

*Steblyna N. O., Sc. D. (Political Sciences), professor,
professor at the department of journalism and social communications,
Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University*

*Dvorak J., professor, head of Dept. of Public Administration and Political Sciences,
Klaipėda University*

DEMOCRATIC AND AUTHORITARIAN MEDIA ENVIRONMENTS' COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS IN THE CRISIS TIMES (CASES OF UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN INDEPENDENT MEDIA)

Abstract. The idea of connection between the political order and the media environment is discovered in the paper. The media environment's possible changes during the crisis times are observed. Ukrainian and Russian news produced by independent online media are examined to confirm the hypothesis of the connections between the political order and the media environment.

Keywords: media environment, political order, digitalization, Ukraine.

Introduction. Democratic and authoritarian media environments' comparative analysis in the crisis times (Cases of Ukrainian and Russian independent media) is conducted in the paper. In this study the term 'media environment' is used to describe the peculiarities of online news creation within a state with certain political regime. It is supposed that significant differences may be seen between authoritarian and democratic states' media environments, and the regime predefines the media environment. However, in modern globalized and highly digitalized world a political order may be challenged with numerous disruptions (pandemics, war, economic and other crises). Thus, some obvious and traditional peculiarities of news creation may be changing as well, and the differences between authoritarian and democratic media environments may be erasing.

Theoretical background. Previous studies of Ukrainian political regime have shown its' several specific features. Firstly, it is the instant political struggle for different visions of the future, especially, before the Russian aggression in 2014. Secondly, consolidation was problematic [1], scholars mentioned "a radical discursive clash" between the future options (Russia or Europe) [2]. Thirdly, weak state institutions [3], influence of the oligarchs etc.

As for Russian political regime, it is characterized as a closed one, where decisions are made secretly and without public discussion [3], the picture, which is shown to the people don't have anything in common with the "real politics" [4], however, some democratic values may be imitated [5, p. 76]. There is only one center of decision making [6, p. 20], and the regime is called "super-presidentialism" [7, p. 394–395]. The state is dominating over society [8], collectiveness is dominating over the personal [5], some political institutes, like political parties do not have any power [9].

As far as there are the clear differences between Ukrainian and Russian political regimes, we are expecting to observe them in media environments of the states.

Material. Ukrainian and Russian news produced by independent online media are examined. Period of the study is 2005–2023. Material of the study is Ukrainian

online media (Ukrayins'ka Pravda; Dzerkalo Tyzhnya) and Russian (lenta.ru – before 2014, Novaya Gazeta and Meduza after 2014) – 450K items in total. Python programs were used for news processing and analysis. Computer analysis method for measuring different indicators may be seen in the previous publications (Steblyna, 2021).

Results. Results are shown in the table below (table 1).

Table 1 – The indicators of emotionality, local focus and the presence of the president in the media

	2005–2009	2010–2014	2015–2019	2020–2023
UA	0,4	0,3	0,3	0,2
RU	0,2	0,2	0,2	0,2
<i>local focus</i>				
UA	9,6	5,6	2,1	1,3
RU	0,6	1,1	1,0	1,7
<i>presence of the president</i>				
UA	21,8	12,6	5,8	5,0
RU	1,3	2,1	0,2	0,1

Conclusion. Between 2005–2014 (before Russian invasion) in Ukrainian and Russian media environments clear differences were observed. In Ukraine local political actors were mostly represented, that's why the indicator of the local focus was several times higher, than in Russian media. Emotionality was used to attract attention towards politics, and the president was actively participating in the public politics. These features of the media environment reflected more open, democratic type of political discourse, where political actors should sell their messages to media and society. Whereas in Russia international actors prevailed, emotions were rarely expressed. And the presence of the president was low. And this situation corresponded with more close, authoritarian type of political discourse, where political actors may use plenty of instruments to centralize information flow.

However, after Russian aggression in 2014 and full-scale invasion in 2022 the differences between Ukrainian and Russian media environments weren't so vivid, as before. The invasion reshaped the media agenda significantly. In Ukrainian media environment numerous international political actors have been active, that's why the indicator of the local focus decreased. Whereas Russian media environment has been more isolated with local political actors mostly represented. Dynamics of emotionality changed as well; the emotionality indicator became almost the same for both media environments. For now it is the only one indicator, which helps to differentiate Ukrainian and Russian media environments – the presence of the president.

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