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Dzmitry Yuran
dyuran@utk.edu

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I am submitting herewith a thesis written by Dzmitry Yuran entitled "Public Confidence in Social Institutions and Media Coverage: A Case of Belarus." I have examined the final electronic copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major in Communication and Information.

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Public Confidence in Social Institutions And Media Coverage: A Case of Belarus

A Thesis Presented for the
Master of Science Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Dzmitry Yuran
May 2011

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ABSTRACT

Social scientists agree that public confidence in social institutions is a crucial element in building democratic society. This is especially true for transitional societies including post-communist countries, because the lack of public confidence in newly emerged democratic institutions can interfere with democratic development. Although different theories explaining public confidence in social institutions were developed, these theories ignored the role that mass media play in building public confidence. The goal of this study is to examine the connection between mass media coverage of social institutions and public confidence in these institutions by conducting content analysis of Belarusian newspapers, reviewing the results of the public opinion polls from Belarus, and exploring the links between coverage of social institutions and trust in them. Four institutions were chosen for this examination: two institutions with high level of confidence representing the state (the President, the military) and two institutions with low level of confidence representing civil society (independent labor unions, opposition political parties).

Results showed that there is a noticeable connection between media coverage and public confidence in social institutions. Content analysis demonstrated that the state-run newspapers publish a great number of articles about Belarus President Lukashenko, covering him within the scope of explicitly positive themes. As results of public opinion polls demonstrate, the President enjoys an high level of confidence amongst people who trust state-run Media. On the other hand, independent newspapers present President Lukashenko in a negative different light: he is being depicted as a dictator and an ineffective leader. According to public opinion polls, people who trust the independent media are less confident in the President: more than 42% do have confidence in him. Given that state-run newspapers present the President almost exclusively within positive themes and independent newspapers seldom speak of the President's achievements, concentrating mostly on his failures and shortcomings, we can see a strong connection between media coverage of the President and levels of public confidence in him. Examining media coverage and public opinion about other social institutions provided similar results, confirming the connection between media coverage and public confidence in this study.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Social science scholars agree that social trust is an essential component for the correct functioning of democratic political institutions (see Almond and Verba, 1963; Putnam, 1993, 1995, Sztompka, 1999) and of market economies (see Raiser, 1998). According to Sapsford and Abbott (2006), the phenomenon of social trust consists of several related components: confidence in social institutions and the social environment, trust in people and trust in the existing socio-economic order.

Unfortunately, the literature shows no consistency in the use of terms "trust" and "confidence." In some works, the word "trust" has very broad meaning, while the word "confidence" is used for trust only in social institutions, whereas in other works the words "trust" and "confidence" are used interchangeably. For the purpose of this study, the term "social trust" was used as a broader term, meaning the public's expectation about the profitable behavior of a social agent (Falcone & Castelfranchi, 2001), while "confidence" was used when referring to public's trust for *social institutions*.

As my review of the literature demonstrates, the problems of trust in society and confidence in social institutions have been studied by scholars since the late 1960s. Moreover, the problem of eroding confidence in institutions in transitional societies (including post-communist countries) has been the focus of research in different disciplines for more than 20 years. The role that the mass media are playing in building public confidence in social institutions is, however, not thoroughly studied and is often ignored by sociologist and political scientists.

As Walter Lippmann noted in 1922 in his famous work, *Public Opinion*, "the world that we have to deal with… is out of mind, out of sight, out of mind." Nearly a century after Lippmann penned these words, McCombs (2004) wrote that most knowledge and information that people possess still comes from the mass media: "Today we also have television and expanding panoply of new communication technologies, but the central point is the same." American journalist Theodore White described the power of the mass media over public opinion in 1972 as "an authority that in other nations is reserved for tyrants, priests, parties and mandarins (White, 1973)." Once again, McCombs (2004) commented, "In the years since White's cogent observations, social scientists across the world have elaborated the ability of the mass media to influence many aspects of our political, social and cultural agendas."

Thus, it would be a major mistake to ignore the role of the mass media in building public confidence in social institutions. This thesis was conceptualized to make a small contribution toward filling the gap in existing knowledge on the topic by studying the connection between confidence in institutions and the media coverage of these institutions in Belarus. The theoretical background of this study is based on works by distinguished Polish sociologist Piotr Sztompka (1996, 1999, 2002, 2004) on issues of confidence in social institutions in transitional societies, as well as his theories on the origins of public confidence.

Belarus was chosen for this study for several reasons: it is a transitional post-communist society with a short recent history of having modern social institutions; it is an example of a post-Soviet authoritarian regime with state control over mass media; and, due to its unique geopolitical position, it is of special interest to the United States (see: Belarus Democracy Act in chapter 3).

Purpose of the Study

As the literature review demonstrates, the issue of public confidence in institutions is a crucial element in building democratic society. Scholars note that confidence in institutions is especially important in transitional societies, and the lack of public confidence in newly emerged democratic institutions hinders their effectiveness and interferes with democratic development. Although several theories try to explain the origins of public confidence, the role of mass media is generally overlooked.

Taking into consideration that public confidence in social institutions is essential for the effective functioning of a society, and considering that mass media influence public opinion, the purpose of this thesis was to study **ways in which selected social institutions are covered by Belarusian media and to determine if there is a connection between media coverage and levels of public confidence in these institutions.**

A content analysis of selected Belarusian newspapers was conducted by the author, and the results of the public opinion polls from Belarus, conducted by the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies[1], were examined.

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[1] Independent Institute of Socio-Economic & Political Studies (IISEPS) is the first independent think tank in post-Communist Belarus that was established in February 1992 by group of academics, journalists, politicians and businessmen. Now IISEPS is registered as public institution in the Lithuanian Republic.

CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW/THEORY BACKGROUND

The Problem of Trust

In the last two decades, the problem of trust has come to the fore of social science's attention (Sztompka stated, 1999). Collective intellectual effort led to the conclusion that "the clear and simple fact that, without trust, everyday social life which we take for granted is simply not possible" (Seligman, 1997). In addition, "trust becomes a more urgent and central concern in today's contingent, uncertain global conditions" (Misztal, 1996).

So what is trust and why does it matter? According to Sztompka (1999), the notion of trust is related to the uncertainty and unpredictability of the future, which is of human provenance: "Trust is a bet about the future contingent actions of others". Gambetta (1988) provided a similar perspective: "Trust is particularly relevant in conditions of ignorance and uncertainty with respect to unknown or unknowable actions of others". Another useful definition is given by Earle and Cvetkovich (1995): "[Trust is] a simplifying strategy that enables individuals to adopt to complex social environment, and thereby benefit from increasing opportunities".

Two types of trust could be distinguished according to the objects of trust: interpersonal and social. While interpersonal trust is dealing with other people, social trust has a more abstract orientation toward different social objects, including social groups, social roles, social institutions and organizations, social system and order, etc.

One of the basic reasons why trust is essential for society is its complex relationship with cooperation: on one hand, trust is a necessary precondition for cooperation and on the other, trust is a product of successful cooperation. According to Dasgupta (1988), "trust is a

lubricant for cooperation." And Gambetta (1988) affirms that distrust destroys cooperation, writing, "If distrust is complete, cooperation will fail among free agents."

Sztomka (1999) identifies two types of functions related to trust: personal and social functions (Sztompka, 1999). On the personal level, trusting other people evokes positive actions towards others, and liberates and mobilizes human agency. That is, as Almond and Verba stress (1965), "belief in the benignity of one's fellow citizens is directly related to one's propensity to join with others in political activity." On the other hand, distrust plays the opposite role, i.e. the level of activism, mobilization and freedom is lowered.

As to the wider community, the following functions of trust are reported by Sztompka (1999), it (1) inspires sociability and cooperation with others (thus increasing social capital); (2) encourages tolerance, recognition of differences and acceptance of strangers, and (3) reinforces feelings of identity and collective solidarity. The opposite of trust, destroys social capital, and leads to isolation and decay of social networks and channels of communication. Distrust also mobilized defensive attitudes, stereotypes, prejudice and xenophobia.

Sztompka (1999) suggests a brief overview of the six major social sciences concepts, in which, according to the author, "Trust appears as a core component," and that demonstrates the importance and intensity of trust-related research:

- *Civic culture*: the line of research, started by Almond & Verba (1965), switched the focus from the legal and institutional facts to "soft" factors, including believes and values.

- *Civil society*: according to Alexander (1992), "[is] an arena of social solidarity that is defined in universal terms. It is the 'we'ness' of a national community, the feeling of

connectedness to one another… that allows there to emerge a single thread of identity among otherwise disparate people."

- *Cultural capital*: according to Bourdieu (1979), the key to social hierarchy and social organization is hidden at the cultural level. Cultural capital was defined as cultural signals used for cultural and social exclusion.

- *Social capital*: Putnam (1995) defined social capital as "features of social life – networks, norms and trust – that enables participants to work together more effectively to pursue shared objectives… and, in short, refers to social connections and the attendant norms and trust."

- *Post materialistic values*: as stated by Inglehart (1990), 'soft' cultural concerns and commitments play the key role in the new set of values that emerged in developed societies during last decades.

- *Civilizational competence*: the focus on post-communist transitions in Eastern Europe led Sztompka (1993, 1999) to the concept of 'Civilizational competence', that includes social trust as one of the key components.

Apart from the above-mentioned indirect approaches that address the notion of trust as part of a broad cultural system, several important studies are fully focused on trust:

- Luhmann (1979) linked trust to the growing complexity and uncertainty of contemporary societies, and suggested that in comparison to the traditional societies, trust plays an even more important role in 'late modernity'.

- Gambetta (1988) and his co-authors analyzed trust in different settings, including in closed and exclusive communities like the Italian Mafia.

- Hardin (1991, 1996) extended a rational-choice framework to the analysis of trust and distrust.

- Fukuyama (1995) created a comprehensive framework of trust as a crucial ingredient for economic success (he based his arguments on examples of Japan, China and other South-East Asian countries).

- Sztompka (1999) presented his own comprehensive theoretical account of trust "as a fundamental component of human actions." He offers models of the emergence and decay of trust cultures, based on his long-term studies of the communist and post-communist societies.

Confidence in Social Institutions

The problem of confidence in social institutions has been studied for more than five decades, and according to Newton and Norris (1999) consists of several sub-areas of research. Some scholars are more interested in the loss of confidence in the main institutions of democratic government, such as the executive branch, the parliament, the courts, the police or the military (see Orren 1997; Dalton 1999). Others pay more attention to public opinion about private institutions, such as the church, mass media, trade unions and major corporations (see Lipset and Schneider 1983; Manaev, 2001, 2006). Another area of research is concentrated on trust among people as an indicator of social stability (see Putnam 1995; Dalton 1996).

Scholars describe social institutions as the basic "pillars" of society. In the modern, complex world the confidence in such institutions provides the base for social and political stability (see Luhmann 1988; Dunn 1984; Giddens 1990; Seligman 1997). Despite the differences in the object of analysis, scholars agree that the loss of confidence in social institutions has a wide range of negative consequences that often extend beyond the political life of society (Dogan 1994; Dalton 1996; Listhaug 1995, Putnam, 1995).

