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### **Information Policy of Modern China: Role of Media from the Evidence of Hong Kong Coverage**

This work is devoted to the analysis of the information space of modern China in the context of crisis management policy by the central government in the light of the protest movement in Hong Kong in the summer-winter of 2019. In the course of our work, we analyzed the specific features of the information policy of China and the information space as such, providing the characteristics of the main newspapers that form the information agenda for the domestic audience. We also built the network of information flows of the main print media of the pro-Beijing orientation, the Hong Kong press and foreign media to highlight the main patterns of the features of China's information space in the aspect of regulating protest activity.

*The purpose of our study* is to identify the main features of the Chinese media information policy on the evidence from the protests coverage in Hong Kong in 2019 and assess the role of this policy in informing the audience of Hong Kong and the rest of China. Accordingly, in the course of work, we set ourselves the following *tasks*:

- identify the key actors (media) of China's information policy and their network characteristics / structure;
- analyze how the information about Hong Kong protests is spread in China through the media;
- describe and analyze the network structure of the Chinese media during the research;
- identify the main processes that lead to the organization of such a structure (the logic of building information flows between individual media outlets in China).

As the main research method, I will use SNA analysis to identify the main patterns of media information flows in China. This method is traditionally used to identify the structural features of communication patterns between actors both at the micro level and at the level of organizations, states, etc. According to the results of the study, it will be possible to conclude, firstly, which media outlets create the information agenda that is subsequently transmitted to other media using centrality characteristics. Second, the use of network analysis will allow us to get an idea of the level of media homogeneity in China, since the level of clustering of network objects reflects political divisions in society and the media. Accordingly, the main research question can be formulated as follows: What actors (media) play a leading role in shaping China's information policy in the context of the Hong Kong protests?

Since the period of protests was relatively short in comparison with the information policy of China in certain sectors (education, medicine, and so on), we have decided to analyze the six months' period as a time unit during which open protests in Hong Kong took place. To conduct a network analysis of the information policy of the Chinese media, we collected data from June

12, 2019, that is, directly from the beginning of active protests in Hong Kong, to December 12, 2019; after that, we transformed the data obtained into the adjacency matrix. In general, in the period from 12 June till 12 December 2019 we have collected quotations of 16 Chinese pro-government newspapers, 9 major local Hong Kong newspapers and 18 foreign newspapers and news agencies referred to the Chinese media in the context of Hong Kong events. All calculations in the course of the current research work were carried out using the free software environment for statistical computing *R* [r-project]. The main elements of the network are the vectors of citations from one print media to another, presented in matrix form in the adjacency table. To build the network, we used directed graph to state the relationship between Chinese media more accurately. The node size of each media was adjusted based on the volume of citations of this newspaper by other sources. The focus of our research is the analysis of the four centrality indicators in the constructed network - degree centrality, actor closeness centrality, betweenness centrality and the eigenvector centrality, based on which we will be able to draw a conclusion about who sets the information agenda among these media in the context of the protests in Hong Kong, how individual media are interconnected and, no less important, certain types of actors - Chinese, Hong Kong media and foreign press. The results of the constructed networks for the period from 12 June to 12 December 2019 are presented the *Figure. 1, 2, 3 and 4* respectively.

The scientific novelty of this study is supported by the fact that we managed to obtain empirical results of specific features of China's information space structure (official media) by the network analysis method, since earlier studies have either claimed the absolute control by central government over the information space, without taking into account features of the political autonomy of the information policy of the Hong Kong media, or asserted the full political and informational autonomy of the media in Hong Kong and Taiwan. The results of the study, however, reveal that, with the control of the predominant part of information space by Beijing, that formulates the information agenda in the context of crisis management in Hong Kong, there are a number of pro-democratic Hong Kong newspapers that play a vital role as a link between the international information space and domestic center policy, which is quite isolated from the outside.

In the course of network analysis, it was found that the pro-Beijing media do really form the information agenda in China in the context of protests regulation, being the dominant nodes of the network, as we assumed at the beginning of the work. While there is the presence of a powerful cluster of pro-government mass media, we, however, have not detected a similar, but more isolated cluster of Hong Kong media, due to the diversity of their political attitudes and mutual contradictions. Nevertheless, since we cannot deny the intensity of ties between regional media, despite their diversity, we cannot claim that there is no interaction between Hong Kong newspapers, which partly confirms our initial expectations. Finally, regarding the expected role of the main party newspaper of the CPC *People's Daily* as the main information hub between pro-Beijing media, Hong Kong media and foreign sources, we cannot confirm this hypothesis, since the indicators of closeness and betweenness centralities of pro-democratic and politically neutral

Hong Kong media - primarily the *South China Morning Post* - turned out to be significantly higher, which allows us to speak of its connecting role between clusters in the information space of China in the context of our research.

