

**Role of Russian Media in International Political
Communication: A Study of 'Arab Spring'**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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DECLARATION


I declare that the dissertation entitled *ROLE OF RUSSIAN MEDIA IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICAL COMMUNICATION: A STUDY OF 'ARAB SPRING'* submitted by me for the award of the degree of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.


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CERTIFICATE

We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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Dedicated to
my
Umma & Uppa

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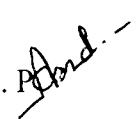
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List of Abbreviations

AFP:	Agence France-Presse
AP:	Associate Press
APN:	Novosti Press Agency
BBC:	British Broadcasting Corporation
BRICS:	Brazil Russia India China South Africa
CCASG:	Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf
CCTV:	China Central Television
CIS:	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNN:	Cable News Network
CPRF:	Communist Party of the Russian Federation
CPSU:	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
EBRD:	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EU:	European Union
FSB:	Russian Federal Security Service
IAN:	Information Agency Novosti
KGB:	Russian Secret Police
NMG:	National Media Group
NATO:	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
RSDLP:	Russian Social Democratic Labour Party
USA:	United States of America
UK:	United Kingdom
UNSC:	United Nations Security Council
USSR:	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VGTRK:	All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company

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Definitions of Key Terms

1. **CNN-effect:** The phenomenon of global real time media becoming a decisive factor in determining policies and outcomes of significant political events globally. It proposes media's impact and influence on diplomacy, foreign policy and humanitarian interventions of state and non-state actors.
2. **Glavlit:** Russian abbreviation for Chief Board of Literature and Publishing established in 1922 which renamed as Chief Board for Providing Security of State Secrets in the Press after Stalin era.
3. **Global Media:** Media outlets which originally based in any nation-state (mostly Western) but transcend geographical boundaries with global presence in the production and dissemination of media contents.
4. **Global Public Sphere/ Transnational Public Spheres:** The sites and forums in which non-state actors including media debate and discuss about issues of common concern.
5. **Information and Communication Flow:** The movement of messages across national boundaries among two or more national and cultural systems. It includes a flows of all kinds of information, political discourse, scientific research, corporate data, personal communication and media entertainment.
6. **International Political Communication:** Use of information and communication to influence the politically relevant behaviour of people abroad. It's the diplomatic flow of information, political persuasive communication, propaganda and public diplomacy aimed at public opinion of international audience used as an instrument for conducting international relations as a specific mean by which state can gain power over opinion.
7. **Media Diplomacy:** Media's engagement with the foreign policy-making processes making it more public through selling war or peace and sustaining public support for it.
8. **Media Globalization:** The outflow of domestic media products to global spheres vis a vis the inflow of global media products to *local spheres* attracting both domestic and global markets.

9. **Mediated Political Communication:** Media's effort to select and shape messages originated from various types of actors, politicians and political parties, lobbyists and pressure groups, or actors of civil society to form 'political public sphere'.
10. **Mediatization/Mediated-Politics:** Media's move toward the centre of the social and political process of any society promoting "media-constructed public spheres." It also means the strategic use of political and social power of media to influence the agendas as well as the triggering and framing of public issues.
11. **Obshchestvennoe:** The term meaning civic or non-state used by Soviet scholars instead of the term public, in reference to opinion.
12. **Political Communication:** Purposeful communication about politics or the competitive struggle to influence and control popular perceptions of key political events and issues.
13. **Public Diplomacy:** The diplomatic efforts to promote positive images of any country through cultural and communication and information measures that can develop people-to-people relations.
14. **Public Opinion:** The expressed view of an individual or aggregation of individuals on a subject of broad social importance it also comprises is a point of view shared by a number of people and relevant to a topic of general political significance.
15. **Public Sphere:** All the places and forums where issues of importance to any political community are discussed and debated, and where information is presented that is essential to citizen participation in community life.
16. **Soft Power:** The ability to affect others through resources of culture, values, and policies and the power to obtain the needed outcomes through attraction rather than coercion or payment.
17. **Sovinformburo:** The Russian abbreviation for *Soviet* Information Bureau.
18. **War for Hearts and Minds:** Diplomatic and propaganda initiatives to win the public opinion of foreign people and to ensure the spheres of influence abroad.
19. **Zakazhuka:** Russian term for accepting bribes in exchange for editorial content popular in different forms like paid articles and paid investigative reports.

Chapter I

Media and International Political Communication: A Conceptual Frame Work

Background

Mass media play a great role in international political communication through engagement with global public mediating political discourses and interpreting global issues concerning international relations. Given the geopolitical and strategic importance of information and communication in the emerging globalized world order after the disintegration of the Soviet Union (Wilhelm, 1990: 119; Alleyne, 1995: 7; Moulana, 1997: 12; Tylor, 1997: 58; Tehranian, 1999: 60; McQuail, 2006: 9), the role of media in international political communication becomes a crucial factor in international relations. Celebrated as the fourth estate of democracy, the universally accepted form of government in the post-Soviet world order, media, information and communication can play significant role in shaping foreign policies of modern nation states. Information and communication flow and mediated political communication across borders are believed as integral means in the emergence of transnational public sphere where as non-state actors like media and civil society are active stake holders in global politics and international relations today. While media becomes a “soft power” influencing international politics and relations, media and communication issues can be analyzed in an international relations context assessing the political interaction between nation states, global media, and international civil society since it promote democratization of world politics (Crack, 2008: 3). Hence, as Hamid Moulana suggested, ‘it is high time to discuss the global issues not only in explicit economic, geopolitical and military terms but equally in the context of cultural communication and information struggle’ (Moulana, 1997: 5).

After the disintegration of Soviet Union and the emergence of a unilateral hegemonic “new world order”, the Russian media has been the part and parcel of the race for influencing the international audience along with the state initiatives

to search for alternative order and expand its spheres of influence across the globe. Russia has developed its own media and communication tools to reach to both internal and external audience. The main mechanisms, opted for enhancing Russia's global influence can be identified as multivector diplomacy and strategic communications (Kimmage, 2009: 4). The traditional as well as new media tools like web and social media are also used for Russia's nation-branding and spreading pro-government news across the globe. Mediated political communication and foreign policy of the state on international issues demonstrate compatibility in the case of Russia. The state supported media are now actively engaging in mass mediated public diplomacy conveying Russian perspective of the international politics. Russian strategic communications with foreign audience take the shape of international broadcasting and public diplomacy. *Russia Today(RT)*, a satellite television station with a \$30 million annual budget, which offers programming in English, Arabic and Spanish is one of the significant Russian state initiatives for international political communication (Cohen, 2012: 201).

As the role of media in international political communication is addressed mostly in the context of United States and Western Europe (Rantanen, 2005: 1), Russian media's role in international political communication seems an under-researched area. When media of major Western powers remain as the leading players in so-called 'global public sphere', Russian media and its political communication in shaping global public opinion towards international issues like 'Arab Spring' deserve academic attention since Russian media arguably tries to emerge as a global alternative though burdened with Soviet legacy. Hence, 'Arab Spring' is a good case in point to demonstrate the role of Russian media in international political communication. In 'Arab Spring' media of global powers including US, EU, China, etc also has been playing a decisive role either as active stake holders or key commentators. As a precedent to examine 'Arab Spring' in relation to Russian media a conceptual framework on the role of media in international political communication is required.

Conceptualizing Role of Media in International Political Communication

The political and strategic role of media and mass communication has been the theme of academic research since the early twentieth century as nation states, international organizations and multinational institutions have been using media and communication tools in order to reach to both domestic and international audience (Tyator, 1997: 58). International political communication can simply be defined as national media and communication initiative designed to influence the politically relevant behaviour of people in other national states (Davison & George, 1953: 2).

In order to understand international political communication it is necessary to define political communication and its implications with media. Political communication has been defined in varied ways, but none has gained universal acceptance. Perhaps the simplest definition, according to Kaid (2004), was proposed by Chaffee (1975) who defined political communication as the “role of communication in the political process”. Brian McNair (2011) defines political communication as ‘purposeful communication about politics’ which includes all forms of communication undertaken by political actors to achieve specific objectives. Focusing on the ‘intentionality’ of the communication McNair considered the ‘political’ factor of the content and ‘purpose’ of the messages communicated by or to political actors. Since ‘political actors’ constitute politicians and non-politicians like media all communication about these actors, including media discussions of politics, can be considered as political communication. McNair’s definition has wider scope when he calls ‘all political discourses’ as political communication.

Moreover this definition helps us to enhance the frame of political communication to variety of areas like governmental communications, mediated-political communication, diplomatic communications, intra and international political communication. The political communication can be expanded, as Blumer and Gurevitch (2000) suggested, to a wider aspect such as “competitive struggle to influence and control popular perceptions of key political events and

issues". This phenomenon crosses national boundaries as the geography of the communications is in flux and the flow of mass communications is being internationalized. Moreover, political actors increasingly strive to influence international audience which according to them proposes 'the contours of a global public sphere seem to be emerging' (Blumer & Gurevitch, 2000: 155).

However, there is a question of why we use 'international communication' rather than 'global communication'. The only justification is based on what Kai Hafez (2007) argued that "the means of communication, the media, remain dominated by the nation and the state" and its impact is international rather than global. Though media from East and West have global reach, they are basically grounded in 'national' or 'state' boundaries representing or rejecting certain characteristics of the political system (Hafez, 2007: 3, 26). Considering this aspect Philip Davison and Alexander L. George (1953) had defined international political communication as "the use by national states of communications to influence the politically relevant behaviour of people in other national states". Davison further developed the field exploring the means and methods of 'fight for the mind of mankind' during the World Wars and Cold War. As a result, then popular means of international political communication like "negotiation," "propaganda," and "political warfare" were labelled as part of 'psychological warfare' where as propaganda leaflets were referred to as 'paper bullets' (Davison, 1965: 9).

Tracing the theoretical development of the field, various approaches and models can be identified as relevant to study role of media in political communication both national and international level. The discourses on media and international political communications could be traced back to Aristotle and Plato. Dan Nimmo and Keith R. Sanders' (1981) seminal work, *Handbook of Political Communication*, traces the development of the field as an academic discipline in the latter half of the 20th century (Kaid, 2004). Walter Lippman established the premises for the field of international political communication. Though the massive efforts to form international public opinion were not so

popular among nation states in the early decades of 20th century, Lippman asserted that “governments today act upon the principle that it is not sufficient to govern their own citizens well and to assure the people that they are acting wholeheartedly on their behalf. They understand that the public opinion of the entire world is important to their welfare” (Lippmann, 1922 quoted in McNiar, 2011: 15).

Harold Lasswell’s (1927), five question model of communication can be considered as a comprehensive theory to introduce political, social and structural aspects of communication. Defining communication as “*Who says what to whom through what medium for what purpose under what circumstances and with what effects?*” Lasswell enhanced the field and made it more applicable to political and social aspects. Extensive studies of Lasswell, Lazarsfeld, Kurt Lewin, and Carl Hovland on socio-psychological tradition of communication helped to develop the methods to analyze political impacts of communication. Lasswell’s analysis of political propaganda was systematically followed by Hadley Cantril and Gordon Allport (1935) through researches on persuasion (Ryfe, 2011: 10).

Though Walter Lippman’s *Public Opinion* set the premises of international political communication (1922) the research and practice in this field has enhanced to different aspects in Cold War era. To address this trend, Philip Davison and Alexander L. George developed an outline for the study of international political communication as early as in 50s of last century. The study of international political communication, according to them cuts across the established boundaries of academic disciplines since all the social sciences, and some other disciplines, can contribute something to it; none has the complete answer (Davison & George, 1953: 6). Thus the theoretical development of international political communication could be analyzed through exploring the paradigms emerged in the field of media and mass communication studies.

Various approaches explaining influence of political and social factors on the media and political relations were developed in the post-war era focusing on the media production, diffusion and effect. The most popular among them is

comparative study of the media systems analysing the political systems which determine the form and structure of media and communication (Siebert, Peterson and Schramm, 1956; Hallin and Mancini, 2003). Following this method 'four theories of press' developed by Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1956) introduced "Soviet" or "Communist", "Libertarian," "Authoritarian" and "Socially Responsible" models of media systems. Theoretically, following Marxist Leninist ideology, the Soviet model promoted media's role "to serve the interests of working class allowing censorship and control by the consciousness of the journalist in solidarity with workers". While the authoritarian model stood for a press completely subservient to the state the libertarian model suggested that opinions should be aired freely. The social responsibility model demanded that media should work in a responsible way for the society. Among all these models, "Socialist" model welcomed criticism vis-à-vis Western model of libertarian media system which theoretically let media to attack government while journalists and media are given full "freedom" (Oates, 2007: 1279).

While most of the studies from US and Western Europe followed this method to analyze the media models around the world, later it was accused as product of Cold War mindset (Koltsova, 2006). James Curran and M. J Park (2000) strongly criticized this model through their theory of 'de-westernizing media systems while C. Parks (2000) tried to develop a new theory rejecting the old models from East and West, in the wake of fall of European communism. Hallin and Mancini (2003) reconstructed the comparative method to 'three models of media and politics' to compare media systems of the world. They introduced Liberal Model, the Democratic Corporatist Model and the Polarised Pluralist Model which also, according to Sarah Oates, proved its limitations to address the media politics relationship especially focusing on the political communication aspect in the post-Soviet world (Oates, 2007: 1283).

Correlating the arguments on comparative media systems Denis McQuail (2006) has emphasised that in market oriented system "the mass media are first and foremost an industry providing services to audiences and clients according to

demand and profitability.” He further clarified that media under market based system would be essentially neutral intermediary between would-be communicators of all kinds (propagandists, journalists and politicians) and the public they want to reach whereas media under government controlled system would act mainly as agencies of conformity to official policy and aims. However, McQuail concludes that ‘in reality there is no such simple division’ as the media under free market system faces pressures, limitations and directions from various corners to meet the demands in market whereas the tightly controlled media also have to pay attention to the demands expressed by their potential audience and patrons (McQuail, 2006: 7)

Another approach to study media’s relations with socio-political factors emerged when Wilbur Schramm (1963) set a new paradigm proposing independent communication theories that had been conducted in previous decades in social psychology, sociology, and political science (Rogers, 2004: 4). Schramm’s *Mass Media and National Development* (1964) appeared as influential book about communication and development setting the dominant paradigm in this field. In this regard, Rogers with Shoemaker (1971) developed the theory of diffusion of innovation which proposed that “an idea perceived as new by the receiver –an innovation- is traced as it spreads through a system which highlights top-down communication to the public (Rogers, 1976: 347). Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw (1972) elaborated the approach of information diffusion and developed communication effect studies through their theory on ‘agenda setting function of mass media.’ This theory proposed a new hypothesis for research in the field of media and its effect in political communication suggesting that mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes towards the political issues (McCombs and Shaw, 1972: 249)

While both comparative media system approach and diffusion-effect approach were mainly focused on the media and its socio-political relations with the audience within a state or national boundary, a new paradigm was needed to

analyze mass media's interaction with international audience and global politics. In this regard the concept of 'global village' promoted by Marshal McLuhan (1967) had already suggested that mass media will be the 'tribal drum' of the upcoming interconnected world. His theory, 'the medium is the message' promoted studies on the link between globalization and media in later years (Rantanen, 2005: 1). Thus a new approach in the studies on transnational or international media and communication emerged, as Rantanen (2005: 1) argued, since communication studies mainly originated from US preferred the term 'international communication' realizing that media and communications can play an important role in wars. Identifying potentiality of media in shaping people's behaviour and attitudes through propaganda the field of international communication developed into subfields such as 'international political communication', 'international propaganda' and 'psychological warfare'. As the Cold War politics engulfed most of the disciplines, media and communication studies found new paradigms of international communication and information flow, cultural imperialism and international propaganda which promoted discourses on media and its political impact beyond borders.

Sean McBride et. al (1980) theoretically promoted the 'free and balanced flow' and 'new world communication order' to expose information divide between global North and South. Critical scholars like Herbert Schiller and Cees Hamelink (1983) focused on questions of ownership and control of international media and communication structures which helped Western cultural imperialism through so-called "free flow" doctrine that called for least control of under developed countries on the inflow and outflow of media and communication goods. This paradigm encouraged studies on global hegemonic media flow and contra flow addressing the questions of state-media nexus and its power politics in international order. In this regard Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky (1988), through their 'propaganda model' explored the political economy of media and communication which arguably worked for "manufacturing consent" both national and international level. Based on critical-Marxist approach, this model suggested that "among their other functions, the media serve, and

propagandize on behalf of the powerful societal interests that control and finance them. The representatives of these interests have important agendas and principles that they want to advance, and they are well positioned to shape and constrain media policy” (Herman & Chomsky, 1988, 2002: 7). Though this model was developed on US experiences of mass media, it remained as one of the most tested models within the social sciences for last three decades.

Following this trend of questioning the politics behind national and international communication a number of scholars have explored the role of media and communication in global politics (Wilhelm, 1990, Alleyne, 1995, Moulana, 1997, Tehranian, 1999, Tylor, 1997, McQuail, 2006). As Terhi Rantanen (2005) suggested the first generation of scholars saw international communication as international relations while the second generation paid attention to the imbalance in these relations. Anyhow, leaving the relationship between nations intact, most of the studies focused on ‘*international*’ rather than ‘*global*’ communications. Addressing this phenomenon Hamid Moulana (1997: 5) created a new frame work to study global information and world communication order which opened the doors of research exploring new frontiers in international relations. He asserted on culture and communication as the fundamental aspects of new international relations.

Majid Tehranian (1999), on the other hand, elaborated a thesis on global communication and world politics and the underflow of domination, development and discourse. Politically, according to him, global communication has been undermining the traditional boundaries and sovereignties of nations where as the broadcasting foreign news, entertainment, educational and advertising programs help the rising globalism. Moreover, he argued that global communication could redefine the power in world politics in ways that traditional theories of international relations have not yet seriously considered. Tehranian asserted that this trend is bringing about significant changes in major arenas of hard and soft power while governments can enhance restrict or manipulate the media’s access to information and coverage and the media can play important role in the

formation of foreign policies. And it's very apparent that media has become one among different players and stakeholders on the global scene which taking part in formulating policies that inevitably enhances or constrains national governments in the pursuit of their goals (Tehrani, 1999: 60-77).

All such discussions during the post-Soviet era which unfolded the debates on 'globalization' were supplemented by theories and concepts on 'media globalization' or 'global media' and its impacts on national and international politics. E.S Herman and R.W. McChesney (1997: 1) introduced 'global media' as the 'new missionaries of corporate capitalism', arguing that 'operation of the global media is affecting media structure and performance and their political and cultural impact in a number of countries around the world'. Working on this paradigm, Rantanen (2005) questioned the theoretical bias towards media and communication while most globalization theorists agree that there is practically no globalization without media and communications. Moreover, according to Rantanen 'the role of media and communications in globalization theories remained vague and unspecified while media studies missed the 'big picture' of globalization contributing little to theoretical discussions on globalization" (Rantanen, 2005: 4).

A new approach in the media state relationship or global media's impact on foreign policies emerged when the so-called global media could establish its footprints on the frontiers of Gulf wars and humanitarian interventions. The phenomenon known as CNN-effect asserted that global television networks, such as *CNN* and *BBC World*, have become a decisive factor in determining policies and outcomes of significant events. However, Eytan Gilboa (2005) has argued that CNN-effect remains a widely debated issue across the disciplines of mass media and international relations. According to Gilboa "studies have yet to present sufficient evidence validating the CNN-effect, that many works have exaggerated this effect, and that the focus on this theory has deflected attention from other ways global television affects mass communication, journalism, and international relations" (Gilboa, 2005: 7).

Babak Bahador, (2007: 4), on the other hand, defended the CNN-effect as it can be considered a manifestation of larger globalization as it relies on recently formed transcontinental media networks that facilitate a certain sense of global awareness. Moreover, Bahador argued that “the global real time media still influence on diplomacy and foreign policy in many ways.” To clarify this he introduced more than one CNN-effect like ‘accelerant effect’ which shortens the time available for governments to establish a position or formulate a policy, ‘impediment effect’ which comes into play in the context of military engagements and ‘agenda setting effect’ in which issues that receive the greatest media coverage become the ones that receive the most foreign policy attention and resources (Bahador, 2007: 7-11).

While the debates on power of global media and its impact on government policies home and abroad went on, scholars like Daya Kishan Thussu (2007) worked on emergence of alternatives or ‘contra-flows’ suggesting that ‘the global dissemination of non-Western media can reduce inequalities in media access, contribute to a more cosmopolitan culture, and in the long run perhaps affect national, regional and even international political dynamics.’ Thussu asserted that “media and communication contra-flows can shape cultural identities, energize disempowered groups, and help create political coalitions and new transnational private and public spheres” (Thussu, 2007: 3) Meanwhile, exposing the ‘myth of media globalization’ Kai Hafez (2007) questioned the very concept of emerging ‘global public sphere’, arguing that the means of communication, the media, remain dominated by the nation and the state.

Ultimately, if Cold War years were the time when mass media crossed national borders to communicate with the public abroad (Taylor, 1997: 58) in the post-Soviet context media has emerged as the source and venue of international political debates during war and peace. McQuial (2006) reasserts this point suggesting that media were born into an era of competing nation states and global ideologies and not a great deal has changed in this respect. He points to the use of media during war and peace as means to disseminate ideas and controlling

images of friends and enemies. Recently, according to McQuail, “influence over a more international media system has been thought necessary for achieving global policy objectives and occasionally has been thought to have had an effect on foreign policy”. He concludes that little has changed in the basic dynamics although mass media have greater independence from national control (McQuail, 2006: 9).

