

# Russian TV market: Between state supervision, commercial logic and simulacrum of public service



**Ilya Kiriya**

STATE UNIVERSITY – HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, MOSCOW, RUSSIA

**Elena Degtereva**

MOSCOW STATE UNIVERSITY, RUSSIA

**ABSTRACT:** The state plays supervising rather than regulative role on the Russian TV market, being an acting force *per se* on this market. The state takes care of the ideological and moral health of citizens as a missionary. In this respect the Russian State TV cannot be classified as public TV – as the social order could not be formed by society. Instead the order is dropped down from power structures, imposing state ideas of social development and providing reproduction of power elite.

**KEYWORDS:** state television, broadcasting, power, state and social control, state ownership, state regulation, homogenization of TV content



## INTRODUCTION

The situation of Russian television cannot be perceived outside the context of social structure of the Russian society and the role of state in this society. This paper considers the role of the state in the TV sphere according to the logics of formation of the Russian media market. The Russian media market has been linking together market structures and mechanisms with non-market and state-paternalistic ones. This duality should not be regarded as a transition factor. In our opinion, the period of transition of the Russian media system from Soviet to market-oriented is over.

We are convinced in the necessity of describing the actual situation within TV-sector as stable and organized, having already passed the period of post-Soviet transition. This system joints the market-oriented and social-oriented media with the state-oriented and propagandistic into a much instrumentalized media system.

It is necessary to stress that Russian television sector is formed not under post-Soviet predictions of globalization or commercialization but according to the specific social conditions of modern Russia; the new role of power and new concept of social stratification. This new system of Russian television is formed under presi-

dent Putin and will exist for a continuous time after his rule. We will try to verify our hypothesis by examination of structure of television property, state presence in the television sector, content model that this new television proposes and finally the new social role played by state-television and state policy on the television market.

## **BETWEEN STATE OWNERSHIP AND PRIVATE OWNERSHIP**

In this part we will shortly remind the main principles of formation for the main actors at the Russian TV market and influence of the state onto this process. Monopoly of the state in the TV broadcasting sphere was broken in 1993 after establishing of the first private TV Company NTV. However, the mechanism of launching NTV did not follow the market logics: broadcasting license was given by the Kremlin administration according to the decree of president B. Yeltsin. This decree gave NTV a chance to start broadcasting using the frequency of a former state educational channel (Hlebnikov, 2001). NTV was founded by V. Gusinsky, one of the well-known businessmen in Russian Federation.

In 1995 when the Russian advertising market was formed, the 'grey cardinal' of the Kremlin, B. Beresovsky (a businessman who was close to B. Yeltsin's family), lobbied the privatisation of the Channel One. As a result, Russian 'public' TV, ORT, was established. The notion 'public' in this title has been purely decorative, because 51% of shares belonged to state enterprises and 49% were distributed between a number of private companies. One of the biggest shareholders was a bank owned by B. Beresovsky (Hoffman, 2002; Richter, 1999).

The second private TV channel, Ren-TV, was launched in the similar way. Its founder Irena Lisnevskaya got president B. Yeltsin's approval to start the new TV channel. Political and economic context of the epoch was plain. Russian government at that time was in need of finance; obtaining financial support was possible only with the help of 'authorized' banks. The above mentioned banks (about 10) together served the accounts of all the state organizations. All these banks were run by private persons.

The year 1995 introduced a change. Bank owners received huge parts of state property in exchange for financial support of the state (so-called second stage of Russian privatisation) (Gaydar, 1998; Nureev, 2003). One of the most important events of the time was support of B. Yeltsin and his policy at the elections 1996. B. Yeltsin would never have won the elections for the second time without such support. Thus, the biggest Russian financial industrial groups were formed. They got control of the most effective state enterprises; the most of the Russian media companies were affiliated with them. At that period the so-called oligarchs did not consider media as a source of income because the advertising market was weak. Accordingly, the media income was not comparable with the income from their main branches of businesses.

One of the evidences of this function was the so-called oligarchies' wars during the end of the 1990s. At that time the Channel One, which was controlled by B. Be-

resovsky, was confronting NTV channel, belonging to V. Gusinsky. The two oligarchs were supporting opposite political forces and used their media for support of respective election campaigns. B. Beresovsky was trying to lead to empower the Edinstvo party, affiliated with prime minister V. Putin, while V. Gusinsky was supporting the left forces as led by former prime minister E. Primakov and Moscow mayor Y. Luzhkov.

