

THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN MASS MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

In the article I. N. Blokhin «The political role of the individual in mass media environment» presented the concept of the political and ideological identity of the individual in the space of mass communication. The author proposes a typology of communicative political behavior, analyzes functions of communities, forming in the mass media environment. As the types of behavior in a mass media environment are considered consumption, communication, work and navigation. Each of the selected species corresponds to a certain type of role behavior: the consumer, the communicator, the author and navigator. Types of behavior in mass media environment directly from the types of personal political activity. Political functions media communities consist in the implementation of the control over the bodies of the political authorities and subjects of the political activity, public self-government with taking into account density and simplify communications. The functions of exchange and media coverage in the political sense are instrumental, with prospects of implementation in order to organizational activities, the formation of the political image, images leaders and parties. The author uses the structural-functional approach and methods, role-based analysis of the behavior of the individual.

Key words: *the political behavior, identity, mass media environment, communication, mediatization, the local government.*

Political behavior is a form of participation of a personality in the exercise of political powers and protection of its political interests. Political activity of the personality is expressed as a constructive or destructive political action, individual political act, which has social and political meaning and sense. A type of political behavior of an individual is an expression of a judgment or opinion of the personality about politics and politicians, including communication media.

As for politics, a person is provided with the right to express itself in the role of a voter, activist, party member. Exercise of the relevant political roles is the basis of **political identity** – human ability related to his feeling of belonging to a certain political group, i.e. political statuses of the personality act as sources of identity.

However, it is not enough to take into account only exterior social and political statuses for analysis of political behavior of the personality in social medium. In psychology **identity** is defined as an ability of the individual to remain himself in the changing conditions. It is a result of perception as a personality different from others. As for politics, such an approach to identity leads to the conclusion about its ideological (sense and value bearing) contents, as systems of political values and opinions about political ideals and goals of political activity are formed just in ideologies.

Pertaining of a person to a social (including political) group acts as one of typology grounds for media target audiences. Political and ideological identity provides the basis for formation of such types as party, agitation, opposition, liberal, nationalist etc. media. Election behavior corresponds to ideology and stylistics of agitation media, the purpose of which is to incite a political action – taking part is

election and voting process. Behavior of an activist depends from the present political conditions. In general, he learns new forms of communication or resigns himself to the pressure of administrative resource. Party members are inherently focused on party press. All the listed forms of communication inciting to the direct action also have certain ideological nuance, but they cannot directly play this role exercising only, for example, organizational functions. Spectrum of political press is considerably expanded at the expense of “ideological” media (“Novaya Gazeta”, “Zavtra”, “Russkiy Reporter”, “Sovershenno Sekretno” etc.). Within the political meaning, the conflict of identities is found exactly in this sphere.

Empiric results of elections are an indirect indicator of ideological identity based on political values. From 54,5 % (those who cast votes on elections of State Duma deputies in 2011) to 62 % (those who cast votes on President elections in 2012) are politically active in Saint Petersburg (Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation: [site]; Центральная избирательная комиссия Российской Федерации: [сайт]). Results of “United Russia” (35,4 %) and V. V. Putin (58,8 %) demonstrate the meaning of value concept “stability” (minimum) for one third of active citizens. Partially these data are based on achievements of the previous elections period, which is characterized by stabilization of consumption and formation of new consumption practices related to crediting. In Russia “26 % of the population think that now it is the ideal time for funds borrowing. The All-Russian Public Opinion Research Center (ВЦИОМ) provided this information. For comparison, in 2011 there were 18 % of such activists. In its turn, the share of those who are sure that it is not yet worth taking credit in the bank, by contrast, reduced from 70 % to 56 %. Thanks to this tendency, the index of credit trust achieved the highest mark for the last two years” (Smart credits: [site]; Кредиты с умом: [сайт]).

