

The Anomaly of Ekho Moskvyy: Adaptation Strategies for the Survival of Diversity of
Viewpoints in Russian Media during the Putin Era

by

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Department of
Slavic and Eurasian Studies in the Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Moscow-based radio station Ekho Moskvyy is an anomaly in the authoritarian media climate of Vladimir Putin's Russia for its commitment to hosting a diversity of viewpoints on its broadcasts. Yet no systematic research has been conducted to determine what the station's exceptionalism means in practice or how the station has been able to operate as long as it has (over twenty years). This paper explores the question of a possible adaptation strategies employed by the station during the Putin era, 2000-2010, by focusing on Ekho Moskvyy's editor-in-chief since 1998, Alexei Venediktov, and seeks to understand why or how Ekho Moskvyy is able to continue operating and hosting diverse viewpoints in a hostile media environment.

In the first part of this thesis, the research contextualizes the business aspect of the station, especially its ownership structure, profitability, and audience. The second part of the thesis examines the relationship of the station with the Russian political elite, and then looks at every program on which Venediktov hosted a discussion with one or more guests and the contents of those discussions and their relation to Putin and Kremlin policies from 2000-2010. This research seeks to construct an idea of how and in what ways each of these strategic elements of Ekho Moskvyy's operations add up to an overall adaptation strategy for an exceptional media outlet's survival in Putin's Russia.

Contents

Abstract	iv
List of Tables	vii
List of Figures	viii
Acknowledgments.....	ix
Part I.....	1
1. Introduction.....	1
<i>Research Questions</i>	5
2. A Brief History of Ekho Moskvyy, 1990-Present.....	8
<i>Biography of Alexei Venediktov</i>	8
<i>A Brief History of Ekho Moskvyy</i>	11
3. The Business of Ekho Moskvyy: Audience, Format, Ownership, Profitability.....	16
<i>Audience</i>	16
<i>Audience Demographics</i>	20
<i>Format: Balancing News and Opinion Programming</i>	23
<i>Ownership Stakes</i>	25
<i>Profitability and Independence</i>	27
4. Literature Review and Media Context.....	30
<i>Survey of Literature on Russian Media</i>	30
<i>Kremlin Influence in Russian Media since 2000</i>	35
<i>Radio in Russia</i>	38
<i>Ekho Moskvyy: The Anomaly</i>	39
Part II	41
5. Power Relations with the Kremlin Elite	41
<i>Freedom of Expression vs. Freedom of Speech</i>	43
<i>Kremlin Statements Regarding Ekho Moskvyy</i>	44
<i>Professional vs. Oppositional Radio</i>	46
6. Selection of Program Participants: Discussion and Methodology of Categorization	51
<i>Methodology of Programs to Select for Analysis</i>	52
7. Participant Research: Results and Analysis	54
<i>Power and the Kremlin: Political Tone in References to the President/PM</i>	54

<i>Tone of Participant and Host Discussion</i>	61
<i>Professional Background of Participants</i>	64
<i>Officials</i>	66
<i>Subcategories of Officials</i>	69
<i>Journalists/Media</i>	71
<i>Foreign Participants</i>	73
<i>Russia's Political Allies</i>	75
<i>Foreign Program Participants and International Political Support</i>	78
<i>Themes of Discussions</i>	80
<i>Terrorism and Chechnya</i>	82
8: Conclusions	85
Appendix A	87
<i>Power and the Kremlin</i>	87
<i>References to President/Prime Minister</i>	87
<i>Political Tone</i>	88
<i>Theme of Discussion</i>	88
<i>Tone of Discussion/Participant Relations</i>	92
<i>Guest Occupation</i>	92
References	96

List of Tables

Table 1: Moscow Radio Market: Size of Daily Audience, Oct.-Nov. 2011, Ages 12+.....	16
Table 2: Daily Ekho Moskvyy Listeners as Percentage of Russia and Moscow Radio Markets, Selections from 2005-2011.....	18
Table 3: References to President/Prime Minister per Guest as Percentage of Total Guests, 2000-2010.....	55
Table 4: Political Tone toward President/Prime Minister per Guest as Percentage of Total, 2000-2010.....	57
Table 5: Degrees of Tone of Discussion among Program Participants as Percentage of Total, 2000-2010.....	63
Table 6: Participant Occupation as Percentage of Total Guests by Year, 2000-2010.....	65
Table 7: Types of Officials as Percentage of Total Number of Official Guests, 2000-2010.....	70
Table 8: Types of Foreign Occupations as Percentage of Total Number of Foreign Guests, 2000-2010.....	74
Table 9: Foreign Officials' Regions as Percentage of All Foreign Official Guests.....	76
Table 10: Foreign Ambassadors' Regions as Percentage of All Foreign Ambassador Guests.....	77
Table 11: Primary and Secondary Themes of Discussion as All Discussion Themes, 2000-2010.....	80

List of Figures

Figure 1: Ekho Moskvyy Listeners in Russian Radio Market, 2005-2011.....	19
Figure 2: Ekho Moskvyy Listeners in Moscow Radio Market, 2006-2011.....	20
Figure 3: Political Tone towards President/Prime Minister per Guest per Year as Percentage of Total Guests, 2000-2010.....	57

