A COMPARATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS OF ITAR-TASS'S AND
THE UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL'S COVERAGE OF
THE RUSSIAN REFERENDUM IN APRIL 1993

THESIS

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By

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A comparative content analysis was conducted to determine whether the Russian (ITAR-TASS) and the American (UPI) wire service coverage of President Boris Yeltsin in the April 25, 1993, referendum was balanced and unbiased. Also, the amount of space dedicated to this topic was measured.

Study results indicate that ITAR-TASS was more critical of Yeltsin prior to the referendum than UPI, and that there was no statistically important difference between the two wire services in their post referendum coverage. UPI articles were almost 30% longer than the ITAR-TASS articles. Each UPI article was on an average more than 220 words longer than were the ITAR-TASS articles.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Background

In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev was named General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. He represented a change from previous leaders of the communist superpower in that he was the youngest, the most highly-educated and the most free-spoken leader ever. He sought to carry out major economic and political reforms--starting with economic reforms.

Gorbachev rapidly reorganized large portions of the ruling elite's traditional party structure and sought to strengthen governmental institutions. His four main policies of reform consisted of perestroika, glasnost, democratization and "New Thinking." Perestroika, as did glasnost, encouraged restructuring of the existing political as well as economic system. Through glasnost (openness) Gorbachev encouraged "individual responsibility and competition in state enterprises; and to enable citizens to take erring officials to court" (McCauley, 1988, p. 474). "Democratization" was understood as "coming to terms with failures of the past" (Pushkov, 1990, p. 7). "New Thinking" attempted to "manage current problems through a
comprehensive set of security, economic and environmental initiatives" (Janes, 1990, p. 163).

Through these policies Gorbachev accrued many political foes which indirectly led to the attempted putsch in August of 1991. The subsequent events led to Gorbachev's resignation and the rise of Boris Yeltsin and the Russian Parliament as dominant political actors.

Yeltsin broke with Gorbachev in 1987 and pushed for faster and more comprehensive political and economic reforms. He gave up on Gorbachev's process of reform. Yeltsin also had support from the "numerous independent groups [that] began to emerge...and were acting as quasiparties" (Smith, 1992, p. 97). Yeltsin was elected to the presidency of the Russian republic in May 1990. During the coup against Gorbachev in 1991, Yeltsin "mounted a tank in front of the Russian parliament building and urged his followers to resist the illegal seizure of power" (Smith, 1992, p. XIX). The coup attempt lasted only sixty-three hours, but in this short time Yeltsin gained an enormous amount of support after he and the Russian parliament "rescued" Gorbachev. A short time afterwards, Gorbachev stepped down, the Communist Party was declared illegal, and Yeltsin entered the stage as the most powerful politician in Russia.

Until December 1993, the Russian governmental system, the central administration consists of a popularly elected
Congress of People's Deputies and a bicameral Supreme Soviet which is named from the ranks of the Congress. The President is also popularly elected. The Constitutional Court was established in October 1991 "to oversee the constitutionality of Russian laws and treaties, in addition to ruling on territorial disputes between Federation members" (Banks, 1992, p. 640).

However, in a system undergoing turbulent transition the distance from success to failure is not very far, and by the end of 1992, Yeltsin's powers had been "pruned to such a degree that he was left with only two options: either to agree to become a pure figurehead or to appeal to the people for support" (Rahr, 1993, p. 9).

After the failed coup attempt in August 1991, Yeltsin implemented a program of radical economic reform aimed to change the country's centrally-planned economy into a market economy. But following steep price rises, the support for Yeltsin started to wane and former, as well as new, Yeltsin opponents appeared on the political stage. The main political struggle evolved between Yeltsin and the Congress. The Constitutional Court ultimately sided with Yeltsin's opponents in Congress. Vice president Aleksandr Rutskoi and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov, initiated a strong anti-Yeltsin campaign, and built an independent power base backed by communists and nationalists. To break the deadlock, Yeltsin chose to
enhance his position by asking the Russian people for support through a referendum.

At the Sixth Congress in April 1992, Yeltsin was being pressured to resign from his position as prime minister by communist hardliners in the Congress, but before his departure from the government, he transferred the most important executive powers to his presidential post. He also created a Security Council in June 1992 which was placed in charge of security, defense and foreign affairs. This left the Congress with only the management of the economy as its main responsibility (Rahr, 1993, p. 10).

On April 30, 1992, Yeltsin indicated for the first time that he might conduct a referendum that would seek popular mandate for the establishment of a new political system and get rid of the Congress. Tension between the executive and the legislature increased steadily after this, and the power struggle weakened the central authorities and, more or less, led to the break-up of the union.

