



Russian Media System Under State and Commercial Pressures

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Russian vs. ‘Western’ Media Model

- the deliberate and rhetoric orientation of political and media elites towards ‘Western’ media simply masked poor understanding of the complexity and dissimilarities of the post-Soviet society which did not permit media system to duplicate or efficiently reconstruct ‘Western’ experience
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Institutional Economics

- Formal laws vs. informal rules and practices
 - North: It is the admixture of formal rules, informal norms, and enforcement characteristics that shapes economic performance. While the rules may be changed overnight, the informal norms usually change only gradually. Since it is the norms that provide "legitimacy" to a set of rules, revolutionary change is never as revolutionary as its supporters' desire ...
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“State paternalism” or “political clientalism” ?

- “For centuries journalism as a social institute in Russia has been developed free from economic considerations while the role of an economic regulator has been carried out by the state which in turn secured the paternalistic foundations in the journalism... it was the state to define the particular journalism mode such as Court journalism, Imperial journalism, (Communist) Party journalism... However, while liberating the economic activity in the media the state was not ready to relax the control over the content. This has produced practically unsolvable tension for the media themselves trying to function both as commercial enterprises and as institutions of the society”

Russian researcher Valery Ivanitsky



Rational-legal authority

- Russians perceive media as an essential part of the power structure and traditionally “see themselves as media subjects, without the rights of either media citizens or media consumers” (Oates, 2007, 192)
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Media and Market

- Russia's new type of society: market-driven economy affected by the rise of an integrated political-economic elite and low political activity of voters
 - Mass circulation press could not follow the same lines as described in Hallin & Mancini analysis
 - New Russian regional/local press has strengthened its position in the national newspaper system, but did not provide any similarity to the three models
 - It was either highly commercialized and sensationalized or instrumentalized by informal state/business alliances
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Political Parallelism: the Russian Way

- The role of media in construction Russian political parties has been limited, though still instrumental
 - Media were used to promote the interests of emerging elites, part of which tried to legitimize themselves as political parties
 - Conflicts and ‘information wars’ in Russian media in early 2000s served more as “a means of infra-elite, rather than mass communication”
 - New independent political parties failed because the crucial force in Russian political power game has remained the state.
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Media and the State

- The relationship between the state and media has always defined the nature, main features and conditions of the media system in Russia
 - Relations between a state and a citizen in Russian public communication have involved a clear subordination of an individual to a social power always associated in the Russian context with the state
 - Paternalistic relations between citizens and power elites, between people and their leader have defined the nature of Russian political and media culture for centuries
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Periods of Media-State Relations

- The first period of change in state–media relations (early 1990s) was characterized by a visible decrease of the state visibility in the media system. Media organizations have been privatized, and numerous private media companies have been set up in all segments of media system – press, TV and radio, news agencies, audiovisual production.
 - Strong market-driven motives of Russian media companies had originated not only from profit-driven motivations or deficiencies of a juvenile civil society, but also from the strong belief that only commercial motives might be ‘regarded as mainly limiting state penetration without having any unfavorable consequences’ (Splichal, 1994: 135). This was linked to the belief of early modern times in “decentralized
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Periods of Media-State Relations

- The second period of post-Soviet state-media relations was marked by the state attempts to re-structure its relationship with the media in mid-1990s
 - Media were used instrumentally by various agents of power which represented both state officials and businessmen. As Resnyanskaya put it, “...business elites bartered the loyalty and information support of their owned media for financial and economic preferences from the state” (Resnyanskaya, 2007, 55).
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Periods of Media-State Relations

- The third period in Russian state-media relations inspired by the emergence of Putin's 'monocentric' political regime was aimed at improvement of political management and decrease in internal conflicts in 2000s. It was also intended to subordinate earlier centres of power including the Parliament (State Duma) to the President. In this context political parties have been established, but their independence from the state was illusory.
 - Some researchers define this process as re-etatisation of Russian media landscape (Dubin, 2005), confirming this by the fact that in early 2000s various state agencies re-established financial or managerial control over 70% of electronic media organizations, 80% of regional and 20% of national press (Fossato, 2003).
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State Pressures

- ' The state' cannot be seen as a unified actor. 'State' actors tend to form temporary alliances among themselves and with external agents and pursue their short-term group interests rather than the interests of the state' ” (Koltsova, 2005, 227)
 - State pressures mostly informal
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Journalistic professionalism

- Literary tradition
 - Censorship leading to traditions of self-censorship
 - Soviet media theory: journalism as ‘a social activity of collection, transmission and periodical dissemination of information through mass communication channels aimed at propaganda and agitation
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Changes in Profession

- Russian journalists considered the professional autonomy mostly as liberation from any kind of interference
 - Journalism became more autonomous than independent, characterized by ‘an anomaly with an almost impossible degree of media autonomy’, and, consequently, more free than responsible. (Nordenstreng and Paasilinna, 2002: 195).
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Professional and Moral Conflicts

- Major contradiction derived from the double-folded nature of the Soviet journalism that socially and culturally belonged to a group of creative literary jobs, but was also a politically and ideologically determined profession
 - This directly linked the idea of professionalism to the idea of instrumentalization and explains why shifts from instrumentalization of journalism to its professionalization happened to be painful and problematic (Paasti, 2006)
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New Trends

- Processes of *standardization and commoditization* have changed the environment in the news-rooms, and have lead to the establishment of new professional values – sensationalism backing the creation of large audiences, appeal to mass tastes and entertainment
 - The decline in journalism as a creative profession was paralleled by the birth of new creative but openly commoditized professions in *advertising and public relations* that outsources talents from journalism. Professional standards of advertising and PR texts eroded journalism values
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Russian Media Model as Statist Commercialized

- Contemporary Russian media model should be viewed as a synergy of different features that might be found in various and often dissimilar national contexts
 - Being close to the Polarized model Russian media seriously differ from it in some dimensions, especially in state–media relationships, including the role played by the state/state agencies in shaping media structures, policy and journalism practices.
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