MEDIATIZATION OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS: THE NATURE AND CONDITIONS OF MANIFESTATION

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Abstract: The world created by the media is part of the environment of modern man. If you look at journalism, namely at one of its segments – mass media, it can be assumed that they are a communication tool for the authorities and the society of individuals. At the same time, with the development of social relations and their changes, the role of mass media is constantly being reviewed. In recent years, there is a tendency that the media are a platform declared to be either society's or politicians' territory. Studying this platform, one can tell how and when some or other political process was happening. Almost every political process is mediatized. This paper covers the basic scientific approaches to mediatization. The author's view of mediatization of the political process and ambiguous consequences of using new media therein is represented.

Keywords: Mediatization, political process, new mass media.

INTRODUCTION

By the end of the twentieth century, mass media have become one of the most attractive tools for political participation of citizens, having turned into an effective mediator in the relationship of the population and the authorities. Openness, flexibility in formulation of positions, ability to reflect a wide range of interest and demands of different groups of people allow media to influence the political process, to modify its structure and focus, to *reconfigure* the rules of the political game. They create a platform for open debate, conflict of opinions, ideas and programs, while reserving the verdict returning right or correction of the final judgment of the mass audience on a particular political issue.

Specific historical understanding of mediatization is the loss by the ruler of the direct (*immediate*) subordination to the supreme power, transition to dependence on the supreme sovereign (monarch, *i.e.*, king or emperor) through other ruler. At the same time, the very etymology of the word leads us to an understanding of mediation as the intermediary process, from the Latin – *mediātus* – acting as an intermediary. In conflictology and law, the term *mediation* is used as the mildest form of alternative non-judicial dispute resolution.

A very broad understanding of media is represented by cultural studies, which relate to media all intermediaries, the use of which introduces significant changes in an individual's communication with the outside world (both natural and social) and reorganizes his/her way of perception of the world and way of life. Scholars include here such diverse phenomena as electric light, speaking, writing,

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roads, numbers, clothing, housing, city, money, watches, prints, comics, books, advertising, wheel, vehicle, auto accessories, photography, games, press, telegraph, typewriter, telephone, phonograph, motion picture, radio, television, weapons and more (McLuhan, 2003).

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical points and conclusions obtained were argued by the authors on the basis of the following scientific methods of research in the framework of the systematic approach: structural and functional, subject-object, logical, comparative, theoretical modeling, and statistical analysis techniques. The analysis of revealed scientific positions and the use of proven methodological apparatus ensure evidence and validity of the findings. Information and empirical research database is formed from a number of sources, including articles published in scientific journals.

RESULTS

Until now, in science there is no single definition of *mediatization* in relation to the mass media sphere. Therefore, it is advisable to give a general characteristic of this process, components of which are contained in the research of the latest decades.

In the 20th century, the scientific literature and political practice formed a universal approach to build vertical communication from the government to the people through the creation of specific virtual models, contributing to the formation of societal notions on real political processes as required to the elites. The media act in this theory as a means of delivering information to the mass consciousness. As experts note, in most models of mass communication, the role of mass media is largely in building media pseudoreality to replace the objective socio-political reality for the masses. The science postulates the following: *There are clear structural conjunctions between the media system and the political system* (Luhmann, 2002), *agents can perceive them in the political field only through the media* (Bourdieu, 1994), *big politics disappear* (Bauman, 2006) and *the actual content of what the media and in particular television call politics has changed* (Champagne, 1997).

Mediatized policy is the virtual reality, represented and created by the media and mediatization of politics in the process of establishing this reality. It is a collection of mass phenomena of information influence and interaction both within the political sphere (through formal or informal management techniques) and when it is interlinked with the sphere of the media, which is indicative of the formation of the media-political system (Zasurskiy, 2001).

A German scientist Wilfried Schultz focused on the following aspects of mediatization: media technologies extend the natural limits of human communication capacities; the media partially or fully cover the replacement of social work and

social institutions; the media are connected with different non-media processes in public life; actors and organizations from all social strata adapt to the media's logic (Lundby, 2009, p. 87).

The basis of mediatization process is the material-technical factors: properties of social information, expansion of the circle of professional creators of information products, improvement and accumulating of the media, demand for information and its availability, expanding the range of the media consumers. But mediatization cannot be reduced only to the material and technical phenomena. It generates not only the media environment, but the media culture of the society, and is characterized by the intensification of the dependency of culture and society on the media and the media's logics.