The increasing erosion of confidence in fundamental social institutions across the globe has been the focus of academic research since the early 1970s. For example, a Trilateral Commission on the Crisis of Democracy in 1975 (Crozier et al. 1975, 158-59) concluded, "Dissatisfaction with, and lack of confidence in, the functioning of the institutions of democratic government have thus now become widespread in Trilateral countries." Since that time, several studies have demonstrated increasing dissatisfaction in central social institutions in advanced industrial democracies (see Miller 1974; Niemi et al. 1989; Dogan 1994; Dalton 1996, 1999; Nye 1997; Nye and Zelikow 1997; Norris 1999). One study demonstrates how expectations of a mass public and its confidence in social institutions can have a direct effect on the effectiveness of a democratic government (see Putnam, 1993, 2000).

Studying Public Confidence in Transitional Societies

Studies of public confidence and its dramatic decline in institutions in transitional societies, specifically post-communist countries, are quite extensive and constitute a separate area of research, because of the severity of the regime repressiveness (see Markovar, 1994a, 1994b; Mischler and Rose, 1997; Rose, 1994, 1995, 2003; Miller, White, and Heywood, 1998; Miller, Grodeland, and Koshechkina, 2001; Levada, Shubkin, Kertman, Ivanova, Yadov,

Shiraev, 2002; Abbott, 2002; Sztompka, 1996, 1999, 2002, 2004; Aberg and Sandberg, 2003; Abbott and Beck, 2003; Kochanowicz , 2004; Jeffries, 2004; Sapsford and Abbott, 2006;).

Polish scholar P. Sztompka (see 1996, 2002, 2004) asserts that after the collapse of the old Soviet system many post-communist societies experienced "cultural trauma," which includes crises of trust and confidence in institutions. As a result, society is transformed into an "atomized society" in which trust is confined to small local pockets of inter-personal interaction. One of the greatest problems with such a transformation is the emergence of corruption on every possible level. With the erosion of confidence in social institutions, people prefer to solve problems using personal connections. In addition, as Sapsford and Abbott (2006) emphasize, the erosion of confidence in institutions results in a decline of public trust in the socio-economic order and as a consequence societies become unstable, and are liable to experience social shocks and revolutions.

Theories of Trust and Confidence

Over the years, many scholars attempted to explain the phenomenon of trust and public confidence and its decline in social institutions. Sztompka's (1999) three dimensions of trust – relational, psychological, and cultural – lead to the search for bases of trust in three different areas of inquiry. According to Newton and Norris (1999), the three major schools of thought on how to define trust and confidence include social-physiological, social-cultural and institutional explanations.

The social-physiological explanations (see Erikson, 1950; Rosenberg, 1956, 1957; Easton, 1965; Gabriel, 1995) connect trust and confidence in institution to basic personality traits. The social and cultural models (see Almond and Verba 1963; Inglehart 1990, Coleman 1990; Inglehart and Abramson 1994; Sztompka 1996; Newton 1997; Rose, et al. 1998) explain

trust and confidence as the product of socialization and social experiences. The institutional performance model focuses on the efficiency of institutions as the key to understanding the citizen's evaluations of these institutions (see Hardin, 1996; Newton and Norris, 1999; Newton, 1999).

It is important to note that none of these theories mention mass media as influencing genesis of trust and confidence in social institutions. Mass media scholars have, of course, been focusing on the influences of media on public opinion and political processes, elements that lead into notions of trust and confidence in social institutions.

Media Effects: Spiral of Silence

Scholars of the mass media have articulated a number of theories pertinent to the subject of this theses, including the agenda setting theory (McCombs and Shaw, 1972), gate keeping theory (Lewin, 1947; White, 1950), two-step flow theory (Lazarsfeld, 1944; Lazarsfeld& Katz, 1955), among others. In its analysis of the findings, this thesis, in part, employs the spiral of silence theory, which is focused not only on the mechanism of media influence but also on the social implications of this influence on public opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1974; 1977; 1993).

This theory focuses on the concept of group pressure and concentrates on the influence of the media on public opinion. The spiral of silence theory lies on an intersection between communication, sociology and political science, and thus it is of special interest for this researcher. The theory, introduced by German sociologist Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, states that people are more likely to express a certain opinion if they think that their point of view is shared by the majority. Their exposure to and understanding of the majority opinion is facilitated by the mass media, influencing their final decision on which view to support.

Thus, the "spiral of silence" refers to the way people tend to remain silent when they feel that their views are in the minority. The theory is based on three premises: (1) people have a "quasi-statistical organ," which allows them to sense the prevailing public opinion, even without access to the results of public opinion polls, (2) people fear social isolation and know what behavior will lead to it, and (3) people tend not to express their unpopular views, because of their fear of isolation. If a person believes that his/her opinion is the one held by the majority, he/she will more willingly express that opinion in public; if public opinion on the matter changes, a person will be more willing to conceal an opinion that is no longer favored by the public. The larger the perceived distance between popular opinion and personal opinion, the less likely the person will express his/her unpopular point of view. The spiral of silence occurs directly when people, whose opinion differs significantly from majority's views, stay silent and do not express their position publicly and especially via mass communication channels. Thus an impression that there is only one dominant opinion in the society is created through mass media and other communication tools.

Existing literature on the spiral of silence is quite extensive. Since Noelle-Neumann first published her work in the early 1970's, the spiral of silence theory has been studied and tested repeatedly by scholars from different disciplines, including communication, sociology and political science, including its effect on the democratic societies (Moy, Domke, &Stamm, 2001; Detenber, Willnat, Aday, & Graf, 2004; Hayes, Glynn, & Shanahan, 2005; Spencer &Croucher, 2008). Less attention has been paid, however, to the phenomenon in studies on countries with authoritarian and semi-authoritarian regimes (Manaev, Manayeva, Yuran, 2010) or in cross-cultural studies (Lee, Detenber, Willnat, Aday, Graf, 2004; Kim, Han, Shanahan, Berdayes, 2004).

The only study of the spiral of silence in post-communist or authoritarian society that is available in English is the article, “Spiral of silence in election campaigns in post-communist society” (Manaev, Manayeva, Yuran, 2010). This study examines the effects of the spiral of silence in post-communist societies in the presidential and parliamentary elections of 2001 and 2008 in Belarus. The authors of the study assumed that in an authoritarian society, where state authorities use mass media as a tool of political control, particularly during important political campaigns (elections, referenda, etc.), the “spiral of silence” becomes the intended result of political communication and of control over public opinion. The socio-cultural peculiarities of a post-communist society, as is the case in the Belarus-focused study, significantly strengthen effectiveness of the phenomenon.

The results of the study outlined in the above-mentioned article, confirm its hypothesis and demonstrate the existence of the effects of the spiral of silence in Belarus. The majority of voters got their election campaign information from the mass media controlled by the state; these media, above all other candidates, covered president Lukashenko during the presidential campaign, and the candidates that supported him during Parliamentary campaigns. The results of public opinion polls demonstrated that several months before the official election campaigns (when voters were not sure about the majority opinion), people were more likely to cast their votes for opposition candidates; whereas during the official campaigns (with strong pro-authority propaganda dominating mass media coverage), people’s perceptions of how the majority will vote dramatically changed as did their own electoral preferences. Coverage of the official campaigns in state-run media “pumped” public expectations of “majority voting” in favor of Lukashenko (in the presidential elections) and pro-Lukashenko candidates (in the parliamentary elections).

The study described above demonstrates that institutional changes in post-communist societies (including the introduction of free media and rule of law) alone are insufficient for real democratic transformations without parallel social-cultural changes. It also identified the need for further research on the issue in other post-communist countries in order to test the assumption that due to cultural similarities (that derive from shared experiences of the Soviet era) similar effects of the spiral of silence may be taking place across the region.

Ultimately, the spiral of silence theory suggests that mass media coverage has strong effects on public opinion and thus it may be useful in explaining phenomena observed in this thesis.

CHAPTER III
BELARUS BACKGROUND AND MEDIA LANDSCAPE

Belarus: Façade Democracy and a Rogue Regime

Christopher Walker, Director of Studies at Freedom House, aptly outlined the politically based divisions in Eastern Europe in 2009. At the time of this writing, more than twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Central and Eastern Europe and the former states of the USSR are still split into two groups of countries: the new democracies and the still authoritarian nations[2]. Belarus, as well as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Russia, belong to the second category of repressive and undemocratic countries. In fact, "Belarus is unique among the states of the former Soviet bloc, in that after twelve years of 'transition', the country remains 'stalled' and backward-oriented… The country balances between the prospect of democracy and a retreat to authoritarianism (Korosteleva, Lawson & Marsh, 2003)."

Belarus declared independence in 1991, ending centuries of foreign control. After several years of democratic transition, Alexander Lukashenko[3] was in 1994 elected through a free and fair election as the country's first post-Soviet president. Since his election, Belarus rapidly evolved into "an example of a 'façade regime' in which democratic 'scaffolding' conceals a dictatorial style of polity building" (Korosteleva, Lawson & Marsh, 2003). As the Freedom House's report, *Nations in Transit 2010,* indicates, "Elected on a populist platform and buoyed by widespread nostalgia for Soviet-era stability, President Lukashenka pursued a reversal of nascent democratic openings of the early 1990... He restored Soviet-era symbols,

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[2] Walker, C. (2009). Fast-Forward, Rewind: Press Freedom since the Berlin Wall's Fall. http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=72&release=1109

[3] Several variations of the spelling of his name are used in different sources, including Lukashenko and Lukashenka.

reduced the Parliament and judiciary to rubber-stamp bodies, abandoned term limits for the presidency, and took control over local administrations and security forces. President Lukashenka also curbed media freedom, suppressed political opposition, and reasserted state control over the economy[4]." Since the 1994 election, as Manaev (2009) writes, Lukashenko invested himself with direct powers over most institutions; controlled the electoral process to the extent that none of the presidential or parliamentary elections that were held in Belarus since 1994 were recognized as free and fair by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe; marginalized political opposition; took complete control over state-run media and nearly annihilated independent mass media, and created mechanism of control over the economy.

In Freedom House's annual report, *Freedom in the World 2010*[5], Belarus was labeled as "Not Free" and was placed among "worst of the worst" in terms of political rights and civil liberties. The combined rating average for the country is 6.5 (according to the rating, 1 represents most free and 7 the least free). As another Freedom House's special report, *Worst of the Worst 2010: the world's most repressive societies,*[6] indicates: "Belarus is not an electoral democracy. Serious and widespread irregularities have marred all recent elections. The constitution vests most power in the president, giving him control over the government, courts, and even the legislative process by stating that presidential decrees have a higher legal force than the laws. President Alyaksandr Lukashenka systematically curtails press freedom…

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[4] Freedom House. (2011). *Nations in Transit 2010.* http://freedomhouse.eu/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=321:nations-in-transit-2010&catid=46:nations-in-transit&Itemid=121

[5] Freedom House. (2011). *Freedom in the World 2010 Annual Report.* http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=363&year=2010

[6] Freedom House. (2011). *Worst of the Worst 2010: the World's Most Repressive Societies.* http://www.freedomhouse.org/uploads/special_report/88.pdf

restricts freedom of assembly and of associations. The right to a fair trial is often not respected in cases with political overtones."

