

UKRAINE'S MEDIA IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBAL CULTURAL CONVERGENCE

MARTA DYCZOK

UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO

Abstract: This paper reframes conventional views of Ukraine by showing how global trends of cultural and media convergence are influencing its identity. It looks at how the country's media system developed after independence, particularly television, and how this reveals the ongoing struggle to define what it means to be Ukrainian. Media representations illustrate that three visions coexist: a cosmopolitan, pro-Western one which embraces the forces of globalization; a residual Soviet Ukrainian one that is open to change but has a strong cultural affinity to Russia; and a new/old Ukrainian identity that draws on deep-rooted local (national) values, which coincide with universal ones such as democracy, with a contemporary flavor and without a Russian dimension. It argues that despite certain unique features caused by "the Russia factor," the new/old country is also being strongly influenced by globalization through mass media, and is part of larger worldwide trends where identity, values, society, and political practices are in flux.¹

Ukraine became independent when modern globalization went into high gear.² Thus the new country with an ancient history has been

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² Tehri Rantanen. 2002. *The Global and the National. Media and Communications in*

Marta Dyczok is Associate Professor, Departments of History and Political Science, Lawson Hall, Room 2246, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario, N6A 5B8, Canada, email: mdyczok@uwo.ca.

re-defining its identity and relations with the world in the larger context of global cultural convergence.³ Mass media are at the center of this process, both reflecting and influencing it. In Ukraine, the state has not systematically imposed a single vision of identity from above, and no consensus has emerged from below on what it means to be Ukrainian today. At the same time, the media system changed radically. Thus the media can be seen as a site where the struggle for representation power, or identity, is visible. In many ways Ukraine is following larger global trends.

A quick look at media consumption patterns and trends shows that Ukrainians now have many comparable tastes and habits to other Europeans and North Americans. In 2012 the most watched TV shows in Ukraine were strikingly similar to those in the US and UK: sports, reality shows, sitcoms, and drama.⁴ Over 30 million social network accounts were registered in Ukraine in 2012⁵, approximately 66 percent of the total population, which puts it on par with the US⁶ and UK.⁷ The current state of affairs is dramatically different from the situation in 1991 when Ukrainians were watching Soviet-sanctioned programming on the three state-owned TV channels and the internet, still in its infancy, was not yet available in Ukraine.

In today's globalized world, media is one factor causing identity to be fluid, and this is certainly visible in Ukraine. After twenty years of independence, no consensus has emerged on what it means to be Ukrainian, and media representations show that a number of competing visions coexist. One is a cosmopolitan, pro-Western Ukrainian identity which embraces the forces of globalization. Another is a residual Soviet Ukrainian identity that

Post-Communist Russia. Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield.

³ Tim Dwyer. 2010. *Media Convergence*. New York, McGraw Hill; Isabelle Rigoni and Eugenie Saiita, eds. 2013. *Mediating Cultural Diversity in a Globalised Public Space*. Houndmills and New York, Palgrave.

⁴ For Ukraine see, "Top rated 2012 broadcasts on the 'big six' channels" ("Top naireitinyovykh translyatsii 2012 roku na kanalakh 'velykoi shistky"), <http://www.telekritika.ua/news/2013-01-09/78047>, 1 January 2013; for the US see, "What were the Top 10 most-watched shows this season?" *Washington Post*, 23 May 2012, http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/tv-column/post/what-were-the-top-10-most-watched-shows-this-season/2012/05/23/gJQA-NudXIU_blog.html; "Nielsen Tops of 2012: Television," 11 December 2012, <http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/consumer/nielsen-tops-of-2012-television/>; for UK see, "Most-watched TV shows of 2012 so far - In pictures," <http://www.digitalspy.ca/british-tv/news/a437899/most-watched-tv-shows-of-2012-so-far-in-pictures.html>, 13 November 2012.

⁵ "Expert: More than 30 million Ukrainians Subscribed to Social Media," 12 September 2012, <http://www.ukrainebusiness.com.ua/news/7110.html>.

⁶ According to Pew, as of August 2012, 69% of US online adults use social networking sites, <http://pewinternet.org/Commentary/2012/March/Pew-Internet-Social-Networking-full-detail.aspx>

⁷ Office of National Statistics (ONS) reported that in 2011 57% of Britons use social media, up from 43% in 2010, see <http://www.computerweekly.com/news/2240105511/Office-of-National-Statistics-internet-survey-shows-UK-surge-in-social-network-use>.

is open to some change but has a strong cultural affinity to Russia. A third is a new/old Ukrainian identity that draws on deep-rooted local (national) values, which often coincide with more universal ones such as democracy, but with a contemporary flavor and without a Russian dimension. These three are simultaneously distinct yet overlapping.⁸

Ukrainians' evolving identities have profound implications for democracy. While Ukraine's media watchers have focused on censorship,⁹ other political scientists and media scholars have been noticing that mass media are transforming politics and identities globally. A new style of politics has emerged in established democracies, where media are changing symbolic frameworks and transforming citizens into audiences.¹⁰ This approach has also become the norm in Ukraine, where politicians reach out to society directly through media and use cultural icons and symbols to construct their public images.

This article presents an overview of how Ukraine's media changed from the Soviet era through the first twenty years of independence, both in terms of the structure of the system and media content. It argues that Ukraine's media and society are in many ways following global patterns of changing media preferences and values.

Ukraine, Identity, Mass Media, Globalization, Cultural Convergence, and New Politics

When the USSR collapsed, a Soviet identity category disappeared and discussions re-emerged about what it meant to be Ukrainian. People needed to redefine who they are, how they want to be governed, what kind of society they want to live in, and how they want to interact with the world. French theorist Pierre Bourdieu has suggested that when elements of collective identities are being re-sorted, as is the case in Ukraine, the process involves a combination of changes in institutional structure, social interaction, and subjective meaning.¹¹

⁸ Mykola Ryabchuk suggested two Ukrainian identities in Mykola Ryabchuk. 1992. "Two Ukraines?" *East European Reporter* 5: 4 (July- August): 18-22; Mykola Riabchuk. 2003. *Dvi Ukraïny: real'ni mezhi, virtual'ni viiny*. Kyiv: Krytyka. 6. Iaroslav Hrytsak suggested 22, Iaroslav Hrytsak. 2011. *Strasti za natsionalizm: Istorychni ese* Kyiv: Krytyka. 216-28; Andriy Kulykov suggested three in, "Novi 'rus'ki': Trudnoshchi perekladu," *UkrainNext*, <http://issuu.com/ukrainext/docs/ukrainext?e=1368478/2974728>.

⁹ Marta Dyczok, "Was Kuchma's Censorship Effective? Mass media in Ukraine before 2004." *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (March 2006): 215-238.

¹⁰ Lance W. Bennett and Robert Entman eds. 2001. *Mediated Politics: Communication in the Future of Democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Ronald Inglehart. 1977. *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Robert Putnam. 1995. "Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital." *Journal of Democracy* 6:1 (January): 65-78.

¹¹ Pierre Bourdieu. 1984. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Translated

Most discussions about Ukrainian identity overlook these issues and focus on regional divisions, historical legacies, language issues related to the post-communist transformation, Ukrainian-Russian relations, and whether Ukraine will make a pro-Russian or pro-Western choice.¹² Although important, such analyses all miss the point that for over 20 years Ukraine has been part of the global community, and through mass media, engaged in transnational cultural flows. Ukrainian society, identity, and, consequently, its politics, are profoundly changing as a result of becoming part of McLuhan's global village. Todd Gitlin aptly noted the worldwide trend where Habermas's public sphere has splintered into public sphericules and media have become a public arena where different ideological positions confront each other.¹³ This is precisely what is happening in Ukraine.

