

NININS 2020**International Scientific Forum «National Interest, National Identity and National Security»****INFORMATION PROCESS AS THE BASIS OF POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN RUSSIAN SOCIETY**

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Abstract

The modern political process in Russia is characterized by non-linearity, inconsistency. On the one hand, the returned elections of governors testify to the development of democratic processes. On the other hand, there is a tendency to replace elected mayors of cities with appointed city managers, which suggests the opposite. Also discussed changes to the Constitution of the Russian Federation confirm: any law is always historical, it changes and transforms along with the circumstances that characterize the political process today. However, there is a flip side to the coin: the changes were proposed by the President, although there are many other subjects of legislative initiatives that can initiate amendments to the laws of the Russian Federation. Such transformations naturally affect the specifics of the Russian media processes, since the media are a field for expressing public opinion, and society lives according to the laws of politics. The media has always been given the role of mediator in the process of transmitting the information. The role of the subject was assigned to leading politicians acting on state behalf, and society was conceived as an object of power influence. Today, all functions have become more complicated, and the above-stated division has become not obvious. Moreover, the nature of the media, which went into the digital space of mass media reality, has changed. Therefore, the authors in the article consider not only the specifics of the Russian media process in current conditions but make precise forecasts of its further development.

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1. Introduction

The Russian political process at the present stage of development of public relations is undergoing a systematic transformation: it is reflected in very contradictory trends. The first is that political governance goes through the next democratic stage. The process of creating new political parties is simplified, the elections of Governors are returned, the election law is being transformed, and amendments to the Constitution of the Russian Federation are introduced in a civilized way. Thus, the changes in the field of political governance, which at its dawn was marked by the adoption of the new Federal Law “On General Principles of the Organization of Local Self-Government in the Russian Federation,” which sharply differed from its predecessor, partially outlined the paradigm of development of prevailing trends. On the one hand, the law significantly strengthened the centralized (federal) principle in regulating critical issues of local self-government, filled it with uniform rules and unified provisions. At the same time, the list of provisions that were previously regulated by the subjects of the federation was reduced. The number of municipalities has grown to 24.5 thousand (instead of the previously existing 12 thousand municipalities)” (Vydrin, 2013, p. 6).

However, the second trend indicates a specific restriction in the expression of the will of citizens. So, according to researchers, the consistent rejection by municipalities of direct mayoral elections is nothing more than curtailing democratic trends. On this occasion, they note that today the problem is “inconsistency and systematization of the legislation of the Russian Federation on local self-government. Many federal, regional, and sectoral legislative and other regulatory legal provisions contain provisions that do not correspond to the constitutional status of local self-government” (Khmara, 2013, p. 84).

This trend would have remained a simple declaration, if not for the fact that almost 40 percent of the cities in the industrial region today is the “legacy” of the era of socialist construction, which means that they are necessarily monotowns that are “tailored” to a specific enterprise. Moreover, it is not surprising that such a system of their functioning cities, taken from the commercial space, has its reflections in the political space. The fact is that in such cities, power is “imprisoned” under the same city-forming enterprise. Moreover, therefore, a natural continuation of this trend is that power is a “continuation” of the policy of the city-forming enterprise. Under the authority of the city-forming enterprise, all political processes are connected: from the creation of precinct election commissions to the elections of the bodies of representative public power themselves.

If we consider the process of appointing mayors (city managers) in such cities, it becomes evident that this process is very convenient from the point of view of continuing the policy of the city-forming enterprise, because the city manager will be appointed with the consent of this enterprise and, most likely, he will become a native of this company.

However, it is impossible to consider this as a folding of democratic traditions unambiguously. Here the trends are much more in-depth. So, for example, Magnitogorsk is an example of a city with a city-forming enterprise. Before that, all the elected mayors of the cities came from a city-forming enterprise. Furthermore, out of 32 districts in the representative body – Magnitogorsk City Assembly of Deputies – from the city-forming enterprise, deputies are represented in 19 districts. Without a doubt, the

city-forming enterprise is the majority. It acts as a guarantee that the policy in the municipality will be under the control of the same city-forming enterprise.

There is no need to explain how vital open dialogue is becoming in this situation. The discussion of the situation on the part of all participants in the political process, since only in this way can a new, innovative policy be implemented in the field of not only mass media reality but also political management in Russia as a whole.