The U.S. Department of State *2009 Human Rights Report,*[7]states that the human rights record of the Belarusian government remains very poor, the authorities committing frequent abuses:

> "The right of citizens to change their government was severely restricted. The government failed to account for past politically motivated disappearances. Arbitrary arrests, detentions, and imprisonment of citizens for political reasons, or for criticizing officials, or for participating in demonstrations also continued. The judiciary lacked independence, trial outcomes usually were predetermined, and many trials were conducted behind closed doors. The government further restricted civil liberties, including freedoms of press, speech, assembly, association, and religion and continued to enforce politically motivated military conscriptions of opposition youth leaders. State security services used unreasonable force to disperse peaceful protesters. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and political parties were subjected to harassment, fines, and prosecution."[8]

And according to the Heritage Foundation's *2011 Index of Economic Freedom*, Belarus economic freedom score is 47.9, which ranks the country in 155th place among the free economies in the world. As stated in the report[9], the low rating is a consequence of a high corruption rate, an ineffective judiciary and a time-consuming bureaucracy, and strong

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[7] U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor. (2010). *2009 Human Rights report*. http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2009/eur/136021.htm
[8] Ibid.
[9] Heritage Foundation. (2011). *Index of Economic Freedom*. http://www.heritage.org/Index/about

government interference with the private sector (which influences monetary, investment and financial freedoms).

The 2010 Presidential Elections and Post-Election Development

The Presidential election, that took place on December 19, 2010, failed to meet key standards of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) for democratic elections.[10] As described in European Exchange/Human Rights Centre "Viasna"/Belarusian Helsinki Committee's *Final Human Rights Defenders Monitoring Report on Presidential Election in Belarus,*[11] riot police brutally dispersed participants of mass demonstrations, people who came to the main Minsk square to protest against the unfair conduct in the elections. More than 700 people were arrested, including seven presidential candidates. Many protesters, including presidential candidates and journalists, were brutally beaten by the police. Repression against political opposition and independent mass media continued in the following months.[12] According to the Committee to Protect Journalists' *Attacks on the Press 2010: Belarus* report[13], "In a massive post-election crackdown, authorities raided news outlets and detained at least 20 journalists covering protests over a flawed December 19 presidential vote... Leading journalists such as Natalya Radina, editor of the pro-opposition news website *Charter 97*, and Irina Khalip, correspondent for the Moscow newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, were among those

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[10] Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe: Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. (2010). Belarus still has considerable way to go in meeting OSCE commitments, despite certain improvements, election observers say. http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/74656

[11] European Exchange / Human Rights Centre "Viasna"/ Belarusian Helsinki Committee. (2011). *Final Human Rights Defenders Monitoring Report on Presidential Election in Belarus*. http://spring96.org/en/news/41257

[12] Reporters Without Borders. (2011). Authorities seek to suppress news of plight of held journalists. http://en.rsf.org/belarus-authorities-seek-to-suppress-news-24-01-2011,39386.html

[13] Committee to Protect Journalists. (2011). Attacks on the Press 2010: Belarus. http://www.cpj.org/2011/02/attacks-on-the-press-2010-belarus.php

imprisoned in December 2010. Security agents stormed newsrooms of major outlets, including Radio for Belarus and the satellite television channel Belsat." As of March 2011, 42 people, including ex-presidential candidates, their campaign members and journalists, are facing criminal charges for organizing mass riots and participating in social unrest.

The Belarus Democracy Act

The Belarus Democracy Act is a statement of U.S. policy towards Lukashenko's regime, with special focus on assistance to promote democracy and civil society in Belarus, and apply sanctions against the government of Belarus. Its aim is "to provide for the promotion of democracy, human rights, and rule of law in the Republic of Belarus and for the consolidation and strengthening of Belarus sovereignty and independence."[14] President George W. Bush stated in 2004: "The Belarus Democracy Act will help us support those within Belarus who are working toward democracy. We welcome this legislation as a means to bolster friends of freedom and to nurture the growth of democratic values, habits, and institutions within Belarus."[15]

The original Act was signed by President Bush and passed by the U.S. Congress on October 4, 2004.[16] The U.S. Congress amended versions of the Act in 2006,[17] 2008[18] and 2011.[19]

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[14] U.S. Congress. (2004). H.R. 854: Belarus Democracy Act of 2004. http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h108-854

[15] The White House Office of the Press secretary. (2004). President Bush's statement on the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004. http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2004/October/20041022100536btrueveceR0.8822595.html

[16] Ibid.

[17] U.S. Congress. (2006). H.R.5948: Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006. http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h109-5948

18 U.S. Congress. (2008). H.R.5970 - Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2008. http://www.opencongress.org/bill/110-h5970/show

The U.S. government's assessment of the Belarus regime is clearly negative: "the government of Belarus has engaged in a pattern of clear and uncorrected violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms[20]." Consequently, the Act authorizes U.S. assistance for democratic opposition in Belarus and applies economic sanctions against the Belarusian government.

The Belarus Democracy Act pays close attention to the suppression of freedom of speech and press in Belarus: "the government of Belarus has attempted to maintain a monopoly over the country's information space, targeting independent media, including independent journalists, for systematic reprisals and elimination, while suppressing the right to freedom of speech and expression of those dissenting from the dictatorship of Alexander Lukashenko, and adopted laws restricting the media, including the Internet, in a manner inconsistent with international human rights agreements."[21]

The Belarusian Media Landscape and Media Freedom

According to Reporters Without Borders' *World Press Freedom Index 2010*, Belarus is among the lowest-ranked countries: #154 of 178, and in regard to media freedom, stating in part, "the [Belarusian] regime makes no concession to civil society and continues… to put pressure on the country's few remaining independent media outlets."[22]

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[19] U.S. Congress. (2011). H.R.515: Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2011. http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h112-515&tab=summary
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Reporters Without Borders. (2010). World Press Freedom Index 2010. http://www.rsf.org/IMG/CLASSEMENT_2011/GB/C_GENERAL_GB.pdf

Another widely recognized report on international media freedom, the IREX's *Media Sustainability Index,*[23] gave Belarus an overall score of 0.96 out of 4.0, on a scale from 0 to 4.0 (where 0 is no freedom of the press), placing the country into the category of "unsustainable, anti-free" press systems. And according to Freedom House' *Freedom of the Press Index 2010,*[24]Belarus is ranked 189, along with Cuba, Libya, Burma, Turkmenistan and North Korea.

State Control of Mass Media

The reason for Belarus' low media freedom ratings is the strict control that Belarusian authorities gained over the mass media system since Lukashenko's election in 1994. Lukashenko clearly and unequivocally stated his position on media freedom when he spoke to a group of journalism students at the Belarusian State University in 2008: "Media hold the weapon of a most destructive power. They must be controlled by the state".[25]

According to IREX's *Media Sustainability Index*, the Belarusian government restricts the work of media through its control or manipulation of printing houses, distribution systems, advertising, taxation, and of editorial policy, e.g. outright censorship, dissemination of false-information, the filing of libel law suites, and restrictions of access to information. The Index succinctly states,

> "Economic conditions for media are not equal, subscription and distribution systems are monopolized or controlled by the state on a large scale and limit access for non-state

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[23] IREX. (2010). Media Sustainability Index 2010: the Development of Sustainable Independent Media in Europe and Eurasia.
http://www.irex.org/system/files/Europe%20MSI%202010_Full%20Version.pdf
[24] Freedom House. (2011). Freedom of the Press 2010.
http://www.freedomhouse.org/images/File/fop/2010/FOTP2010Global&RegionalTables.pdf
[25] International Fact-Finding Mission to the Republic of Belarus. (2009). For Free and Fair Media in Belarus: Mission Report.
http://baj.by/index.php?module=p&type=file&func=get&tid=6&fid=pdf&pid=33

media, allocation of broadcast licenses and frequencies is neither transparent nor equal, access to information is restricted, accreditation of journalists (working for foreign media) is restricted, legislation on defamation and extremism creates an environment of self-censorship and thus lack of publicly available information on important issues."[26]

A new Belarus Media Law, labeled "draconian" by the Freedom House' *Freedom of the Press 2010* report, was approved in 2008 and took effect in 2009. The new law set up a number of obstacles for independent journalists and media outlets, and shortened the list of journalistic rights.

According to the International Fact-Finding Mission to the Republic of Belarus report, *For Free and Fair Media in Belarus*,[24] some of the control measures include: new burdensome procedures for the accreditation process (journalists have to go through a three-step process and could be denied accreditation without any explanation); increased authority for penalizing journalists and mass media outlets (for vague reasons like "dissemination of inaccurate information that might cause harm to state and public interests," journalist could be fined, operations of media outlets could be suspended or terminated); the requirement for all print and broadcast media outlets to re-register with the Ministry of Information (at least half a dozen independent media outlets were denied registration); there are also sanctions for violating requirements of "compliance with reality" for media materials; and foreign share in media ownership is restricted to 30 percent.

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[26] Ibid.

Repressive legal regulations are the norm in the Media Law of 2009. According to the International Fact-Finding Mission to the Republic of Belarus report *For Free and Fair Media in Belarus*27, other laws detrimental to freedom of speech/press include:

- The Law on Public Service, which restricts public and media access to information. All state organizations are obliged to have spokespersons who present official information; these spokespersons are linked directly to the Presidential administration and have to follow the official ideological doctrine. Furthermore, state officials often refuse to provide information to independent mass media.
- The Law on Counteraction to Extremism, which is commonly used to impede press freedom: publishing materials that are considered an "extreme and present danger to the state or the people" could result in fines or closure of the news outlet.
- The Criminal Code: Articles 367, 368, 369, 369-1 and 193-1. Several articles provide for criminal defamation for "Calumny against the President of the Republic of Belarus, Insults against the President of the Republic of Belarus, Insults against the representative of the authorities, and discrediting the Republic of Belarus". These articles are widely used by the Belarusian government to prosecute independent media outlets.
- Another problem is the courts, where judges are appointed directly by President Lukashenko, and offer little or no support for independent media.

[27] Ibid.

The Belarusian Media Model

According to Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm's classic *Four Theories of the Press* (1956), the Belarusian media model could be identified as an authoritarian model: the function of the state-run media is to support the policies of the authorities; state-run media fosters support for the president, social and national unity; the state has a right to control mass media by the enforcing repressive media law and other means.

The backwardness of the political regime explains why the media system in Belarus could be analyzed within the classical framework of Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm developed more than half a century ago. Although significant progress has been achieved in the studies of media systems since the *Four Theories of the Press* was published (for example, *Comparing Media Systems*, by Hallin & Mancini, 2004), most current research is either fully focused on Western media systems (including North America and Western Europe), or it includes post-communist countries that embarked on democratization and adopted Western values. Obviously, Belarus does not fall into either category. According to Jakubowicz's classification (2007), it falls into the category of non-competitive regimes, and its media system is very different from the media systems in Western Europe, or even from that of the Baltic states, the Ukraine or Poland, Belarus's closest neighbors.

