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Information-communication policy of the state in crisis conditions. Current state, problems, prospects

Інформаційно-комунікаційна політика держави в кризових умовах. Сучасний стан, проблеми, перспективи

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Abstract

Effective democracy requires effective mechanisms for society to influence public authorities. Interaction between government and citizens, active public participation in decision-making is the key to sustainable development, prosperity, and stability of state institutions, social programs, and economic growth. Political leadership and effective communication of the action plan to the public promote public order and security. In this paper, we explore the current state of information policy in a crisis. We used general scientific and special methods such as historical and philosophical, systemic, comparative. In the first part, we consider philosophical approaches to the concept of communication and the role of the state in shaping information policy. The second and third parts are devoted to specific examples of such policies within two countries: Ukraine and Azerbaijan. In conclusion, we argue that there are currently complex challenges for the information policy of both countries. This is especially true of health problems caused by the coronavirus pandemic and armed conflict. Differences in the prospects of regulating the information field of the two countries are caused by economic factors and political conditions. The ways of information society development on the example of each of the countries are considered.

Keywords: information and communication

Анотація

Для ефективної демократії обов'язкова наявність дієвих механізмів впливу суспільства на органи державної влади. Взаємодія між владою та громадянами, активна участь громадськості в прийнятті рішень є запорукою сталого розвитку, добробуту та стабільності державних інституцій, соціальних програм та економічного зростання. Політичне лідерство та ефективне доведення плану дій до публіки сприяє громадському порядку та безпеці. У цій роботі ми досліджуємо актуальний стан інформаційної політики в кризових умовах. Ми використали загальний науковий та спеціальні методи такі як історико-філософський, системний, компаративний. У першій частині ми розглядаємо філософські підходи до поняття комунікації та ролі держави у формуванні інформаційної політики. Друга та третя частини присвячені конкретним прикладам такої політики в рамках двох країн: України та Азербайджану. Як висновок, ми стверджуємо, що нині існують комплексні виклики для інформаційної політики обох держав. У першу чергу, це стосується проблем охорони здоров'я, викликаних пандемією коронавірусу та збройними конфліктами. Відмінності в перспективах регулювання інформаційного поля двох країн викликані економічними факторами та політичною

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policy, crisis conditions, communication, information field, information society.

Introduction

In modern conditions, the rapid dissemination of information draws close attention of society and the scientific community to the impact of communication technologies on the social and political life of different countries (Shah, 2016). This is especially true for democracies and states moving in this direction, where the political process is developing dynamically, and effective communication between government and society is critical (McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 2013; Voronyansky, 2014).

The political process of democracies involves various institutions of power, as well as civil society (Bowler & Donovan, 2002; Komzyuk & Panchuk, 2003). One of the main characteristics of the political process is the power struggle, and here it is equally important to communicate competently with their constituents and like-minded people, not to allow in their rhetoric things that could negatively affect reputation, etc. (van Dijk, 2008; Morska, 2019). But this is especially true of political leaders. Concerning state institutions, everything is somewhat more complicated, as they already have power in their hands and are responsible for the welfare and lives of citizens, the effective implementation of their functions under the law (Nyzhnyk, 2007). In times of crisis, all eyes are on them, because the algorithm of citizens' actions, in particular, in conditions of danger, depends on how they will communicate. Transparency and accessibility of information are just some of the signs of effective public information policy (Obushna, 2015; Malinina, 2021). Subject to detailed development, it has the appropriate principles, priorities, strategy, and mechanisms for its implementation, which are enshrined in the relevant documents, which can be read by any citizen (Kushnir, 2015).

In this article, we focus on the theoretical aspects of information and communication policy of states, in particular, Ukraine and Azerbaijan, in crisis conditions, which include economic difficulties, pandemic coronavirus, armed conflicts, etc., to establish the main features and characteristics of the subject, modern the state of

кон'юнктурою. Розглянуто шляхи розвитку інформаційного суспільства на прикладі кожної з країн.

Ключові слова: інформаційно-комунікаційна політика, кризові умови, комунікація, інформаційне поле, інформаційне суспільство.

state information and communication policy, its problems, and prospects for development.

Theoretical Framework or Literature Review

Political communication, the information society, the interaction of government and citizens through the media are in the lens of research in various disciplines of humanities such as political science, sociology, linguistics, social philosophy. There are various theoretical approaches to understanding the role of public policy in regulating the information environment.

For example, Bowler & Donovan (2002) explored the role of civic participation in the development of democracy. The authors conclude that political activism and pluralism of opinion, as well as feedback in the interaction of government and society, will continue to be key factors for the stability of democratic governance.