Many researchers argue about democracy at the present stage of its development:

In our opinion, the rejection of democracy, the habit of controlling mobilization methods determine the position of the conservative part of both the Russian establishment and its expert community. As a rule, they proceed from the competitive advantage of authoritarian regimes concerning the inhibitory role of democratic control institutions in the adoption and implementation of political decisions. At the same time, a single circumstance is hushed up: the crisis state of society and the need for quick operational decisions require the appropriate powers of the executive branch. Nevertheless, from a historical perspective, the lack of partnership in relations between the authorities and civil societies, its replacement with disciplined enthusiasm and submissive obedience of the population is fraught with a loss of the ability to make adequate operational decisions and mass passivity of the society in response to any initiatives of the authorities (Antoshin & Ershov, 2018, p. 18).

In our opinion, the field of dialogue among various actors in the political process is, without a doubt, the media. The media, as a political institution, is studied by many researchers (Kiselev & Kirichek, 2019). The activities of the media involved numerous actors in the political process. Mass media creates conditions for equal access to the opportunity to express one's own opinion. The media situation is mostly the key to a political agreement in society, the basis of innovative management policy. The media situation is an indicator of its development and implementation in the country.

We see our research task in identifying through the problem points in the functioning of the media at the present stage of development of public relations the specifics of the development of the Russian entire media process in Russia, as well as making a forecast for its further development taking into account the interest of all political actors: from the government and society to the media themselves.

2. Problem Statement

Many researchers are addressing the issue of innovations in information management in our country. So, for example, in the Russian science of the media, the emphasis is on the relationship between the government and the media. Today, researchers are focused on emphasizing the specifics of artificial intelligence and its impact on public consciousness" (Podprigora, 2019, p. 14).

As soon as the question of payment for information arises on the agenda, we come to the institutional aspect of the discussion. Behind significant investments may be such entities as the state and business. This circumstance concerns not only the sphere of mass media, but also many others. Researchers in the field of economics argue about this, concluding that in this aspect, "the key role belongs to the state as an institutional innovator" (Avdeeva, 2014, p. 3). Thus, the whole variety of views and positions on management issues in the field of information, in our opinion, can be reduced to several.

According to the first theory, the dominant role of the state as the main subject of innovation policy in any field, including information management. All legislative innovations fit into this paradigm.

This paradigm is expanding or narrowing down democratic trends. All legislative innovations are provided with particular information support in the media, thereby directing media flows to specific channels, creating a new information reality, and shaping the attitude of other participants to political events information interaction (Balynskaya & Volkov, 2019; Pavlyutenkova, 2019).

According to the second theory, the dominant role of society in the dialogue on significant issues. Here, an indirect basis can be the introduction in the conditions of globalization into the scientific environment of the concept of the “knowledge economy,” which symbolizes the addition of knowledge to such traditional factors of production as labor and capital. Innovations are increasingly being born at the junction of various fields of science and are becoming intersectoral in nature. Models of the innovation process, reflecting the changes that have taken place, began to acquire a non-linear character, including a feedback mechanism. It seems that the intersectoral communication of information from completely different areas can be achieved only through dialogue, communication between different social groups, in the conditions of their access to sources of production and dissemination of information. This is how science can be popularized, so the progressive process in the exchange of information by different subjects of social relations can be established.

Another theory deserves our attention. Following it, the leading role in the exchange of information belongs to the media themselves. Some researchers believe that the media are full-fledged subjects of political interactions, that the functions of the media in political governance are different from other participants: they are also full-fledged subjects of action that produce information, and objects of influence from both the government and society, and the means of transmitting information from the authorities to the population. This circumstance brings us to the philosophical question of the subject of power in principle. However, other authors argue, arguing that as soon as the media begin to act as an independent subject of political governance, the media themselves are greatly affected, and the result is a manipulative component in politics. Moreover, this again brings to the question about the features of the media institution functioning in the political communication system. Nevertheless, we consider it possible to formulate this theoretical position: the media as a full-fledged subject of political governance.

The three theoretical positions outlined are not new in science; they are being developed by various scientific schools in the field of mass theory. Without disputing the opinions of the researchers cited above, we will nevertheless make an attempt at some systemic generalization and derive another theory, conditionally calling it “subjective-functional.” From the name, it is evident that it will be based on the method of functionality.

