Freedom of speech and independence of media in Russia as condition for «public building»

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Abstract: The last time investigators have a deal with both facts and subjective interpretation in the area of social science. The social phenomenon can be interpreted by the some researchers in different ways. These ways can be depend on empirical basis of research, researchers’ belonging to different scientific society, their social position, status and political views. The political scientist, researching the some problems, can be dependent on his political view, thereby the political science loses its impartiality. It’s need to use universal instruments to level subjective opinion of political scientists and raise the objectivity of summary at political science. Such universal instrument is appeal to mathematician and mathematic modeling. In our case of researching Freedom of speech and independence of media in Russia on the examples of analytical, social and political programs on TV we’ve built the mathematic lattices, represented hierarchies of experts in terms of popularity in different subperiods. Such instrument allows to us not only objectively estimate popularity of any experts, but also make the conclusions about different ways experts’ activity.

Key words: Freedom of speech and independence of media, Russia, experts’ membership, mathematic lattice.

Research problem

The institutions of media independence and freedom of speech are basic institutions of modern democratic state. The media provide “information support of the cognitive, value-oriented, communicative and socially organizational activities.”

According to structural-functional approach, mass media discharge a function of providing the political communication between major political actors, mainly between elites and non-elites, politicians and citizens, which promote stable functioning of political system in whole.

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2 Within the Research Project “Professors-Students” 2010-2011 “Developing discrete mathematical models for political analysis of democracy institutions and human rights”, supported by the University-Higher School of Economics Research Fund
4 Almond G. Comparative politics today: A world view. – Moscow, 2002. P.55-57
Theory of democratic process, in its turn, put an emphasis on importance of existence of citizens’ “enlightened understanding” of political agenda, basics of decision-making and implementation of decisions. It is a basis for their full-fledged political participation.  

Citizen participation in democratic political process is supposed that citizens exhibit basic properties of the “public”: information awareness, competence, involvement, interest, freedom of thought, of opinion, of action, connection with community, willingness to realization of collective action, responsibility.

Therefore in modern state the media discharge not only functions of providing the communication, but educate citizens to be well-informed and competent, transforming some individuals into “the public”.

From the above reasoning it is clear that public interests should be the basic priorities for the media officials. In this case representatives of public organizations and experts should have equal opportunities for expression of their opinions in the media.

Also one of the main tasks of the media is establishing of social dialogue between citizens and authorities is to motivate citizens for active political life. The media must be autonomous and independent, informing citizens with alternative opinions.

There are a lot of literature and researches about restrictions of media independence and freedom of speech in Russia. But overwhelming majority of those papers deal with examination of communicative function of the media and, accordingly, censorship, imposed by authorities on this function. According to it, the main emphasis is laid on analysis of news items.

Thus Belchenko in his work «The media non-coverage: how national TV-channels hush-up the “uncomfortable” events» examine, how much Russian TV-channels falsify information about events or don’t cover it at all.

Conclusions based on analysis of news reporting of such themes as Stanislav Markelov’s murder, dispersal of demonstration in Vladivostok 14.12.2008 and economic crisis in Russia. T.Bykov in his work “Freedom of media speech in terms of legislation and media market in Russia” examine issues of media’s existence in the complex of modern society terms and verify

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6 Belyaeva N. Public policy in Russia: overcoming resistance of environment // Polis, 2007, №7
7 Dzyaloshinsky I. Journalism of complicity: How to make the media be useful for people. – Moscow, 2006. P.104
8 Ibid
hypothesis about impossibility of full-fledged realization of media independence rights in modern Russia. 10

N Zhukova in her paper “Comparative analysis of media roles in modern political process in Russia and US” examine such things that are at the back of “freedom of media” in USA. Author acknowledge the existence of censorship both in USA and Russia: critics against authorities is absent (especially, at the regional level), and access of opposition parties to state-run media is restricted.11

But assessment of media independence and freedom of speech in Russia, based mainly on analysis of news reports and function of informing, is insufficient. So mass media discharge more important role – to educate “the public”. Putting emphasis on that socializing function, we examine the subject of our investigation and the object with the other focus. To be exact, it’s supposed to analyze content and context not of the news, but of analytical and expert television broadcasts. In case of the latter we consider it to directly promote socialization of “the public”, educating citizens with “enlightened understanding” of social problems and the ways of solving it. Thereby the media promote consensus between parties, holding different and, frequently, polar views. The media cover positions of the parties, draw in experts, independent moderators, call on all the concerned parties. Thereby the media become a forum where positions are argued and collided with each other, and the knowledge about goals, the methods of interaction and political action is produced. And functions of socialization agents in this particular case are discharged by analysts and experts which are invited to analytical TV-programmes and speeches of which we propose to examine in this research.