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Part I

1. Introduction

On January 18, 2012, Vladimir Putin, Prime Minister of Russia, called a meeting of the nation's leading media representatives to his private residence outside of Moscow.¹ At the meeting, Alexei Venediktov, editor-in-chief of Moscow-based radio station Ekho Moskvy,² asked Putin about the Prime Minister's refusal to meet with the League of Voters³ to discuss Putin's candidacy in the presidential election that was to be held in March 2012. The League of Voters, established in fall 2011 in the lead-up to the parliamentary Duma elections, is comprised of members of the political opposition outside of the governmental structure, also known as the "non-systemic opposition,"⁴ seeking fair and open elections in Russia. In response to Venediktov's question about the League of Voters' request to meet with him as a presidential candidate, Putin gave a long monologue that turned the question about the election into a denouncement of Ekho Moskvy for giving anti-governmental voices a platform from which to denounce Putin and his policies.

Putin's attention in the monologue focused in particular on an Ekho Moskvy broadcast he once heard that incensed him, in which the station's guests discussing

¹ The full English translation of Putin's conversation with media leaders can be found on the official website of the Prime Minister of Russia: "Prime Minister Vladimir Putin meets with heads and editors-in-chief of domestic television and radio broadcasting companies and print media," January 18, 2012 (accessed January 19), 2012 <http://premier.gov.ru/eng/events/news/17798/>. The full Russian-language original text can be found at: <http://premier.gov.ru/events/news/17798/>.

² *Ekho Moskvy* is the English transliteration of the radio station's name, which can be translated as "Ekho of Moscow" or "Moscow's Echo." In most non-Russian readings on the station, the transliterated name is used, and will be used as such in this paper.

³ The website of the League of Voters, in Russian, can be found at: <http://ligaizbirateley.ru/>.

⁴ The "non-systemic opposition" in Russia is made up of those who belong to unregistered political parties and do not have representation in the Duma, Russia's lower house of Parliament, and thus operate outside of the bounds of the systemic opposition, who belong formally registered political parties and are represented in the Duma.

missile defense systems with opinions that contradicted with the Kremlin's official point of view:

...They were discussing missile defense. They were just ranting and raving, honestly... Where did these arguments come from? They said it was not important for us how far from our borders these missile interceptors will be. Why is this not important? How can it not be important? If they are closer to our borders our land-based missiles will be within their range and these interceptors will destroy them. If they are deployed further away they won't come within this range and won't be able to take down our missiles. How can this not be important? This is a question of principle. It is extremely important!

Ekho Moskvyy is an anomaly in the current Russian society because it is the only media outlet that provides a platform for a diversity of viewpoints outside of the official Kremlin⁵ standpoint on issues such as missile defense. Venediktov has long stated that it is important for Ekho Moskvyy to ensure that all sides of the issue are discussed. Ekho Moskvyy is an anomaly precisely because it has apparently succeeded where no other media outlet in Russia has since the collapse of the Soviet Union in adapting to the ever-changing unspoken themes and ideas that control the Russian media.

Putin takes offense at the inclusion of opinion that goes against his own stance on missile defense, but this is not the only time Venediktov has aired content that goes against the official narrative. Putin continued his monologue:

Or another argument. Ostensibly, Americans are offering to work together with us on missile defense and Russia is refusing to do so. But it is we that are offering and they are refusing! Not only are they not permitting us, they are not allowing their European allies either. They agree on the deployment of radar stations but don't give anyone access to control them. This is so simple. I was lying in bed, either at night or in the morning – I don't remember now – and thinking: this is not information; what they are presenting serves the foreign policy interests of one state against another – Russia. I'm telling you this as an expert because I have

⁵ Throughout this paper, the term "Kremlin" will be used to discuss the power of the government under Putin, especially as a symbolic term to describe the inner circle of political elite in Moscow. As Thomas Remington has discussed, the Kremlin has historically served as both the physical as well as symbolic image of the Russian and Soviet state since the time of Ivan the Terrible in the sixteenth century, Thomas Remington, *Politics in Russia*, 7th ed. (New York: Longman, 2012), 64.

been studying this issue for many years. There are some elementary things and it is impossible to be ignorant of them. I don't believe they are ignorant. I think they are doing this on the Russian taxpayers' money. It's unfathomable to me how this could happen.

Putin highlights the mixed-ownership model of the media that is prevalent in Russia, in which shares of media outlets are split between public and private holding companies. It is not true that Ekho Moskvyy is funded by Russian taxpayers. It is true that through the station's mixed ownership structure a majority share in Ekho Moskvyy is held by the state-owned natural gas monopoly, Gazprom. But Ekho Moskvyy functions as a financially and editorially independent entity under Gazprom, with an editorial policy determined solely by the station's editor-in-chief, Venediktov, and financial independence granted through self-generated advertising revenue that allows the station to divide its profit among Gazprom and the station's minority shareholders: the journalists themselves.

Putin accuses Ekho Moskvyy of using taxpayer funds to conspire against the government as an opposition media source serving the interests of the United States:

This would never have happened in the United States. They would never let this happen. I remember how the Fox TV channel covered the events in South Ossetia when two women – a small girl and her aunt – described what had happened there. When they realized that these women supported Russia's actions, do you remember what happened next? They started clucking, sniffing and coughing – sorry, we are at the table now – but what didn't they do!