The Mass Media Landscape

A significant number of media outlets are registered in Belarus: 1,353 print and 240 broadcasting outlets as of March 2011, according to Belarusian Ministry of Information.[28] However, as Manaev (2009) indicates, the mass media do not contribute substantially to the

[28] Ministry of Information of the Republic of Belarus. (2011).Registered mass media outlets. http://www.mininform.gov.by/rus/smi/

development of democracy and freedom in Belarus. To the contrary, due to strict governmental control, the mass media contribute to the strengthening of authoritarianism.

The Belarusian mass media landscape is dominated by state-run media outlets whose editors are appointed by the President or by local authorities subservient to him. This fact has an enormous influence on editorial policy. As the International Fact-Finding Mission to the Republic of Belarus report *For Free and Fair Media in Belarus* indicates, state-run media outlets are in a beneficial position compared to the independent media: they enjoy subsidized rent, salaries, better distribution and printing, and tax exemptions.

Broadcasting in Belarus remains under strict governmental control: TV channels are either state-owned, or Russian-owned. According to the Freedom House' *Freedom of the Press 2010* report, "the state maintains a virtual monopoly on domestic broadcast media, which consistently glorify Lukashenko and vilify the opposition. Only state media broadcast nationwide, and the content of smaller television and radio stations is tightly restricted."

About two-thirds of registered newspapers and magazines are non-state owned, but the majority of these outlets cover entertainment and special topics.[29] There are only about 20 national and local independent newspapers that deal with social and political issues. The comparison of the circulation numbers of the most popular state-run newspapers *Sovetskaya Byelorussia* ("*Советская Белоруссия*") and the most popular independent newspaper *Narodnaya Volya* ("*Народная Воля*") illustrates the difference in the size of the audience of state-run versus that of independent media: 2,000,000 to 25,000 respectively (Manaev, Manayeva, Yuran, 2010).

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[29] International Fact-Finding Mission to the Republic of Belarus. (2009). For Free and Fair Media in Belarus: Mission Report.
http://baj.by/index.php?module=p&type=file&func=get&tid=6&fid=pdf&pid=33

CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY

This study examines the mass media's role and efficacy in building public confidence in social institutions, and outlines the perceptions of the institutions that the public is getting from the mass media. Public opinion polls data analysis indicates levels of public confidence in institutions and illustrates the importance of print media as a source of information for Belarusian public. Comparison of the results of content analysis and public opinion data analysis made it possible to determine if there is a connection between media coverage of and public confidence in social institutions.

The main research question is **how are social institutions covered by the Belarusian media and if there is a connection between media coverage of these institutions and the level of public confidence in them.** In order to answer the main question, a set of sub-questions were addressed:

1. **RQ1:** How are selected social institutions covered by the Belarusian mass media?
2. **RQ2:** What is the level of confidence of the Belarusian public toward selected social institutions?
3. **RQ3:** What is the level of trust of the Belarusian public toward news media? What are the characteristics of media consumption among Belarusian public? What are the main sources of information about internal affairs for Belarusian public?

Content Analysis

In this study, elements of qualitative and quantitative content analysis are combined.

The qualitative content analysis allows studying themes that were used by the mass media covering selected social institutions and demonstrates the difference in coverage between state-run and independent newspapers. This type of analysis allowed sorting out themes that promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, or solution to an issue, and could stimulate support or opposition to an issue. The content analysis suggested the themes outlined. Themes derived from data analysis, and the researcher has characterized the press coverage by citing quotes and examples. Themes that were found in analyzed articles were categorized as negative, positive, and neutral. The overall tone in each theme was created by using direct evaluation of a social institution via the use of epithets; by presenting the institution as effective or ineffective, as a "problem solver" or a "problem creator"; by covering successes or failures of the institution; by focusing on positive or negative outcomes of actions of the institution.

According to Berelson (1952), quantitative content analysis "is a research technique for the objective systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of the communication"; it allows for the examination of social interactions based on texts. A conceptual (or so-called thematic) type of content analysis was used in this study, because it allows the researcher to look at the occurrence of selected items within a text. The quantitative content analysis shows how the coverage is constructed by the mass media by looking at the presence of several categories:

- What is the type of publication: news, opinion, press release, official document?
- Is there negative or positive evaluation of the institution?

- What is the main topic of the article?
- What is the main subject of the article?
- Does the story refer to the institution as an organization or is the reference personified?
- What is the primary scope of activity of institutions in the article?

Four institutions were chosen for the study: two institutions with high levels of confidence (according to IISEPS data) that represent the state (the President and the military) and two institutions with low level of confidence that represent the civil society (independent labor unions and opposition political parties).

Articles published in a three months period, January – March 2010, were selected for analysis. The beginning of 2010 was a "calm" period between elections in which the mass media did not concentrate on covering certain institutions, such as the presidency or the National Assembly.[30] That allowed the researcher to analyze regular, everyday coverage in selected newspapers.

Four major newspapers were chosen as sources for this study. As results of public opinion polls from Belarus demonstrate, about 65% Belarusians get their news from print media and most people trust print media as a reliable news source (see Manaev, 2009). The structure of the Belarusian media landscape (see Manaev, 2006, 2009; Manayeva, Manaev, Yuran, 2010) influenced the choice of sources for this study, including two nation-wide state-run newspapers with highest circulation numbers *Sovetskaya Belorussiya/Belarus Segodnya (*«*Беларусь Сегодня/Советская Белоруссия*»)and *Zvyazda* («*Звязда*»), and two independent nation-wide newspapers: *Narodnaya Volya* ("*Народная Воля*") and *Belorusy I Rynok*

[30] Belarusian Parliament

("*Белорусы и Рынок*"). All four newspapers have online archives that are free to public and served as the source of articles in this study.

The following *key search words* (in both Russian and Belarusian languages)[31] were used to select articles for analysis (see *Appendix A* for a full list):

- For the Presidency: President, Lukashenko, Alexander Grigorievich (Lukashendo's given name), Head of State;
- For the military: army, military, draft, military service, military registration and enlistment office, armed forces, generals and other military ranks;
- For the opposition political parties: titles of registered political parties and names of their leaders;
- For independent labor unions: titles of registered independent labor unions and names of their leaders.

Public Opinion Data Analysis

The public opinion data that was used in this study was provided by the Belarusian polling organization, Independent Institute for Social-Economic and Political Studies. IISEPS was established in Minsk, Belarus in February 1992 by a group of academics, journalists, politicians and businessmen. IISEPS is currently registered as a public institution in the Lithuanian Republic, but still conducts public opinion research in Belarus.[32] Data from IISEPS quarterly public opinion polls are available on the organization's website (www.iiseps.org) and are open to public.

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[31] This is a short list of key search words. For the full list see Appendix A.
[32] In April 2005 IISEPS had been shut down by the Belarus Supreme Court. Later that year the institute was registered in Lithuania under the same name and with the same mission. See details at http://www.iiseps.org/ebullet05-2.html

Question about confidence in social institutions, media consumption and trust for mass media are included in IISEPS national polls, which are conducted quarterly, with random samples of approximately 1,500 respondents, and a sample error of 0.03.[33]

The following social institutions, that is their media coverage and public opinion data on them, were chosen for this study: the military, the President, opposition political parties, independent labor unions, state-run media and independent media.

The time frame for the secondary data analysis covered the period of 2008, 2009 and 2010. Data on media consumption was obtained from the polls of 2008, which allowed exploring media consumption patterns that were formed before, and presumably existed during, the time frame chosen for the content analysis. [34] Data on confidence in social institutions came from the polls conducted in December 2010, several months after the analyzed articles had been published, when possible media effects could have taken place already. The last set of data on trust for state-run and independent media was drawn from two sets of polls conducted in 2009 and 2010, which allowed for identifying patterns in trust for media among the Belarusian public.

Justification of Methods

Since there were two separate research areas in this study – (1) media coverage of selected social institutions and (2) public opinion about these institutions, along with trust for news media, and some characteristics of media consumption among Belarusian public – two methods were used in this research: content analysis and public opinion polls data analysis.

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[33] See details of methodology at http://iiseps.org/emethods.html.

[34] Polls are conducted by IISEPS quarterly. Questionnaire varies from poll to poll. Thus there was no data on media consumption available from a period closer (and at the same time, prior) to the time-frame selected for content analysis.

Using a combination of content analysis and public opinion polls data analysis in this research project allowed for the study of how Belarusian newspapers are covering selected social institutions, and to compare media coverage with public confidence in selected institutions.

The first method was a content analysis of Belarusian press that incorporated elements of qualitative and quantitative content analysis. Qualitative analysis allowed seeing how mass media cover social institutions. Quantitative analysis allowed examining *how* the coverage is constructed by determining the presence of certain categories. The combination of these two methods in content analysis helped obtain a better understanding of media coverage of selected social institutions.

The second method employed in this study is the data analyses of results of public opinion polls from Belarus[35]. Using survey data allowed for the studying of several important issues, like the level of confidence of the Belarusian public toward social institutions, the level of trust toward news media, and characteristics of media consumption among Belarusian public.

[35] The author of this study used public opinion data in a form of SPSS files provided by IISPES. Using the data provided, author acquired cross tabulations and other descriptive statistics using SPPSS software. See Appendix D for the results.

CHAPTER V
RESUTS

A total of 1,198 articles from four Belarusian newspapers were analyzed in this study. The search for articles that were mentioning selected institutions provided results that were worth noting before going content analysis. Thus, in the three-month period, independent newspapers published the following number of articles about selected institutions:

- 406 articles about the presidency and President Lukashenko;
- 40 articles about the Belarusian military;
- 253 articles about opposition political parties and their leaders;
- 12 articles about independent labor unions.

During January – March 2010, independent newspapers covered all four selected institutions, but the amount of coverage for each institution differed from one newspaper to another. Most articles were about President Lukashenko and opposition political parties.

The coverage by state-run newspapers was quite different from that of the independent newspapers:

- 378 articles about the presidency and President Lukashenko (28 articles less than the independent newspapers);
- 89 articles about Belarusian military (49 articles more than the independent newspapers);
- 20 articles about opposition political parties and their leaders (233 articles less than the independent newspapers);
- 0 articles about independent labor unions.

State-run newspapers were excessively covering President Lukashenko; they paid close attention to the military as well. At the same time, their coverage of the institutions of civil society (including Political Parties and Labor Unions) was distinctly poor: there were only 20 articles about Opposition political parties, and no articles about independent labor unions.

Qualitative Content Analysis

Results of the qualitative content analysis are presented as an analytical description followed by tables of identified themes in the state-run and independent newspapers. The use of tables to introduce the findings accentuates the differences between coverage in state-run and independent newspapers allowing for the presentation of the differences and similarities in state-run and independent newspapers themes.