Communications scholars study how international communications systems shape cultural change and influence national cultures, and the discussions are polarized. Some argue that globalization and the shift towards convergent digital media weakens state influence over media institutions and content, and erodes national cultures.¹⁴ Others contend that national governments remain the key players in regulating, thus shaping, media.¹⁵ Globalization optimists view the integration of media systems as a positive development that leads to global norms, practices and thus global stability and prosperity,¹⁶ while critical theorists raise concerns about cultural imperialism because the production, dissemination and marketing of media and cultural products are dominated by a handful of countries led by the U.S.¹⁷ They also note that the U.S. media model is driven by

by Richard Nice Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press; Bourdieu. 1993. *The field of cultural production*. New York: Columbia University Press.

¹² Yitzhak Brudny and Evgeny Finkel. 2011. "Why Ukraine Is Not Russia: Hegemonic National Identity and Democracy in Russia and Ukraine," *East European Politics & Societies* 25: 4 (November): 813-833; John-Paul Himka. 2006. "The Basic Historical Identity Formations in Ukraine: A Typology," *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 28:1-4 : 483-500; Volodymyr Kulyk. 2011 "Language identity, linguistic diversity and political cleavages: evidence from Ukraine," *Nations and Nationalism* 17: 3 (July): 627-648; Mykola Riabchuk. 2012 "Ukraine's 'muddling through': National identity and postcommunist transition," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45:3-4 (September): 439-446.

¹³ Todd Gitlin. 1998. "Public sphere or public sphericules?" T. Liebes & J. Curran, eds. *Media, Ritual, and Identity* London, New York: Routledge: 168-175.

¹⁴ Paula Chakravatty and Yuezhi Zhao, eds. 2008 *Global communications: toward a trans-cultural political economy* (Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; Robert Hackett, and Yuezhi Zhao. 2005 *Democratizing global media: One world, many struggles* Lanham, MD, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

¹⁵ Tim Dwyer. 2010. *Media convergence* Maidenhead, New York: McGraw Hill.

¹⁶ David Held. 2007. *Globalization Theory: Approaches and Controversies*. London: Polity Press.

¹⁷ Andrew Calabrese and Colin Sparks. 2004. *Toward a political economy of culture: Capitalism and communication in the twenty-first century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield

market forces rather than the liberal, normative “watchdog of the state” principle, and this model, aimed at delivering audiences to advertisers, is being exported globally.¹⁸

A recent study by Harvard's Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart shows that the impact of global cultural convergence appears to be mixed.¹⁹ While some countries are adopting the global model and others reject foreign ideas,²⁰ many appear to amalgamate aspects of the imported culture into their own and produce a hybrid.²¹ Thus, it is difficult to establish direct causality between media use and social values. In Ukraine transcultural flows are more complex than the usual global-national dynamic because in addition to globalization, the new/old country continues to be affected by the legacy of Russian/Soviet cultural domination and continued Russian influence.²² The result is a complex triangular pattern of internal and external forces engaged in a cultural competition, which in turn is influencing politics. Media, and particularly television, are at the center of this process. As Italian media scholar Mancini noted, “Television with its messages, values and view of the world, interferes continuously with politics and determines and shapes its values.”²³ He, as well as others, argues that the new 21st century “Lifestyle Politics” are now the norm in established democracies.²⁴ Traditional institutions like political parties, unions, and civic organizations have weakened and mass media became the key agent of socialization. In Ukraine, as elsewhere, politicians use television to reach their electorate,²⁵ citizens are treated increasingly as audiences, and

Publishers; Edward S. Herman and Robert W. McChesney. 1997. *The global media: The missionaries of global capitalism*. London and Washington: Cassell. Herbert I. Schiller. 1976. *Communication and Cultural Domination*. White Plains NY: M. E. Sharpe.

¹⁸ Robert W. McChesney. 2008. *The Political Economy of Media*. New York: Monthly Review Press; Daya Kishan Thussu, ed. 1998. *Electronic Empires: Global Media and Local Resistance*. London, New York: Arnold.

¹⁹ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart. 2009. *Cosmopolitan Communications. Cultural Diversity in a Globalized World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

²⁰ Benjamin R. Barber. 2001. *Jihad vs McWorld*. New York, Ballantine Books; Meic Pearse. 2004. *Why the Rest Hates the West: Understanding the Roots of Global Rage*. Downer Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press; Daya Kishan Thussu, ed. 1998 *Electronic Empires: Global Media and Local Resistance*. London, New York: Arnold.

²¹ Marwan M. Kraidy. 2005. *Hybridity, or the cultural logic of globalization*. Philadelphia, Temple University Press.

²² Russia is also influenced by globalization, see, Natalia Rulyova. 2007. “Domesticating the Western Format in Russian TV: Subversive Glocalisation in the Game Show Pole Chudes (Field of Miracles). *Europe-Asia Studies* 59: (December): 1367-1386.

²³ Paolo Mancini. 2011. *Between Commodification and Lifestyle Politics. Does Silvio Berlusconi Provide a New Model of Politics for the Twenty-First Century?* Oxford: RISJ, p. 8.

²⁴ Peter Dahlgren. 2009. *Media and political engagement: citizens, communication, and democracy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Putnam, “Bowling Alone.”

²⁵ Peter Dahlgren. 2005. “Media, Citizenship and Civic Culture,” in James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, eds. *Mass Media and Society*. London: Hodder Arnold; Yves. Meny and

political messages are mixed in with entertainment and consumption.²⁶

By looking at media developments, especially television, this article explores the relationship between media and identity in Ukraine in the context of a globalized world. Moving away from a normative approach that asks how free or independent the media are,²⁷ it instead follows Carothers and tries to show what is really going on.²⁸ It argues that the power struggle over identity is ongoing, visible in media representations, and Western-led global forces are just as important as the Russia factor.

The Imperfect Soviet Hegemon

Ukraine's current struggle over identity is shaped by both present realities and the past. In 1991 Ukrainians rejected the USSR, but legacies from the Soviet era are still an important reference point for habits, beliefs, and values for many Ukrainians today, albeit in different ways.

For seventy years Soviet authorities used the media in a hegemonic way to try and construct a Soviet identity, the "*homo sovieticus*."²⁹ Yet Soviet identity was neither static nor monolithic, and although strongly dominated by Russian cultural imperialism,³⁰ it also contained international and multi-national dimensions.³¹

The complex, multi-layered Soviet identity was visible in the media system. Constructed like a series of concentric circles, a Russian language central media covered the entire territory of the USSR; within it, on the

Yves Surel eds. 2002 *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. New York: Palgrave.

²⁶ B. Manin. 1997. *The Principles of Representative Government*. Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press.

²⁷ Diana Dutsyk. 2010. "Media Ownership Structure in Ukraine: Political Aspects," Olexiy Khabyuk and Manfred Kops, eds. *Public Service Broadcasting: A German-Ukrainian Exchange of Opinions*, Working Paper No. 277, Institute of Broadcasting Economics, University of Cologne (December); Marta Dyczok. 2005. "The Politics of Media in Ukraine: Election 2002," Nicolas Hayoz and Andrej N. Lushnycky, eds. *Ukraine at a Crossroads*. New York, Oxford, Wien, Peter Lang Publishers: 63-99; Volodymyr Kulyk. 2010. *Dyskurs ukrainskykh medii: Identychnosti, ideolohii, vladni stosunky*. Kyiv: Krytyka; Andrei Richter. 2002. "The Partial Transition: Ukraine's Post-Communist Media," M. Price, B. Rozumilowicz and E. Verhulst, eds. *Media Reform: Democratizing the Media, Democratizing the State*. New York: Routledge; Natalya Ryabinska. 2011. "The Media Market and Media Ownership in Post Communist Ukraine. Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism." *Problems of Post-Communism* 58:6 (November/December): 3-20.