After the Seventh Congress in December 1992, the worsening economic situation and the Congress's constant blocking of the reform process contributed to the Congress's growing unpopularity. However, Yeltsin was still relatively popular among the people. Yeltsin moved to break the deadlock by offering to hold a referendum in which he would ask the Russian public whom they trusted the most: him, or the legislators. At first, the Congress rejected the idea of
a referendum, but later agreed to a compromise. The Congress wanted a referendum in which the public would be asked "to approve a new constitution that was to be drafted by the parliament. Later the Congress backed away from its compromise, arguing that a referendum might lead to civil war" (Rahr, 1993, p. 11). Yeltsin agreed not to hold the referendum if a "firm agreement on power sharing could be reached" (Rahr, 1993, p. 12). However, the Eighth Congress in March 1993 rejected Yeltsin's proposal for power sharing; its members tried to take away Yeltsin's main powers and cancelled the referendum. As a result, Yeltsin announced in a live televised address on March 20, 1993, the introduction of "special rule." His declaration stripped the Congress of powers and set aside the constitution. By so doing, Yeltsin placed himself above the hostile Congress. The parliament went into an emergency session at which Yeltsin's impeachment was discussed. Yeltsin backed down from introducing "special rule," but instead insisted on holding the referendum.

The Ninth Congress met on March 29, 1993 trying to impeach Yeltsin, but the motion was defeated by a narrow margin.

The Congress finally agreed to hold a referendum. The Congress stipulated that the referendum would consist of four questions. The four questions were: (1) Do you have confidence in the president of the Russian Federation?
(2) Do you approve of the reforms of the Russian government?
(3) Do you favor an early election for the presidency?
(4) Do you favor early elections for the parliament?
(Sneider, 1993, p. 7). The responses would become legally binding only if supported by at least 50% of all eligible voters. These terms made it almost impossible for Yeltsin to win. Later the Constitutional Court--beholden to Congress--decided that only the questions regarding presidential and parliamentary elections needed to fulfill this requirement.

Yeltsin won the referendum on April 25, 1993, by a relatively large majority. "Fifty-eight percent supported Yeltsin's rule and 53% backed his economic policies" (Burke, 1993, p. 6). However, there was not enough popular support to make early elections mandatory.

Most political scientists agree that the results of the referendum showed that the Russian people were tired of the political impasse, seeking a final split with the old communist system and a move toward democracy and a market economy.

Victorious in the referendum, Yeltsin seemed to have recovered his political standing and for the time being the opponents were silenced. This victory temporarily strengthened Yeltsin's authority over the important instruments of power, the military, the state security agencies and the media.
Since Yeltsin's ascent, the media seem to have become highly politicized, very biased and opinionated. Members of the one camp, which calls itself democratic, think the answer to the question of how the media are to help construct democracy lies in wholeheartedly supporting president Boris Yeltsin and his reform policies and in criticizing members of the anti-Yeltsin opposition, even to the extent of portraying them as ideological enemies of democracy (Tolz, 1993, p. 3).

The view that there is only one answer, and that is Yeltsin, was supported by state television, radio and many newspapers. Supreme Soviet and Congress of People's Deputies Chairman Ruslan Khasbulatov blamed the media for the defeat of his side in the April referendum (Tolz, 1993, p. 4). "The Russian media have failed so far to become a true Fourth Estate" (Tolz, 1993, p. 5). Despite the gloomy picture being painted of the Russian media, most political scientists agree that the media, more than any other institution in Russia, have made the greatest step toward reform and democracy (Tolz, 1993, p. 5). "The media are...believed to be the freest and most advanced facet of Russian society today" (Wishnevsky, 1993, p. 86). However, in October 1993, Yeltsin banned 15 communist media outlets.

In the weeks before the referendum, hardly a day passed without at least one television program seeking support for
Yeltsin's position in the referendum. Considering the fact that television is the main source of information for 85% of the Russian population, Yeltsin's victory in the referendum certainly was helped by the heavy "advertising" on television (Wishnevsky, 1993, p. 90).

Another factor which might have helped Yeltsin to win was the attention American politics as well as the media paid the referendum. Several other political elections have shown, "The American preoccupation with elections leads directly to the phenomenon of the 'demonstration election,' where the main purpose is not to select an indigenous ruling elite but rather to give the U.S.-backed ruling elite a veneer of international legitimacy" (Soderlund, 1990, p. 62). U.S. economic aid negotiations to Russia were taking place simultaneously with the referendum and could have had an impact on the outcome.

In addition to the impact of U.S. foreign policy, the media in Russia played an important part in the fall of communism. However, the public trust in the media started to dwindle in the late '80s. Several new publications, especially newspapers, appeared in the early '90s. These new publications were often radical in the Russian sense of the word and they encouraged criticisms of the past. But they offered little advice on how to build a democracy and how to solve the current problems. Consequently, the media started to lose some of the credibility they had gained during the initial period of glasnost.
One of the main problems of the Russian media is that their journalists were trained under the totalitarian concept of journalism which believes that media are a propaganda tool for the leading communist party rather than a source of information for the public (Eribo, Gaddy, 1992, p. 244). The former director of TASS explained the Soviet media theory to journalism students at the University of Moscow as follows; "Information is the literary reflection of facts, but it must pursue a definite goal" (Jones, 1966, p. 687). The old Soviet press refrained from reporting any political event as it happened unless some policy decision had been made prior to the event (Richards, 1958, p. 455). The truth was printed, but not the whole truth. In summarizing the status of the Soviet press for most of the Soviet era, the following quote seems appropriate; "Lenin cast the model for the Soviet system and Stalin held to it rigidly, while Khrushchev elevated the press to a higher position. Under all three men, however, the fundamental flaw of state control remained" (Hopkins, 1965, p. 523). As a result, communication in the Soviet Union was "actually two parallel systems, one for the official system, and the other a series of devices which enabled the citizens to supplement, correct and replace the official media" (Eribo, Gaddy, 1992, p. 245).