Unlike in the previous centuries, as McNair noted, “modern wars, liberation struggles and territorial disputes are increasingly fought out in the media, with global public opinion as the prize” (McNair, 2011: 187). As the power play in international politics diversified, media became an active partner of international political process disseminating political messages across borders. Once the media extended their reach, geographically and temporally the political arena became more international. And in the twenty-first century, “media audiences are the targets of political communication not only from domestic sources, but foreign ones. Foreign governments, business organizations, and terrorist groups such as al-Qaida, all use the global information system to further their political objectives” (McNair, 2011: 187). Based on the above discussion, we can conclude that all efforts through media or else to influence international public opinion and policy are clearly political communication. Moulana (1997) had asserted this point defining international political communication as ‘diplomatic flow of information, political persuasive communication, propaganda and public diplomacy aimed at public opinion of national and international audience which may influence media driven transnational public spheres’ (Moulana 1997: 8).

Since the contexts of all given studies were quite different from today’s, there is need of more enquiries on the role of media in international political communication. Apparently it could be seen that media played decisive role international political communication through forming global public opinion in major international issues like 11 September 2001 and ‘War-on-Terror’ in Afghanistan, Iraq and recently in ‘Arab Spring’. Thus, media has influence in

international political communication and forming of global public opinion, public spheres and influencing foreign policies in the present global context. Against the backdrop of geopolitics in the post-Soviet world order, Russian state and its media institutions act in their own way influencing the flow of information communication and forming 'public spheres' both at national and global level. Various theoretical approaches linking media and public opinion, media and public sphere, state, media and globalization, global media and foreign policy are also relevant to look into Russian media's role in international political communication.

Media, Public Opinion and Public Sphere

The media-ization of politics and mass mediated-political communication is an integral part of political process not only in modern democracies. Working as a mirror of political process at national and international level, media is one of the important venues of political communication. More than reporting *politics* media is a crucial part of the environment in which politics is pursued' (McNair, 2011: 12). Though McNair attributes this role to the media in contemporary liberal democracies, there is enough room to assume the similar functions of media in emerging democracies in post-Soviet space like Russia. Studies on mass movements (colour revolutions) against ruling governments in post-Soviet space and recent discourses on mass uprising across Arab world tried to address the question; how mass media, even in authoritarian states, do effective political communication with domestic and foreign publics (Dabashi & ZviBar'el, 2012).

Celebrated as the fourth estate of democracy, media plays more than its prescribed 'watch dog' role informing and educating the public about issues happening within their country and the world around them. Media, especially news media, works as a liaison between the rulers and ruled even under authoritarian governments. Though the degree of media involvements differ in the political process of authoritarian and democratic societies, the 'public opinion' is formed and assessed through media responses. As McNair noted "media contribute to policy discussion and resolution setting public agendas or

provide platforms for politicians to make their views known to the public and judging and critiquing the variety of political viewpoints in circulation” (McNair, 2011: 13). The case is similar regarding the domestic and foreign policies of states as most of the governments are keen to influence ‘public opinion’ to make their policies popular in home and abroad.

Juergen Habermas elaborates how media form public opinion through ‘political public sphere’ arguing that “the dynamics of mass communication are driven by the power of the media to select, and shape the presentation of, messages and by the strategic use of political and social power to influence the agendas as well as the triggering and framing of public issues” (Habermas, 2006: 415). At the same time, for effective political communication McNair argues, political actors use the media since their messages would be communicated to the desired audience. “Political programmes, policy statements, electoral appeals, pressure group campaigns, and acts of terrorism have a political existence only to the extent that they are reported and received as messages by the media audience” (McNair, 2011: 13).

Moreover, as Herman and McChesney (1997) argued, at the political level the media play a central role in the working of democracies in which creation of a ‘public sphere’ is a critical part where as ‘public sphere’ represents “all the places and forums where issues of importance to a political community are discussed and debated, and where information is presented that is essential to citizen participation in community life.” However, Hebermas and others, according to Herman and McChesney, argued that public sphere works most effectively when it is institutionally independent of the state and society’s dominant economic forces while such autonomy is difficult to develop and maintain (Herman and McChesney, 1997: 3).

Thus, the ‘mediatization’ or the media moving toward the centre of the social and political process of any society, is very important in the discourses on political communication since it promotes the concept and practices of a “media-constructed public sphere.” As Hebermas argued “every published opinion

originated from various types of actors, politicians and political parties, lobbyists and pressure groups, or actors of civil society are selected and shaped by mass-media to form 'political public sphere'." His position can be justified as Habermas further clarifies his stance saying that media is one among two types of actors without whom no "political public sphere" could be put to work, while both media and politicians, who occupy the centre of the political system, are "co-authors and addressees of public opinions." Since the mass media remain as the source of power, based on the technology of mass communication, "the use of media power manifests itself in the choice of information and format, in the shape and style of programs, and in the effects of its diffusion, in agenda setting, or the priming and framing of issues" (Habermas, 2006: 419). Thus it is clear that media play a pivotal role in the forming of public opinion and public sphere which is very relevant factor in the political process at national and international level.

Media, International Politics and Foreign policy

Irrespective of realist, liberal, critical, Marxist or constructive aspects of international politics, the relations between nation states and its publics remain the subject matter of the field. While E.H Carr introduces three sources of power in international relations he considered the power over opinion as important as military power and economic power (Carr quoted in Allene, 1995: 52). Thus we can understand that international political communication as inherently strategic since it is used as an instrument for conducting international relations as a specific means by which state can gain power over opinion. From very early times, as Davison (1965) stated, political actors have supplemented diplomacy and force with communications to keep the relations with peoples of other nations. That's why international political communication via mass media and public diplomacy still remains as an integral part of international relations. Neither states nor multinational institutions can engage in proper cooperation and trade unless there is proper way and venue for international political communication. Davison asserted that most international political communication

has been appeals made in war time to win hearts and minds while there were a few to avoid conflicts, to encourage friendship and to bring cooperation(Davison ,1965: 6).

Now days, unlike in the age of suitcase diplomacy, the mass media is the main venue for debates on geopolitics, foreign policy and balance of power in an interconnected world order. Once Joseph Nye (2004) developed the concept of ‘soft power’¹ in international relations, the media and cultural diplomacy has got wider appeal thanks to the growing attention towards people-to-people relations in the post Cold War context. The erstwhile super powers as well as the emerging ones have been doing their best to ensure their soft power and sphere of influence abroad through mediated public diplomacy. We have seen the diplomatic use of media and culture for getting legitimacy even for hegemonic actions of nation states in their inter-state relations. The post 9/11 developments showcase how media diplomacy helped US to win the minds of people overseas to use its soft and hard power on its target audience in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Since politics is about power, as Alleyne (1995) argued, we can say that the global flow of news is political where as it reflects and determines the international configuration of power. Moreover, international news is believed as a weapon of those with power in the international system a tool to maintain the status quo at least in regard to the inferior status of some peoples and nation states. Analysing the structure of global news Alleyne further argues that “those with power are those who can determine the very definition of news. Ultimately the power rests with those whose voices and perspectives are heard the most” (Alleyne, 1995: 65).

Identifying this political and strategic role of media and mass communication, nation states all over the world have developed their own media and communication tools in order to reach to both internal and external audience. As Philip M. Taylor argued media came to be deployed as a psychological

¹ Nye (2004) defined ‘soft power’ as the ability to affect others through resources of culture, values, and policies and the power to obtain the needed outcomes through attraction rather than coercion or payment.

weapon at home and abroad since World War II and it is used for the program of 'moral rearmament'(Taylor, 1997:58). The cold war years were the time when media crossed the national borders to communicate with the public abroad when 'battle of ideas' or 'ideological indoctrination' was the slogans of foreign policy makers (Davison, 1965: 8). We can assume the very link between, media, information, communication and foreign policies of nation states, since the flow of ideas from one country to another being highly monitored even today. Thus the information and communication flow and mediated political communication across borders are believed as integral means in the formation of transnational public sphere.

Though mass media have come to play an ever increasing role in the external relations between states as it became integral to the domestic affairs, Eytan Gilboa's criticism on the trend of exaggerating media's 'CNN-Effect' in foreign policy issues is not to be neglected. Earlier, Ralph Negrine (1996) also had raised questions on media's role in the diplomatic process, suggesting that media's involvement in this process can be complex. "Media can't bring dramatic change in policies rather than informing public and persuading 'public opinion' and media could be powerless to change the policy directions of political actors in certain struggles and pursuing certain agendas" (Negrine, 1996: 165).

However, Taylor (1997) had dismissed this stance arguing that the arrival of media as an important player in the international arena reflects the changing aspects of foreign policy and international relations. "Prior to the advent of the mass media, diplomacy was the sport of kings and, as such, it had little or nothing to do with public opinion. But, the modern media had proved to be considerable allies in selling the war, many a time peace also, and sustaining public support for it." Moreover, media contributed to the advent of a new, more public, era for the foreign policy-making processes. Despite prejudicial attitude of foreign policy making elites towards media, lamenting it for 'parachute journalism', Taylor reiterated that there is growing trend in the use of media for political and diplomatic purposes (Taylor, 1997: 75).

State-sponsored international TV channels, websites, social network pages, and online discussion forums are few examples of steps taken in this direction. As Taylor suggested “the media are today a central part of the foreign policy-making process, whether as observer, participant or catalyst.” Taylor discredited the arguments of diplomats, that media are likely to cause more trouble and jeopardize the operation under review, arguing that media can’t any longer be ignored or dismissed as being irresponsible or a nuisance. Since media's business is to get a story, the best they can within reasonable human risk, it will remain as a source of information for both domestic and foreign public (Taylor, 1997: 84). Thus the phenomenon of mass mediated international political communication is relevant though scholars debate on media globalization or the transnational access and flow of news and values thanks to the wide reach of internet.

Once information and communication technology redefined the means and methods of publishing, broadcasting and mass communication, governments, organizations and civil society groups use social-media and other online platforms for narrowcasting. Most of the public and private satellite TV channels press and news agencies are supplemented with web pages and online live streaming available for global audience. Internet has made independent, civic and citizen journalism popular worldwide which questions the traditional way of gathering and disseminating information and news whereas ‘gate keeping’ raised the question of objectivity. As the globalization left imprints on the political, economic and cultural aspect of the international relations we can perceive that globalization of communication systems has redefined the methods and models of international political communication also. For example, unlike in the past when leaflets, press, radio, TV and news agency reports were main instruments of political communication, social media, web pages and mobile messages are used for political interaction with domestic and foreign publics. When US President Barack Obama used YouTube and Twitter to reach out to public, Russian President Vladimir Putin and other heads of different countries have been using similar means to communicate with public at home and abroad. Thus social media has implications in transforming international relations.

Transformation of Russian Media and International Context

Russia is aware of the strategic character of news in international relations and they invest in national and global media of their own and use mass media in their public diplomacy. The Russian national media engage with the global audience forming public opinion and forcing a transnational public sphere to discuss significant global issues. Since Russia chose to transform its political system during the post-Soviet period, the transformation of media environment also deserves more attention where as many suggest media's pivotal role in breaking the wall of Soviet centralism (Benn, 1996: 12). In order to properly contextualize Russian media's role in contemporary international political communication it is necessary to analyse the state media policies, journalistic practices and ownership patterns of post-Soviet media giving special attention to the Putin-Medvedev era in which our case 'Arab Spring' was in bloom.

In the final years of Soviet Union, Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* had driven global attention, as it led to the transition of Soviet systems including media. Soviet leaders believed that media, and television in particular, were absolutely central to power at home and abroad (Koltsova, 2006: 40). In Gorbachev era, significant changes could be perceived in media's political communication, even as the leadership maintained control of the state-owned television system that dominated the media landscape (Mansell, 2011). As the democratization began in Russia after the disintegration, media also underwent transformation (Becker, 2004: 14). Given the media was under state control during Soviet period and media acted as an agency of state used for shaping foreign policy of Soviet Union, in the post- Soviet Russia, media freedom became the question of democratization (Oates, 2007: 1279).

In the post-Soviet period, Russian media tried to reflect Russia's two-pronged policy of protecting her national interest and maintaining good relations with West. Media being the main source of information about domestic and international developments, Russian media also believed that the coverage on political developments could shape the attitude of its audience. The main

mechanisms, opted for enhancing Russia's global influence can be identified as multi-vector diplomacy and strategic communications. Russian strategic communications with foreign audience take the shape of international broadcasting and public diplomacy. *Russia Today*, a satellite television station in English, Arabic and Spanish is one among many Russian initiatives for mediated international political communication. The traditional as well as new media like web and social media are used for Russia's nation-branding and spreading pro-Russian news across the globe. At present, instead of a propaganda war in Cold War era, the state supported Russian media is actively engaging in mass mediated public diplomacy conveying Russian angle of the international politics (Kimmage, 2009: 4).

Moreover, Russian media's approach in international political communication is explicable in its 'Arab Spring' discourse. The series of mass protest demonstrations across the Arab world, known as 'Arab Spring', started in December 2010 from Tunisia and kept momentum against ruling monarchs in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. The timing and extent of the popular uprisings surprised not only policy-makers, diplomats, and journalists but also scholars and activists who have been doing their entire research on socio, economic and political developments of the region (Goldstein, 2012: 23). However, the socio-political upheavals in the region have already left imprints on the current global politics. The NATO-led intervention in Libya and UN sanctions on Syria created a tussle between US-led West and Russo-China supported global south including India. West Asian region being the centre stage of geo-strategic interests and oil politics, the uprising of 'Arab Street' could generate new discourses in International Relations. While western media and policy makers tried to call the movements as a blow on 'Arab exception' of democratizing the political systems in the region, others suggested that Arab uprising is an harbinger of the revolutions to come against authoritarian, autocratic and undemocratic governments, including Russia and China, which are in fear of the spill over effect of the popular movements in Arab countries. After the initial shock on the unprecedented popular movements namely 'Arab Spring',

global powers were compelled to find a strategic position to keep their geopolitical and economic interests in the region (Hamid, 2012: 2).

Russia has taken her own political and strategic step in the recent popular uprisings across West Asia keeping her strategic interest in the region since Soviet Union was one of the important supporters of Arab countries from 1950s till the end of USSR. While Arab world also carry this memory and history of Soviet support especially in the Arab-Israel conflicts, Russia has to think twice before jumping on to US-led bandwagon for regime changes especially in Syria. Despite Russia's indifference in developing relation with the region in the post-Soviet period, now she wants to regain the historic and constant interest in West Asia. Moreover, Russia now wants to restore her cordial relation with the region through various measures like economic and defence cooperation, political support, and writing off some Soviet-era debts (Gresh, 1998: 67).

During the 'Arab Spring', Russia demonstrated different approach and policy towards each case. In the early stages of uprisings, Russia supported democratic demands of the people in Arab world despite the fears of spill over effect in the mother land (Klein, 2012: 2; Erenler, 2012: 4). However, Russia had rethink its stance once the NATO forces intervened in Libya and pushed Russia's age old ally, Syria, for a regime change. Russia's position on the uprisings has been broadcasted by the media including *Channell*, the biggest and state controlled media, quoting Putin, "The only way to out of the crisis is through negotiations". Thus we have to understand Russia's foreign policy in terms of her media and communication strategies regarding global issues like 'Arab Spring'.

Even questioning the Western promoted term², 'Arab Spring' Russian media tried to play its role in mobilizing global public opinion, protecting Russian national interest, national security and shaping foreign policies towards Arab countries. We can understand Russian media's concern in this regard as president Putin himself suggests that "The Arab Spring has graphically

² It is generally believed that the term is first used by an American Professor, Marc Lynch in his article published in American political journal, *Foreign Policy* dated 6 January 2011.

demonstrated that world public opinion is being shaped by the most active use of advanced information and communications technology. It is possible to say that the Internet, social networks, cell phones, etc. have turned into an effective tool for the promotion of domestic and international policy on par with television”(Putin, 2012: 4).

Research Objectives and Questions

Against this backdrop Russian media’s diplomatic and political communication with international audience in the wake of ‘Arab Spring’ is thus examined with following objectives:

1. To examine the role of Russian media in international political communication by analyzing the case of ‘Arab Spring’
2. To explore the link between media discourse, national interest and foreign policy of Russia in regard to ‘Arab Spring’.
3. To examine the media and communication environment in Russia against the backdrop of democratic transformation.
4. To study Russian efforts to raise a different voice in global public sphere, to sustain its geopolitical and economic interests in ‘Greater Middle East’.
5. To explore Russian soft power and public diplomacy measures to retain the super power status in global politics.

Some of the following pertinent questions related to the link between Russian media and international communication were brought under scrutiny. What is the role of media in international political communication in the post-communist information and communication order in the global public sphere? How does the state-media relationship affect the communication and information flow in a globalized world order? What is the current status of media policy, state control, oligarchic structure of ownership and level of press freedom in Russia? Whether state uses media for its political communication and getting information for policy making? What role Russian media played in international political

communication as reflected in discourses on ‘Arab Spring’ comparing to its global counterparts? Did the Russian media coverage of ‘Arab Spring’ influence in shaping and propagating Russia’s policy towards ‘Arab Spring’? Variables like diplomatic flow of information, political persuasive communication, propaganda and public diplomacy aimed at public opinion and “media constructed” transnational public spheres (Moulana, 1997; Louw, 2010) are useful in the attempts to answer such questions.

Hypotheses and Methodology

The two important hypotheses of this study are:

- Russian media uses different means of international political communication such as factual statements, propaganda reports and persistent discourses to play influential role in international relations and foreign policy.
- Russian media supports national interest, national security and foreign policy of the state by mediating a different discourse on ‘Arab Spring’ in the global public sphere.

Considering the nature of research objectives and questions to be addressed, this study followed an interdisciplinary approach. It employed theoretical insights drawn from various disciplines such as mass communication, political science, international relations and so on. Since the researcher depended heavily on international communication theory to address the research problem the following parameters and concepts were useful analytical tools for this study. New world communication and information order, global media flow, global public sphere, government media policies, national interest, national security and foreign policy, mediated international political communication, mediated public diplomacy, media control, freedom and censorship, information and communication environment after democratic transition, media-political complex, media manipulation and political persuasion.

For the purpose of this study both qualitative and quantitative methods of content analysis are used to examine the political nature of Russian media contents, in the form news and views communicated in a particular social and political context, 'Arab Spring.' Therefore, the entire content has been divided into different categories to measure the quantity of given contents and themes. For qualitative analysis, certain criteria have been set for selection of sample data to satisfy the empirical validity of the method. And the study used both primary and secondary sources. Primary materials include government documents, policy documents, Russian media reports such as TV, Press, Web, News Agency official websites, etc. The secondary sources are books, articles, journals, periodicals and internet sources. Materials available in English, Arabic and Russian languages will be used.

Structure of the Study

The study is organized into five chapters. The first chapter explains the background and theoretical framework of analysis of the study. The second chapter explains the transformation media environment in Russia after the disintegration of Soviet Union. It also pays attention to the Soviet media legacies in Russia. State policies related to media in Russia are also a component of this chapter. The third chapter is about role of Russian media in the discourses on 'Arab Spring'. Russian media reports are analyzed according to their themes and contents. The fourth chapter deals with the impact of media coverage on foreign policy Russia towards Arab Spring. The concluding chapter gives the summary and lists out the findings. This chapter also states whether the hypotheses have been proved or not.

Next chapter discusses the transformation of media environment and state policies in Russia.

Chapter 2

State and Transformation of Media Environment in Post-Soviet Russia

Russia, unlike many other European countries, has a unique history in the development of its mass communication system. The state-media relationship has been a prominent variable in the evolution of media system in Russia. When writers like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky made the media space of Imperial Russia globally popular, the revolutionary journalists under communist regime, following Lenin's propaganda ideology, introduced a Soviet model of mass communication. In the last decades of Soviet Union, Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika* got global attention, as it led to the transition of Soviet systems including media. Media played a pivotal role in breaking the wall of Soviet centralism in all walks of the life (Rogerson, 1997; Benn, 1996; Becker, 2004). Therefore, the transformation of media environment in post-Soviet Russia, regarding its relationship with state, deserves more attention since this phenomenon is an important factor in Russian media's political communication with national and international audience.

Media policies of state, journalistic practices and ownership patterns of post-Soviet media especially during the Putin-Medvedev era in which "Arab Spring" caught international attention informs Russian media's role in contemporary international political communication. Though the Soviet- media system and its means and methods of international political communication has already been ended, Soviet legacy is explicit in the current political and media environment. Many of the available studies on Soviet media are biased and mostly based on outside views which definitely carry certain preconditions and prejudices towards an alien system.

The Western studies on post-Soviet Russian media carry methodological bias. Olessia Koltsova (2006: 15) points out the methodological bias in the Western scholarship which focuses on the same question "does Russian

government still pressure the media?” Here comes the question of how do we address the media system in Russia and what parameters we use to analyse the post-Soviet media environment. It has already been suggested that old methods and theories are irrelevant to examine Russian media system since the transformation of post-communist society has brought changes in mass communication system too. Earlier, researchers were eager to explain the “communist media system” using erstwhile press theories of “Socialist” or “Marxist” (Rantanen & Vartanova, 1995: 13).