²⁸ Thomas, Carothers. 2002. "The End of the Transition Paradigm." *Journal of Democracy* 13:1 (January): 5-21.

²⁹ *Lenin about the press*. 1972 (English edition compiled by A. N. Burmistenko), Prague, International Organization of Journalists, see RadNarKom RSFSR Decree on the Press, October 1918.

³⁰ Ivan Dziuba. 1970. *Internationalism of Russification. A Study in the Soviet Nationalities Problem*, 2nd ed. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson.

³¹ Terry Martin. 2001. *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

level of Soviet national republics, media sub-systems existed that used regional and local languages. Central media were better funded and of higher quality than those in the Soviet republics, yet the republican systems produced their own content. Thus a Soviet Ukrainian identity existed as part of the larger *homo sovieticus*, and alternative ideas circulated through the *samizdat* (*samvydav*) underground media.

During Gorbachev's *glasnost*, the representational struggle widened. It is well known that media liberalization was intended to gain support for reforms but led to a broader public discourse about ideology and identity.³² Media content became more diverse during this time. Both conservative and reform messages appeared in central and republican media, pro-democracy messages grew from emerging alternative media, and exposure to the outside world increased. Things in Ukraine changed more slowly than in Moscow: as late as 1990 the Communist Party of Ukraine (CPU) was instructing newspaper editors how to cover elections.³³ That said, already in 1989 the official Writer's Union paper, *Literaturna Ukraina*, published RUKH's draft program, republican state TV aired debates between the Communist Party and RUKH, and the youth TV program HART began reporting previously taboo subjects, such as the crackdown on protesters in Lithuania in January 1991. Informal newspapers appeared all over the country from L'viv to Dnipropetrovs'k and Simferopol, containing a variety of visions of what kind of Ukraine people wanted to live in, but all critical of the status quo and advocating change.³⁴

International media played an important role during this time as well. Foreign journalists started working in Kyiv, so news about Ukraine was no longer reported by Moscow-based correspondents like *The Guardian's* Jonathan Steele who found it difficult to believe that Ukrainians were openly advocating independence as late as 1991.³⁵ Western journalists also provided contacts for Ukrainian journalists, ideas, and employment opportunities at western media outlets.

Thus, although the Soviet state had a monopoly on the media, it perhaps should be thought of as an imperfect hegemon, since a degree of struggle over representation issues and identity was always present.

³² Joseph Gibbs. 1999. *Gorbachev's Glasnost: The Soviet Media in The First Phase Of Perestroika*. College Station: Texas A & M University Press.

³³ Svitlana Oleksandrivna Kostyleva. 2001. *Drukovani Zasoby masovoi komunitatsii Ukrainy (1986 – 2000 rr). Istorii stanovlennia, tendentsii i rozvytku*. Kyiv: Ministerstvo Osvity Ukrainy, p. 39.

³⁴ Kostyleva, p. 249; Interviews with Bekir Memutov, journalist. Simferopol, 16 September 2004; Oleksander Kryvenko, journalist. Kyiv. 22 December 2001; Vadym Ryzhkov, journalist. Dnipropetrovs'k, 18 October 2004. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok.

³⁵ The author heard this repeatedly while working as *The Guardian's* correspondent in Kyiv May 1991 - June 1992.

Early Independence: What Kind of Ukraine? and Opening Up to the World

After Ukrainians voted overwhelmingly for independence in December 1991, the media became an important site for discussing what kind of Ukraine to build. As already mentioned, the state did not take it upon itself to exercise a hegemonic role through media representations. In a 2011 interview, first President Leonid Kravchuk could not answer the question, “what kind of media system did you envision?”³⁶ Some Ukrainian scholars viewed it as a failing that “in the early years of independence, the new state failed to fill the ideological vacuum, did not create an integrated set of values, new ideology.”³⁷

Institutional changes were made to the media system in the early years, including changes to legislation and upgrading infrastructure. Ukraine began integrating into transnational networks like the European Broadcasting Union, but its media system remained part of the old Soviet communications network. Russian Ostankino remained the most watched TV channel because it continued to broadcast on the most powerful TV frequency.³⁸ Thus the Soviet Ukrainian identity remained quite strong. Private media ownership was legal since 1990, and small private media outlets began to appear “like mushrooms after the rain,”³⁹ but due to the economic crisis most of the media system remained state owned.

Perhaps most importantly media content began to change quite significantly, beginning the process of global cultural convergence. In the early 1990s, Western media content increased, and Ukrainian media outlets began experimenting with new ideas and formats. Programs ranging from Latin American soap operas⁴⁰ to U.S. sitcoms, Hollywood films, and BBC and CNN news gained large audiences. In December 1991 American Story First Communications created a private TV station, ICTV.⁴¹ They were only able to gain broadcast licenses on regional state-owned channels, but within a year became the fourth most popular channel by showing Western entertainment programs. This appetite for Western formats revealed that part of Ukrainian society was open to the world, and saw itself in cosmopolitan terms, as part of a larger global community. In these early years

³⁶ Leonid Kravchuk, First President of Ukraine. 2011. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok, Kyiv, 22 August.

³⁷ Valeriy Bebyk and Oleksander M. Sydorenko. 1996. *Zasoby masovoi informatsii post-komunistychnoi Ukrainy*. Kyiv, Mizhrehional'na akademiia upravlinnia personalom, p. 54.

³⁸ Ukrainian Media Monitor, September 1994 (Prepared by Socis-Gallup International).

³⁹ Svitlana I Eremenko, journalist. 2004. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok, Donetsk, 11 October.

⁴⁰ *Los Ricos También Lloran* (“The rich also cry”); telenovela produced in Mexico in 1979, broadcast on UT2, 1993.

⁴¹ Ivan Mashchenko. 1998. *Telebachennia Ukrainy. De facto*. Tom Pershyi. Kyiv, Tetra, p. 338.

small advertising companies also began appearing, starting new patterns of consumerism in Ukraine.

Ukrainians also began creating new media products that reflected both their own ideas and influences from the West. Oleksandr Tkachenko revolutionized Ukrainian television with his weekly news program, *PislaMova*, introducing innovations like live interviews, talking heads, expert commentary, original camera angles, and seating the host in the center of the screen rather than at the side next to a phone, the Soviet model.⁴²

Global, or rather Western, influences also appeared in the form of funding and training. U.S. based NGO InterMedia allocated a \$7 million USAID grant to Ukraine in the early 1990s, to develop independent media. The funds were used to create an independent news agency, UNIAN, and produce new radio and television programming with the assistance of Western journalists. By 1994 six new shows were broadcast on state TV channel UT2 that reached wide audiences, including news and commentary – *Vikna Novyny* (Yuri Horban, producer), *Vikna Plus* (Heorhii Gongadze, producer), *Vikna v Svit* (Oleksander Myroniuk, producer), sports, economics and culture.⁴³

Simultaneously, Ukrainian journalists began exploring their old/new Ukrainian identity, perhaps best illustrated by a series of historical films called *Nevidoma Ukraina* (The Unknown Ukraine), which were produced by Adrian Shmotolokha and Danylo Yanevs'kyi and aired on the state broadcaster. These films showed Ukrainians aspects of their history that had previously been silenced, or framed from the Soviet perspective.⁴⁴

Thus the early years of independent media developments show two simultaneous trends: Ukrainians began exploring their identity in the context of a nation-state that was called Ukraine rather than the USSR, and exploring the world, largely through mass media. During this period the pro-Western cosmopolitan and new/old Ukrainian identities are most visible.