The Soviet media were known for turning most international conflicts into an East-West conflict. One
example of this practice was seen in the reporting of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 in which the Soviet media revealed "a change away from the original Russian-Afghanistan military conflict toward the consequences of this conflict for East-West political relations" (Kristiansen, Fowlie, Spencer, 1982, p. 640).

The coverage of the Chernobyl disaster (April 26, 1986) was the first test of Gorbachev's policy of glasnost reflected in the press. Initial coverage sought to minimize the magnitude of the disaster. Later coverage (April 30, 1986), marked the beginning of an era of unprecedented timeliness and openness in the Soviet media. Some Russian journalists still observed the basic principles concerning news coverage based on the principle of "Marxist objectivity" (Zhou, 1989, p. 204). Glasnost did not mean, and never meant, "freedom of the press" in the Western sense of the phrase (Androunas, 1991, p. 190). Instead, it implied biased support and control of opinions regarded as "unwanted" by the ruling party.

As of 1993, there are several Russian news agencies, both state-owned and independent. ITAR-TASS (Information Telegraph Agency Russia--The Telegraph Agency of the Soviet Union) is one of the oldest and it is state-owned. Other state-owned agencies are RIA (the Russian Information Agency) and Novosti. "A number of independent agencies, including Postfactum, DR-Press, ANI, and Sibinform, also
came into being in the early 1990s, and at least one of them, Interfax, seems to be capable of competing with RIA and ITAR-TASS" (Wishnevsky, 1993, p. 87).

"TASS, with its gigantic network of reporters and foreign correspondents, [was] is the major news source for Soviet newspapers" (Smith, 1992, p. 190). As ITAR-TASS, it still holds a prominent position as disseminator of news from the post-communist Soviet Union. Both The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press and Radio Free Europe/Free Liberty: Research report said they rely on Interfax and ITAR-TASS interchangeably, and that their coverage would not be adequate based on only one of these two news agencies. At least to the non-Russian part of the world, these two wire services seem to dominate as sources for news coverage of Russia.

Problem

The problem of this study is to determine whether ITAR-TASS and United Press International presented balanced and unbiased coverage of the Russian referendum of April 1993.

Purpose

The purpose of this comparative content analysis is to attempt (1) to determine if any differences exist between the two wire services in their coverage of the Russian referendum of April 1993; (2) to determine what, if any, changes took place in pre- and post-referendum reporting, and of Yeltsin in particular, and (3) to learn if the news
services differ in the amount of space devoted to the referendum or Yeltsin.

Hypothesis

To solve the problem posed in this study, research was designed to prove or disprove these hypotheses: (1) The UPI wire service reports were more favorable of Yeltsin before the referendum than the ITAR-TASS reports. (2) The UPI wire service reports were more unfavorable of Yeltsin after the referendum than the ITAR-TASS reports. (3) ITAR-TASS articles focused on the effects the referendum would have on Russia, while UPI similarly focused on the effects the referendum would have on the United States. (4) UPI carried a larger amount of coverage regarding the April referendum than ITAR-TASS.

Review of Literature

By the middle of the previous century, Karl Marx had outlined a theory of media practice in socialist societies. He believed, "The very function of the press should come from the central function--the perpetuation and expansion of the socialist system" (Martin, Chaudhary, 1983, p. 170). Lenin expanded on Marx' thoughts and he had the strongest impact on the Soviet press system among all the General Secretaries of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Romm (1935, p. 21), a special Washington correspondent of Izvestia, said about the Soviet press:
Our press is not simply a means of distribution and circulation of news or of ideas; it is a powerful factor of organization and education of large masses of people for new forms of work, and for a new collective consciousness, gradually replacing the old individualist mentality.

Romm's article on the Soviet press's function was one of few written by a Soviet citizen believing in communism and published in a Western communication journal.

Many works have been published on the Soviet press and its function in the communist society. Most of this work has been carried out by Western researchers after 1946, during 45 years of Cold War. Content analyses and comparisons determining differences between Western and Soviet media are numerous, but quite one-sided.

Richards (1958) claimed in his study of the Soviet press, Pravda and Izvestia had not only attempted to discredit completely the United States and its policies in the eyes of the readers of the Soviet press but had included the United Nations in the camp of the "reactionaries"...The Soviet press consistently showed its readers a Soviet government battling for the "democratic" rights of small nations and a United States spreading "terror" and "oppression" in the wake of its policy of "domination" (p. 520).
This was a commonly held opinion of the communist press seen with Western eyes. Propaganda was most definitely one of the main functions of the communist press, and communists did not disagree.

Hopkins (1965, p. 531) quoted Khrushchev in his research report assessing the Soviet press: "Journalists are not only the loyal helpers of the party, but literally the apprentices of our party--the active fighters for its great cause." There seemed to be little doubt among researchers that the Soviet press had for decades been one-dimensional, distorted and filled with communist party propaganda.

