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Deliberative performance of television news in three types of democracy:

Insights from the U.S., Germany, and Russia<sup>\*</sup>

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**Deliberative Performance of Television News in Three Types of Democracy:  
Insights From the U.S., Germany, and Russia**

**Abstract**

We show that television news is considerably more deliberative in established (U.S., Germany) than in defective democracies (Russia) and slightly more deliberative in a power-sharing political system (Germany) than in a power-concentrating system (U.S.). We further demonstrate that public-service channels, nonpartisan programs, and in-depth news shows make stronger overall contributions toward deliberativeness than their respective counterparts. While national news cultures produce distinct national styles of mediated deliberation, individual channels in the U.S. (Fox, CNN) and Russia (REN) cut across these national patterns. The significance of deliberative media content for citizens and political elites is discussed.

Keywords: Deliberation; Television; News, Journalism; International & Comparative; Quantitative - Content Analysis

**Deliberative Performance of Television News in Three Types of Democracy:  
Insights From the U.S., Germany, and Russia**

The democratic performance of the news media has been a central concern for communication scholars from Walter Lippmann (1922) to Denis McQuail (1992) and C. Edwin Baker (2002), and the discussion continues to this day. Most would agree that democracy cannot function well if important social groups are excluded from public debate in the news media, if that debate amounts to nothing but an empty shouting match, or if political news ignores the substance of actual political decisions. But coming from such common sense perceptions, how can we capture the contribution of news media to democratic life in a systematic and meaningful way? Any attempt in this direction faces at least three main challenges: (a) choosing theoretically meaningful performance criteria, (b) choosing empirically relevant media types and outlets, and (c) selecting the right kind of countries to capture the full range of democratic performance.

Concerning the normative criteria we heed the call by Althaus (2012) for a “systematic normative assessment” that taps existing normative theories of democracy to derive performance standards, instead of ad-hoc judgments. In this study we deliberately draw on the most demanding variant, the theory of deliberative democracy. Deliberative theory favors civil, argumentative exchange and thus exceeds the sparser demands of its liberal, republican and agonistic counterparts (Ferree et al., 2002; Baker, 2002; Strömback, 2005; for a particularly undemanding version see Zaller, 2003). The explicit development of normative performance criteria for the news media is also more advanced in the deliberative than in other traditions (see Gastil, 2008; Wessler, 2008).

With respect to media types we focus on television news in commercial, public-service, and state-controlled channels. It is striking that deliberative qualities have been studied in print media (e.g. Ferree et al., 2002; Dekavalla, 2012), talk radio and television talk shows

(e.g., Mutz, 2007; Jacobs & Townsley, 2011) as well as online discussion forums and blogs (e.g., Xenos, 2008), but that television news has been largely neglected. After all, television news is the most important source of political information for most people in most countries (see Papathanassopoulos et al., 2013; Trilling & Schoenbach, 2012) and television exposes viewers to alternative viewpoints more often than newspapers and thus should support deliberative qualities in citizens more strongly (Goldman & Mutz, 2011).

Finally, most studies of the news media's democratic performance focus on a narrow group of established democracies in the West (e.g. Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Esser, 2008). The third challenge therefore lies in covering the range of democratic systems to also include unstable and defective varieties (Merkel 2004). The defective democracy we look at in this study, Russia, qualifies as both "illiberal" with deficiencies in the rule of law and weak judicial oversight of the executive and legislative branches, and "delegative," in the sense that power is delegated to a strong president who then rules as he pleases (Voltmer, 2012). Investigating news discourse in Russia helps put into perspective the differences found among the more widely studied Western democracies.

We will start with an overview of the limited existing research on cross-national differences in deliberative media performance, present a multidimensional construct of deliberativeness in television news, and develop hypotheses and a research question about the impact of system, organizational and news format variables on the deliberative features of television news. We then present findings from a large-scale analysis of television news content in the U.S., Germany, and Russia and spell out the factors conducive (and detrimental) to deliberative performance. Finally, we map the characteristics of mediated deliberation as realized in television news shows in a single two-dimensional space and analyze cross-national similarities and differences.

### **Mediated Deliberation in Television News and Across Systems**

According to a systematic search on the *Communication and Mass Media Complete* journal database and *Google Scholar* about 70 publications in the last two decades explicitly employ a deliberative framework in analyzing media content.<sup>1</sup> Twenty-two publications focus exclusively or partly on television content. These studies follow different methodological approaches and typically use a small number of diverse measures of deliberativeness ranging from actor and idea inclusiveness to justification of and dialogue between different positions. A comprehensive instrument that systematically gauges the input, throughput and output aspects of deliberation in television news is lacking, however.

In addition, the existing studies do not systematically reflect on how particular levels and forms of deliberation in television news relate to different empirical models of democracy and different types of media organizations (for an exception, see Benson, 2013). Ferree et al. (2002) study one issue, the debate about abortion legislation, in U.S. and German newspapers and show that the U.S. debate is more inclusive – featuring more people affected by the problem and more “ordinary citizens” – than the German debate, but that levels of dialogue and civility are quite similar in the two countries. Benson (2013) compares U.S. and French newspapers and television news and finds that due to differences in press-politics interactions and news formats French media generally provide more diverse perspectives on social issues, more in-depth information and critical debate (p. 206). Finally, Wessler (2008) argues that print media in countries conforming to Hallin & Mancini’s (2004) media system types – liberal, democratic-corporatist, polarized-pluralist – should differ systematically in the kind of mediated deliberation they offer. He proposes a research strategy for investigating deliberativeness comparatively so as to detect the structural and cultural prerequisites of mediated deliberation. Our study builds on and extends the comparative argument made by all three studies and uses discourse criteria developed by Ferree et al. (2002) and Wessler (2008).

### **Criteria of Deliberativeness: The Dependent Variables**

The deliberativeness of television news is a multi-dimensional construct, and we distinguish three dimensions (input, throughput, output) with five sub-dimensions and thirteen individual criteria of deliberativeness (Table 1). The input dimension of mediated deliberation concerns the range of topics and actors found in TV news (not any extra-media phenomenon) and covers two criteria pertaining to a proper information base and three criteria of actor inclusiveness. The throughput dimension comprises two criteria of debate quality and four concerning the sophistication of discourse in TV news. Finally, the output dimension carries two criteria that specify the relation of TV news content to political decisions. It should be noted upfront that it would be arbitrary to specify an absolute optimum for each criterion on the basis of theoretical considerations alone. Instead, in this paper we provide *relative* assessments of deliberative performance by using a comparative approach that identifies empirical minimums and maximums for each criterion on the basis of a maximally diverse set of channels and types of democracies.