Competing Visions of Ukrainian Identity

By the mid-1990s deepening economic crisis led to different views on how to proceed, which in turn reflected the increasingly divergent views on identity. Some believed the best way to move ahead was to embrace Westernization and push ahead with rapid market reforms. Others felt that

⁴² Oleksander Tkachenko, journalist (UT1, Studio 1+1), media manager (CEO New Channel, Studio 1+1). 2005. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok, Kyiv, 25 July.

⁴³ Andriy Kulykov, journalist, general producer of InterMedia funded programs in Ukraine, 1995. 2010. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok by phone from Kyiv 15 June.

⁴⁴ Danylo Yanevs'kyi, journalist (Studio 1+1). 2011. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok, Kyiv, 6 July. See, http://ukr-film.ucoz.ua/publ/serial_quot_nevidoma_ukrajina_quot/12

is was safer to retain close relations with Russia and reform more gradually. A third view was that Ukraine needed to find its own path, draw on its own ideas and traditions, although there was no clear vision on what that was. Media representations clearly show these competing visions of identity.

When Leonid Kuchma became president in 1994 he pursued an aggressive privatization program, secured Ukraine's international position vis-à-vis Russia and the U.S., and reformed the media system. Although his legacy will always be linked to the disappearance of opposition journalist Heorhii Gongadze and the gradual restriction on the freedom of speech, he did not try and use the media to construct a Ukrainian identity.⁴⁵

Kuchma's goal was to make the media system work more efficiently and protect Ukraine from continuing uncontrolled Russian influences. In January 1995 he was quoted as saying, "My position is that rather than occasional, shall we say, fireman-like measures,⁴⁶ it is desirable to move to a clear government policy in the information sphere."⁴⁷ Freedom of speech was codified in the 1996 Constitution, and a Press and Information Ministry and National Council on Television and Radio Broadcasting were created.⁴⁸ The Russian Ostankino TV channel was removed from the country's most powerful broadcast frequency through a 1995 Presidential decree; thus, Ukraine gained control over broadcasting on its territory.⁴⁹

Perhaps the most important change Kuchma introduced was the privatization of major state media outlets. The non-transparent way this was done produced a rather corrupt system where media suffers from both state and corporate pressures. Kuchma viewed media largely as an asset, and television was privatized much the same way as everything else: certain actors were given privileged access, while foreign capital was allowed in, but limited.⁵⁰ According to insiders involved in the process, early business groups would come to Kuchma and say, "Papa, here is a state TV enterprise that is failing, let us have it, we'll make it work, and make it profitable."⁵¹ Thus media owners became dependent on good rela-

⁴⁵ Serhiy Vasiliev, Head of the Presidential Administration of Ukraine (2002-2004). 2003. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok, Kyiv, 19 June.

⁴⁶ Kuchma's words were "pozhezni zakhody."

⁴⁷ *Uriadovyi Kurier*, 14 January 1995

⁴⁸ I. H. Boyko, Head of Ministry of Press and Information, *Radianska Zhytomyrshchyna*, 12 January 1995; <http://www.nrada.gov.ua/en/1283520327.html>.

⁴⁹ Presidential Decree No 296/95, 11 April 1995, followed by Ministry of Information Nakaz (Directive) No. 72, 18 August 1995, "Pro tymchasovyi rozpodil zasobiv rozpovsiudzhennia derzhavnykh prohram telebachennia."

⁵⁰ For the media sector, this was 30%.

⁵¹ Olexiy Mustafin, journalist, news director INTER TV, STB TV. 2006. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok, Kyiv, 26 September. Similar narratives were recounted by Mykyta Poturaev, journalist, 2006. Kyiv, 27 September. Oleksander Tkachenko. 2003. Kyiv, 22 June, 26 September 2006; Oleksander Martynenko, director, InterFax Ukraine. 2003. Kyiv, 20 June. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok.

tions with the president, a pattern which continues to the present.

Kuchma did not privatize the entire broadcast sector. The most powerful national TV channel, UT1,⁵² remained in state hands. It positioned itself as representing the state and its identity, and broadcast exclusively in Ukrainian. But innovations from the early 1990s disappeared and UT1 returned to its Soviet-era flavor because senior management did not change, and innovators moved to the new private channels. UT1 continued to produce important programming on culture, for children, and public service information like explaining legislation about privatization, but it lacked vision. There was no guidance from state policy and UT1 became known as “the channel with no image.” Once a private sector emerged, it steadily lost audience share.

Two new private channels appeared in the mid-1990s and presented very different notions of what it was to be Ukrainian, although neither articulated the identity issue in national terms.⁵³ Both were *de facto* transferred into private hands, commercially oriented, and allowed to develop with little state interference in terms of content.⁵⁴ Both attracted large audiences, yet each had very different ideas about how to do this.

Studio 1+1⁵⁵ began broadcasting in October of 1995 and projected a cosmopolitan Ukrainian identity. From the beginning it used only the Ukrainian language, and projected a hip, youthful image from the screen. Initially it aired mainly Western films and entertainment shows, but within a year created the top newsroom in the country by bringing together talented journalists from all over Ukraine, providing them with resources and a free hand. The first news director, Oleksandr Tkachenko, later recalled those days, “this sort of thing happens once in a lifetime. We had a dream team and were not restricted in what we did.”⁵⁶

The channel was created by three key individuals: Oleksandr Rodnianskyi, a Kyiv-born filmmaker who had spent the late 1980s working in Germany; Vadym Rabinovych, a somewhat controversial early Ukrainian businessman; and U.S. billionaire Ronald Lauder. Their vision was very much Western and European-oriented. “It [the channel] was supposed to be substantively Ukrainian, and as such was meant to play a role in social change in the country,” recounts Ol’ha Herasymiuk, one of the station’s early employees who went on to become a big TV star.⁵⁷ The cosmopolitan ideas of the founders came from different motivations.

⁵² At the time UT1 had the greatest technical broadcast reach.

⁵³ For a more detailed version, see Dyczok, 2009.

⁵⁴ The state retained ownership of the infrastructure of both UT2 and UT3 but granted broadcast licenses to the two new private companies.

⁵⁵ <http://www.1plus1.ua/>

⁵⁶ Tkachenko interview, Kyiv, 26 September 2006.

⁵⁷ Olha Herasymiuk, journalist. 2006. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok, Kyiv, 27 September.

Rodnianskyi had the creative vision that contemporary Ukraine was part of a European cultural landscape. Rabinovych seemingly intuitively understood the importance of advertising, and that profits would initially come from abroad, while Lauder's ambition was to create an East European media corporation that could then enter the global arena.⁵⁸ Each of them viewed Ukraine as part of the larger global community whose future lay with the West. The channel gained popularity immediately and remained one of the top two audience favorites until it came under attack by political censorship.

The second private TV company, INTER,⁵⁹ first aired in April 1996 and began by projecting the residual Soviet Ukrainian identity. Russian was the primary language, the main evening news was *Vremya*, produced by Russia's ORT TV,⁶⁰ and initially much of the entertainment programming was either Soviet era classics or new Russian media products.

The main force behind creating INTER was Kyiv businessman Ievhen Pluzhnikov, who was a key member of the then powerful Kyiv clan and the SDPU(o) party. His business partners were the Ukrainian State Property Fund and the Russian TV company ORT. From the beginning it seemed that this was conceived as both a business project and political instrument, and was oriented on the Russian-speaking part of Ukrainian society.

The creators of this channel viewed Ukrainian identity through a Russian lens, drawing on the shared cultural heritage and orientation along familiar patterns. This channel, too, attracted large audiences, showing that some Ukrainians continued to prefer the old, well-known media content and style, and, although prepared to change somewhat, were more comfortable moving along with Russia rather than directly embracing global values.