Thus, the results obtained in the course of this study are the basis for an in-depth analysis of the information policy of modern China. They also reveal the specifics of the formation of the information space in the context of crisis management theory in terms of how China creates the internally controlled environment.

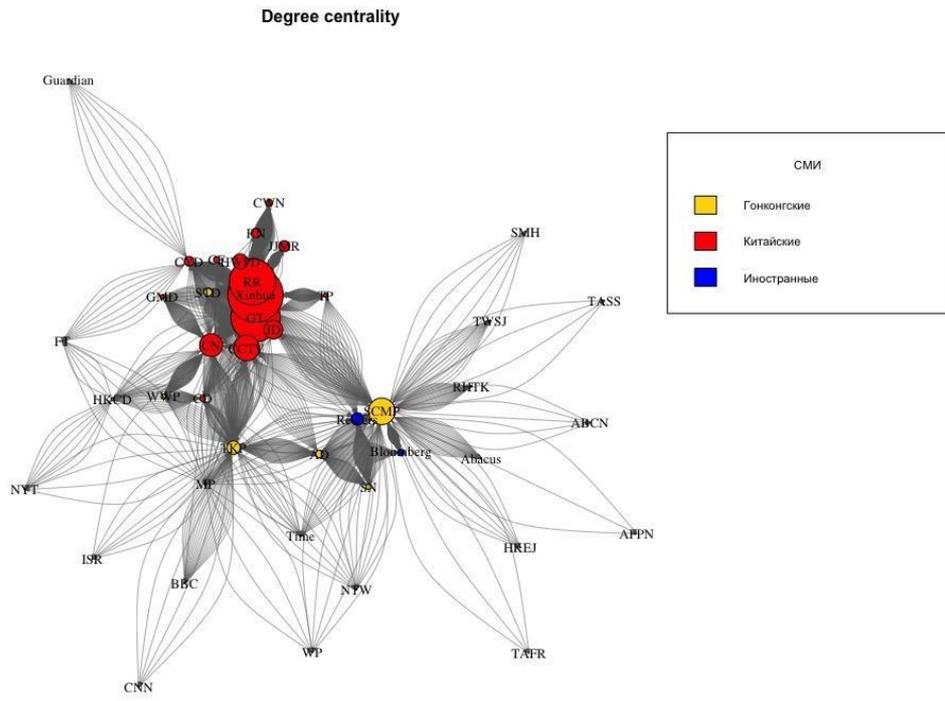


Рис. 1

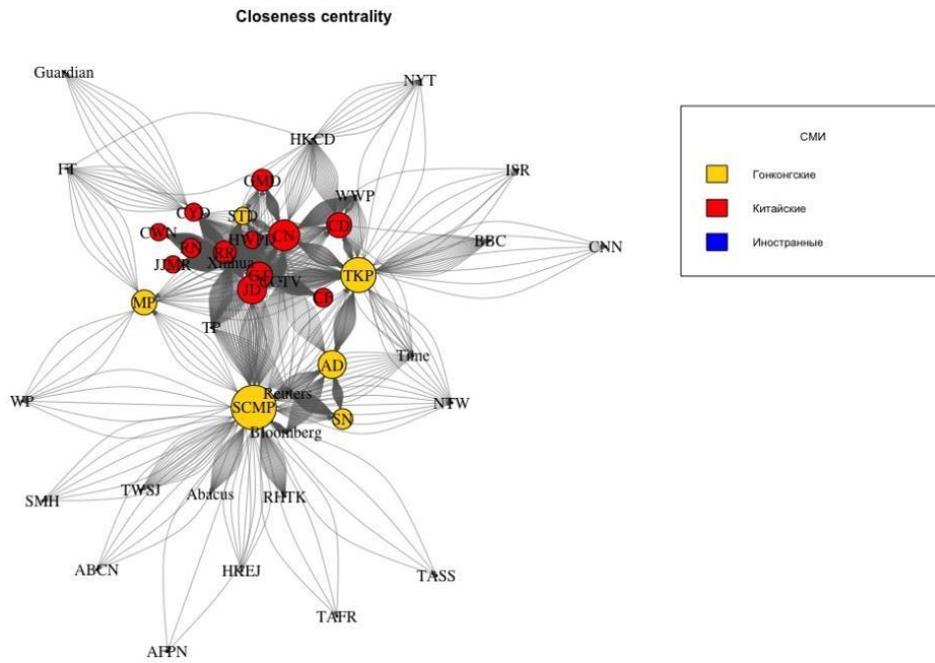


Рис. 2

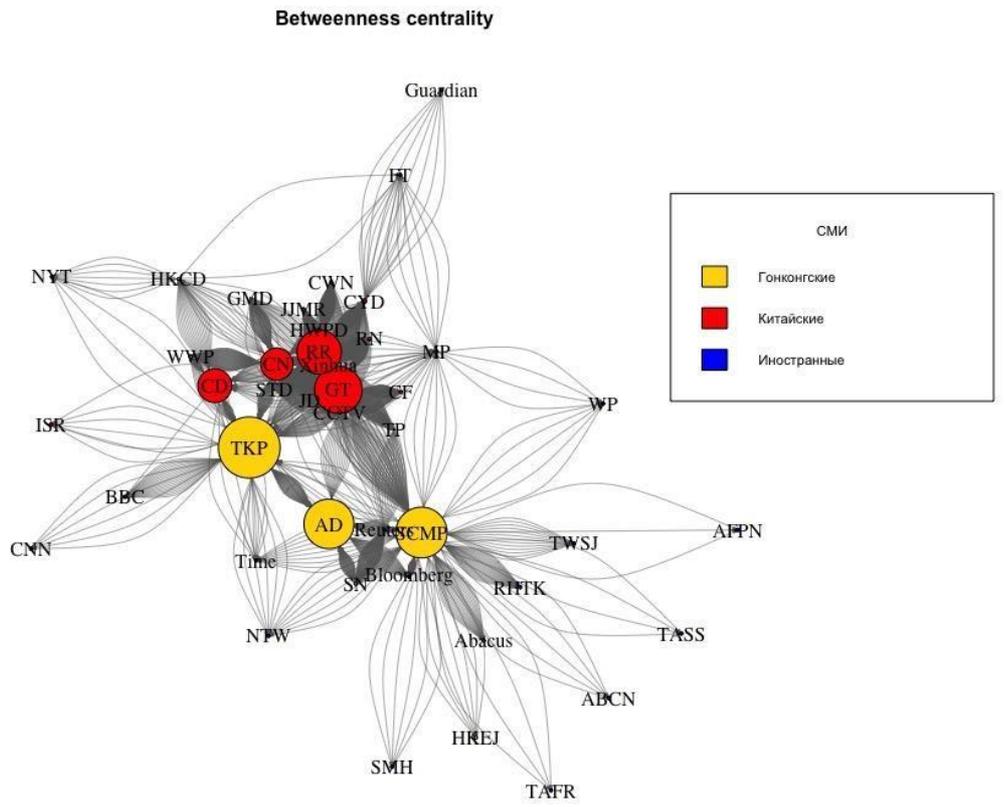


Рис. 3

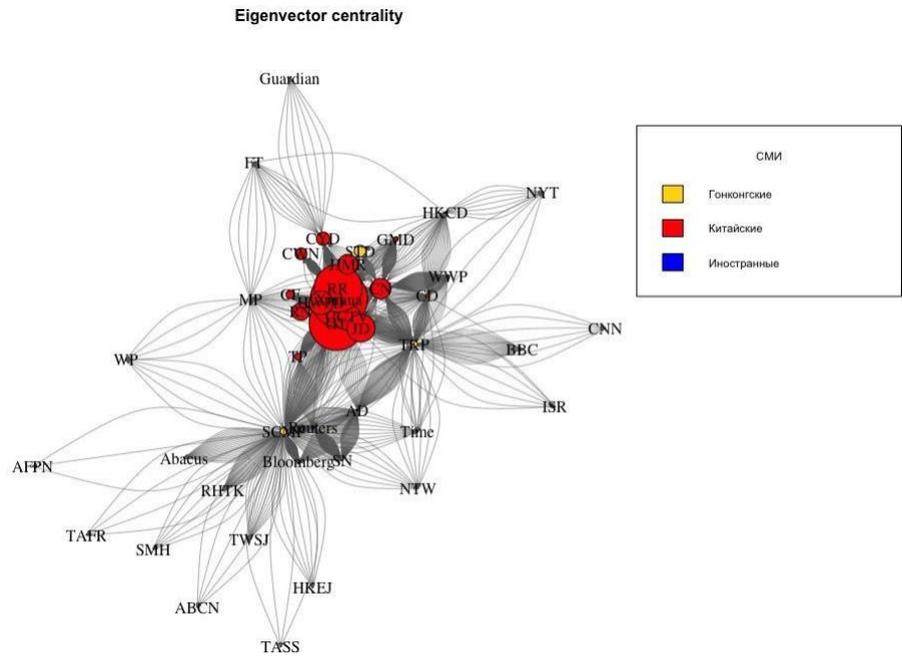


Рис. 4