According to Habermas (2006), indirect political communication in the public sphere can facilitate the process of legitimation debate in complex societies only if the self-regulating media system gains independence from its social environment and if an anonymous audience provides feedback between informed elite discourse and sensitive civic society.

Tokarska (2008), in her dissertation, points out that communication is the basis of legal interaction, as law relates to social relations, which are expressed in the interaction between people. At the same time, communication is subject to regulation and moderated in every possible way by the legislature. According to the study, future directions of research should relate to the development of an integrated approach within the postclassical theory of legal communication, which involves a synthesis of the best achievements of different approaches to the regulatory function of communicative law. Tairov (2010), in his dissertation, points out that the introduction of effective communication

practices reduces the need for the media as intermediaries between government and citizens. The author concludes that the latest communicative policy of the state is based on the principles of the post-industrial philosophy of public administration, so communication is the basis of public administration and the main lever of formation and influence on democratization. Niyazov (2013, 2016, 2017) pays great attention to the prospects of forming an information society in Azerbaijan. In his work, the author demonstrates the achievements and challenges facing the country's leadership in the globalization process, as well as the growing demand of the population for access to information.

Voronkova & Oleksenko (2020) believe that public administration is an effective public regulator only when it is opposed by public control. The authors see this as the main safeguard against the distortion of the rule of law.

Methodology

We used the general scientific method and special ones such as systemic, historical-philosophical, and comparative.

With the help of the system method, it was possible to demonstrate the interaction of various features of the concept of communication, as well as to consider the information policy of the state as a system of measures aimed at implementing freedom of information, press, regulation of public relations in this area. Accordingly, information and communication policy consists not only of legislative regulation but also implies technologies that will implement the relevant legislative priorities. For example, information technology infrastructure plays a meaningful role in the process of informatization of society, and the implementation of government programs to improve digital or media literacy is complicated without access to specific information technologies. Thus, considering all the factors together using the system method, it was found that the state information and communication policy is influenced by many factors such as economic situation, access of citizens to IT-infrastructure, political situation, the availability of developed media, professional journalism, demand for quality, scientifically verified information, information culture of the population, etc., which is a system of interconnected elements, which due to mutual influence are formed as an information and communication policy of the state.

Using the historical and philosophical method, we traced the development of ideas about the concept of communication and its role in public administration. Starting with the ideas of ancient Greek thinkers about the goals and objectives of the state, we considered the ideas of other philosophers in the field of social philosophy, philosophical anthropology, and philosophy of language.

Using a comparative method, it was possible to consider the characteristics of communication policy in Azerbaijan and Ukraine. The main obstacles to the development of the information society were identified, changes in the political climate of each country under the influence of the crisis were identified and ways to respond to them were identified. Based on the comparative method, as well as with the help of synthesis techniques, recommendations are given and prospects for improving the information and communication sector are outlined.

Results

Philosophical basis of communication theory

Reflections on the role of public policy are rooted in antiquity. Depictions of the symbiosis of the state and the citizen can be found in the works of ancient Greek thinkers such as Plato (2021) and Aristotle (2021). Among the original ideas, they indicate not only what are the responsibilities of the citizen in society, but also the functions of the state, the purpose of its existence. In his reflections on the state in the work "Republic", Plato (2021) points out that in the ideal state, which he imagined, virtues prevail, the most important of which is justice. This view corresponds to what is now interpreted as objective idealism, because the essence of things for Plato exists as an ideal category, in itself. In this sense, citizens, to be exemplary, should strive to be embodied in the ideal, subordinating their activities to moral principles. It should be remarked that there are methodological difficulties in reading Plato's works due to the peculiarities of the form and style of writing dialogues (Kraut, 2014). Most likely, the primary purpose of Socrates' mayevtics, which is depicted in them, serves as teaching only at a basic level. If the reader wants to better understand the text or set himself a difficult task – to understand what the author meant, then the dialogues become a work on themselves, as each statement and answer must be integrated into their own experience of thinking about the issues raised. As for those who were to rule the ideal

state, this privilege should be enjoyed by noblemen who are philosophers.

Concerning information policy, as we now imagine it, from the works of Plato (2021) it is clear that communication within his ideal state must also be subject to the common good, therefore, the performance of musical works that promote it should be encouraged, and things like poetry since it does not serve the common good, there is no place in the state.