[Table 1 about here]

First, on the *input* side of television news discourse deliberative democratic theory is particularly concerned with the openness of debate. No contentious issue should be permanently suppressed and the range of voices should not be structurally curtailed (see Ferree et al., 2002, pp. 232-236; Gastil, 2008, p. 52). By opening up public debate both in a topical and in a social sense the news media should redress some of the inequalities in media access that exist because actors command different levels of resources to express their views. The most basic value in public deliberation consists in “creat[ing] a solid information base” (Gastil, 2008, p. 52) for television users to draw on. From a deliberative point of view the *share of political content* [1] should be high compared to other content, particularly soft and entertainment news. In addition, television news should not focus on a few issues all of the time. Consequently, the *diversity of political topics* [2] is a second important standard that has not been investigated in prior research. Concerning the range of different voices heard in the

news it is particularly important for Habermas (1996, pp. 359-387) that powerful actors from the center of the political and economic systems are supplemented by actors from the periphery such as civil society organizations, experts and ordinary citizens (see the *civil society* [3] criterion in Table 1). Attached to this criterion is the expectation that the top-down, routine mode of political decision-making be reversed every now and then and societal concerns channeled “upward” into the political power centers. In addition, a particular premium is placed on actors such as intellectuals, experts, and individual citizens, who primarily contribute ideas to public discourse rather than articulating their own interests (Peters, 2008, p. 94-99). These actors are seen as least detached from the authentic concerns and communicative rationality of the life-world. For this reason we include a second, narrower criterion of inclusiveness in our analysis (*citizens and experts* [4]).<sup>2</sup> Finally, inclusiveness should also be understood in political-institutional terms. For open democratic debate to thrive, opposition parties must be given a public voice and government speakers must not remain uncontested in public discourse. Thus we include the share of *opposition speakers* [5] as our final criterion of inclusiveness.

Second, the *throughput*-related criteria distinguish the deliberative tradition most clearly from other traditions of democratic theory (see Ferree et al., 2002, pp. 217-222). This pertains to the structure of communication, where debate is privileged over monologue, as well as to the degree of sophistication, where reasoned, civil exchanges are preferred to clamor and denigration. A necessary condition for debate is the existence of *opposing positions* [6] in a news item (see the “dialogic structure” variable in Ferree et al., 2002, p. 240; also Rohlinger, 2007). While this criterion is certainly shared with conceptions of news and journalism in other theories of democracy, the deliberative tradition is distinct in valuing the direct responses of speakers to each others’ points of view (see *responsive utterances* [7]; cf. Bennett et al., 2004). Direct substantive responses can potentially segregate compelling from untenable arguments (Peters, 2008, p. 118). One, if not the, foremost criterion of



*sophistication* in deliberative theory is the share of *justification* [8] present in substantive discussion of shared problems (see Chambers, 2010). In the context of mediated deliberation, this criterion demands that journalists obtain reasons from political actors for their claims and positions and make them accessible for public deliberation (Ettema, 2007). While non-verifiable justifications such as references to abstract principles are not generally discarded as illegitimate in deliberative democratic theory we expect that communicative pressures on speakers towards accuracy in their statements as well as potential cognitive gains for audiences will be greater if the justifications are, at least potentially, *verifiable justifications* [9]. Furthermore, theories placing deliberation at the heart of the democratic process recognize that the *civility* [10] of mutual engagement is a necessary condition for varied positive consequences of exposure to political disagreement (e.g., Mansbridge, 1983; Mutz, 2006)—a recognition that has been shown to apply to mediated deliberation as well (e.g., Mutz, 2007).<sup>3</sup> A final yardstick for the sophistication of public deliberation is the degree to which it carries a potential for self-reflexivity in the form of *meta-deliberation* [11]. Underlying this criterion is the realization that any democratic polity needs practices that facilitate continuous democratic innovation (Fung, 2012). Discussing the terms and conditions of public debate thus becomes a society-wide democratic endeavor and indeed a fundamental question of social justice (e.g., Gamson, 1999).

Third, on the *output* side of mediated deliberation it is important to recognize that “[d]iscourses do not govern. They generate a communicative power that cannot take the place of administration but can only influence it.” Habermas (1992, p. 452) thus succinctly points to the limitations of mediated deliberation on the output side, but also to its necessary connection to political decisions. In assessing the deliberativeness of television news across issues, organizations, and countries it is impossible to directly measure the clout of that communicative power in influencing political decisions. The deliberative function of television news rather lies in enabling citizens to generate informed opinions and engage in

meaningful political activity in order to influence decisions themselves. Therefore, television news should point out how political debates are connected to political decisions (*decision-relatedness* [12]) and, even more importantly, to do so before the respective decision is taken (*pre-decision debate* [13], see Higgins, 2006). Note that deliberative theory does not have to assume that mediated deliberation leads to or should lead to substantive consensus in public discourse itself, as some have argued it does (e.g., Gerhards, 1997; Ferree et al., 2002). By casting the output dimension of mediated deliberation in terms of its topical and temporal relation to political decision-making we circumvent the conceptual problems that arise when the consensus-orientation of communicative action (Habermas, 1987) is transposed too literally as the desired outcome of public debates (for a similar argument see Rinke et al., 2013).

It should be noted that, conceptually, each of the thirteen criteria is normatively relevant independent of the others. For example, it constitutes a deliberative gain if speakers justify their positions, even if these speakers were only members of the elites (and inclusiveness would therefore be very low). Conversely, it is normatively desirable to have a diverse actor set including civil society actors in TV news programs, even if none of these actors justifies their positions. Theoretically, therefore, the thirteen criteria are independently valuable and thus carry the same level of normative importance.

### **Structural Prerequisites of Deliberative Television News**

With the thirteen criteria mentioned we have a comprehensive theoretical basis for the relative assessment of deliberativeness in different television news shows. But what are the conditions conducive to deliberative performance? The scarce literature on the topic does not offer a fixed set of likely explanatory factors. Rather, these have to be carved out of various separate strands of research in communication and political science. On the macro-level of the political system, the distinction between established and defective democracies is important. Defective democracy is an umbrella term for various structural deficiencies including

limitations on press freedom, strong state dominance in the media system, and a weak civil society (Vartanova, 2012). It stands to reason that all of this will limit the inclusion of non-state actors in mediated deliberation (input) as well as effective debate between well justified opposing positions (throughput). Television news in established democracies will be more deliberative than in defective democracies (*H1*).