The President in State-run Newspapers

Three major themes were found in articles published in the state-run newspapers about Presidents Lukashenko. Two themes were explicitly positive (themes 1 and 3): presenting President Lukashenko as an effective leader and decision-maker. Within these themes, advances in Belarusian internal and external affairs were directly attributed to Lukashenko's leadership (example from *Sovetskaya Belorussiya,* article 145: "Today the Shklov area looks like a huge construction site… thanks to President Lukashenko"). The third theme was neutral and touched upon routine work of President Lukashenko (such as signing documents, giving speeches on different occasions, etc.) or provided full texts of official documents signed by the president. All three themes were almost equally represented in the state run newspapers: theme 1 was found in 35.2% of articles, theme 2 in 34.9%, and theme 3 in 29.9% of articles.

The President in Independent Newspapers

The picture of the presidency painted in the independent newspapers was nearly the opposite of that in the state-run: analysis revealed two distinct negative themes, one neutral and one positive. Two negative themes presented President Lukashenko as a dictator (theme4, example from *Narodnaya Volya*, article 89: "Belarusian authorities banned public discussions of the new decree. The situation now resembles Stalin's or Brezhnev's times, when everybody was really proud of the USSR constitution and were constantly talking about human rights, while repressive mechanisms annihilated and oppressed millions of citizens") and attributed problems that Belarus is facing directly to bad and ineffective leadership by Lukashenko (theme 1). Theme1 was found in 38.4% of articles, and theme 4 in 14% of stories. The two negative themes together dominated the coverage: 52.4% of articles presented President Lukashenko in negative themes. The neutral theme (theme 2) was the same as in state-run newspapers: it's a description of President's daily routine and official documents without any evaluation connotations. This theme was found in 38.2 % of all articles about Lukashenko. The theme that presented President Lukashenko in a positive way (as an effective leader and decision-maker) was found in 9.4% of articles.

Table 1. Themes: The President

State-run newspapers	Independent newspapers
Theme 1 (positive): Progress and success in Belarusian affairs as a result of good leadership by Lukashenko (including themes such as "progress and success in domestic affairs as a result of great leadership of Lukashenko," "progress and success in foreign relations as a result of great leadership of Lukashenko," and "Lukashenko as a patron and benefactor")	**Theme 1 (negative): Problems that Belarus is facing as a result of bad leadership by Lukashenko** (including themes such as "problems in foreign relations as a result of bad leadership of Lukashenko," "domestic problems as a result of bad leadership of Lukashenko," "Lukashenko is ignoring major problems," "critique of Lukashenko's decisions / statements, Lukashenko is not holding his word/ breaks his own rules," and "rhetoric, not supported by actions")
Theme 2 (neutral): Routine work/official documents (including themes such as "official document signed by President Lukashenko," "routine work of the president," and "problems in foreign relations (without explaining whose fault is it)"	
Theme 3 (positive): Presidents Lukashenko as a leader the main decision maker in the country (including themes such as "Lukashenko is making right decisions," "everybody reports to Lukashenko," "Lukashenko gives instructions and assignments," "Lukashenko as a fount of wisdom," and "Lukashenko is not satisfied with performed work, critiques his subordinates and other branches of power")	
	Theme 4 (negative): Lukashenko as a dictator and a supporter of rogue regimes (including themes such as "Lukashenko's regime," authoritarian/ totalitarian methods of control over state and society," "Lukashenko as an oppressor of national Belarusian culture and language," and "Lukashenko as a friend and supporter of rogue regimes")

The Military in State-run Newspapers

Qualitative content analysis revealed that the Belarusian military was mostly presented in the context of positive themes. The most prominent positive theme in which the Belarusian military was presented was military history and World War II, encompassing 43.8% of stories. The second positive theme presented the Belarusian military as "a good place to be in" and focused on its achievements; this theme was detected in 18% of the articles. A neutral theme covered military routines (such as staff changes, scheduled activities of the military recruitment office, etc.) without any evaluations (38.2% of stories). It is worth noting that articles about the military frequently mentioned President Lukashenko, emphasizing the connection between the two.

The Military in Independent Newspapers

Independent newspapers covered the Belarusian military mostly in the context of negative themes. The most prominent negative theme (theme 4) presented the military as a tool of political pressure both inside of the country and in the international arena, with special attention being given to the use of military draft as a tool of pressure on political opposition (example from *Narodnaya Volya*, article 361: "It's important to note that since 2008 the so-called 'political draft' is used by the Belarusian authorities against young political activists"). This theme was found in 50% of the articles. Another negative theme (theme 2) focused on different problems within the military and was found in 12.5% of stories. A neutral theme, found in 22.5% of stories, covered the military routines without any evaluations, and a positive theme presented the military in articles that dealt with military history and World War II (12.5% of articles).

Table 2. Themes: The Military

State-run newspapers	Independent newspapers
Theme 1 (positive): Belarusian nation and the military history (including themes such as the "exploits of WWII veterans and other heroes, promoting Soviet heritage")	
Theme 2 (positive): achievements of Belarusian military (including themes such as "technology, international trade and cooperation," "women in the military," and "army as a good place to be in")	**Theme 2 (negative): defections of the Belarusian military** (including themes such as "military as bad place to be," "disrespect for personal rights and rights of citizens in military," and "degradation of the Belarusian military; obvious need to cut it down")
Theme 3 (neutral): military routine (including themes such as "law and regulations, promotions, congratulations and official declarations," and "Lukashenko gives orders and controls")	
	Theme 4 (negative): the military as a tool of pressure (including themes such as "military as a tool in the international arena used for economic and political pressure," "military (draft) as a tool of political pressure")

Opposition Political Parties in State-run Newspapers

State-run newspapers published only 20 stories about the opposition political parties during the three months period of this study. Most of these articles (80%) covered the opposition political parties within the scope of negative themes, presenting parties the as passive and ineffective (example from *Zvyazda* article 275: "There are almost no candidates from political parties in the local elections. Parties are sleeping… And all the new changes in the laws that make it easier for parties to participate in elections – parties are not using any of those opportunities"). Several other articles mentioned opposition political parties in data bared reports on local elections and did not contain any evaluation.

Opposition Political Parties in Independent Newspapers

Analysis detected several themes in the articles about opposition political parties published by independent newspapers. A positive theme presented parties as active participants in the political process and the construction of civil society, and was found in 28.1% of stories. Another theme (theme 3) presented political parties as targets of political repressions (example from *Narodnaya Volya*, article 437: "As soon as activists of the Young Front took out posters, the special police forces attacked demonstrators and started to arrest people. Using brutal force police dragged people into busses and beat them up"). This theme was found in 23.3% of stories and was presented in a non-evaluative way. Approximately 43% of the articles contained a neutral theme of party routines (such as party meetings, structural changes within parties, registration for upcoming local elections, etc). A negative theme that presented political parties as passive and ineffective was found in 4.7% of stories. Thus, most articles about opposition political parties in independent newspapers employed neutral or positive themes.

Table 3. Themes: Opposition Political Parties

State-run newspapers	Independent newspapers
Theme 1 (negative): ineffectiveness of political parties (including themes such as "scattered nature of political opposition/conflicts between parties," and "passiveness and inactivity of political parties")	
Theme 2 (neutral): party routine (including themes such as "Activities within parties," and "reports on local elections")	
	Theme 3 (neutral): opposition parties as a target of political repressions
	Theme 4 (positive): parties as active participants is civil society and political process (including themes such as "parties as initiators of public actions," "parties as alternative diplomats," "parties as human rights advocates," and "parties critique of the Belarusian authorities")

Independent Labor Unions in State-run Newspapers

During the three months period this study encompasses, no articles covering the independent labor unions were found in the state-run newspapers.

Independent Labor Unions in Independent Newspapers

Coverage of the labor unions was neutral or positive in independent newspapers, though only a small number of articles about independent labor unions were published (12 articles in the three months period). Three themes were equally represented. First, "independent Labor Unions as part of the democratic political opposition;" second, unions were presented as "advocates of human rights" (example from *Narodnaya Volya*article 370: "Belarusian labor union in the radio-electronic industry workers continue to support activist Yuri Loban, who was fired by BelAz administration. The union collects donations and is ready to defend worker's rights in the court."); and third, unions were depicted as a "target of political pressure by the Belarusian authorities."

Quantitative Content Analysis

Results of the quantitative content analysis[36] provided additional perspectives on the findings discussed earlier and contributed to the understanding of the mechanisms involved in constructing coverage by state-run and independent newspapers in Belarus.

The category "Publication Type"[37] demonstrates that in the state-run and independent newspapers different actors (newspapers themselves, authorities, and opposition political leaders) are involved in constructing themes.

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[36] This section contains selected results of the quantitative content analysis that are meaningful and important for this study. All results of the content analysis are in Appendix C.
[37] All categories of quantitative content analysis are in Appendix C.

Table 4. President in Independent Newspapers. Publication Type

Publication Type	Frequency	Percent
News Article	369	**90.9%**
Opinion Piece	37	**9.1%**
Press Release	0	0%
Official Document	0	0%
Other	0	0%
Total	406	100.0%

Table 5. President in State-run Newspapers. Publication type

Publication Type	Frequency	Percent
News Article	189	50.0%
Opinion Piece	33	8.7%
Press Release	144	**38.1%**
Official Document	11	**2.9%**
Other	1	0.3%
Total	378	100.0%

While independent newspapers mostly published news articles and some opinion pieces, e.g. editorials and interviews with experts (Table 4) in state-run newspapers, press releases and full texts of official documents (such as presidential decrees[38] and other legislative acts) make up more than 40% of publications about president (Table 5). By publishing press releases and other official documents, that were created by Lukashenko's administration, without any alterations or additional information, state-run newspapers yield some control over framing to the authorities, thus providing them with a platform for political propaganda.

The next category of content analysis, "Nature of Actions," (Table 6) presents how the actions and decisions made by the President were presented in newspapers. By providing different prognoses about future outcomes of the President's actions or discussing different consequences of his decisions, independent and state-run newspapers were able to give indirect evaluations of the President, thus creating positive and/or negative coverage.

Table 6. President in State-run Newspapers. Nature of Actions

Actions	Frequency	Percent
Attempt/ Intent to do Good	76	**20.1%**
Have/ Will have Positive Outcome	138	**36.5%**
Have/ will have Negative Outcome	0	0%
Actions are not being taken, though necessary	0	0%
Neutral/ no outcome could be inferred	164	43.4%
Total	378	100.0%

[38] In Belarus Presidential decrees are regarded as legislation.

Table 7. President in Independent Newspapers. Nature of Actions

Actions	Frequency	Percent
Attempt/ Intent to do Good	43	10.6%
Have/ will have Positive Outcome	14	3.4%
Have/ will have Negative Outcome	108	**26.6%**
Actions are not being taken, though necessary	54	**13.3%**
Neutral/no outcome could be inferred	187	46.1%
Total	406	100%

Given the nature of what was published, it is not surprising that in state-run newspapers, in the majority of instances, the actions taken by the President were described as beneficial (or potentially beneficial) for the country and the Belarusian people (Table 6). At the same time, when discussing the same events, independent newspapers were constructing negative themes by presenting the President's actions as wrong, harmful, or potentially dangerous; or by pointing out the fact that the President does not always pay attention to important social problems.

