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Mass media and digitalization in the traditionalist critique of globalization and information policy

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Abstract. In the context of rapid digitalization and globalization, the mass media has become a key tool for shaping public consciousness, legitimizing power, and mobilizing social groups. In this context, traditionalism, a movement that emerged as a reaction to the crisis of modernity and postmodernity, is of particular interest. Traditionalists view the mass media and the digital environment as both a threat to the sacred foundations of society and a necessary tool for gaining political influence. The processes of globalization and unification of the cultural space are at the center of traditionalist criticism, where mass media acts as a conduit for universalist values and consumer models. At the same time, modern right-wing movements based on the ideas of A. de Benoît, D. Wenner, and A. Dugin actively use digital channels to mobilize supporters, indicating a dual attitude towards the media space. The purpose of this study is to analyze the traditionalist criticism of mass media and digitalization in the context of globalism, as well as to identify its significance for evaluating modern state information policy strategies. The research methodology includes discourse analysis of the works of traditionalists, a comparative analysis of their approaches to media and digitalization, and an institutional approach that allows us to consider mass media as an element of global and national public administration. The use of digital resources reveals a key contradiction of traditionalism. On the one hand, they are seen as a symbol of postmodern simulacral reality and as a tool of globalization. On the other hand, digital media have become the main channel for their political activity. Traditionalists simultaneously criticize and instrumentalize the media space. The authors analyze the challenges posed by the media activity of traditionalists to state information policy: the threat of the spread of radical ideas; the growth of alternative online communities that compete with official political discourse; and the erosion of information sovereignty due to the control of key digital platforms by transnational corporations. The study concludes that the public administration system should respond to these challenges by regulating the Internet and developing its own media platforms.

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Массмедиа и цифровизация в традиционалистской критике глобализма и информационной политики

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Аннотация. В условиях стремительной цифровизации и глобализации массмедиа приобретают статус ключевого инструмента формирования общественного сознания, легитимации власти и мобилизации социальных групп. В фокусе данного исследования находится традиционализм как идейное течение, возникшее в ответ на противоречия модерна и постмодерна. Представители этого направления воспринимают медиапространство и цифровые технологии в качестве двойственного феномена: с одной стороны, это угроза традиционным устоям, с другой — эффективный ресурс для достижения политических целей. В центре традиционалистской критики находятся процессы глобализации и унификации культурного пространства, где массмедиа выступают проводником универсалистских ценностей и потребительских моделей. В то же время современные правые движения, опирающиеся на идеи А. де Бенуа, Д. Веннера, А. Дугина, активно используют цифровые каналы для мобилизации сторонников, что свидетельствует о двойственном отношении к медиапространству. Авторы ставят цель исследовать критику традиционалистами процессов медиатизации и цифровизации в условиях глобализма и определить ее влияние на формирование современных подходов к государственной информационной политике. Методологическую базу составляют дискурс-анализ трудов идеологов традиционализма, компаративный анализ их взглядов на функции медиа, а также институциональный подход, трактующий массмедиа как инструмент публичного управления. В использовании цифровых ресурсов раскрывается ключевое противоречие традиционализма. С одной стороны, они рассматриваются как символ постмодернистской симулякративной реальности и орудие глобализации. С другой стороны, именно цифровые медиа становятся основным каналом их политической активности. Традиционалисты одновременно критикуют и инструментализируют медиапространство. Проанализированы вызовы, создаваемые медиаактивностью традиционалистов для государственной информационной политики: угроза распространения радикальных идей; рост альтернативных сетевых сообществ, конкурирующих с официальным политическим дискурсом; подрыв информационного суверенитета, обусловленный нахождением ключевых цифровых платформ под

контролем транснациональных корпораций. Сделан вывод о том, что система государственного управления должна реагировать на эти вызовы с помощью мер по регулированию интернет-пространства, развитию собственных медиаплатформ.

Ключевые слова: средства массовой информации, информационно-коммуникационные инструменты, консервативно-традиционное мировоззрение, глобальные процессы, управление информацией, устойчивость политической системы, самобытность культуры

Вклад авторов. Все авторы участвовали в разработке концепции исследования, сборе, обработке и анализе данных, написании текста рукописи, формулировке выводов.

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Introduction

In contemporary conditions of rapid digitalization and globalization, mass media have acquired the status of a key instrument for shaping public consciousness, legitimizing power, and mobilizing social groups. Information flows are becoming not only a means of communication but also a factor in the transformation of the political order. This circumstance makes the media space one of the most important objects of analysis for both state strategies of information policy and alternative ideological movements.