It is less clear, however, whether the deliberativeness of television news will differ between our two cases of established democracies, Germany and the United States. Several authors have pointed to the impact of political system variables on the shape of mediated deliberation (Ferree et al., 2002; Kriesi, 2004; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; see also Nir, 2012). The distinction between majoritarian and consensus democracies (Lijphart, 2012), especially the degree of institutionalized power-sharing between executives, parties, and other political interest groups on what Lijphart calls the executives-parties dimension plays a prominent role here (Kriesi, 2004). The U.S. is a moderate majoritarian system on this dimension, with power concentrated in the hands of the majority party and elected president, and Germany a moderate consensus system, in which power is shared between several parties in coalition governments (Lijphart, 2012, p. 244).<sup>4</sup> Kriesi (2004) argues that consensus systems tend to produce less mediated public contestation. Political actors in countries with highly fragmented political power structures are expected to rely less on strategies of public contestation to galvanize voters or negotiate political positions, but more on behind-the-scenes negotiations (Pfetsch, 2003). Nir (2012) on the other hand argues that power-sharing systems produce more public deliberation because the higher number of political parties creates incentives to stake out ideological differences more clearly for voters. If the influence of the political system on the quantity of mediated deliberation is unresolved, its effect on deliberative quality is even more unclear. Instead of formulating a hypothesis we therefore revert to the

following research question: Will television news be more deliberative in a majoritarian or in a consensus democracy?

On the meso-level, the type of media organization is bound to have an impact on the deliberativeness of television news. Television channels can be institutionalized in three main ways: as public-service, commercial, and state-controlled channels. Public-service channels are distinguished from other networks by obligations codified in legal and administrative charters and specific professional commitments to providing quality journalism and engendering meaningful societal debate (Benson & Powers, 2011). While commercial stations may also produce quality journalism and contribute to public discourse, profit is their main organizational goal. The available empirical literature shows that market orientation, on average, limits the sophistication of public affairs reporting (Cushion, 2012). We therefore expect deliberativeness to be higher in public-service channels. State-controlled channels, in turn, are clearly curtailed in their ability to foster inclusive and uncoerced debate so that deliberativeness will be low here. Deliberativeness of television news will be higher in public-service than in commercial channels and deliberativeness in both of these types will be higher than in state-controlled channels (*H2*).

State-controlled channels can be either owned by state agencies exerting direct command or privately owned and more indirectly controlled through intimidation. The latter type, which we call semi-autonomous, should exhibit somewhat stronger deliberativeness than the state-owned type. In a defective democracy, television news in semi-autonomous channels will be more deliberative than in state-owned channels (*H3*).

Commercial channels, on the other hand, can either follow the historically dominant “catchall formula” by attracting viewers from all sides of the political spectrum or they may advance the partisan politics of their owners or supporters. Partisanship can be expected to curtail the inclusiveness of mediated debate by privileging speakers from one camp. In

established democracies, television news in non-partisan channels will be more deliberative than in partisan channels (*H4*).

Finally, on the micro-level of editorial decisions about individual shows television news has been subject to a diversification of formats. To keep things simple and applicable across different national contexts we distinguish two main formats: fact-centered newscasts that mainly feature items read out by anchors and relatively short pre-produced video reports on the one hand, and focused in-depth news shows that concentrate on a limited number of topics and offer interviews and longer background pieces on the other. Evidently, in-depth news shows offer more possibilities for journalists to feature different voices presumably making them more inclusive, responsive and argumentative than fact-centered newscasts. Focused in-depth news shows will be more deliberative than fact-centered newscasts (*H5*).

### **Method**

The data to test the above hypotheses and answer the research question were generated in a large-scale quantitative content analysis of the main evening television news programs from ten national television stations in the United States, Germany, and the Russian Federation (see Table 2).<sup>5</sup> The choice of channels was based on considerations of their prototypicality for the respective combination of attributes in each cell and their market share in the respective segment.<sup>6</sup>

[Table 2 about here]

On the one hand we look at general-interest television stations of the public-service, the commercial, and the state-controlled variant. The two Russian general-interest channels differ in the degree to which they are subject to direct government influence: REN-TV manages to insulate itself somewhat from direct government interference, which is why we label it semi-autonomous, while Pervy is directly subjected to state control. We also study news-only television channels, which are either non-partisan (n-tv, CNN) or partisan (Fox News, R24).<sup>7</sup>

Among the newscasts aired by these different types of television stations four are focused in-depth news shows (CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360°*, ARD-*Tagesthemen*, PBS's *News Hour*, and Fox News Channel's *Fox Report*); all others are more fact-centered newscasts.

For each of the channels in our sample, we analyzed data from two constructed weeks random-sampled from the six-month periods between October 1, 2009 and March 31, 2010 and from April 1, 2010 to September 30, 2010. All sampled newscasts were recorded and the audiovisual material was coded directly without using transcripts. Variables were measured for two units of analysis: news items ("stories") and, nested within them, utterances made by or attributed to actors. An overview of our operationalizations is given in Table 1; the complete unitizing and coding protocol is available in the Online Appendix (located at <http://mkw.uni-mannheim.de/hwessler>). Coding was done by eight student coders who underwent intensive, multi-wave coder training (approx. 50h per coder). The analysis included a total of 2.340 news items, and 10.308 direct and quoted utterances. Several measures were taken to ensure high data quality. All coders received the exact same training and instructions and were fluent in German and at least one of the two other source languages (English and Russian). Coders were rotated over the material so as to code news content from Germany and at least one other country (Russia or the U.S.) to ensure an even spread of possible remaining idiosyncratic coding error across at least two countries and prevent undue bias in the data for any single country. In addition, the entire corpus of television material was coded twice by pairs of independent coders. As an initial step upon completion of the double-coding process, percent agreement, Brennan and Prediger's kappa (1981), and Krippendorff's alpha (2004) were calculated for every variable as measures of intercoder reliability. Brennan and Prediger's kappa corrects for chance agreement between coders by subtracting from raw agreement a chance agreement term based on the number of available categories. Krippendorff's alpha employs covariance-based correction for chance. Overall, the double-

coding process showed acceptable levels of intercoder reliability ( $\kappa$  or  $\alpha > .7$ ) for all but three variables: topic, decision-relatedness, and justification (Table 3).

[Table 3 about here]

To remedy the remaining problems on these variables, pairs of coders identified each and every coder disagreement and adjudicated them via consensus decisions. Coder consensus can be used to reduce error in the data and is common practice in research involving rating tasks, for example in meta-analytic research (see Orwin & Vevea, 2009, p. 184). We accounted for two known pitfalls of coder consensus: Systematic error due to between-pair bias was avoided by again rotating the adjudicating coder pairs over the material; systematic error due to within-pair bias (e.g., due to deferral to the more senior coder) was avoided by pairing student coders that were equally familiar and involved with the project. This concluding step ensured that final coder agreement is much higher than the pre-consensus-decision reliability coefficients in Table 3 indicate. In light of the measures taken, we are confident that no major systematic bias occurred in the cross-national measurement of our variables. The quality of data used in this study can be considered very high.

## Results

Tables 4 to 6 show the exact values for all news programs and all criteria on the input, throughput, and output dimensions of deliberativeness and rank them accordingly.<sup>8</sup> If we compute the mean rank for each newscast across all thirteen criteria, we have a rough measure of its overall deliberative performance.<sup>9</sup> It turns out that CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360°* has the highest mean rank (4.46), followed by ARD-*Tagesthemen*, ABC's *World News* and PBS's *News Hour*. On the low end of overall deliberative performance we find the three Russian channels R24, REN and Pervy as well as German commercial broadcaster RTL. However, a closer look at Tables 4 to 6 reveals some striking divergences from this overall mean.