Most of the studies on media around the world, including Russian media system, are based on the acclaimed normative press theories of Siebert, Peterson and Schramm (1963) which introduced a “Soviet” or “Communist” model which theoretically followed Marxist Leninist ideology “to serve the interests of working class allowing censorship and control by the consciousness of the journalist in solidarity with workers” (Oates, 2007: 1279). Given the theoretical imbalance, Koltsova (2006) has questioned the Cold-War mind set of researchers when comparing “manipulated “Communist” media with an idealized system of Western “free” media, that itself has hardly ever existed in reality.” Though the new Russian regime has nothing to do with Soviet centralism, most of the studies find roots of the present system in the seventy years of ‘Party’ run ideological apparatus. Though Hallin and Mancini (2003) tried to refute the so-called “Four Models of the Press” suggesting that these models are incapable to explore the role of media in the modern political sphere, also according to Sarah Oates, lack the frame to define post-Soviet Russian media (Oates, 2007: 1278).

To fill this theoretical gap, taking the recent developments in Russian media system for granted, Oates (2007) suggested a “Neo-Soviet” model of media system. Oates asserts her theory with a few parameters like “rejection of balance or objectivity, flaws in media law, self-censorship, government interference and harassment of media outlets, the lack of journalistic professionalism, and an atmosphere of violence against journalists” (Oates, 2007: 1290). This model is relevant to analyze the current media system of Russia.

However, before getting into the present media environment in Russia, as precedent, it is necessary to explore the media system of Soviet era and how it left imprints on the current policies of political communication both national and international level.

Media System in the Soviet Union: A Brief History

It could be viewed media was treated as “collective propagandist” during the Soviet period. The Soviet term for mass media, “means of mass information and propaganda” speaks a lot about why media system of former Soviet states including Russia never fit into the definitions popular among media and political scholars in the West. Journalists were serving the party and the government following Soviet media policy which was developed on Lenin’s thesis suggesting that media must play multiple role of ‘not only a collective propagandist and a collective agitator but also a collective organizer’ (Lenin, 1901/1961; Simons and Strovsky, 2006: 192). Until the early 1990 the word “propaganda” remained in the Soviet media policy documents which arguably resisted external interference.

While Stalin put the theory of Soviet mass information and propaganda through print and radio into practice Khrushchev formed a “coordinated media army led by television”, to penetrate to every households and prevent foreign cultural and political invasion through media. It was Brezhnev in 1967 who reiterated that the mass media are “a powerful means of rearing the people and propagandizing the party’s ideas.” (Koltsova, 2006: 18) Once the revolutionary phase of Russia passed, the media were assigned to export the ideas to other parts of the world (Rogerson, 1997: 12). As the Soviet media system took the ideological indoctrination as an international mission during the cold war years the entire means of mass communication remained under the surveillance of the Soviet state. This form in which National TV, wire radio and the system of print press communicated the CPSU’s (Communist Party of the Soviet Union) version of information to both domestic and foreign audience, survived until the collapse of USSR (Koltsova, 2006: 19).

Moreover, under the provision of “*Glavlit*”,¹ Soviet media was just a tool performing the prescribed functions since “the well consolidated institution of Party-State was the only owner, employer, distributor and decision-maker” (Koltsova, 2006: 19). Despite party ownership and censorship the Soviet regime controlled the media through “institutionalizing a system that mandated self-censorship by journalists” (Sordi, 2008: 8). Rick Simmon goes further arguing that there was no need of repression for majority of Soviet journalists as “they came to understand the parameters of their actions and became self-censoring” (Simmon, 2004: 8). Thus, the journalists of the Soviet era were either ‘messengers of party propaganda or mobilizers of self-censored information’ under the Party ruled state which gave little space to dissent or opposite voice in public sphere.

However, the de-Stalinization of Soviet society brought a new wave in which mass media played a greater role in articulating and aggregating public opinion. As Remington (1981) argued Soviet scholars were willing to accept the term public, *obshchestvennoe* meaning civic or non-state, in reference to opinion. Regarding the opinion as an active social force even when it remained unexpressed, Soviets believed that the media can shape and express public opinion whereas the credibility of the media always depends on their success in reflecting the voice of the public. Soviets wanted the state should dominate the public opinion since it was considered as ‘specific sphere of the consciousness of diverse collectivities with their own diverse, if non antagonistic, interests and outlooks’, it. To them, if government may not dominate the public sphere, opinion must have the opportunity to form autonomously (Remington, 1981: 810). Eventually, in the later years of Soviet rule the situation began to change enough to make the public opinion emerge and form a counter sphere to challenge the state domination in this regard.

¹ Russian abbreviation for Chief Board of Literature and Publishing established in 1922 which renamed as Chief Board for Providing Security of State Secrets in the Press after Stalin era.

The decline of, *Pravda* and *Izvestia*, then officially supported Party mouth pieces marked as the beginning of the raise of such “alternative voices” among Soviet society. This was the time, according to David Benn (1996), a small newspaper like *Literaturnayagazeta* could pave the way for *Glasnost & Perestroika* as early in Brezhnev era. Finally Gorbachev’s *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* in 1986 set a new trend in the media and mass communication system which, according to many within and outside Russia who fight for ultimate media “freedom”, brought the “golden age” of Russian media (Benn, 1996: 14 and Rogerson, 1997: 12). During this period media enjoyed a fairly unique position with government support and relatively little Party interference while media and political experts were dared to think that Russia is on the way of transition to a democratic media system (Becker, 2004: 9).

Hopes were in high when the Supreme Soviet finally decided to enact the first USSR Law on Press and other Mass Media in 1990. The Law prohibited censorship, and allowed organizations and individuals to set up media outlets which have been the state monopoly. But, the later developments proved that “the changes that transformed the Russian media in the Gorbachev and the early Yelstin period created a false optimism about the future of the Russian media” (Koltsova, 2006: 20). Within months Kremlin initiated for legalization of state control over media and provisions for concealment of information and other prohibitive actions. As the Soviet era *Glavlit* was transformed into the Committee on Press in 1992, state enforced media outlets for registration in order to allocate of frequencies and get state funds for media. State took another controlling mechanism keeping the ownership of all media organizations that were not privatized in the early 1990s (Koltsova, 2006: 20).

Media in Post-Soviet Russia: State Policy, Oligarchy and Ownership

The disintegration of Soviet Union led to political transformation and change in the media environment in Russia. Russian state adopted a democratic form of government where as media freedom has been an important indicator of democratic transition. If the Soviet era was of centrally controlled media system,

according to Ken Rogerson (1997), the post-Soviet era has been characterized by continued clashes between the government of Russia and the mass media. Contrary to the claims of democracy promoters, the government has been in fear of a powerful mass media and been hesitant to deal with them on the level of a democratic free press. "Despite its announced devotion to a free press, Russian government distinguished between 'pure' or pro-government media and 'impure' or critical media," (Rogerson, 1997: 16). Moreover, many were desperate on the neo-authoritarian measures taken by Yeltsin's government as it hampered the free and fair functioning of media in independent Russia (McAllister, 2004: 4).

Instead of emerging an independent media system in Russia, the post-Glasnost era witnessed the raise of private players which led to the concentration of ownership to oligarchs who used media for political and economic purposes. Considering this situation, Sordi (2008) analyzes post-Soviet Russian media system through three phases of ownership which left deep imprints in the style and structure of mass communication in Russia. According to Sordi the first phase of "privatization" during 1990-95 accelerated the passing of state monopoly over mass communication tools to private actors. The second phase happening in the second half of 1990s is known for "oligarchization" which emphasized the domination of oligarchs who structured and distributed the media assets among them. The final phase of "de-oligarchization" came in 2000s in which the State under Vladimir Putin retained its power over media with the very help of oligarchs (Sordi, 2008: 12).

As the control over the media by the communist authorities ceased to exist, according to Stephen White (2008: 14), the state retreated from formerly state-owned media outlets whereas the economic and editorial freedom remained very limited during Yeltsin era. This situation led to a chaotic atmosphere in the media space as it was too difficult to separate financial interests from media interests in post-Soviet Russia. As a result, Oates (2007) argued "it can be complicated to identify when financial concerns are impending media freedom and vice versa." (Oates 2007: 1286) Since the politician-oligarch nexus turned as a very challenging factor to the New Russian media system state actively sought

the control using variety of tools like legal acquisitions, financial ties registration and licensing rules (Sordi, 2008: 13).

With Putin's arrival to Kremlin as president (2000-2008), oligarchs of the Yeltsin era were viewed as "politically dangerous" and thus lost their positions of economic and political power. Prominent oligarchs like Mikhail Khodorkovsky, Vladimir Gusinsky and Boris Berezovsky were forced out of media business (White, 2008: 14). The political pressure of State became more apparent when armed guards seized private television station, *NTV* in 2001 and when *TV6* lost judicial appeal and came under de facto state control in 2002 (McAllister, 2004). Media remained under State surveillance enacting stringent measures like 'Information Security Doctrine of the Russian Federation' by the Security Council in September 2000 and the law 'On Counter-Extremism' in July 2006 (White, 2008: 21).

Dmitry Medvedev, during his presidential tenure (2008-2012), had taken a few remarkable steps for the development of mass media in Russia. He called meetings of top officials from government and media houses to discuss pressing issues like financial support for the media, bridging the technological divide between central and regional media, and implementing nationwide public broadband internet. During the meeting, Medvedev stressed the importance of developing diverse media environment while rejected the alleged role of government in the ownership patterns. Medvedev claimed that "as of July 8, 2010, there were 93,532 media outlets registered in Russia – almost one hundred thousand which is a significant force. Moreover, the vast majority of these media (over ninety percent) are private and thus rumors that all the media in our country are state-owned are somewhat exaggerated" (Medvedev, 2010).

Thus, the current media ownership indexes of Russia show that *Channel Rossia*, *Channel Kultura* and *Channel Vesti-24* directly belong to the state. While fifty one percent (51%) of the main nationwide television network, *Channel 1*, is owned by the state, the rest is in the hands of state enterprises. All-Russia State

Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (VGTRK), a newly emerged media company plays a significant role running national TV channels and radio stations *Mayak* and *Radio Rossii*, along with eighty nine regional TV stations (Hopstad, 2011: 45). Along with national and regional media houses VGTRK runs international media outlets, which are most important in Russia's political communication with global audience. *Russia Today*, a channel established in 2005 by VGTRK is aimed at branding Russia's image beyond Russian borders. *Russia Today* is broadcasted in over 100 countries with Arabic, Spanish and English languages as the medium. This channel's USA version is called *Russia Today Americas* or *RT* and is arguably very popular among American audience (*Russia Today*, 2013).

Russia's biggest energy company, the state-owned enterprise Gazprom controls a media empire including most popular TV channels like *NTV* and *TNT*. National Media Group (NMG) runs *Ren-TV* and *Channel 5* which are owned by Kovalchucks brothers who said to have close connections to Putin. Apart from these companies many scholars (Kiriya and Degtereva 2010) call Roman Abramovich, a well-known businessman with connections to the power elites as a media tycoon having maximum ownership of media houses in Russia (Hopstad, 2011: 47).

Putin Regime and Media Management

Putin's ascendancy as president has arguably brought the Russian media system back to authoritarian tendencies. According to Becker, many features like the media pluralism, criticism of the government (including on the issues like Chechnya) and limited state control on the press were taken away once Putin took the rein of Kremlin (Becker, 2004: 10). Although we can find a few alternative voices during Putin's first term as President, the state media disseminated official "messages" while private media widely practiced self-censorship (Belin, 2002: 75). Oates reiterates this point saying that Putin has divided the media into two, pro-state and anti-state and accused private media houses as "mass misinformation outlets" which are used as "means of struggle against state".

However, it does not mean that Putin never talked about media freedom or democratic mass communication. Putin had suggested media freedom “as one of the corner stone of democracy” adding that “if we don’t have a free mass media, we shall very soon slide back into the past” (Oates, 2007: 1291) However, Oates rejects this claim accusing Putin’s role in the death of prominent opposition journalist, *Novaya Gazeta* reporter Anna Politkovskaya as he himself dismissed her work, *Putin’s Russia: Life in a Failing Democracy*, as ‘extremely insignificant’ for Russian politics

Putin had unequivocally disclosed his stance towards media addressing the nation in 2000. He said about media freedom, “regrettably, we have not yet elaborated clear-cut democratic rules that would guarantee genuine independence of the fourth estate. I repeat genuine independence. Journalistic freedom has become a coveted goal for politicians and the largest financial groups, a reliable instrument of inter-clan struggle.” Putin also reminded the authorities that the law prohibits censorship and interference in the operation of the mass media where as he warned about use of the mass media for settling accounts with rivals and mass misinformation fighting the state. He continued that “the freedom of speech has been and will remain the inviolable value of Russian democracy. This is our position of principle” He further said that “Russian democracy will not survive and a civic society will not be created without truly free mass media” (Putin, 2000).

Putin has given enough weight for role of media freedom of speech in the political process at national and international level during his current term as President. Putin’s greetings to the participants of the World Media Summit Global Media: Challenges of the 21st century, held in July 2012, is one of the examples. President’s message suggests that “it is important your forum has been building up its authority as an influential public discussion venue for considering topical and pressing issues of today. The mass media’s concerted stance can and must play a tangible, truly unique role in addressing these issues. It is the diversity of media resources – from daily newspapers and television channels to electronic media and the Internet – that largely determines the current and future trends in

global politics, the economy and in all spheres of life. This role requires high professional, civil and moral responsibility” (Putin, 2012). Highlighting the importance of the role of media in domestic and global politics, Putin suggested the normative roles media has to follow particularly in Russia, “it is very important that the agenda of the summit includes such key issues as the evolution of ethical standards for the media community, enhancement of the guarantees of media impartiality and independence, guarantees of the freedom of speech, the promotion of an equitable and constructive dialogue with state bodies, the business community and non-governmental organizations” (Putin, 2012).

Considering Putin’s methods of media control, Becker (2004) had already argued that Russia recently follows a ‘neo-authoritarian’ media system in which even state media have limited autonomy and political loyalty is the hallmark for appointments. Instead of pre-publication censorship, state uses economic pressure, legal and quasi-legal actions, criminal and civil penalties, national security and image of the head of the state as tools to silence critics (Becker, 2004: 12). Moreover, Scott Gehlbach (2010) quotes Freedom House report in 2009 suggesting that, “the Kremlin relied on Soviet-style media management” with control exerted through a “vast state media empire” while it characterizes media under Putin as “not free” (Gehlbach, 2010: 79). Instead of controlling all sources of information and attempting to own all the media Putin controls through economic pressure to keep editors and journalists in line. Ultimately, within the first turn of Putin’s presidency, “no electronic media with nationwide significance and politically relevant content left without the influence, either directly or indirectly, of state agents”. TV channels like *Pervyi Kanal* and *Rossia* having largest audience share, are under firm state control while significant others are controlled by people and companies loyal to or dependent on the government (White, 2008: 67).

Scott Gehlbach (2010: 84) characterizes the present media environment as suited to Russia’s authoritarian capitalist system. Though Putin himself had disclosed that government “could not control” the large variety of media “even if

we wanted to”, Kremlin put control on three national television networks, *Rossiya*, *Channel 1*, and *NTV*. Once-lively national television channels become mouth piece for the government as top officials of these national TV networks meet at Kremlin every week and set the media agenda. Instead of allowing discourse on controversial issues at national and international level, these state controlled channels in Russia broadcast official points of view while most private channels cunningly resort into verity shows and soap operas. Ultimately it was apparent that Putin and those in his milieu created a “vertical propaganda machine” by restructuring the mass media ownership and adopting information policies aimed at building “consensus” on the monologue of power (Linan, 2009: 6).

Journalistic Practices and Challenges in Russian Media System

With the turn of the millennium the political communication or massive media campaigns for presidential elections made Russian people “misinformed rather than less informed.” Media became the venue for political parties and candidates to spread propaganda messages to reach to target audience and win their support. Instead of “hard coercion” through threats and violence, though it still practiced, presidential candidates preferred “soft coercion” using techniques of persuasion and mass communication to win elections. In spite of being the most expensive medium TV shrank the power to state apparatus monopolizing the air frequencies. Oates (2007) argues that Putin was one who successfully utilized the power of the ‘idiot box’, as the central TV remained supreme thanks to limited access to internet and high cost of telecommunication, to orchestrate his propaganda politics. Central television could retain a particular influence on Russian people as many of them were even poor to afford newspapers while satellite television is for well-off people in the urban centres (Oates, 2007: 1292).

For their poor commitment to the profession, media and journalists in Russia are sometimes alleged as responsible for their degradation as mere tools in the hands of owners and government whereas Russian people invested their trust on media especially TV, the popular media covering 90 percentage of the

population, unaware of its propaganda character. Becker (2004: 15) blames the Putin era media and journalists for negative impacts on the democratic process in Russia. During the presidential election, according to European Institute of Media, this situation helped Putin to overwhelmingly dominate in the media coverage, in terms of the coverage of campaigns and presence in new and current affairs programs.

Above all, since corruption is a widespread phenomenon in all levels of society Russian media houses and journalists hardly try to run against the flow. According to Hopstad (2011), the corruption among media persons, *Zakazhuka* or accepting bribes in exchange for editorial content, rules the roost in different forms like paid articles and paid investigative reports. The very term *Zakazhuka*, taken from the literature meaning Black PR, is defined as ‘illegal methods, by which media outlets or journalists accept bribes in exchange for publication of materials, which are specifically intended to sway public opinion in favour of or against a certain candidate’ And *Zakazhuka*, ‘is usually associated with payment for presenting negative information about a political opponent, in order to influence the electorate, but also to avoid negative coverage of a party or politician. The service of avoiding negative information is regarded as the most “expensive service”’ (Ledeneva, 2006: 219 in Hopstad, 2011: 31).

Veteran journalist Azhgikhina (2007) shares more pathetic condition of the media system suggesting that journalists, with a few exceptions, in post-Soviet Russia are working like tool in the hands of their financial and political patrons. Moreover, the majority of journalists in Russia are allegedly ready to accept the instrumental use of the mass media out of material and normative considerations (Azhgikhina, 2007: 8). According to DeSmaele, ‘journalists consider themselves, in line with tradition, as missionaries of ideas rather than neutral observers’ (DeSmaele, 2007: 1307). Still Azhgikhina (2007) finds hundreds of independent publications and committed journalists in Russia serving justice and their readers despite political and economic pressure from above. Media persons can justify their inability to go beyond the fences since the

information climate in Russia gives little scope to journalists to get access to official institutions (Azhgikhina, 2007: 9). Currently, “presidential structures, government circles, and administrative offices are sealed off from journalists” if not “they are more closed than the former party committees” (Price et al., 2002 quoted in DeSmaele, 2007). The Russian President and the executive branch keep “direct control over the media via institutions such as the Ministry of Culture and Mass Communication” (DeSmaele, 2007: 1309).

There would be least chances for independent voice from media houses in Russian while the state itself directs the appointments of media personnel such as the chairpersons of the television channels *ORT, RTR and Kul'tura* (DeSmaele, 2007: 1310). Moreover, state has enough possibilities of enforcing indirect control due to the dependency of the media on state for subsidies, facilities such as printing houses, transmitters and satellites, and on state organs for the issuance of licenses. The prime objective of this state-controlled media system was clearly mentioned by Putin’s then presidential spokesperson, Sergei Yasterzhembskii calling media houses as “mobilizers” or propaganda messengers. Yasterzhembskii reminded that “the media should take into account the challenges the nation is facing now. When the nation mobilizes its strength to achieve a goal, this imposes obligations on everybody, including the media” (DeSmaele, 2007: 1310).

State Media Policies and Civil Society

To check the journalistic activities and keep the media and mass communication space under the ambit of state, Russian government updates the laws and regulations related with this sector. During the presidency of Medvedev, he signed Federal Law on Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation to Improve Legal Regulation of Mass Media. Though, according to the official website of President of Russia, the Federal Law was aimed at modernising the Russian Law on Mass Media, it offered enough provisions to keep media under government surveillance. Initially the law is introduced as one which ‘takes into account the organisational, technical, and economic changes

that have occurred in the last decade in electronic media production and dissemination as well as the prospects for TV and radio broadcasting market development associated with the transition to digital broadcasting '(Medvedev, 2010). But, in its further provisions suggest that this law contemplates the creation of a state mass media information system. Moreover, this law tried to introduce "the concept of Network Publication for information and telecommunications websites registered as mass media." Introducing the principle of voluntary registration for media websites and modifying the definition of mass media to include such websites, the government ensured the control over new media outlets available online (Medvedev, 2010).

Although, considering all these factors, many in Russia and elsewhere predict the decline of normative and democratic mode of journalism in Russia, Rosenholm et.al. (2010) point that Russian media and journalistic practices are influenced by the complex interplay of societal, political and cultural forces. They oppose the grand generalizations like, journalist are being corrupt and too willing to 'sell themselves out' and betraying justice and democracy. On the other hand, considering 'patriotic or nationalist obligations' of media and journalists, many argue that Russian media should be highly concerned on "the public interest" that the media do not cause social problems or extreme offence (Rosenholm et.al.,2010: 23). Greg Simons and Dmitry Strovsky (2006) address this issue raising the very fundamental question on public interest, "who exactly determines the nature of public interest in Russia"? They point to the very problem, when media try to satisfy the so-called national interest that "sometimes the national interest is not in the public interest." While media or journalists in Russia perform their "patriotic duty" satisfying the national interest, they are also compelled to play "self-censorship and a propaganda role" (Simons & Strovsky, 2006: 200).

Following the former Soviet government, the Russian authorities have been defending their authoritative tendency regarding the media control in the name of public interest. To them, state is the best provider of information to its people while state protects the interests of the citizens preventing the mass media

from reporting freely. Moreover the Russian authorities claim that they act in the best interests of society, to protect their citizens. But critics like Brigitte Hopstad (2011) argue that since Russian media, particularly popular television channels, is the main source of political debates and discourses, the political elites are highly concerned about the importance of media and the impact media have on their electorate. Therefore the political interest of the elites is a dominant variable in the media environment of Russia as 'the regime's media policies are designed to serve the interests of the regime itself' (Hopstad, 2011: 55).