Serving Russia's interests as against America on some government-owned channel is unthinkable. I cannot even imagine this – it's simply impossible. And you're talking about freedom of speech. Where is it if not here? But I think this is indecent. Please, go ahead.

Putin claims that this discussion on Ekho Moskvyy is a sign of overall freedom of speech in Russia, but in reality Ekho Moskvyy is an anomaly, and is a token example of freedom

of discussion in Russia. Ekho Moskvyy is the only media outlet in Russia that continues to provide diverse opinions that do not always support the Kremlin's standpoints.

This conversation then ends with an abrupt exchange between Venediktov and Putin highlighting both Putin's penchant for crude language as well as his sentiments towards Ekho Moskvyy, which he considers a media outlet opposed to him and his policies that "pours excrement over him day and night":

Vladimir Putin: And you have taken offense at what I said. I can see it on your face. This is a pity.

Alexei Venediktov: Yes, I have taken offense. I will tell you later.

Vladimir Putin: And I have no hard feelings against you when you cover me with excrement from morning till night. I say a couple of words and you are already offended.

Alexei Venediktov: I was joking, I'm not offended...

Vladimir Putin: Well I'm not joking.

Putin certainly was not joking. Nearly one month to the day after this meeting of media leaders, on February 14, the majority shareholders of Ekho Moskvyy, Gazprom, for the first time since becoming the majority owner of the station in 2001, made changes to the station's Board of Directors, which makes decisions relating to the station's finances, though not its editorial policy.⁶ Gazprom replaced two independent voting members of the Board of Directors, who were not affiliated with either Gazprom or Ekho Moskvyy, and as a result Venediktov resigned from the Board in protest, though he remains the powerful editor-in-chief who selects the guests for Ekho Moskvyy, controls the editorial direction of the station, and regularly hosts programs himself.

Ekho Moskvyy is an exceptional case in Russian media; it remains the single exception to overt political control of news and opinion in a tightly controlled media

⁶ Georgy Neyaskin, "Gazprom Replaces Ekho Moskvyy's Board of Directors," *Slon.ru*, February 14, 2012 (accessed February 18, 2012), http://slon.ru/economics/gazprom_smenit_sovet_direktorov_ekha_moskvyy-747490.xhtml.

world. With more people owning cars in Russia, the station's penetration has increased, but so too has scrutiny from the political overseers in the Kremlin. Putin's comments and the actions of Gazprom media in the wake of those comments bring up several intriguing issues for the study of the intersection of Russian media and politics, including the airing of diverse opinions in an authoritarian media climate; the government's reaction to the media outlets that give the opposition airtime; the relationship between government elites, especially Putin, and the media; and the complex mix of public and private ownership in contemporary Russian media outlets, including Ekho Moskvyy. But what makes Ekho Moskvyy an anomaly and how has it survived as long as it has while so many other media outlets have been stifled or shut down?

Research Questions

This exchange between Putin and Venediktov was not the first time that Putin has made a public statement about Ekho Moskvyy. Yet Ekho Moskvyy has endured over two decades of political upheaval and fears of government intervention, either through censorship, takeover or shutdown. Western media outlets praise the station for its independence and its purported opposition to the increasingly authoritarian Russian government, yet no Western scholar has researched systematically the operations of the radio station to find out what, if anything, it means to be an embattled independent media outlet in Russia today and how its continuation is achieved.

Ekho Moskvyy is much more than a radio station; but what makes Ekho Moskvyy an anomaly and what forms of adaptation have kept it alive in an otherwise bleak landscape for diversity of viewpoints in the Russian media? Does Ekho Moskvyy really present oppositional opinions on its broadcasts, or do they find a way to strike a balance

of opinions? Who are the guests that appear on the station's programs, and are they invited for particular reasons? What is the ownership structure of the station, and does the station's financial situation affect their operations? Can the answers to these questions be identified as adaptation strategies that combine to answer the question of how Ekho Moskvyy is able to do what it has, and for as long as it has? Do these adaptations add up to a formula for the exceptionalism of Ekho Moskvyy in the Putin era?

In order to seek answers to these questions, this thesis provides an analysis of Ekho Moskvyy through a precise study of every program on which Venediktov hosted a discussion, plus the contents of those discussions and their relation to the Kremlin and Kremlin policies. In the first part of this thesis, the research examines the financial aspect of the station, especially its ownership structure, profitability and listener base. Then the research places the content of the programs into a political context. This has been done by coding and analyzing the content of discussions on every program hosted by Venediktov from 2000-2010.⁷ Therefore, what editorial independence means for the station in practice is provided by an examination of what is said by whom on Ekho Moskvyy's programs, which relates significantly to the selection of guests and the content of their discussion.

The decisions of the station's editor-in-chief, Alexei Venediktov to select particular participants for Ekho Moskvyy's broadcasts throughout the Putin era provide the basis of an empirical analysis for the station's operation; but it is just one part of the larger adaptation strategy that constitutes Ekho Moskvyy's exceptionalism. As the editor-in-chief of an exceptional media outlet, Venediktov is responsible for registering the

⁷ The methodology for this research is discussed in Chapter 6 and fully broken out in Appendix A.

political temperature at all times and to adjust the station's operations accordingly.