Popularity of Putin can be explained by the structure of social expectations in relation to him. The success in formation of his image depends on the degree of coordination of this process with social expectations and accordingly the degree, in which the political personality awares such interdependence. In the conditions, when social expectations are amorphous and unformed, the role of subjective factor in the formation of the national leader image increases. Now it is not only his subjective will, but a cumulative vector of subjective wills of all involved in the process of image creation (environment, political technologies, journalists) and perceiving his citizens-addressees. Different directions of wills result in the situation, in which the cumulative vector tends to zero, and different subjects create the image of Putin proceeding from their own expectations and requirements. If the image is colorless and empty, any interested citizen will paint and fill it at his own discretion. That is why everybody answers the question “Who is mister Putin?” in his own way, i.e. fills his image with the things, which he expects to find in him.

The meaning of concepts of “social fairness”, “collectivism” and nostalgic “achievements of the USSR”, which form the basis of communist ideology, are expressed in the results of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (15,3 %) and G. A. Zyuganov (13 %). The results of “Fair Russia” (23,7 %) show the value for citizens of the same “left” concept of “social fairness”, but in the context of social and democratic ideology. Difference of election results for “Fair Russia” and S. M. Mironov (6,6 %) shows the value of personal factor and the mentioned role of the “filled emptiness” of the national leader image, which pulled back not yet strong social and democratic votes.

Results of “Yabloko” (11,6 %) and Mikhail Prokhorov (15,5 %) show that the value of concepts of liberal ideology – “human rights and freedoms”, “private property”, “individualism”, etc. was preserved for a part of citizens.

Various institutions contribute to formation of political behavior of the personality, but taking into account the degree of mediatization in the modern politics, the leading role of the institute of journalism and social medium in this institute, in which ideological (ideal, value, meaning bearing) influence on a person is implemented, should be paid attention. Specific character of human behavior in social medium

allows finding new facets of the problem of understanding a human. Social medium, on one hand, comes across as a system, which requires a personality to accordingly relate to itself as a part of the system, which plays certain social roles according to social status. In this case social medium structures and regulates human relations, in which the individual acts in the world regulated by the rules. Understanding of a person on the basis of surrounding social conditions proceeding from his social statuses and relevant roles is achieved only in the conditions of regulating behavior and activity and total structuring of human relations. The approach presupposing that we understand a human, if we understand his social environment, is called *ecological misapprehension*. A special case of ecological misapprehension is interpretations and conclusions of public opinion researches with the help mass surveys, when opinions of respondents are explained by dependence (correlation) from their social characteristics.

On the other hand, social medium allows a person to express himself as an independent (“integral”) subject (actor), which, actually, determines its attractiveness for the personality. In this case the attitude to the person changes – he becomes a center of his own system of value bearing outlook coordinates. The problem of person understanding in social medium is removed. The person understanding in social medium is achieved through *information*, which he consumes, on which reacts, and *communication*, in which he is involved, initiates and provokes it. Therefore, we can judge on the essence of person political behavior by the degree of his civil activeness and types of his role behavior in social medium.

Behavior of the personality in social medium is estimated through media preferences and network routes. Niklas Luhmann considered that “all program fields of mass media imply presence of a “person” – but... only in the form of social construct. This construct... is necessary in the mass media functional system in order to permanently and uninterruptedly subject itself to irritations from the perspective of biological and psychological outside world of a person. As in other functional systems, this outside world remains operationally unachievable, it cannot be included by parts and that is why it requires permanent “interpretations”. “Characterization” of people, which is uninterruptedly reproduced by the specified means, determines the items on the internal side of mass media system borders, in which structural connections with outer world of people come into effect. Thus, passions of billions of psychic events are transferred into the form, which allows their further use inside the mass media system and the new psychic interpretation in the range of differences, which follow from it” (Луман 2012, p. 129-130). Luhmann clearly actualizes the problem of person understanding through media, which settlement is possible on condition of recognizing the identity principle (mutual recognition, penetration and readiness for changes) of social medium and the personality existing in it.