[Tables 4 to 6 about here]

On the *input* side (Table 4) German commercial broadcaster RTL (overall rank 8) surprisingly leads the field due to its high topical diversity and great openness to civil society actors as well as ordinary citizens and experts. At the same time the partisan news-only channel Fox News (overall rank 7) drops to rank 10 on the input dimension mainly because it features very few civil society actors. The *throughput* dimension (Table 5) exhibits relatively little differences to the overall mean, but here RTL and the German commercial news-only channel n-tv, fall into the lowest segment. Both channels offer very little responsive debate and justifications. The *output* dimension (Table 6), in turn, is characterized by a very different pattern. Here both partisan news-only channels, Fox News (USA) and Rossiya 24 (RUS) as well as n-tv (GER) enter the top group. It seems that their targeting of more elite audiences leads them to focus on how news relates to political decisions. N-tv and Fox even provide pre-decision debate to a considerable degree. On the other end of the scale PBS and ARD-*Tagesschau* (overall ranks 4 and 5) fall into the lowest segment on the output dimension; PBS in particular offers more free-wheeling news that is less related to political decisions than most other channels.

The four overall top performers CNN (USA), ARD-*Tagesthemmen* (GER), ABC and PBS (both USA) differ considerably in their profiles. While the three U.S. news shows are consistently strong on the debate criteria, echoing the prominence of the balance norm in Anglo-American mainstream journalism, ARD-TT is weak in this respect but particularly strong in including the opposition parties into public debate, in eliciting verifiable justifications from speakers, and in connecting debates to imminent political decisions.

### **Explaining Differential Levels of Deliberativeness**

Concerning the *type of democracy*, we predicted that deliberativeness will be higher in established than in defective democracies (H1). And indeed, the television newscasts from Russia, our case of a defective democracy, are much less deliberative than those from the U.S. and Germany. When we compute country-wise mean ranks across all criteria, Russia's mean



rank is 2.85, while the U.S. news shows display a mean rank of 1.62 and those from Germany a mean rank of 1.54. The answer to our research question (Will television news be more deliberative in a majoritarian or in a consensus democracy?) points to a slight advantage for consensus systems, albeit by a relatively slim margin. Both the U.S. and Germany are moderate cases of their respective system types so that we should expect to see clearer differences in more pure cases. But there is no plausible reason to believe that the study of such cases would revert the pattern we found. Ferree et al. (2002), the only other study that directly compares deliberativeness of media content (in this case, newspapers) between the U.S. and Germany, finds no interpretable difference in the overall level of deliberativeness but strengths and weaknesses on different criteria and thus two different variants of deliberativeness in established democracies. We cannot completely rule out this interpretation, but our data tilt the scale more in favor of power-sharing systems.

In H2 we expected that public-service channels display higher levels than commercial channels and both fare better than state-controlled channels. This hypothesis is confirmed. When we merge all newscasts by organizational types and compute mean ranks across all criteria for each type, the public-service stations (ARD and PBS) come in first with a mean rank of 1.38, followed by the commercial stations (RTL, ABC, n-tv, CNN and Fox News) with a mean rank of 1.77 and the state-controlled channels (Pervy, REN and R24; mean rank 2.85). The statutory and legal requirements as well as professional commitments of public-service channels do seem to boost deliberativeness in comparison to their commercial and, even more strongly, their state-controlled counterparts.

H3 and H4 pertained to within-country comparisons in Russia and the U.S. We hypothesized in H3 that in Russia deliberativeness is higher in the semi-autonomous channel REN than in the state-owned channels Pervy and R24. This was not confirmed when we look at mean ranks across all criteria, where REN has the same mean rank as Pervy (7.15) with R24 tailing at 7.62. What distinguishes the semi-autonomous REN from the two state-owned

channels is its openness for a wide range of civil society actors and speakers from the political opposition as well as its focus on pre-decision debate. In this respect REN, although only on rank 9 overall, marks a clear alternative to the state-centered channels in Russia. H4 hypothesized that in an established democracy, deliberativeness will be higher in non-partisan than in partisan channels. This hypothesis was confirmed since CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360°* turned out much better than the *Fox Report* (mean rank of 4.46 versus 6.69).

Finally, H5 in which we hypothesized that focused in-depth news shows perform better than more fact-centered newscasts was clearly confirmed since three of the four top ranks are occupied by focused in-depth news shows: CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360°* (rank 1), ARD-*Tagesthemen* (rank 2), and PBS's *News Hour* (rank 4), while the fourth in-depth news show, *Fox Report*, reached rank 7. By comparison, fact-centered newscasts fare much worse on average and thus offer less deliberative news to their viewers.

### **Mapping Deliberativeness in Television News Across Cases and Key Criteria**

As a final step of analysis key criteria of deliberativeness were used to map the “deliberative space” of television news using a multiple correspondence analysis (MCA; see Figure 1).<sup>10</sup> Among the thirteen criteria we selected those that reflect the essence of deliberativeness most clearly on each of the three dimensions: On the input dimension deliberativeness is most closely related to both social and political inclusiveness, in terms of the throughput the core of deliberativeness lies in an exchange of well justified opposing positions and on the output dimension deliberativeness is about relating this exchange to (imminent) political decision. This conceptual core of deliberativeness is best captured by Civil society [3] and Opposition speakers [5], Opposing positions [6] and Justification [8] as well as Decision-relatedness [12]. In practical terms, a two-dimensional representation such as an MCA biplot limits the number of criteria that can be usefully displayed and five proved to be the maximum number yielding an interpretable graph. Therefore no additional criteria were included.

The two axes of the two-dimensional space are interpreted through orthogonal projection of the variable categories onto the respective dimension: The further away from the origin and the closer to the axis a category is located, the more it correlates with the respective dimension. Categories close to the origin bear only little influence on the substantive interpretation of the dimension. The smaller the distance between two variable categories, the more similar they are; the greater the distance between them, the more dissimilar they are. In order to investigate the position of the different news channels in this “deliberative space”, they were projected into it as passive variable categories *post-hoc*, after the spatial solution had been derived from an MCA of the deliberativeness indicators (see Greenacre, 2006, pp. 70-74). This positions the channels in accordance with their actual values on the five variables that make up the space without distorting the space by the positions of the channels themselves. The closer the news channels appear in the biplot, the more similar their deliberativeness profiles are.

The two-dimensional solution in Figure 1 explains 63.4% of the total variance (inertia) of the five deliberativeness indicators. However, most of the variance (59.1%) is explained by the first (horizontal) dimension which mainly discriminates between news coverage focused on speakers from the political center (displayed on the left side) and non-official speakers. This means that the major dimension of television news deliberativeness, as indicated by the five criteria used here, is the degree to which political elites or non-elites are given a voice on television news.