The attitude of power to the media property (as well as to any property) was special. The state considered media property as a privilege. Such approach is very typical for estate based society (Burtin, 1995). In other words, the privilege to own a TV channel was granted by the state. Only one channel remained independent of the state or oligarch capital: Ren-TV. It belonged to I. Lisnevskaya. However, in the end of the 1990s, due to financial problems, Lisnevskaya was forced to transfer a part of shares to the possession of the state energetic company RAO ES.

In 1998 Russia was hit by the financial crisis. The crisis led to the decay of advertising market. For TV channels that was the reason to search for finance in the form of credits. Credits were obtained from state banks and companies in the form of gifts and privileges rather than credits in traditional understanding: NTV got the money from the state monopoly Gasprom, ORT – from state bank Vnesheconombank.

When V. Putin took power on the verge of 2000s, Russian governmental policy in media sphere and in business in whole rapidly changed. The state began to redeem the media power once given to oligarchs back in its own hands. All the companies not acting loyally towards the current power were abolished or were imposed to change owners for more obedient ones. The same process happened in the society: the state was starting the restriction of civil liberties. Both processes were linked together as civil liberties were given by the power as well as TV estate, but never became the result of people's struggle. This phenomenon was described by Russian sociologist Y. Levada (Levada, 2005). According to his research data, people were granted liberties as gifts or presents. In the public mentality these liberties were depolarized. When the liberties were slightly restricted by the state, people became passive.

Estate sphere followed the same way. The property, which was also acquired as a gift, rather than according to market mechanisms, was required back while the society remained passive. So, in the beginning of the 2000s the state started the replacement of media property especially in the sphere of television. Such replacement was realized by economical methods. In case of NTV channel the scheme of so-called 'repayment' was used: the creditor (Gasprom) required the debt back and finally became the main shareholder of company. This debt claim showed plain 'political selection' as the Channel One had similar debts but was exempted from similar sanctions.

The state forced B. Beresovsky (already having fallen into disgrace) to sell his shares (49%), but official information about the new owner still was not publicized.

Non-official information attributes them to R. Abramovich (Russian businessman, close to power and owner of Chelsea club) (Kachkaeva, Kiriya & Libergal, 2006). Thus, in the middle of 2000 the principally new structure of TV property was formed. The key owners became the state (directly) or state companies or at least oligarchs personally bound with political elites.

Channel One belongs to the state (51%) and non-officially to R. Abramovich (49%). Channel Rossia, channel Kultura, information Channel Vesti-24 belong to state directly. Channels NTV and TNT belong to the state corporation Gasprom, and finally National Media Group (NMG) is the owner of Channels Ren-TV and Channel 5 now. Formally, the NMG belongs to Bank Rossia and insurance company Sogas, but the main shareholders of above mentioned companies are brothers Kovalchucks, close to Putin (*ibid.*).

Observing the affiliation of Russian TV channels with power, we should note that the affiliation is not clearly expressed in the cases of media group STS-Media (channels STS, Domashniy, DTV) and media group Prof-Media (channels 2×2, TV3 and MTV). The financial enterprises group Alfa Group is one of the main shareholders and owners of Alfa Group are the part of the Russian political and economical elite. The main owner of Prof-Media is Interross, which belongs to V. Potanin (one of the oligarchs close to power). At the same time, STS-Media and Prof-Media own entertainment TV channels only.

Hereby, tracking the relationships between the state and media owners, we could observe the evolution of state control of media. From direct state ownership or direct financial groups ownership we are passing to the state corporations' ownership and non-direct ownership *via* pool of actors related with state power.

## STATE AS AN AGENT OF MEDIA MARKET

In this part we will consider the role of state as an actor on the market. The Russian state is simultaneously the regulator of the market, the main actor on the market and the biggest owner of infrastructure on the TV market (systems of broadcasting). As we resume all mentioned above, the three types of control could be allocated in the sphere of TV property:

- **Type I:** Direct control of TV companies' ownership by the state (e.g., a company belongs to the Russian Estate Committee);
- **Type II:** Non-direct control *via* a state company (e.g., an owner of TV company might be a state corporation);
- **Type III:** Non-direct control based on informal affiliations of TV company owner with power (this type emerged with the case of Yukos oil company and arrest of its head, oligarch M. Hodorkovsky) (see Tab. 1).