Still, to satisfy the advocates of liberal media system, Russian government permits commercial media stations, foreign ownership and cross-ownership of TV and other media outlets. However, the new Russian media are directed to promote a positive, national-patriotic, mobilizing identity which is arguably prevent the development of a media environment independent of state. Moreover, in post-Soviet Russia the public interest is identified entirely with the government since , as Russian media sociologists Boris Dubin (2006) pointed out, a general public still needs to be brought into being even to oppose the official interest. Using TV as a single virtual unifying umbrella, the Russian government places special emphasis on the unity of the estate and the nation in the erstwhile imperial way. We can imagine the situation in contemporary Russia where 'only state-controlled channels implement 'public' broadcasting whereas the state is the major stakeholder in the media market, receiving seventy percent (70%) of its revenues from advertising' (Dubin, 2006; Rosenholm et.al., 2010: 35).

Amidst the debates on the lack of public support towards the government media policies White and Oates had noted that Russians keep a more positive view of their media under Putin than during *Perestroika* or in the early post-communist years. Many Russians think that it's irresponsible of the mass media to present information in a neutral way, without any kind of reference to wider moral or patriotic value (White and Oates, 2003). The political use of television exerts greater influence in the national elections and other major political turns. It may be this scenario compelled Sarah Oates to argue that "the debate about the

role of media as a pillar of civil society or watchdog in the political arena does not fit well into the on-going concerns about the media in Russia” (Oates, 2006: 1).

In spite of Russia’s rich and varied media environment Oates asserts that “Russian media remain polarized between various political views rather than becoming an arena for free expression and discussion”. Russian media, according to her, enjoyed a brief period of plurality at the end of the Soviet regime while in post-Soviet period “the media have become less varied; less open, and much less free.” Oates accuses the presidential administration and the business elite for this situation as both consolidate their power on media. She takes the example of the state-run television networks like *Channel 1*, the most popular medium in the country, which give no space for “unbiased or disinterested political information for viewers” (Oates, 2006: 2).

Under this system of “Neo-Soviet Model” of media control, independent publishers and broadcasters have no choice other than agree with the “monopoly of power in narrow band of elites.” Those who challenged this power structure will be victims for various forms of attacks from state like legal manures, smear campaigns and even violence. Since the Russian citizens are less informed or misinformed about the world around them, the media environment in Russia is more or less Soviet like ideologically biased (Oates, 2007: 1294). However, the diversity in the current Russian media environment suggests that the unprecedented degree of connectivity and interactivity via new media can make it impossible to rely on once-effective methods of socialist time propaganda (Rosenholm et.al., 2010: 36). Ultimately, the changes in Russian society and the changes in system of government during the last three decades are evidently reflected in changes in the media and media politics. Since they lost the optimism over the transition towards democratic media system, it is likely that there are hardly any discussions regarding media freedom or independent journalism in the public sphere, with the exception of instances when a Russian journalist is killed (Hopstad, 2011: 56).

Globalization and Russian Media

The fall of Berlin Wall was remarked as the beginning of relentless flow of goods, ideas, information and people across the borders irrespective of structural control mechanism adopted by nation-states in the post-Soviet space. Being the erstwhile citadel of communist and socialist political system, Russia has been the focal point of debates on globalization and transnationalization of social, political and economic institutions of the country. During transition period scholars and policy makers debated on post-Soviet Russia's position either as an inherent of old Slavic traditions or as a global power integrated to international economy and opening up the doors for transnational flow. Russian media and communication sector faced the same question according to the policies adopted by the political elites during the time of transitions. While the Yelstin era was marked for inflow of global media products to Russia, the Putin and Medvedev era is seen as the time of outflows of Russian media and information to global spheres.

Russian media system, Jakubowicz and Sükösd (2008) believe, became vulnerable to changes thanks to the influence of the international community or Western organizations. In the early days of transition Russians who could hardly cope up with the end of communism, alleged the international community and organizations of import of foreign cultural and economic elements. Russians remained sceptic on importing normative and idealized system of the free and democratic media which is popular in the West. Many raised questions on the implementation of such a free and objective media system which hardly exists even in the Western countries. Hopstad (2011) reiterates this argument saying that "in Russia, post-communist political and business "clans" used westernization and Europeanization discourses against communist and right-wing populist during the 1990s, to be replaced by a strong development state and nationalism discourse under President Putin whose administration refused a mimetic orientation and implemented authoritarian media policies", (Jakubowicz and Sükösd, 2008; Hopstad, 2011: 56).

Given the recent trends in Russian media space, Rantanen has discussed the 'glocalization' model in which global media companies nationalize their products, and the national companies globalize their products (Rantanen 2005: 7). Russian media houses and policy makers have taken the very initiatives to translate the advantages of globalization in different aspects. Russian national media companies are keen to enhance their influence to global spheres whereas global media outlets such as *Newsweek*, *MTV* and *Europa Plus* try to influence and leave their imprints in the national boundaries of Russia. President Medvedev had stressed this aspect during his meeting with media officials in 2010. He asserted that this is "an issue most essential for our country, given its size, is overcoming the technical, digital, and the so-called content divide between Russian media and leading global media" (Medvedev, 2010). Therefore, with every support from the government Russian media outlets take the steps to influence the world, at least those parts of the world of interest for the government. Recognizing the very need of mass-mediated public diplomacy and soft power in a world of information abundance, Russian authorities promote media and information sources for political communication with international audience (Hopstad, 2011: 65).

Russia Today TV channel, initiated and financed by Russian government, is the very good example to understand how far Russian government under Putin and Medvedev is using global opportunities to influence foreign publics through media outlets. The political economy of this phenomenon deserves deep attention though Rantanen (2005: 7) calls this trend as national companies' attempt to globalize their products and make their domestic products more global in order to attract both domestic and global markets. As it went on air since 10 December 2005, *Russia Today*, or *RT* as it prefers to be called, remains as the first Russian 24/7 English-language news channel which brings the Russian view on global news (Sakwa 2008, *Russia Today*, 2012). As the official website of the TV channel claims *RT* was initiated to broadcast Russian version of world politics and to build up Russian image abroad or nation branding. *RT* is now used as the main media of Russia's international political communication providing the

Kremlin's point of view to the global audience especially those in US. Outflowing Russian side of the story on both national and international issues. *RT* aims to attract domestic and global audience and markets (Hopstad, 2011: 65).

It is quite well known that Russian power elites have the mechanism to keep a certain extend of uniformity in the interpretation of events on the country's TV channels. This phenomenon is maintained to ensure the domestic and foreign audiences remain in Kremlin's spheres of influence. This strategic use of media and communication seems proved successful as the Russian television is quite popular in former Soviet space especially in CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) countries and in the Baltic States. Russian media's role in public opinion and agenda setting even in foreign land was explicable when Putin and Medvedev won the popular support in opinion polls than Moldovan leaders in 2008. Moldova is not an exception as most of the population in Latvia and Estonia fall within the information space of the Russian Federation (Hopstad, 2011: 66).

With the arrival of Putin and Medvedev into presidential office Russia has integrated the soft power measures through public and media diplomacy using satellite television. Russian popular culture, growing film industry, pop music, modern literature and dramatic art tradition are a few arenas developed to make Russia a rather attractive regional as well as global power. And quite interestingly certain television channels under direct or indirect governmental control try to keep the nostalgia of the Soviet period broadcasting broadcast a series called "The best time in our life", "good Soviet times" and "huge losses after the collapse of the USSR" (Kudors, 2010: 4).

Considering the given variables identified for exploring the media environment in post-Soviet Russia, we can conclude that state is a prominent factor in every aspect of media and mass communication and information flow within and outside Russia. State apparatus headed by the president has a decisive role in all variables namely media structure, ownership, control, political influence, public opinion, journalistic practice, and even the globalization of

Russian media. Since the state enjoys an upper hand in media and information flow, the nature of Russian media's political communication with national and international audience is graspable. Since the Russian media system, communication environment and journalistic practices are highly influenced by the state and its political elite, apparently it reflects in the news flow both domestically and globally. Moreover, as the state has taken deliberate efforts to control and shape the information flow towards global audience initiating pro-Kremlin TV channels and cultural outlets, Russian media's political communication with international audience can be seen as part of the strategic and diplomatic efforts of Russian government.

The next chapter looks into the role of Russian media in communicating the discourses on "Arab Spring" to the global audience.

Chapter 3

Role of Russian Media in Communicating the Discourses on 'Arab Spring' to the Global Public

The discourses on 'Arab Spring' appeared in Russian media demonstrate its role in international political communication. It also shows the changing political dynamics in international relations and growing significance of mediated communication in the transnational public sphere. 'Arab Spring' itself is an example which depicts the power of media especially social media in fomenting revolutions. A qualitative content analysis by using news samples from a whole range of Russian media, including TV, press, news agency and websites, available online and offline help us to assess the implications of mediated communication on 'Arab Spring'. This chapter discusses the Russian media's engagement with international audience through samples from those media outlets which are prima-facie instituted for giving news and views for audience abroad. News samples are taken from the TV channel *Russia Today (RT)*, the main tool of Russia's interaction with international community, Russian news agencies like, *RIA-Novosti* and *Interfax*, and a newspaper, *Moscow Times* and websites of *Russia in Global Affairs* and *Valdai Discussion Club* in order to get the online discourses on 'Arab Spring'.¹ An attempt has also been made to compare Russian media's response to other global media outlets like *BBC*, *CNN* and *Al-Jazeera* in their coverage of 'Arab Spring'.

Why 'Arab Spring'?

The analysis of 'Arab Spring' should start with the description of this event itself and why this case has been chosen to discuss Russian media's role in international political communication. 'Arab Spring' refers to a series of mass protest demonstrations, started in December 2010 from Tunisia which kept momentum across the Arab world against ruling monarchs in Egypt, Libya,

¹ These media outlets are mainly used in the next chapter which discuss Russian media's role in shaping and propagating Russia's foreign policy towards 'Arab Spring'

Yemen, Syria, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain. The demonstrations shook the Arab world with a wave of popular discontent as the people called for dignity, democracy, and social justice. Samir Amin (2012), veteran Marxist scholar, calls this series of shattering, wrathful explosions from the Arab people as the second 'awakening of the Arab world'. Though he warns against the generalization of the 'Arab world' ignoring the diversity of objective conditions characterizing each countries of that world, Amin prefers to call the entire revolts as 'Arab Spring' as 2011 was a time of spring for the entire region (Amin, 2012:5).

Following this trend the term 'Arab Spring' has been used to refer to the unprecedented events unfolded in West Asia and North Africa during the last couple of years and still continuing. Galal and Spielhaus elaborate the rationale behind international media's choice to present the uprisings in several Arab countries under the single heading saying that 'disparate events that originated in vastly differing historical circumstances within separate Arab countries were assigned a common name, theme, and aesthetics, the 'Arab Spring'. Though the term, according to them, is homogenizing the Arab world to a common region, hiding the different histories, languages and cultures, it can be 'associated with awakening, spring, and the time of sowing what will be harvested in autumn. Moreover, the season stands for hope after a long and deep winter.' Moreover, such a striking expression definitely worked as the very selling point for media and offered enough appealing to the demonstrators (Galal and Spielhaus, 2012).

For the purpose of this study we use the term within inverted comas because the title 'Arab Spring' was not assigned by the people of the region but by American Professor, Marc Lynch² in a January 6, 2011 article in American political journal, *Foreign Policy*. It's believed that the term "Spring" is derived from the memories of the Revolutions of 1848 or the Prague Spring in 1968. Though the protesters adopted this term in Arabic as *Al-Rabee al-Arab* meaning 'Arab Spring', many suspected this terming as a US strategy to hijack the popular

²Marc Lynch is a Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at The George Washington University, where he is also director of both the Institute for Middle East Studies and the Middle East Studies Program.

movement. However, as Kenneth Roth of Human Rights Watch has noted that, the series of protests across the Arab world had particular starting points in spite of well-known socio-economic and political reasons. In Tunisia protests were followed by the self-immolation of a fruit vendor Mohammed Bouazizi after a routine case of humiliation by the police. Similarly the photos of the deformed face of Khaled Said, a young man beaten to death by police, enflamed the public anger in Egypt. The cases of Libya and Syria were little bit different but same in terms of official attack on freedom of the people to live free of state intervention. In Syria the uprisings followed by the torture of teenagers for scribbling anti-regime graffiti. Libyans started their protests when the state police arrested Fathi Terbil, the lawyer for the victims of the 1996 Abu Salim prison massacre (Roth, 2012: 2). Though the uprisings spread in different colour and format in different countries, like “Jasmin” and “Lotus” revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt respectively, the entire phenomenon got wider popularity through media under the heading ‘Arab Spring’.

Instead of exploring whole the news and views aired by Russian media on entire uprisings spread across Arab world, this study will focus on reports on upheavals in Libya and Syria in which the global power politics remain apparent. For the purpose of this study we limit our area to Libya and Syria since unlike in other cases, the ‘Arab Spring’ took a different turn, leading to a lock horn between US-led West and Russo-China led global south. As the geo-strategic importance of these two countries defined the global media discourses on the developments here we can place the main question of this study, Russian media’s role in the international political communication, in a proper sense. Limiting the focus on these two cases also reveal the interplay between the foreign policy of a nation state like Russia and its engagement with transnational audience politically communicating her legitimacy. Moreover, Russia’s mediated communication with international community deserve special attention in the cases of Libya and Syria as the so-called socially networked revolutions in other countries turned to violent civil wars supported by external forces.

For the purpose of discussion in this study, researcher took a period of more than two years, 2010-2012, during which the 'Arab Spring' remained in the headlines of national and international media of every country including Russia. As it is premature to make conclusions on the revolutionary phase of entire Arab world, when Syria is still struggling to reach at reconciliation with domestic and foreign stakeholders of the democratic change, this study limits its scope to the media reports of the developments up to December, 2012 and try to discuss the direction of the uprising in terms of war and peace.

Russian Media Reporting on 'Arab Spring'; A Content Analysis

Content analysis is a popular research method in social science, in the fields of sociology, political science, mass communication and media studies, for making inferences by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages considered as texts in different formats .Bernard Berelson (1952) introduced the content analysis as 'research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication'. A bunch of scholars (Kracauer, 1952; Carney, 1972; Krippendorff, 2004 and Fiske, 2011) have enhanced the methods of qualitative and quantitative content analysis reiterating the strength and weakness of both techniques. While proponents of quantitative method argue for producing objective, measurable and verifiable account of the manifest content of messages qualitative researchers consider each body of text as unique having multiple interpretations which need to be treated accordingly (Fiske, 2011: 4, Kracauer, 1952: 636).

However, both qualitative and quantitative approaches are found relevant for content analysis for this study where as Krippendorff (2004) argued that the proponents of both approaches 'sample text, in the sense of selecting what is relevant; unitize text, in the sense of distinguishing words or propositions and using quotes or examples; contextualize what they are reading in light of what they know about the circumstances surrounding the texts; and have specific research questions in mind'. In qualitative research the holistic qualities of texts

is acknowledged through revising earlier interpretations in light of later readings and the researcher considers the whole body of texts to engage the reader with the contexts of the analyzed texts (Krippendorff, 2004: 88).

For the purpose of this study both qualitative and quantitative methods of content analysis are considered to examine the political nature of Russian media contents, in the form of news and views communicated in a particular social and political context, Arab Spring. Therefore, the entire content has been divided into different categories to measure the quantity of given contents and themes. For qualitative analysis, certain criteria have been set for selection of sample data to satisfy the empirical validity of the method.

In this regard, Russian media reports (news and views) on ‘Arab Spring’ are taken as the samples of this study. The sample reports are selected purposefully using online searching option. The very term ‘Arab Spring’ was used for the search. From the available samples we categorize the reports in a certain way which can address the main theme of this research, Russian media’s role in international political communication. Totally we classified seven categories of news and views on ‘Arab Spring’ especially in the context of Libya and Syria.

1. Reports on demonstrations and rallies by protesters in the Arab world.
2. Reports on response of ruling elites and their supporters to the uprisings.
3. Reports covering responses of other countries and its rulers in the region.
4. Reports on Russian response on the issue.
5. Reports on response of US and other global powers on the issues.
6. Reports on international media’s response to the ‘Arab Spring’.

Centred on these categories of Russian media reports on ‘Arab Spring’, the data is put for qualitative analysis based on the manner and style of the political content communicated. Therefore a few political themes are selected as units of

data to be analyzed qualitatively. The criteria we use to select the themes are the style of narrative and thematic presentation of certain politically relevant issues in which Russian media keep its own parameters of definition. The major political themes considered for this purpose are:

- Democratic element of protests
- Extremist/fanatic element of protests
- Foreign influence in the protests
- Regime change/import of democracy in to Arab world
- Geo-political interest of external powers
- National interest of Russia
- Russian foreign policy towards Arab Spring.

Profile of Russian Media

In order to make the analysis more comprehensive, a brief introduction has been given to each media from which samples have been taken for analysis. This introduction helps to know the profile of the media houses and to understand their editorial policies especially in the context of reporting stories related with government's domestic and foreign policies. The following are the main sources data that has been collected for analysis.

Russia Today (RT)

One of the major sources of sample data taken for this study is *Russia Today* or *RT* as it prefers to be called, which has won enough attention in the global media spheres for different reasons. The first channel from *RT* network, according to channel's official website, went on air since 10 December 2005. *RT* remains as the first Russian 24/7 English-language news channel which brings the Russian view on global news (*Russia Today*, 2013). Within eight years *RT* has expanded to three global news channels broadcasting in English, Spanish and Arabic. The channel has 'twenty two bureaus in nineteen countries and territories, with a presence in Washington, New York, London, Berlin, Delhi, Cairo, Baghdad and

other key cities, and employs over 1000 journalists around the globe.³ *RT* claims that it ‘has a global reach of over 550 million people in 100+ countries, or more than twenty eight percent (28%) of all cable subscribers worldwide, and is now available in more than 2.7 million hotel rooms’(*Russia Today*, 2013).

Considering the philosophy behind *RT*, it was initiated to broadcast Russian version of world politics and to build up Russian image abroad or nation branding. *RT* is now used as the main media of Russia’s international political communication providing the Russian government’s point of view to the global audience especially those in US. Out flowing Russian side of the story on both national and international issues, *RT* aims to attract domestic and global audience and markets (Hopstad, 2011: 51). With a punching tag line ‘question more’ *RT* covers the major national and global issues and ‘delivers stories often missed by the mainstream media to create news with an edge.’ *RT*’s main strategy, according to its own website, is to ‘provide an alternative perspective on major global events, and acquaint international audience with the Russian viewpoint.’ During this period *RT* has won international fame as it became the only Russian TV channel to be nominated for the prestigious International Emmy award, in the News category both in 2010 and in 2012, for coverage of the “Occupy Wall Street” movement. Unlike many other global channels, *RT* runs a YouTube channel to upload its best broadcasts which arguably attract more than 930 million viewers. *Rusiya Al-Yaum*, *RT*’s Arabic-language news channel, according to *RT* website, is one among Top TV Channels Online in Forbes Middle East’s latest ranking of Top Media Online in the Arab World. This suggests that *RT* has made success winning more than 350 million viewers across Europe and Greater Middle East (*Russia Today*, 2013).

Russian News & Information Agency (*RIA Novosti*)

According to its official website, ‘*RIA Novosti* is Russia’s leading news agency in terms of multimedia technologies, website audience reach and quoting by the Russian media.’ The agency also claims that it has sophisticated media facilities

³ However, talking to Russian officials in New Delhi, the researcher could find that *RT* bureau at Indian capital is presently switched off.

like integrated multimedia newsroom which enable *RIA Novosti* to deliver news and information in all possible formats, including video, animated info-graphics and cartoons to professional clients and the end user in fourteen languages through a network covering over forty five countries of the world and the Russian regions '(*RIA Novosti*, 2013).

RIA Novosti enjoys decades-old history since it started as the Soviet Information Bureau (*Sovinformburo*) under the USSR Council of People's Commissars and the Central Committee on 24 June 1941. From its early years this bureau worked to cover international, military events and the events of the country's domestic life in periodicals and on the radio. In 1944 *Sovinformburo* kicked off a special bureau on propaganda for foreign countries, which covered 1,171 newspapers, 523 magazines and 18 radio stations in 23 countries. Apart from media contents, *Sovinformburo* explored Soviet embassies abroad, friendship societies, trade unions, women's, youth and scientific organizations to inform the Soviet people about their struggle against Nazism. During the post-war years *Sovinformburo* became the main source of information about Soviet domestic and foreign policies.

In 1961 *Sovinformburo* was replaced by *Novosti Press Agency (APN)*, which became leading information and press body under Soviet public organizations like USSR Journalists Union, USSR Writers Union, Union of Soviet Societies of Friendship and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, and the Znaniye Society. APN's aim was "to contribute to mutual understanding, trust and friendship among peoples in every possible way by broadly publishing accurate information about the USSR abroad and familiarizing the Soviet public with the life of the peoples of foreign countries." With an interesting motto, "Information for Peace, for the Friendship of Nations", APN opened bureaus in over 120 countries publishing sixty illustrated newspapers and magazines in 45 languages with a one-time circulation of 4.3 million copies. (*RIA Novosti*, 2013)

During Gorbachev era, *Novosti Press Agency* (APN) was renamed as *Information Agency Novosti* (IAN) started its work on 27 July 1990. APN provided information support for the USSR's state domestic and foreign policies. Though it was known for the 'democratization of the mass media,' APN continued the works of its formers, 'preparing and publishing printed, TV and radio materials in the USSR and abroad, studying public opinion on Soviet foreign and domestic policies in the USSR and abroad.' After the disintegration of USSR, Russian Information Agency Novosti which created in September 1991 on the basis of IAN and the Russian Information Agency worked with eighty bureaus and news offices abroad, over 1,500 subscribers in CIS countries and about a hundred in non-CIS countries. After all in May 1998, the Agency was renamed the Russian Information Agency Vesti and retained the name of *RIA Novosti*. Proponents of the agency proudly claim that RIA Novosti's main criteria of information services are the combination of promptness, objectiveness, authenticity and its own opinion regardless of the political situation (*RIA Novosti*, 2013).