Venediktov's adaptation strategies are controlled very specifically across the station, and he is not averse to compromise, though he is not criticized for it.

Each of the decisions that Venediktov makes in the operations at Ekho Moskvyy is an adaptation strategy; these individual factors are not enough to ensure the station remains open, nor are they concrete, they can change over time; but when combined, they contribute to the ability for Ekho Moskvyy to remain open. This research seeks to construct an idea of how and in what ways each of these strategic elements of Ekho Moskvyy's operations add up to an adaptation strategy of an exceptional media outlet's survival in Putin's Russia. Ekho Moskvyy's success is safeguarded not only by its financial composition, nor only its audience size nor only its political relationships, nor its presentation of diverse discussion participants and their viewpoints, but rather from a sophisticated combination of them all that keeps both audience and overseers placated.

2. A Brief History of Ekho Moskvyy, 1990-Present

Any history of Ekho Moskvyy must focus on the central figure of Alexei Venediktov, editor-in-chief of the station since 1998. As one interviewer remarked on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of Ekho Moskvyy in 2011, “When we say ‘Ekho Moskvyy’ we mean Alexei Venediktov. And vice-versa.”¹ Venediktov is the sole determiner of Ekho Moskvyy’s editorial policy, thanks to the station’s operational charter, which he helped to create;² he serves as a “buffer” for all other journalists at the station, “he takes all the flak”;³ and he is recognized as the sole figure responsible for all operations at the station, as Putin told him in 2008: “You are answerable for everything!”⁴ Venediktov’s tenure as editor-in-chief coincides with Vladimir Putin’s arrival in Moscow and his time in the leading positions of Russian government (1998-present).⁵ The longstanding relationship between Venediktov and Putin’s inner circle is of particular interest in the exploration of how Ekho Moskvyy has been able to maintain its editorial independence while similar media outlets have been taken over or shut down.

Biography of Alexei Venediktov

Alexei Alexeivich Venediktov was born in Moscow in 1955, and graduated from Moscow State Pedagogical Institute in 1978 with a degree in History. He then became a high school history teacher, serving in this role from 1978-1998, and was awarded the

¹ Susanna Alperina, “‘Ekho’ for Sensitive Ears: Radio Station Ekho Moskvyy is 21 Years Old,” *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, September 22, 2011 (accessed September 22, 2011). <http://www.rg.ru/2011/09/22/echo-poln.html>.

² Nadezhda Stepanova, “Russia: Ekho Moskvyy Managing Editor Venediktov on Plans for Future of Radio Station,” *Izvestiya*, March 10, 2005 (accessed April 6, 2011), <http://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc7458703>.

³ Maria Eismont, “Rules of Engagement,” *Index on Censorship*, Trans. Irena Maryniak, 2010 39:80 (accessed September 14, 2011).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Putin was appointed head of the FSB by President Boris Yeltsin in July 1998, then Prime Minister (August-December 1999) and acting president (December 1999-March 2000), before being elected as President (2000-2008) and Prime Minister (2008-present). For a brief history of Putin’s rise to power up to 2004, see Chapter 1, “The Unlikely Rise to Power” in Richard Sakwa, *Putin: Russia’s Choice* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 1-33.

prize of “Excellence in Russian Public Education.”⁶ Venediktov, though a history teacher by training, was among the first radio hosts asked to work with Ekho Moskvyy when it was founded in 1990.

The history of Ekho Moskvyy begins on August 1, 1990, when Soviet law was changed to permit independent forms of mass information media outside the Soviet propaganda system for the first time.⁷ Two friends, Sergei Buntman⁸ and Sergei Korzun,⁹ both former employees of official Soviet radio,¹⁰ sought to create a new form of talk radio in the Soviet Union, and so they took advantage of the new law on media ownership and registered Ekho Moskvyy, or Radio-M as it was originally called. Radio-M received the first operating license for an independent radio station in the Soviet Union.¹¹ Korzun is an important figure in the history of Ekho Moskvyy, and he is still involved with the station’s operations to this day. It was Korzun, according to Venediktov, who instilled the principles in him and the other journalists at the station that have defined Ekho Moskvyy’s “professional journalism” since its founding.¹²

Venediktov was recruited to host a program on Radio-M by his old friends Buntman and Korzun, who recognized in him an unusual intelligence and remarkable

⁶ Source: “Biography of Alexei Alexeivich Venediktov, 2004 recipient of the ‘One’s Own Track’” (*Svoya Koleya*) award, from the “Svoya Koleya” website (accessed March 9, 2012), <http://www.svoyakoleya.ru/cms/2004>.

⁷ Ivan Zassoursky, *Media and Power in Post-Soviet Russia*, (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 2004).

⁸ Sergei Buntman’s personal biography on his “Contributors” page on the Ekho Moskvyy website (accessed March 9, 2012), <http://echo.msk.ru/contributors/12/>.

⁹ Sergei Korzun’s personal biography on his “Contributors” page on the Ekho Moskvyy website (accessed March 9, 2012), <http://www.echo.msk.ru/contributors/74/>.

¹⁰ David Remnick, “Letter from Moscow: Echo in the Dark,” *New Yorker*. September 22, 2008 (accessed February 4, 2011), http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2008/09/22/080922fa_fact_remnick.