The modern era is characterized by the fact that the media, featuring politics, are the decisive and sometimes the only way to represent the political reality, regardless of the time and place of the events. As a result, the media have become one of the most important actors in the political field. Firstly, because the information brought by them into the public space for the majority of society is the only contact with politics. Secondly, because there are clear structural conjunctions between the media system and the political system: politics benefits from the presence in the media, and the media are demanding political reaction for this presence.

It is possible to agree with Voinova that, as a rule, the mediatization of politics is spoken about, *firstly, in cases where it is necessary to emphasize that agents can establish communication and get to be perceived in the political field only through the media, since only the media contribute to giving value to political events and ensuring the appearance of facts in the public space. And secondly, when it is necessary to identify a need, opportunity and activity of various parties of the political process seeking to replace the real political action and two-way communication with their imitation in the media – a one-way media construct* (Voinova, 2006).

It is in this interpretation where the *mediatization politics* concept seems one of the most important to understand the specifics of the modern political process.

The degree of full and fair reflection in the media of an event objectively depends on the physical capabilities to reproduce actual events, professional journalist skills to create any media image, most adequate to the real, and a number of other circumstances. That is, the virtuality created in the process of mediatization is unable to fully, comprehensively, identically reflect the reality. The subjective side is in the intent of journalists, editors, political powers, whose will is executed by a journalist and is a conscious change/distortion of the virtuality created. It is in this combination of objective and subjective sides where the specifics of politics mediatization are identified.

Modern researchers focus on the study of this particular, subjective side, bearing in mind that, firstly, the political actors may use the media to add some weight in the political field, as the media have the ability to enhance the value of individual events and phenomena or, on the contrary, ignore them by filtering out. Secondly, there is a need and opportunity for the parties of the political process seeking to replace the real political action with its imitation in the media – a total media construct of the political reality to substitute the meaning of the information with its simplistic, neutral or entertainment-related representation. Often, mediatization is perceived superficially – politics is added more entertainment and personalization, politicians tend to get into the center of events, become media persons.

The starting point of the argument on the essence of the mediatization of politics can be, firstly, the definition of politics as *relationships* between large groups of people associated with the authorities/powers, secondly, understanding of power as the ability and opportunity of a party to impose its will on others, and, thirdly, the idea of democracy as the *power* of people. Without getting involved into a discussion about the relationship and interdependence of these phenomena, it is important to note that they, like other social processes and phenomena, occur and flow with the help of information and based on information. It is therefore natural that the media are a means by which social groups *communicate* through the power, the means by which it is possible to *impose* the will of one party on another, the means by which it is possible to substantially or at least formally give the right *to rule all* – 'demos-kratos'.

In fact, only the first period of the development of democracy, called *democracy of the crowd*, could do without intermediaries, when simple procedures to solve problems with the participation of all citizens, their scarcity, and small territory helped in communication directly between the rulers and the ruled. The other periods, the second period of *newspaper (newspaper-party) democracy*, the third *teledemocracy* and the current fourth *network democracy* are carried out through the media – first printed, then electronic. Thus, in the course of long-term development, the social being was replaced by private media being, and democracy of the masses becomes democracy of audiences via politics mediatization.

But the mediatization of politics, which has premises at the *paper* stage, is developing with the help of electronic media, creating the virtual space in which it became possible to exercise a charismatic type of ruling on the basis of new technologies. It is obvious that the advent of each subsequent stage in the development of political communication does not mean the disappearance of the previous forms, as another emerging mass media would not displace or replace the existing but would rather supplement them (Latenkova, 2011). Under current conditions, each of them has its own characteristics, advantages and different opportunities for politics mediatization under the conditions of different models

of mediatized politics: 1) one-way communication model, built in the information space by setting the agenda, modeling public opinion, making images and imposing opinion of *public intellectuals*; 2) two-way communication model, built on the principles of equality of all parties of the information process and assuming response participation of the society in communication.

For the bulk of the population, television has become the main source of information and knowledge of the world. This is due to the fact that, as part of the society's communication system, TV, possessing qualities inaccessible to other media, performs the same functions: helping to disseminate information, knowledge, culture, acting as a tool of propaganda, social control, organizing people, etc. Like radio, it has characteristics that distinguish it from newspapers and magazines: quickness, ability to inform play-by-play; documentary precision of psychological richness of events, creating the effect of presence; ubiquity and accessibility of information perception; breadth of coverage and unlimited audience; ease of perception and image: effectiveness of the impact of *live* speech and *live* image, enhancing the effect of infusion.