Similarly, independent and state-run newspapers were giving indirect evaluations of the Belarusian military and opposition parties[39] by providing different prognoses about future outcomes of their actions.

Public Opinion Data Analysis

Trust in the media by the Belarusian public

[39] For details, see appendix C.

Even though state-run and independent media in Belarus are not comparable in audience size, it looks as if they enjoy roughly similar levels of public trust. In June 2009, 45.3% of respondents said that they trusted independent media, whereas 35.5 % expressed distrust. At the same time, 44.7% of respondents declared that they trusted state-run media, while 42.1% said that they distrusted them. A year and a half later, by December 2010, trust for both kinds of media had risen: 46.3% of respondents declared their trust for independent media, and 52.9% for state-run media.

Media consumption and sources of information of the Belarusian public

The data that was used in this section came from several IISEPS national public opinion polls conducted in 2008. According to this data, print media remain an influential source of information for the Belarusian public. A reported 60.5% of respondents get information about life in Belarus and abroad "most often from newspapers." Among them, 85.7% get information about life in Belarus from the state-run media, and 35.4% get it from the independent media. The most popular newspaper is *Sovetskaya Belorussiya*: more than a quarter of respondents read it "daily" or "often", and 16% "from time to time."

Interdependence between trust in the mass media and confidence in social institutions

A crucial aspect of the public opinion analyses involves the interdependence between trust for independent and state-run mass media, and confidence in selected social institutions. The author of this thesis was guided by the assumption that trust in media outlets and trust in messages these outlets disseminate are closely related. In other words, trust in the source, influences trust in the message.

The data that was used in this section came from IISEPS December 2010 national public opinion poll. Following are the results by institution.

Table 8. Trust for Mass Media and Confidence in Selected Social Institutions

Of those who **trust independent media**	Of those who **trust state-run media**
The President	
48.8% have confidence in the President and **42.2%** do not.	**89.3%** have confidence in the President and **7.1%** do not.
The Military	
50.4% have confidence in Belarusian Military and **36.9%** do not.	**76%** have confidence in Belarusian military and **15.5%** do not.
Opposition Political Parties	
22.9% have confidence in opposition political parties and **59.4%** do not.	**15%** have confidence in opposition political parties and **72%** do not.
Independent Labor Unions	
47.3% have confidence in the independent labor unions and **32.6%** do not.	**42.3%** have confidence in the independent labor unions and **35.4%** do not.

Results of public opinion polls showed that people who trust state-run media also have very strong confidence in the President. Almost 90% of them declared their confidence in the President, while only 7.1% had no confidence in Lukashenko. These people have a much higher level of confidence in the President than do people who trust independent media. Among those who trust state-run media, the number of people who have confidence in the President is nearly twice as high as that among people who trust independent media. The number of people who do not have confidence in the President is more than four times smaller among those who trust independent media. Given that state-run media present the President almost exclusively in the context of positive themes and the independent media seldom address the President's "achievements" and mostly concentrate on his failures and shortcomings, a strong connection between media coverage of the President and levels of confidence in him is detected. Although other important factors may be involved and it is impossible to prove causal relationship at this stage, the observed connection between media coverage and public confidence in social institutions is evident.

The case of the public's confidence or lack thereof in the military is somewhat similar. Most of the people (71%) who trust state-run media are confident in the military, whereas the levels of confidence in the military among those who trust independent media are significantly lower. The number of people who do not have confidence in the military is two times smaller among those who trust state-run media compared to the audience of the independent media. In light of mostly positive or neutral coverage of Belarusian military in state-run newspapers and mostly negative coverage in independent print media, different levels of confidence in the institution provide additional prove of the connection between media coverage and public opinion.

Confidence in oppositional political parties is low in both groups. Even though logic dictates that the difference here should be more noticeable, public opinion data are consistent with the results of the content analysis. Coverage of opposition political parties in independent newspapers could be described as mostly neutral (with 66% of articles employing neutral themes); thus this independent media do not urge the public to think of parties in a positive or a negative way. The amount of media coverage an institution gets may play a significant role in public perception of this institution. Even though state-run media write about opposition parties mostly in the context of negative themes, the amount of coverage is not ample and is likely to be ignored by the public.

There is almost no difference in the levels of confidence in independent labor unions between people who trust independent media and those who trust state-run media. Lack of information on independent labor unions in both state-run and independent newspapers might serve as a possible explanation alongside with a lack of personal experiences with such institution among the Belarusian public.

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Social scientists agree that public confidence in social institutions is a crucial element in building a democratic society. This is especially true for transitional societies, including post-communist countries, because the lack of public confidence in newly emerged democratic institutions can interfere with democratic development of these societies.

Although, over the years, different theories explaining the phenomenon of public confidence in social institutions was developed, these theories tend to ignore the role that mass media play in building public confidence.

The ultimate goal of this study was to prove that there is a connection between mass media coverage and public confidence in social institutions.

Combined results of content analyses and public opinion polls data analyses suggested that there is an evident connection between media coverage and public confidence in social institutions.

Content analyses demonstrated that the state-run newspapers publish a great number of articles about President Lukashenko, covering him within the scope of explicitly positive themes. He was presented as an effective leader and decision-maker. The successes in Belarusian internal and external affairs were directly attributed to Lukashenko's leadership. As results of public opinion polls demonstrate, the President enjoys a high level of confidence (90%) among people who trust state-run media, but not among those who trust independent media.

Independent newspapers present President Lukashenko in a different light. He is covered within the scope of two distinct negative themes: he is being depicted as a dictator and an ineffective leader. According to public opinion polls, only 42% of people who trust independent media have confidence in the President.

Given that state-run newspapers present the President almost exclusively within positive themes and independent newspapers seldom address the President's achievements, mostly concentrating on his failures and shortcomings, a strong connection between media coverage of the President and levels of confidence in him appears to exist.

Examining media coverage and public opinion about other social institutions (the military and opposition political parties) provided similar results, suggesting a connection between media coverage and public confidence.

Even though causal effects are still to be tested, ignoring the role of media in building public confidence in social institutions would be a mistake for scholars in all relevant disciplines.

Although, from a mass communication perspective, several theories can be used to explain the apparent connection between the media coverage and the public opinion that was revealed in the study,[40] the spiral of silence theory is of special interest to the author. This

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[40] According to the *framing theory*, mass media cover certain issues and thus make them more salient, and frames these issues by interpreting them and placing facts within the field of meaning (see Davis, 1975; Entman, 1993; Fairhurst & Star, 1996; Miller, 1997; Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; D'Angelo, 2002). Content analysis demonstrated that the state-run and independent newspapers are using different themes when presenting information about social institutions. The difference was especially noticeable in the coverage of the president and oppositional political parties. State-run and oppositional newspapers presented the same topics and issues (for example – local elections), but they presented the news in different (sometimes opposite) ways. Within the *gatekeeping theory* the gatekeepers, such as media or authorities, control the flow of information and decide which information will be available to the public (see Lewin, 1947; White, 1964; McCombs et al, 1976; Willis, 1987). In

theory is focused on the mechanism and social implications of the media influence on public opinion. As previous research (Manaev, Manayeva, Yuran, 2010) demonstrated, there is a strong evidence of the spiral of silence effects in Belarus.

According to the *spiral of silence theory*, (Noelle-Neumann, l973, 1993; Lee, 1989; Scheufele & Moy, 2000) people are less likely to voice their opinion if they think that they are in the minority and the media play a great part in forming individuals' perception of the opinion climate. With the help of mass media vocal majority intimidates others into silence. This theory is useful in understanding the situation in Belarus. State-run mass media dominate the media sphere in Belarus, and there is a shortage of the alternative sources of information. As the content analysis demonstrated, activities of the opposition political parties and independent labor unions are either not covered by the state-run newspapers, or parties are presented as ineffective and passive actors. That is where the spiral of silence mechanisms come into play: if people with "protest potential" who are not satisfied with Belarusians authorities read state-run newspapers or watch state-run television, they will get the impression that nothing is going on

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Belarus state-run newspapers keep silent about repression against oppositional political parties and independent labor unions. Moreover, by publishing unchanged press releases from the Lukashenko's administration, state-run newspapers give control over framing to Belarusian authorities, thus providing them with additional tool of direct control over media content.

Agenda setting theory states that the media tell the public not what to think, but what to think about (see McCombs & Shaw, 1972, 1977; McCombs 1972, 1982; McCombs & Weaver, 1973, 1985; Rogers & Dearing, 1988; Kleinnijenhuis & Rietberg, 1995; McCombs, 2004). As the results of content analysis demonstrated, Belarusian state-run newspapers almost completely ignore institutions of civil society (the oppositional political parties and independent labor unions). Activities of those institutions are not covered by the media, and thus they are getting excluded from the public discourse. At the same time, state-run newspapers attribute most of Belarusian accomplishments attribute those directly to the leadership of President Lukashenko, thus promoting an image of Lukashenko as a thoughtful, caring and successful leader. The media dependency theory (Ball-Rokeach & DeFleur, 1976; Donohew, Palmgreen, & Rayburn, 1987; Baran and Davis, 2009) states that the more a person becomes dependent on the media to get his/her needs fulfilled, the more the media will become important for the individual and the more influence it will have. Taking in consideration peculiarities of the Belarusian media landscape, such as strict governmental control over state-run mass media and shortage of alternative sources of information, this theory might be useful in explanation of the strong influence of the mass media on the public opinion.

in the public sphere – nobody is protesting, or is criticizing the authorities, opposition is weak and inactive (or even that there is no opposition at all). As a consequence, people will either stay silent and will not get engaged in political activities, or they might even line up with the opinion that is presented by the predominant media outlets and seemingly shared by the majority of Belarusians.

Although studying the influence of mass media on the public's confidence in social institutes is important from an academic perspective (generating new knowledge), the results could also be applied in a number of ways. For several decades, the promotion of democracy around the world has been one of the most important elements of American foreign policy doctrine. But further democratization is impossible without the proliferation and acceptance of democratic values. Studying the ways authoritarian countries such as Belarus are using mass media to influence public opinion could achieve a better understanding of the mechanisms at work and could facilitate more effective interactions with publics in those countries.

Suggestions for Future Research

Research on the influence of mass media on public's confidence in social institutions could be enhanced in a number of ways.

Current research could be extended by including other institutions of civil society covered by the media in a study in order to find out if there is a similar connection between media coverage and public confidence in those institutions. Extending the study to other countries and regions with similar media environments where media are partially or completely controlled by the state (for example, Venezuela, Russia) could be done. This would allow comparative testing of interactions between mass media and public trust in social institutions.

