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MEDIATIZATION OF RELIGION IN RUSSIA: FRAMING AND AGENDA-SETTING PERSPECTIVES

Abstract:

The terms describing vibrant and complex media and religion relations – interplay, interaction, dialogue, cooperation, competition, conflict, etc – more and more often find themselves under the ‘umbrella’ of the very new notion of the mediatization applied to religion (Hjarvard 2008).

Recent research on Russian journalistic practices lead to the conclusions of 1) narrowing the debate on religion and religious values in mainstream media; 2) reducing the possibility for journalists to make public their position in cases when it differs from the position of media managers; 3) removing of the dialogue on values into uncensored and free area of Internet resources, mostly - to blogs or forums of similar value orientations users.

Therefore media framing, gate-keeping and agenda-setting studies are essential for understanding of the religion mediatization in Russia.

Results of empirical studies confirm the following trends of dysfunction and corruption in the religious life coverage in Russia:

- lack of education and therefore lack of understanding the complexity and sensitivity of religious issues;
- biased approach among journalists, tolerated by their colleagues;
- marginalization of religious minorities;
- introducing not competent persons as experts;
- non-critical approach to myths and stereotypes about religion.

Up to our conviction, there is a time to rediscover the basic normative principles of mediatization of religion, based all three stages (pluralism - dialogue - consensus) are described below. Religions must have values transparency, availability of texts representing their normative models; correct articulation, the use of adequate symbolic systems, language and cultural codes and recognition of the possible existence of other normative systems. Journalists - from their side - have to guarantee representativeness, qualitative and quantitative completeness of the spectrum of values and norms and optimization of broadcast channels.

From the dialogue perspective, tolerance and mutual respect to other religious systems and commitment to participate in the dialogue is expected from religions with active presence of their advocates and experts in the public sphere. Media professionals have to search for new subjects of the dialogue, to present new models, create new forums for discussion and moderate them. Both - religions and media - have to put forward the seeking of common good as a basic principle. Otherwise tragic accidents as Charlie Hebdo shootings in Paris or Nemtsov killing in Moscow are hardly avoidable.

Keywords:

religion, mediatization, journalism, framing, agenda-setting, Russia