We laid emphasis on social and political broadcasts just on the TV because this kind of media in modern Russia covers the overwhelming majority of Russian population. Moreover, in this research we confined ourselves to examine broadcasts only on the first two channels as both have the highest rating among the population. On Channel One we examine a popular analytical programme “Sudite sami” (“Judge by yourself”), because it’s the only analytical programme with social and political subject area where experts are invited. On the second channel (“Russia 1”) we examine broadcast “Natsyonalniy interes” (“National Interest”), because it is also the only analytical programme of 23 on this channel which go on the air. For comparison we also examine TV-broadcast “Chto delat?” (“What to do?”) on channel Kultura, which we consider to be important to include in the object of this research as a “control group”, because it has comparatively inconsiderable population coverage and have specificity of editorial line. We

examine period 2007-2010, because it is considered to be the most difficult period for independence of media and because in 2007, 2008, 2009 and 2010 some crucial events in Russian politics took place.

2007 – State Duma pre-election
2008 – Medvedev’s presidency and the beginning of economic crisis
2009 – economic crisis
2010 – Medvedev’s modernization policy

In our opinion, there is the problem in the pointed field of the research. The same experts, not offering alternative decision for solving the declared problem or discussing limited number of themes, are permanently invited to many television programs. Probably, it’s the reason that there are few enough analytical and social and political programs at the domestic TV. The content of these programs is the subject to severe censure or other different restraints. Such obstacles prevent to spreading of democratic principles at the state and the society and the forming of audience. Thus the principle of Freedom of the Speech and independent mass media and its concrete realization in the political practice promote the mass media as the efficient mean of political socialization

It is precisely this fact that explains our purpose of research. So, our purpose is the investigation the Freedom of Speech and independence of mass-media at the example of expert discourse and the content of the popular analytical and social and political programs in Russia.

In our point of view, the pluralism of experts’ opinions, expressing at the analytical programs, the topicality of the themes of the programs and also the absence of the some factors distorting two first principles promote the abidance of the principles of Freedom of Speech and independence of mass media and the mass media as the efficient mean of political socialization.

The pluralism of experts’ opinions, expressing at the analytical programs, depends on the degree of the diversity of expert membership at the social and political and analytical programs, the positions and expressing experts’ opinions for discussion and solving urgent social and political, economical and the state problems.

That’s why, the first our task is the detection of the degree of diversity of the expert membership. Whether are different experts and specialists invited to different programs or there is the certain pool of the experts, forming the members for analytical programs? Or are there several experts- “talking heads”-permanently appearing on TV and talking about the same themes and things? The monopoly of the certain groups of experts and analytics doesn’t promote the pluralism of experts’ opinions and prevent the audience to form the “enlightened understanding” of the political agenda. The great number of universal experts, be capable talking
about everything, don’t allow to the audience to profoundly understand the point of the problem (The audience, in turn, has neither time nor competence for that).

The second our task is the clearing-up of the degree of diversity of the experts’ positions. Whether are opposition experts and analytics, belonging to different scientific schools, political orientation and offering the alternative methods for solving social problems, invited? How are the experts’ positions alternative to each other? If the majority of experts holds the same position with each other, there is no pluralism of the point of view, and audience won’t have access to the alternative information, it won’t be able to critically analyze the experts’ positions and form individually one.

The third task is the question, how themes of analytical, social and political programs are urgent and topically, how they represent the urgent politics. If the themes of the programs are interested in by only journalists or invited specialists or sent “from above”, they insignificantly represent and describe real social problems, the public interests and the common good. Such things won’t be forming the conscious audience, be capable to solve the problems of society.

At last our fourth task is detection of the ex- and internal factors, influencing on the membership of experts, experts’ positions, the subject area of the program. The external factors are social and political, economical affairs in the country. The internal factors is the presenter’s position to a problem of the program, editorial policy of TV-channel. How experts’ opinions will be independent from the pointed factors, so they will promote the access to alternative information independent from some ex- or internal factors.

Based on our observation and situational analysis of politics in the country, it can be propose and suggest a sequence of operational hypotheses for continuation of investigative tasks, formulated earlier. We propose to verify these hypotheses in the course of our present and next research.

We have formulated the next hypotheses on the basis of the pointed tasks:

1. **The monopoly of the consolidated group of experts.** There are the certain permanent pool of the experts, invited everywhere

2. **The Monopoly of the “act-alone” experts.** There are no permanent pool of the experts. Substantially, there is “act-alone” experts

3. **The Monopoly of the universal experts.** There are universal experts, talking about everything.
Methodology and research results

In order to prove or disprove these hypotheses we use a data mining technique, namely Formal Concept Analysis (FCA)\(^\text{12}\).

Firstly, we give a short introduction for formal concept analysis.