Jones (1966, p. 687), in her review of U.S. news in the Soviet press, quoted Lenin saying; "A newspaper must be a mass propagandist, agitator, organizer and critic for the Communist cause." Eribo and Gaddy (1992, p. 244) supported previous research on the Soviet press saying; "It was Soviet press policy to keep information on many issues and controversies affecting the society at large from the Soviet public."

The change in Soviet media policy after glasnost has been a popular topic for a multitude of media specialists/researchers (Zhou, 1988/89; Schillinger, 1989; Androunas, 1991; Eribo, Gaddy, 1992; Wishnevsky, 1993; Tolz, 1993). One of the experts on recent Soviet/Russian media is Ellen Mickiewicz, who has specialized in post-Cold War broadcast journalism in the former Soviet Union. She
observed as early as 1988, only two years after glasnost had been launched, "[the Soviet press has gone through] a radical change in a whole system of interrelated processes of information flow and assimilation." Mickiewicz (1991) reassessed the American image on Russian television and drew an optimistic picture for future relationships between Russians and Americans with help of the Russian television (Dennis, Gerbner, Zassourski, 1991, p. 30).

Several studies examined the coverage of foreign news in wire services. Some of these studies have been content analyses comparing two Western wire services on a specific foreign event (Giffard, 1982), and others compared different wire service news accounts of the same event (Kirat, Weaver, 1984).

There are many reasons why it is important that wire services be content-analyzed. Their impact on other media is extensive. Malaney and Buss (1979) outline in five points the wire services' influence on today's media:

[1] The wire services are considered by some to be one of the most reliable and important news source for reporters in the mass media...[2] The wire services provide many news stories reported in the media...
[3] The wire services by virtue of their large number of members/clients; their own news gathering staffs; and their local, national and international coverage provide a large volume of stories on a wide range of
topics which may be consumed by the mass media...

[4] The wire services have developed a reputation for credible, honorable, objective news reporting...

[5] Wire service reports are presented in a format readily usable by the mass media, so that a wire report may appear in television, newspapers or radio (pp. 602-603).

The majority of the studies employing wire services have focused on geographical distribution of news and the balance of distribution of news between developed and less-developed nations. Relatively few studies have content analyzed a specific news event and compared two nations' wire services' coverage of the same event. Soderlund (1990) did such a study comparing U.S. media coverage and Canadian media coverage of the 1982 and 1984 elections in El Salvador. Soderlund's analysis proved helpful in developing categories for analysis in this study, but media coverage in the U.S. and Canada were too similar to represent an analog to this study. The Canadian coverage served as a neutral control against which to assess the American coverage. Also, this study used both newspapers and wire services as data of analysis.

More directly relevant to the present study was the evaluative assertion analysis by Farrokhi (1985). Farrokhi content-analyzed three American prestige newspapers comparing and measuring their editorial attitudes before and
after the 1979 Iranian revolution. He found the newspapers "treated the revolution negatively during the pre-revolutionary period... showed moderation during the transitional period... [and] switched their attitudes to most unfavorable after the establishment of the revolutionary government in Iran." Farrokhi suggested U.S. press reporting supported the present ally regime. If the U.S. considered the regime unsuccessful, they encouraged a military coup, or even, directly or indirectly, launched a war with the regime. This study provided a support for a change in U.S. foreign policy based on self-interest (Farrokhi, 1985, p. 25-27).

To summarize the results of these studies, content analysis studies showed that in reporting of foreign affairs the U.S. press was noticeably influenced by official American foreign policy decisions.

Justification

Few studies have been conducted using wire service articles as main data of analysis. The importance of wire services in news collection is undisputed. "In spite of the apparent importance of the wire services in understanding reporting of political information, few studies have been conducted on wire service reporting" (Malaney, Buss, 1979, p. 603). The sole purpose of Malaney's and Buss's (1979) study was to "illustrate the importance of a need for a more comprehensive analysis of wire service reporting."
Limitations

The content analyzed was limited to articles carried by ITAR-TASS and UPI during April 1993 regarding the referendum in Russia on April 25, 1993. Articles were restricted to those extracted from the database Lexis/Nexis by the use of the following search words: Yeltsin, referendum, parliament and crisis. Headlines were not included in the items selected for analysis.

Methodology

Content analysis was used to answer the research questions of this study. Each paragraph was a unit of analysis to determine the favorableness toward Yeltsin. Paragraphs that were not oriented around the referendum or Yeltsin were not included in the directional analysis.

Item selection: The study used news articles downloaded by computer via telephone modem from the database Lexis/Nexis. To select relevant stories, search words were chosen to identify articles that referred to the April 1993 referendum in Russia. The search was limited to ITAR-TASS and UPI files for the whole month of April.

Twenty-three UPI articles and 17 ITAR-TASS articles were coded. The number of paragraphs (units) was 543, while the number of paragraphs with direct reference to Yeltsin was 384. Three hundred forty-six units appeared prior to the referendum and 197 after the referendum. Of the units reported before the referendum, 254 made direct reference to
Yeltsin. One hundred thirty units after the referendum made direct reference to Yeltsin.

Coder reliability: Three independent coders were trained and tested. Reliability was estimated based upon the degree to which the three coders agreed (Farrokhi, 1985, p. 41). The average intercoder reliability coefficient for the two news agencies was estimated.