It appears that the majority of the TV channels could be correlated with the Type III, but according to the share of audience data the biggest part considered to be the Type I. It means that the biggest part of the advertising flow goes through the state

Table 1. Distribution of property in the Russian TV market

Channel	Owner	Type of control	Affiliation	Average daily share <sup>1</sup>
Channel 1	State (51%), private owners (49%)	Mixed I, III	Direct state ownership; non-official affiliation with Abramovich	18.3
Rossia	State media holding VGTRK	I	Direct state control	18.5
Culture	State media holding VGTRK	I	Direct state control	1.8
Vesti-24	State media holding VGTRK	I	Direct state control	0.8
Sport	State media holding VGTRK	I	Direct state control	2.2
NTV	Gasprom Media Group	II	State monopoly Gasprom	13.3
TNT	Gasprom Media Group	II	State monopoly Gasprom	6.9
Ren-TV	National Media Group	III	Bank Rossia, insurance company Sogas, Severstal group, Surgutneftegas	4.6
Channel 5	National Media Group	III	Bank Rossia, insurance company Sogas	2
STS	STS Media Group	III	Alfa group, MTG (Sweden)	9.2
Domashniy	STS Media Group	III	Alfa group, MTG (Sweden)	2
DTV	STS Media Group	III	Alfa group, MTG (Sweden)	1.9
MTV	Prof-Media	III	Interross financial industry group	1
2x2	Prof-Media	III	Interross financial industry group	0.5
TV3	Prof-Media	III	Interross financial industry group	2.7
TV Center	Moscow government	I	Moscow government	3.4

Source: Authors.

and the state is the main and the largest actor on the TV market. The paradox of the situation is that the Russian state TV channels are getting the biggest part of their income from advertisement, while the advertising incomes of public TV channels in the European countries are strongly restricted (see Fig. 1).

During the last decade the role of the state media became stronger: the new TV channels were launched and the state got more influence over the whole media market. In 1999 the new media holding VGTRK (TV channel Rossia, radio stations Mayak and Radio Rossii, TV channel Kultura and 89 regional TV stations according to the number of administrative units of Russian Federation) was established.

<sup>1</sup> Average daily share (%) from 5.00 to 5.00 AM, week 2009.03.16–2009.03.22 (by TNS Gallup Media).

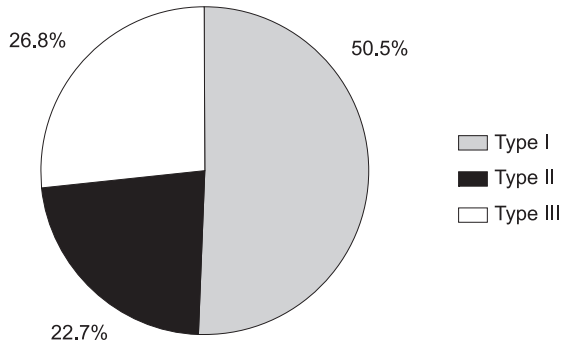


Fig. 1. Summarized shares of audiences in the TV channels with different types of control

Source: Authors.

Centralization and transition of these channels under the VGTRK umbrella coincided with cancellation of regional governors' elections practice and increasing control over activity of regional administration from the side of central power. The process abolishing autonomy of regional state TV stations was completed in 2002 when TV stations lost financial independence and became subordinated to VGTRK. (Before that, regional TV stations were under control of local authorities.) Such structure of VGTRK holding led to shaping the centralized type of broadcasting and oblivion of network structure.

In 1999 VGTRK inherited the whole technical infrastructure of terrestrial broadcasting. Two years later this infrastructure was allocated at the separated state

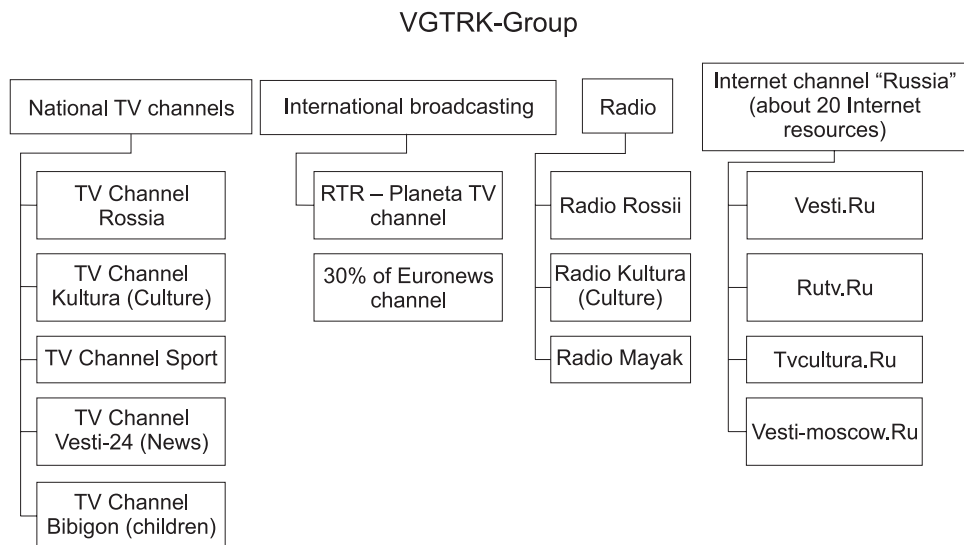


Fig. 2. Organisational structure of VGTRK Group

Source: Authors.

