

BETWEEN THE EAGLE AND THE BEAR: COVERAGE OF U.S.-RUSSIAN
FOREIGN POLICY DISPUTES IN RUSSIAN ETHNIC MEDIA IN THE U.S.

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ABSTRACT

Despite its long history, Russian ethnic press in the United States is an untapped area in media research. This study had two goals: to address this research gap and to shed light on the ethnic and political identity of Russian Americans. News coverage of eight U.S.-Russian foreign policy controversies was examined. By looking at the tone of the coverage, attributes assigned to the two countries and whether or not the conflict between them has been emphasized, this study sought to find out whether Russian ethnic newspapers in the U.S. consistently supported one side more than the other.

Most of the coverage was found to be neutral in tone. Attributes assigned to the two countries were somewhat positive, neutral, or somewhat negative, avoiding the extremes. The conflict between the U.S. and Russia was mostly de-emphasized. These findings suggest that the Russian ethnic media provide a balanced coverage of both their country of origin and the country of adoption, thereby communicating a hybrid political identity of Russian Americans.

Although a small step into the virgin area, this study offers insights into the identity and loyalties of the Russian ethnic community in the U.S. It reveals that multiculturalism is a more viable approach in ethnic media than partisanship. It also shows that ethnic press does not threaten a community's cultural integration, as some scholars feared.