The Moscow Times

The Moscow Times, according to the official website of the paper, is the leading English language newspaper in Russia. The paper boasts on its special feature that everyday a team of professional foreign journalists highlight important events in the sphere of business and politics in Russia and the world. Above all, *Moscow Times* introduce its audience as 'mainly of foreigners residing in the capital temporarily or permanently and English-speaking Russians readers. And *Moscow Times*'s audience consist the richest and youngest as compared to the competitors (the highest income level of C and C+; average age 30-35)'. To satisfy this audience *Moscow Times* tries to introduce Western values of journalism claiming that 'Independence, accuracy and competency are important principles in Western journalism, and we are bringing these principles to Russia' (*Moscow Times*, 2013)

The company website says that *Moscow Times* is a part of Independent Media-Sanoma Magazines publishing house and it's the only Russian daily

English-language newspaper which has been published in Russia since 1992. The Moscow Times also has the credit of having unique distribution system — distributed for free in over 500 of Moscow's most prestigious locations such as business centres, international airlines, embassies, hotels, medical centres, restaurants, supermarkets, sport clubs etc. The content of the paper may be presented in Russian or English having an average circulation from 500 copies to 35 000 with the possibility of additional distribution at special events' (*Moscow Times*, 2013).

Pravda

Pravda emerged as a journal of art and literature by V. A. Kozhevnikov in 1903, started publishing in 1905 to make the revolutionary sentiment alive (White D. 1974: 183). As a result of Bolshevik Menshevik fraction, *Pravda* under Lenin officially became a newspaper associated with the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF) on 5 May 1912. The first issue costs two kopeks and had four pages with articles on economic issues, workers movement, strikes, and also had two proletarian poems. During Tsarist regime *Pravda* was closed down in July 1914 and forced to change its name eight times within a couple of years. After the Russian Revolution, *Pravda* enjoyed the official press status in the Soviet Union while it remained as the central organ of the Central Committee of the RSDLP and the CPSU between 1912 and 1991(White, 1974: 185).

During Soviet days, *Pravda* ruled the roost in the media space selling millions of copies and the world considered it as official voice of Soviet Socialism during the Cold War years. However, *Pravda* became the victim of then Russian President Yeltsin's liberal policies and was forced to shut down the printing. Due to economic crisis Communist Party lost the ownership of the newspaper to a Greek business family until it regained *Pravda* as the mouthpiece of the CPRF in 1997. Unlike in the Soviet era when *Pravda* was a daily newspaper, today it publishes three times a week and is available online (White, 1974: 186).

Interfax

Interfax, established in 1989 as a non-governmental news agency is part of the Interfax Information Service Group. According to the official website, *Interfax* Group is a leading provider of critical information on Russia, China and emerging markets of Eurasia serving the diverse needs of investors, corporations, financial professionals and the media. Having 100 specialized information services, *Interfax* can supply intelligence reports with industry analysis, business information, real-time news, market data and ratings and credit reports even in daily basis (*Interfax*, 2013).

Apart from real time services *Interfax* news service is available either in daily or weekly subscription. The service can be accessed either through mails or visiting *Interfax* website with login ids. *Interfax* has enhanced its service beyond CIS with a global operational network with over 1000 staff daily turning out over 3000 stories from over seventy bureaus worldwide. Though *Interfax* focuses on Europe and Asia, it has offices in important cities across the world (*Interfax*, 2013).

Different Categories of Reports on Arab Spring: An Analysis

Russian media reports are categorized according to the political content communicated through the title and the lead of each stories for the purpose of quantitative and qualitative analysis of media content. A total of 201 reports were taken as samples in which *Russia Today* shares maximum numbers with eighty reports followed by *Rianovosti* with sixty five reports. *Interfax* carries minimum number of reports, eight while *Moscow Times* and *Pravda* have twenty six and twenty reports respectively. Reports were retrieved, from the online archives of the respective media, in text format during a period of four weeks (April-May, 2013) and organized according to the date/month/year of publishing. The number of reports in each year is given separately to know the variation of contents throughout the years.

In the first category (as shown in table No.1) we tried to explore whether Russian media, following its Soviet tradition, still keep checking the global media especially of West. The following table shows the number of reports on international media response on ‘Arab Spring’ appeared in Russian media.

Table 1

No. of Reports on International Media Response to the ‘Arab Spring’*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
3	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	0
Total: 7 (2011)+ 4 (2012) = 11									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

The table above demonstrates that *Russia Today* channel has used its online space to expose the role of global media in the coverage of ‘Arab Spring’. During the period of this research *RT*, claiming its perspective as an alternative to pro-Western global media, has given total six reports (as shown in the table No.1). *RIA Novosti* also maintained to address this issue giving a couple of stories (as shown in the table below). Being the mouth piece of left movement in Russia, *Pravda* criticized the global media approach towards ‘Arab Spring’ with three reports. Two private sector media organizations, *Interfax* and *Moscow Times*, carried no comments on global media response to the developments in Arab world.

Another category of reports considered is Russian media reports which directly tell the stories of demonstrations, protests and their aftershocks both in Libya and Syria. This category of reports was included to check the style and narrative of Russian media coverage of protests, rallies, struggles and their impacts across the region. In this category (as shown in table No.2) also, *RT* is in the frontline giving total sixteen reports while *RIA Novosti* followed with thirteen, *Pravda* with five and *Moscow Times* four reports (2012 only). *Interfax* had nothing to report in this regard.

Table 2

No. of Reports on Demonstrations and Protests in Libya and Syria*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
3	13	5	8	0	0	0	0	1	4
Total: 9 (2011)+ 29 (2012) = 11									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

Another category of reports we explored in Russian media were reports on response of ruling elites/government and pro-government people to the uprisings in Libya and Syria. This category (as shown in table No.3) was included to know how far Russian media have given space to the government action, reaction, policies and measures as well as the responses of incumbent rulers and governments regarding the popular uprisings . We found total five reports in *RT*, two in *RIA Novosti* and one in *Pravda* while *Interfax* and *Moscow Times* hardly carried these kinds of reports either in 2011 or 2012.

Table 3

No. of Reports on Response of Ruling Elites and Their Supporters to the Uprisings in Libya and Syria*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
3	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Total: 5 (2011)+ 3 (2012) = 8									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

Here is another category of reports covering role/ responses of other countries and its rulers in the Arab region. This category of reports (as shown in table No.4) tells us Russian media's interest in exposing the reactions of regional powers which either supported the protesters or sympathized with neighbouring countries. While *Russia Today* carried seven reports in this category *RIA Novosti* have three, *Interfax* has one and *Pravda* have two reports. *Moscow Times* has no reports in this category.

Table 4

No. of Reports Covering Role/ Responses of Other Countries and its Rulers in the Region*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
1	6	3	0	0	1	0	0	1	1
Total: 5 (2011)+ 8 (2012) = 13									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

One of the main categories of Russian media reports on ‘Arab Spring’ is that which covers Russia’s role/response towards the developments in the Arab World. It includes reports on government’s official response considering strategic, economic and geopolitical interest of Russia. This category of reports uncover Russian media’s role in communicating Russian version of stories on international issues like ‘Arab Spring’. Giving enough space for this category of news Russian media could stand behind or against the home-side. In this category (as shown in table No.5) we have *RIA Novosti* with maximum reports, twenty eight while *Moscow Times* followed with eighteen reeports. *RT* carries seventeen, *Pravda* have four and *Interfax* have two reports in this category.

Table 5

No. of Reports on Russian Role/Response Regarding ‘Arab Spring’*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
3	14	10	18	0	2	7	11	0	4
Total: 20 (2011)+ 49 (2012) = 69									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

At the end there are some crucial reports from Russian media which cover role/response of US and other global powers regarding ‘Arab Spring’. These reports suggest how far Russian media could uncover the policies adopted by US and its allies to win the game in Greater Middle East. It also underline that, apart from giving space for Russian version of stories, Russian media keep Soviet legacy of exposing Western powers and their policies towards global issues. With these kinds of reports Russian media want to play its significant role in international political communication. Among all five media samples (as shown in table No.6) *RT* is leading in this category giving thirty one reports. *RIA Novosti* carries seventeen, *Interfax* have five *Moscow Times* have four and *Pravda* have five reports in this category.

Table 6

No. of Reports on Role/ Response of US and other Global Powers Regarding ‘Arab Spring’*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
14	17	11	6	3	2	0	4	1	4
Total: 29 (2011)+ 33 (2012) = 62									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

Analyzing Major Political Themes:

Once the Russian media reports on ‘Arab Spring’ are categorized on the basis of their title and leading themes, we revisit the samples for another kind of qualitative analysis. To answer the research questions on Russian media’s role in international political communication, here we explore for a few political themes related to ‘Arab Spring’. Examining the recurrence of these themes across the reports taken for this study, it’s assumed that Russian media keep certain agenda in its political communication with domestic and foreign audience. The themes we put for test can expose Russian media’s political attachment with official narratives regarding domestic and foreign policies. The themes were identified

through detailed reading of reports whereas one theme can be repeated in a single report which asserts the editorial agenda or policy behind such news or views.

The first theme explored across these reports is that how far Russian media consider/recognize the democratic element of the uprising in Arab world. These themes help us to identify Russian media's policy towards 'Arab Spring'. In this category (as shown in table No.7) *Russia Today* leads reasserting the democratic element of the protests eight times across various reports. *RIA Novosti* also has given equal importance repeating this theme seven times while *Pravda* and *Moscow Times* considered it twice. *Interfax* has no mentioning about the democratic feature of the protests in Arab World.

Table 7

Recurrence of Themes on Democratic Element of Protests*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
3	5	3	4	0	0	2	0	1	1
8		7		0		2		2	
Total : 19									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

The second category of theme considered in Russian media's coverage of 'Arab Spring' is the extremist/fanatic element of the uprisings both in Libya and Syria. This theme can answer the question, how far the so-called popular uprising is free from fanatic, extremist and sectarian elements prevalent in Arab world. Stressing on this theme Russian media try to expose the Western claims on even military support to the opposition groups in Libya and Syria. Russian media policy in this regard (as shown in table No.8) is very clear as *RT* itself reasserted thirty three times that the protests and demonstrations in Libya and Syria are motivated or armed by extremist (Islamist) forces. *RIA Novosti* has much similar view repeating eighteen times the same theme while *Pravda*, *Moscow Times* and even *Interfax* carry this theme four, three and a couple of times respectively.

Table 8

Recurrence of Themes on Extremist/Fanatic Element of Protests*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
3	30	6	13	0	2	0	3	1	3
33		18		2		3		4	
Total : 60									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

Another theme presented by Russian media, which exposes an alternative view in the global public sphere, is that the uprisings in Libya and Syria are funded and promoted by foreign powers. With this theme, claiming that the protests were fuelled by Western powers and their allies in the region, Russian media try to question the popular believe that ‘Arab Spring’ was a spontaneous outflow of rage and anger of natives in particular countries . To justify its tagline, ‘question more’, RT has raised severe questions on the foreign influence behind the ‘Arab Spring’. In this regard (as shown in table No.9) *RT* presented this theme forty four times through several reports. *RIA Novosti* raised the same issue nineteen times, *Pravda* eight times, *Moscow Times* four times while *Interfax* restricted its question to once.

Table 9

Recurrence of Themes on Foreign Influence in the Protests*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
7	37	9	10	0	1	1	3	3	5
44		19		1		4		8	
Total : 76									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

Adding to the aforementioned view on ‘Arab Spring’, Russian media present one more theme which suggests that the uprisings in Libya and Syria were utilized by external powers for regime change or import of democracy. Russian media

especially *RT* and *RIA Novosti* have reasserted geopolitical interest behind the developments in Arab world where West want to deploy governments which make no harm to their interests. Here, (as shown in table No.10) call for regime change and democracy through NATO-led military intervention is depicted by Russian media as a token to establish pro-Western governments in the region. *RT* has repeated this theme forty one times while *RIA Novosti* followed with thirteen. *Interfax*, *Moscow Times* and *Pravda* addressed this theme six, seven and five times respectively.

Table 10

Recurrence of Themes on Regime Change/Import of Democracy in to the Arab World*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
8	33	3	10	3	3	2	5	2	3
41		13		6		7		5	
Total : 72									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

In spite of questioning the attempts of foreign powers to intervene in the political affairs of Libya and Syria, Russian media have exposed the geo-political and economic interest of US-led West and their allies in the region. To the Russian media, forcing of UN sanctions and Security Council intervention and the NATO-sponsored military move in the name of supporting the civilian demands are nothing but the different ways to ensure the geo-political interests of US and its allies are kept unaffected. *RT* has uncovered this theme (as shown in table No.11) repeating it forty three times where as *RIA Novosti* reasserted this position twenty five times in their reports on ‘Arab Spring’. *Moscow Times* and *Pravda* maintained to keep this theme alive repeating it nine and ten times each. *Interfax* also did its best stressing this theme twice.

Table 11

Recurrence of Themes on Geo-Political Interest of External Powers (West/Allies in the Region)*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
12	31	15	10	0	2	1	8	4	6
43		25		2		9		10	
Total : 89									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

The final two themes explored in Russian media were related to the Russian interests and policies regarding the developments especially in Libya and Syria. The first category (as shown in table No.12) of theme emphasizes Russia's national interest alerting the home side about the impacts of 'Arab Spring' in Russia. *RT* has repeated this theme ten times while *RIA Novosti* did the best reasserting it thirteen times. *Moscow Times* and *Pravda* reminded this fact eight and five times respectively where as *Interfax* did it twice.

Table 12

Recurrence of Themes on National Interest of Russia Regarding 'Arab Spring'*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
1	9	4	9	0	2	3	5	2	3
10		13		2		8		5	
Total : 38									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

The last but very relevant theme considered for this study is Russian media's emphasis on Russia's foreign policy towards the developments particularly in Libya and Syria and the 'Arab Spring' as a whole. This theme uncovers the role of Russian media in communicating Russia's policies in global affairs like 'Arab Spring.' Exploring this theme in Russian media reports, we can understand the correlation between the media agenda and government policies regarding the

foreign policy issues. Here (as shown in table No.13) *RIA Novosti* and *RT* have reasserted Russia's foreign policy towards 'Arab Spring' which may contradict with that of US and other Western powers. *RIA Novosti* repeated this theme twenty eight times followed by *RT* with twenty one times. *Moscow Times* has shown its editorial muscle in this category stressing it twelve times while *Pravda* and *Interfax* repeated the theme four times each.

Table 13

Recurrence of Themes on Russian Foreign Policy towards 'Arab Spring'*

Russia Today		RIA Novosti		Interfax		Moscow Times		Pravda	
2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012	2011	2012
3	18	10	18	0	4	2	10	0	4
21		28		4		12		4	
Total : 69									

(* A few excerpts of reports in this category are given in the appendix part)

And finally, looking to the number of Russian media reports in chronological order, we can find the growing trend in the discourses on 'Arab Spring' in a quantitative means. Among the total seventy six reports appeared in 2011 *RIA Novosti* shares the most with thirty one followed by *RT* with twenty five reports. *Pravda* carried ten reports while *Moscow Times* and *Interfax* gave seven and three reports respectively during this period. Taking the case of total 125 reports in 2012 *RT* has made a leap carrying fifty six reports followed by *RIA Novosti* with thirty four reports. During this period, *Moscow Times* gave space for seventeen reports followed by *Pravda* having thirteen and *Interfax* with five reports. Ultimately, this trend suggests that *RT* and *RIA Novosti*, with eighty one and sixty five reports each, have been leading the Russian media discourses in transnational public spheres. *Moscow Times* and *Interfax* which arguably representing the private sector of Russian media have also played their part with twenty four and eight reports respectively while *Pravda* tried to raise the leftist voice through twenty three reports on 'Arab Spring' during 2011 and 2012.

The next chapter looks in to the role of Russian media in communicating Russia's state policy towards 'Arab Spring'.

Chapter 4

Russian Media and State's Policy towards 'Arab Spring'

The different themes and categories of reports Russian media carried to engage in the global discourse on so-called second Arab awakening can be perceived as compatible to Russian state policy towards 'Arab Spring'. This chapter looks into the role of Russian media played in the political communication with international audience especially in the case of 'Arab Spring'. This will also present a small account on the different dimension of post-Soviet Russian foreign policy followed by a discussion on Russian soft-power tools especially in the media space. Russia's policy towards 'Arab Spring' is examined in the broader context of Russia's relations with West Asia focusing on Libya and Syria. This chapter argues that Russia's 'Arab Spring' policy was promoted or propagated by Russian media to ensure its support among transnational public spheres.

Russian foreign policy has been evolved through its engagement with the nuances of Tsarist and Soviet policies towards the world around it. If the imperialist Russia's foreign policy rested on expansionist approach the Soviet era is known for exporting revolution followed by creating spheres of influence during Cold War years. Evolved through different socio-political trajectories at home and abroad the post-Soviet Russian foreign policy has been trying to keep the historical legacy of highlighting the uniqueness of 'Russian idea' vis a vis the geo-political partners across the world. Russian political elite claims there is no influence of Soviet era in current foreign policy, as Igor Ivanov, then Russian Foreign Minister, argued in 2000s that "Russia did not and implicitly does not see itself as heir to the Soviet policy in pursuing a foreign policy dictated by the requirements of an international class war" (Ivanov, 2000 quoted in Blank, Stephan J. 2012: 25). Nevertheless, the post-Soviet Russian foreign policy can be analyzed only in the backdrop of decades-old Soviet approach to the world in the periphery and beyond. This thinking gets more takers in the academic and diplomatic circles as the presidential power in Russia rests in the hands of Putin for more than a decade and Russia is following Soviet like methods to regain its

great power status through the integration of hard and soft power in its relations with foreign lands.

After a short period of lagging in international politics due to the chaotic situation followed by the Soviet disintegration and financial crisis, Russia has maintained to flux its muscle as an economic and military power because of the hike in oil prices and growing arms sales. Stephen J. Blank addresses this re-emergence of Moscow as a realist phenomenon since ‘Russia certainly no longer pursues a “class-based” foreign policy based on Marxism-Leninism” (Blank 2012: 25). This view can be fit in its full sense to Russia during the era of Boris Yelstin in early 1990s, but the later years under Putin and Medvedev have witnessed the return of Soviet style world view into the foreign policy department. Though he suggests that Russian foreign policy under Putin and Medvedev is ‘really a qualitatively new foreign policy’ Blank assumes that “there are significant elements of enduring Russian approaches to foreign policy that developed during the Tsarist and Soviet periods of Russian history.” Therefore Blank raises the very important question in this regard asking that “is there no ideological component to Russian foreign policy and only the strict pursuit of national interests, obviously conceived of in a manner resembling the 19th century fashion” (Blank, 2012: 25)

Tracing the foreign policy measures adopted by Russia in the last decade we can understand that the national interest, in terms of economic, geopolitical and military gains of homeland, has overshadowed the Soviet legacy of ideological war only for political gains. Russia, on the other hand, has diversified the means and goals of its foreign policy during Putin and Medvedev era while their first priority has been to keep the economy and polity stable instead of pushing Russia to wars and crisis. Blank (2012) further argued that ‘much of the tone and content of Russian foreign policy represents an outward projection of its autocratic domestic political system and that system’s attendant mentality.’ According to Blank Russia’s foreign policy has been trapped within a framework of its historical development where as post-Soviet Russian leadership use the

Russian history as a justification for their continuation in power. Thus, Ivanov's rhetoric in early 2000s on the development of new way of looking at Russian foreign policy goals and priorities can be understood as a shift from pro-Western attitude prevailed during Gorbachev and Yeslstin era (Blank, 2012: 26)

Despite the history of centuries-old relations with foreign lands new Russia's foreign policy has been redefined time to time according to its relation with rest of the world especially the West. Andrei Zagorski (2012) has stressed this factor saying that "Russian foreign policy appears to be going in circles since each new president begins by emphasizing, or repairing, the relationship with the West, only to end his time in office by questioning and jeopardizing it" (Zagorski 2012: 7-11). Therefore, the West, especially the US, has been made the reference point of Russia's foreign policy as it was the case during Soviet times when Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev devised their foreign policy looking their counterparts in West. Though the Cold War scenario ended in 1991 with the disintegration of USSR, Russian policy makers kept the sceptic view on West, especially US. Equating Russia with China as one pillar of the "high church of realism" in international affairs, Blank argued that "the aim of Russian foreign policy is the creation or formation of a Russian centre of power as one constitutive element of the emerging world order, a global oligarchy of five or six key players." (Blank 2012: 30-54) He further accuses Russian elites associated with Kremlin for their daydreaming about the end of American hegimonism which will enable a genuine partnership with America.