company RTRS (Decree of president: RF №1031, 2001). Since 2003 we observe the appearance of numerous new state TV channels under the VGTRK holding umbrella (see Fig. 2). TV channel Sport was established in such a way at the frequency of former channel TV6, and inherited its broadcasting structure. TV6 belonged to B. Beresovsky and was closed due to political reasons.

Channel Sport is actually a propagandistic channel: the sport is viewed by the state as an element of national ideology and national pride. Free access for the audience makes the channel unique: that was the absolute nonsense for the European broadcasting practice. However, VGTRK management is planning to transform channel Sport to channel Russia-2 in 2010 because of the high expenses on sport translations. The new channel will be targeted for youth audience.

TV channel Vesti-24 was also established by VGTRK as one of the TV channels distributed *via* the cable broadcasting system. Another project of VGTRK was the children's TV channel Bibigon. Since 2004 we could observe establishing of new TV channels, which were not subordinated by VGTRK but were built into the system of the state owned media and executed the propagandistic function. They are: TV channel Russia Today (international English language channel launched in order to improve the image of Russia abroad), TV channel SPAS (religious TV channel), and TV channel Zvezda (propaganda of military and defense power, owned by the Ministry of Defense).

The state being the main actor on the media market remains the biggest owner and 'quasimonopolist' of transmission infrastructure. In the sphere of television this structure is represented by the state enterprises RTRS (Russian Radio and Television Broadcasting Network). It owns 78 transition centers and 10 500 TV transmitters that count for approximately 86% of the infrastructure units. RTRS also owns 8251 satellite transmitting stations. The satellite transmitting infrastructure is owned by another state enterprise called Kosmichaskaya Svyaz' (Space Communications).

The system of technical translation and retranslation of broadcasting signal was inherited from the Soviet Union. Constructing such a system could be possible only in the totalitarian society with tax payers' money. The current system presupposes centralized broadcasts of homogeneous content at least through the four TV channels. All the channels repeat their broadcasts according to local time-zones. The principle of centralized broadcasting which functioned from the Soviet period is not commercially-effective, especially for the country spread over 11 time zones. Nowadays it is influencing the effectiveness of transmitting management. TV infrastructure that belongs to the state is the object of the state tariff regulation. The absence of market mechanisms in pricing of transition service leads to the lack of financing for all TV transmission in Russia.

The finance assigned to RTRS by the state is not enough for modernizing technical infrastructure. The federal budget covers only 10% of funding at present, which is necessary for maintaining transmitting network in satisfactory conditions. In general 1.38 billion USD is needed for modernization of Russian TV transmit-

ting network (Kachkaeva, Kiriya & Libergal, *op. cit.*, p. 77). The transmitting structure is ageing and needs to be renovated. At least 60% of all the transmitters in Russia have used more than 80% of their expectancy potential by now (*Materialy Kollegii Federal'nogo agentstva po pečati i massovym kommunikacijam* (FAPMK), 2005).

The state TV landscape is expecting the crucial changes which are planned until 2015. Although the state committee does not make the decision about distributing channels in multiplexes, it is already clear that the first multiplex will belong to the state TV channels. Thus, these state TV channels which are available today in the fee paid packages will become free. On the one hand, it could be a real chance for Russian TV broadcasting to become more diverse and social-oriented, but on the other hand, the above-mentioned social function will be blocked if these channels will be practicing any advertisement. Moreover, it will lead to the non-presidential domination of the state and to the dysfunction of balance between private and public interests.

## **CONTENT MODEL**

Differences between financing models of state and non-state TV are not significant as both follow commercial logics. Finally, the program flows are quite similar. Commercial way of financing (by income from advertising) on one hand, and serious limitations of socio-political and informational broadcasting, on the other hand, were the reasons for predomination of entertainment formats on Russian TV.