3. Research Questions

The subject of the research is the process of production, dissemination, and assimilation of information in the era of digital technology and its impact on the political process in modern Russia.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the work is to study the specifics of the information process at the present stage of social relations, presenting it as the basis of political transformations in Russia.

5. Research Methods

We will designate our approach as functional. In our opinion, it is a functional approach that allows considering the specifics of the Russian media process in current conditions. Let us explain. The modern political reality is increasingly demonstrating: we are in a period of systemic political transformations. There are many reasons: globalization processes that include Russia in the international legal space; the introduction of economic sanctions, prompting the search for resources for the development of numerous industries within the country itself; the search for self-identification on the part of political actors (media, public groups, political parties, government agencies, business elites) (Sukhodolov & Anokhov, 2019). Turning to each specific condition of political changes, one can deduce a massive number of patterns, cause-effect relationships. However, this approach is unlikely to give us a systematic view of the whole totality of changes and their consequences. In our opinion, a functional approach is needed. Despite the seemingly huge volume of political changes and contradictions, one thing remains unchanged – namely, the functions of participants in political interactions.

So, the primary function of power structures has always been political management. Of course, a legal, political initiative can be expressed “from below,” but bringing any such initiative to the category of dogma binding on all is the prerogative of power structures. Despite globalization trends and the ongoing erosion of information boundaries between states, the primary function of power remains unchanged.

The function of another participant in political interactions, the media, remains unchanged. Media in the West arose from the need of society for the exchange of financial information, in Russia – at the initiative of government agencies to promote their political actions (Kosinski et al., 2015). In any case, both variants of origin are “related” by the function of informing. In the political process in Russia at the present stage, this function has remained unchanged: the media continue to inform the country's population about major and minor events in various areas of life.

From such a statement of the question, the invariability of the function of yet another political participant – society (he also understands it as the whole totality of social groups – from small groups to social movements and political parties) becomes evident. Society consumes information from all kinds of media, accumulates a reaction to it (on the pages of the same media). As a result, the society, in the form of a kind of “public request” (through the same media), issues the authorities either as support for the chosen political course or as a demand, disagreement with the declared position.

If the functions of the participants in the political process have remained unchanged, then what is the specificity of the Russian media process? We think that it does not consist of changing the functions of political participants. The Russian media process specificity lies in the transformation of the participants thinking in the transition to innovative methods of experience exchange. We turn to each subject of politics sequentially. We also use interdisciplinary approaches. The advantages of this approach

are that Soloviev, for example, managed to define politics through information and communication characteristics. However, a logical question arises, which is related to the fact that information and communication relations are a connecting element in politics, and they create the prerequisites for the artificial management of politics. Based on this, it should be assumed that before the technical revolution, the management of the political system was “not artificial,” that is, “naturally.” The technological revolution made it possible for the information to circulate at lightning speed in different directions.

Meanwhile, throughout human history, we have seen a picture when the goal of any power at any time is artificial, that is, pre-targeted, management of the political system. And even at a time when such control was determined by the strength of the weapon, it was precisely “artificial.” This transformation means that the information and communication essence of politics does not lie in the fact that prerequisites are created for the artificial management of the political system, but in the fact that the system itself and its management methods become qualitatively different.

6. Findings

In our opinion, state structures, power as the leading political force in the country have not changed their function: the will of those who legislate is mandatory for all participants in political interactions. However, the very methods of these interactions are changing. For example, power structures are forced to master others, until recently, forms of communication with the population that is not known to them, such as the Internet. Researchers note, today, they expect from a public servant the effective use of new information technologies in their professional activities (Bolsover & Howard, 2017, p. 274; Volodenkov, 2019, p. 350). Also, one of the points that deserve attention is the requirement for a civil servant to be adaptable to rapidly changing information technologies. A servant has to have the ability to self-development, the ability to find practical solutions to managerial problems with the help of information technologies, creativity, and innovativeness when using them.

They are also forced to change their methods of influence on power structures and representatives of society. Various social networks, interactive sites are far from the only examples of such innovations. A new method of influencing the power structures has appeared – through electronic appeals to the President’s website. This innovation carries, in addition to benefits, many problems. On the one hand, this is, without a doubt, a valid form of communication between society and the authorities, since a quick reaction from the supreme authority in this regard provokes a positive reaction from the population, strengthens the level of confidence in the authorities, and belief in an early and fair solution to the problems that arise.