An individual, who is connected with the network social medium, cognitively and mentally expresses itself as a “media personality”. As defined by V. D. Mansurova, “media self-reflection and self-determination become ontology of modern society existence, and the individual, who gained the unsanctioned access to communication acquires the status of **homo mediates**. <...> “**Media**” person, now acting as a subject, then as an object of mass communication, is caught in the necessity to select his social status and the way of self-expression – as a **digital duplicate** “without name or destiny” or a **real participant** of social interactions on public stage (Мансурова 2011, p. 8). Let us consider four types of the ways of expression in social medium: consumption, communication, production and navigation. Each of the selected types corresponds to a certain type of role behavior: consumer, communicator, author and navigator.

Consumer. This person “comes into” network medium, “spending” time on it. Consumption is considered as the beginning of feedback in the communication system. The consumption subject is the network medium is “benefits” of information and communication messages. “Now it is not enough to inform in order to arrange communication, it is not only because of more and more messages, and communication requires their selection, but also because the role of information receivers increases”

(Вольтон 2011, p. 6). In the ontological sense the information consumer demonstrates oneness of the interaction subject and object creating the new stature. The mechanism of oneness is *identification* – the process of role acceptance by the consumer, which is set and determined by the message. Identification for the consumer is the way of acquirement of mindsets and values offered in the message, as if they were his own ones.

In the concept of “axial age” by Karl Jaspers the phenomenon of communication itself is considered as an internal metaphysical ability of the personality to find in himself the feelings of other people: “Ability to see and understand others helps to understand yourself, surmount the possible narrowness of each aloof historicity, to make a breakthrough» (Яснерс 1991, p. 49). Communication (in contrast to agreement, in which the participants undertake to fulfill obligations) is understood as an act of mutual understanding, intimate contacts and conscious spiritual oneness. In the existentialism, special attention is paid to the contrast (even incompatibility) of a person and the surrounding world. Identification as acceptance of a role is a way of going out of the world of incompatibility and lack of understanding, way of interaction for the addressee and the mass media world, where the communication problem is settled not through division between the subject and the object, but through their identity.

Communicator. His functions are initiation of communications and production of messages. Activity of communicators leads to formation of network structures similar to social structures. Networks are formed on the basis of objective communication needs (“Odnoklassniki”) and for solving certain (concrete) problems (“Khimkinskiy Les”). Then the networks are transformed according to different scenarios and under the influence of multidirectional factors.

The basis for networks formation is exchange. The concept of social exchange was created by the American researcher George Homans, who described social behavior as exchange of activity resulting in awards and expenses. Homans formed a number of propositions, which form the grounds for social exchange: success, stimulus, value, deprivation-satiation, aggression-approval, and rationality (Хоманс 1996). Description of human behavior in the theory of Homans became the starting point for the concept of exchange created by the American social scientist Peter Blau, who was striving to understand social structure by means of analyzing the processes, which manage the relations between individuals and groups. The binding mechanisms in complex social structures are norms and values (or agreement about values). The agreement concerning social values serves as a basis for distribution of social regulation procedure outside direct social contacts and for prolonging existence of social structures beyond the life of one person (Блау 1994). Social exchange, which creates social structures, is executed in the form of social networks, which, with the help of Internet and computer technologies get the “real” opportunity for their functioning.

Norbert Bolz mentions the role of networks both globally, and in the new context of social differentiation: “The value itself of the networks is... not that they process information, but that they create communities. As a result a nation as an instance creating identities ever more loses its value – in favor of globalizing and “tribalizing” powers” (Больц 2011, p. 104).

Author. “Information producer”, who turns everyday life into the event and has the need to do so. The author removes differences between the phenomenon of everyday life in the real world and in social medium. He creates the second – complying with “certain conditions – reality, from which point of view the ordinary way of life looks like a real reality» (Луман 2012, p. 92). The author can act as a “creator of event”, a separate expression of the author’s role in networks is blogging.

The problem of the author’s role is to find the balance between the social medium (everyday life medium), but without losing his own value bearing identity. For the author, description and interpretation of everyday life from the position of his own values is just the first step to the production of new knowledge or the knowledge of new quality. The next step is to fix the tension caused by the

divergence of world views and value systems of the author and the heroes of his work. Then the meanings of behavior are decoded, which helps to understand motives and, as a result, values “of the other”.

