Mobilization, Mass Perceptions, and (Dis)information: “New” and “Old” Media Consumption Patterns and Protest

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Abstract
When people join in moments of mass protest, what role do different media sources play in their mobilization? Do the same media sources align with positive views of mass mobilizations among the public in their aftermath? And, what is the relationship between media consumption patterns and believing disinformation about protest events? Addressing these questions helps us to better understand not only what brings crowds onto the streets, but also what shapes perceptions of, and disinformation about mass mobilization among the wider population. Employing original data from a nationally representative panel survey in Ukraine (Hale, Colton, Onuch, & Kravets, 2014) conducted shortly after the 2013–2014 EuroMaidan mobilization, we examine patterns of media consumption among both participants and non-participants, as well as protest supporters and non-supporters. We also explore variation in media consumption among those who believe and reject disinformation about the EuroMaidan. We test hypotheses, prominent in current protest literature, related to the influence of “new” (social media and online news) and “old” media (television) on protest behavior and attitudes. Making use of the significance of 2014 Ukraine as a testing ground for Russian disinformation tactics, we also specifically test for consumption of Russian-owned television. Our findings indicate that frequent consumption of “old” media, specifically Russian-owned television, is significantly associated with both mobilization in and positive perceptions of protest and is a better predictor of believing “fake news” than consuming “new” media sources.

Keywords
social media, television, Ukraine, EuroMaidan, protest, disinformation, fake news, participation

Introduction
When people join moments of mass protest, what role do different “old”¹ and “new”² media sources play in their mobilization? Is the consumption of specific media sources also associated with certain views of the protests among the general public? If so, is there a relationship between “new” and “old” media consumption patterns and believing disinformation about the protests? With increasing numbers of mass mobilizations taking place around the globe, and accusations about the role of “fake news” in driving these mobilizations abound, addressing these questions will help us to better understand not only what brings crowds onto the streets, but also what shapes attitudes toward them and the likelihood of accepting disinformation about mass mobilization among the wider population.

While we know that “new” media have been used extensively during mass mobilizations such as the EuroMaidan, Occupy, and the Arab Spring (Jost et al., 2018; Khamis et al., 2012; Trottier & Fuchs, 2014; Tufekci, 2017), there is a lack of consensus in the literature about whether “new” media actually mobilizes protest participants (Garrett, 2006; Onuch, 2015a; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011). Uncertainty also remains about the effects of social media consumption in shaping public dispositions or driving the acceptance of disinformation campaigns more broadly (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017; Spohr, 2017; Zhukov, 2017). Past studies have shown that “old” media is significant for both the public’s engagement

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in and opinion of contentious episodes (Iyengar, 1987; Prior, 2006; Snow & Benford, 1988). Yet, much attention is still paid to “new” media as not only the main source behind mobilization, but also the tool most often used by external powers to manipulate public perceptions of protesters.

To explore contradictions relating to the role of “old” and “new” media in mobilization and mass perceptions of protest events we employ an original, nationally representative panel survey covering participation in and public opinion of Ukraine’s 2013–2014 EuroMaidan mass mobilization, as well as online and offline media consumption (Hale et al., 2014). We analyze whether individuals’ media consumption patterns correlate with participation in, perceptions of, and belief in disinformation about the protests. We also control for a variety of ethnolinguistic, socio-economic, and demographic factors, enabling us to test alternative explanations such as “affective polarization.”

Our findings indicate that frequent consumption of “old” media is strongly associated with protest mobilization. In addition, we find that “old” media consumption is a predictor of whether an individual holds positive views of and believes “fake news” about the protests depending on the “old” media outlet they consume. Specifically, we find robust evidence that frequent consumption of political news on Russian-owned television channels (henceforth, Russian television) increases the likelihood that respondents also believed disinformation about the EuroMaidan. Our findings not only highlight that “old” media remains important for public opinion, but also underline Russian television’s influence in Ukraine in inflaming tensions and furthering political polarization.

Given the nature of observational data, our article does not provide direct causal evidence and we should be careful not to overstate the influence of either type of media as directly shaping attitudes or behaviors. Yet, even given legitimate concerns about endogeneity, we argue that it is unlikely that people would first arrive at a specific theory about the EuroMaidan and only then seek out a media source to confirm it. Furthermore, we identify strong and robust correlations (or their absence in the case of “new media”) which are in themselves important findings. Our negative finding on the relationship between “new” media and protest participation is counter-intuitive to current common wisdom, thus suggesting limitations on new forms of public influence through “new” media.

In the sections that follow, we first outline the case of Ukraine’s 2013–2014 mass mobilization. We then develop theoretical expectations for our study, based on the existing literature on protest mobilization, public opinion, and media consumption. After this, we describe our data, and methodological and analytical approaches. We finish by discussing our findings, their limitations, and highlighting avenues for further research.

**EuroMaidan: Overview**

On 21 November 2013, a few thousand Ukrainians took to the streets in major cities, responding to calls expressing outrage at then-President Viktor Yanukovych’s refusal to sign a set of free trade and association agreements with the European Union (Onuch & Sasse, 2016). That night, a new hashtag was born (#EuroMaidan) which gave a name to the emerging protest wave. An “official” “Євромайдан” (EuroMaidan) Facebook page became Ukraine’s fastest growing page, attracting more than 100,000 followers by 1 December. The early, and highly visible role of social media lead some observers to dub the EuroMaidan protests a “Hashtag”, “Facebook” or “Social media” Revolution (BBC Trending, 2013; Hilleary, 2014; Vlasov & Leonard, 2014). And on 24 November, activists and opposition leaders coordinated a march drawing 200,000 participants to Kyiv.

The protests reached a critical turning point when protesters in Kyiv were brutally beaten by “Berkut” militia forces on the night of 29–30 November. Images of the repression were tweeted, posted, and even streamed, triggering widespread outrage. As hashtag use swelled—from 3,200 tweets per hour following the 24 November march to 4,800 per hour on 30 November (Lokot, 2013; Moroz, 2013)—so did protestor numbers.

On 1 December, an estimated 2 million people marched in Kyiv and thousands more joined in the events across all of Ukraine (Onuch & Sasse, 2016). Protester demands expanded to universalist claims—the protection of basic human rights and democracy, and the punishment of corrupt elites. Most importantly, the protesters demanded the President’s resignation (Onuch, 2014). A cross-cleavage coalition of individuals from different backgrounds developed, surprising both the party in power and the opposition (Onuch & Sasse, 2016). The use of “new” media was not limited to social media—Internet-based streaming sites such as SpilnoTV, HromadskeTV, and UkrStream were also important. Near nonstop broadcasts made it possible for anyone in Ukraine or around the world to follow live. “New” media seemed to rule supreme. However, the livestreams were not used by those standing on the square but rather by those sitting on the sofa at home (Stepanchuk, 2014). In fact, during Onuch’s (2015a) onsite protest survey, a majority of protesters said that regular television as well as friends and family remained their two main sources of information on where, when, and how to protest.