This all suggests how Ukrainians were viewing themselves in rather different ways. The popularity of both Studio 1+1 and INTER shows that the cosmopolitan identity resonated among large sectors of society, while simultaneously the residual Soviet Ukrainian identity resurfaced as an enduring alternative. Both were forward looking but in different directions – Russia vs. the West. The new/old identity seemed somewhat directionless at this stage, or perhaps lacking in well placed advocates.

⁵⁸ Lauder created Central European Media Enterprises in 1994, <http://www.cetv-net.com/en/index.shtml>

⁵⁹ <http://inter.ua/uk/>

⁶⁰ This was the successor of Soviet era VREMYA, and the pattern continued until 2001. Ukrainian news was also produced, but was broadcast during non prime time slots.

Unusual Convergence and Contradictions: The Worst of Both Worlds?

By the late 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium, an unusual cultural convergence became visible in Ukraine and its media, which one analyst called “combining the worst of all worlds.”⁶¹ Many positive values from the Soviet era, such as social justice, had all but disappeared from public discourse, while negative behavior patterns like corruption had increased. Excesses of consumer capitalism and unfettered individualism grew in a society that was not enjoying the benefits of democracy and the rule of law. The larger context is significant here – Ukraine’s economy had begun to stabilize and grow, while simultaneously democracy was seriously backsliding. To a large degree these changes were driven by structural, economic, and political factors that led to the gradual change in value systems.

This period coincides with Kuchma’s second term in office, which was overshadowed by the Gongadze case. On September 16, 2000, internet journalist Heorhii Gongadze disappeared, soon afterwards a headless corpse was found, and the president was implicated in the case. This led to domestic protests, international isolation, and increasing authoritarianism that included intensified censorship.⁶² However, as already noted, Kuchma was largely uninterested in issues of identity, and the censorship was directed at whitewashing his regime. Information needed for the economy was allowed to circulate freely, as were various representations of identity.⁶³ In part because news became distorted, audiences tended to prefer entertainment programming.

However, apart from the intensified censorship, during these years Ukraine’s media system continued to follow many global patterns, including growing concentration of ownership and media content shifting towards infotainment. Most foreign investors were bought out by Ukrainian businessmen who began creating large media corporations (called holdings in Ukraine). Victor Pinchuk, Kuchma’s son-in-law, purchased ICTV from Story First Communications, New Channel from Russia’s Alpha Bank,⁶⁴ and STB⁶⁵ from Russia’s Lukoil.⁶⁶ When in 2000 Ukraine’s economy went

⁶¹ Yevhen Fedchenko, Dean of the School of Journalism, NaUKMA. 2005. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok, Kyiv, 1 June.

⁶² Dyczok, 2006.

⁶³ Iryna Pohorelova, journalist. 2003. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok, Kyiv, 20 June.

⁶⁴ MIGnews.com.ua reported this on 11 February 2003.

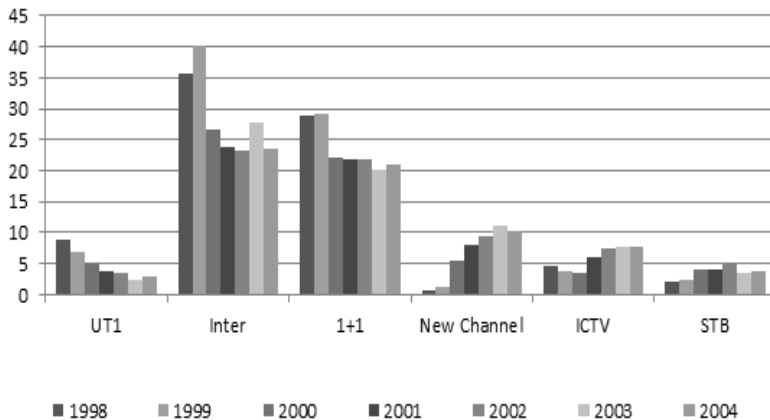
⁶⁵ STB was created with INTERNEWS funds to be an independent TV station. In 1996 it was privatized, and although the owners remained in the shadows, it was widely reported that Lukoil had purchased a significant portion of the shares.

⁶⁶ In the next phase, this media corporation would grow further to include entertainment TV channels, newspapers, radio, and internet sites, and become known as the StarLightMedia

into growth for the first time since independence, media finally became profitable because advertising revenues grew, even though real profits were often hidden.⁶⁷

That meant that media companies had more resources to spend on content, and entertainment programming continued to gain popularity. New products continued to appear, some domestically produced, others purchased from abroad.⁶⁸ At the turn of the millennium, quiz shows were all the rage internationally. In 2001, Studio 1+1 purchased the “Who Wants to be a Millionaire” format and broadcast a Ukrainian version to great popular success. A year later it repeated this feat, purchasing the British format “Brainiest,”⁶⁹ and producing it as “Nairozumnishyi.” INTER also

Table 1. Audience Share Dynamics, 1998-2004



Source: Oleksander Tkachenko, CEO, Studio 1+1 TV Channel

followed this trend, but when they adapted “Blind Date” into the Ukrainian “Kokhannia z Pershoho Pohliadu,” they opted for both Russian and Ukrainian speaking co-hosts. There were also examples where Ukrainian and Russian companies jointly purchased formats and produced a single show.⁷⁰

Group.

⁶⁷ Studio 1+1 profits reportedly reached \$10,543,000.00 in the first half of 2001, compared with a loss of \$334,000.00 the year before. *Ukrainian Media Bulletin*, No.7, August 2001, distributed by European Institute for the Media (EIM). However, State broadcast regulator, Borys Kholod, announced that half of advertising revenues were “in the shadows,” *Interfax Ukraine*, 15 December 2003.

⁶⁸ See Natalia Dankova, “Vid ‘Pershoho miliona’ do ‘X-faktora,’” *Telekritika Magazine*, No. 11-12(76), November 2010, p. 60.

⁶⁹ Created and owned by Celador.

⁷⁰ For example Studio 1+1 co-produced *Harem*, purchased from Styx, with Russia’s STS.

In these years all TV channels began broadcasting content that reflected the three visions of identity, with the aim of attracting audiences. Thus, Ukrainians continued to be exposed to an ever-widening range of media formats, images, messages, and value systems, and private channels began diversifying their content.

State media were underfunded by the Kuchma administration, given no direction or incentive to produce programming which would foster a common identity, and as a result considered uninteresting at best, and "media with no character" at worst. Their main function was, as one journalist put it, "to create obedient citizens who would be loyal to the state regardless of what the state did."⁷¹ Clearly, this did not succeed, since a massive protest erupted in 2004, known as the Orange Revolution.

2004: Collision, Explosion, Reframing

The 2004 Orange Revolution reframed media representations once again. An estimated one in five Ukrainians took to the streets to protest when Victor Yanukovich allegedly stole the presidential election from Victor Yushchenko. The media played a key role in these events, although a more complex one than usually portrayed.⁷² The journalists' revolution showed a submerged desire for democracy, transparency and accountability quickly coming to the surface, seemingly re-framing the representational struggle into one over political values as the key component of identity, a combination of new/old values and cosmopolitan ones.

However, despite the excitement of the revolutionary events, there was still no consensus on values. Ukrainians had been receiving a distorted picture of political events for years, yet a handful of journalists in alternative media outlets had been actively opposing censorship and used their technologically savvy international contacts to draw attention to the issue as best they could.⁷³ During the revolutionary events many others joined them, suggesting that while they had exercised self-censorship under neo-authoritarian conditions, they did hold democratic values. The best example is that the entire Studio 1+1 news team went on strike on the second day of protests, and later made a live public apology for having lied in the past. Others continued to present news in a rather dubious way. Once widely respected journalist Volodymyr Ruban denounced the revolution as an American plot aimed at destabilizing Ukraine. TRK Ukraine⁷⁴ reported mainly anti-revolutionary meetings, including the infamous hysterical

⁷¹ Kulykov, interview, 27 March 2010.