From a philosophical point of view, communication is a wide field for interpretation. For example, from a dialectical point of view, communication can equally be considered as a dialogue of the soul with the soul of another, as an exchange of information, as an intellectual duel, as being in the information sphere, etc. After the so-called "Linguistic turn" in philosophy, which is associated with the works of Austrian-British philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein (2017), communication was placed in a strong framework of analytical approach, which, for her research, required a clear definition of concepts to be considered, to avoid logical errors. Thus, in the context of analytical philosophy, which has been developing since the first half of the twentieth century, the study of communication has received an almost mathematically rigorous methodology (Nerubasskaya, Sarnavskaya & Palshkov, 2021), the common good, without the attention of the study, focusing on the social nature of communication, the roles of the addressee and the addressee, the content of speech, discourse analysis, etc.

Communication is a key element for receiving and transmitting values, customs, traditions. Beliefs were also formed not only through mystical enlightenment, something that is a purely subjective experience, but also through their explanations and interpretations, which helped to understand and accept the specific worldview of other people. Thus, communication is an exchange of ideas.

However, there is a debate about the role of the individual and the public in communication. For example, can it be said that in a dictatorship the agenda is formed according to the will of one person? Doesn't totalitarian discourse have as its cause the corresponding wishes of citizens, who only in time understand what a terrible mistake they made in bringing despotic power to power? Such questions involve a discussion of the role of the individual in history or the role of society in

shaping the individual, which is always interrelated issue.

Separation, the estrangement of the individual from society, in turn, is a separate subject of philosophical studies. For example, the conditionality of such a distinction is not obvious in Buddhism, because, according to the concept of anatman and shunyata, ie, the absence of the soul as something substantial (anatman, literally an – absence, atman – soul) and emptiness dharma (shunyata – emptiness), discourse individual, however, as well as collective, becomes impractical (Xu, 2020). Another typical example of the distinction between the individual and the social is Noam Chomsky's discussion with Michel Foucault, who, while belonging to the leftist spectrum of political ideas, differ in their understanding of the role of the individual in history. to the power of the personal in their arguments, for example, that associations (syndicates) of free people are possible only based on voluntary choice and a personal desire for peaceful and creative, fruitful coexistence (Chomsky & Foucault, 2015).

The approach to communication as a cultural heritage that is passed down from generation to generation exists in the biological sciences. According to this approach, man as a being who has a culture, or rather exists in a cultural environment, in addition to the biological determinants of their behavior, learns to communicate and pass this knowledge on. The roots of this idea can be found in the writings of Aristotle, who argued that man is a political being, therefore, at a certain stage of community formation is a predictable result of the realization of man's nature. This idea is a source of inspiration for the study of communication in the framework of philosophical anthropology and social philosophy (Canfield, 1993). For example, Gehlen (1952) noted that, as a result of reflection on one's own thoughts, a person began to use language to convey his thoughts to others. In the works of Scheler (2010, 2012), communication is inherent in the individual as a social being that exists within the social framework, so its existence is possible through social acts, which are based on interaction with other actors in society. These studies provide knowledge about how a person transforms his or her own subjective experience into a form of information transmission that is language. The culture here is a major factor for the transmission of such knowledge to future generations. From this point of view, the social is more important than the personal, because only participation in active social life and the development of a particular

culture serves to realize the potential of the individual. Thus, communication pursues both the exchange of information and self-expression (realization, representation). From an individual point of view, it can be reduced to the benefits of communication. Pleasure in this sense is also a benefit. From this point of view, effective communication means being useful to each other. The obvious psychological consequence of this is that we do not seek communication that is of no use or unpleasant. This is the rational position of Benedict Spinoza, who argued that human happiness is what pleases him. He used pleasure as an indicator of happiness and other ethical issues, as opposed to dissatisfaction, which causes pain, sadness, anger, and hatred. The peculiarity of this approach, which he uses in his work "Ethics", is to reduce definitions to clear formulations and prove statements using a "geometric" method, which implies the existence of axioms, derivation of theorems, and their proof. His "Ethics", in fact, is built with the help of such semantic oppositions. It should be noted that satisfaction is not limited to the individual, because the abuse of their interests in violation of the rights and interests of others, according to Spinoza, is irrational, and, therefore, ethically unacceptable.

Communication as a manifestation of the love of neighbor and being in the world can be found in the works of Thomas Aquinas (2017). Such communication is based on freedom of choice and religion (1a2ae, 105.2 and ad 3). Thus, human interaction should promote unity in the love of God as the ultimate public good, which is at the same time the foundation of all communication.