[Figure 1 about here]

The second (vertical) dimension only adds another 4.3% of explained inertia. It represents more subtle differences mostly connected to the throughput and output criteria Opposing positions [6], Justification [8] and Decision-relatedness [12]. To interpret the dense cloud close to the origin in Figure 1 it is important to see which categories cluster together on which side of the horizontal line. Above this line television news tends to engage more in the

presentation of opposing positions when reporting on authoritative political decisions *after* they have been made, and this presentation of opposing positions also generally tends to lead to a greater exchange of justifications by speakers. Also, opposition and civil society speakers tend to appear more in such situations. Below the horizontal axis pre- or no-decision reporting is associated with the absence of opposing positions and justifications. The vertical dimension may thus be read as distinguishing between a more declaratory, justification-poor pre-decision reporting in which government officials take center stage on the one hand and a more argumentative, justification-rich post-decision reporting in which the display of opposing positions, mostly from the parliamentary opposition and civil society speakers, combine on the other hand.

From a comparative point of view it is decisive where the individual news shows come down in the overall space. Three clusters of news shows emerge: The two Russian state channels are located in the lower left corner indicating that they are both characterized by a strong dominance of state actors as well as a lack of opposing positions and justifications. The German news shows as well as *Fox Report* (USA) fall below and left of the origin of the axes. This means that they tend to privilege state speakers and favor coverage that is non-argumentative (i.e., not showing contrasting positions and justifications) as well as focused on pre-decision debate, albeit to a much lesser degree than the Russian state channels. The third group of news shows clusters in the upper part of the deliberative space with the U.S. channels PBS, ABC and the Russian semi-autonomous REN relatively close to the center and CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360°* in the upper right corner. These news shows combine opposing positions, justifications and a post-decision focus with an orientation toward civil society speakers (CNN) or the political opposition (REN).

Figure 1 thus demonstrates how distinct national news cultures entail distinct deliberative performances of television news. But it also shows that cross-national variation clearly is not the only explanation for patterns of deliberativeness. Several channels deviate from the

national pattern, most notably REN and Fox. The semi-autonomous REN provides a more deliberative alternative to the state-owned channels in Russia by balancing government with opposition voices (y-axis) and giving more voice to civil society (x-axis). REN is also much closer to the cluster of throughput and output deliberativeness in the upper right quadrant than its state-owned counterparts. Fox News on the other hand deviates from the mainstream of U.S. television news culture, especially regarding the weaker deliberativeness of its throughput (y-axis) but also with respect to its somewhat greater focus on official politics as opposed to civil society on the input dimension (x-axis). Among the countries studied here Germany has the most homogeneous deliberativeness profile with all four news shows forming a close national cluster.

### **Discussion**

This study provides the first systematic demonstration of the deliberative strengths and weaknesses of television news in diverse institutional and organizational settings and in different television news formats. It shows that state control of the news media clearly depresses deliberative performance, a finding that holds both between countries (Germany and the U.S. versus Russia) and between channels within Russia where a more deliberative semi-autonomous commercial channel like REN outperforms its state-owned counterparts. In established democracies consensus systems characterized by power sharing are more likely to produce deliberative news output than majoritarian systems. Our data is not completely conclusive because the countries studied are moderate cases on Lijphart's (2012) executives-parties dimension. So we do not know how large the difference in deliberativeness would be for pure cases. But our data suggest that a more consensus-oriented political culture offers more incentives for deliberative public debate. And we have no reason to believe that consensus systems show a dearth of mediated public contestation as Kriesi (2004) and Pfetsch (2003) suggest. Our study also confirms the democratic advantages of public-service

broadcasting vis-à-vis commercial channels (see Aalberg et al., 2010; Esser et al., 2012, Iyengar et al., 2010). While previous studies offer evidence on the sub-dimension that we call “Information base,” with our comprehensive catalogue of quality criteria we are able to show, in addition, that the merits of public-service news provision extend across all three dimensions and are particularly pronounced with respect to the throughput criteria (opposing positions, responsive utterances, justification, civility). This is due to the specific statutory and legal responsibilities and professional cultures of public-service channels.

We thus have evidence that institutional settings with strong public-service channels (such as those found in many European countries) do contribute to the provision of deliberative news content to citizens more than settings in which public-service broadcasting is weak or endangered. In addition, non-partisan channels generate better deliberative performance than partisan ones, a finding that supports Sunstein’s (2007) widely acknowledged argument for the value of what he calls “general interest intermediaries.” Our analysis clearly reveals that Fox News provides not only less inclusive but also less interactive debate than CNN. This lends credence to the idea that fragmented news environments, be they fragmented by the sheer number of channels available or along ideological lines, tend to diminish democratic benefits both in the news and in citizens (see Nir, 2012a, 2012b).

At the top end of the spectrum and across all thirteen criteria CNN’s *Anderson Cooper 360°* comes out as the best performer, followed by the in-depth news show of German public broadcaster ARD (*Tagesthemen*) and ABC’s *World News*.<sup>11</sup> These programs seem to define different deliberative optimums in television news programming, illustrating that deliberative television news can be realized in divergent, but possibly complementary ways. While *Anderson Cooper* is particularly strong on inclusive and responsive debate and shows above-average performance on a number of other accounts, *ARD-Tagesthemen* excels in including opposition speakers, eliciting verifiable justifications from speakers through its interviews and reports and in linking debates on a diverse set of political issues to political decision-making.

ABC's *World News* is a more fact-centered news format and, in combining the balance norm long established in American journalism (e.g., Gamson & Modigliani, 1989) with the characteristic "news you can use" approach of commercial news media (Esser, 2008), performs well in featuring opposing positions in news items that often include non-official voices as well as links to political decisions.

Our study has a number of limitations that are worth acknowledging. First, our country sample is small and thus limited in diversity. The differences found between majoritarian and consensus systems could be further corroborated (or qualified) (a) by including more pure consensus systems such as Switzerland oder the Netherlands in addition to the moderate case we have studied, and (b) by including polarized-pluralist variants of majoritarianism such as those found in Southern Europe to complement the U.S (Lijphart, 2012; Kriesi, 2004; Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Also, less authoritarian cases of post-Soviet transformation such as Poland should be studied to fill the gap between Russia and the established Western democracies.

Second, our set of indicators could be refined in some cases and expanded in others. We have already mentioned possibilities for a more fine-grained typology of actors that would separate, for example, experts from pundits and public intellectuals as well as strong from weak civil society organizations. The only condition here is that such distinctions must be borne out by normative reasoning that specifies why the inclusion of a particular actor category is relevant for the functioning of democracy. Additional quality criteria are also conceivable. While we have defined both a conceptual core and a full set of criteria of deliberativeness other authors use additional standards that can support deliberative success. Benson (2013), for example, looks at criticism of the government, a possible indicator for how wide the space of noncoercive bottom-up deliberation actually is. The width of the ideological spectrum represented in media debate can serve as a standard of inclusiveness beyond actor representation. And our own measure of responsiveness could be extended into

an analysis of who responds to whom in news discourse in order to reconstruct *relations* of accountability and justification between actors.