Navigator. He is an “employee (worker) of network medium”. His task is to regulate information streams and control the routes. He is an operator of perspectives, contexts, and senses. His functions also include “surveillance” over consumers, communicators, and authors. Depending on the navigation objectives, he helps or harms them. The character of the navigator’s activity allows determining a number of navigation types. They are: information distribution through information and advertizing agencies, mass media distribution, regulation (stimulation, arrangement or blocking) of information and communications, destruction of damage of information (hackishness) etc.

The social meaning of navigation is social medium is to organize coexistence of views, senses and values: “communication is not to share similar views by free and equal individuals, but to organize coexistence of often contradicting points of view. <...> *Communication is training of coexistence in the information world, in which the issue of otherness is put into the center.* <...> Communication... never happens itself, but it is a result of fragile communication process. That is why informing is not enough for communication, and that is why, most often, excluding some rare cases in life and history, communication is general means coexistence» (Вольтон 2011, p. 33). Arrangement of communication and, accordingly, coexistence training is the main principle of the navigator’s activity.

Distribution of navigation as a type of network behavior influenced journalist immigration from the conclave of authors to the sect of navigators. It began when a part of authors found the property of snowballing growth of information volumes connected with the lack of own time for search and interpretation of “exclusive” and, at the same time, with the accessibility of information resources and communications. Simultaneously a new type appeared among photoartists and designers, which works not on its own piece of art, but with the ready visual data bank. It is not accidental that media information producers oftener and oftener apply to the audience with an appeal “let us make news together”. However, successful navigation as an activity for organization of contexts and senses, formation of “agendas” and “world views” requires, on the one hand, the necessary level of education, on the other hand – awaring of responsibility for the consequences of their activity. Accordingly, also the role of journalists as navigators and information organizers increases.

At the level of personality the selected types of role behavior are transformed, they evolve and contribute to unification of functions. The conclusion about the convergent character of the selected types of behavior confirms the remark of Dominik Volton about the type of information recipient, who “becomes the new person, the actor”. Of course, the information recipient existed always, but now he gets authorization and criticizes, according to his release, and in proportion to the growing volume of information, which overburdens him. He is not always right, far from it, and that is the problem, as informing often means contradicting the opinions of information recipients» (Вольтон 2011, p. 20).

Functions, which are fulfilled by network communities forming social medium, on one hand, are inherent to social medium as a whole, on the other hand – they have their own expressed specifics. Natural network regulatory function is **social control**. Forms of social control are: formation of public opinion (in all of its aspects – distribution of knowledge by way of creating competent audiences, working out of the system of social assessments and incitement to action) and provision of functioning of social institutions, including journalism. Social control methods include isolation, individualization and rehabilitation.

Isolation (deprivation in the meaning of refusal of exposure of these or those events, phenomena, facts, situations, characters, etc.) is expressed as ignoring, moving the object out of the information field and, accordingly, from the public opinion field, social discussions. *Individualization* is reproduced in the

forms of social and political criticism, including mediacriticism. *Rehabilitation* is implemented by way of constructive discussion of problems through acceptance of the opponent's role and understanding of his values and motives.

In addition to control, regulatory functions include **management** and **self-management**. However, external control seems to be the most actual expression of the regulation function, as for management building in or inclusion of "media person" to this system is necessary, for self management it is necessary to build him in and include him into the system of public self-regulation. Anarchism is one of the theories of self-management and self-regulation. If its propositions are analyzed in the context of the network theory, it can be noted that the basis for the anarchic model, similar to network structures, is exchange. This exchange takes various forms: from direct product exchange to information exchange and mutual help, which is "inherently" intrinsic to human nature (Кропоткин 2007). In the political doctrine of anarchism much attention is paid to the criticism of democracy of election campaigns, in which the contents of advertizing (election pledges) are in no way related to the product (party or leader); absence of responsibility of "people representatives" for these people; impossibility to conduct an independent inspection by the voter, how his voice was counted; provision of opposition loyalty by all possible means, which guarantees self-reproduction of the ruling clan; appeal to permanent things and provoking emotions, etc.