But TV identifies the weaknesses of the mediatization process such as the instability of the images, stereotypes and attitudes formed, depending on the dynamics of the political situation, distorted perception of information and its short life, blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction and creation of the illusion of *involvement in politics*. In the course of mediatization, a new type of personality is born – *the political child of TV*, who has no fundamental humanitarian training, no skills of analysis and synthesis of information, overturned or dropped value criteria for evaluation of the social world, mixed and partially utilized fragments of many cultures, including political, strive to symbolic leaders, perception of politics as a game, *dominating perception of politics as a dirty thing, unworthy of a normal human* (Denisov, & Fedoseyev, pp. 230-231).

Global computer network provided tough competition to other media, becoming a means of mass communication. The Internet provides new opportunities for politicians as compared to the traditional media: access to global data and information sources, simplification of the horizontal and vertical political connections and uncontrolled free communication, freedom of dissemination of information, unlimited opportunities to publish digital information, combined with the advantages of other media – visual appeal of TV, readability inherent to newspaper reading, interactive communication as radio or telephone (Marchenko, 2003, p. 401).

Considering political Internet communication in terms of the political process, two key points regarding the political potential of the Internet can be identified. The first, in the Web citizens are less dependent on the actors of politics and their information guides, are more independent in collection, organization and circulation

of information (Blokhin *et al.*, 2016). The second point: Internet technology and technological capabilities of today's electronics allow providing direct social and political dialogue between political actors and active users of the Web, each individual becoming an equal participant with communicators of the political discourse.

The present media Internet space has fully become a political actor and at the same time an ideal platform to form the political discourse, free commenting actual agenda and affecting it. It is possible, therefore, to speak of forms of power mediatization with all the components of the media system involved, including the Internet, while mediatization is equivalent to strengthening the democratization of the state system, associated with the need for the political elites to ensure approval of the masses and govern them in a communicative way (Kravtsov, 2012, p. 22).

Scientists point out the ambiguity and inconsistency of new media involvement in the politics mediatization process. Thus, Nikonov notes the "noopolitical aspect of information" (Nikonov, 2013), Bekurov studies the "mediatization process in social media" (Bekurov *et al.*, 2015), Danilova states the "ethnic component in the media" (Danilova *et al.,* 2015). A "distinctive feature of the present Russian mediatized politics is the presence of a full debate in alternative media space of the Internet" (Nikonov *et al.*, 2015). *The Russian process of politics mediatization involves dividing the information space in two components: the traditional sphere within the official political line, and the alternative sphere, which presents the opposition. Therefore, one of the most important trends is the strengthening of the role of this alternative online space and increasing presence of particular political actors there, moved out of the traditional (in particular, television) space* (Voinova, 2006).

Others argue that *growing mediatization of the public sphere significantly reduces the chances for the average individual to ever become a full participant of a rational discussion, somewhat critically assess the real state of public affairs. Of course, this opens up redundant opportunities for strategic plans on the part of the media: the use of mystification elements is gradually becoming a routine technology* (Sharonov, 2008, pp. 236-237). Modern information technologies, with the expansion of their scope of application in everyday life, make society more vulnerable to political control, and promote growth and improvement of political domination instruments, creating the potential for authoritarian socialization and manipulative influence on personality. Moreover, to a certain extent the development of new information technologies now challenges the interests of public and state security.

As a result of mediatization, politics tends to obey the laws of the internal functioning of the media. The place of what used to be called politics, the place of discussion, the process of forming public opinion and political decisions is being

increasingly taken up by some symbolic actions. This symbolic politics appears where politics cannot change anything, where the awakened expectations cannot be met. Competition for viewers and readers, the desire and the need to increase the circulation of publications is forcing journalists to artificially create significant out of insignificant, to notice the unusual in the usual, and to create imaginary sensations (Mein, 1955, p. 155). The danger of such *creativity* is the fact that these pseudo-events close the way to socially important events and critical thinking.

DISCUSSION

Researchers of the mass communication systems have started to use this term when describing the process of the formation of a special type of social space, calling it the *mediatization of society*.

The identification of the essence of mediatization is also contributed by the transformation of the practice of applying the media concept. In recent decades, not only in research, but also in daily life, instead of the cumbersome expression *mass media* the term *media* became widespread, including the entire set of information tools and techniques serving to deliver a message to a specific user in one form or another (printed words, music, radio broadcast, etc.). Moreover, as the contemporary scholars put it, the media are not just a means for the transmission of information, but the entire environment to produce and aestheticize cultural codes.

As a rule, the term media is not used alone, but is a part of the complex word. In our case – mass media are the massive communications, including full set of audio, TV and visual communications. They exercise remote communication, in contrast to the traditional, in which information is transmitted by word of mouth. The transition from the term *mass media* to *media* and the related mediatization evidence the shifting of the focus in the functionality of this institution – from mass information to mass mediation.