The coders were instructed to code only paragraphs with reference to Yeltsin. This included paragraphs that indirectly mentioned Yeltsin, e.g. not by name but by title, and the like. The coders were provided with examples. They were also informed of the danger of (1) the halo effect, (2) the error of central tendency and (3) failure to scatter ratings. These three points refer to common mistakes coders do when judging location of values on a scale. A three-point scale was developed: favorable, neutral and unfavorable. Paragraphs rated neutral were dropped from final analyses.

In testing hypothesis one and two, the coders were trained in coding paragraphs about Yeltsin to be favorable when they associated attributes of success or other desirable characteristics. This included winning, gaining, being successful, skilled, hard worker, diligent or responsible, being greeted by a favorable crowd reaction or approval. Similarly, paragraphs about Yeltsin were judged to be unfavorable when they associated attributes of failure or undesirable characteristics. This included losing, losing
support, failing, being negligent, lazy, foolish, irresponsible and being greeted by an unfavorable crowd reaction or disapproval. Stories that could not be classified as predominantly favorable or unfavorable were classified as neutral.

According to Budd, Thorp and Donohew (1967, p. 55), "In studies where the classification of direction can be reduced to terms of favorable and unfavorable content, an overall estimate of the degree of imbalance has been developed." Therefore the statistical computation method of the coefficient of imbalance was used.

The third hypothesis stated that the ITAR-TASS articles would focus on the effects the referendum would have on Russia while UPI articles would focus on the effect the referendum would have on the United States. The unit of coding was determined to be each article in this instance. Four categories were developed for this purpose; (1) Russia, (2) United States, (3) both countries and (4) none.

The fourth hypothesis stated that UPI carried a larger amount of coverage regarding the Russian referendum than did ITAR-TASS. Each article carried a word count, a measurement of central tendency and standard deviation were estimated.

Statistical treatments and results: the chi-square test was used because it tests statistical significance, and not the strength of an association (Stempel, Westley, 1981, p. 67). Even though this study was not based on a true
random sampling, the chi-square test seemed to be the only appropriate method for testing the favorableness proposed in the first and second hypothesis. A high degree of significance reduces the level of chance regarding the strength in the relationship. The actual values were compared to the expected values.

Thereafter, the coefficient of imbalance was used to judge the statistical impact of favorableness.

Organization of Thesis

Chapter II reports on the collection of data in the content analysis. Chapter III interprets and analyzes the data. Chapter IV reports the conclusions reached and offers suggestions for future study.
CHAPTER II

DATA COLLECTION AND RESULTS

General Information

All articles examined made references to Yeltsin and the referendum. Every paragraph that carried a direct reference to Yeltsin was coded for favorableness. A total of 17 ITAR-TASS articles and 23 UPI articles were included in this study. The ITAR-TASS articles contained 68 paragraphs with direct reference to Yeltsin, while the UPI articles contained 317 paragraphs regarding Yeltsin.

Although the number of UPI articles were only six more than the ITAR-TASS articles, the number of referendum-related paragraphs differed widely. Table 1 reports the results of the number and percentage distribution of referendum-related paragraphs.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wire Service</th>
<th>Articles</th>
<th>Paragraphs</th>
<th>Yeltsin</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITAR-TASS</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>59.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPI</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>74.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Unit size is one paragraph.

A preliminary test of the coding process was conducted to determine intercoder reliability. Various statistical methods of deciding the reliability exist. Holsti (1969,
p. 85) suggested that Scott's (1955) formula "appears to be the most useful." However, Scott's index of reliability (pi) is useful only with two coders. This study used the formula devised by Westley and his associates. (Westley et al., 1963, p. 527). "This formula has been established based upon the author's rationalization: 'There being three judgments on every code, a special reliability formula was used which counted three-judge agreements as twice two-judge agreement'" (Farrokhi, 1985, p. 41).

The formula is: \[ R = \frac{A + 2A^1}{2N} \]

"A" represents the frequency of agreement between two coders; "A^1" represents the frequency of agreement among all three coders; and "N" represents all the units coded.

Three coders read through the "Instructions for coders" (Appendix A) and coded 30 ITAR-TASS and UPI units for favorableness. The results of this test were tabulated and resulted in intercoder reliability index of .866. To test the effect the referendum had on Russia, United States, both or none, the same coders analyzed ten ITAR-TASS and UPI units. This resulted in an intercoder reliability index of .90. Both results indicate a high reliability of this study.

Reliability

Once coding was complete on the main data, Westley's intercoder reliability test was used to test all units. When two of the three coders agreed, their judgment prevailed. Total three-way disagreement appeared in eleven of the 385
units only. These units were excluded from this study (Farrokhi, 1985, p. 41). In 374 of the 385 units there was agreement. Intercoder reliability was .731. The reliability was .699 for TASS and .762 for UPI.

As a measure of direction, the coding process required the three coders to score each unit or paragraph as favorable, unfavorable or neutral in relationship to President Yeltsin.

The third hypothesis stated that UPI would focus more on the effects of the referendum on the United States, while ITAR-TASS would focus more on the effects of the referendum on Russia. At least two coders agreed on each article (unit) which gave a .807 intercoder reliability. Reliability for the ITAR-TASS articles was .853. Reliability for the UPI articles was .761. The difference in reliability between the two wire services could be due to the difference in the number of articles. The more articles there are to code, the greater the chance for a lower reliability score seems to be.