¹¹ Source: Gazprom-Media, “Echo of Moscow” (accessed April 7, 2011), http://www.gazprom-media.com/en/radio.xml?&company_id=50.

¹² “Are you not sad that more people don’t listen to Ekho Moskvyy and become citizens out of residents?” “No, I’m not sad. We are doing our job. If we had two, three, or ten times less listeners, we would do our job the exact same way. These are principles instilled in us by Sergei Korzun, they have been preserved.” Quoted in “Alekssei Venediktov: ‘Kak ya mogu druzhit’ s krovavym Fursenko?! A vot tak!’” *Novaya Gazeta*, September 26, 2011 (accessed October 10, 2011), <http://old.novayagazeta.ru/data/2011/107/47.html>.

breadth of historical knowledge. Buntman and Venediktov first met in the mid-1980s when Butman ran a theater program in Moscow's School No. 875, where Venediktov taught history.¹³ When Venediktov told Buntman and Korzun that he had no experience in radio, they asked if he knew anyone in the Soviet Ministry of Education through his connections as a teacher. He said that he did, he was friends with an education official; and as a result, on August 29, 1990, Venediktov hosted his first guest on Radio-M: Lyubov Kezina, the director of the Moscow city government's Department of Education.¹⁴

During the Yeltsin era, Venediktov worked as a teacher during the day and as a radio host in the evenings, two careers which, though seemingly different, Venediktov found quite similar:

In the daytime I taught children and served as head of the school council and in the evening I sat in the studio. That continued until 1998, when I became chief editor... The more I work on the radio, informing people, the more similarity I see with education. A teacher's task is to give people – children – facts that they do not know, and to arrange these facts appropriately. A journalist's job is exactly the same. It's only that the audience is different.¹⁵

Venediktov's style of discussion is to present facts and opinions in a way that his listeners can form a comprehensive understanding of an issue, which reflects upon his experience as a history teacher.

As the editor-in-chief, Venediktov sees himself in a different category than his journalists at Ekho Moskvy because he must single-handedly controls the editorial content and direction of the station: "The editor is no journalist at all. He/she is

¹³ Remnick, "Letter from Moscow."

¹⁴ Quoted by Venediktov on-air in a June 17, 2006 interview with Kezina, who served as the Director of the Department of Education in Moscow city from 1989-2007: <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/beseda/44101/#element-text> (accessed December 15, 2011).

¹⁵ Shevelev, Igor, "We'll Implant Ekho Moskvy Straight into the Listeners' Brain," *Moscow News*, July 5, 2000 (accessed April 6, 2011) <http://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/219849>.

accountable for the editorial policy and can allow or not allow this or that material to be published.”¹⁶ As Putin reminded him in 2008, when he told him that he was responsible for everything that the station produced,¹⁷ Venediktov notes that Russian law mandates that the editor-in-chief be held responsible for the content of a media outlet: “According to the law on media, everything that the medium does, the editor-in-chief is responsible for it.”¹⁸ As the center of all political pressure against Ekho Moskvyy and the sole source of the station’s editorial content, Venediktov is the primary focus of study in this research as he maintains Ekho Moskvyy’s exceptional status in Putin’s Russia.

A Brief History of Ekho Moskvyy

The inaugural broadcast of Radio-M as the Soviet Union’s first alternative, independent radio station went live on August 22, 1990 on the borrowed FM frequency of a radio station called “Test Channel”. The short evening broadcast featured an extended news program, an interview with one of the young leaders of the Moscow reformers at the time, First Deputy Minister of the Moscow City Council, Sergei Stankevich¹⁹, and The Beatles’ song “All My Loving.”²⁰ Not long after it started, Radio-M officially changed its name to Ekho Moskvyy (The Echo of Moscow). During the tumultuous period at the end of the Soviet Union and the birth of the Russian Federation, Ekho operated under the slogan of “Free Radio for Free People,” and gained widespread renown and respect for their frontline reports on the 1991 putsch and the collapse of the

¹⁶ Natalia Rostova, “Alexei Venediktov: The Kremlin is Our Real Stockholder,” *Novaya Gazeta*, April 16, 2008 (accessed October 10, 2011), <http://en.novayagazeta.ru/data/2008/25/08.html>.

¹⁷ Eismont, “Rules of Engagement.”

¹⁸ Alperina, “Ekho.”

¹⁹ Sergei Stankevich was a late-Soviet liberal reformer who was elected a Soviet Duma deputy in 1989 and, in 1990 around the time that Ekho Moskvyy was started, became the First Deputy Chairman of the Moscow City Council. He would go on to become the State Councilor for Political Affairs, then First Deputy Mayor of Moscow, and a Duma deputy (1993-1995). He has lived in Poland since 1996 (accessed March 9, 2012), <http://www.echo.msk.ru/guests/559/>.

²⁰ A compilation of facts from Remnick’s “Letter from Moscow” and Ekho Moskvyy’s history from their website: <http://echo.msk.ru/about/history/misc.html> (accessed April 4, 2011).