The protest lasted for 3 months, with several cycles of government escalation and reactive use of violent repertoires by protesters. Social media remained an important source for coordination, but also had negative impacts. Social movement organizations, like Hromadskyi Sektor (Civic Sector), used Facebook to disseminate instructions on how to prepare for protest or how to spot and stop provocateurs; lists of what the protesters needed; as well as a running tally of casualties and arrests. Yet, these “new” media also enabled the regime to track protesters, exposing them to violent attacks (Onuch, 2015a), and facilitated the spread of false information about organizers and funders (Onuch, forthcoming). Images of participants wearing balacavas or engaging in disobedience were coupled with statements about how radical, xenophobic, and...
criminal they were. The proliferation of new digital technologies also facilitated both the editing of images and their instantaneous distribution. And EuroMaidan leaders lacked any real capacity to control the protest’s image or message in this dynamic media environment.

Increasingly, Yanukovych’s regime and Russian interests were seen as coterminous. Observers of Russian “fake news” narratives that began during the EuroMaidan cite two conspiracy theories central to disinformation campaigns both online and offline. The first was that the United States and the European Union (EU) had orchestrated the protests. Referring to the protests as a coup, the supposed goals of the United States and the EU were to destabilize Ukraine and the broader region, while depriving Russia of its rightful concerns over Ukrainian affairs (StopFake.org, 2014b, 2014c). The second narrative foregrounded radical-right wing group’s alleged importance, falsely claiming them as both the majority of protesters and the Euro-Maidan’s main organizers (Bezzuk, 2014; EU vs DISINFORMATION, 2019a, 2019b).

The protests descended into extreme violence with a final climax over 18–20 February, when more than 100 protesters and 13 militiamen were killed, and thousands were injured in clashes. These deaths were tweeted, posted, shared, and streamed—but so were frightening pictures of gun-toting protesters. Following a protester ultimatum as well as defections by key oligarchs, President Yanukovych fled the country (Onuch & Sasse, 2016). Despite this apparent victory, the larger political crisis in Ukraine had only just begun. In subsequent months, the Russian Federation annexed the Crimean Peninsula, a major violent episode occurred in Odessa, and a Russian-instigated insurgency broke out in the Donbas region. Observers felt that social media networks (specifically Russian-owned VKontakte and Odnoklassniki) continued to play a vital role in shaping these events. It was also believed that Russian television channels were engaging in a massive disinformation campaign working to shape the views of ordinary Ukrainians (Fedor, 2015; Gruzd & Tsyganova, 2015).

The ensuing deadly conflict, which has killed 13,000 and displaced 2 million (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], 2019), has been accompanied by information warfare promoting disinformation about the EuroMaidan, the Ukrainian state, and the Donbas (Jaitner, 2015; Mejias & Vokuev, 2017). The threat posed by social media and Russian television disinformation was perceived to be so consequential that the Ukrainian government blocked VKontakte and 14 Russian television channels (The Economist, 2017; President of Ukraine, 2014). Meanwhile, EuroMaidan activists set up fact-checking organizations like “Stop Fake,” to combat Russian media disinformation (StopFake.org, 2014a).

But was disinformation around the EuroMaidan really a #Revolution, mostly benefiting from “new” media proliferation and consumption? Or was Russian television (and its consumption) the main and more successful menace in the campaign to disinform and polarize Ukrainian citizens? And thus, do patterns of media consumption relate to Ukrainians’ participation in, evaluations of, and acceptance of disinformation about the EuroMaidan? To address these questions, we turn to current scholarship on protest, media, and mass perceptions.

### Media, Mobilization, and Mass Perceptions: Framing the Analysis

#### Media Consumption and Political Participation

What is the relationship between media consumption and protest participation? Like all studies on the relationship between media consumption and political behavior, the scholarly literature is divided (Clarke & Fredin, 1978; Glaser, 1965; Hayes, 2009; Stroud, 2008). While Gentzkow (2006) found that television diminished political engagement, Sørensen (2019) found that consumption of public broadcasting TV can increase levels of political participation, suggesting that specific channel content and consumption mattered. Furthermore, scholars note that without conducting randomized control trials or “natural” experiments (Peisakhin & Rozenas, 2018), it is difficult to make causal claims about media consumption driving political behavior due to possible self-selection bias and endogeneity (Salzman & Aloisi, 2009), which can muddle inferences based on observational data.

Recent scholarship on the role of the Internet and social media maintains similar divisions. While Tolbert and McNeal (2003) found that respondents accessing election news online were significantly more likely to report voting, their socioeconomic status and education were highly likely to systematically influence this access. Wellman et al. (2001) found a positive association between offline and online participation in politics, yet others highlight that social media can depress offline political engagement as individuals achieve satisfaction from “clicktivism” (Jones & Wayland, 2013). Most of these studies concede that when standard control variables such as age, education, race, socioeconomic class, and urban residence are accounted for, much of the effect of social media or online news use is mediated (Enikolopov et al., 2011; Wei & Hindman, 2011). This research highlights that different types of individuals will use the Internet differently (Vitak et al., 2010). More specifically, it suggests that the usual suspects of the politically aware and socio-economically well-off are more likely to read and share political news online—although the less politically engaged also do so (Vitak et al., 2010).

#### Media Consumption and Protest Participation

It is no surprise that recent studies examining media consumption patterns and protest behavior focus on “new” media. Research on mass mobilization has repeatedly
highlighted protesters’ usage of “new” media, such as online news sites, blogs, and particularly social media (Khamis et al., 2012; Trotter & Fuchs, 2014). “New” media has been identified as both a new tool for activists to coordinate activity, and as a means for mass communication with or between ordinary citizens. The speed and low-cost with which “new” media transmits information about protest facilitates its mobilizing potential (Bennett, 2013; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011; Youmans & York, 2012). “New” media is considered particularly powerful because of its capacity to reach across multiple diverse networks, bridging weak ties, and thus, “scaling” up protests (Tufekci, 2017; Tufekci & Wilson, 2012)—but, this easy-entry model also leaves protests with unstable, momentary, and virtual coalitions.