A (formal) context \(K = (G, M, I)\), consists of a set of objects \(G\), a set of attributes \(M\), and a binary relation \(I \subseteq G \times M\), which determines which object has which attributes. The derivation operator \((\cdot)^I\) for \(A \subseteq G\) and \(B \subseteq M\) is defined as:

\[
A^I = \{ m \in M \mid \forall g \in A : g \mid m \} \\
B^I = \{ g \in G \mid \forall m \in B : g \mid m \}
\]

Literally, \(A^I\) is the set of attributes shared by every object from \(A\), and \(B^I\) is the set of objects that have all attributes from \(B\).

It is common to use \((\cdot)^I\) instead of \((\cdot)^I\) if it does not lead to ambiguity. Double application of \((\cdot)^I\) is a closure operator. Therefore, \(A''\) and \(B''\) are closed sets.

A (formal) concept of the context \((G, M, I)\) is a couple \((A, B)\), where \(A \subseteq G, B \subseteq M\), \(A = B'\), and \(B = A'\). It can be easily seen that, in this case, \(A = A''\) and \(B = B''\). The set \(A\) is called the extent and \(B\) is called the intent of the concept \((A, B)\). A formal concept \((A, B)\) is fully defined by its extent \(A\), as well as by its intent \(B\).

A concept \((A, B)\) is a subconcept of a concept \((C, D)\) if \(A \subseteq C\) (or, equivalently, \(D \subseteq B\)). In this case, \((C, D)\) is a superconcept of \((A, B)\). We write \((A, B) \leq (C, D)\), and define relations \(\geq, <\) and \(>\) as usual. If \((A, B) \leq (C, D)\) and there is no \((E, F)\) such that \((A, B) \leq (E, F) \leq (C, D)\), then \((A, B)\) is a lower neighbor of \((C, D)\), and \((C, D)\) is an upper neighbor of \((A, B)\). Notation: \((A, B) < (C, D)\) or \((C, D) > (A, B)\).

The set of all concepts ordered by the relation \(\leq\) forms a lattice, which is denoted by \(\mathcal{B}(K)\) and called the concept lattice of the context \(K\). As a rule, lattices are visualized by so-called line (Hasse) diagrams. Formal context usually visualized as so-called cross-tables, each row of such table is object and each column is attribute, cross (or 1) in position \((i, j)\) (i-th row and j-th column) means that object \(i\) has attribute \(j\).

We collect data for three Russian analytical TV-programmes: “Sudite sami” (“Judge by yourself”), “Natsionalniy interes” (“National Interest”) and “Chto delat?” (“What to do?”). For each programme we have an airing date, a theme of the programme and a list of the experts attended this programme. According to our period of interest we split the data to four chunks with respect to four subperiods:


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For each chunk we build a table, which represents how much times each expert attended each programme in this period. Next, we join tables of the same programme to one table, and obtain three tables represented guests of four different programmes. As rows these tables have full names of the experts and as columns – 4 subperiods of time. As our technique needs a binary matrix (a formal context, see above) as input, we had to binarize table of each programme. Heuristically we obtain a scale that helps us to binarize our tables. Let’s define a scale as a vector of boolean expressions. In our case the scale was $S = (x>6\%, x>10\%, x>12\%, x>15\%)$. To build a formal context we apply the scale $S$ to each value in the initial table, it means that we substitute $x$ in the scale by every value in the table, then compute a value of each expression in the scale and append it to the context. For example, if expert $i$ was in first period only at 11% of programmes, therefore expert $i$ has attribute “in 1 > 6%” (in first period more than 6% of programmes) and attribute “in 1 > 10%”, but does not have attributes “in 1 > 12%” and “in 1 > 15%”. This way we construct a formal context for each programme. Now we have three formal contexts and we can find a concept lattice for each. These lattices represent hierarchies of experts in terms of popularity in different subperiods. More popular experts are shifted to the top of the lattice; less popular or popular only in specific periods are shifted to the bottom of the lattice. By the reasons of simplicity, we erased from the diagrams such experts that attended less that 6% of programmes in each period. We consider such experts not relevant for our purposes. Here we provide the numbers of such experts: for “Chto delat?” – 215, for “Национальный интерес” – 147, and for “Судите сами” – 335.

Now, have a look at Figure 1. It is line diagram of “Chto delat?”’ lattice. Let’s briefly explain what this diagram means. Let’s look at the node with labels “Lev Jacobson; Vladimir Zharihin; Vladimir Pantin” (“Лев ЯКОБСОН; ВЛАДИМИР ЖАРИХИН; ВЛАДИМИР ПАНТИН”) and “in 4 > 10%” (“в 4 > 10%”); in “4 > 10%” (“в 4 > 6%”). Obviously, this node represents three experts which attended in fourth period more than 10% programmes. It is true, but these three experts not only experts that attended in fourth period more than 10% programmes, we can say the same thing for all the experts that situated above current node and can be reached throw the lines ascending from current node. This means that Joseph Diskin (НОСИФ ДИСКИН), Valeriy Solovey (ВАЛЕРИЙ СОЛОВЕЙ), Sergei Markov (СЕРГЕЙ МАРКОВ), Mihail Remizov (МИХАИЛ РЕМИЗОВ), Gleb Pavlovskiy (ГЛЕБ ПАВЛОВСКИЙ) also attended more than 10% of programmes in fourth period.