Soviet Union, as well as the 1993 constitutional crisis during which Yeltsin ordered tanks to fire on the Russian White House.²¹

During the 1990s, Ekho Moskvy flourished and solidified its programming as well as its broadcast frequency in Moscow and other large cities in Russia. Masha Gessen describes the 1990s and the years of Boris Yeltsin's presidency as a time for the freedom of the media: "...to Yeltsin, media freedom was a baseline value... Yeltsin replaced Communist ideology with a supremely simplified version of democracy that boiled down to two tenets: He could not abide Communists, and he supported freedom of the press."²² In 1994, the station was acquired by Vladimir Gusinsky's Media-Most media conglomerate, which included the television station NTV, the newspaper *Segodnia* (*Today*), and the weekly newsmagazine *Itogi* (*Results*). Venediktov describes the process of changing from a small, journalist-supported media outlet into a piece of a much larger media conglomerate, and the importance placed on Ekho Moskvy's core original values even in a new ownership structure:

In 1994, it became clear it was time to stop working like amateurs and to really get our act together...we started casting about for investors. Eventually, we zeroed in on two groups. They were the Weiners, Chicago bankers, and the Gusinsky group, which had just acquired NTV. The Weiners offered more money but they demanded control over editorial policy. Gusinsky offered less money but said, 'Let the journalists choose their own Editor-in-Chief.' We decided to write it down in our charter that the journalists elect the Editor-in-Chief and the board of shareholders attaches the final seal. In other words, the shareholders cannot appoint the Editor-in-Chief over the heads of the journalists, as happened with NTV. So we sold the controlling stake to Gusinsky and he lived up to his promises.²³

²¹ Ekho Moskvy's leading editors and journalists published an extensive oral history of the 1991 coup d'état and the station's role in the crisis in Sergei Buntman, Sergei Korzun, etc., *Devyatnadsatoe, dvadtsatoe, dvadtsat' pervoe...*: *Avgustovskie sobytiya glazami sotrudnikov radiostantsii "Ekho Moskvy"* (Moscow: Shakur-Invest, 1991).

²² Masha Gessen, "Beat the Press," *New Republic*, June 5, 2000 (accessed October 13, 2011), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/212801114?accountid=10598>, 17.

²³ "History of Russian Media, 1989-2011: The Putsch and Ekho Moskvy. August 19, 1991," *Afisha*, July 6, 2011 (accessed February 4, 2012), <http://www.afisha.ru/article/mediahistory/page6/>.

Though Ekho Moskvyy was still a young media outlet in the politically and economically turbulent 1990s, the station's journalists found it more important to maintain editorial independence from their majority shareholders rather than accept a quick payout. With new rules in place regarding the election of an editor-in-chief by the station's journalists enshrined in a charter agreed to by Gusinsky, Venediktov was elected editor-in-chief in 1998. In 1999, he finally quit his day job as a high school history teacher and began to work full time as the editor-in-chief of Ekho Moskvyy.²⁴

Ekho remained part of Media-Most's holdings until the Kremlin dissolved Media-Most and imprisoned Gusinsky in 2001, whereupon a 52% stake in Ekho was taken over by the state-owned energy company Gazprom, with a statement from one Kremlin aide that despite the new state-company ownership, Ekho Moskvyy should remain independent.²⁵ Gazprom's holding eventually increased to include 66% of the station's shares, a figure it still maintains today, with the station's journalists owning the remaining 34% of shares.

Despite the takeover of Media-Most by Gazprom and Ekho Moskvyy's change in ownership to a state-run natural gas monopoly, the station continued to thrive as the 2000s began. In his introduction to a 2000 interview with Venediktov in the independent newspaper *Moscow News*, journalist Igor Shevelev noted that every sudden change and political event in Russia during the turbulent decade since the collapse of the Soviet Union had only seemed to give Ekho Moskvyy greater standing: "Thus far [Ekho Moskvyy] has stood to gain from everything: coups d'état, market competition, and even the

²⁴ Shevelev, "Implant Ekho Moskvyy."

²⁵ Andrei Zolotov, Jr., "Nemtsov to Accept Gazprom's Radio Stake," *St. Petersburg Times*, July 13, 2001 (accessed April 8, 2011), http://www.sptimesrussia.com/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=4742.

prosecution of its owner – the media tycoon Gusinsky.”²⁶ Venediktov recounts his involvement in the takeover of Ekho Moskvyy by Gazprom-Media in 2001, including his relationship with the station’s journalists during the takeover, as he asked them to carry on as they had in the past:

Later Ekho Moskvyy was taken over, along with NTV, by Gazprom-Media. I knew everything down to the last detail because I took part in the negotiations and met with [Alexander] Voloshin²⁷ and with Putin. I realized that the authorities had decided to take control of the editorial policies of all TV and radio channels. It was a logical process of hidden nationalization... Is there anything you can do about it? Nothing. So I told my people: Let us go on doing our job as if nothing has happened; when they come to shut us down, we will know. That is my problem, and your task is to work. I told the people on high, ‘We won’t meddle in politics, but if there are deviations, we will criticize them.’ Putin listened to me and you know the result. We are allowed to criticize.²⁸

This interaction between Venediktov and Putin during the Gazprom takeover of the former Media-Most holdings highlights the powerlessness of Russian media outlets in the face of government-backed takeovers but the importance of personal relations between Venediktov and Putin as an element of the station’s continued success. Yet Venediktov was aware of the tradeoffs inherent in the Gazprom takeover of the station, including more scrutiny from above than that experienced under the ownership of Media-Most:

As it turned out, in reality it was Vladimir Putin and not Gazprom who became my main shareholder. I was told: ‘Your shareholder sits in the Kremlin. You are turning a profit and we don’t want to interfere with your organizational problems.’ I had a conversation with Vladimir Putin in August 2000 and he told me that the editor-in-chief was responsible for everything that was happening at the radio station. But they, too, understand that if things are to turn out well, Ekho should have a good reputation. Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama would never come to a radio station owned by Gazprom. But they would and have actually come to a radio station because it is independent of the shareholders and the

²⁶ Shevelev, “Implant Ekho Moskvyy.”