Traditionalism is of particular interest in this context — a current formed as a reaction to the crisis of modernity and postmodernity. Traditionalists view mass media and the digital environment both as a threat to the sacred foundations of society and as a necessary tool in the struggle for political influence.

The aim of study is to analyze the traditionalist critique of mass media and digitalization within the context of globalism, as well as to identify its significance for evaluating contemporary state information policy strategies.

Materials and Methods

The growth in research on the communicative sphere emerged in the second half of the 20th century under the influence of technology, the development of mass culture, and changes in the humanities. The works of M. McLuhan, M. Castells, F. Kittler, and others are noteworthy in this regard [1–3]. The theoretical foundations for the study of media began to take shape thanks to thinkers such as J. Huizinga, P. Bourdieu, M. Foucault, J. Baudrillard, and others [4–7]. This field of knowledge has sought to be interdisciplinary from its inception, drawing inspiration from political science, sociology, and philosophy. By the end of the 20th century, changes predicted by McLuhan as early as the 1960s became evident [1].

In the early 21st century, against the backdrop of developments in cybernetics and structural analysis, F. Kittler's theory of electronic media evolved [3].

An important subject of scientific debate is the concept of "digital mass media". A number of researchers identify them as online media and consider them part of the "new media" [8]. This term was introduced into scholarly discourse by R. Neumann, implying by it "a new format for the existence of mass media, constantly available on digital devices and implying active user participation in creating and disseminating content" [9. P. 35]. To this day, there is no consensus in the academic field regarding digital media. For instance, Y. Liao believes that digital media in the humanities have been defined within the context of forming cultural experience, socio-cultural practice, and an information-symbolic space shaped by social networks, chats, forums, and other media projects [10]. In essence, the communicative functions of media form new information, while society begins to transfer its ordinary everyday experience into online content. According to A.A. Lisenkova and A.Yu. Melnikov, in the renewed information world, a modern media-human emerges, whose motives can range from playful activity to creating a new, necessary society consisting of specific individuals [11]. D.V. Dunas believes that a "freedom in theorizing" is characteristic of the contemporary study of media [12. P. 262].

The research methodology includes discourse analysis of traditionalist works, comparative analysis of their approaches to media and digitalization, as well as an institutional approach that allows examining mass media as an element of global and national state governance.

Results

In modern society, mass media perform functions that extend far beyond information exchange. They shape public opinion, set the boundaries of political discourse, and serve as a tool for the institutionalization of power. As early as the first half of the 20th century, C. Schmitt noted that mass media were becoming "an integral part of the modern state apparatus" [13], as it is precisely through them that influence on public consciousness is exerted. The influence of media on politics manifests not only in their ability to broadcast ideas but also in their structural role as an element of governance.

These ideas were developed in the works of M. McLuhan, for whom media were not merely a channel for transmitting messages but an "extension of power" and a factor changing the very nature of political domination. "The medium is the message" [1], imposing a certain type of perception and image of reality, which makes them a crucial resource for political actors.

By the end of the 20th and beginning of the 21st century, the media space became a battlefield for control over information. According to A.G. Dugin, the concept of "network warfare", developed by Arthur K. Cebrowski, showed that dominance in the global network and control over the "network code" form new mechanisms of power [14. P. 167]. Under such conditions, mass media turn into

a weapon capable of not only mobilizing but also destabilizing political systems. Examples from the Georgian events of 2008 or the Ukrainian events of 2014 demonstrate that media resources play a key role in imposing certain attitudes and goals, shaping protest sentiments, and creating alternative legitimizing narratives.

From the perspective of state governance, the media space becomes a critically important element of information policy. It is a strategic resource for ensuring the stability of the political order and protection from external influences. The ambivalence of mass media lies in their ability to perform both functions of societal integration and its fragmentation. For the traditionalist discourse, it is precisely this duality that makes media a central object of critique: on one hand, they are viewed as a conduit for globalist values and an instrument of cultural unification; on the other hand, as a resource that can be used in political struggle against the modern order.

Traditionalist thought views mass media as a key tool of globalist expansion, a mechanism for imposing universalist values that erode cultural differences and undermine national sovereignty.

As early as the second half of the 20th century, traditionalists emphasized the connection between the development of mass media and processes of cultural unification. For example, A. de Benoist noted that in a unipolar world, the media space serves as an instrument of American hegemony, promoting standardized models of behavior and consumption. The modern capitalist economy creates not only goods and services but also “images, dreams, aspirations, and symbols” broadcast worldwide through television, cinema, and popular culture [15. P. 145].