TV content on the state and non-state TV channels is homogeneous and entertainment-oriented; it could be confirmed by the fact of 'repurchase' of famous TV showmen, who migrate from non-state to state TV channels and back. A peculiar phenomenon: ideological and political themes are addressed in the recent entertainment formats. Entertainment TV formats are very useful also for the promotion of sport themes and cultivation of 'sport pride.' Channel One's TV shows "Zvezdi na ldu" (*Stars on the Ice*) constructed by the principle of celebrity sports competition started many years ago.

Soap operas and feature films are the main entertainment formats on Russian TV now. At least, 40–50% of all the broadcasting time on each state TV channel in 2004 catered for mostly domestic-produced soaps and films; approximately 15–20% was entertainment: e.g., reality, talk-shows, music, concerts, etc. (Degtereva, 2007). The tendency has remained through the years. Neutral entertainment programs are both profitable and politically safe for the broadcasting media, especially for commercial TV channels. The themes and the production of TV soap are remarkable. Russian soap operas are predominantly produced within the genre of mini-serial (15–20 series). If such a mini-serial turns successful, producers continue with a new cycle. All costs are covered and all the risks emerging with low interest of audience are insured.



Criminal theme portraying workers of law-enforcement bodies on the one side, and businessmen (and bandits simultaneously) on the other side, dominated in the Russian soap operas in 2004. Thereby the social significance and positive affect of the power structures and simultaneously the bright stereotype of the 'dishonest way of making the money' was demonstrated (Davydov & Seliverstova, 2004). Content analysis in 2007 showed the substantial transformation of soap supply. Now the most important soap genre is melodrama (up to 50% of the general soap flow). The detective plot can be present in melodrama, but usually it flows into a parallel plot line accompanying the main story (Davydov & Dutov, 2007). At least 12% of all the soap operas are devoted to crime or crime-related topics. Action takes place in Russia in at least 90% of soap operas (Kachkaeva & Kiriya, 2007).

The ideological function of the state TV implements specific restrictions of news broadcasting. Since the second period of V. Putin's presidency the strong system of news regalement, limitation of covering certain events, blacklisted of 'non-grata' persons were introduced on the state (and even on the non-state) TV channels (Pribylovskij, 2006; Koltsova, 2006). Now, one year after election of V. Putin to prime minister, the above mentioned system is working without any changes. One of the striking confirmations to the fact was utmost mild coverage of economic problems and financial crisis in Russia in the fall of 2008 by information services of the state machine.

Up to 2009 spreading information on the economic crisis in Russia was forbidden for all the TV channels (especially for state TV channels). It was allowed to mention the world's financial and economic crisis – abroad – and echoes and consequences of the crisis in the Russian economy. However, any information about problems in Russia itself was strictly banned (in spite of the devaluation of national currency, bankruptcy of certain Russian banks, and increase of unemployment).

The reflection of social reality in the newscasts also changed since 2004. As content analysis shows, in 2007 Russian TV news more extensively covered social problems, then came political problems (in 2004 the share of politics in the news was over 50%). Now the share of the social topic in the news is about 45% out of total quantity of all the plots. Further on follow economics (17%) and, last, the cultural/ecclesiastical topic (12%) (Kachkaeva & Kiriya, 2007).

Predomination of social-oriented messages is common not just for newscasts, but for weekly analytical programs and even for crime reports. However, it does not depend on the changes in the attitude of TV managers. The power is interested to pay more and more attention to social problems. Particularly, realization of prioritized national projects (which are linked with the social sphere) and involvement of politicians into their execution (D. Medvedev, Russian president, being the prime minister, was supervising the national projects) became the reason for significant and exclusive attention of TV channels to 'social problems.' It further influenced the content of TV news.

## **SOCIAL ROLE OF THE STATE AND ATTITUDES OF AUDIENCE**

In this section we will examine social consequences and social prerequisites for supervising role of the state in the television sphere. Firstly, we have to stress that the modernizing role of the state within social life is rather typical for Russian authorities. It clearly appeared in different periods of the Russian history. According to research of the Russian economic mentality, not one reform in Russia (starting from Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great) has ever been a result of natural institutional development. On the contrary, every reform would be imposed by the state, bearing a violent character towards the people. The state at the same time assumed its major role in modernizing the society (Balabanova, 2001).

We will try to argue that the transformation of social attitudes and social representations of the state's civilized (enlightening) activity is a direct outcome of this civilized (enlightening) role. It further transforms society's views on its own role in this system. Present passivity of the masses facing this state predominance becomes common response. Very marginal and not so popular social groups have been showing their political and social activity (e.g., through participation in restricted political clubs) but the people as a majority have never been involved in social debates (even when this debate would be allowed).