There remains little consensus about the role “new” media play in the motivation and mobilization of protesters (Garrett, 2006; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011). Studies by Jost et al. (2018) and Onuch (2015a, 2015b) question social media’s power as a tool of mobilization, highlighting that while it is very likely that “new” media may help motivate some individuals to consider joining a protest event, they are unlikely to push people on to the streets per se. This last step requires participants to be embedded in offline personal networks with high levels of trust, which in turn limit the risks associated with participation. These ties are far less likely to be present in solely online networks. Several studies further suggest that consumption of “old” media, and here, we specifically mean television, continues to be related to the mobilization of “ordinary” citizens during contentious episodes (Beissinger et al., 2015; Boyle & Schmierbach, 2009; Snow & Benford, 1988).

In the Ukrainian context, onsite surveys of EuroMaidan participants show that the top source of information was television, at 58% of respondents (Onuch, 2014). According to a nationally representative survey, 54% of participants learned when or where to go to protest from TV and radio (Hale et al., 2014). This fits with findings that traditional media remain the main information source for most people in contemporary societies and continue to dominate information dissemination to the general public (Papathanassopoulos et al., 2013).

Given all this, we believe “new” media (1) can provide significant capacity gains through coordination mechanisms, (2) can broadcast information quickly and disseminate it broadly among the Internet-using segment of the population, and (3) may motivate and appeal to the politically engaged due to connecting political goals or emotions to protest goals. But, given the Internet’s low-trust environment, as well as the lack of true connections to protesters through social ties, this may not translate to mobilization proper. Furthermore, the continued use of television as a primary news source means that protest information dissemination will reach more people through TV than through “new” media, and specifically social media. Moreover, television is seen by many as more trustworthy and less open to manipulation than online and print media (Newman & Fletcher, 2017; EBU, 2017). Thus, we distinguish the effects of “old” media from “new” media, and propose the first element of our “old” media hypothesis.

We expect,

\[ H1. \text{Protest participation to be positively and significantly associated with television news consumption.} \]

And conversely, we propose the first element of our “new” media hypothesis, and expect that

\[ H2. \text{There will not be a significant association between protest participation itself and “new” media consumption.} \]

But this still leaves the question of whether the same patterns of media consumption are similarly related to, and potentially shape, mass perceptions of protest events?

**Media Consumption and Perceptions of Protest**

Scholarship on media consumption and public opinion of protest is similarly conflicted. McCombs and Shaw (1972) and McCombs (2014) have argued that “old” media influence mass perceptions of important events by “setting the agenda” and influencing public perceptions of reality. These findings have been extended to studies of mass perceptions of protest. As noted by Crabtree et al. (2015) and McLeod and Detenber (1999), the framing and agenda-setting powers of different television channels have been found to be related to the likelihood that an individual feels solidarity with or even joins a protest. Despite expectations that “old” media’s ability to shape mass perceptions would decline with the rise of the Internet (Chaffee & Metzger, 2001), studies indicate that “old” media continue to influence public opinion during crises (Djerf-Pierre & Shehata, 2017; King et al., 2017).

Meanwhile, scholars disagree on the extent to which “new” media shape mass perceptions more broadly (Murphy et al., 2014; Shapiro & Jacobs, 2011) and of protest specifically (Garrett, 2006; Segerberg & Bennett, 2011). There is some limited evidence that social media content can negatively impact perceptions of protesters (Johnson & LeFebvre, 2018) and that authoritarian states seek to manipulate the public and undermine the opposition with social media (Spaiser et al., 2017). Nonetheless, much of this literature warns that different medias’ effects on public opinion are highly contextual. We, thus, need to understand the specific media landscape in the country under study.

According to studies of the Ukrainian media landscape (Dyczok & Gaman-Golutvina, 2009; Szostek, 2014b), television remains the dominant news medium, used by 97% of the population (BBG Gallup, 2014). Despite a post-EuroMaidan ban on Russian television in Ukraine, 19% of
citizens in south-east Ukraine continued to watch it using a satellite dish, and 38% use a virtual private network (VPN) to stream the broadcast (BBG Gallup, 2014). Going online remains the second-most used news source, at 48%. However, usage varies significantly by age, ranging from 90% for those aged 15–24 to only 12% of those over 55 years (BBG Gallup, 2014).

In terms of social media,9 Russian-owned VKontakte and Odnoklasnyky dominated the Ukrainian market in 2014, with 75% and 66% of the population registered (Yandex, 2014). Despite much discussion of the role of Facebook and Twitter during EuroMaidan, only 10% of the population was signed up to Facebook, and under 1% to Twitter by the end of 2014. Considering the Ukrainian media context and findings about the continued influence of television, there is no reason why public perceptions of the protest would be less likely to be linked to “old” media consumption. Thus, we extend our “old” media hypotheses to also postulate that

H3. Public views of protests (positive and negative) would be more closely aligned to and will correlate strongly with the consumption of “old” media as opposed to “new” media.

However, the main issue around media consumption and mass perceptions of EuroMaidan was the suspected role of disinformation campaigns (Dyczok, 2014; Mejias & Vokuev, 2017).

**Media Consumption and Buying into Disinformation**

Disinformation campaigns are not new. Yet, with the rise of “new” media, scholars have become particularly concerned with social media’s ability to spread false information for political purposes (Howard & Bradshaw, 2018).

Social media is considered a particularly dangerous source of disinformation because (a) platforms are susceptible to the use of state-sponsored bots10 and trolls11 which aim to magnify marginal, divisive, or conspiratorial opinions (Howard & Bradshaw, 2018); and (b) misleading or fabricated content is often disseminated much more quickly on social media than through traditional media (Wardle, 2017). Nevertheless, disinformation is not a new phenomenon and was disseminated in newspapers and on television long before the Internet emerged (Chesney & Citron, 2019). Even today, traditional media in the form of state-run, elite-backed, or partisan TV channels attempt to shape public narratives through sharing inaccurate, misleading, or false information (Benkler, 2018; Walker & Orttung, 2014).

In the case of Ukraine, Mejias and Vokuev (2017) have noted that both Russian television and social media12 have been used to spread disinformation. Scholars have highlighted that the content of Russian television and the Russian social media sites (namely, VKontakte and Odnoklasnyky) were less supportive of the EuroMaidan, European integration, and Ukrainian independence (Dyczok, 2014; Kozachenko, 2014; Kulyk, 2014; Szostek, 2014a). This leads us to propose our **Russian media hypotheses**.

First, following on from our above thinking on the role of “old” media, and the literature on the Ukrainian media context, we propose our **Russian television hypothesis**, whereby we expect that

H4a. Consumption of Russian television will be negatively correlated with holding positive views of the EuroMaidan and will correlate positively with buying into disinformation.

