruption scandal in regard to the Sochi Olympics it would incriminate a particular person but never Russia as the country or Russian government. Notably, Olympic spending was discussed in the context of Russia’s preparation to the Sochi Olympics compared to NBC, which often mentioned the costs in the context of problems. As far as problems were concerned, RT presented them as manageable, similarly explaining them in the context of Olympic preparations.

Articles on LGBT rights aimed to debunk the myth about treatment of homosexuals in Russia urging to stop merging Olympic sport with politics. In many cases, if RT was not able to shift focus to the positive, it would divert attention away from the negative by, for instance, putting the West on the spot in a critical manner. Articles on human rights theme also related to LGBT rights, with only one article giving a passive mention of human rights violation in the North Caucasus.

RT reporters indeed referred to the Soviet Union and the Cold War in their articles but less often than NBC, 8 percent and 2 percent accordingly. None of the above category included highlights of the day and other Olympic-related news.
4.2.7 Summary

The English-language broadcaster RT was founded in 2005 by Russian government with the primary goal of catering to foreigners and promoting the Russian point of view on international events worldwide. In regard to the Sochi Olympic Games, RT’s major focus was generally on constructing a powerful idea of Russia’s great momentum of hosting the Olympic Games and, to a lesser extent, repelling the criticism towards Russia.

The majority of RT’s articles on the Sochi Olympics were news reports with an average length of 487 words. Russian government was quoted more frequently than other sources with a fifth of these quotes attributed to Russian President Vladimir Putin. The generic Pro-Russian frame was mostly used in RT’s coverage with a positive tone towards Russia and rather neutral towards the West. Thus, my second hypothesis is also partly correct: Positive valence towards Russia and Pro-Russian frames, not Anti-Western, were dominant in RT’s articles.

To answer the first research question (RQ1), framing analysis of the most frequent themes was conducted. The analysis identified three major frames: first (Russia’s Great Olympics) focused on generating good publicity about the Olympic Games, a celebration of sport and Russia’s big momentum; the second related to Russian President Vladimir Putin (Putin as the man of authority) who was mentioned in a third of RT’s coverage: it implied Putin’s deep involvement with the work of the Sochi Olympics, and, finally, the third was an enemy frame (Us vs Them); it was critical of the West and shadowed all negative arguments of the Western media towards Sochi 2014. Kremlin to this day uses this frame in its official discourse. An illustrative example is Russia’s increasingly conflictual relations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), which from December 2015 is officially viewed as an external threat to the country and an extension of U.S. global strategy. The second (RQ2) and third (RQ3) research questions are answered in the next chapter.
5. Discussion and Conclusion

As I was preparing to leave Helsinki for a job assignment at the Sochi Olympics, the colleague of mine said to me worryingly: “Be careful out there!” “Why?” I asked. She looked puzzled: “You know it is not safe there. Don’t you read the news?” I did read the news. However, until that moment I didn’t realise how influential the news can be. Most people do not get to travel to the Olympics. Representations in the news are the only way they learn about this and many other global events. And what do they receive as representations? Media researchers continue to uncover the differences between news coverage of the same event, but what I found in this research was far from just “differences.” It was two almost opposite portrayals of the Sochi Olympics presented by the two of the largest broadcasting companies in the world: with one situated in Russia, and the other one — in the United States.

Hundreds of millions of people were exposed to the news coverage of the Olympic Games by either of these two companies, and I wanted to understand why media representations were so different and whether there was any pattern behind them.

After I returned from the Sochi Olympics, the crisis in Ukraine intensified. The more I followed the Ukrainian events in the Western and Russian media, the stronger my conviction grew that the media war might have started much earlier, with the Olympics reporting. Thus, it became important for me to uncover those potentially explosive media processes that could further evolve into something bigger.

This study has highlighted the ways in which Russian (RT) and American (NBC) news organisations constructed and reported the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi. My starting point was that the media representation could reveal much about the geopolitical standings of the countries in which the news organisations are situated. The second chapter of this study reviewed previous works on news reporting of the Olympics Games and geopolitics. Media organisations are embedded in a context consisting of economic and political forces of various
significance. Their reporting on the Olympic Games produces clearly situated geopolitical knowledge. The main role of media organisation as the window on the global sporting event is widely acknowledged. The limitations of the “window concept” are also recognised: Olympics news reporting often lacks contextual perspective and media organisations tend to be more ethnocentric covering the event in a way that resonates with their own histories and present realities. A media organisation has to domesticate extra-national events so they would make sense for its audience or would connect on a certain level with the ongoing debate in its home country. In the end, the window is composed not only of glass, but of the frames too.