On the other hand, the very possibility of such treatment deprives the population of the need to understand hierarchical structures and to rank existing problems. The supreme power is being addressed with questions that the regional and local authorities can fully solve. However, the desire of the authorities to appear as some almost “magical” force that can cut off a knot with problems at once directs the mass media flow into the mainstream, preferably, a manipulative one, since the image of power, in this case, is positive. Such a function of the media is not close to objective informing. However, to political advertising, which in itself is neither bad nor good – it is based on other principles.

So, the media in the political process begin to realize the vertical function of “power – society” as a political manipulator. However, the specificity of the Russian media process at the present stage also lies in the fact that on the reverse vertical “society-power,” the media realize their other function – the function of a political informant. By accumulating and displaying the opinions of various groups of entities regarding political events, the media inform the authorities about the reaction of the population to power initiatives. Of course, we are aware that behind each specific media, there is private capital, which imposes certain restrictions on the expression of this or that opinion. In this case, when discussing the media, we are talking about a particular generalized political subject that contains the entire set of print, audiovisual, and electronic media (Janowski, 2015; Kohlborn et al., 2013).

The functions of the media in the political process do not change. Media continue to build awareness of the population or government on objective (as in analytical genres), biased (as in advertising genres), purely subjective (as in author programs or personal, personal sites) principles. The choice of an appropriate model of media “behavior” depends on the political task that confronts it. For example, if the media is “responsible” for the image of a particular territory in the eyes of the authorities, the media stream created by the media will not be objective, because the development of the entire territory depends on how the information is presented.

It is worth dwelling on the functions of society in the political process in the conditions of transformations. As already mentioned, the function of this subject is to express an opinion on political events and make adjustments to existing policies. During the shift of which society, making its choice, adjusts the political course in the country, the electoral cycles have noticeably extended: the term of office of the State Duma and the President has increased.

The function of adjusting the political course remained assigned to society. However, the methods for its implementation have transformed. The traditional methods of expressing public opinion were public appeals to the media, speeches at demonstrations, rallies. Modern life shows that such methods are a thing of the past.

For example, the system of legislation on mass media obliges officials to respond within a specified period to appeal and criticize them from the media pages. Is it worth mentioning that such a norm is not just not respected in our country; it is openly ignored? There is also a rational explanation for this: in a massive flow of information, it is sometimes impossible to track the very appeal to which a government official is obliged to respond. That is why these methods have long ceased to be effective.

Rallies and demonstrations are also a thing of the past in proportion to the development of social networks, which on a virtual basis, connect people into faceless communities, giving a feeling of unity, involvement in events. Going to a rally to express one’s own opinion is no longer a necessity. It is enough to “identify” yourself on a social network, vote on the site for or against any initiative to get satisfaction from visible participation in politics.

Thus, we are witnessing a unique situation: while the functions of the subjects of the political process remain unchanged. We are still faced with the manifestation of innovations in the field of the mass media process, in which all members of modern society living according to the laws of politics are involved.

7. Conclusion

So, we can summarize: a functional approach to the Russian media process in the context of political transformations gives reason to argue that there is no change in the functions of political actors. However, we can safely talk about innovations in the media process. Why? The point is the changed methods of manifestation of information activity on the part of all subjects of political relations. Their media actions have changed the power structures, using the manipulative aspect of the media. Society, on the contrary, is increasingly using the function of a political informant, urging the media not only to accumulate opinions on pressing issues but also systematically represent them to the authorities. The question remains open: how do the media themselves position themselves in the new conditions? The primary function of the media is to inform. It is its implementation that allows the media acts as a kind of field for dialogue between various political actors. However, information can be on an objective and biased basis (this is the difference between such types of information activities as journalism, advertising, and PR).

Modern mass media continue the search for self-identification, effectively adjusting to the position of independent political actors and, at the same time, trying to become full-fledged entities themselves. Such a search will undoubtedly prompt not only to rethink the history of the emergence and development of mass media in our country, not only to compare it with other countries. Such a search will prompt us to turn to the empirical legacy of the Russian media, which have accumulated considerable experience in transforming political realities both at the level of municipalities and the country as a whole. In any case, the specific of the Russian media process in the context of political transformations is an urgent topic for further study. This topic requires joint efforts on the part of political scientists, media theorists, sociologists, and historians in understanding the systemic transformations taking place in the media process at the present stage of development of public relations

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