And if we were to base our thinking on this literature focused on the Ukrainian media context, we would expect the same to be true in the case of consumption of Russian “new” media. Namely that

H4b. Individuals who use Russian social media (VKontakte and Odnoklasnyky) will be less likely to hold positive views of the EuroMaidan and more likely to buy into disinformation about it.

Yet, we expect that consumption of “old” as opposed to “new” media will align with general public views of protests and thus propose a competing hypothesis to the earlier. In line with both Nisbet and Kamenchuk (2019) and Lewandowsky et al. (2017), we redirect the focus away from technological innovations in social media as driving disinformation. We decouple our treatment of how disinformation travels and is consumed in these two media outlets (Russian television and Russian social media). Instead, we argue for an approach that privileges the cognitive responses of actors embedded within society—whereby, underlying partisan-identity-based orientations and worldviews, and socio-economic characteristics allow disinformation not only to spread but also, and crucially, be accepted.

Thus, we highlight two mechanisms through which individuals’ beliefs and identities can influence their susceptibility to disinformation: “motivated reasoning”13 and “affective polarisation” (Nisbet & Kamenchuk, 2019). Processes of “motivated reasoning” can lead individuals to seek out and accept information compatible with their beliefs, thus making them more susceptible to disinformation which appeals to their partisan position (Flynn et al., 2017; Lodge & Taber, 2013).

This process may be amplified by social media: not only do social media users have to first seek out certain information and then “like” or share it, but social media algorithms can work to exacerbate this selection mechanism and self-placement into neatly partisan or “siloed” information bubbles (Pariser, 2011; Stroud, 2010). However, some research
has challenged the existence of these “filter bubbles” (Nelson & Webster, 2017), indicating that social media also exposes individuals to material which challenges their partisan beliefs (Barberá et al., 2015), particularly when their online networks comprise of diverse individuals (Bakshy et al., 2015; Flaxman et al., 2016).

Moreover, and particularly important for our thinking, this process may play out differently among users despite using identical platforms. Two people using the same social media site, at the same time and day, in the same location, could have two very different experiences of the information supplied to them—precisely because of self-selection processes, as well as actual reasons for using the platform.14 It is for this reason that we would not expect social media use to be significantly associated with a particular type of disinformation. Therefore, if our thinking (competing with the above [H4b], as well as popular and government discourse around perceptions of key channels of disinformation in Ukraine) is correct, we can expect that

\[ H4c. \] Users of Russia social media (VKontakte and Odnoklassniki) will be no more likely to buy into disinformation about the EuroMaidan or to have negative or positive views of it.

Meanwhile, we postulate that because two people exposed to the same television channel receive the same information simultaneously, the only thing someone who strongly disagrees with the content can do is to stop watching this channel. Thus, we propose our frequency of viewership hypothesis, expecting that

\[ H5. \] Watching Russian television channels frequently would be associated with the likelihood of holding negative views of the EuroMaidan and agreeing with disinformation.

While we place more emphasis on the role of media, we acknowledge that disinformation targets particular groups. Thus, our thinking about the mechanism explaining believing disinformation about the EuroMaidan is closer to the second mechanism of “affective polarisation.” Affective polarisation occurs when political discourses and framings increase an individual’s positivity toward those perceived to share their identity, and hostility toward “outsiders” (Wojcieszak & Garrett, 2018). In the context of key Russian disinformation narratives about the EuroMaidan, this is visible in its focus on both the malign intent of foreign actors (EU, the United States or CIA) in orchestrating the protest, but also on the Ukrainian-ethnocentric and violent nature of the protests—the target of which were eastern Ukrainians, ethnic Russians, and Russophones.

There is consensus that overlapping regional, ethnic, and linguistic divides drive political participation and public opinion in Ukraine (Arel, 1995; Barrington & Faranda, 2009; Barrington & Herron, 2004; Kulyk, 2001; Laitin, 1998). More recently, scholars, such as Kulyk (2019) and Onuch and Hale (2018), caution against an overly simplistic view of ethnicity and language as shaping Ukrainian political behavior. Onuch and Hale (2018) advise that while region is quite a powerful predictor, language practice, language embeddedness, ethnolinguistic identity, and national identity all measure different things and have divergent effects on behavior and opinion.

Russian disinformation campaigns about a foreign-organized and funded coup referenced a need to defend “Russian speakers” from the likely onslaught of Ukrainian nationalists (Bezruk, 2014; EU vs DISINFORMATION, 2019a, 2019b; StopFake.org, 2014b, 2014c). Given the longstanding ethnolinguistic cleavage in Ukrainian politics, and associated dislike among many Russophones and residents of south-eastern Ukraine for Ukrainianization (thought to be supported by foreign governments), narratives that fed into pre-existing perceptions were plausibly more likely to be believed through “affective polarization.” We expect that residence in eastern and southern regions make it more likely that individuals see the EuroMaidan as something external to their identity, increasing their hostility toward these “outsiders,” as well as their likelihood of believing disinformation about them. Conversely, those who regularly speak Ukrainian, who are embedded in Ukrainian-speaking work environments, have a strong sense of Ukrainian ethnic identity, and those who have strong sense of Ukrainian civic or national identity should be less likely to connect to disinformation narratives.

For this reason, we propose the first two elements of a three-part affective polarization hypothesis. We expect that

\[ H6. \] Ukrainophones, ethnic Ukrainians, western Ukrainians, and those with a strong sense of Ukrainian civic identity, would likely identify with the protests and would be unlikely to believe the content of disinformation narratives.

and

\[ H7. \] Russophones, ethnic Russians, eastern and southern Ukrainians, and those without a strong sense of Ukrainian civic identity will be more likely to accept disinformation narratives about the EuroMaidan.

Recent studies have also repeatedly shown that those who were economically vulnerable, or perceive themselves to be economic losers are also more likely to support Russian-backed separatism and believe disinformation about the conflict (Giuliano, 2018; Zhukov, 2016). Russian disinformation narratives also often referenced a Ukrainian economic crisis, harked back to past economic successes of the communist era, and made references to a Kyiv elite that did not care
about poor or working people (StopFake.org, 2014c). Keeping in mind that buying into disinformation may be associated with background factors, it is also plausible that disinformation narratives that fed into pre-existing perceptions of Kyiv “elites” can be believed more easily through affective polarization. And thus, in line with our affective polarization hypothesis, we also expect that

\[ H8. \] Those who perceive themselves to be economic “losers” will be more likely to accept disinformation narratives about the EuroMaidan.

The inclusion of variables associated with the affective polarization hypothesis provides an important robustness test for our proposed “old” media, Russian television, and frequency of viewership hypotheses. We postulate that if media consumption patterns mediate or absorb some of the effects of belonging to the aforementioned groups then our proposed claims about their role might even be stronger.