Network creates crucially new opportunities for direct democracy, opportunities for each person to express his political will. At present implementation of this option seems to be illusory, nevertheless, the technological basis for its implementation already exists – the opportunity of mass communication without travelling expenses and on-line arrangement.

In the network medium **exchange** exists as an economic phenomenon – direct product and indirect advertizing exchange. The main exchange object in networks is information; economically it acquires the resource characteristics. Resource potential of the information is based on a concept of "implicate knowledge" of Friedrich von Hayek, according to which each individual has unique knowledge (concrete people and circumstances); it means that only he can use them in his activity (Хайек 1989). All the complex of the processes of using such information advantages in economics is coordinated by the market, which provides (also for business press) the activity subjects with new knowledge about demand and opportunities to satisfy it (through price mechanism), and also about potential spheres of demand and supply. In the "area of the greatest uncertainty" of market information competition unfolds ("the procedure of opening") - look for changes in consumer preferences and new tools to meet them. The essence of business is to find and explore new possibilities, i.e. business is characteristic not only of the type of activity, but also of behavior. Business journalism in such a system of relations that serves as the destruction of "implicate knowledge".

Significance of the findings made by Hayek about media consists in the fact that competition "as the procedure of opening" takes place between the sources of information based on the credibility of the consumer. In this case, the relevance of a trusted source and the source that contains objective information remains open for discussions. Apparently, the trust as a quantitative characteristic begins to prevail over the quality characteristic of objectivity. The competition takes place between different groups selected on the basis of types of network behavior. It appears, for example, between groups of consumers and authors, as of the protection of information, intellectual property and copyright.

According to behavior motivation criterion **symbolic exchange** can be mentioned. It underlies the formation of the "hipster" community (based on demonstrative real consumption), "friends" (where the virtual assignment of status takes precedence over the real one), etc. This behavior is described in terms of the concept of "symbolic capital" by Pierre Bourdieu, according to which fame and recognition become a value, when they are in relation with a certain field. Realization of social status is achieved through symbolic consumption, and real infrastructures are reproduced through exchange processes.

Governance, trade, services, entertainment, crime, etc. will gradually penetrate into the social medium. There is also a reverse process - mediatization of reality. Another argument of Bourdieu relevant for the analysis of behavior in the social medium is the "struggle for space" (Бурдье 2005, p. 380). It manifests itself as a function of **space mediatization**. Its examples are projects of coverage of public spaces through video broadcast and video tracking, 3D volumetric mapping, etc.

The specific function of network communities is **mediatization of organizations**. "Organizations, which have turned into a network, cannot be in any way meaningfully represented as a hierarchy or as clearly bordered "corporations". The company today is nothing else than a sum of its internal and external relations, which are essentially an information process" (Большц 2011, p. 113). Any public or organizational event (concert, a presentation, lecture, exhibition, conference, workshop, etc.) has a chance to become a media event. Mediatization becomes the essential feature of the organization also in the meaning of legalization of its documents, normative structuring of its activities. Organizations are transformed into open and interactive media environment - urban management and self-management, social activism and civil control, economics and business, education and science, culture and arts, medicine and services, leisure and everyday life, etc.

Private life mediatization is also a specific function. It is based on the proposition about freedom to demonstrate privacy. The individual is required, at least, an agreement with this situation. Symbolic exchange in the network medium can be represented as a specific manifestation of the social-role behavior. Its specificity is that the usual social role and identity are aligned (or replaced) with game. Accordingly, it leads to the increase of importance of relational features in the social medium, legitimizing the game as a kind of social behavior in the network space.

These types of individual behavior in the social medium directly form types of individual political activity. Political functions of media communities primarily consist of exercising control over governance bodies and political activity subjects. Self-management function has prospects in the system of social and political regulation in view of the new factor of density and simplification of communications. As for politics, functions of exchange and mediatization are instrumental, having the prospects of implementation for organizational activities, the formation of political images, images of leaders and parties.

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