This Western centric or anti-US strategy in Russia's global affairs seems very apparent in its policy towards West Asia, a region where the US and European powers keep an upper hand over Moscow. Pavel K. Baev (2012) supports this argument suggesting that foreign policy trend setters in 2000s aimed at upholding Moscow's role as a major power though it was not supported by sufficient resources which led to a period of increasing self-assertiveness. This was the time, according to Baev, Russian policy makers had to resort into the concept of multipolarity, 'which essentially predicted an unravelling of the unfair

and unnatural U.S. dominance on the global arena.’ (Baeve, 2012: 4). This concept encouraged Moscow to join hands with developing powers like China and India and form a multilateral institution like BRICS¹ which can raise challenge to the US-led West at least in economic and political spheres. Baeve finds the root of this anti-West phenomenon in Russia’s foreign policy making suggesting that Russian leadership thinks that “the respect coming from the privilege of being a major strategic adversary for the United States more than compensates for the lost opportunities that could have been gained through entering the crowded marketplace of U.S. allies” (Baeve, 2012: 6). To justify this argument Baeve points that since a large part of the Russian political elite are originated from power structures like KGB and FSB, the foreign policy is being shaped by Cold War mindset giving priority to power-pole based competition rather than theoretically supported geopolitics (Baeve, 2012: 7).

However, many like Sabine Fischer (2007) hoped that the emergence of a post-Cold War thinking in Russia for ‘equal partnership’ with US and EU will translate into constructive partnership and the mutual economic and political interdependencies will avoid a “New Cold War” (Fischer, 2007: 16). Though Putin and Medvedev asserted this view such a move did not reached to a promising stage yet may be because, as Bobo Lo (2002) remarked, ‘Russian foreign policy was overwhelmingly Western-centric, although not pro-Western.’ Moreover, the Western-centrism continued to take the United States as its principal point of reference in Moscow’s foreign policy in a post-Soviet context when fundamental disagreements emerged over Russia’s identity and place in the world politics (Lo, 2002: 8). This Western-centric sentiment in Russia’s foreign policy is very apparent in Russia’s political and military relation with post-Soviet space, especially with Central Asia and Baltic states. Whenever US-led NATO tries to strengthen military bases Russia feels it as a new Western threat to the sovereignty of Russian spheres of influence. The enlargement of European Union to post-Soviet states, economic or military sanctions against Russia’s allies like

¹ BRICS includes other developing countries like Brazil and South Africa which also promotes a new wave of South-North collaboration in international affairs.

Iran is conceived by Russian policy makers as Western agenda to destabilize the region and minimize Russian influence.

It was in this context Putin could arguably win public opinion at home with a deterministic and pragmatic approach to the foreign policy aimed at regaining the dignity and privilege once Russia enjoyed in global politics. Though he stands for Russia's integration to the global trends in economic, cultural and information sectors and opposes Russia's isolation from the 'changing world', Putin always argued for Russia's own interests and goals rather than decisions dictated by someone else (Putin, 2012: 2) He has reiterated this in a detailed article saying that "Russia has generally enjoyed the privilege of conducting an independent foreign policy and this is what it will continue to do." Putin further argued that "our foreign policy objectives are strategic in nature and are not based on opportunistic considerations. They reflect Russia's unique role on the world political map as well as its role in history and in the development of civilization." Russia's deterministic approach to global issues including uprisings in Arab world is a clear signal about Putin's future plan: "We will continue on our constructive course enhance global security, renounce confrontation, and counter challenges like the proliferation of nuclear weapons, regional conflict and crises, terrorism and drug trafficking" (Putin, 2012: 3).

Russian "Soft Power" and Media Diplomacy

To achieve the strategic and economic goals Russia has diversified the means and the methods integrating hard and soft power measures in its relations with foreign lands. Joseph Nye who introduced the concept of soft power in international relations has noted that "the Soviet Union once had a good deal of soft power. And the Soviet soft power declined even as its hard economic and military resources continued to grow" where as "because of its brutal policies, the Soviet Union's hard power actually undercut its soft power" (Nye, 2004: 94-109). Realizing this fact Russia under Putin and Medvedev has been on its way to recover the means of soft power the Soviet Union once enjoyed. Daniel Kimmage (2009: 4) has pointed to Russia's soft-power policies in different forms like

multivector diplomacy, political interference, financial leverage, energy blackmail, and strategic communications. Along with the energy based economic growth, Russia managed to develop new means and methods of “soft power” that extends far beyond its energy resources.

Against the backdrop of unrest in the Arab world, Putin did reiterate the increased use of "soft power" to achieve strategic goals. “Soft power, according to Putin, implies a matrix of tools and methods to reach foreign policy goals without the use of arms but by exerting information and other levers of influence” (Putin, 2012: 5). Realizing this factor much earlier Putin himself had initiated to enhance Russia’s spheres of influence even beyond former Soviet space using soft power. Ariel Cohen (2012: 201) presents a list of soft power measures like Eurasian Union, protection and expansion of the Russian language and Russian Orthodox religion and use of energy and economic power as primary geopolitical tools which are a few of them adopted by Putin. During his presidency, according to Stobdan (2008), Dmitry Medvedev also had put forth a fresh foreign policy blueprint in which he stressed on regaining Russia’s “Great Power” through abandoning ‘bloc diplomacy’ in favour of ‘network diplomacy’, which was ‘exactly distinct in form from Putin’s doctrine’. It also asked for ‘fresh strategic partnership with the United States’ as well as the need of conducting ‘public diplomacy’ to improve Russia’s image in the 21st century (Stobdan, 2008: 4).

According to Cohen (2012) soft power is not a new phenomenon to Moscow as it viewed soft power as a tool of statecraft since the Soviet era. Soviet Russia used an enormous arsenal of print publications, movies, television and radio programming, education exchange programs and above all spreading tens of thousands of leftist intellectuals worldwide to win hearts and minds. In this context media outlets especially satellite channels, films and educational means and materials work as the cultural pipelines of Russian soft power. It’s quite interesting that Russia has made a great leap in its mediated soft power whereas US foreign secretary, Hillary Clinton publicly admitted that America has lost the information war to emerging powers like Russia and Qatar in this field(*The Week*,

2011). Cohen has underlined this fact suggesting that “United States has fallen behind Russia in the struggle for hearts and minds through traditional and new forms of media.” Through a number of media outlets online and offline, Russian presence in virtual world is very apparent while Moscow uses these low-cost outreach tools to connect millions around the world (Cohen, 2012: 209).

With systematic control over the most popular print, radio, and television outlets and encouraging pro-government media, Russia could project a unified, patriotic image of Russia abroad and promote the idea of a multipolar world. Moreover, through effective media diplomacy Russia could win support from official media of anti-Western camp which want end the end American hegemonism in all fields. *CCTV* of China, *Press TV* of Iran and *Telesur* of Venezuela are now major partners of Russia in its war of ideas and images. Though *Al-Jazeera* of Qatar is most popular as a major alternative to US-based *CNN* and UK based *BBC*, Russian presence in the global media space is successfully achieved through pro-Kremlin satellite channel, *RT*. Despite growing criticism for its propagandistic content and tone, *RT* is struggling to compete with its European counterparts like *France 24* and *Deutsche Welle* of Germany.

RT, the flagship news network launched in 2005 to “improve Russia’s image around the world”, is now Russia’s premier soft power instrument. Started to defend alleged anti-Russian bias from outlets *CNN* and *BBC*, *RT* is now very popular for its special coverage of anti-US moves like “Occupy Wall Street” protests. Apart from satellite TV channel available in English, Spanish, and Arabic, *RT* has established its foot prints across the world through a website with live streams of the channels, a Twitter feed, and a popular YouTube Channel with over 200 million hits. Russia has developed a handful of media outlets like TV, terrestrial radio, and national newspapers to make impact on public opinion of ruling elites and people across North and Latin Americas, Europe, Greater Middle East and others. To counter *Voice of America* and Radio Free Europe Russia has launched radio service, *The Voice of Russia* which is available online

in many languages like English, Russian, French, Arabic, Spanish, German, and Chinese and else(Cohen, 2012: 201).

Moreover, Russia has made its presence in Western print media publishing special pages titled *Russia Behind the Headlines* or *Russia Now* in European and American newspapers. *Russia in Global Affairs*, a journal from foreign affairs department and *Valdai Discussion Club*, a forum to promote pro-Russian discourses on global affairs are another tools initiated to win hearts and minds abroad. To compete with *AP*, *Reuters* and *AFP* in news and information service Russia has empowered its Soviet time news agency *RIA Novosti* (Cohen, 2012:202). Reminding the very need of Russia to accumulate numerous information brands to face Western outlets Sergey Karaganov(2012) suggests that improvement of Russia's image abroad is important even to bring more money and to encourage skilled Russians to stay back instead of abandoning the country. "In this situation, according to Karaganov, the positions occupied by states or societies in the sphere of mass communication provide a particularly capacious source of power and influence" (Karaganov, 2012: 2).

This aspect of media-led war of images will get clear once we go through Putin's statement in this regard: "The Arab Spring has graphically demonstrated that world public opinion is being shaped by the most active use of advanced information and communications technology." He further argued that the Internet, social networks, cell phones, etc. have turned into an effective tool for the promotion of domestic and international policy on par with television" (Putin, 2012:4). All these soft-power and media diplomacy measures adopted by Russia are very important in the context of Russian media's role in international political communication especially in the case of 'Arab Spring'. Analyzing Russia's official policy towards West Asia in general and during 'Arab Spring' in particular would be helpful to understand Russian media's engagement with state foreign policy

Russia's Relations with West Asia

Russia has a long history of relations with the countries in Greater Middle East. Until the October Revolution, Russian interest in the Middle East was inspired by the expansionist policy of the Russian Empire to connect the landlocked territory of the Russian Empire with the outside world by reaching the Mediterranean (Erenler 2012: 3). Underlining this point Atef Motamad Abdul Hamid (2012) has pointed that instead of commercial and military relationship with Arab world, Russia kept unofficial link through culture and religion² until the World War I and Bolshevik Revolution changed the geopolitical balances (Hamid, 2012: 2).

It was during Soviet days Arab world got strategic importance in the foreign policy. According to Lenin's communist class based world view Arab world was included in the third category (third world) of nations which were under colonial powers. During the post-war years Soviet Russia sympathized with West Asia as the region witnessed emergence of Arab nationalist forces challenging imperialist powers. To ensure the defeat of capitalist imperialist forces during Soviet Russia supported Arab nationalism advocated by Jamal Abdul Nasser in Egypt, Bathist Socialist movements in Iraq and Syria. Cold War under Khrushchev and Brezhnev made West Asia a battle ground between US-led West and USSR-led Soviet bloc. Arab Israeli conflict has been the major geopolitical factor that defined Russian relations vis a vis West in this region. As a global power Soviet Russia could make Arab world a trusted partner in military terms once it brokered a Czechoslovakian weapons deal with Nasser in 1955 before Arab Israeli war of 1956 (Hamid, 2012: 5).

The Soviet-Arab relations faced a great blow due to the defeat in 1976 followed by signing of Camp David Accord by Egypt's Anwar al-Sadat who shifted Arab world's relations from Moscow to Washington. However, Soviet Russia could maintain its economic, military and political relations with Iraq under Saddam, Syria under Assad, Libya under Muammar Gaddafi and with Revolutionary Iran. In the last years of Soviet Union, Arab world had almost

² Russian Orthodox Christians traveled to Palestine while Muslims in Russia and Central Asia went to Mecca for Haj pilgrimage.

shifted its relations to Russia to US because of Soviet invasion to Afghanistan and US-led war on Iraq in 1991 (Hamid, 2012: 5). Since Gorbachev and Yelstin expressed least interest in relations with region rather than going with Western partners, Arab world had already left out of Soviet sphere of influence. After all, until Madrid Peace Conference in 1991 which underlined US hegemony on the region, Soviet Russia could keep a few friends in the region through its seasoned support to Palestinian cause as well as with a strong military and arms deals.

The arrival of Yevgeny Primakov as the Foreign Minister of Russian Federation in 1996 and as Prime Minister in 1998 marked a new era in Russia's relations with rest of the world including West Asia. Primakov's attempt to reorient the foreign policy in multipolar and multilateral terms was perceived as Russia's return to its Soviet time spheres of influence (Hamid, 2012: 6; Cohen, 2012: 7). The 'War-on-Terror' led by US after the 9/11 attack and invasion of Afghan and Iraq helped Russia to make use of anti-American sentiment in the Arab world. However, Russia under Putin and Medvedev kept itself away from geopolitical tug with US and focused on strategic partnership through economic, energy and military deals. Russia's pragmatic and strategic approach in its foreign relations especially with Greater Middle East in 21st century has been understood as successful due to the hike in fuel prices and arms deals. Erenler(2012) underlines this point suggesting that "the only difference between post-Soviet foreign policy and that of the Russian Empire and Soviet Union is what was essentially a *zero-sum* relationship during the latter ones has now turned into a *positive sum* relationship between Russia and its rivals" (Erenler,2012: 5).

However, ZviMagen (2012) argues that Russian policy in the West Asia is part of its efforts to advance Moscow's regional and global interests vis a vis the West especially US. Like in many other cases Russia's global stand against the US is very apparent in its West Asian policy which reflects Russia's aspiration to preserve its spheres of influence. Magen concludes that "Russia is pursuing an independent policy and is competing with the West to shape the region's future

order” (Magen, 2012: 2) All these factors related to the evolution of Russia’s relations with West Asia during Soviet and post-Soviet conditions should be duly considered to contextualize Russia’s response to the uprisings or the so-called ‘Arab Spring’ which already brought changes in the balance of the regions.

Russia’s ‘Arab Spring’ Policy

Russia like many other global powers had caught in surprise by the wind of popular protests across Arab streets started in December 2010 from Tunisia and led to toppling of decades old rule of monarchs in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen. Once the upheavals spread across the Arab world demanding democratic changes in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Syria the power balance and geopolitical equations have reached to a new phase. Since external forces like US and its European and Arab allies called for regime changes even with military intervention, as NATO did in Libya, the Russo-Chinese-led camp including Iran has been in a confronting situation especially in the case of Libya and Syria. Though the situations in Syria remains unpredictable, so far we can assume that Russia has followed a strategic and pragmatic policy to each cases of ‘Arab Spring’. Instead of competing with West in military terms Russia has been playing multi-vector diplomatic game to sustain its economic, military and strategic interests in the region especially with Syria (Erenler, 2012: 2; Klein, 2012: 1).

In the early days of the uprisings Russia had expressed solidarity with the protesting people despite its fear of spill over effect in the home land. Responding to the protests in Tunisia, then Russian President Medvedev said that “The authorities must not simply sit in their convenient chairs but develop themselves together with the society. When the authorities don’t catch up with the development of the society, and don’t meet the aspiration of the people, the outcome is very sad” (Medvedev, 2011). However, despite having no concern with authoritarian regimes Russia remained as a passive spectator when the government of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali of Tunis was thrown out. Russian response to the protests in Tahrir Squar in Egypt was much similar though

Deputy Prime Minister Igor Sechin accused internet giant Google of initiating the revolts in Egypt. Moscow neither did any attempt to rescue three decades old Hosni Mubarak nor supported the massive protests for regime changes. Russia kept on low profile when the 'Arab Spring' hit Yemen ousting President Ali Abdallah Saleh and Bahrain and Saudi Arabia where authorities took controlling measures (Erenler, 2012: 6).

Russia's passive response to the regime changes in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen can be perceived as strategic and interest oriented. Rather than playing a global power role Russian policymakers gave priority to national interest, economic and military deals with these countries. As Margarete Klein (2012) suggested Russia had very little to lose if the ruling elites of Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen survived or not since Russia enjoyed low profile in economic and trade relations with these countries. Moreover, as the regime changes in these countries happened in a civilized manner, there was no chance to use Russia's most highlighted instrument for geopolitical influence, the veto power in UN Security Council (Klein, 2012: 3). We can also assume that Russia could be shown least interest in securing allegedly pro-Western governments in Tunisia, Egypt and Yemen. Though Soviet Russia kept economic and military relations with Egypt, Hosni Mubarak even being educated in Soviet military academies had shifted his countries relations from Moscow to Washington.

However, at one stage of uprisings Russian President Medvedev perceived the situation as extremely difficult which may bring great problems to Arab world and the entire region. "In some cases it may even come to the disintegration of large, heavily populated states, their break-up into smaller fragments," Medvedev argued stressing that things will help the arrival of fanatics into power. Denying any such situation back home, Russian President accused that "in the past such a scenario (keeping the colour revolutions in mind) was harboured for us and now attempts to implement it are even more likely. In any case, this plot will not work." However, he expressed the concern over the impact of unrest in West Asia saying that "everything that happens there will have a

direct impact on our domestic situation in the long term, as long as decades” (Medvedev, 2011).

Consequently watching the course of developments in Arab world, Russia had to shed its spectator role and to be part of race either to support the ruling elites or win the hearts and minds of opposition forces in the region. As Tiberio Graziani (2012) suggested, Russia like many other developing powers started to perceive ‘Arab Spring’ as a geopolitical agenda for the struggle for world supremacy. There are claims like the so-called Arab revolution was orchestrated by Western powers when the world order has been in transition from the unipolar to the multipolar system thanks to the emergence of China and India as new economic powers while Russia under Putin was making a return as a global actor (Graziani, 2012: 6). But, people like Blank and Cohen accuses this as Russian trend of anti-Western campaign downplaying protests in Arab world as another form of “colour revolution”, stage-managed from outside by external political actors whereas the people here were merely passive bystanders or puppets of this external manifestation (Blank,2012: 91; Cohen,2012: 1-6).

The Cases of Libya and Syria

Contrary to its passive role towards uprisings in many Arab countries, Russia made its presence visible in the case of Libya and Syria using its UN veto power as a token to reassert its status in global politics. After, a ‘wait and see policy’ in other cases Russia raised its voice since Moscow’s relations has been excellent, during Soviet and post-Soviet times, with Libya since Muammar Gaddafi rose to power in 1969 and until his fall in 2011(Cohen,2012: 2). More than ideological affinity with Gaddafi who adopted some Socialist methods, Russia enjoyed strong economic, military and arms deals with Libya. Acknowledging Tripoli’s pro-Russian attitude Russia had written off a Soviet debt of \$ 4.5 billion in 2008 whereas in return Russian companies won lucrative contracts in oil, arms and infrastructural sectors. So-called ‘Arab Spring’ which turned to acute civil war supported by external forces had left a big blow on Russia’s economic relations with Libya which was estimated around \$10 billion (Klein, 2012: 2).

Having all such economic losses, Russia failed to make out a clear position in the beginning of Libyan revolution even when Libyan opposition got military support of NATO. Going with Western partners for initial economic sanctions and arms embargo on Libya, Russia's response to UN Security Council resolution No. 1973, promoted by European powers and America for military intervention, also was uncertain. Though Russia abstained from voting the lack of clarity in Russia's position was exposed when President Medvedev rejected the Prime Minister Putin's criticism of the NATO intervention as "crusade" (Erenler, 2012: 7). Though Russia claimed that it exercised veto because the resolution was "based on a philosophy of confrontation," contained "an ultimatum of sanctions," and was "against a peaceful settlement of a crisis," many believed that Russia had limited economic, diplomatic, and military resources to oppose such a move (Cohen, 2012: 3).

According to Mark N. Katz (2012) Russia had to give the price, for its support to Gaddafi even when the Arab League backed the Libyan opposition, as the new rulers were unhappy with Russia and suspended economic cooperation with it (Katz, 2012: 2). However, Klein (2012: 2) has pointed that Russian policy towards Gaddafi, who never been a political partner of Moscow, without using its veto power when the Libyan ruler was isolated by Arab countries was strategic regarding its relation with the region and West. On the other hand, Russia's later responses³ to the uprisings suggest that it was late to identify the Western interest behind the 'Arab Spring' making it an opportunity for reshaping the economic and trade regimes of the entire region. Putin himself has raised this point saying "it appears that with the Arab Spring countries, as with Iraq, Russian companies are losing their decades-long positions in local commercial markets and are being deprived of large commercial contracts." Questioning the morale of West and its allies in enjoying the economic and commercial benefits through their support for regime change, Putin concluded that "the tragic events have been encouraged

³The response came from Putin after he returned to Presidential office, The Arab Spring: lessons and conclusions, <http://valdaiclub.com/politics/39300.html>

to a certain extent by someone's interest in a re-division of the commercial market rather than a concern for human rights” (Putin 2012: 3).

Unlike in any other country in Arab world, the uprisings in Syria have been checking Russia's role either as a trusted partner of an age old ally or as a powerful mediator in global politics. Even though the crisis in Syria is continuing unpredictable, the Russian policy towards this Soviet-era partner remains the same from the day one of the protests. Russia has played unequivocal role for protecting the ruling Assad regime despite enormous pressure from US-led West and Arab countries. Russia has ensured all kind of support to Syria including veto against United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution for military intervention to oust the minority Shia-Allevite government by the support of Sunni majority in the region. In a highly diplomatic tone Russian Foreign minister Sergei Lavrov had made this point clear saying that “If someone intends to use force by any means, we most likely won't be able to contain them in doing so. But we'll let them do that unilaterally, so there is nobody else to blame. They will receive no endorsements from the UN Security Council,” (Lavrov, 2012, quoted in Lukyanov, 2012).

Despite use of force against opposition parties and ongoing bloody war between government force and 'Free Syria Army' Russia's staunch support to Assad government is perceived in economic, military and geopolitical terms. Klein (2012) argues that Russia wants the survival of ruling regime in Syria which enjoys strong economic and military ties with Moscow. Russia has made investments of total \$ 19.5 billion in 2009 where as Syria is the third largest importer of Russian arms of total \$ 5-6 billion. Being a military and economic partner since Soviet times Russia had waved off 73% of Syria debt which costs around 13.4 billion. Geopolitically Syria is nearer to Russian main land and Russia's only remaining naval base beyond post-Soviet space is in Tartus which makes Russia's geopolitical and military interests in the region alive(Klein, 2012:4). Moreover, 'the close relations with Damascus provide Moscow with the

ground to penetrate into region and play an indirect crucial role in the balance of power in the Arab-Israeli conflict' (Erenler, 2012: 8).