Russia and the West have a rich history of confrontation, dated back to the Soviet Union times, when the Olympic Games were the site for both superpowers to showcase their power and influence through the sports achievements of national teams. Political hostility was widely shared in media — the phenomena that persists even to the present day, as the contextual analysis of state-media relations has shown. States can convey their preferences for particular nationally relevant types of media coverage through indirect or direct control. Media in the West are owned privately for the most part, whereas Russia shows greater state ownership of the media. Nevertheless, both media organisations mostly followed the official line of their nation-states in the news coverage of the Sochi Olympics using predominantly domestic sources. The current study was not specifically designed to evaluate all factors related to media-state relations, but in regard to media framing, state regulation on particular topics has proven to be an influential factor.

The third chapter set a research framework to examine quantity and quality of the Olympic media coverage offered by the observed news organisations. Media representations were further investigated in the fourth chapter through the means of quantitative content analysis first, and later interpreted with the help of qualitative framing analysis, based on the framing theory. Media broadcasters RT and NBC differ in attitude and method. Being a major U.S. broadcaster, NBC adheres to
national values to the extent that some researchers find its reporting to be ethnocentric. By contrast, RT is known for its mission to counter the U.S. information monopoly. However, what I found was rather opposite: in RT’s reporting of the Sochi Olympics, Pro-Russian frames and positive valence towards Russia were dominant whereas NBC seemed to favour Anti-Russian frames and had negative valence towards Russia. That was the main systematic difference in the observed media coverages, thus, I answered the second research question (RQ2). I will further elaborate this significant finding.

NBC devoted considerable time to report on the social and political issues surrounding the Olympics, dominated by LGBT and human rights debate, security concerns, and Sochi problems. All of these issues were linked to Russian President Vladimir Putin, as he “staked his personal reputation” on the Games’ success. The dominant framing attributed a great deal of power to Vladimir Putin, making him a key persona behind the Olympics, accountable for everything which may go wrong, because the little share of articles with Pro-Russian frame did not apply directly to the Russian president. Another characteristic of NBC’s framing was an extensive use of “beware” frame as illustrated by Sochi Problems and security concerns. Beware of terrorist attacks, beware of getting arrested in Sochi, beware of the brown water in the hotels – the way these themes were framed was increasingly problematic. Returning to the hypothesis posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that negative frames and a negative tone of coverage in NBC’s reporting on the Sochi Olympics suggest the degree of othering, if not demonisation, of Russia and President Putin. An illustrating example is NBC’s reporting on security threats at the Olympic Games that seemed to be blown out of proportion. Yet, no terrorist attacks happened in Sochi and the athletes and spectators were perfectly safe.

RT, from the other side of the globe, used all its channels to promote a dynamic image of Russia as it prepares for the “great and glorious” Olympic Games. However, as the world media’s criticism built up amid the LGBT propaganda law,
terrorist bombings, and other problems surrounding the Sochi Olympics, RT had to switch focus on rebutting the criticism by framing it as a kind of dichotomy between the West and Russia. RT commonly quoted Russian officials, including President Putin, and the IOC to increase authority of the framing. Nevertheless, RT tried to adhere to its goal of promoting Russia’s great momentum worldwide, as this study has found. It took on Anti-Western frame when the debate on anti-gay propaganda law was linked to the Sochi Olympics. Some articles were particularly directed against the United States. Notably, NBC mostly employed the phrase “anti-gay law”, whereas RT stressed “anti-gay propaganda law” – this, seemingly, slight difference in the lexical choice became the key to the understanding of different framing strategies employed by the media organisations.

Finally, I will attempt to answer the third and the last research question (RQ3), which asks, “How do RT and NBC’s framing of the Olympic Games in Sochi contribute to the understanding Russo-Western relations in terms of geopolitics?” The results of this study suggest that not only media organisations are involved in the news construction. Despite global transitions of news across borders, the decisions about the construction of news are mostly made within one country. With a changing geopolitical environment, governments are willing to exercise their influence on media to strengthen national appeal and competitive power of the country on the global scene. The locational standpoint does matter as it helps to explain the differences in the news coverage of the same event. Why, for instance, was NBC’s reporting on the Sochi Olympics less drawn on national narrative, and why did it adopt a strong stance against Russia? The review of power concepts revealed that the rhetoric from the United States is built on the precedence of human rights over the state’s right to sovereignty, whereas in Russia it is the opposite. Russia’s attempt to align with the Olympic values, mostly driven by Western rational thought and universal humanism, shined the spotlight on multiple inconsistencies in its Olympic discourse. Russia was a priory measured against highly unlikely benchmarks, and the subsequent mismatch between rhetoric and
reality further amplified the gap. I am convinced that the unwillingness of NBC to
develop a sympathetic understanding of Russia was influenced by two factors:
Russia’s contradiction to the fundamental principles underlying Western normative
core, and the reluctance of the media organisation to abandon its own governments’
dominance on the global scene.