²⁷ At the time, Alexander Voloshin was the head of Putin’s Presidential Administration. As noted in Sakwa, *Putin*, 16, 62.

²⁸ “History of Russian Media,” *Afisha*.

government. I put this message across to [Yury] Senkevich and Putin. They realized that Ekho Moskvyy was a business in the broad sense of the word.²⁹

This statement illustrates Putin's regard for the purely business element of the station's operations, an element of protection that Gusinsky's Media-Most lost through taking on enough loans to allow political interference with their accounts; but at the same time highlights the pressure on Venediktov to continue to deliver a business product that Putin is content with, or else the onus is on Venediktov and Venediktov alone. At the same time, of note in this statement is the mutual understanding between Putin and Venediktov that the nature of the station's editorial independence allowed it to achieve a reputation among its guests, especially among members of the international community (when Venediktov discusses Clinton and Obama as guests of the station). The added element of potential safeguards incurred by hosting international guests will be explored at length later in this paper in the section on the selection of discussion participants on programs hosted by Venediktov. The adaptation strategies that have managed to keep Ekho Moskvyy alive during the Putin era are all evidenced in Venediktov's words: providing a diversity of viewpoints in the broadcast content that manages to keep both the station's financial and political overseers placated.

²⁹ Ibid.

3. The Business of Ekho Moskvyy: Audience, Format, Ownership, Profitability

Audience

Paradoxically, Ekho Moskvyy may continue to thrive as an independent media outlet thanks to both its profitability granted by advertising revenue generated from its listener base, but also in no small part due to the station's limited audience as a primarily talk-radio outlet. One theory for Ekho Moskvyy's exceptionalism is that the station provides a pressure valve for disaffected voices in Putin's Russia by giving them a medium through which to voice their opinions, albeit with a limited audience size.

Table 1: Moscow Radio Market: Size of Daily Audience, Oct.-Nov. 2011, Ages 12+¹

Radio Station	October 2011		September 2011		November 2011	
	Percentage (%) of Respondents	Total Number, in Thousands	Percentage (%) of Respondents	Total Number, in Thousands	Percentage (%) of Respondents	Total Number, in Thousands
Ekho Moskvyy	9.4	891	9.7	914	9.5	901
Avtoradio	8.5	801	9.5	892	10.5	988
Europa Plus	8.4	795	9.1	856	9.3	877
Radio Rossii	8.0	757	8.7	824	8.3	788
Russkoe Radio	7.7	726	8.9	839	8.5	798
Retro FM	7.4	698	8.3	785	9.3	874
Humor FM	6.6	622	7.5	705	7.3	686
Mayak	6.4	606	7.0	660	7.0	665
Siti-FM	3.3	313	3.5	327	3.2	307
TOTALS	67.1	6330	67.9	6411	69.6	6566

¹ Source: ComCon statistics posted in Ekho Moskvyy's blog of news and announcements on the station's official website, "Ekho Moskvyy' snova na pervom meste!" <http://echo.msk.ru/blog/echomsk/826844-echo/>, November 3, 2011 (accessed November 4, 2011).

However, the audience of Ekho Moskvyy is made up of elite and influential listeners, and the size of the station's audience (in actual listeners) as well as its share of the Russian radio market continues to grow. The audience of Ekho Moskvyy averaged 900,000 daily listeners in Moscow in the fall of 2011, which landed it in first place as the most listened-to radio station in all of Moscow in media ratings company ComCon's monthly reports (see Table 1), beating out all other radio stations, not just talk or news radio, but among pop music and comedy stations.

However, Gazprom-Media points out that the station's potential weekly audience is an estimated 46 million, a number more useful for recruiting advertising revenue than a true representation of Ekho Moskvyy's audience.² Of note in these listener totals is the fact that Ekho Moskvyy's audience dwarfs that of Siti-FM, the rival talk radio station set up by Gazprom in 2006. Ekho Moskvyy's audience numbers, the actual listeners to the station, as opposed to the potential audience quoted by Gazprom-Media, has grown over the last five years in no small part thanks to the increasing number of drivers in Russian cities who listen to the radio while in the car.³ Venediktov himself has mentioned this relation between Russia's increasingly bad traffic and the station's popularity, "We adore traffic jams: as soon as Moscow is stuck behind the wheel, our audience immediately increases."⁴

² Source: Gazprom-Media, "Echo of Moscow" (accessed April 7, 2011), http://www.gazprom-media.com/radio.xml?&company_id=50.