It also might be useful to extend the research of connection between media coverage and confidence in social institutions by exploring the spiral of silence effects on electoral behavior.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A
SEARCH WORDS
LIST

Category / Search words	SB[I]	ZV[II]	NV[III]	BR[IV]	English Translation
Presidnet					
Президент / Прэзідэнт	☑	☑	☑	☑	President
Лукашенко / Лукашэнка	☑	☑	☑	☑	Lukashenko
Глава государства / Кіраўнік дзяржавы	☑	☑	☑	☑	Head of the state
Руководитель страны / Кіраўнік краіны	☑	☑	☑	☑	Leader of the country
Александр Григорьевич / Аляксандр Рыгоравіч	☑	☑	☑	☑	Alexandr Grigoryevich
Military					
Солдат / Салдат (жаўнер, жаўнёр)	☑	☑	☑	☑	Soldier
Боец / баец	☑	☑	☑	☑	Combatant
Военнослужащий / ваеннаслужачы	☑	☑	☑	☑	Military servant
Призывник / прызыўнік	☑	☑	☑	☑	Draftee
Армия / армія	☑	☑	☑	☑	Army
Вооруженные силы / узброеныя сілы	☑	☑	☑	☑	Military
Военно-воздушный / ваенна-паветраны	☑	☑	☑	☑	Air force
Учения / вучэнні (*))	☑	☑	☑	☑	Military exercises
Вооруженный / узброены	☑	☑	☑	☑	Armed
Военный / ваенны	☑	☑	☑	☑	Martial
Воинский / вайсковы	☑	☑	☑	☑	Military (adj. or person)
Войско / войска	☑	☑	☑	☑	Troops
Войска / войскі	☑	☑	☑	☑	Troops
Военкомат / ваенкамат	☑	☑	☑	☑	Recruitment office
Военком / ваенкам	☑	☑	☑	☑	Commissar
Призыв / прызыў	☑	☑	☑	☑	Draft
Арсенал / арсенал	☑	☑	☑	☑	Arsenal
Вооружение / узбраенне	☑	☑	☑	☑	Armament
Полигон / палігон	☑	☑	☑	☑	Firing ground / range
Генерал / генерал	☑	☑	☑	☑	General
Полковник / палкоўнік	☑	☑	☑	☑	Colonel
Майор / маёр	☑	☑	☑	☑	Major
Independent labor unions					
Профсоюз / прафсюз	☑	☑	☑	☑	Labor union
(Белорусский Конгресс демократических профсоюзов) БКДП	☑	☑	☑	☑	Belarus Congress of Democratic labor Unions
Александр Ярошук / Аляксандр Ярашук	☑	☑	☑	☑	Aleksandr Yaroshuk
(Белорусский профсоюз работников радиоэлектронной промышленности) РЭП	☑	☑	☑	☑	Belarus Union of Electronic Industry Workers
Геннадий Федынич / Генадзь Федыніч	☑	☑	☑	☑	Gennady Fedynich
(Белорусский независимый профсоюз) БНП	☑	☑	☑	☑	Belarus Independent Labor Union
Василий Коробов / Васіль Корабаў	☑	☑	☑	☑	Vasilij Korobov
(Свободный профсоюз Белорусский) СПБ	☑	☑	☑	☑	Free Labor Union of Belarus
Михаил Ковальков / Міхаіл Кавалькоў	☑	☑	☑	☑	Mikhail Kovalkov
(Свободный профсоюз металлистов) СПМ	☑	☑	☑	☑	Free Labor Union of metalworkers
Василий Левченков / Васіль Леўчэнкаў	☑	☑	☑	☑	Vasilij Levchenkov

Category / Search words	SB[I]	ZV[II]	NV[III]	BR[IV]	English Translation
Oppossitional parties and civil initiative					
(Белорусский Народный Фронт) БНФ / Народны Фронт	☑	☑	☑	☑	Belarusian Popular Front
Алексей Янукевич / Аляксей Янукевіч	☑	☑	☑	☑	Aleksey Yanukevich
(Объединённая Гражданская Партия) ОГП / АГП	☑	☑	☑	☑	United Civil Party
Анатолий Лебедько / Анатоль Лебедзька	☑	☑	☑	☑	Anatoly Lebedko
(Белорусская партия объединённых левых	☑	☑	☑	☑	Belarusian United
"Справедливый мир") ПКБ / Справядлівы Мір	☑	☑	☑	☑	Left Party "Fair World"
Сергей Калякин / Сяргей Калякін	☑	☑	☑	☑	Sergei Kaliakin
Партия "Белорусская социал-демократическая Громада" / Грамада (БСДГ)	☑	☑	☑	☑	Belarusian Social Democratic Assembly
Станислав Шушкевич / Станіслаў Шушкевіч	☑	☑	☑	☑	Stanislaw Shushkevich
Консервативно-христианская партия БНФ / Кансерватыўна-хрысціянская партыя БНФ (КХП БНФ)	☑	☑	☑	☑	Conservative Christian Party – BPF
Зенон Позняк / Зянон Пазняк	☑	☑	☑	☑	Zenon Pozniak
(Белорусская социал-демократическая партия (Громада)) / Грамада (БСДП)	☑	☑	☑	☑	Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Assembly)
Анатолий Левкович / Анатоль Ляўковіч	☑	☑	☑	☑	Anatoly Levkovich
Белорусская партия «Зелёные» / партыя "Зялёныя"	☑	☑	☑	☑	Belarusian Green Party
Олег Новиков / Алег Новікаў	☑	☑	☑	☑	Oleg Novikov
Зарегистрированное движение "За Свободу" / За Свабоду	☑	☑	☑	☑	Registered initiative "For Freedom"
Александр Милинкевич / Аляксандр Мілінкевіч	☑	☑	☑	☑	Aleksandr Milinkevich
Молодой фронт / Малады Фронт	☑	☑	☑	☑	Young Front
Дмитрий Дашкевич / Дзмітры Дашкевіч	☑	☑	☑	☑	Dmitry Dashkevich
Партия / партыя	☑	☑	☑	☑	Party

SB[I] - Newspaper Беларусь Сегодня/ Советская Белоруссия (Sovetskaia Belarussia -Soviet Belarus)

ZV[II] - Newspaper Звязда (Zvizda - Star)

NV[III] - Newspaper Народная Воля (Narodnaia Volia - People's Will)

BR[IV] - Newspaper Белорусы и Рынок (Belarusy I Rynok - Belarusians and Market)

APPENDIX B
RESULTS OF QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

Themes: President

- Problems with foreign relations as a result of bad leadership of Lukashenko (independent newspapers)

- *Belorusy I Rynok*, 002. "Polish authorities stated that are not satisfied with Lukashenko's position on human rights violations"

- *Belorusy I Rynok* 090. "Belarusian president isn't about to change his positions. We can only hope that it will not result in great financial loss for Belarus… But it probably will"

- *Belorusy I Rynok* 054. "Belarusian authorities failed to convince Russia to sign the contract on Belarusian conditions"

- Lukashenko's "regime", authoritarian/ totalitarian methods of control over state and society (independent newspapers)

- *Narodnaya Volya*, 011. "Independent experts are assured that Lukashenko's decree #60 will be used as a tool of control and blocking alternative sources of information during up-coming elections"

- *Narodnaya Volya* 067. "Lukashenko's dictatorship"

- *Narodnaya Volya* 089. "Belarusian authorities banned public discussions of the new decree. The situation now resembles Stalin's or Brejnev's times, when everybody was really proud of the USSR constitution and were constantly talking about human rights, while repressive mechanisms annihilated and oppressed millions of citizens"

- Domestic problems as a result of bad leadership of Lukashenko (independent newspapers)

- *Belorusy I Rynok* 020 "The effectiveness of new agrarian reform is very low"

- *Belorusy I Rynok* 025 "Behind nice-looking facades of the main Minsk avenue once major and well known industrial plants are languishing in poverty. Well-developed instry, inherited by Belarus from the USSR is ruined by Belarusian authorities"

- *Narodnaya Volya* 008 (story about new custom regulations, introduced by Lukashenko) "One way or another, after the New Year Belarusian car dealers became depressed and lost. They are scared by the uncertainty and ambiguity of new regulations"

- Lukashenko is not holding his word/ breaks his own rules (independent newspapers)

- *Belorusy I Rynok* 30 "Last year Lukashenko promised the public not to raise utility rates. But the rates were raised"

- *Narodnaya Volya* 068 “It looks like the censorship is only applied to opposition web sites”

- *Narodnaya Volya* 081 “Will the regulations be canceled only on paper? We believe so. Local authorities will continue to twist arms of local business”

- Critique of Lukashenko’s decisions / statements (independent newspapers)
  - *Belorusy I Rynok* 088. “Decree 60 is all about control of information in Belarusian society”

  - *Narodnaya Volya* 097. “Lukashenko’s general plan for Minsk development opens up opportunities for corruption and potential damage to private sector”

  - *Narodnaya Volya* 071. “With the decree #60 Alexander Lukashenko created so many problems, that it will take us years to solve them”

- Lukashenko as an oppressor of national Belarusian culture and language
  - *Narodnaya Volya* 012. “At the press conference Lukashenko clearly stated his position on Belarusian language: there will be no state support for Belarusian language.

  - *Narodnaya Volya* 087. “Last statements of President Lukashenko about Belarusian language (at the December press conference) generated a lot of comments from our readers; they were offended by Lukashenko’s positions”

- Lukashenko as a friend and supporter of rogue regimes
  - *Belorusy I Rynok* 028 “Belarus’ reputation of a friend of rogue regimes could lead to economic sanctions from the United States”

  - *Belorusy I Rynok* 068 “We’ve buried capitalism – that was Lukashenko’s catch phrase during his official visit to Venezuela”

- Lukashenko is ignoring major problems
  - *Belorusy I Rynok* 089 “It looks like Lukashenko is to going to implement economic changes that are required by the IMF in order to get another credit”

- Rhetoric, not supported by actions
  - *Belorusy I Rynok* 007. In his speech, Lukashenko was trying to switch focus from numerous economic problems to exaggerated and questionable victories”

- Problems with foreign relations (without explaining whose fault is it)
  - *Belorusy I Rynok* 039 “Belarusian and Russian delegation could not reach the agreement again”

- *Belorusy I Rynok* 041 “Current gas and oil confrontation with Russian brought to a question Russia-Belarus military alliance”

- Progress and success in foreign relations as a result of great leadership of Lukashenko (state-run newspapers)
  - *Sovetskaya Bielorussia* 141: “Until the end of this year Belarus will get 4 million tons of Venezuela oil. This agreement was reached by President Lukashenko during his visit to Karakas.”

- Everybody reports to Lukashenko
  - *Sovetskaya Bielorussia* 119: President Lukashenko had a meeting with State Secretary of Defense, who reported to the president.

- Lukashenko gives instruction and assignments
  - *Sovetskaya Bielorussia* 044: “President demanded to work out transit agreements in the best interests of Belarus.”

- Lukashenko is not satisfied with performed work, critiques his subordinates
  - *Sovetskaya Bielorussia* 101: “President Lukashenko expressed his displeasure with the work of Belarusian linen producers.”

  - *Sovetskaya Bielorussia* 016: “President criticized the work of the government.”

- Lukashenko as a patron and benefactor (state-run newspapers)
  - *Sovetskaya Bielorussia* 145: “Today Shklov area looks like a huge construction site… thanks to President Lukashenko.”

- Lukashenko is making right decisions
  - *Sovetskaya Bielorussia* 097: “President signed a new decree… “This will be terrific for the Grodno region”, said Alexader Yakobson from Grodno.”

