

Master Thesis Annotation  
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**Russia Beyond the Italian Headlines:  
Political Polarization in News Coverage of Russia in the Italian Media**

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The **relevance** of this work lies in the will to research upon political parallelism in the Italian media and upon the representation of Russia that emerges in the most popular and important Italian newspapers. Most of the academic works explaining and exploring media political parallelism in Italy, are focused on local coverage and on domestic issues. Today Russia plays an important role in the geopolitics and a research on the news coverage of Russia was needed to understand whether Italian politics influence international issues. This is why this work is important, to continue the study of media political parallelism on Italian media but also to research on the representation of Russia that emerges in the most popular and important Italian newspapers. Also, the recent incendiary dialogue from both the European and Russian leaders and the increasingly confrontational relationship between Russia and Italy, presents an opportunity to explore the news coverage that's possibly affecting this relationship.

The **novelty** of this research involves trying to decontextualize the political parallelism – a complex of concepts in the media field – retracing the history of Italian journalism, the relations between Italy and Russia and using the case of four Italian newspapers. Moreover, with narrowing the case studies to two periods of analysis in the last three years, we had the opportunity to concentrate on concrete topics and events.

Political parallelism in Italian newspapers became the **object** of the study, and the **subject** was the news coverage of Russian events in Italian newspapers of 2010s.

The **purpose** of the study is answer the two research questions to understand (1) if the news coverage of Russia in the selected Italian newspapers varies when the type of the newspaper changes and (2) what is the representation of Russia that emerges in the analysed newspapers articles.

The **chronological period** of the analysis runs from November 2013 until April 2014 and from November 2016 until February 2017.

The **theoretical foundations** of the study are based on the concept of political parallelism as, despite the lack of a shared methodological theory, it is today studied to understand the correlation between media and politics. It has been considered the concept of political parallelism and in particular in the framework of the Italian journalism. The studies of the 21st century help us to research on the topic: the study of Hallin and Mancini, Comparing Media Systems and their Mediterranean or Polarized Pluralist Model where Italy belongs to, especially the dichotomy of external and internal pluralism has been reviewed. But also the scholar Seymour-Ure, who has originally presented the concept of political parallelism, Blumler and Gurevitch and their five level of partisanship,

researchers such as Voltmer and Van Kempen, who have continued to apply the concept to different media systems.

The **methods** used for this study is a quantitative content analysis of 196 newspapers articles published by four journalists: 63 articles written by Fabrizio Dragosei of *Il Corriere della Sera*, 52 articles written by Anna Zafesova of *La Stampa*, 50 articles written by Nicola Lombardozi of *La Repubblica* and 31 articles written by Antonella Scott of *Il Sole 24 Ore*, all published between November 2013 – April 2014 and between November 2016 – February 2017. Univariate analysis has been conducted to calculate the frequencies, and the coefficients Spearman's Rho and Cramer's V have been computed using SPSS statistical analysis software to examine the relationships between the variables. To explore the methods of the quantitative content analysis, we referred to the communication scholars: Lasswell, Babbie, Neuendorf, while for the choice of using a vocabulary in the analysis of the articles, to Van Dijk.

The **structure** of this thesis consists of the introduction, relevant background, context, method, results and discussion, conclusion, bibliography list and appendices. It begins with a focus on political parallelism concept and the Italian case, more specifically an excursus on the Italian journalism from the 19th century until today. In the next paragraph, we concentrate on the relevant context by looking closer to the relations between Italy and Russia in 20th and 21st centuries and also the image and coverage of Russia in Italy. Next, are explained the most important events happened in the periods of the analysis. The second chapter explains first the method used in the work, followed by the sampling, the variables and the creation of the code book. Lastly, we focused on the results along with the conclusions.

The **results** show:

1. There is no political parallelism in the Italian press regarding the representation of Russia. It does not seem to depend on the political orientation of the newspaper, but instead from its type.
2. An unfavourable representation of Russia is mainly related to international issues. When the coverage of Italian newspapers regards international politics, there is a more hostile attitude, while when they talk about sanctioning Russia, and topics related to the economics, they are much less negative.
3. The coverage of Russia varies just partially regarding the type of newspaper, as it varies only for some variables, and it cannot be said with certainty that there is a perfect variation regarding the type of newspaper. The type of newspaper seems in fact to influence the news coverage of Russia only in part, in particular in the first period the newspapers considered to be neutral/institutional – *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Stampa* – and economic – *Il Sole 24 Ore* – use a mainly neutral tone for the stories, whereas in the liberal/left type – *La Repubblica* – there is a bigger presence of articles with an unfriendly tone; in the second period, a negative image of Russia slightly prevails in the neutral/institutional type, while in the type of economic there is a clear prevalence of a non-negative image of Russia.