Results

The number and percentage of favorable, unfavorable and neutral were reported in the pre- and post referendum units as well as the number and percentage of total relevant units. Table 2 reports the pre referendum direction of these units.
Table 2

Favorable, Unfavorable and Neutral Scores in Pre Referendum Units Containing Yeltsin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wire Service</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Unfavor.</th>
<th>Favor.</th>
<th>Disagree.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITAR-TASS</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPI</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Unit size is one paragraph.

Forty-eight percent (48.1%) of the ITAR-TASS units and 42.5% of the UPI units were neutral. The ITAR-TASS pre referendum units coded unfavorable constituted 29.6% of all the pre-referendum units in the ITAR-TASS articles. Twenty-eight percent of the pre referendum UPI units were coded unfavorable toward Yeltsin. Finally, 20.4% of the pre referendum ITAR-TASS units were coded favorable toward Yeltsin, while 27% of the UPI units were favorable.

Table 3 reports the post referendum direction of favorableness in ITAR-TASS and UPI units.

Table 3

Favorable, Unfavorable and Neutral Scores in Post Referendum Units Containing Yeltsin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wire Service</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Unfavor.</th>
<th>Favor.</th>
<th>Disagree.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITAR-TASS</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPI</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Unit size is one paragraph.

Fifty percent of the ITAR-TASS units and 25.6% of the UPI units were neutral. The ITAR-TASS post referendum units coded unfavorable constituted 21.4% of all the post
referendum units in the ITAR-TASS articles. Twenty-seven percent (27.4%) of the post referendum UPI units were coded unfavorable toward Yeltsin. Finally, 21.4% of the post referendum ITAR-TASS units were coded favorable toward Yeltsin, while 43.6% of the UPI units were favorable.

Total disagreement among the three coders in pre- and post referendum units constituted 2.9%.

Of the Yeltsin-related units, 38.4% were scored neutral. This reflected some of the ambiguity of the data.

For the pre-referendum coverage (chi-square = 15.8595; df = 5; p = .0073), the chi-square test revealed at a significance level of 5% a statistically significant difference in coverage between ITAR-TASS and UPI. For the post referendum coverage (chi-square = 9.6079; df = 5; p = .0871), the chi-square test result, with a significance level of 5%, showed there was no statistically significant difference between ITAR-TASS and UPI.

To test the relationship between favorable and unfavorable units, the coefficient of imbalance was used. The neutral units were dropped from this analysis. Two formulae were applicable—the first when favorable units outnumber the unfavorable and the second when unfavorable units outnumber the favorable units (Budd, Thorp, Donohew, 1958, p. 56).

\[
C_f = \frac{f^2 - fu}{rt} \quad f > u
\]

\[
C_u = \frac{fu - u^2}{rt} \quad f < u
\]
Where: \( f \) = favorable units of content
\( u \) = unfavorable units of content
\( t \) = number of units of total content
\( r \) = total units of relevant content

The coefficient of imbalance produced a single figure indicating the relationship between the favorable and unfavorable units.

The coefficient of imbalance was \(-0.0218\) for the ITAR-TASS pre referendum units. This figure expressed the content's negative direction in ITAR-TASS's pre referendum reporting of Yeltsin. The coefficient of imbalance was \(-0.0018\) for the UPI pre referendum units. This figure expressed the content's negative direction in UPI's pre referendum reporting of Yeltsin. However, this negative direction was weaker than that of ITAR-TASS.

In the case of ITAR-TASS's post referendum reporting, an equal number of favorable and unfavorable (3 units) paragraphs appeared. The coefficient of imbalance was therefore zero. The coefficient of imbalance in UPI's post referendum reporting was 0.026.

The measurement of the effects of the referendum on United States, Russia, both and none, showed that 58.8% of the ITAR-TASS articles focused on Russia, while 60.9% of the UPI articles did the same. Only one UPI article focused on the effects of the referendum on both the United States and Russia. No ITAR-TASS article focused on the effects of the referendum on both countries. Forty-one (41.2%) percent of the ITAR-TASS articles and 34.8% of the UPI articles did not
focus on either country as far as effects were concerned. No article focused on the United States.

The fourth hypothesis stated that UPI would carry a larger amount of coverage regarding the referendum than would ITAR-TASS. Each article carried a word count. The ITAR-TASS articles' mean word count was 542 (542.352) and the standard deviation was 206 (205.939). The UPI articles' mean word count was 763 (762.652), and the standard deviation was 170 (169.700).

Validity

Data-related validity "assesses...the degree to which the representation of the raw data in an analysis correspond to an outside criterion" (Krippendorff, 1960, p. 157). It is noted that this study yielded a high degree of agreement among its three coders. This agreement demonstrated how well the method of analysis represented the data. It also showed that this study used the type of data needed for drawing inferences to solve the problem as it was defined.