- Routine work of the president (independent and state-run newspapers)
  - *Sovetskaya Bielorussia* 008: “Lukashenko visited Switzerland”

Themes: Opposition political parties

- Repressions against opposition political parties (independent newspapers)
  - *Narodnaya Volya* 402: “Anatoly Lebednko will be taken into court for his support for the Polish Union.”

  - *Narodnaya Volya* 437: “As soon as activists of the Young Front took out posters, the special police forces attacked demonstrators and started to arrest people. Using brutal force police dragged people into busses and beaten them up.”

- Parties as alternative diplomats (independent newspapers)

- *Narodnaya Volya* 409: "Delegation of the Belarusian opposition visit Warsaw. They will meet with representatives of Polish government, European Union and other and international organizations and discuss situation in Belarus."

- Parties critique of the Belarusian authorities (independent newspapers)

- *Belorusy I Rynok* 121: "As the leader of United Civil Party stated, the party is not satisfied with the changes in election regulations, because political parties did not get a guaranteed opportunity to take part in control over counting the votes."

- *Belorusy I Rynok* 129: "The leader of BNF stated that the Belarusian authorities have total control over electoral process."

- Parties as human rights advocates (independent newspapers)

- *Belorusy I Rynok* 117: "United Civil Party reacted to the outcome of the court hearings… The party will take efforts to push international organization to recognize A. Bondarenko as a prisoner of conscience."

- Scattered nature of political opposition / conflicts between parties (independent and state-run newspapers)

- *Belorusy I Rynok* 118 "On October 27th declaration on the new "Belarusian Independent block" was signed. The new block devaluate the importance of the United Democratic Forces as an organization representing most of the opposition. The notion of "united opposition" is now destroyed, and the chances to agree on the single candidate are going down.

- Activities within parties (independent newspapers)

- *Narodnaya Volya* 603 "Last weakened Anatoly Lebendko was re-elected as a a head of the United Civil Party."

- Passiveness and inactivity of political parties (state-run newspapers)

- *Sovetskaya Bielorussia* 256. "Political parties are being passive again – only 3% of all applications came from them. The same picture with the formation of local committees. Less than 1% of applications came from political parties."

- *Zvyazda* 275 "There are almost no candidates from political parties in the local elections. Parties are sleeping… And all the new changes in the laws that make it easier for parties to participate in elections – parties are not using any of those opportunities."

APPENDIX C
RESULTS OF CONTENT ANALYSIS

a. Newspaper
    1. Sovetskaya Bielorussia
    2. Zvyazda
    3. Narodnaya Volya
    4. Belorusy I Rynok

b. Article number

c. Type of publication:
    1. News article
    2. Opinion piece (editorial, expert interview etc.)
    3. Press release (if apparent)
    4. Official document (presidential decrees and directives, other legislative acts)
    5. Other

d. Main topic
    1. Domestic politics
    2. International politics
    3. Domestic economy
    4. International economy
    5. Sports
    6. Culture and science
    7. Everyday life
    8. Other

e. Main subject in the article
    1. President
    2. Military
    3. Independent unions
    4. Opposition parties
    5. Other

f. Secondary subject in the article
    1. President
    2. Military
    3. Independent Unions
    4. Opposition Parties

g. Institution in general or personified
    1. Institution
    2. Person

h. Apparent evaluation of the main subject
    1. Positive
    2. Negative
    3. Neutral

i. Apparent evaluation of the secondary subject
    1. Positive
    2. Negative
    3. Neutral

j. Nature of actions of the institution
    1. Attempt/intent to do good
    2. Have/ will have positive outcome
    3. Have/ will have negative outcome
    4. Actions are not being taken, though necessary (apathetic).
    5. Neutral/none (not an action oriented article or no indications of the action outcomes are present in the article, actions of other subjects are being discussed)

k. Main frame of the article (see the list of frames)

Table C1. Military in State-run Newspapers. Nature of Actions

Actions	Frequency	Percent
Attempt/ Intent to do Good	15	16.9%
Have/ will have Positive Outcome	51	57.3%
Neutral/no outcome could be inferred	23	25.8%

Table C2. Military in Independent Newspapers. Nature of Actions

Actions	Frequency	Percent
Attempt/ Intent to do Good	1	2.5%
Have/ will have Positive Outcome	2	5.0%
Have/ will have Negative Outcome	17	42.5%
Actions are not being taken, though necessary	2	5.0%
Neutral/no outcome could be inferred	18	45.0%

Table C3. Opposition Parties in State-run Newspapers. Nature of Actions

Actions	Frequency	Percent
Have/ will have Negative Outcome	3	15.0%
Actions are not being taken, though necessary	15	75.0%
Neutral/no outcome could be inferred	2	10.0%

Table C4. President in State-run Newspapers. Nature of Actions

Actions	Frequency	Percent
Attempt/ Intent to do Good	76	**20.1%**
Have/ Will have Positive Outcome	138	**36.5%**
Neutral/ no outcome could be infered	164	43.4%

Table C5. Opposition Parties in Independent Newspapers. Nature of Actions

Actions	Frequency	Percent
Attempt/ Intent to do Good	115	45.5%
Have/ Will have Positive Outcome	33	13.0%
Have/ will have Negative Outcome	2	0.8%
Actions are not being taken, though necessary	10	4.0%
Neutral/none	93	36.8%

Table C6. President in Independent Newspapers. Publication Type

Publication Type	Frequency	Percent
News Article	369	90.9%
Opinion Piece	37	9.1%

Table C7. President in State-run Newspapers. Publication type.

Publication Type	Frequency	Percent
News Article	189	50.0%
Opinion Piece	33	8.7%
Press Release	144	38.1%
Official Document	11	2.9%
Other	1	0.3%

APPENDIX D
PUBLIC OPINION POLLS DATA ANALYSIS RESULTS

Table D1. Crosstab: Trust in State-run Media and Confidence in Independent Unions

Trust to State-run Media / Confidence in Independent Unions		Trust State-run Media	Do not trust State-run Media	N/A	Total
Confident in Independent Unions	Count	338	152	14	504
	Percent	42.3%	26.1%	10.8%	33.3%
Not confident in Independent Unions	Count	283	317	22	622
	Percent	35.4%	54.5%	16.9%	41.1%
Not sure about Independent Unions	Count	178	112	94	384
	Percent	22.3%	19.2%	72.3%	25.4%
N/A	Count	1	1	0	2
	Percent	0.1%	0.2%	0.0%	0.1%
Total	Count	800	582	130	1512
	Percent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table D2. Crosstab: Trust in State-run Media and Confidence in Opposition Parties

Trust to State-run Media / Confidence in Opposition Parties		Trust State-run Media	Do not trust State-run Media	N/A	Total
Confident in Opposition Parties	Count	120	123	3	246
	Percent	15.0%	21.1%	2.3%	16.3%
Not confident in Opposition Parties	Count	575	335	38	948
	Percent	72.0%	57.6%	29.2%	62.7%
Not sure about Opposition Parties	Count	102	123	89	314
	Percent	12.8%	21.1%	68.5%	20.8%
N/A	Count	2	1	0	3
	Percent	0.3%	0.2%	0.0%	0.2%
Total	Count	799	582	130	1511
	Percent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table D3. Crosstab: Trust in State-run Media and Confidence in Military

Trust to State-run Media / Confidence in Military		Trust State-run Media	Do not trust State-run Media	N/A	Total
Confident in Military	Count	608	155	46	809
	Percent	76.0%	26.7%	35.4%	53.6%
Not confident in Military	Count	124	355	11	490
	Percent	15.5%	61.2%	8.5%	32.5%
Not sure about Military	Count	68	70	73	211
	Percent	8.5%	12.1%	56.2%	14.0%
Total	Count	800	580	130	1510
	Percent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table D4. Crosstab: Trust in State-run Media and Confidence in President

Trust to State-run Media / Confidence in President		Trust State-run Media	Do not trust State-run Media	N/A	Total
Confident in President	Count	714	81	38	833
	Percent	89.3%	13.9%	29.0%	55.1%
Not confident in President	Count	57	449	9	515
	Percent	7.1%	77.1%	6.9%	34.0%
Not sure about President	Count	29	52	84	165
	Percent	3.6%	8.9%	64.1%	10.9%
Total	Count	800	582	131	1513
	Percent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table D5. Crosstab: Trust in Independent Media and Confidence in Independent Unions

Trust to Independent Media / Confidence in Independent Unions		Trust Independent Media	Do not trust Independent Media	N/A	Total
Confident in Independent Unions	Count	331	159	14	504
	Percent	47.3%	25.6%	7.4%	33.4%
Not confident in Independent Unions	Count	228	367	26	621
	Percent	32.6%	59.1%	13.7%	41.1%
Not sure about Independent Unions	Count	140	95	149	384
	Percent	20.0%	15.3%	78.4%	25.4%
N/A	Count	1	0	1	2
	Percent	0.1%	0.0%	0.5%	0.1%
Total	Count	700	621	190	1511
	Percent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table D6. Crosstab: Trust in Independent Media and Confidence in Opposition Parties

Trust to Independent Media / Confidence in Opposition Parties		Trust Independent Media	Do not trust Independent Media	N/A	Total
Confident in Opposition Parties	Count	160	83	3	246
	Percent	22.9%	13.3%	1.6%	16.3%
Not confident in Opposition Parties	Count	416	486	46	948
	Percent	59.4%	78.1%	24.2%	62.7%
Not sure about Opposition Parties	Count	123	51	141	315
	Percent	17.6%	8.2%	74.2%	20.8%
N/A	Count	1	2	0	3
	Percent	0.1%	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%
Total	Count	700	622	190	1512
	Percent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table D7. Crosstab: Trust in Independent Media and Confidence in Military

Trust to Independent Media / Confidence in Military		Trust Independent Media	Do not trust Independent Media	N/A	Total
Confident in Military	Count	352	389	68	809
	Percent	50.4%	62.5%	35.8%	53.5%
Not confident in Military	Count	258	202	30	490
	Percent	36.9%	32.5%	15.8%	32.4%
Not sure about Military	Count	89	31	92	212
	Percent	12.7%	5.0%	48.4%	14.0%
Total	Count	699	622	190	1511
	Percent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table D8. Crosstab: Trust in Independent Media and Confidence in President

Trust to Independent Media / Confidence in President		Trust Independent Media	Do not trust Independent Media	N/A	Total
Confident in President	Count	342	409	81	832
	Percent	48.8%	65.9%	42.6%	55.0%
Not confident in President	Count	296	194	25	515
	Percent	42.2%	31.2%	13.2%	34.1%
Not sure about President	Count	63	18	84	165
	Percent	9.0%	2.9%	44.2%	10.9%
Total	Count	701	621	190	1512
	Percent	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

VITA

Dzmitry Yuran was born in Belarus in 1987 and graduated from the Belarusian State University with BA in Information and Communication in 2008. In 2011 he graduated from the School of Journalism and Electronic Media, College of Communication and Information at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville as a Master of Science in Communication and Information with a minor in Political Science.