Fyodor Lukyanov (2012), on the other hand argues that the perseverance of Russia in the case of Syria is also directly related to the events that took place in Libya in 2011. He further suggests that "the Russian interpretation of the events in Syria is completely different from that of the West and the Arab world." The developments in Syria is to be perceived as bitter civil war in terms of religious (Sunnis versus Shiites) and geo-political (monarchies of the Persian Gulf against Iran). Thus Damascus has been the battle ground for balance of power in the Middle East, where as most of the participants, especially foreign, could not care less about the democracy of the future of Syria (Lukyanov, 2012: 3).

Remembering the Libyan experience, Russia has so far exercised its veto in UNSC against any resolution proposed by US and its European allies for arms embargo or military intervention. On the other hand Russia has initiated to introduce a resolution in which Russia criticized Assad for using force against citizens but give no chance to global powers to impose any sanctions on Syria. Reasserting its coveted role in international politics Russia initiated to bring Damascus and its opposition for a dialogue with UN delegation led by Kofi Annan. Though it reiterates the presence in Syrian opposition of global terrorists groups funded and armed by external powers, Russia welcomed them to Moscow for a civilized solution to the crisis. However, many like Cohen (2012:5) believe that Russia's firm stand behind Assad, even when Arab League cancelled Syria's membership in the organization, is self defeating in terms of future relations with the region. Katz (2012) also reiterates this point arguing that "just as the Soviet invasion and occupation of Afghanistan vitiated many of the achievements made by Soviet foreign policy toward the Middle East from the 1950s through the 1970s, Moscow's strong support for the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria threatens to negate the achievements of Putin's foreign policy" (Katz, 2012:3)

Ultimately Russian policy towards the developments in Arab world can be understood from the assertive stance adopted by Russia's new President Vladimir Putin. In a detailed note on the issue Putin underlined that "the Arab Spring was initially received with hope for positive change. People in Russia sympathized with those who were seeking democratic reform" He further argued that Russia as well as many of its partners could very soon realize that events in many Arab countries were not following a civilized scenario. "Instead of asserting democracy and protecting the rights of the minority, attempts were being made to depose an enemy and to stage a coup, which only resulted in the replacement of one dominant force with another even more aggressive dominant force" (Putin, 2012: 3).

Putin clarified his government's policy especially in the case of Libya and Syria suggesting that "foreign interference in support of one side of a domestic conflict and the use of power in this interference gave developments a negative aura." He lamented US and its European and Arab allies for using air power in the name of humanitarian support to dethrone Libyan regime. Calling the revolting slaughter of Muammar Gaddafi as not just medieval but primeval, Putin suggested that this was the manifestation of what actions Western powers follow in the name of importing democracy. As the bottom-line Putin warned the West and its allies saying "no one should be allowed to employ the Libyan scenario in Syria. The international community must work to achieve an internal Syrian reconciliation" (Putin, 2012: 4).

Russian Media's Communication of State Policy towards 'Arab Spring'

Against this backdrop of foreign policy measures adopted by Russia towards 'Arab Spring' now we have to check what role Russian media played in communicating this with international audience. To address this most important question of this study we have to go through the media contents and themes already analysed in previous chapter and check whether it resonated the state foreign policy or make independent commentary on the upheaval across West Asia especially in Libya and Syria. Before reaching at any conclusions we make

a comparative cross check of the contents of the given media samples with materials from other sources like, *Russia in Global Affairs*, *Valdai Discussion Club* and official press releases which are aimed at making Russian version of international affairs popular and suggesting it as an alternative to mainstream discourses promoted by so-called global media. Ultimately here this chapter could uncover how far Russian media is engaged in international political communication by which creation of alternative public spheres becomes possible at transnational level.

Russian media's engagement with state's foreign policy can be uncovered through a cross check of the categories of reports and themes on 'Arab Spring' appeared in Russian media. Similar to the reaction of state policy departments, the response of Russian media, *RT*, *RIA Novosti*, *Moscow Times*, *Interfax* and *Pravda*, to the 'Arab Spring' appears very strategic in nature in the first two years of protests. Russian media seems adopted a policy of 'wait and see' in late 2010 and early 2011 when 'Arab Spring' was getting footholds in Libya after Tunisia and Egypt. In this context we could find, from the available samples, *RIA Novosti* carrying an opinion piece, though it was originally published in *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, by Yevgeny Primakov titled "Protests in Egypt raise questions" on 1st February. *RT* followed with a report on Russia's official response to the uprisings quoting Medvedev, "No Middle East-style scenario for Russia" on 22nd February. While these two reports exposed Russia's concerns over the developments in West Asia, *Moscow Times* carried a report titled "Care Urged in EBRD Arab Move" on 23 May 2013 which addresses the Russian response to the lending policy of European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to Greater Middle East in the wake of 'Arab Spring'.

In this regard, the first report on 'Arab Spring' appeared in *Interfax* and *Pravda* are very important since both of them addresses the interests of US-led West behind the so-called second Arab awakening. *Interfax* carries an interview with Robert Gates on 22 March 2011, which says "U.S. will very soon recede back into supportive role in Libya" while *Pravda* waited until 29 August 2011 to give a report titled "Libya not enough for the West". This pattern of reporting is a

good sample to assess the nature of Russian media discourses on ‘Arab Spring’. When *RIA Novosti* and *RT*, being government supported media houses, are enthusiastic in defending Russia’s official ‘Arab Spring’ policy in home and abroad, *Moscow Times* communicates Russia’s economic interest vis a vis EU in West Asia. *Interfax* on the other hand comments on US role and interests in Libya while *Pravda* keeps its communist tradition criticizing the imperialist tendency of West hidden behind the curtain of promoting regime changes through ‘Arab Spring’. Ultimately, all these sample reports follow in one way or other the typical way of Russian response to international politics suggesting to ‘question more’. as *RT* tagline says, the vested geopolitical, military and economic interest of global powers.

Once the peaceful ‘Arab Spring’ protests turned into violent conflicts in late 2011 and 2012, with the help of external forces, in Libya and Syria Russian media have tried their best to engage with Russia’s foreign policy measures. A descriptive note by Putin, published by *Valdai Discussion Club* can be considered as the very reference point for Russia’s official tone on the ‘Arab Spring’. Here Putin says that “people in Russia sympathized with those who were seeking democratic reform. However, it soon became clear that events in many countries were not following a civilized scenario” (Putin, 2012: 4). He further argued that “instead of asserting democracy and protecting the rights of the minority, attempts were being made to depose an enemy and to stage a coup, which only resulted in the replacement of one dominant force with another even more aggressive dominant force” (Putin, 2012: 4).

Against the backdrop of the above discussion, Table No.13 depicts that Russian media have given enough space to present and promote Russia’s foreign policy towards ‘Arab Spring’. Re-asserting this theme of Russian foreign policy, *RIA Novosti*, followed this pattern twenty eight times while *RT* repeated it only twenty one times. *The Moscow Times* has addressed the issue of Russia’s foreign policy a dozen times while *Interfax* and *Pravda* repeated the same theme four times each. This pattern of theme-presenting would be considered as Russian media’s active role in setting in the tone of Russia’s policy towards the

developments in Arab world. To support this argument we have a list of reports on Russian role/response regarding ‘Arab Spring’ shown in Table No. 4, which make Russian presence alive in global politics especially in the time of crisis. In this category also *RIA Novosti* is the leading one among Russian media with twenty eight reports while *RT* followed with seventeen, *Moscow Times* with fifteen, *Pravda* with four and *Interfax* with two reports.

The correlation of media commentary with Russia’s official policy towards the developments in West Asia is more convincing from the themes presented by Russian media to mediate in the discourses on ‘Arab Spring’. *RIA Novosti* has reminded the policy makers and foreign audience about the very national interest of Russia regarding ‘Arab Spring’ reiterating this theme thirteen times followed by *RT*, *Moscow Times*, *Pravda* and *Interfax* ten, eight, five and a couple of times respectively. Putin has officially asserted this point saying that “with the Arab Spring countries, as with Iraq, Russian companies are losing their decades-long positions in local commercial markets and are being deprived of large commercial contracts. The niches thus vacated are being filled by the economic operatives of the states that had a hand in the change of the ruling regime” (Putin, 2012: 4).

Moreover, following the rhetoric of policy makers in Moscow, Russian media have been presenting propaganda like interpretation on the role of US and its allies during the upheavals in Arab world. *RT* has reiterated the theme, geopolitical interest of external powers like West and its allies in the region, forty-three times while *RIA Novosti* stressed this theme twenty five times. *Pravda*, *Moscow Times* and *Interfax* also considered this issue for discussion ten, nine and a couple of times respectively. From this pattern of reporting its quiet apparent that Russian media have given weight to the official narratives about ‘Arab Spring’ that West-supported regional powers in the West Asia have vested interest in promoting regime changes in Libya and Syria. People like Pyotr Stegnyy⁴ who are part of Russia’s foreign policy department has reiterated the

⁴Pyotr Stegnyy is Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation, and a member of the Russian International Affairs Council.

official argument saying that “Arab League and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (CCASG) supported Western armed intervention in Libya, and is taking a similar position on Syria”. He continued that “regime change in the course of the Arab Spring has heightened ethnic and religious antagonisms as radical Islamists enter the political scene” (Stegniy, 2012: 1-2).

Above all, Russian media have challenged the global media rhetoric on ‘Arab Spring’, as spontaneous, democratic and nonviolent protests against authoritarian governments in Arab world. Presenting alternative discourses on the means and goals of protests in West Asia, Russian media tried to create parallel public spheres that can challenge the euphoria promoted by global media. The very important pattern in this kind of reporting is one which highlights the extremist and fanatic elements of protests contrary to exposing the democratic element of ‘Arab Spring’. *RT* has exposed the extremist or fanatic tendency of protests in Libya and Syria thirty three times while it mentioned the democratic feature of ‘Arab Spring’ only eight times.

RIA Novosti has similar strategy questioning role of extremists eighteen times while giving only seven times space for democratic elements of Arab awakening. While *Pravda* and *Moscow Times* mentioned democratic theme twice each *Interfax* had no mentioning on this. On the other hand, *Pravda* stressed fanatic theme four times followed by *Moscow Times* and *Interfax* three times and twice each. Here is a narrative by Pyotr Stegnyy which helps to understand Russian media’s role in propagating Moscow’s official stance claiming the extremist nature of the Arab Spring. According to Stegnyy “having begun as a ‘twitter revolution’ of the middle class, has handed power to conservative Islamic forces, from fundamentalist to extremist factions, some of which march under theocratic slogans,” (Stegnyy, 2012: 3).

Moreover, Soviet like propagandist nature of Russian media has been apparent in its very attempt to depict the ‘Arab Spring’, orchestrated by external forces rather than people of Libya or Syria, as the developed versions of ‘Color Revolutions’ happened in the Post-Soviet states. Supporting official government stance in this regard, Russian media have tried to expose the foreign hands which

want regimes changes or import of democracy in the cost of civil wars and internal clashes in this part of the world. Here also we find that Russian media have advocated the official tone of government which is reflected in Pyotr Stegnyy's words: "Syria, the civil war in this key Arab country has gained the traits of a latent regional conflict. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar support the opposition of the Free Syrian Army, while Bashar al-Assad's administration is supported by Iran" (Stegnyy, 2012: 3). Much similar argument has made by Putin saying that "Foreign interference in support of one side of a domestic conflict and the use of power in this interference gave developments a negative aura. A number of countries did away with the Libyan regime by using air power in the name of humanitarian support. The revolting slaughter of Muammar Gaddafi - not just medieval but primeval - was the manifestation of these actions" (Putin, 2012: 4).

Following Russian official argument about foreign interference in the protests in Arab world, *RT* stressed the theme of foreign influence behind 'Arab Spring' forty four times. The theme of regime change or import of democracy also got space forty one times in this Russian media outlet, *RT* which is primarily aimed at winning the hearts and minds of foreign audience. Repeating the same theme nineteen times *RIA Novosti* also reiterated that external forces played the key role behind the uprisings while this news agency repeated, thirteen times, the argument that regime change or import of democracy in Libya and Syria was the real agenda behind these so-called upheavals. Among the three other samples, *Pravda* has supported both these themes eight and five times each, *Moscow Times* did the same with four and seven times and *Interfax* accused foreign influence once and supported the regime change theme six times.

The media driven argument that 'regime change and importing democracy' in the Arab world is foreign supported echoes Russia's official stance advocated in an opinion piece in foreign affairs journal, *Russia in Global Affairs*

on 12 July 2012 by Fyodor Lukyanov⁵ entitled “Is Democracy the Solution for the Middle East?” states that “The main task for all Arab Spring countries is to create a stable and effective government. The illusion that they only need to overthrow their dictators and introduce democracy to solve all their problems, a theory promoted by American neocons, has been shattered” (Lukyanov, 2012: 2).

Ultimately Russian media have done its best to translate the official narratives about ‘Arab Spring’ and used every chance to place it before international community to justify Russia’s policies. Moreover, Russian media have worked strategically to convince the world that Russia has to place some alternative discourses on the developments in Greater Middle East. This media diplomacy method adopted by Russian media can be perceived as Russia’s attempt to regain its status in global politics using mediated soft power tools.

⁵ Fyodor Lukyanov is editor in chief of the journal *Russia in Global Affairs*, Chairman of Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defense Policy, Russian Federation.

Chapter 5

Findings and Conclusions

Having a detailed analysis of various variables related to the main question of this study, role of Russian media in communicating the political discourses on 'Arab Spring' to foreign audience, a few findings and conclusions are presented for further enquiries in this field. On the outset of the study, a conceptual framework was introduced to explore the role of media in international political communication given its potentiality in shaping people's behaviour and attitudes by disseminating news and views to serve certain interests. The context of this study is very critical since the erstwhile methods of international propaganda or psychological warfare now have been crossing national boundaries as the geography of the communications is in flux and the flow of mass communications are being internationalized.

It's very apparent, from the given literature in this field, that Soviet and post-Soviet Russian media has been part of "competitive struggle to influence and control popular perceptions of key political events and issues" and do purposeful communication about international politics. This phenomenon known as international political communication has become inherently strategic since it's used as an instrument for conducting international relations as a specific mean by which any nation state can gain power over opinion. Ultimately the first part of the study has tried to underline that international political communication via mass media and media diplomacy has been an integral part of governments' means and methods to win hearts and minds abroad.

Unlike in the age of suitcase diplomacy the mass media have emerged as the main venue for debates on geopolitics, foreign policy and balance of power in an interconnected world order. Media and cultural diplomacy has got wider appeal as the part of 'soft power' concept in international relations due to the growing attention towards people-to-people relations in the post Cold War context. Therefore, the information and communication flow and mediated

political communication across borders are taken as integral means in the formation of transnational public spheres when non-state actors like media and civil society are playing more active role in global politics and international relations in a globalized or interconnected world order.

Finding the political and strategic role of media and mass communication, Russia like many other countries has developed its own media and communication tools in order to reach to both internal and external audience. State-sponsored international TV channels, radio services, news agencies, websites, social network pages, and online discussion forums are few examples of steps taken in this direction during Putin and Medvedev era. While the flow of information and ideas from one country to another being highly monitored even today, we can figure out the inter-link between, media, information and communication measures and foreign policies adopted by any state like Russia. Ultimately the first part of the study has almost tried to answer one of the major questions of this study: what is the role of media in international political communication in the post-communist information and communication order in the global public sphere?

The Russian media environment at present is transforming and characterises strict media policy, state control, oligarchy oriented structure of ownership and low level of press freedom. Going through the given variables taken for exploring the post-Soviet media environment in Russia, we could conclude that state is a prominent factor in every aspect of media and mass communication and information flow within and outside Russia. State apparatus headed by the president has a decisive role in all variables namely media structure, ownership, control, political influence, public opinion, journalistic practice, and even the globalization of Russian media.

Moreover, as the state has taken deliberate efforts to control and shape the information flow towards global audience initiating pro-government TV channels and cultural outlets, Russian media's political communication with international

audience can be seen as part of the strategic and diplomatic efforts of Russian government. Therefore, it seems very apt to characterize the current Russian media system, especially during Medvedev and Putin era, as 'Neo-Soviet model' in which state keeps Soviet legacy of direct and indirect control over media whereas oligarchic structure of ownership and poor journalistic practice curtail the proposed media freedom. Exploring the different aspects of the post-Soviet Russian media system, a major objective of the study is to examine the media and communication environment in Russia against the backdrop of democratic transformation. Considering the international political and cultural communication scenario of post-Soviet Russia, we could find that if the Yelstin era was marked for inflow of global media products to Russia the Putin and Medvedev era can be seen as the time of outflows of Russian media and information to global spheres.

Russian media play a great role in international political communication in this regard. The discourses on 'Arab Spring' promoted by Russian media demonstrate the way mediated communication reach to global public. Through quantitative and qualitative analysis of more than 200 reports we tried to answer the very question: what role Russian media played in international political communication as reflected in discourses on 'Arab Spring' comparing to its global counterparts? Six categories of reports exposed the nature and style of Russian media's engagement with international audience on global issues like 'Arab Spring'. The analysis could find that similar to the Russian government's approach to the 'Arab Spring', the response of media samples, *RT*, *RIA Novosti*, *Moscow Times*, *Interfax* and *Pravda*, was very strategic in nature in the first two years of protests. While Russian media adopted a policy of 'wait and see' in late 2010 and early 2011 when 'Arab Spring' was getting footholds in Libya after Tunisia and Egypt later in 2012 they joined the official war for shaping global public opinion against the vested interests of West and its allies behind the protests in Libya and Syria.

Qualitative analysis of seven themes on 'Arab Spring' carried by Russian media could figure out Russian efforts to raise a different voice in global public sphere, to sustain its geopolitical and economic interests in 'Greater Middle East'. Russian media have challenged the global media rhetoric on 'Arab Spring', as spontaneous, democratic and nonviolent protests against authoritarian governments in Arab world. Thus, presenting alternative discourses on the means and goals of protests in West Asia, Russian media tried to create parallel public spheres that can challenge the euphoria promoted by global media. In this regard, contrary to exposing the democratic element of 'Arab Spring' Russian media carried propaganda themes which highlighted the extremist and fanatic elements of protests.

Following the rhetoric of policy makers in Moscow, Russian media also tried to expose the role of US and its allies behind the upheavals in Arab world. Moreover, Russian media did its best to depict the 'Arab Spring' as one which has been orchestrated by external forces rather than people of Libya or Syria similar to the 'Colour Revolutions' designed for the post-Soviet states in 2000s. Russian media thus supported official Russian stance accusing foreign hands behind the unrest in Arab world where US-led West want regimes changes or import of democracy in the cost of civil wars and internal clashes. The analysis also could find that, reiterating the theme of geo-political interest of external powers in the region, Russian media have given weight to the official narratives about 'Arab Spring' that West-supported regional powers in the West Asia kept vested interests in promoting regime changes in Libya and Syria.

In regard to the link between media discourse, national interest and foreign policy of Russia in regard to 'Arab Spring', this study could find that Russian media have given enough space to present and promote Moscow's foreign policy towards 'Arab Spring'. The different pattern of themes presented by Russian media stressing the national and geopolitical interests of Russia can be considered as the very proof for underlining Russian media's active role in setting and disseminating the tone of Moscow's 'Arab Spring' policy. A handful

of reports stressing the Russian role or response vis a vis other global powers regarding ‘Arab Spring’ are arguably designed for making Russian presence alive in global politics especially in the time of crisis. Moreover, as the Russian media keep reminding the policy makers at home and foreign audience about the very national interest of Russia regarding ‘Arab Spring’ we can understand the correlation of media commentary with Moscow’s policy regarding the developments in West Asia.

Ultimately, analyzing the different patterns and themes of Russian media content on ‘Arab Spring’, this study could find that Russian media have been playing an important role in communicating Russian version of political discourses to international audience. Thus, the above listed findings approve the first hypothesis of this study: Russian media use different means of international political communication such as factual statements, propaganda reports and persistent discourses to play influential role in international relations and foreign policy. Through reports that exposing the undemocratic nature of ‘Arab Spring’ and themes reiterating external influence and vested interests behind the protests, Russian media have played decisive role behind Moscow’s policy towards global issues and its relations with foreign people. However, there is enough room to do more research on Russian media’s success in its engagement with transnational public spheres to create alternative discourses vis a vis the dominant narratives aired by so-called global media like *CNN*, *BBC* and *Al-Jazeera*.

The study was to test two hypotheses as stated in chapter one. These hypotheses are:

1. Russian media uses different means of international political communication such as factual statements, propaganda reports and persistent discourses to play influential role in international relations and foreign policy.
2. Russian media supports national interest, national security and foreign policy of the state by mediating a different discourse on “Arab Spring” in the global public sphere.

This study could find that Russian media have done its best to translate the official narratives about ‘Arab Spring’ and used every chance to place it before international

community to justify Moscow's policies. Russian media also have worked strategically to convince the world that Russia has to place some alternative discourses on the developments in Greater Middle East. And the proposed hypotheses of this study have been proved accordingly. This study also identifies the role of media diplomacy method as a soft power tool in pursuing foreign policy interest as an area of further research. More research is needed to check how far the media diplomacy method adopted by Russian media is helping Russia's attempt to regain its super power status in global politics using mediated soft power tools.