### Data and Operationalization

To test these theoretical expectations, we make use of an original dataset: the Ukrainian Crisis Election Panel Survey (Hale et al., 2014). This nationally representative three-wave panel survey was conducted in collaboration with The Kyiv International Institute for Sociological Studies in 2014—shortly after the protests concluded. Our analysis below draws upon the first and second waves of this three-wave survey. The first wave comprised of a nationally representative sample of 2015 individuals, and was conducted from 16 to 24 May 2014. The response rate was 51%. The second wave took place 24 June to 13 July 2014, consisting of interviews with 1,406 of the original 2,015 respondents. The margin of error of our frequency estimates is no greater than 3.3%.

### Dependent Variables

To enable us to explore whether different patterns of “new” and “old” media consumption can be identified between protest participants and non-participants, we use an item from Wave 1 of the survey. We create a binary variable for EuroMaidan protest participation, taking the value 1 when the respondent reported participating in the EuroMaidan (see Table 1 below). To test whether those who have positive perceptions of the EuroMaidan hold similar patterns of “new” and “old” media consumption to those who participated in the protest, we employ a Wave 2 survey item whereby respondents were asked to indicate the extent of their positive or negative feelings toward EuroMaidan on a 0–100 scale. Using these responses, we generated a continuous variable indicating the degree of positive perceptions of the EuroMaidan, illustrated below in Table 2.

| Frequency | Percentage (%) | Cumulative percentage (%) |
|-----------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Very negative | 190 | 15.47 | 15.47 |
| 10 | 89 | 7.25 | 22.72 |
| 20 | 71 | 5.78 | 28.5 |
| 30 | 73 | 5.94 | 34.45 |
| 40 | 48 | 3.91 | 38.36 |
| 50 | 232 | 18.89 | 57.25 |
| 60 | 76 | 6.19 | 63.44 |
| 70 | 107 | 8.71 | 72.15 |
| 80 | 138 | 11.24 | 83.39 |
| 90 | 86 | 7 | 90.39 |
| Very positive | 118 | 9.61 | 100 |
| Total | 1,228 | 100 |

### Independent Variables

The theory discussed earlier leads us to test the relationship between three sets of “new” and “old” media consumption variables.
Old Media

In Ukraine television is the dominant “old” media news source, with only a fraction of the population using newspapers and radio (BBG Gallup, 2014). Hence, we focus on television consumption. First, we distinguish between those who do and do not watch television (for full Independent Variable survey item details and coding please see Supplemental Appendix Table A4). Moreover, since we have both empirical and theoretical reasons for expecting Russian television (and again, here we mean Russian-owned) to be more likely to present a negative picture of the protests and to have communicated disinformation, we divide our analysis accordingly. To capture this “old” media consumption, we use two wave one survey items which capture whether a respondent watched political news or shows on Ukrainian-owned channels and/or on Russian-owned channels in the 7 days prior. We create separate binary variables for reported consumption of Ukrainian television and Russian television.

New Media

To capture “new” media consumption patterns, we employ five binary variables. First, we distinguish between those who do and do not use the Internet. Second, we specifically identify social media users. Since the literature expects Russian social media sites to be more likely to present a negative picture of the protests and to spread disinformation about them, we disaggregate VKontakte, Odnoklassnyky, and Facebook users. We create variables for these three sites as they dominate social media usage in Ukraine.

As the literature suggests that there is a difference between those who use the Internet for news and those who use it for other things like communicating with family, or entertainment, we include a binary variable capturing those who said that they use the Internet primarily for “getting news and information about current events.”

Frequency of TV Watching

We measure consumption frequency by including six scaled variables to account for consumption frequencies of Russian and Ukrainian television as well as social media and Internet news. Including these variables helps to reduce any signaling effect from respondents self-reporting their media use, and accounts for the cumulative effect of consumption. We use two survey items (Wave 1), where respondents were asked how often in the last 7 days they had watched daily news or political shows and how often they had watched news on the Internet to construct an ordinal variable for frequency.

Control Variables

In addition to our primary independent variables, we control for gender, urban residence, age, education, and socio-economic status. And, as we expect that “affective polarisation” may also be at play in the acceptance of EuroMaidan disinformation, we control for region of residence, language practice, language embeddedness, ethno-linguistic identity, national identity, protest participation, and perceiving oneself as an economic loser (see Supplemental Appendix Table A5 for full details of control variables).

We create four dummy variables for respondents’ residence in the east, west, south, or center macro-regions. Because major differences are found between the east/south and west macro regions, and the center is seen as a mixed region, we use this as a reference category, excluding it from our analysis.

Given the complexity of measuring identity in Ukraine, following on from Onuch and Hale (2018) we break it down into four components. We measure personal language preference with a variable coding all those who chose to take the survey in Ukrainian. To capture language embeddedness, we created a variable coding all those who report using Ukrainian in their place of work. Ethnolinguistic identity was measured with a variable coding all those reporting Ukrainian as their native language. Finally, for our national identity (also referred to as civic identity) variable, we coded all those who selected that if they had to register one nationality, they would register as Ukrainian.

Following Tucker (2006), we capture whether someone is an economic loser with a binary variable coding all those who reported that their family lost or mostly lost in economic terms as a result of the changes since Ukraine’s transition to independence in 1991 (Wave 1).

All our models incorporate a continuous variable for age, a binary variable for gender (Female = 1), a six-point scaled variable for education, and a binary variable capturing residence in an urban environment over 50,000 residents. To capture socio-economic status, we employ a measure of the respondent’s family financial situation.

Causal Sequencing and Analytical Approach

To estimate the relationship between our variables of interest and our dependent variables, we employ two logistic multivariate regressions (for DV1 and DV3) and one ordinary least squares (OLS) multivariate regression (for DV2). As logit coefficients do not facilitate straightforward interpretation, we report estimated effects of each factor on a given dependent variable in terms of full effects for DV1 and DV3. A full effect is the average marginal effect when all variables are scaled from 0 to 1. Therefore, these results should be interpreted as the average change a factor produces in an individual’s estimated likelihood of becoming a protester, or their likelihood of believing that the United States and the EU organized the EuroMaidan, when one raises any given factor from its minimum to its maximum value while holding all other variables at their
actual values. Where our dependent variable is continuous (DV2), we report the marginal effects of each factor on the likelihood of seeing the EuroMaidan as positive.