Third, in this paper we have not looked at whether some of our criteria of deliberativeness are empirically interrelated, particularly across the three dimensions: Does an inclusive actor set go along with more opposing positions and more responsive utterances? If included, is the citizen public indeed shown passive, without opportunity to make and justify their points or address issues that are up for decision (Lewis, Wahl-Jorgensen, & Inthorn, 2004)? Does the inclusion of the political opposition enhance decisions-relatedness and diminish civility? And do such possible interrelations hold across contexts and formats, or not? The internal contingencies of mediated deliberation have never been systematically studied before so that this route of inquiry seems to be the most obvious next step.

Finally, while we identified a number of institutional and organizational prerequisites of deliberative television news, its consequences for citizens and elites are not well understood yet. Deliberative news content, we contend, has profound implications for citizens' ability to form considered opinions and develop preferences that take other citizens' interests and perspectives into account. Thereby, deliberative news content can foster perceptions of common concerns and solutions, including solutions that require trade-offs between individual gains and public solidarity. Political decision-makers, in turn, can be held to account because deliberative news coverage checks the quality of their justifications and thereby directly affects the level of legitimacy they enjoy (Wessler, 2008). Building on our study researchers are now in a position to empirically test the effects of different elements and models of mediated deliberation in television news on citizens' and decision-makers' attitudes and practices. Conversely, our results on the Russian case put researchers in a better spot to investigate the challenges faced and strategies employed by citizens in news environments that do not exhibit satisfactory deliberative standards. Either way, much work lies ahead.



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**Table 1** Criteria of deliberativeness used in this study

<b>Dimension/ sub-dimension</b>	<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Operationalization</b>
<b>I. Input dimension</b>		
Information base	[1] Political topics	Share of news items that have a political topic as their main focus (as opposed to soft news, entertainment news, etc.)
	[2] Diversity of political topics	Standard deviation of political topic categories' relative share of all political news items (based on six political topic categories: economic/financial policy, social policy, foreign/security policy, judicial policy, domestic party politics, and other political topics)
Inclusiveness	[3] Civil society	Share of utterances originating from civil society actors (i.e., organized civil society, individual citizens and experts), as a percentage of all utterances by civil society and political center actors
	[4] Citizens and experts	Share of non-journalistic utterances that originate from individual citizens or experts, as a percentage of all utterances by civil society and political center actors
	[5] Opposition speakers	Share of utterances originating from the respective opposition party/parties, as a percentage of all utterances by actors whose party affiliation is identified
<b>II. Throughput dimension</b>		
Debate	[6] Opposing positions	Share of all news items that contain two or more positions with opposing propositional content
	[7] Responsive utterances	Share of all utterances that explicitly react to another actor's position (irrespective of whether this other actor has an utterance in the same news item or not)
Sophistication	[8] Justification	Share of opinion-oriented utterances that contain a justification for the opinion expressed
	[9] Verifiable justification	Share of opinion-oriented utterances that contain a potentially verifiable justification for the opinion expressed
	[10] Civility	Share of all utterances that do not contain a disparaging verbal or physical expression
	[11] Meta-deliberation	Share of all utterances that talk about the rules and conduct of mediated debates
<b>III. Output dimension</b>		
Consequences	[12] Decision-relatedness	Share of all news items in which a collectively binding political decision is mentioned
	[13] Pre-decision debate	Share of all news items in which a collectively binding political decision is mentioned that lies in the future



**Table 2** Typology of television channels studied

	<b>Public-service</b>	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>State-controlled</b>
<b>General interest</b>	ARD (DE) PBS (US)	RTL (DE) ABC (US)	Pervy (RU) (state-owned) REN-TV (RU) (semi-autonomous)
<b>News-only, non-partisan</b>		n-tv (DE) CNN (US)	
<b>News-only, partisan</b>		Fox News (US)	Rossiya 24 (RU) (state-owned)

**Table 3** Pre-adjudication reliabilities for deliberativeness measures

Measure	DE				RU				US				Overall			
	<i>N</i>	<i>PA</i>	$\kappa_n$	$\alpha$	<i>N</i>	<i>PA</i>	$\kappa_n$	$\alpha$	<i>N</i>	<i>PA</i>	$\kappa_n$	$\alpha$	<i>N</i>	<i>PA</i>	$\kappa_n$	$\alpha$
<i>News item level</i>																
Topic	415	74.7	.73	.71	320	71.9	.70	.66	473	68.3	.66	.62	1208	71.4	.69	.66
Decision-relatedness	96	67.7	.52	.51	52	57.7	.37	.37	97	62.9	.44	.45	245	63.7	.46	.46
Opposing positions	415	94.2	.88	.45	323	96.0	.92	.22	467	94.0	.88	.66	1205	94.6	.89	.55
<i>Utterance level</i>																
Type of speaker	2338	91.2	.91	.83	1428	84.7	.84	.74	3732	84.1	.83	.72	7498	86.4	.86	.76
Party of speaker	514	97.9	.98	.96	428	95.8	.96	.87	958	89.2	.89	.72	1900	93.1	.93	.84
Meta-deliberation	2340	95.1	.90	.12	1432	97.6	.95	-.01	3727	92.5	.85	.09	7499	94.3	.89	.09
Justification	175	74.9	.62	.23	69	68.1	.52	.18	820	48.2	.22	-.05	1064	53.9	.31	.00
Incivility	2342	100.0	1.00	.67	1433	99.9	1.00	.00	3758	99.4	.99	.20	7533	99.7	.99	.24
Responsiveness	2342	98.8	.98	.26	1433	98.7	.97	.34	3758	96.5	.93	.26	7533	97.7	.95	.27

*Note:* Cell entries are percent agreement (*PA*), Brennan and Prediger’s kappa ( $\kappa_n$ ), and Krippendorff’s alpha ( $\alpha$ ) values indicating pre-consensus-decision agreement between coders based on double-coding of the complete sample. *N* is the number of double-coded units (news items or utterances).