The same logic is applied when it come to labels under the nodes. For example, have a look at the node with labels “Sergei Markov” (“СЕРГЕЙ МАРКОВ”) and “in 2 > 15%” (“в 2
> 15%”, it is obvious that this expert was more than in 15% of programmes in the second period, but if we follow descending lines, we will find out that Sergei Makarov (СЕРГЕЙ МАРКОВ) was more than in 15% of programmes in the fourth period and more than 10% of programmes in the third period.

Now, let’s try to interpret this diagram (Figure 1). At the top we have Diskin (Дискин) and Markov (Марков); they are the two most popular experts. Diskin (Дискин) is more stable expert; he has high rates during the all four periods, although Markov (Марков) has higher rates at the second and third periods.

Also we should consider another interesting group: Migran’an (Мигранян), Dianov (Дианов) and Nikonov (Никонов). They was rather popular during the first period (at least so popular, as was Diskin), but not very popular during the other periods. May be it is caused by the socio-political context in the first period. Groups with same properties exist in the third and fourth periods.

Next, we have to consider Figure 2, which represents diagram of concept lattice for “Natsyonalniy interes”. Here we also see the group of experts who rather popular than others during all four periods – they are Vitaliy Tret’akov (ВИТАЛИЙ ТРЕТЬЯКОВ), Natal’а Narochnickaya (НАТАЛЬЯ НАРОЧНИЦКАЯ), Valeriy Fadeev (ВАЛЕРИЙ ФАДЕЕВ). Also we can notice some deviations at the specific periods, for example – Gleb Pavlovskiy (ГЛЕБ ПАВЛОВСКИЙ), who is rather popular in fourth period, but does not in the others.

The last diagram Figure 3 is about “Sudite sami”. It has more complex structure than the others; it can be caused by the fact that more experts attend every issue of “Sudite sami”, rather than “Natsyonalniy interes” and “Chto delat”. In spite of that we can also make some conclusions about experts’ hierarchy. We also have some popular experts at the top of the lattice, for example – Valeriy Fadeev (ВАЛЕРИЙ ФАДЕЕВ), Sergei Kurgin’an (СЕРГЕЙ КУРГИНЯН), Viktor Erofeev (ВИКТОР ЕРОФЕЕВ). But structure of such popular experts is different from other programmes. Considering “Natsyonalniy interes” and “Chto delat” we have some experts that dominate the others during all four periods, but there we have different popular experts over different periods. For example, Sergei Kurgin’an (СЕРГЕЙ КУРГИНЯН) has high rates during the fourth and third periods, but not in the first and second, or Valeriy Fadeev (ВАЛЕРИЙ ФАДЕЕВ), who has high rates during the second and third periods, but not the first and fourth periods, or Vitaliy Tret’akov (ВИТАЛИЙ ТРЕТЬЯКОВ), who has rather high rates during the first and second periods, but not the third and fourth. In other words, we have there higher rotation of the popular experts rather than the other programmes.
Figure 1. Diagram of the lattice represented “Chto delat?” (“What to do?”)
Figure 2. Diagram of the lattice represented “Natsynalniy interes” ("National interest")
Figure 3. Diagram of the lattice represented “Sudite sami?” (“Judge by yourself”)
Conclusions

After our research, we’ve understood, that our first hypotheses about the monopoly of the consolidated group of is proved by the analysis. But this group of experts is thin. Thus, for the program “Chto Delat?” the dominated group of experts consists only of two stable members: Diskin and Markov. But there are other interesting group: Migran’an, Dianov and Nikonov, which were more popular during only the first period.

For the program “Natsyonaliy interes” there are three dominated experts: Vitaliy Tret’akov, Natal’a Narochnickaya, Valeriy Fadeev for all four periods.

But for the program “Sudite Sami” there are no the dominated experts for all four periods. There we have different popular experts over different periods. We also have some popular experts at the top of the lattice, for example- Valeriy Fadeev, Sergei Kurgin’an, Viktor Erofeev,. We have there higher rotation of the popular experts rather than the programmes “Chto Delat?” and “Natsyonaliy interes”.

That’s why, this program is proved our second hypotheses about The Monopoly of the “act-alone” experts, as there are no the dominated group of experts for all four periods.