When estimating effects of each factor, our modeling choices for control variable inclusion follow Campbell (1980) and Colton (2000), whereby we include variables of interest at different “causal” stages into our equation. In Stage 1, we include “observed” demographic factors (region, urban residence, language of questionnaire, level of education, gender, and age) unlikely to be driven by other factors of interest. In Stage 2, we separate out what we consider to be “declared” demographic factors (language embeddedness, ethnolinguistic identity, and national identity) as these are more likely to be influenced by first-stage factors. In Stage 3, we include socio-economic variables (family financial situation, being a “transition loser”) and only in the case of DV2 and DV3, we also include EuroMaidan participation. Next, we include our independent variables capturing “old” and “new” media consumption. In Stage 4, we include “old” media (watching Russian TV channels, Ukrainian TV channels, or not watching TV at all). In Stage 5, we include “new” media (using Facebook, VKontakte, or OdnoKlasnyky, or using the Internet for news).

In a separate model, we account for the frequency of watching Russian or Ukrainian television, of using social media sites Facebook, VKontakte, or OdnoKlasnyky, or using the Internet for news. In this model, to avoid collinearity, we exclude the variables added in Stages 4 and 5. As a robustness check for our findings related to believing disinformation, we ran our model with a different binary DV4 (see Supplemental Appendix Table A9 and Figure 4 for these results).

Results and Discussion

The results from our analysis are definitive and we believe highly robust. We confirm our expectations that media consumption patterns align with both participation in, positive perceptions of, and believing disinformation about the EuroMaidan. We also find that their inclusion mediates the effects of residing in the east and south, in some instances completely absorbing this effect. Furthermore, we find that media consumption patterns mediate language practice, language embeddedness, ethnic identity, and nationality, where they were significant in this first stage.

What is perhaps most interesting is that unlike many of the expectations in the literature on protest, and confirming our “new” media hypotheses (H2, H3, H4c), “new” media consumption patterns are not significantly associated with any of our dependent variables. There is no evidence from our analysis that any social media platform correlates with mobilization or beliefs about the protests. It may be surprising to some observers to know that even usage of the Russian (state-sponsored) VKontakte had no effect. We thus reject the hypothesis found in the literature (H4b) expecting that those “individuals who consume news on Russian social media will be more likely to buy into disinformation about the EuroMaidan.”

We find consistent evidence that “old” media (H1 and H3) and specifically frequently watching Russian television (H5) is associated with both protest participation and holding positive views about the EuroMaidan. Even more convincingly, we find that watching Russian television increases the likelihood that an individual believes disinformation about the protests, confirming hypotheses H4a and H5. This confirms our frequency of viewership hypothesis.

Finally, we find only limited evidence supporting the affective polarization hypothesis, finding that perceiving oneself to be an economic loser (H8), residing specifically in the east of the country, and not holding a strong Ukrainian civic identity (H7) significantly shape the likelihood of believing disinformation about the EuroMaidan. We find the same pattern for participating in, or having positive views of, the EuroMaidan. However, we do not find evidence of ethnic or linguistic identities being associated with participation in, views of, or belief in “fake news” about the EuroMaidan. Below, we interpret results for each dependent variable in turn.

Protest Participation

We report full effects for our dependent variable of EuroMaidan protest participation visually with key independent variables in Figure 1, and with control variables in Table 4. We see no evidence for hypotheses that social media usage correlates with protest participation. We confirm our hypothesis (H4c) that watching Russian television frequently correlates negatively with EuroMaidan protest participation. We find that frequently watching Russian television channels is associated, at a statistically significant level, with an 8% decrease in the likelihood that someone was a protest participant. Due to model limitations, we cannot causally say whether Russian television actively demobilized people, but we can be certain that, controlling for a variety of factors, watching Russian television frequently is significantly correlated to not having participated in the EuroMaidan protests. Interestingly, we also find that non-Internet users (about 44% of our sample and by our estimation about 48% of the population) are 6% less likely to have been a EuroMaidan protest participant. Age and not using the Internet are negatively correlated with protest participation. We note that we do not find a similar correlation between frequent Russian television viewership and age.

Unsurprisingly, the strongest predictors of protest participation are education and family financial situation, increasing the likelihood that someone was protest participant by
Figure 1. Correlates of Euro Maidan participation.

Table 4. Full Effects of Variables on Probability of Participating in EuroMaidan (Hale et al., 2014).

|                                             | Old media Stage 4 | New media Stage 5 | Media frequency Stage 6 |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| **All significant control variables**       |                   |                   |                         |
| East                                        | 0.09*             | 0.09*             | 0.08                    |
| South                                       | 0.09*             | 0.09*             | 0.09*                   |
| West                                        | 0.07**            | 0.07**            | 0.07**                  |
| Urban locality                              | 0.07**            | 0.06*             | 0.06*                   |
| Education                                   | 0.12**            | 0.09*             | 0.08*                   |
| Language at work Ukrainian (language embeddedness) | 0.04*             | 0.04*             | 0.04*                   |
| Family financial situation                  | 0.15**            | 0.13*             | 0.12*                   |
| **Explanatory variables**                   |                   |                   |                         |
| Watches Ukrainian TV channels               | -0.02             | -0.02             |                         |
| Watches Russian TV channels                 | -0.04             | -0.05             |                         |
| Does not watch TV                           | -0.05             | -0.06             | -0.04                   |
| Not user of Internet                        | -0.04             | -0.06             | -0.06*                  |
| Odnoklasnyky                                | -0.01             |                   |                         |
| VKontakte                                   | 0.01              |                   |                         |
| Facebook                                    | 0.01              |                   |                         |
| Uses Internet for news                      | 0.03              |                   |                         |
| Ukrainian TV frequency                      |                   |                   | 0.01                    |
| Russian TV frequency                        |                   |                   | -0.08*                  |
| VKontakte frequency                         |                   |                   | -0.00                   |
| Facebook frequency                          |                   |                   | 0.02                    |
| Odnoklasnyky frequency                      |                   |                   | -0.01                   |
| Internet news frequency                     |                   |                   | 0.03                    |
| **N**                                       | 2,015             | 2,015             | 2,015                   |

Calculated using logit model.

*p < .05; **p < .01.

Non-significant variables omitted, see Table A2 in Supplemental Appendix.
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We find neither to be correlated with frequent TV consumption. We also find an unsurprising negative effect of residing in the east and south, decreasing the likelihood that an individual was a EuroMaidan protest participant by 14% and 11%, respectively.

Positive Views of the EuroMaidan

We repeat the analysis with our second dependent variable measuring overall views of the EuroMaidan. Our results are presented visually with key independent variables in Figure 2, and with control variables in Table 5. There is no evidence that social media usage is associated with any statistically significant change in views regarding the EuroMaidan. We do find robust evidence that watching Russian television, and being a frequent viewer, are correlated with a decrease in the likelihood that someone regards the EuroMaidan positively by 8% and 9%, respectively (H3, H4a). Conversely, being a viewer of Ukrainian television channels increases the average likelihood that someone viewed the EuroMaidan positively by 14% and 9%, respectively. These figures are statistically significant and highlight a strong possible effect of both Ukrainian and Russian television consumption shaping views of the EuroMaidan.