**Table 4** Deliberativeness ranking of news shows: Input dimension

News show	Input mean rank (rank)	Overall mean rank (rank)	Political topics (rank) <sup>a</sup>	Political topics diversity (rank) <sup>b</sup>	Civil society (rank) <sup>c</sup>	Citizens and experts (rank) <sup>c</sup>	Opposition speakers (rank) <sup>d</sup>
RTL (GER)	3.80 (1)	6.69 (8)	25.3% (8)	7.54 (1)	51.7% (1)	43.3% (1)	15.8% (8)
CNN (USA)	5.00 (2)	4.38 (1)	32.1% (4)	14.37 (10)	45.7% (4)	33.1% (4)	34.7% (3)
ABC (USA)	5.20 (3)	4.92 (3)	30.0% (7)	11.71 (7)	49.5% (2)	40.5% (3)	19.1% (7)
ARD-TT (GER)	5.20 (3)	4.77 (2)	38.7% (3)	12.66 (9)	31.9% (7)	28.2% (6)	38.5% (1)
n-tv (GER)	5.60 (5)	5.85 (6)	22.5% (10)	9.57 (3)	39.1% (5)	33.0% (5)	20.0% (5)
PBS (USA)	5.80 (6)	5.00 (4)	44.8% (2)	11.18 (5)	32.6% (6)	27.7% (7)	15.7% (9)
REN (RUS)	5.80 (6)	7.09 (9)	9.8% (11)	18.40 (11)	46.7% (3)	41.6% (2)	35.3% (2)
ARD-TS (GER)	6.00 (8)	5.69 (5)	45.5% (1)	10.50 (4)	20.9% (10)	12.2% (12)	30.3% (4)
Pervy (RUS)	6.60 (9)	7.08 (9)	31.7% (5)	8.96 (2)	24.0% (8)	22.6% (8)	3.0% (10)
FOX (USA)	8.20 (10)	6.62 (7)	30.0% (6)	11.76 (8)	15.8% (11)	13.0% (10)	19.2% (6)
Rossiya24 (RUS)	8.80 (11)	7.69 (11)	24.6% (9)	11.35 (6)	23.3% (9)	20.1% (9)	0.0% (11)

*Note:* <sup>a</sup> Share of all news items; <sup>b</sup> Standard deviation of political topic categories' share of all political news items (in %, based on six political topic categories); <sup>c</sup> Share of all utterances by civil society and political center actors (based on all news items); <sup>d</sup> Share of all utterances by actors whose party affiliation is identified (based on all news items).

**Table 5** Deliberativeness ranking of news shows: Throughput dimension

News show	Throughput mean rank (rank)	Overall mean rank (rank)	Opposing positions (rank) <sup>a</sup>	Responsive utterances (rank) <sup>b</sup>	Justification (rank) <sup>c</sup>	Verifiable justification (rank) <sup>c</sup>	Civility (rank) <sup>b</sup>	Meta- deliberation (rank) <sup>b</sup>
PBS (USA)	2.67 (1)	5.00 (4)	18.2% (1)	4.5% (2)	48.5% (1)	13.5% (2)	99.8% (6)	3.8% (4)
CNN (USA)	3.50 (2)	4.38 (1)	12.0% (3)	5.6% (1)	33.4% (2)	8.6% (3)	98.1% (11)	5.0% (1)
ABC (USA)	4.50 (3)	4.92 (3)	15.5% (2)	3.3% (3)	26.4% (6)	7.6% (5)	99.6% (9)	4.3% (2)
ARD-TS (GER)	5.17 (4)	5.69 (5)	6.9% (4)	2.7% (5)	16.9% (10)	6.2% (8)	100.0% (1)	4.3% (3)
ARD-TT (GER)	5.17 (4)	4.77 (2)	3.4% (7)	1.0% (9)	29.6% (3)	15.2% (1)	99.9% (5)	3.0% (6)
FOX (USA)	6.00 (6)	6.62 (7)	3.7% (6)	3.0% (4)	26.8% (5)	6.5% (6)	99.7% (8)	2.6% (7)
Pervy (RUS)	7.17 (7)	7.08 (9)	2.0% (10)	1.2% (7)	27.0% (4)	8.1% (4)	100.0% (1)	0.8% (11)
n-tv (GER)	7.33 (8)	5.85 (6)	2.7% (8)	2.2% (6)	21.5% (7)	1.9% (11)	99.8% (7)	3.1% (5)
Rossiya24 (RUS)	7.67 (9)	7.69 (11)	1.5% (11)	1.1% (8)	21.4% (8)	5.7% (9)	100.0% (1)	0.9% (9)
REN (RUS)	8.50 (10)	7.09 (9)	4.6% (5)	0.7% (10)	20.3% (9)	6.5% (7)	99.5% (10)	0.8% (10)
RTL (GER)	8.83 (11)	6.69 (8)	2.1% (9)	0.3% (11)	9.6% (11)	3.5% (10)	99.9% (4)	1.1% (8)

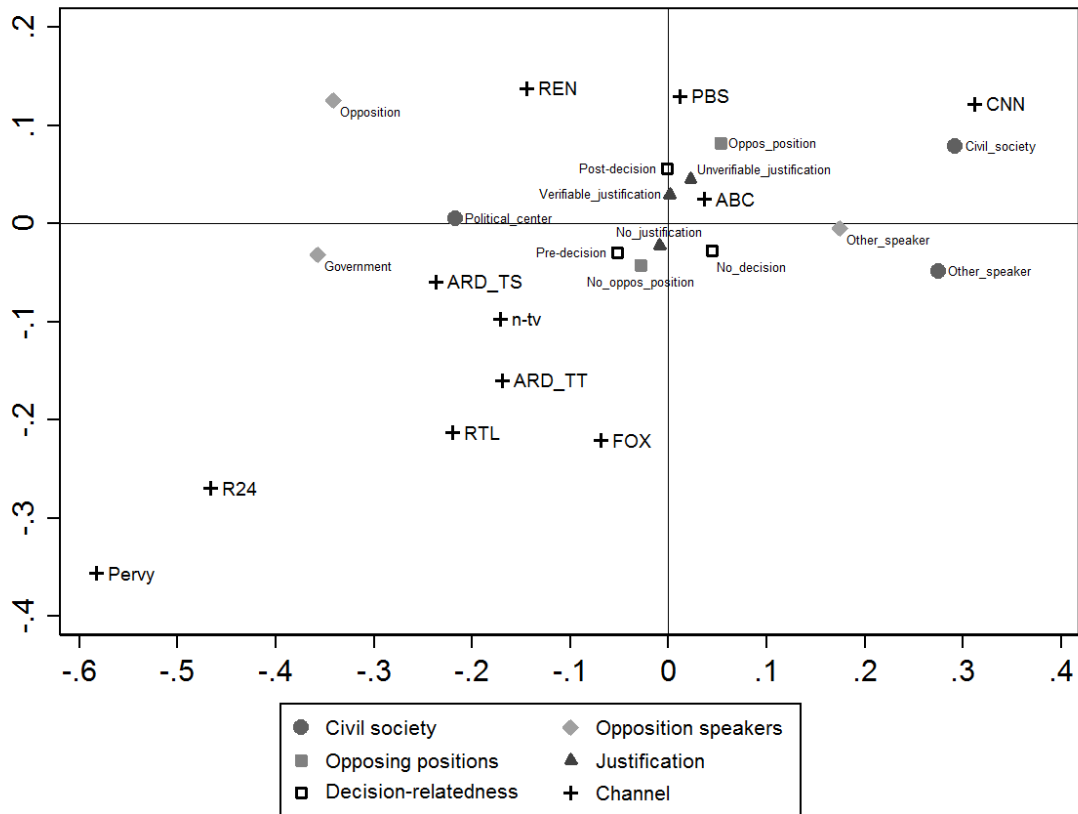
Note: <sup>a</sup> Share of all news items; <sup>b</sup> Share of all utterances (based on all news items); <sup>c</sup> Share of all utterances containing a statement of opinion (based on all news items).