In regard to RT, the study’s findings differ from those of Hutchings et al. (2015) who
researched RT’s use of social media at the Sochi Olympics. While Anti-Western and
counter-hegemonic agenda was present, it was not, however, central to RT’s news
coverage of the Sochi Olympics. This study has shown that RT was most
concerned with promoting Russia’s image rather than countering Western media
agenda.

Nevertheless, the controversy surrounding media coverage of the Olympic Games
in Russia and the West allowed international conflict to come to the fore. NBC
argued, “(Russia’s) politics — and human rights — threatened the success of the
Games, much as they did during the darkest days of the Cold War era”, while RT
complained, “Why the rest of the world has to accept Western norms.” In doing so,
both countries’ coverages revealed more about ideological rhetorics of their nation-
states than they did about the Olympic Games.

The present research has fulfilled its goal and showed how such a global media
event as the Olympic Games in Sochi cannot escape the geopolitical context in
which it is embedded. This said, the researcher does not suggest that the hostility,
revealed in the Olympics news reporting, antagonised Russian and Western
broadcasters against each other to the extent the Ukraine crisis has shown, but it
certainly confirmed the resurgence of the East-West tension.

Other studies on the similar subject would, perhaps, take a step further and explore
how the dominant frames actually affected Russian and American audience’s
understanding of the (geo)political situation between their countries. This could be
done through a quantitative study complemented with a qualitative study, such as a
survey of media audiences. It would be also interesting to take a closer look at those global broadcasters to see if their framing differs depending on the intended audience. For instance, did the audience of RT USA receive the same picture of the Sochi Olympics as RT’s global channel portrayed? More information would help to establish a greater degree of accuracy in the relations between the media and geopolitics in the Post-Cold War era.
Bibliography


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Nimmo, D., & Felsberg, A. J. (1986). Hidden myths in televised political advertising: 


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Social Movement Research: Vol. 1. From structure to action: Comparing social movement research across cultures (pp. 197–217). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.


Data Articles Quoted in Chapter 4

**NBC:**


RT:


Appendix 1

Content Analysis Codebook:

Dates of coverage: January 1, 2013 to February 28, 2014

Area of study: Articles with “non-sports coverage” of the Olympic Games in Sochi

Working definition of “non-sports coverage”: Articles that are primarily related to the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games with the dominant focus on non-sport-related context. Articles are selected by entering the word “Sochi” into the search engine for each media company’s website. In order to access all articles from the given period, an additional sample is drawn through a web search engine. Articles with solely sports content are excluded from the sample.

Only articles exclusively produced by the media in question are considered, articles from other sources (news agencies, organisations, press releases etc.) are not included in the sample.

Sources:

RT
www.rt.com
http://2014.rt.com

NBC
http://www.nbcnews.com
http://www.msnbc.com/
http://www.today.com/

Column A: Date – Write in the data of the article in the following format Day/Month/Year, for example, 26/12/2013.

Column B–C: Media+ Article ID – Two English-language media sources were selected for the study: NBC (USA) and RT (Russia). Below are the code numbers for the media:

1. NBC
2. **RT**

*Article ID:* Each article has a unique four-digit identification number. The article number is recorded in chronological order with the first articles dated back to January 2013. Code number for the first article is 001, second — 002 and so on. Example coding for the first article from NBC: media 1, article code 001, the code will be 1001.

*Column D: Headline* — Write in an entire headline of the article.

*Column E: Author* — Write in the name of the author of the article.

*Column F: Type of article* — Each article is placed in one of the categories below:

- **News** (hard news, brief news, press events) — a very short article that informs about recent events or provides new facts. A news article usually has no quotes and if it does, the quote is obtained from press/news release issued by a government or organisation.

- **Feature article** (news feature, background) — an article focusing on background and character of a particular person or group of people. It is mostly issue-oriented, rather than event-oriented, not immediate and includes information from several different sources.

- **Op-ed and Commentary** (stories containing opinions and commentaries, editorials, analysis) — an article that mainly reflects the opinion of the media (journalist, editor, publisher) or an invited expert. The column usually provides writer’s own evaluation of the current situation, no quotes or opinions are contributed to other sources.

- **Other** — an article that does not fit to any of the categories above. The general rule is to use this category as little as possible, so if the content is nearly appropriate to one of the categories above, the article will be placed accordingly.