This attitude of people and the particular social structure could hardly lead to the public sphere construction in Russia. The public sphere in its classic Habermas' understanding never existed in Russia. In the 19th century (when English public sphere flourished, according to Habermas) 90% of Russian population (dominated by serfs) had neither political rights nor special needs in information. In addition, 62% of the population in 1914 was illiterate (Mironov, 2000). Accordingly, Russian public sphere in the 19th century has been very narrow. Russian intellectuals discussed actual political problems and possible paths of social development in the printed media, but these discussions have been understood and read by a limited range of audience. These paths often became themes for the Russian literature and further on the subject of discussions in the printed media. That is explained by the fact that the Russian writers of the 19th century were at the same time journalists and editors for the press.

In the Soviet period we cannot observe this public sphere as the state has been based (at least within the first part of the 20th century) on physical rather than symbolic violence. In later Soviet times (starting from Khrushchev) we could trace two parallel public spheres emerging. This concept of the two parallel public spheres was first brought in by Mattelart. He distinguished official public sphere from non-official or parallel public sphere. The first one is the monopoly of state propaganda. The society is excluded from this field. The second one is the area where certain anti-Soviet groups of the nation construct their own press, their own mechanisms of self-expression, their parallel power and contribute to transformation of 'official public sphere' into 'ritual public sphere' where ideology is not really shared but

becomes a simple habitude. Mattelart considers ‘*samizdat*’ (auto-publications), international radio broadcasting, and illegal video-traffic from abroad, etc. as crucial elements of this parallel sphere’s constitution (Mattelart, 1995).

In the Soviet period the minority of people living in the parallel public sphere shaped from the so-called ‘dissidents’ and those sympathizing with them. As opposed to a Central European dissident who would be supported by the majority of socially active population, in USSR this stratum has not been really powerful. That is why perestroika has not become a real revolution provoked by social action but a simple reform imposed by the state. The so-called liberalization of TV and the press (‘*glasnost*’) has consequently been a state-promoted policy, changed considerably the television and media landscape in Russia and imported a new westernized content (Paasilinna, 1995). But it has never considerably changed the social landscape and the social attitude towards television.

Sociologists distinguish two different attitudes towards television and social life: locus of exterior control and locus of self-control. Locus of exterior control characterizes people who are not adapted to new social conditions. These people rely on the external conditions and perceive television as the social institution that should explain social life to them as it is and take care of them. Locus of interior control is typical for people who rely on themselves in solving their problems. For these people television plays entertaining and pragmatic role of informing (Klimov, 2007).

The majority of population in Russia keeps the latter passive role, expecting television to resolve their moral problems. In our survey “Everyday television critics” we observed that the majority of people expect television to take care of their moral health. Thus television is seen as a state institute. That is why the unique resolution for violence problem on television has become the closure of all violent projects and tough censorship (Kachkaeva & Kiriya, *op. cit.*).

*Grosso modo* we can see the same existence of two types of media audiences: wide audience not involved into civil life and passively absorbing the propaganda (the same passive majority of the 19th century and of the Soviet period) and narrow socially active audience strata, discussing the political life, making own decisions according to the range of obtained information. These ‘majority’ (more than 90% of TV viewers) and ‘minority’ (less than 10% of TV viewers) can be seen in diachronic.

The majority is manipulated by the state-owned media because it wants to be manipulated, it wants to assume political concepts, stereotypes, pre-filtered and sifted opinions (cf. with fast-food) as it is much easier to think within the ready-made concepts. At the same time the state allows the minority to keep their own media and their parallel ‘public sphere’ but on a unique condition not to invade into the mass political field. We assist to re-creation of this second non-official parallel public sphere.

Russia has two societies and consequently two television audiences. For the first one the state demonstrates its own mass power, dominates in content and news as

it plays an active role in modernization. For the second one – the state builds information ghettos and proposes entertainment. In these ghettos opposition mass-media could represent alternative opinions, alternative views, and alternative agenda of social life. But these opposition media are *de facto* also controlled by the state. The opposition TV channel Ren-TV is controlled by Y. Kovaltchuk, the friend of prime minister V. Putin. The opposition radio station Echo Moskvy belongs to state monopoly Gasprom. The opposition newspaper “Novaya Gazeta” is under control of A. Lebedev, Russian oligarch and deputy of Duma. These information ghettos do not play an active role into widespread debates. Their unique role is to focus and marginalize opposition debates into really marginal, as led by the social groups insignificant in political life. These two audiences have two different views on society, they are encountered with completely different news agenda, and information intersections between them are very limited.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Russian state-owned television is not a public service broadcaster. The population does not play any role in financing this television or governing it. Consequently the content strategy of the state television is the ‘push strategy’, consisting of imposing certain symbols, representations and stereotypes to mass audience. But the ‘push strategy’ is not just a consequence of totalitarian tradition (as some specialists would like to argue) but a model well corresponding to the core of Russian society and its institutions.