**Table 6** Deliberativeness ranking of news shows: Output dimension

News show	Output		Overall		Decision-		Pre-decision	
	mean rank		mean rank		relatedness		debate	
	(rank)		(rank)		(rank) <sup>a</sup>		(rank) <sup>a</sup>	
n-tv (GER)	2.00	(1)	5.85	(6)	70.6%	(3)	47.1%	(1)
ARD-TT (GER)	2.50	(2)	4.77	(2)	78.3%	(1)	39.1%	(4)
FOX (USA)	4.50	(3)	6.62	(7)	62.2%	(7)	41.5%	(2)
Rossiya24 (RUS)	5.00	(4)	7.69	(11)	67.7%	(4)	35.3%	(6)
ABC (USA)	5.50	(5)	4.92	(3)	72.7%	(2)	27.3%	(9)
CNN (USA)	5.50	(5)	4.38	(1)	62.8%	(6)	37.3%	(5)
REN (RUS)	6.00	(7)	7.09	(9)	58.8%	(9)	41.2%	(3)
ARD-TS (GER)	6.50	(8)	5.69	(5)	65.2%	(5)	30.4%	(8)
RTL (GER)	7.50	(9)	6.69	(8)	62.2%	(8)	35.1%	(7)
PBS (USA)	10.00	(10)	5.00	(4)	56.3%	(10)	21.9%	(10)
Pervy (RUS)	11.00	(11)	7.08	(9)	43.8%	(11)	15.6%	(11)

Note: <sup>a</sup> Share of all political news items.

**Figure 1: Mapping deliberation in television news (MCA)**



*Note:* Biplot for multiple correspondence analysis using the Burt approach with post hoc scale adjustment (Greenacre, 2006). Row and column coordinates were obtained through principal normalization (i.e., coordinates are scaled by principal inertias). Analysis was performed using Stata, version 11 (StataCorp, 2009).

### Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> The search comprised five steps. First, a search of *Communication and Mass Media Complete* and *Google Scholar* was performed using the following query: (media) AND (deliberation OR deliberative OR deliberativeness). Second, we used the bibliographies of all relevant items retrieved in step one for a backward search of further items. Third, we used *Google Scholar's* "cited by" functionality for a forward search on the basis of all relevant items found until step 2. Steps two and three were reiterated for newly found items until no more relevant items could be identified. Finally, we added relevant publications not found via this procedure but known to us. For the most part, these were older non-English language publications. The effective search date was October 15, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> This is a relatively rough indicator for idea-giving actors that could be further differentiated in future studies. Our category of "experts" does not distinguish academic experts and public intellectuals, and it comprises pundits who, in a more fine-grained analysis, could be grouped with the actors from the political center due to their usually strong connections to established powers. In the "civil society" category we do not distinguish between strong and weak organization, i.e. between collective actors with a strong membership or power base (such as trade unions, industrial associations etc.) and smaller, informal organizations of engaged citizens.

<sup>3</sup> Deliberative theorists disagree on whether all public communication should be civil or whether in the agenda-building phase uncivil forms of protest and disruption are acceptable or even desirable to put certain issues or grievances on the media agenda (Wessler, 2008, p. 5; Rinke et al., 2013, p. 487).

<sup>4</sup> Kriesi (2004) describes Germany as "the typical intermediary case" (p. 205) in this regard. In fact, according to Lijphart's data (2012, p. 305-306), both Germany and the U.S. are only moderate cases of consensus and majoritarian systems. If anything, differences between pure majoritarian and consensus systems should be more pronounced than between the two cases we study (see results section).

<sup>5</sup> The following news programs were analyzed in this study. German programs: *Tagesschau* (ARD), *Tagesthemen* (ARD), *RTL aktuell* (RTL), *Nachrichten (n-tv)*; U.S. programs: *PBS NewsHour* (PBS), *World News* (ABC), *Anderson Cooper 360°* (CNN), *Fox Report* (Fox News Channel); Russian programs: *Novosti* (Pervy), *Novosti 24* (REN-TV), *Vesti. Seitschas* (Rossija 24). For the German public service station ARD, both main evening newscasts (*Tagesschau* and *Tagesthemen*) were analyzed because ARD presents two major news programs during prime time (TS at 8.00-8.15 pm, and TT at 10.15-10.45 pm).

<sup>6</sup> For details on ownership and market shares for all channels studied, see the online appendix.

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<sup>7</sup> Rossiya 24 is a state-owned news-only channel that effectively serves as an official voice of the Russian government; it must therefore be considered partisan in the Russian context. Fox News has been shown to be partisan in their news choices, even in the hard-news sections of its program (Groeling, 2008, p. 652).

Comprehensive content analyses show that CNN does not exhibit a partisan bias towards either side of the political spectrum (Holtzman et al., 2011; see also Groseclose & Milyo, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> In testing the hypotheses formulated in this study, we depart from the often-observed practice of employing statistical significance testing to identify differences in media content across countries and media types. This study shares with most cross-nationally comparative social research the two fundamental inferential problems of a country sample that is non-probabilistic (see Ebbinghaus, 2005; Western & Jackman, 1994) and too small to allow inferences on the country level in the logic of classical inference (see Stegmüller, 2013). Standard errors and *p*-values would therefore be uninformative. Instead we report more meaningful and instructive uni- and multivariate descriptive analyses such as comparisons of mean ranks and multiple correspondence analysis (on the value of descriptive analyses see, e.g., Levine, Weber, Park, & Hullett, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Ranks reflect the relation between one particular case and the entire set of cases at the expense of information about the exact distance between cases. Ranks also provide a unified scale that allows comparisons of relative performance across variables with divergent scales. The raw data underlying the ranks are displayed in tables 4 to 6. In addition, we complement mean ranks with the more holistic and information-rich approach of multiple correspondence analysis (see below).

<sup>10</sup> MCA is a descriptive multivariate statistical method used to identify and plot systematic associations found in a multiway contingency table of categorical variables (Le Roux & Rouanet, 2010), and can be thought of as a generalization of principal component analysis (PCA) to categorical data analysis. Similar to PCA, it essentially identifies the low-dimensional subspace that is maximally close to the set of data points in the true space defined by the full set of variables.

<sup>11</sup> This does not contradict the general pattern that, on average, public-service stations offer more deliberative news, because commercial channels are found among the strongest as well as the weak performers.