A separate subject of traditionalist scientific discourse is “Mass Culture and the Loss of the Sacred”. In the mid-20th century, J. Evola sharply criticized mass culture and the communication media prevalent at that time. In his words, “technological society has already realized the necessity of a systematic organization of ‘leisure time’, offering man a standard set of mindless entertainment” [16. P. 59]. For traditionalists, this meant not merely a change in leisure but a fundamental transformation of society: the destruction of the sacred dimension of culture, the substitution of spirituality with consumerist simulacra.

In this context, mass media are perceived as an instrument for leveling hierarchies and replacing transcendent values with mass ones, which is directly linked to the crisis of political power’s legitimacy in the conditions of modernity and postmodernity.

Traditionalists pay special attention to liberal market ideology. Alain de Benoist, in a polemic with F. Hayek, pointed out that market universalism undermines social justice and deprives democracy of deep content, reducing it to a formal procedure. “Tradition in Hayek’s eyes has no value other than to point the way to an impersonal and abstract order embodied in the market” [15. P. 96].

If this narrative is projected onto state governance, a media policy based solely on market principles leads to threats to its sovereignty and dependence on transnational corporations.

Dominique Venner emphasized that media actively broadcast the ideology of consumption, contributing to the destruction of natural resources and the cultural resilience of Europe [17]. Endless economic growth and a mediatized consumer culture jeopardize the very survival of Western civilization. In this sense, media space becomes a crucial factor in the civilizational crisis.

The traditionalist critique of mass media is comprehensive. For analyzing state information policy, it allows for identifying the weaknesses of the liberal-globalist media paradigm, drawing attention to the necessity of preserving cultural and information sovereignty.

The contemporary stage of digitalization development forms a special social reality, which traditionalists interpret as a radical break with previous forms of existence. For example, A. Dugin views digitalization as a manifestation of the postmodern era, where reality is replaced by simulacra. In his interpretation, the digital environment creates a “new post-society”, devoid of stable foundations and traditional connections. “In postmodernity, there is no longer a society. There is a post-society... A space of ‘computer jungles’ arises with an exotic semi-natural, semi-mechanical ambiance” [18]. This understanding emphasizes the artificiality of digital connections, their arbitrary and temporary nature, which sharply contrasts with the traditionalist idea of hierarchy and sacred order.

From the traditionalist perspective, digitalization leads to the transformation of humans into passive content consumers, deprived of real connection with sacred and cultural foundations. Social networks are perceived not only as spaces for entertainment but also as tools of manipulation, allowing political actors to impose convenient meanings on society.

This interpretation is relevant from the standpoint of information sovereignty. Since digital platforms, global by nature, often fall outside the control of nation-states, this opens possibilities for transnational influence and ideological expansion.

However, despite sharp criticism of digitalization, traditionalists are forced to use digital resources to disseminate their own ideas. The creation of alternative media, activity in social networks and Telegram channels demonstrates that the digital environment has become an arena for political struggle, where even ideological opponents of globalism utilize its tools.

This reveals the ambivalence of traditionalists’ attitude towards digitalization. On one hand, they reject its value foundations. On the other hand, they recognize its effectiveness as a tool for political mobilization.

Discussion

The use of digital resources reveals a key contradiction within traditionalism. On one hand, they are seen as a symbol of postmodern simulacral reality and a tool of globalization. On the other hand, it is precisely digital media that have become the main channel for their political activity. That is, traditionalists simultaneously criticize and instrumentalize the media space, which indicates the flexibility of their strategies and a pragmatic approach to digital technologies.

For state information policy, the media activity of traditionalists creates several challenges:

- The threat of spreading radical ideas through digital channels, which are difficult to regulate.
- The growth of alternative network communities competing with official political discourse.
- The undermining of information sovereignty, due to key digital platforms being under the control of transnational corporations.

The system of state governance must respond to these challenges through measures to regulate internet space, develop its own media platforms, and devise strategies to counter radical ideologies.

Conclusion

The conducted analysis has shown that traditionalist discourse forms an ambivalent attitude towards mass media and digitalization. The profound contradiction of traditionalism lies in the fact that while criticizing modern media as conduits of the liberal-globalist paradigm, it simultaneously becomes embedded in the media space where the struggle for the interpretation of political and cultural reality is waged.

For analyzing state information policy, such criticism is of interest because it reveals vulnerabilities in contemporary strategies: the loss of control over national media environments, dependence on global digital platforms, as well as threats of the spread of radical ideologies in the networked space.

Thus, the traditionalist perspective, despite its marginality, allows for a novel consideration of the phenomenon of mass media and digitalization as a factor in the crisis of states' information sovereignty and as a challenge to national governance strategies in the context of global transformations.

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