Based on the concept of *mediation*, mediatization reflects the process of transformation of the society. With regard to a particular environment, mediatization category has different interpretations.

Sokolova, from the standpoint of social informatics, defines mediatization as the process to improve the means to collect, store and disseminate information. Implementation and support of these processes in the society is the main function of the mass communications, and the whole media environment (Sokolova, 2008).

A linguist Klushina understands mediatization as *the spread of the media's influence over the most important areas of social life and the reverse process of engagement in the information sphere of various aspects of social activity, i.e., creation of zones of intersection of media and social phenomena* (Klushina, 2014, p. 69).

According to Perezhogin, mediatization is the process of informatization, the purpose of which is the creation and distribution of the newest systems of collective and personal communications providing access of any member of the society to all sources of information and into the world of virtual reality (Peregozhin, 2007).

The original opinion on this process can be found in the works by Slavoj Zizek, considering contemporary culture in the context of global mediatization – the process of transformation of a real object into an artificial: *body, which is almost entirely mediatized, functions using prostheses and speaks in an artificial voice* (Zizek, 1998, p. 125). As soon as our body is mediatized, our consciousness also changes. The media in this process are quite specific and imperious *matrix* – a system of cultural and information monopolies, which now becomes the main pillar of any state.

A mass communication researcher Zemlyanova emphasizes that *the concept of mediation could be interpreted as a manifestation of the transforming function of the media which, in the course of collecting, processing (filtration) and transferring information data on the facts of reality, are able to modify (or distort) them, giving them mediated meanings, emerging during the fabrication of imaginary pictures/events of the reality. Researchers who criticize the processes of this kind to emphasize the intensity of their influence on public consciousness and being, on the fate of culture, use the mediatization term* (Zemlyanova, 2002, p. 84).

With regard to politics and the media, the mediatization term has been applied rather lately. A Swedish media researcher Kent Asp defines mediatization as a phenomenon, during which the political system is influenced by the media and is adjusted by them via the manner of highlighting political events. Through the use of this term, Asp tried to explain how the media have become an essential mediator between politicians and society, how a political structure becomes dependent on the media, when they are the only source of political information, through which it can influence people's perceptions of political reality.

CONCLUSION

The media experts suggest that mediatization is a social process by which society is so oversaturated with media that other phenomena may no longer exist separately from the media.

Describing the nature of mediatization, it is quite insufficient to understand the process as increasing the share of political shows on radio and television, which have a more significant impact on the audience than the real actions of the political actors. Real politics is impossible without the involvement of a wide audience via the media. Therefore, to a greater extent, mediatization is characterized through the *politico-journalistic field* and sequential shift of gravity of the political space (Champagne, 1997, pp. 154-155) in the direction of attracting a mass audience, the content being carefully constructed in accordance with certain logic and cleared up within this logic, most *consumed* by the audience.

The distinguishing feature of modernity is manifested in the fact that the media, telling about politics, have become the only source of reflection of political events, regardless of time and place. It is mass media which increase or decrease the importance of what happened in the country or the world, limiting the space to a set of the positions of images', setting up the mediatized politics. In other words, the process of moving of the political values and aspects from reality into virtuality is occurring. Imaginary structures increasingly affect the real political processes, not only replacing the reality, but actively shaping it (Kazimirchik, 2014, pp. 99-100].

The development of communication and information technologies has opened up new forms and opportunities of interaction of politics and the media, as well as the interference of the political and media fields. It is on the political field where a continuous struggle is going on for the power to create reality with the help of words, the power to focus public attention on specific issues and to withdraw any uncomfortable issues from the agenda. Because of this, all the abstract architecture of the political field is based on the media.

Therefore, modern scholars define mediatization through the set of processes and phenomena of information influence and interaction within the political sphere (through formal or informal management techniques), and when it is interwoven with the sphere of mass media – that is, through public presentations of political meanings (Voinova, 2006).

Mediatization, as a process, involves various aspects of the role and place of the media in the societal political system: the political content of mass media, the actors involved in the content production, the impact of the political media content on the audience and politics, the influence of the political system on the media system, and the reverse effect of the media system on the political system. These and other issues need further careful research.

Thus, it can be concluded that:

1. *Mediatization should be understood as the mediation process, and mediatized politics thus appears a result of this process;*
2. So far there is no verified formula of the mediatization process, it is advisable to use a descriptive characteristic estimating this phenomenon as mediation of the media in the organization of political processes, in which, on the one hand, there is an objective reflection in the virtual space of real political processes, on the other hand, their conscious and unconscious distortion occurs.

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