On this basis it is concluded that a satisfactory level of predictive validity for this study has been achieved.
CHAPTER III

INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

The amount of Yeltsin-related coverage varied greatly between ITAR-TASS and UPI. The unit of analysis for determining favorableness of pre- and post referendum coverage was a paragraph. The UPI writing style emphasized the rule of "one thought per paragraph," while the ITAR-TASS writing style showed that more than one thought per paragraph was common. ITAR-TASS carried much longer paragraphs and therefore there were fewer units of analysis for the comparison of pre- and post referendum favorableness of coverage between the two wire services.

In this study 385 units (paragraphs) were tested using the chi-square test and the coefficient of imbalance for significance of difference. Hypothesis 1 stated: The UPI wire service reports were more favorable toward Yeltsin before the referendum than were the ITAR-TASS reports. This hypothesis was proved. There was a statistically significant difference between ITAR-TASS's and UPI's pre referendum coverage of Yeltsin. UPI's pre referendum coverage of Yeltsin was more favorable than that of ITAR-TASS. The coefficient of imbalance showed that the ITAR-TASS wire service reports were more negative toward Yeltsin (-.0218) than were UPI wire service reports (-.0018) (See table 4).
Hypothesis 2 stated: The UPI wire service reports were more unfavorable toward Yeltsin after the referendum than the ITAR-TASS reports. This hypothesis was disproved. The coefficient of imbalance showed that the UPI post referendum coverage was more favorable toward Yeltsin (.026) than was ITAR-TASS (.0000) (See table 4). However, the chi-square test showed that there was no statistically significant difference between ITAR-TASS and UPI wire service reports. The Russian and the American wire services were unexpectedly close in their coverage of this politically significant
event. After more than seven decades under communist rule and a contrasting interpretation of the press’s societal functions from a western viewpoint, it was expected that ITAR-TASS would present rather intense feelings, either pro or against Yeltsin. Since ITAR-TASS is still state-owned, it was believed that the wire service, after the referendum, would take a strong stand in support of Yeltsin. The low number of ITAR-TASS’s post referendum units might have contributed to its "objective" coverage of Yeltsin (See table 4).

Hypothesis 3 asserted: ITAR-TASS articles focused on the effects the referendum would have on Russia, while UPI similarly focused on the effects the referendum would have on the United States. This hypothesis was partially supported. ITAR-TASS did focus on the effects of the referendum on Russia, but so did UPI. The percentage distribution of effects on the four categories (Russia, United States, Both and None) is shown in table 5.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wire Service</th>
<th>Russia</th>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITAR-TASS</td>
<td>58.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>41.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPI</td>
<td>60.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4.35%</td>
<td>34.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Unit size is one article.

Previous research regarding elections in countries where the United States had economic and political interests
("demonstration election," Soderlund, 1990, p. 62) has demonstrated that American coverage had a tendency to focus primarily on the effects of the election on the United States and not the country in question. This does not seem to be the case with the 1993 referendum in Russia (See table 5).

Hypothesis 4 stated: UPI carried a larger amount of coverage regarding the April referendum than ITAR-TASS. This hypothesis was supported. Each unit (article) carried a word count that made comparison between the two wire services straightforward and impartial. The constructed search sequence (Yeltsin, referendum, parliament and crisis) restricted the number of articles to be extracted from the database Lexis/Nexis. Six more UPI articles (23) than ITAR-TASS articles (17) were extracted. It was likely, already at this stage of the study, that UPI would carry a larger amount of coverage than would ITAR-TASS. The arithmetic mean of the number of words was calculated by adding all the number of words and then dividing by the number of articles. The mean is, in other words, not affected by the total number of articles selected for this study.

Table 6 shows the mean and the standard deviation of the ITAR-TASS and the UPI articles.
Table 6

The Mean and Standard Deviation of ITAR-TASS and UPI Articles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wire Service</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ITAR-TASS</td>
<td>542.352</td>
<td>205.939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UPI</td>
<td>762.652</td>
<td>169.700</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Unit size is one article.

The UPI articles were, on an average, 28.886% longer than were the ITAR-TASS articles. Approximately 95% of the UPI articles were between 423 and 1102 words in length. Ninety-five percent of the ITAR-TASS articles were between 130 and 954 words in length. The ITAR-TASS articles varied more in length than did the UPI articles.

The shortest article in the population was an ITAR-TASS article, and the longest article in the population was a UPI article.

The average UPI article was 220.3 words longer than the average ITAR-TASS article.
CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to (1) compare and determine if any differences exist between ITAR-TASS's and UPI's coverage of the Russian referendum of April 25, 1993, (2) determine what changes, if any, took place in pre- and post referendum reporting, and of Yeltsin in particular, and (3) learn if the news services differ in the amount of space devoted to the referendum or Yeltsin. This was accomplished by first identifying the referendum-related articles and then using content analysis techniques and a directional content analysis of articles from ITAR-TASS and UPI. The results were then used to calculate the percentage of favorable, unfavorable and neutral paragraphs.

The research was designed to prove or disprove four hypotheses. The first hypothesis stated that the UPI wire service reports would be more favorable of Yeltsin before the referendum than would the ITAR-TASS reports. The content analysis supported the hypothesis and was able to establish that UPI wire service reports were in fact more favorable toward Yeltsin before the referendum than were those from ITAR-TASS.