The main peculiarity of state TV channels on the one hand is the attempt to follow the commercial logic, and to maintain a simulacrum of public service broadcasting policy on the other one. Advertising became the main revenue of the state-owned channels. The two channels directly owned by the state (Channel One and Rossia) accumulate up to 50% of television advertising market revenues. This factor strongly influenced the content of state-owned channels: they are directly oriented at entertainment, exactly in the same manner as the commercial private-owned channels.

On the other hand, the Russian government is opening new niche television channels broadcasting *via* cable networks predominantly in big cities. These channels are socially oriented and not financed by advertising. Since 2003 the state opened about 5 TV channels with mainly propagandistic aims: channel “Vesti-24” (news), channel “Sport” (promoting sports), channel “Zvezda” (promoting Russian army forces), “Russia Today” (English-speaking, promoting the image of Russia abroad) and “Bibigon” (for children). Probably some regrouping of these state-owned niche channels will be possible after implementation of terrestrial digital broadcasting in 2015 will considerably change the landscape of state television.

The type of ownership does not play a crucial role in controlling news content of television: television news are hardly restricted and information policy is di-

rectly managed by the state administration (Kremlin administration and White House administration) *via* non-formal mechanism of control (from direct state ownership to state-companies ownership and to symbolical pressure on television private owners who have been replaced by friends of state leaders or loyal ‘oligarchs’). The predomination of commercial model of financing the state television and constant intrusion of the state into news content formed a unique popular content model – entertainment content. This model is used equally by state-owned generalist channels and private-owned generalist or entertainment channels. The state plays a triple role for television: it owns its infrastructure, it owns directly some television channels and it is a regulatory authority. At the same time the state as we showed it has a crucial mechanism of non-direct control of media ownership.

The paternalistic role of the state for television market (and production of content for state-owned channels) is explained by the historic tradition of modernizing and reforming function traditionally played by the state. This tradition always privileged two public spheres: official and non-official, the mass public sphere and the marginal one. The first one has never been a veritable public sphere, represented the most passive audience and followed the government’s decisions. The second one has been very unsociable, isolated from the people and has never been really supported by mass population.

The first public sphere corresponds to passive attitude of audience towards television. It expects television to solve all their problems, take care of them and prepare explanations for all aspects of social life. For this audience television is perceived as a state institute. Moreover, for this audience the state proposes a wide variety of channels, first and foremost, generalist channels. The second public sphere is very limited and is very pragmatic towards television and media in general. These people want to analyze the obtained information and are not satisfied by ready-made opinions. For this limited public sphere the state allows some ‘opposition media’ to exist and creates ‘information ghettos’ with a unique condition – not to involve this public sphere’s opinions into the official and mass public sphere. As we can see, the Russian state policy towards television and Russian state television in whole is based on a social contract between the state and the second parallel public sphere including its opinion leaders.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The paper has benefited from comments by Nils Enlund, Department of Media Technology and Graphic Arts/KTH (Stockholm, Sweden); Greg Goldenzwaig, Journalism Faculty/MSU (Moscow, Russia) // JMK/SU (Stockholm, Sweden).

Partial financial support of research: Swedish Institute <http://www.si.se>; in framework of international project “Media Management in Modern Conditions,” 2008–2010, KTH (Stockholm, Sweden) – HSE (Moscow, Russia).