⁷² For a discussion see, Marta Dyczok. 2005. "Breaking Through the Information Blockade: Election and Revolution in Ukraine 2004," *Canadian Slavonic Papers/Revue canadienne des slavistes*. XLVII: 3-4 (September-December): 241-266.

⁷³ *Ukrainska Pravda, Telekritika, Channel 5*, Independent Journalists' Union.

⁷⁴ TRK Ukraine is owned by Rinat Akhmetov, who was financing Yanukovich.

speech by Yanukovych's wife where she accused protesters of distributing oranges laced with American hallucinogenic drugs.

An interesting dimension of the revolution and media representations is that despite the apparent clash between cosmopolitan and residual Soviet views of identity, both sides used cultural symbols, references and formats that seemed incongruent with that identification. Yushchenko supporters, the orange side, regularly played *Oranzhevoie Nebo*, a Soviet era classic sung by Georgian singer Irma Sokhadze,⁷⁵ and used Soviet era Cat Leopold cartoons to ridicule Yanukovych,⁷⁶ while the blue side that supported Yanukovych held Western-style rallies with music, lighting, and DJs as recommended by U.S. PR experts.

Aftermath: Change and Continuity

After Yushchenko became president in the wake of the revolution, Ukraine's media continued to evolve. Heavy-handed state censorship ended, but the media system continued to be profoundly influenced by the forces of globalization and the Russia factor.

Yushchenko made efforts to improve relations between journalists, the state, and society. He created a National Commission for Consolidation of Freedom of Speech and Development of the Information Sphere,⁷⁷ changed the management of the state broadcaster and state media regulatory agencies,⁷⁸ talked about introducing public broadcasting,⁷⁹ had regular televised "fireside chats" and tried to limit negative Russian influences into Ukraine's media space.⁸⁰ He also viewed media as a vehicle to promote a united Ukrainian identity that would draw on the historical past as well as cosmopolitan (Western, European) values. News reporting became more objective and complete. However, checkbook journalism, known as "jeans" in Ukraine, increased, showing that market forces were also a threat to free speech, a trend that media scholars have long noted in established democracies.⁸¹

⁷⁵ http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wqwJvPSiL_I

⁷⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leopold_the_Cat

⁷⁷ See Presidential Decree N. 493/2006, <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/493/2006>.

⁷⁸ See, "Stets'kiv ide na UT1 iak na front, shchob rozchystyty avhievi staini," 24 February 2005, *Ukrainska Pravda*, <http://www.pravda.com.ua/news/2005/02/24/3007404/>; "Obrano kerivnyi sklad Hatsrady a pytan' teradiomovlennia," 13 April 2005, *Telekritika*, <http://www.telekritika.ua/news/2005-04-13/23636>

⁷⁹ See "Hromads'ke movlennia maie buty profesiinishym za kometrsiine," 13 April 2005, *Telekritika*, <http://www.telekritika.ua/news/2005-04-13/23632>

⁸⁰ Press Release, Secretary of the National Security and Defense Council (RNBO), "RNBO povidomliaie pro zavershnnia roboty nad rishenniam Rady ta proiektoom Ukrazu prezidenta za naslidkamy rozhliadu pytannia pro informatsiinu bezpeku Ukrainy." 25 March 2008, Press Division, RNBOU, <http://www.rainbow.gov.ua/news/665.html?PrintVersion>.

⁸¹ For a fuller argument, see Marta Dyczok. 2014 "Threats to Free Speech in Ukraine: The

In terms of political economy, the pattern of media ownership did not radically change, but a number of important media assets changed hands, political actors became media owners, and media corporations grew in size.⁸² For example, the once powerful Kyiv clan lost control over the lucrative INTER TV. It was purchased initially by the Russian corporation EVRAZ, later it came under the ownership of Valery Khoroshkovs'kyi, then Deputy Secretary of the National Security Council. A year after taking control of INTER TV, Khoroshkovs'kyi formed a new media giant, UA INTER Media Group Ltd, made up of 70 media companies.⁸³

The global process of media convergence intensified in Ukraine during this period. As everywhere, technological advancement began altering media usage by society, particularly as internet penetration increased. The infotainment model, which had come to dominate in established democracies, also became the norm in Ukraine. Studio 1+1's PR director proudly announced, "The channel's news programs are mastering a new genre known as infotainment. TSN, the main news program on 1+1, has been operating in this new format for several months now and their ratings are steadily on the rise. This proves that viewers like the new format."⁸⁴ That said, in the spirit of the new freedom of speech, live political talk shows became popular. The format first appeared on ICTV in 2005 with the "Svoboda Slova" show hosted by Savik Shuster, who brought the format to Ukraine after being closed down on Russia's NTV in 2004.⁸⁵

Western programs and films continued to be broadcast on all TV channels; there was an increase in Ukrainian and Russian adaptations of Western formats. Celebrity talent shows became particularly fashionable. Six national TV networks led the market in terms of ratings, commonly known as 'the big Six,' and to a large degree are considered to be the most influential media in the country. They are: INTER, Studio 1+1, STB, Novyi Kanal, ICTV, and TRK Ukraina.

Yushchenko was the first Ukrainian president to make the issue of identity a subject of public discourse, thus it would seem that the old/new vision of Ukrainian identity would have become strong in this period. Yet when one looks at media representations, audience preferences, and images presented by political actors, what is evident is that cultural and identity reference points became increasingly blurred, while the trend

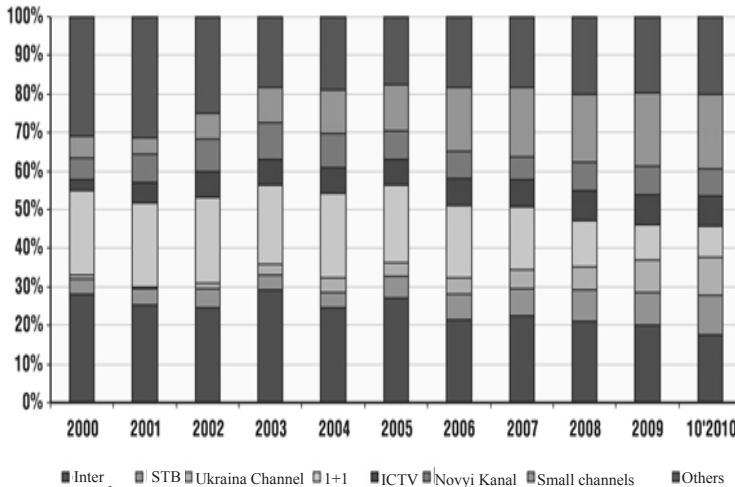
Bigger Picture," in Giovanna Brogi, Marta Dyczok and Oxana Pachlovska, eds. *Ukraine Twenty Years After Independence: Assessments, Perspectives, Challenges*. Bern: Peter Lang.

⁸² For an overview of media ownership, see Dutsyk, 2010.

⁸³ "Khoroshkovsky Creates New Media Giant in Ukraine, June 27, 2007," http://www.komersant.com/p778375/r_500/%D0%9A1_%D0%9A2_Megasport_Inter/

⁸⁴ Olesya Ostafiyeva, "Unbearable lightness of TV: Changes in Ukraine's entertainment," *Kyiv Weekly*, 24 December 2008, <http://www.kyivweekly.com/?art=1230123744>

⁸⁵ Caroline McGregor, "Friday's 'Svoboda Slova' Expected to Be Last," *The St. Petersburg Times*, 9 July 2004, http://www.sptimes.ru/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=968

Table 2 Changes in Audience Share of the Channels, 2000-10

Source: Telekritika Magazine. 2010. 11-12:76 (November),p. 72

toward lifestyle politics grew. Yushchenko did promote the old/new Ukrainian identity, but it tended to merge with the cosmopolitan one. The fireside chat format was directly borrowed from the U.S. His pro-European, pro-Western values are well documented in public statements, and when he travelled abroad he looked indistinguishable from other Western leaders. At home in Ukraine, however, he would often sport a traditional embroidered shirt, usually paired with designer trousers or suits.