The second hypothesis, that the UPI wire service reports would be more unfavorable toward Yeltsin after the
referendum than would the ITAR-TASS reports, however, was not supported by the results of the content analysis. It was found that there was no statistically significant difference between the two wire services in their post referendum coverage. The directional analysis showed that UPI was slightly more favorable in its post referendum coverage than was ITAR-TASS.

The third hypothesis, that the ITAR-TASS articles would focus on the effects of the referendum on Russia, while UPI would focus on the effects of the referendum on the United States, was only partially supported. ITAR-TASS did in fact focus more than half of its referendum coverage on Russia, but so did UPI. Neither wire service’s articles focused on the effects of the referendum on the United States.

The fourth hypothesis, that UPI would carry a larger amount of coverage regarding the referendum than would ITAR-TASS, was supported. On an average, the UPI articles were almost 30% longer than were the ITAR-TASS articles.

Summary

The result of this content analysis suggests a minimal difference in coverage between two very different wire services. Despite ITAR-TASS’s many years of existence under communism and a totalitarian concept of news, the difference between the two wire service’s coverage of the Russian referendum in April 1993 was insignificant.
The analysis suggests that further study in this area is needed. The April 25, 1993, referendum in Russia is only one event in a changing Russia that created great international attention. A similar study using various internationally significant events might yield a different result. A comparison between post communist Soviet and American wire service coverage could establish an interesting base for many future research studies. Also, a comparison between a Russian and an American wire service regarding the coverage of an American event would be a revealing undertaking. Future studies should focus on how Russian wire services view objectivity. Also, the measurement of the amount of investigative and interpretative news coverage found in Russian wire services, and in the Russian media generally, would represent an original and appealing direction for further comparative content analysis.

Further study could select an equal number of dates before and after the event itself. A possible weakness with this study was that the whole month of April was selected, and with the referendum itself taking place as late as April 25, the results might be skewed. This study compared favorableness of pre- and post referendum coverage, in which pre referendum coverage was selected from 25 days and post-referendum coverage from only five days.
It can, however, be argued that in news reporting of an event such as the referendum, most of the reporting takes place prior to the event. When the event is over, the news interest declines rapidly. There might for instance not have been any coverage of the referendum 25 days after the referendum. If this study had included ten days before and after the event in its analysis, the result could be similar to the result of this study, or it could be different.
APPENDIX A

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CODERS
INSTRUCTIONS FOR CODERS

Coding is an essential part of this comparative content analysis. Seventeen ITAR-TASS articles and 23 United Press International articles constitute the data for coding.

Each coder needs to read through these articles thoroughly and determine as objectively as possible the effect and favorableness of articles and paragraphs. The following instructions have been written to achieve intercoder reliability and consistency.

Keep in mind 1) the halo effect, 2) the error of central tendency and 3) failure to scatter ratings.

As coder you will probably encounter situations where it is difficult to make decisions, in these instances try to do your best and judge consistently. Good luck and thank you for helping the researcher complete this thesis.

Coding of effects

Read each ITAR-TASS and UPI article (coding unit) and determine if the article mainly focuses on the effect the referendum would have or had on (1) Russia, (2) United States, (3) both countries or (4) none.

Coding of favorableness

Units (paragraphs) containing Yeltsin have been indicated on each coder's copy of the data. Be aware that he is not only referred to as Boris Yeltsin, but also as the Russian President, president, executive authority, statesman, presidential team, Russian leader and he etc.
Sometimes you might be in doubt whether the unit is positive, neutral or negative. Units that associate Yeltsin with winning, gaining, being successful, skilled, hard worker, diligent or responsible, being greeted by a favorable crowd reaction or approval should be coded as favorable.

Units that associate Yeltsin with attributes of failure including losing, losing support, failing, being negligent, lazy, foolish, irresponsible and being greeted by an unfavorable crowd reaction or disapproval should be coded as unfavorable.

Units that cannot be classified as predominantly favorable or unfavorable should be classified as neutral.

If you still cannot make a decision whether the paragraphs are positive or negative, code them as neutral.

Examples of positive units
* "People expressed confidence in President Yeltsin."
* "The President's speech was emotional and interesting."
* "He believes that the Russian people should vote for confidence in the Russian President."
* "Yeltsin will win."
* Yeltsin's supporters staged a rally protesting Khasbulatov's arrival." Notice Khasbulatov and Rutskoi are regarded as Yeltsin's main political enemies.
* "The President knows well the needs of the people."
Examples of negative units

* "The reforms conducted by the President have collapsed."

* "...losses inflicted upon the state by the president."

* "He compared the president to a criminal."

* "They said no to the policy carried out by the President."

* "...a triumph expected by the President has not been achieved."

* "They made numerous critical remarks in address of the President and his circle."

Examples of neutral units

* "The party believes it is in the interest of the President to prove again the electorate's confidence in him by honest competition at pre-term presidential elections."

* "65 percent of 98,700,000 electors participated in the referendum by 8 p.m."

* "Yeltsin called on citizens of Russia to make their final choice at the national referendum on April 25."

* "President Boris Yeltsin was one of the first to vote in the referendum on Sunday."

* "He said society needs both power branches."

* "Early elections of the President and the Parliament are necessary to confirm their mandates..."
REFERENCES