## REFERENCES

- Balabanova, E. (2001). Osobennosti rossijskoj jekonomicheskoy mental'nosti [*The specifics of Russian economical mentality*]. *Mir Rossii* [World of Russia], No. 3.
- Burtin, Ju. (1995). Demokratija v Rossii: samokritika i perspektivy [*Democracy in Russia: self-criticism and perspectives*]. *Obwestvennye nauki i sovremennost'* [Social sciences and contemporaneity], No. 2, pp. 40–51.
- Davydov, S., Dutov, A. (2007). *Kontent-analiz televizionnogo jefira, otchet o sociologicheskom issledovanii* [Content-analysis of TV broadcasting: sociological research report]. Moskva: Fond "Obrazovannye media."
- Davydov, S., Seliverstova, N. (2004). *Opyt kachestvennogo kontent-analiza teleserialov* [Experience of quality content-analysis of TV serials]. Analytical report. Moskva: InterNews.
- Decree of president: RF No. 1031 (2001). O sozdanii federal'nogo gosudarstvennogo unitarnogo predpriyatija [*For establishment of state unitary enterprise*]. *Rossijskaja televizionnaja i radiovewatel'naja set* [Russian TV and Radio transmitting network]. August, 13, 2001.
- Degtereva, E. (2007). Changing programming strategies of state, public and commercial TV channels: The cases of Russia and Sweden. In: E. Vartanova (ed.). *Media and Changes*. M.: Media-Mir.
- Gaydar, E. (ed.). (1998). *Očerki jekonomicheskoy politiki postkommunisticheskoy Rossii (1991–1997)* [Essays of economical policy of post-Communist Russia (1991–1997)]. Moskva: Institut jekonomiki perehodnogo perioda.
- Hlebnikov, P. (2001). *Krestnyj otec Kremlja Boris Berezovskij* [Kremlin's father-in-Got – Boris Beresovsky]. M.: Detective-press.
- Hoffman, D. (2002). *The Oligarchs: Wealth and Power in the New Russia*. Public Affairs, U.S.
- Kachkaeva, A., Kiriya, I. (eds.). (2007). *Rossiyskoye TV mezhdj sprosom i predlozheniem* [Russian TV: between demand and offer], in 2 books. M.: Elitcomstar.
- Kachkaeva, A., Kiriya, I., Libergal, G. (2006). *Television in the Russian Federation: Organisational Structure, Programme Production and Audience*. Report for the European Audiovisual Observatory. Moscow: InterNews.
- Klimov, I. (2007). Social'nye vyzovy 'privatizirovannogo' teledidenija [*Social choices of privatised TV*]. In: Kachkaeva, A., Kiriya, I. (eds.). *Rossijskoe teledenie: mezhdj sprosom i predlozheniem* [Russian TV: between demand and offer], in 2 books. Moskva: Jelitkomstar.
- Koltsova, O. (2006). *News Media and Power in Russia*. London: Routledge.
- Levada, Y. (2005). Dvadcat' let spustja: perestrojka v obwestvennom mnenii i v obwestvennoj zhizni. Nejubilejnye razmyshlenija [*Twenty years later: perestroyka in public opinion and in social life. Non-anniversary thoughts*]. *Vestnik obwestvennogo mnenija: Dannye. Analiz. Diskussii* [Messenger of public opinion: Data. Analysis. Discussions], No. 2, pp. 8–14.
- Materialy kollegii Federal'nogo agentstva po pečati i massovym kommunikacijam (FAPMK)* [Materials of Board of Federal Agency for Mass Media and Mass Communications – FAPMK]. 5.11.2005.
- Mattelart, T. (1995). *Le cheval de Troie audiovisuel. Le rideau de fer à l'épreuve des radios et télévisions transfrontières* [The horse of audiovisual Troy. The iron curtain and the test of radio and TV without of any frontiers]. Grenoble: PUG.
- Mironov, B. (2000). *Social'naja istorija Rossii perioda imperii* [Social history of Russia in the stage of empire]. St. Petersburg: Dmitrij Bulanin.
- Nureev, R. (2003). *Gosudarstvo: istoricheskie sud'by vlasti-sobstvennosti* [The state: historical destinies of power-property]. Paper presented at the Internet-conference "Poisk jeffektivnyh institutov dlja Rossii XXI veka" [The search of effective institutes for Russia in the 21st century]. Retrieved October 27, 2003 from <http://ecsocman.edu.ru/db/msg/129880.html>.

- Paasilinna, R. (1995, May). *Glasnost and Soviet Television; A Study of the Soviet Mass Media and Its Role in Society from 1985–1991*. Finnish Broadcasting Company, Research report.
- Pribylovskij, V. (2006). *Vlast' i SMI v pravlenie Putina* [Mass media in the times of Putin's presidency]. In: A. Verhovskij (ed.). *Demokratija vertikali* [Democracy of vertical]. Moskva: "Centr Sova."
- Richter, A. (ed.). (1999). *Rossijskie sredstva massovoj informacii, vlast' i kapital: k voprosu o koncentracii i prozrachnosti SMI v Rossii* [Russian mass-media, power and capital: in discussion of concentration and transparency of mass-media in Russia]. Moskva: Centre "Pravo SMI."

