

Without any doubt it could be a required and useful introduction to the processes associated with modern journalism around the world. Although media are changing very dynamically, the authors try to capture the current problems of journalism and often use examples from various countries without limiting themselves to one perspective. The book finds its place in contemporary studies on media and journalism and is a real introduction to a wide range of topics connected with modern journalism across the world.

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Vera Slavtcheva-Petkova (2018). *Russia's Liberal Media. Handcuffed but Free*. New York-London: Routledge, pp. 221, ISBN: 978-1-315-30019-1 (ebk).

The freedom of speech is one of the basic principles in the modern world. Undoubtedly, it is also crucial for the media industry in general, but especially for journalists. Nonetheless, although the freedom of speech is accepted worldwide as an immanent part of democracy, in some countries it is only illusional. In those countries the government still has a big impact on what media cover and how they do that. Nevertheless, even in those countries there are organizations that choose to fight for it. There are journalists who still believe in their mission and who struggle in those regimes that are hardly considered to be free. One of them is Vera Slavtcheva-Petkova, a Senior Lecturer in Communication and Media Studies at the University of Liverpool and an author of many publications on journalistic work. In her book *Russia's Liberal Media. Handcuffed but Free*, she focused on the situation of media and journalists in a country which is undoubtedly restricting freedom of speech and journalistic independence, but still trying to keep up appearances — Russia.

The content of the book can be divided into two parts: media before the president Vladimir Putin era, and how it looks after he came to power. The first chapter is further divided into three main sections: “(1) Mass Media Development after Communism and Before Putin, (2) Mass Media in Putin’s Russia, and (3) Russia’s Liberal Media”. The first section briefly introduces how free media developed after the fall of the Berlin Wall to the readers. It also includes “the legacy of *perestroika*” and the role of Boris Yeltsin. The next part describes the main challenges and changes after President Vladimir Putin came to power for the first, second, and the third time. The last section focuses on some common challenges which liberal media face every day, such as propaganda, threats and harassment, self-censorship, etc. Chapter 2 provides information on the theoretical framework and the main conceptual contributions of the research. The theoretical framework focuses on three key

points. The first one is “Media System and Terms of Reference”. This part includes “[...] an attempt towards conceptualisation of the Russian media system [...]” (p. 36), and reviewing a few seminal studies. The next part is “Journalism: Culture(s), Role conception, and Relationship with Power, Culture, and Society”. It contains the answer to the question whether Russian journalists and their Western colleagues share the same values, or they consider themselves “[...] political actors but with a different role from their colleagues in state-aligned media” (p. 36). The third part, “Mediatisation of Conflict and National Identities: Conflict Reporting and Nation-Building” considers the role of media in representation and perception of conflict, especially in cases similar to the Russian one, when the state has a stake in the conflict. The next six chapters describe examples “[...] of three of the most influential liberal news media organizations in Russia” (p. 9): *Novaya Gazeta*, *Radio Ekho Moskvyy* (*Radio Echo of Moscow*) and *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. Chapter 3 and 4 are organized around *Novaya Gazeta*, or as the author says “Russia’s Deadliest Newspaper”. The third chapter mentions the beginnings of the newspaper, crucial dates, names, threats, and risks connected with being a journalist, and what can be argued most importantly, about the six murdered workers of *Novaya Gazeta*, five journalists and one lawyer, with the main focus on the murder of Anna Politkovskaya. In the next chapter, the author focuses on how the newspaper functions these days, and what is the role of *Novaya Gazeta* and its work in Russian Society from the journalists’ perspective.

The organization of other chapters, about *EkhoMoskvyy* and *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, is similar to those about *Novaya Gazeta*. Firstly, in chapters 5 and 7, the author talks about beginnings of these two radio stations, but also includes the controversies about the founding of *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*. The following chapters, 6 and 8, are about the situation today, how they work, what kind of difficulties they need to face, and also the journalists’ thoughts on their role in society nowadays.

Russia’s Liberal Media. Handcuffed but Free is a really interesting book that provides a lot of useful information, especially for readers who are unfamiliar with the Russian media system. First of all, it provides a detailed description of challenges and problems which liberal media need to face in Russia. Such a deep look into this matter was possible due to interviews with Russian journalists. Empirical research was a very strong point of this book that doesn’t try to recreate the facts already described in the literature, but to dig deeper for actual stories of people who work and live in this system. The author doesn’t show only the normative approach, but she is more focused on practice, how the journalists’ every day looks like, how they cope with murders of their colleagues, how they handle death threats or abuse, and so on.

This book is a really good choice, not only for professional journalists from other countries, who want to know more about the work methods of their colleagues from Russia, but also a good source for students of journalism, because they can

find amazing examples of the professionalism and courage journalists need to have, combined with everyday struggles to survive and preserve work ethics.

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Damian Guzek (2019). *Mediatizing Secular State: Media, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Poland*. Berlin: Peter Lang, pp. 333, ISBN: 978-3-631-77535-6.

The monograph by Damian Guzek, *Mediatizing Secular State: Media, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Poland*, published by the prestigious Peter Lang publishing house, is an important and necessary study which analyzes in a pioneering way media relations, religion, and politics in contemporary Poland from the perspective of the secularization and desecularization processes. The publication is the 8th part of the *Studies in Communication and Politics* series.

The book consists of seven chapters, in which the author discusses the following theoretical issues: the place of religion in the model of a secular state, the theoretical approach of mediatization, mediatization of religion and politics, as well as issues that are based on the empirical findings in the area of media representing the idea of a secular state. The above-mentioned issues are analyzed in the context of the processes of secularization and desecularization as two important ways of understanding the presence of religion in the society of post-communist Poland. Damian Guzek does not consider (and rightly so!) these processes as mutually exclusive “or-or” alternatives, but instead he treats secularization and desecularization as a starting point for discussion, among others about the phenomenon of the privatization of religion, the issue of the separation of state and religious institutions, or the question of plurality of religions.

The research methodology and research hypotheses presented in the introduction help the readers find answers to the key theoretical and practical question: Does Poland fit into the category of a secular state, and if so, to what extent? What do Church-state relations look like in practice? What is the media representation of a secular state and Church-state relations? Do the processes of the mediatization of the secular state and Church-state relations occur and in what way? What is the reception of the mediatization of the secular state?

The first chapter is an attempt to answer the question to what extent one can talk about the implementation of the secular state model in Poland in the context of the fusion of national and religious identity. This problem is successfully taken from a historical perspective and takes into account the role of the Catholic Church during the partitions, the idea and development of Polish messianism, and the fusion