While being a protest participant is associated with holding positive views of the EuroMaidan, this is not the case when we control for frequency of Ukrainian and Russian television viewership. The effect of being a protest participant is completely absorbed. We also find that residing in the east and feeling that one is a transition loser decreases the likelihood that someone will view the EuroMaidan positively by 29% and 13%, respectively, at statistically significant levels. We find a similarly strong but inversely correlated effect of Ukrainian civic identity increasing the likelihood that someone views the EuroMaidan as positive by 15%. Moreover, we note that being from the south of Ukraine is only sometimes correlated at statistically significant levels with negative feelings about the EuroMaidan, although when it is, it is a substantive result.

Belief in Disinformation about the EuroMaidan

Finally, turning to our third dependent variable measuring beliefs in Russian disinformation narratives, we find no evidence that social media was associated at levels of statistical significance with believing in disinformation narratives. Figure 3 represents our results for key independent variables, and Table 6 presents our results including control variables and all independent variables. This confirms our hypothesis H4c and allows us to reject the competing hypothesis (H4b). Instead, we find strong evidence for the divergent impact of broadcast television on buying into disinformation. Viewing Russian television is statistically significantly correlated with a 5% increase in the likelihood of believing disinformation narratives (H4a). This 5% increase is replicated when we look at the frequency of Russian television consumption.
Table 5. Marginal Effects of Variables on Probability of Viewing EuroMaidan as Positive (Hale et al., 2014).

| Demographic variables | Declared demographic variables | Socio-economic variables | EM protest participation variables | Old media Stage 4 | New media Stage 5 | Media frequency Stage 6 |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------------------|
| All significant control variables | Stage 1 | Stage 2 | Stage 3 | Stage 4 | Stage 5 | Stage 6 |
| East                  | −28.72** | −23.14** | −19.63** | −19.31** | −15.65* | −15.52* | −16.25* |
| South                 | −14.18** | −12.30** | −8.29*  | −8.04  | −8.24*  | −8.36  |
| Survey in Ukrainian (Language embeddedness) | 7.08* | 4.96 | 5.5  | 5.39 | 5.35 | 5.29 | 5.13 |
| Age                   | −7.73*  | −5.12   | −1.51   | −1.17  | −3.92  | −0.42  | −1.77  |
| Female                | −3.81*  | −3.4    | −3.58   | −3.39  | −3.13  | −2.96  | −3    |
| Nation forced choice Ukrainian (Ukrainian nationality) | 14.66** | 10.99** | 11.11** | 11.12** | 10.93** | 10.85** |
| Transition loser      | −13.08** | −13.03** | −12.06** | −12.16** | −12.14** |
| EM protest participant | 7.98* | 7.80* | 7.61* | 6.64 |

Explanatory variables

| Watches Ukrainian TV channels | 13.62** | 14.57** |
| Watches Russian TV channels  | −7.75** | −7.48** |
| Does not watch TV            | 10.64   | 10.76   | 4.14   |
| Not user of Internet         | −2.65   | 1.03    |
| Odnoklasnyky                 | −3.34   |
| VKontakte                     | 4.07    |
| Facebook                     | 2.85    |
| Uses Internet for news       | −2.81   |
| Ukrainian TV frequency       | 9.10*   |
| Russian TV frequency         | −9.23** |
| VKontakte frequency          | 6.01    |
| Facebook frequency           | −1.36   |
| Odnoklasnyky frequency       | −4.87   |
| Internet news frequency      | 4.23    |
| N                              | 1,228   | 1,228   | 1,228   | 1,228   | 1,228   | 1,228 |

95% confidence intervals in brackets. Calculated using OLS model.
*p < .05; **p < .01.

Non-significant variables omitted, see Table A2 in Supplemental Appendix.

(H5). We find in an almost uncanny mirror image that viewing Ukrainian television and viewing it frequently both decrease the likelihood by 6% at a statistically significant level.

Aside from television viewership habits, we also find that being a transition loser increases the likelihood of believing disinformation narratives. Somewhat surprisingly, higher education is also statistically significantly correlated with believing disinformation at a 6% increase. It is striking that no other control variables seem to be significant regarding disinformation narratives.

We note that the non-significant finding for VKontakte usage being associated with a greater likelihood in believing disinformation about the EuroMaidan confirms hypothesis H4c regarding Russian-based information sources. We suggest this is partly due to a misplaced assumption that VKontakte content is consumed in similar manner to Russian broadcast media. In fact, this suggests that VKontakte usage works like other, Western-based social media (a part of our H1) in which similar information bubbles and content silos can develop.

Thus, we are consistently able to confirm both our “old” and “new” media hypotheses (H1, H2). We can also confirm our Russian television hypothesis and frequency of viewership hypotheses (H4a) and reject competing hypotheses found in the literature about the role of Russian social media (H4b). Finally, we are only able to partially reject the “affective polarization” hypotheses (H6, H7, H8) as we find limited evidence to support that region of residence, civic identity, and being a loser of transition align with our dependent variables in the way expected above. Much of these effects are also mediated or absorbed by our main variables of interest and thus, we feel this mixed result only further highlights the importance of Russian television viewership on holding positive views of or believing in disinformation about the EuroMaidan.
Figure 3. Correlates of believing EU or the United States organized EuroMaidan (Hale et al., 2014).

Table 6. Full Effects of Variables on Probability of Believing that the EU or the United States Are the Main Organizers of the EuroMaidan (Hale et al., 2014).

| Demographic variables Stage 1 | Declared demographic variables Stage 2 | Socio-economic variables Stage 3 | EM protest participation variables Stage 4 | Old media Stage 4 | New media Stage 5 | Robustness check (Stage 6) |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------------|
| East                          | 0.12*                                  | 0.09**                           | 0.08*                                     | 0.12**           | 0.05             | 0.05                   |
| Education                     | 0.06*                                  | 0.06*                            | 0.06*                                     | 0.05*            | 0.06*            | 0.06*                  |
| Nation forced choice Ukrainian (Ukrainian Nationality) | -0.04*                                | -0.03                            | -0.06*                                    | -0.02            | -0.02            | -0.03                  |
| Transition loser              |                                        |                                  | 0.05**                                    | 0.06**           | 0.04**           | 0.04**                 |

Explanatory variables

| Watches Ukrainian TV channels | -0.06** | -0.06** |
| Watches Russian TV channels   | 0.05**   | 0.05**   |
| Does not watch TV             | -0.03    | -0.02    | -0.01 |
| Not user of Internet          | 0.01     | 0.00     |
| Odnoklasnyky                  | 0.02     |          |
| VKontakte                      | -0.03    | 0.03     |
| Facebook                      | 0.03     |          |
| Uses Internet for news        | 0.00     |          |
| Ukrainian TV frequency        |          | -0.06*   |
| Russian TV frequency          |          | 0.05**   |
| VKontakte frequency           | -0.04    | 0.03     |
| Facebook frequency            |          | 0.04     |
| Odnoklasnyky frequency        | 0.04     |          |
| Internet news frequency       | -0.02    |          |

N = 2,015 2,015 2,015 2,015 2,015 2,015 2,015 2,015

95% confidence intervals in brackets. Calculated using logit model.