Appendix

Excerpts of Sample Reports Analyzed in Tables

Table 1

1. "The War of Images - Video of Syrian Events, and Their Interpretation" *Russia Today* (RT), 21 October 2011

"Unlike other countries of the Arab Spring, there are a lot of different videos about Syria on the internet. TV channels around the world broadcast selective videos of atrocities by armed men. At the same time, they fail to show millions of Syrians rallying to support the government. And they don't show videos of atrocities against Syrian people....The Western media show videos of "atrocities of the Syrian army".

2. "Journalists Drop Stories Too Soon – British Media Chief", *Ria Novosti*, 05 July 2012

"International media could have been more persistent in trying to give a fairer and longer account of Arab uprisings and recent anti-government protests in Russia, Peter Horrocks, the BBC Global News head, said in an interview...."

3. "Arab spring, American "fall" *Pravda*, 22, September, 2011

"Completely ignored by the televised and printed media, the movement was articulated over the Internet. When the demonstration was called by the movement to occupy Wall Street, in which the Anonymous is made present, the event includes a series of demands that have not long been seen in the American public sphere...."

Table 2

1. "Will Syria be the next Libya?" *RT*, 28, April, 2011

"The spread of spring pro-democracy protests continues as violence engulfs Syria and government forces crack down on protestors. Syria's actions, to some, resemble what was taking place in Libya before NATO intervened"

2. "Will international terrorists help the U.S. build 'The Greater Middle East'?" *Ria Novosti*, 13, July, 2011

"The so-called 'Arab spring', which started as a wave of anti-government riots in Tunisia and Egypt, is now developing in full accordance with the

US scenario, its main aim being to reshape the geopolitics, which the Bush administration once described as ‘The Greater Middle East’ plan....”

3. “Finding a Global Solution to the Syrian Crisis”, *Moscow Times*, 13 August 2012

“What began as a popular uprising inspired by the demands of the Arab Spring has taken on increasingly sectarian and radical tones. This reflects a loss of hope in international support....”

4. “Humanitarian catastrophe brewing in Syria,” *Pravda*, 24, December, 2012

“The political situation in Syria remains tense and the number of refugees from the country is increasing every day... The cause of unrest that started in the fall of 2011 and later grew into a real civil war was an open revolt against the incumbent government of Bashar al-Assad.”

Table 3

1. “West two-faced over rights violations in Syria – country’s FM”, *RT*, 25, October, 2011

“The economic sanctions which are having a harsh impact on the Syrian population highlight a clear contradiction in the West’s approach to Syria, insists Syria’s Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem...”

2. “Asad’s broken promises”, *Ria Novosti*, 14, April, 2011

“Under pressure from the street, Syrian President Bashar al-Asad has opted to project an image of uncompromising strength. Some mild concessions were made on the religious front, and the president promised some basic recognition of the disenfranchised Kurdish population’s rights to citizenship...”

3. “Assad warns west”, *Pravda*, 31, October, 2011

“Syrian President Bashar al-Assad warned that an attack against Syria by Western countries could trigger a scene equal to that of Afghanistan.....”

Table 4

1. “Friend turned foe: Turkey rounds on Syria in regional power bid”, *RT*, 18, January, 2012.

“Turkey, Syria’s neighbor and long-time ally, is now taking an active role in

attempts to dethrone Assad. Ankara is backing Western actions, reportedly providing a base for training Syrian rebels and even discussing a no-fly zone with the US... Turkey claimed that the Syrian crisis could not be resolved through negotiations, that Bashar al-Assad could no longer be trusted, and started to act..."

2. "Iran condemns foreign interference in Arab Spring uprisings", *Ria Novosti*, 17, August, 2011

"Iran is against any foreign interference in the domestic affairs of Arab countries engulfed by popular uprisings, but urges the governments of these states to react to civilian demands, the Iranian foreign minister said on Wednesday..."

3. "Ahmed Ben Helli: UN Security Council should exert more pressure on Syria", *Interfax*, 21, June, 2012

"Saudi Arabia and Qatar are the members of Arab League, but they insist on a military intervention in Syria, as well as on shipping weapons to and financing the opposition..."

4. "Toothless Arab League approves sanctions against Syria," *Pravda*, 28, November, 2011.

"The Arab League's overwhelming approval of sanctions against Syria has dealt a significant blow to the regional standing of the government of President Bashar al-Assad..."

Table 5

1. "Russia warns US on consequences of regime change", *RT*, 13, September, 2012

"The so-called Arab Spring has come full circle: newly liberated Libya, which just passed through a brutal civil war that pitted pro-Gaddafi forces against a Western-backed opposition, is responsible for the death of an envoy whose country contributed to the Libyan 'liberation'..."

2. "Russia fighting to save arms sales to the Middle East", *Ria Novosti*, 4, May, 2011

"The Russian leadership uses arms sales for economic gain, but also as a tool of influence in the recipient countries... The recent instability in the Middle East, however, is likely to have a negative impact on the country's

arms sales, because in the past decade this region has been one of the most significant recipients of weapons “Made in Russia”....”

3. “Wendy Sherman: Moscow’s position on Syria may have disastrous consequences for Russia”, *Interfax*, 17, August, 2012

“...it is quite crucial for all countries - and Russia is a great power and a member of the Security Council and a partner with the United States on so many things, we sincerely hope that Russia will come around to affirming the needs of the Syrian people to determine their own future...”

4. “Russian Criticism of Assad Hints at Calculus Change,” *Moscow Times*, 9 April, 2012

“After a year of iron support for its embattled Middle East ally, Russia’s recent criticism of Syrian President Bashar Assad suggests that Moscow could be planning for a future without the Arab strongman...”

5. “Should Russia take Syria’s side or follow ‘American democracy?’,” *Pravda*, 12, July, 2012

“Russia has to decide again whether it is willing to play a role in this drama and on whose side. However, the balance of power and the outcome of events in case of non-intervention is clear on the example of Libya. Moscow faces a difficult choice...”

Table 6

1. “US-supported Arab Spring may backfire on ally Israel”, *RT*, 28, April, 2011

“With America’s push for democracy in the Arab states, groups with radical Islamic links are lining up to fill the power vacuums which are emerging. Amid the current instability, the ramifications for America’s closest Middle East ally could be huge...”

2. “Russia, China should explain their veto to Syrians – Clinton,” *RIA Novosti*

“Russia and China should explain to the Syrian people why they vetoed a Security Council resolution, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said....Despite three months of debates, the 15-nation UN Security Council failed to reach a compromise on the draft resolution on Syria. Russia, which sells arms to Syria, and China applied their veto-wielding power to block the Western blueprint late on Tuesday...”

3. "Alain Juppe: Military operation in Syria not being considered," *Interfax*, 8 September, 2011
 "The UN Security Council should lift sanctions and the arms embargo on Libya the moment the National Transitional Council asserts its authority all over Libya, he told Interfax after a meeting of the Russian-French Council for Cooperation in Foreign-Policy and Security Affairs....."

4. "A Post-Arab Spring Strategy," *Moscow Times* ,16 April 2012
 "More than a year into the Arab revolts, their outcomes remain highly uncertain. But some initial lessons for international politics — and for Western, particularly European, foreign policy — merit serious consideration.."

5. "Libya not enough for the West", *Pravda* 29 August , 2011
 "The collapse of authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, the events in Libya and Syria make many believe that the West has been preoccupied with building democracy in the Arab world..."

Excerpts of Sample Themes Analyzed in Tables

Table 7

Themes on Democratic Element of Protests

1. *RT*, 26 November, 2011
 "The epic fight for democracy which unfolded in Egypt in February has turned to major disillusionment. As the aspiring revolutionaries take a reality check, it seems a pattern is emerging among countries caught up in the Arab Spring..."

2. *RT*. 31 December, 2011
 "Three revolutions shook the Arab world in 2011, and other countries are now seeing protests but no change of power as yet. The successful revolution in Tunisia was the ignition point for the whole Arab world to seek democracy and freedom from autocratic rule..."

3. *Ria Novosti*, 17 August, 2011

“Syria has been rocked by mass protests demanding reforms and the resignation of al-Assad for almost six months. Pressure from international powers has mounted to end the crackdown....About 2,000 civilians are thought to have been killed since protests began in the southern city of Deraa in mid-March..”

4. *Ria Novosti*, 30 December, 2011

“The so-called “Arab Spring” inspired wild hopes, with some optimists even declaring that the 20th century phenomenon of the dictator was finished, and a new era of democracy was dawning- just like in Eastern Europe in 1989”

5. *Moscow Times*, 25 August 2011

“The Arab Spring exploded on the world stage when very few had expected it. Perhaps that is why the Arab autocrats who reigned supreme for decades..... have been scrambling to formulate policies to deal with the surge of popular activism that has rocked the longstanding regimes in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Syria..”

6. *Moscow Times*, 1 July 2012

“...last minoritarianism republican regime in the Middle East, will take longer than it did elsewhere in the region after the Arab Spring uprisings. The current combination of insurgency and popular revolt is not new for Syria and has been successfully repressed...”

7. *Pravda* 24 December 2012

“The cause of unrest that started in the fall of 2011 and later grew into a real civil war was an open revolt against the incumbent government of Bashar al-Assad. According to experts, the conflict is an echo of the "Arab Spring," social and political changes against dictatorial leaders in Asian countries.”

Table 8

Themes on Extremist/Fanatic Element of Protests

1. *RT*, 7 September, 2011

“Extremist forces are gaining ground in Egypt, Tunisia and Syria, according to the Russian president’s special envoy on relations with African states,

Mikhail Margelov, who made the statement at the Yaroslavl Global Policy Forum.”

2. *RT*, 31 July, 2012

“When the US unleashed the Arab Spring in Africa and the Middle East; it let the genie – of Islamic fundamentalism – out of the bottle”....Washington “instils extremist ideology” in the countries that used to have secular regimes.. Russian Communist leader pointed out in a statement published on the party’s website.”

3. *Ria Novosti*, 12 September, 2011

“the Arab Spring could turn into the 'radical Islamic Winter.....Analysts note that in any event the current situation in the region is obviously playing into the hands of al-Qaeda-headed radical Islamists...”

4. *Ria Novosti*, 14 September, 2012

“The assassination of the U.S. ambassador to Libya and attacks on U.S. embassies in Egypt and Yemen this week have stunned Washington, forcing it to urgently confront the tumultuous aftermath of the Arab Spring uprisings it supported.”

5. *Moscow Times*, 5 September, 2011

“Arab Spring is shaking the Muslim world and replacing longtime dictators with "new powers who support radical Islamic politics...”

6. *Moscow Times*, 22 August, 2012

“What began as a popular uprising inspired by the demands of the Arab Spring has taken on increasingly sectarian and radical tones. This reflects a loss of hope in international support, while making...”

7. *Pravda*, 31 October 2011

“The country (Syria) has been dealing with an armed insurrection, the invasion of foreign elements who have been firing at both police and demonstrators. A list of foreign paid elements was recently published who are responsible for the deaths of many people.”

8. *Pravda*, 31 May, 2012

“the violence in Libya where pro-occupation gangs of terrorists continue to run amok spreading chaos, panic, murdering, torching, looting, torturing

and raping, the same terrorists backed by the west, bombing civilians and the latest shocking news, deploying chemical weapons”

9. *Interfax*, 17 August , 2012

“U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, said that there is evidence that there are al-Qaeda members among the Syrian opposition.”

Table 9

Themes on External Influence behind ‘Arab Spring’

1. *RT*, 17 January, 2012

“The daily pictures we have been fed for almost a year of the hell Libya has become – and of the so-called “Arab Spring” with armed uprisings backed by the CIA, MI6, Mossad and NATO -are very eloquent. These Western terror organizations’ “dirty tricks departments” have done a great job!”

2. *RT*, 6 September , 2012

“France has started providing direct aid and money to rebel-controlled areas of Syria and is even considering supplying anti-aircraft weapons to the opposition, a diplomatic source has said... The aid began being supplied last Friday, to five local authorities in so called “liberated zones” located in three provinces – Deir al-Zor, Aleppo and Idlib, the source said on condition of anonymity.”

3. *Ria Novosti*, 26 August, 2011

“NATO is providing intelligence and reconnaissance assets to the NTC (National Transitional Council) to help them track down Colonel Gaddafi and other remnants of the regime”

4. *Ria Novosti*, 2 July, 2012

“The root cause of the conflict unraveling in Syria since March, 2011 is that external forces provide crucial support to the armed opposition groups which unleashed a terrorist war against the Syrian administration and civilians. The groups receive large quantities of armaments and ammunition from Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan with the assistance from NATO intelligence services and the financial backing from the Gulf monarchies.”

5. *Moscow Times*, 27 October 2011
 “After the downfall of longstanding authoritarian rulers in Tunisia and Egypt, President Dmitry Medvedev suggested that the Arab Spring was being fomented by the West to bring about change to Russia itself.”
6. *Moscow Times*. 12 July 2012
 “The active support for the rebels fighting Assad from Saudi Arabia and Qatar only reinforces Russia's deep suspicion of the Islamic character of the Syrian insurgency.”
7. *Pravda*, 21 September, 2012 ,
 “Syrian Prime Minister Wa'el al-Halki recently said that the country was exposed to a plot backed by Western circles in the United States and the EU, as well as some countries in the region - Turkey, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia.”
8. *Pravda*, 27 December, 2012
 “an alleged "Coalition of the Syrian opposition," cooked up by Washington and clearly dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood in all its ranks.”
9. *Interfax*, 21 June, 2012
 “Saudi Arabia and Qatar are the members of Arab League, but they insist on a military intervention in Syria, as well as on shipping weapons to and financing the opposition.”

Table 10

Themes on regime change or import of democracy into Arab world

1. *RT*, 28 April, 2011
 “The US says it wants to establish democracy in the Middle East but instead of democracy, it is very possible that radical Islamists could come to power. ...The US strongly supported the opposition in Libya despite Al-Qaeda connections among its ranks.”
2. *RT*, 25 January, 2012
 “President Obama’s promise to bring “strong and stable democracy” to Syria alarms its population, which sees the shining examples of Iraq and Libya and realizes what fate awaits it... US President Barack Obama referred to Syria and said the regime of President Bashar Assad will soon discover that the forces of change – referring to the Arab Spring – cannot be reversed.”

3. *Ria Novosti*, 28 December, 2011

“...the theme of Syria has become the subject of permanent heated debates during unofficial consultations and surfaced in the discussions of the situations in the Middle East. Considering that US President B. Obama and UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon are selling the Arab Spring as a model for new regime changes, at the moment Syria simply has to be at the focus of international politics.”
4. *Ria Novosti*, 12 March, 2012

“Russia on Monday lashed out at the demands for regime change in Syria, support for the opposition, and calls for outside intervention, which only intensify the conflict, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said at the UN on Monday...”
5. *Moscow Times*, 26 August 2011

“the regime change engineered by NATO and imposition of an arms embargo on Libya has discredited Russia in the eyes of other Arab states as a trusted supplier.”
6. *Moscow Times*, 12 July 2012

“Moscow's policy toward Damascus basically amounts to supporting the Assad regime to prevent it from being overthrown by foreign military intervention. This policy is based on a fairly broad consensus among Russia's politicians, analysts and the general public.”
7. *Pravda* , 2 November, 2011

“Contrary to western analyses, which expect the change of regimes by the "Arab Spring" to be a motivating drive for a similar change in Syria, the changes were bad examples for Syrians.”
8. *Interfax*, 8 September, 2011

"France and its American, British and German allies have urged President Bashar al-Assad to step down as he discredited his regime by cruel reprisals against citizens.”

Table 11

Themes on Geopolitical Interest in ‘Arab Spring’

1. *RT*, 28 April, 2011

“ is over-involved in Arab interventions and routinely applies hypocritical practices on other nations to benefit an American agenda. US programs have worked to incite unrest in Syria to create an opportunity for the US to intervene and create democracy to better serve American interests.”

2. *RT*, 7 September, 2011

“Old colonial powers like Britain and France seem to live as in the old days, attempting to regain their empires and control the Middle East, by starting puppet regimes through the Arab Spring "revolutions", thus enabling them to extract oil safely.”

3. *Ria Novosti*, 1 July, 2011

“The so-called ‘Arab spring’, which started as a wave of anti-government riots in Tunisia and Egypt, is now developing in full accordance with the US scenario, its main aim being to reshape the geopolitics, which the Bush administration once described as ‘The Greater Middle East’ plan”

4. *Ria Novosti*, 1 September, 2011

“Wars and public unrest across North Africa and the Middle East, political and economic standoff in the United States, a feverish financial climate in Europe and chaos in Japan all overshadowed the fact that China has become all but invisible on the international stage, even though all the above have a direct bearing on it”

5. *Moscow Times*, 5 September, 2011

“Russia's envoy to NATO said Friday that the alliance's war effort in Libya marks a major strategic shift to focusing on securing oil and gas supplies for the West.”

6. *Moscow Times*, 6 February 2012

“Western and Arab countries responded with outrage on Sunday after Russia and China vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that would have urged Syrian President Bashar Assad to give up power.”

7. *Pravda*, 2 November, 2011

“The U.S. and NATO are poised now to shift focus from Arab North Africa to the Arab Levant to deal with the last Syrian obstacle to their regional hegemony.”

8. *Pravda*, 29 August, 2011

“The collapse of authoritarian regimes in Tunisia and Egypt, the events in Libya and Syria make many believe that the West has been preoccupied with building democracy in the Arab world.”

9. *Interfax* 17 August , 2012

“After Russia and China vetoed three times UN Security Council resolutions, U.S. official said that these countries have to pay for their position.”

Table 12

Themes on Russia’s National Interest Regarding ‘Arab Spring’

1. *RT*, 20 February, 2012

“Since 2010, the world has experienced a so-called “Arab Spring,” which saw military intervention courtesy of NATO forces in Libya, where militant opposition forces killed former leader Muammar Gaddafi; Russia, meanwhile, is attempting to prevent another similar type of one-sided intervention in Syria, where President Bashar al-Assad is trying to hold onto power.”

2. *RT*, 22 February, 2012

“The leading importer of bananas in Russia, JFC Group has filed for bankruptcy, claiming the Arab Spring and ensuing instability on the global market have undermined its business.”

3. *Ria Novosti*, 4 May, 2011

“The recent instability in the Middle East, however, is likely to have a negative impact on the country’s arms sales, because in the past decade this region has been one of the most significant recipients of weapons “Made in Russia.”

4. *Ria Novosti*, 23 October, 2012

“The idea that Russia is losing influence in the Arab world as a result of the Arab Spring is “wishful thinking,” Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Tuesday.”

5. *Moscow Times*, 2 September, 2011

“As the death toll rises in Syria's Arab Spring and President Bashar Assad's regime becomes increasingly isolated on the world stage, Russian companies in Syria are losing out financially.”

6. *Moscow Times*, 12 July 2012

“...for Russia's position, suggesting that its main motivation is a desire to preserve its military base in the Syrian port of Tartus and its profitable weapons sales to Damascus.”

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7. *Pravda* . 30 October, 2012

“The Middle East remains one of the regions of crucial importance to Russia and the country has no intention of reducing its presence in this region.”

8. *Pravda* , 12 July, 2012

“The events in Syria create quite a problem for Russia. Should Russia interfere to defend the current regime, even though Russia has no obligations to Syria in this case (unlike with Iran)?”

9. *Interfax*, 21 June, 2012

“...Russian military cooperation with Syria? Russia says that it sells weapons that cannot be used against the opposition in Syria, but do you think that Russia anyway has to stop such cooperation?”

Table 13

Themes on Russian Foreign Policy towards ‘Arab Spring’

1. *RT*, 17 August, 2011

“Moscow and Tehran are emphatic that foreign powers should not meddle in the talks between the leadership and the opposition in the Arab world.....The stance was voiced by the Russian and Iranian Foreign Ministers – Sergey Lavrov and Ali Akbar Salehi – at a joint media conference after their talks in Moscow.”

2. *RT*, 26 March, 2012

“Russia says in order to support UN envoy Kofi Annan's peace mission in Syria other nations must stop taking sides. US President Obama, however, is considering providing Syrian rebels with ‘non-lethal’ aid in their uprising against President Assad.”

3. *Ria Novosti*, 5 October, 2011

“Russia has pushed for non-intervention and for international mediation in negotiations between the Syrian opposition and the government. Although the Syrian authorities have offered a plan of reforms to the opposition, the latter has denied any dialogue.”

4. *Ria Novosti*, 10 July, 2012

“Moscow’s announcement on Monday that it was refusing to make new arms sales to Syria came unexpectedly, after top Russian diplomats previously staunchly defended Russia’s right to supply arms to the embattled Assad regime.”

5. *Moscow Times*, 24 October, 2011

“Russia has demanded an investigation into Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi's violent death, while politicians of various stripes have described Gadhafi as a hero and his government as an "exemplary model" destroyed by the United States.”

6. *Moscow Times*, 17 December, 2012

“Russia is shifting its position on Syria toward more cooperation with the West to secure a settlement in the 21-month civil war. Unfortunately, it may be too late to save Syria as a state”

7. *Pravda*, 8 February, 2012

“Russia and China blocked a draft resolution on Syria of the UN Security Council demanding withdrawal of Bashar Assad”

8. *Pravda*, 30 October, 2012

“Whatever happens, Russia will continue to be considered as a reliable partner and an important factor that can ensure a geopolitical balance in this area.”

9. *Interfax*, 29 December, 2012

“Russia is determined to oppose attempts to legalize the practice of replacement of governments in various countries by foreign intervention, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in an interview with Interfax”

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(* indicates a primary source)

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