In the works of the American logician Charles Sanders Peirce, the idea of prime communicative mode appears, the exit to which is a condition for effective communication that generates understanding (Lu, 2019). The first analogy that arises in this regard, since Peirce was a theorist of the pragmatism of semiotics, is the common understanding of sign systems by communication participants to extract the meaning of these symbols (Webb, 2007). In his ideas about cognition, Peirce pointed out that the thirst for truth is more about overcoming the discomfort that arises from differences of belief and facts. According to this principle, communication is also a way to a common denominator, which is mutual understanding, similar to how knowledge is acquired.

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Ukrainian realities of information and communication policy in crisis conditions

The central problems of information policy in Ukraine are communication between the government and society, counteraction to Russian aggression and misinformation, distrust of citizens in government institutions, the negative international image of the state in some aspects, such as corruption, taxation, bureaucracy, and bureaucracy.

The coronavirus epidemic was a significant test for the state. In 2020, Ukrainians began to listen more to relatives, friends, and regional media (USAID-Internews, 2020). The most considerable consumption of information occurred in the first wave of the epidemic, which took place in Ukraine in March-April 2020. An illustrative case is the return of Ukrainian citizens from China, which turned into a scandal and clashes with residents of the village. New Sanjars, who welcomed their compatriots. At that time, the situation was not limited to panic. The factor of influence was poor communication from the authorities, which failed to take appropriate measures to contain the situation (Panchenko, 2020). Among the positive aspects of the government's response to the pandemic was the provision of information by the Ministry of Health through official social media accounts and the official website on the coronavirus situation, availability of vaccines, guidelines, answers to questions, etc. (Krynychko & Motaylo, 2021). The Action application has also helped reduce efforts to obtain information and administrative services related to the coronavirus situation.

The balance of trust in higher authorities such as the President, government, parliament, in general in 2020 was unfavorable. At the end of the year, 34% of respondents trusted the head of state, and

16% trusted the government (KIIS, 2021). In 2021, 33% trusted President Zelensky, and at the end of the year – 27% of respondents (Razumkov Center, 2021; KIIS, 2022). If trends continue, there is reason to believe that at some point in the future the situation will return to 14% of confidence in the President and 9% - in the government, as it was in 2019 before the change of power in the country (Bikus, 2019). However, it cannot be said that good communication will have a significant impact on government ratings, as it is primarily due to objective factors such as war, pandemic, economic problems, inflation, and, moreover, the diversity of voters' expectations at the time of her election (Nekrecha, 2020).

Information policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Ukraine (2020) considers Azerbaijan as its strategic partner. Both countries cooperate in the field of economy, develop trade relations, exchange knowledge and technology.

According to Niyazov (2016) in his study, the main problem of Azerbaijan's information policy is the formation of an open information society. Increasing the media literacy of the population plays an essential role in this. According to the researcher, the information policy of the state should have such characteristics as systemic, integrity, scientificity, unity of quantitative and qualitative features.

The information policy of the state can be understood as a set of measures aimed at ensuring the constitutional right of citizens to receive information and freedom of expression, as well as ensuring freedom of speech, press (media) (Niyazov, 2016). Article 50 of the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan proclaims freedom of information and the prohibition of censorship, provided that public order and morals are not violated (Law No. 1995, 1995). Informatization of society was one of the priorities of the previous President of the Republic – Heydar Aliyev, and his son – the current head of state – Ilham, is developing a legal framework for the information and communication system of Azerbaijan (Rahimov, 2008; Niyazov, 2013).

Currently, the activities of the media in Azerbaijan perform a noteworthy security and communication function, informing the public about the actions, goals, and priorities of the government (Həsənli, 2017). Niyazov (2016) notes that the formation of information policy

depends on the political system of Azerbaijan, and can be divided into such areas as military, economic, social, cultural, sports information policy, which is to reflect a specific aspect of life and communication between government and society within this aspect. Azerbaijan's information policy promotes the protection of state interests, performs a regulatory function in the media space (Aliyeva & Hwang, 2019). For the formation of the information society, the priority of public policy is to ensure public access to communication technologies (Niyazov, 2017). With the expansion of the economic sector, the demand for information content is growing, as a result of which the private sector of the economy is actively involved in the creation and exchange of information that is in demand, in particular, educational and entertainment. The Azerbaijani media is a full participant in the governance process, participating in the formation of public opinion (Niyazov, 2016). The executive branch supports the media market.

In their study, Sidorenko & Geybullayeva (2010) pointed out that among the countries of the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan is the leader in Internet coverage. Government websites and online services are being developed, and young people have been able to take advantage of digital opportunities. However, the improvement of information and communication infrastructure remained an important task, in particular, to increase network access, data transfer speed, and the cost of Internet services.