*p < .05; **p < .01

Non-significant variables omitted, see Table A2 in Supplemental Appendix.
Conclusion

We have provided substantial evidence that greater skepticism is necessary toward claims about the importance of social media during periods of mass mobilization. In the context of the EuroMaidan and the period immediately following mass mobilization, we find that social media usage was not noticeably associated with protest mobilization, general views on the protests, or belief in common disinformation narratives. Instead, we consistently find that “old” broadcast media consumption is significantly and substantively associated with these three aspects of public behavior and belief.

We confirm hypotheses that Russian television is strongly and negatively associated with protest participation, as well as in general negative attitudes toward the EuroMaidan and an increased likelihood of believing disinformation narratives regarding malign, foreign control over protest organization. We also find that consuming Ukrainian television makes it less likely that one buys into such disinformation. Our analysis also suggests that traditional macro-cleavages in Ukraine regarding identity, economic grievances, and region play strong roles in informing participation and views.

In one sense, the confirmation of our hypotheses regarding social media should be a relief to scholars. As research moves forward trying to determine the impact of “new” media and the massive technological and communicational change that it has engendered, it is helpful to know that the world has not yet dramatically transformed, even for events that the popular press dubs “hashtag” or “internet” revolutions. Our results suggest that some reservations are warranted over grand claims about the strong association of social media usage to particular political behaviors, even in extraordinary political contexts.

Given the correlational nature of this study, we cannot provide firm causal inferences for the associations we provide. We have strong theoretical reasons for believing that the direction of effect aligns with our results, but only future research will allow for us to fully assuage concerns about endogeneity. At the same time, we maintain that we have identified and confirmed an important element in the broader media environment—the continued consumption of broadcast television—that clearly is importantly related to both political action and beliefs during periods of crisis. We suggest that future research analyzing media effects on politics should ensure to take television and other “old” media into account.

We cannot adjudicate whether the lack of association between social media and protest behavior and views is a function of the specific Ukrainian context. Although Ukraine is a non-Western state located on the periphery of the European core, it is also a highly educated, post-industrial country with significant Internet penetration. We see no reason to believe that the theoretical insights from this study could not help researchers study protest in other medium-income countries elsewhere in Eastern Europe or in other turbulent regions such as the Middle East or Latin America. Social media may be ubiquitous, but instances of mass mobilization remain perhaps beyond its significant reach, for the time being.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This work was supported by the National Science Foundation (RAPID Grant Scheme) under Grant SES-1445194.

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Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

Notes

1. We mean broadcast television but acknowledge that this can include print newspapers and radio. In our use of this term throughout the article, we specifically mean the use of these media for news.
2. Here, we specifically mean social media (e.g., Facebook, Odnoklasnyky, VKontakte), but we also include in our definition all online information communication technologies (e.g., mobile technologies, apps, online streams).
3. Here, we mean Russian-owned channels and not Ukrainian-owned channels that broadcast in the Russian language.
4. Dvannaya Sotnya or the Sofa Hundred refers to those following events from their living rooms.
5. See Supplemental Appendix Note 1.
6. Provinces (Oblasts) of Luhansk and Donetsk.
7. The term #Revolution is often used in public discourse based on the assumption that recent protests are driven by social media usage. For scholarly discussions of “hashtag” mobilization see: Hale (2013); Lotan et al. (2011); Placek (2017).
8. Again, we stress that our focus is on news media specifically.
9. The “new” media which we predominantly focus on in this article.
10. A “bot” is an application that runs automated tasks over the Internet.
11. An Internet “troll” is someone who purposefully posts offensive, controversial, or divisive material.
12. By “Russian television” and “Russian social media,” we specifically mean television channels and social media outlets owned by Russian actors, be they state or private firms, and not Ukrainian-owned Russian language television channels or Russian language Facebook and Twitter (as examples).
13. Although we are most influenced by the above cited recent works—and do not have the space to go into more depth here—we acknowledged that there is a very broad literature...
on both “motivated reasoning” (Leeper & Slothuus, 2014; Redlawsk, 2002; Slothuus & De Vreese, 2010; Taber & Lodge, 2006; Westen et al., 2006) and “affective polarization” (Boxell et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2019; Jasper, 1998; Levendusky, 2018; MacKuen et al., 2010; Mason, 2016; Rogowski & Sutherland, 2016; Wojcieszak & Garrett, 2018) in political science, as well as in media and communication studies. Relatedly, we also note that there is a growing literature on media skepticism in the post-soviet region that focuses on mistrust of Russian “propaganda” and “information warfare,” and which references these two concepts indirectly or even employs them in their analysis (Hale et al., 2018; Helmus et al., 2018; Oates, 2016; Peisakhin & Rozenas, 2018; Szostek, 2018).

14. While some social media users use a given platform because they are tuned into politics, many others wish merely to keep up with friends and family, follow humorous “memes,” or find events with entirely apolitical goals and stresses. Political disinformation that comes through a non-political social media feed may be ignored, unlike a disinformation-focused television broadcast on a given channel.

15. At this time, Crimea had been annexed and is excluded from the sample.

16. For full survey item details and coding, please see Supplemental Appendix Table A1 and Supplemental Appendix Note 2.

17. In robustness checks, we used a different survey item asking about “funders” of the EuroMaidan. For a full description of this DV4 please see Supplemental Appendix Note 3.

18. 1 + 1, INTER, ICTV, Kanal Ukraina, 5 Kanal, or First National.

19. Channel 1, ORT, Russia 1, or NTV.

20. We note that protest participation is included as a control only in models predicting perceptions of protest (DV2) and believing disinformation (DV3). It is excluded as a control variable in models predicting protest participation itself (DV1).

21. See Supplemental Table A3 for full results and other controls.

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