*Column G: Length* — Word processing program was used to determine the length of the article. Each article falls into one of the following categories:
Short – 250 or less words
Medium – 250-750 words
Long – over 750 words

*Column H: Lead* – Write in an entire lead of the article.

*Column I: Themes* – Do the themes below appear in the article?

0 – no
1 – LGBT
2 – Sochi Problems (weather, heritage, political conflict, infrastructure problems, stray dogs etc.)
3 – Putin
4 – Security/Terrorism
5 – Costs/Corruption
6 – Human rights
7 – Critique of the West
8 – Olympic preparations

*Column J: Directly quoted* – Indicate who was a person or group quoted in the article. Indirect quotations do not count.

– no quotes
9 – Russian government: A representative of the Russian government and Russian Olympic Committee
10 – Other Russian leaders and experts: Former leaders, prominent figures, religious leaders, businessmen in Russia that are not directly connected to the current government.
11 – Team Russia: Athletes, coaches and other representatives of Team Russia
12 – Russians: People or volunteers
14 – Other U.S. leaders and experts: Former leaders, prominent figures, religious leaders, businessmen in the USA that are not connected to the current government.
15 – Team USA: Athletes, coaches and other representatives of Team USA
16 – Americans: People or volunteers
17 – IOC: Olympic Committee leaders or representatives
18 – NGO’s and Human Rights organisations: Non-governmental organisations and human rights monitoring groups, representatives or reports by them.
19 – World: leaders and officials of nations not listed here
20 – Media: media sources and representatives cited in the articles
21 – Other: a person/group who does not fit the categories above.

Column K–L: Terms used to refer to Russia/West – Does the article include any terms used to refer to Russia or USA? If yes, what are they?

Column M–N: Tone of coverage towards Russia/West – Each article is placed into one of the categories below according to the coder’s perception.

Positive — the article provides optimistic outlook on the events, uses positive, emotion-bearing words, such as “promise,” “hopeful,” “heroic” etc.; and has photographs that reinforce the argument in the article.

Negative — the article describes the events, which involve accidents, crime, corruption, human rights violation, severe weather conditions and other problems, uses words with negative connotations such as “crisis”, “abuse”, “discrimination”; and has photographs that add weight to the article.
Neutral — the article provides a balanced perspective on the issue, refers equally to negative and positive aspects. Articles that have no clear stance are also coded as neutral.

Un-codeable – the article does not fit the categories above.

*Column O: Concluding statement* – Write in a concluding statement of the article.

*Column P: Summary* – Write in a short summary of the content of the article.

*Column Q: Generic frame* – Indicate the code that matches the main theme of the article.

22. Pro-Russian frame
   - Does the story describe Russia in positive terms?
   - Does the story refer to the events in both past and present that put Russia in a positive light?
   - Does the story highlight achievements, good deeds, and morality of Russia?
   - Does the story contain visual information that generate feelings of sympathy, warmth, inspiration, or general goodwill towards Russia?

23. Mixed frame Russia (balance of positive and negative references to Russia)
   - Does the story describe Russia in both positive and negative terms or in the terms that cannot be clearly related to either of the categories?
   - Does the story refer to the events in both past and present that put Russia in both a positive and a negative light or no light at all?
   - Does the story highlight both achievements and failures, good and evil deeds of Russia or employ rather neutral approach?

24. Anti-Russian frame
   - Does the story describe Russia in negative terms?
   - Does the story refer to the events in both past and present that put Russia in a negative light?
Does the story highlight failures, evil deeds, and immorality of Russia?
Does the story contain visual information that generate feelings of antipathy, outrage, fear, or general hostility towards Russia?

25. Pro-Western frame

Does the story describe the West in positive terms?
Does the story refer to the events in both past and present that put the West in a positive light?
Does the story highlight achievements, good deeds, and morality of the West?
Does the story contain visual information that generate feelings of sympathy, warmth, inspiration, or general goodwill towards the West?

26. Mixed frame the West (balance of positive and negative references to the West)

Does the story describe the West in both positive and negative terms or in the terms that cannot be clearly related to either of the categories?
Does the story refer to the events in both past and present that put the West in both a positive and a negative light or no light at all?
Does the story highlight both achievements and failures, good and evil deeds of the West or employ rather neutral approach?

27. Anti-Western frame

Does the story describe the West in negative terms?
Does the story refer to the events in both past and present that put the West in a negative light?
Does the story highlight failures, evil deeds, and immorality of the West?
Does the story contain visual information that generate feelings of antipathy, outrage, fear, or general hostility towards the West?
Column R: Other – Write in other interesting observations about the article that are not covered by the categories above.
## Appendix 2

Analysis Results: Frequencies:

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<td>Frequency</td>
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**Tone of coverage towards the West**

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