Then PM Yulia Tymoshenko, on the other hand, retreated from the cosmopolitan image, and increasingly wore folk-inspired clothing and/or Ukrainian fashion designers. Then opposition leader Victor Yanukovich is the most difficult to categorize during this phase. He began to use mainly the Ukrainian language in his media appearances, but also adopted a Berlusconi-like stance, selling a lifestyle of power and glamour.⁸⁶ At a 2007 Regions Party Conference he was photographed smiling broadly as “Dancing with the Stars” celebrity Nataliya Mohylevs’ka spun him around on the dance floor.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Yanukovich had hired the U.S. PR firm Paul Manafort, which helped him transform his image.

⁸⁷ See, “Yanukovich stav partnerom Mohylavs’koi,” 8 July 2007, *Ukrainska Pravda*, <http://tabloid.pravda.com.ua/photos/471dff9fde3bd/>.

2010: New Challenges, Old Threats⁸⁸

When in 2010 Yanukovich was elected president, there were fears that he would roll back Yushchenko's reforms and steer Ukraine closer to Russia. These fears were not unfounded. Within months of the election, state pressures on mass media had increased. Ukraine's top media analyst, Nataliya Ligachova, noted that censorship had increased to the highest levels ever, worse than the darkest days of the Kuchma regime.⁸⁹ These pressures took on a devastating form combining coercion, co-optation, and control through ownership. A new journalists' movement, Stop Censorship, sprung up, but the state largely ignored its efforts.⁹⁰ Yanukovich abolished the Media Advisory Council set up by Yushchenko,⁹¹ Parliament reduced the quota for Ukrainian language in broadcast media to 25 percent,⁹² Russian speaking Yegor Benkendorf was appointed Director of the State TV channel, and for the first time since independence, Russian appeared on the state broadcaster.⁹³

There were few changes in ownership structures with one notable exception – in April 2010 the last significant foreign owner, CME, sold its shares in Studio 1+1 and left Ukraine, leaving the main assets in Ukraine's media market in Ukrainian hands. The remaining changes were intralite competition, illustrating the larger political power struggles which were occurring behind the scenes.⁹⁴ For example, when Khoroshkov'skyi, many times minister under various presidents and prime ministers, sold his controlling interest in INTER to then head of the Presidential Administration, Serhiy Lyovochkin, it was clear that he had fallen out of favor.⁹⁵ A few analysts noted that media are not the primary source of income for media owners and are often used for political purposes.⁹⁶

Yet if one looks at media content and audience preferences, the cultural competition remains clearly visible. Despite the seeming establishment move towards a pro-Russian (residual Soviet) stance after 2010,

⁸⁸ Title of Andriy Kulykov's Keynote Address, Breaking News: Censorship, Media, and Ukraine, Columbia University, 21 February 2013.

⁸⁹ Nataliya Ligachova, Founder and Editor, *Telekritika*. 2011. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok, Kyiv, 31 August.

⁹⁰ Stop Tsenzuri formed 22 May 2010, see <http://www.telekritika.ua/news/2010-05-22/53128>

⁹¹ Presidential Decree No. 493/2010, 2 April 2010, <http://zakon4.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/493/2010>.

⁹² Law 6342 proposed 26 April 2010, adopted 1 February 2011, http://w1.c1.rada.gov.ua/pls/zweb_n/webproc4_2?id=&pf3516=6342&skl=7

⁹³ "Zhyrnalysty ta hromadsist' vymahaiut' vid Benkendorfa ukrainomovnoii Olimpiady," *Telekritika*, 6 August 2012, <http://www.telekritika.ua/news/2012-08-06/73919>

⁹⁴ Media as a site where political power is contested, see Dyczok, 2009.

⁹⁵ "Firtash kupyv hrupu "INTER." Top-menedzhment bude zmineno?" *Telekritika*, 1 February 2013, <http://www.telekritika.ua/news/2013-02-01/78704>

⁹⁶ Dutsyk, 2010, Ryabinska, 2011.

the impact of globalization (or Westernization) continues strongly, as does the search for a new/old Ukrainian identity, while society drifts more and more towards audience democracy and lifestyle politics.

Live political talk shows continued to attract surprisingly large audiences through the end of 2012. In 2010 Shuster Live regularly drew 13 percent ratings; *Svoboda Slova* with Andriy Kulykov on ICTV averaged 12 – 15 percent, and *Velyka Polityka* with Evgeni Kiselyev on INTER attracted 14-17 percent ratings.⁹⁷

But, as elsewhere, entertainment programming remains much more popular in Ukraine than news and information shows, suggesting that global cultural influences are strengthening the cosmopolitan vision of identity. In 2010, adaptations of Western format talent shows topped the ratings: the Ukrainian version of *Ukraine Has Talent* (STB, 30-35%), *X-Factor* (STB, 25-30%), and *So You Think You Can Dance* (16-20%). When ICTV purchased the *Survivor* format and broadcast it as *Ostannyi Heroi* in 2011, it got the highest ratings ever in Ukrainian television.⁹⁸

The residual-Soviet identity continues to resonate with many Ukrainians, as witnessed by the fact that the second most popular entertainment programming on Ukrainian television is Russian TV shows. In 2010 “*Svaty*,” (INTER) topped the ratings with 22-29%, followed by “*Bratany*” on ICTV (11-13%) and “*Interny*” on 1+1 (7-10%).⁹⁹

The new/old Ukrainian identity remains the weakest of the three, yet continues to hold its own. To celebrate twenty years of independence, all TV channels produced special programming about the event, without directives from above. INTER, traditionally oriented towards the Russian-speaking audiences, aired a series of Ukrainian language shows, “*Nashi Dvadtsiat*” (Our Twenty), and “*Legendary Castles of Ukraine*.” Benkendorf, who introduced Russian onto the state broadcaster, raised funds among his corporate friends to produce “*20 Steps towards a Dream*,” a series of 20 short historical films which adopt Hrushevs’kyi’s historiographic scheme and handle controversial topics with sensitivity and respect for various perspectives.¹⁰⁰ His second project, “*Faces of Ukrainian History*,” includes figures ranging from *Kniahynia Ol’ha* and *Pylyp Orlyk*, through *Stepan Bandera* and *Mykola Amosov*.¹⁰¹

Two other important developments during these years are the

⁹⁷ *Telekritika* posts ratings compiled by market research firms GfK, Nielsen. For example see *Proiekt Kiselova znov vyperedyv Shustera*, <http://www.telekritika.ua/news/2011-02-07/59938>.

⁹⁸ Natalia Dankova, “*Iak dyvylysia top-6 kanaliv u pershomu pivrichich 2013-oho*,” 12 July 2013, *Telekritika*, <http://www.telekritika.ua/rinok/2013-07-12/83234>.

⁹⁹ Nataliya Dan’kova, “*Vid Pershoho miliona do X-faktora. Istoriia adaptatsii mizhnarodnykh teleformativ na Ukraini komu telebachenni*,” *Zhurnal Telekrytyka*, 11-12, No. 76 (November-December 2010): 60-66.

