Abstract

The goal of the paper is to examine what coverage of nuclear-related news by state-aligned broadcasters can tell us about the role of Russian television in mediating government policy and popular opinion. The author attempts to identify key topics and patterns in the Russian television news coverage of nuclear-weapons issues in 2009-2015. This period includes the ‘reset’ of bilateral relations under Presidents Barack Obama and Dmitry Medvedev followed by a fallout and then a full-scale crisis in relations between Russia and the West. This timeframe allows tracing shifts in the Russian media discourse about Russian-U.S. strategic partnership and nuclear disarmament – shifts that must have had an impact on the perceptions of TV viewers. Studying the link between official rhetoric, media coverage and public perception may be helpful in identifying ways to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in the rhetoric of nuclear-weapons states. Russia with its state-aligned TV channels’ monopoly over news coverage and large TV audiences offers an excellent case to study.