Foreign studies point to problems in building a transparent information society in Azerbaijan (Gahramanova, 2009). According to Pearce & Kendzior (2012), the emergence of social networks has benefited the central government, which has allowed the political opposition in the form of activists to become more visible and accessible to its bodies. In their study, the authors draw attention to the harassment of dissidents on the Internet and obstacles to expressing the opposition's political position in Azerbaijan. However, regarding the participation of citizens in other non-political topics on the Internet, the situation is optimistic, allowing people to represent themselves on the Internet and interact with other people, receive information, blog, start a business, etc. (Pearce, 2014; Pearce, Freelon & Kendzior, 2014).

Following the victory in the campaign to liberate Nagorno-Karabakh, President Ilham Aliyev enjoys the overwhelming support of the people of Azerbaijan (Synowitz, 2020). It is possible that he can use his mandate for democratic

transit, as his popularity will be enough to win the next election against any of the candidates. From this point of view, the interaction between the authorities and the media in Azerbaijan may also get a chance for significant liberalization.

Discussion

In the context of the spread of coronavirus disease, a promising area of communication between the government and society is to inform citizens in advance about the measures that will be used to limit the spread of the virus, so that people can prepare. The sudden cancellation of entry and exit, for example, when passengers have booked tickets, leads to stress and tension in society, which has a negative impact on attitudes towards government and in everyday life. Therefore, warning in advance about restrictive measures in times of crisis is the recommended way to communicate effectively. In this regard, the authorities must have appropriate protocols to be applied in the event of an emergency. To apply an effective personal approach to solving the problems of citizens in crises, there must be communication channels to which they can turn to solve their special problems, such as chatbots in messengers, hotlines, an early warning system for interaction with the authorities. As this is due to the allocation of additional funds for such infrastructure, this entails considering the sources of funding for such individual support programs. In addition, recruiters will need funding to seek professional support. In addition to emergency assistance in crisis situations related to the restrictions caused by the coronavirus epidemic, it is worth paying attention to the support of citizens in other areas. In this sense, the application "Diya" of the Ministry of Digital Transformation of Ukraine is a positive asset, as it creates opportunities for administrative services in digital form, which reduces red tape, corruption risks, saves time and effort of citizens. However, expanding state support requires other social programs, such as mental health, which is threatened by stressful conditions such as the coronavirus epidemic or armed conflict, which in the situation with Ukraine is combined with social and economic challenges such as energy crisis and inflation. We should also take into account the shortcomings of existing e-government procedures (Bychenko, 2022). A serious study should be conducted to increase citizens' trust in government institutions. As the root of this problem has a historical basis, it is a serious and ambitious task that requires several factors to be addressed to reduce the imbalance of trust. Due to critical, pathological distrust of citizens,

measures to counter the epidemic, such as vaccination, remain ineffective, as, in particular, citizens do not trust vaccines purchased at public expense, as well as information campaigns to promote vaccination. The same applies to state communication with the population in other crisis situations because when a person is biased and skeptical of any messages from the authorities, looking for hidden threats and deception, it makes any communication ineffective precisely because of the primary lack of trust in public administration institutions. To begin with, consider the civil society institutions that the population trusts the most. For example, the army, volunteers, the church. We can work on strengthening and disseminating their positive image in general and on institutions of public administration in particular. Demonstrating support for institutions that have the trust of society can have a positive effect on the solidarity of society. However, we emphasize that serious research should be conducted in this direction, as it concerns a complex problem that has historical, social, economic, and psychological dimensions, so it will be difficult to achieve a clear effective solution to the problem of public trust immediately.

In crisis situations, the role of solving problems on the ground is growing, so regional media must have sufficient support to effectively inform citizens. Establishing cooperation and direct communication between central and regional authorities is a key factor in this regard.

Conclusions

We see that the current challenges that affect the government's discourse and policies are the coronavirus pandemic, as well as armed conflicts in some countries. In the case of the coronavirus pandemic, the negative impact on most spheres of life was objective and global, which led to the transfer of communication between the government and society in an emergency format of crisis communication, which involves briefly informing the public about changes in sources of information.

In this regard, communication problems were primarily related to the inability of the authorities to respond to public information requests and to counteract the dissemination of false, unverified information. This is especially true in countries where there is armed conflict. Further work should be done to optimize information and communication policy in these countries, which have faced unprecedented crisis factors on the way to their development.

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