¹⁰⁰ http://1tv.com.ua/uk/programs/20_krokov

¹⁰¹ http://1tv.com.ua/uk/programs/faces_history

intensification of media convergence, and the explosion of new and social media. Internet usage grew steadily, and although Ukraine has not yet reached European or North American penetration levels, it has the highest rate of growth in Europe.¹⁰² Here, too, the competing influences of globalization and the Russia factor are clearly visible, perhaps best illustrated by which websites Ukrainians visit most often. In 2011, one sees that similar to Canada or the U.S., Google, YouTube, Wikipedia, and Facebook are popular, as well as the Russian VKontakte, Mail.ru, and Yandex (both the .ru and .ua versions), and a few Ukrainian sites (Google.com.ua, Ukr.net). Television is increasingly viewed on-line, such as TVi, and this is providing both commercial opportunities and the ability to get around government pressures on alternative media.¹⁰³

Table 3: Most Visited Websites in Ukraine, 2011

According to Alexa.com	According to InMind
1. Google.com.ua	1. Google
2. vKontatke.ru	2. Mail.ru
3. Google.com	3. vKontakte
4. Mail.ru	4. Yandex
5. YouTube.com	5. YouTube
6. Yandex.ua	6. Wikipedia.org
7. Yandex.ru	7. Facebook.com
8. Facebook.com	8. Marketgrid.com
9. Wikipedia.com	9. Ukr.net
10. LiveJournal.com	10. Odnoklassniki

Source: <http://www.alexa.com/topsites/countries/UA>; <http://ain.ua/2011/01/19/40868>

This evidence shows that symbolic values continue to shift, and competition for cultural capital is ongoing. What does this mean for democracy? Here global trends of media, especially TV, are clearly visible. Politicians continue to use TV as the primary vehicle for communicating with society, thus undermining the importance of traditional institutions, such as political parties. With the ever-deepening corruption and disregard

¹⁰² Olha Minchenko, "V Ukraini 19.3 mil korystuvachiv internet u vitsi 15+," *Watcher*, 25 February 2013, <http://watcher.com.ua/2013/02/25/v-ukrayini-19-3-mln-korystuvachiv-internetu-u-vitsi-15/>

¹⁰³ Mykola Kniazhyts'kyi, then Director, TVi. 2012. Interviewed by Marta Dyczok, Kyiv, 5 July.

for the rule of law, manipulation and abuse of media professionals and the simultaneous projection of a certain lifestyle, two trends are visible in society. On the one hand, there is a disengagement from the political process, as witnessed by low voter turnout in the 2012 parliamentary election, particularly the youth vote. Simultaneously there is an increase in activism on the local level, on issues such as preserving historical monuments.¹⁰⁴ Both of these parallel developments in established democracies.

Conclusion

Ukraine is often viewed in isolation (what is happening in Ukraine, Ukraine's politics, Ukraine's media) or compared to normative standards that do not really exist anywhere (how close or far is Ukraine to a consolidated democracy, how free and independent are Ukraine's media). This misses the point that for over 20 years Ukraine has been part of the global community, through mass media engaged in transnational cultural flows. In many ways Ukraine's media system and content have become very similar to those in other parts of Europe and North America.

Television and the internet have been bringing the world into Ukrainian living rooms for over twenty years, and this is changing values, from growing consumerism to a shift in political views on individualism vs. collectivism. Ukrainians have embraced technology and lifestyle changes,¹⁰⁵ and these innovations are not coming from Russia, but rather from the West.

Ukraine is still struggling to define its identity and global media trends are having a powerful impact on this process. While much attention has rightly focused on the political censorship that Ukraine has experienced during various phases of its independence, what has been overlooked is that media owners are more interested in profits than politics. They accommodate political elites to gain influence and protect their other business interests, but in terms of media content, they are equally accommodating market forces and provide audiences with the same media product that global media corporations are selling and Ukrainians are consuming.

Ukrainian audiences display a wide range of preferences, but in many ways are similar to global audiences in that they prefer entertainment over

¹⁰⁴ See Marta Dyczok. 2013. "Fighting the developers in Kyiv," *OpenDemocracy*, (20 February) <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/marta-dyczok/fighting-developers-in-kyiv>

¹⁰⁵ In 2013, four Ukrainian IT companies were listed among the top 100 in the Global Outsourcing 100 ranking (Intetics, Luxoft, EPAM Systems and Miratech). See, http://tsn.ua/ukrayina/chotiri-ukrayinski-it-kompaniyi-uviyshli-do-sotni-naykraschih-v-sviti-284506.html?fb_action_ids=136932006483382&fb_action_types=og.recommends&fb_source=timeline_og&action_object_map={%22136932006483382%22%3A534074393282504}&action_type_map={%22136932006483382%22%3A%22og.recommends%22}&action_ref_map

information, are open to new ideas, and Western (global) media formats have steadily gained popularity. Whereas in the mid-1990s, INTER TV succeeded by broadcasting mainly Russian/Soviet media content, 15 years later it had adopted many Western formats in the competition for ratings.¹⁰⁶ Russian programming remains popular, but it, too, has increasingly adopted Western formats. Thus, in some ways globalization is coming to Ukraine through a Russian lens. Ukrainian media products also continue to attract audiences.

Media representations show that there are a variety of competing visions on Ukrainian identity. Certain parts of Ukrainian society have consistently demonstrated an interest in and desire to define themselves as part of a larger, cosmopolitan, global community, others feel more comfortable in a Russian cultural space, while others still are looking for a unique Ukrainian identity.

There are different ways to interpret this. One is that Ukraine has not developed a strong national idea around which society has united. This view continues to be voiced in Ukraine, as it has been since the early 1990s.¹⁰⁷ Another is that Ukrainian society is diverse, that the state has not behaved in a hegemonic manner and imposed a vision from above, and media representations demonstrate a high degree of tolerance toward alternative views. A third is that Ukraine is in keeping with global trends, where identities are changing as a result of cultural and media convergence.

Epilogue

This article was completed in the summer of 2013, before the events shook Ukraine in the subsequent autumn, winter, and spring. Much of what happened from November 2013 through April 2014 was about identity and media.

By sheer coincidence, a few months before protests erupted, a number of new independent, internet-based media outlets had appeared, created by journalists who were tired of state and corporate pressures in the existing media.¹⁰⁸ They served as a counter-hegemonic force that challenged censorship and provided alternative, largely objective news on the protests, and later invasion by Russia. As events unfolded, the impact of media convergence became even more evident. Live streamed TV and social media became important information sources which were picked up and disseminated by mainstream and global media outlets. After President Victor Yanukovich fled the country on February 21, 2014, state censorship

¹⁰⁶ Ekaterina Shapoval, "INTER: Vtoroe prishestvie," *Forbes Ukraine*, 7 August 2013, <http://forbes.ua/magazine/forbes/1355859-inter-vtoroe-prishestvie>

¹⁰⁷ Heorhii Pocheptsov, "Informatsiinyi prostir yak kliuchevyi dlia rozvytku krainy," *Media Sapiens*, 3 March 2013, <http://osvita.mediasapiens.ua/material/15890>.

¹⁰⁸ <http://hromadskeradio.org/>, <http://hromadske.tv/>

largely ended and the once compliant media corporations began to show a relatively clear picture of the news and call for national reconciliation and unity. All the main TV stations added the same logo onto their screens: the Ukrainian flag and the words United Ukraine in both Russian and Ukrainian languages.

At the time of this writing, April 2014, it is too early to tell what the long term impact of these events will be. However, it seems ironic that Russian President Putin went to so much trouble to destabilize and divide Ukraine from within, yet the result of his actions, particularly the military invasion of Crimea, served to unite Ukrainians. The three strands of identity outlined in this article seem to be congealing into a single multi-dimensional Ukrainian identity, where cosmopolitan views blended with old/new visions of identity as well as the cultural affinity with Russia. From available polls and media reports, language, ethnicity, and even foreign policy orientation no longer seem to be dividing Ukrainians. Whichever direction they're looking, towards the European Union or Russia, few want to live in a corrupt state or be invaded by Russia.