³ One survey found that the number of respondents who listened to the radio while driving increased from 4.3% to 56.7% between 1994 and 2002, as cited in Jukka Pietilainen, Irina Fomicheva and Liudmila Resnianskaia, "Changing Media Use in Russia," in *Russian Mass Media and Changing Values*, eds. Arja Rosenholm et al. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 50.

⁴ Alina Rebel, "Russia: Ekho Moskvyy Chief Editor Comments on New Format, Freedom of Speech," *Gazeta.ru*, October 27, 2006 (accessed April 6, 2011), <http://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/10303242>.

Table 2: Daily Ekho Moskvyy Listeners as Percentage of Russia and Moscow Radio Markets, Selections from 2005-2011⁵

Research Period (Russia)	Percentage (%) of Market	Actual Audience (in thousands)	Research Period (Moscow)	Percentage (%) of Market	Actual Audience (in thousands)
Dec. 2005-April 2006	2.2%	1240.7	Jan.-Mar. 2006	6.9%	654.8
Dec. 2006-April 2007	2.1%	1221.9	Jan.-Mar. 2007	7.3%	695.7
May-Oct. 2007	2.2%	1226.1	Aug.-Oct. 2007	7.9%	750.7
Jan.-Mar. 2008	3.7%	2238.1	Jan.-Mar. 2008	7.9%	753
July-Sept. 2008	4.2%	2534.1	Aug.-Oct. 2008	9.0%	856.5
Jan.-Mar. 2009	4.5%	2700.7	Jan.-Mar. 2009	9.1%	862.3
July-Sept. 2009	4.2%	2497.9	Aug.-Oct. 2009	9.1%	861.2
Jan.-Mar. 2010	4.1%	2475.4	Jan.-Mar. 2010	8.2%	780.9
Oct. 2010-Mar. 2011	4.9%	2961.1	Oct.-Dec. 2010	8.4%	794.5
Jan.-July 2011	4.8%	2852.8	Dec. 2010-Feb. 2011	9.7%	925.1
Apr.-Sept. 2011	4.5%	2694.3	Aug.-Oct. 2011	9.5%	902.7

⁵ Source: TNS, <http://tns-global.ru/rus/data/ratings/radio> (accessed April 7, 2011). Note the different time periods in the data sets; the All Russia selections varied from the Moscow and St. Petersburg observation periods but were selected to most closely correspond with the time periods for the two cities.

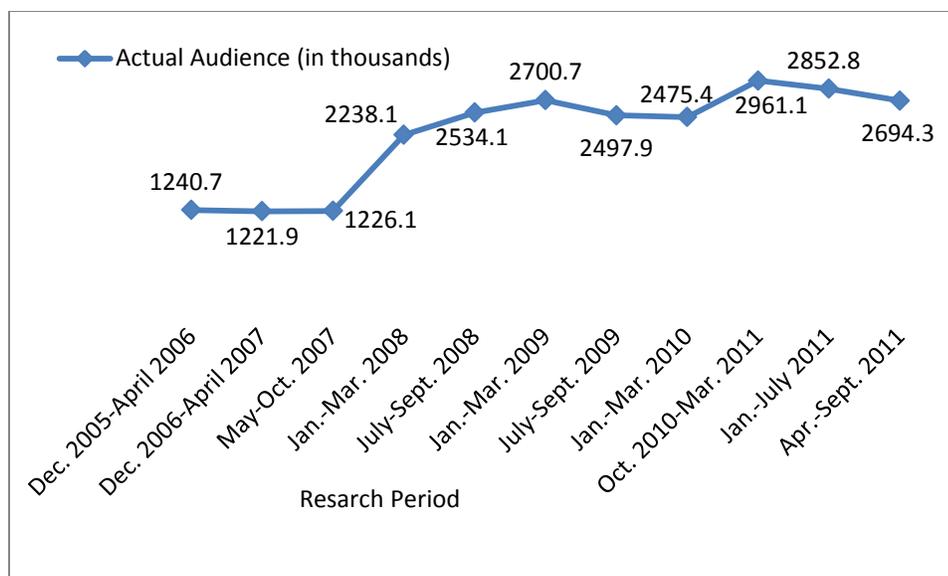


Figure 1: Ekho Moskvyy Listeners in Russian Radio Market, 2005-2011

If its small listener base compared to massive television audiences gives the station immunity from governmental pressure, nonetheless, the station's ratings have risen steadily since 2005 across Russia (see Table 2). The station now claims nearly 3 million listeners (nearly 5% of the entire Russian radio market), in addition to regularly appearing among the most listened-to stations in the Moscow radio market, including first place among all radio stations, including other talk radio and solely pop music stations, in the Moscow market in October and November 2011.⁶

The station's share of the overall Russian market has also increased steadily over time, from 2.1% of the radio market in Russia in 2006, to 4.5% in 2011. These numbers show that the station's growth in the Russian market spiked between late 2007 (May-Oct. 2007) and early 2008 (Jan.-March 2008), which coincides with preparations for the March 2008 presidential elections.

⁶ Source: ComCon statistics quoted on website of Ekho Moskvyy, "Ekho Moskvyy na pervom meste!" (accessed September 30, 2011) <http://echo.msk.ru/blog/echomsk/816574-echo/>.

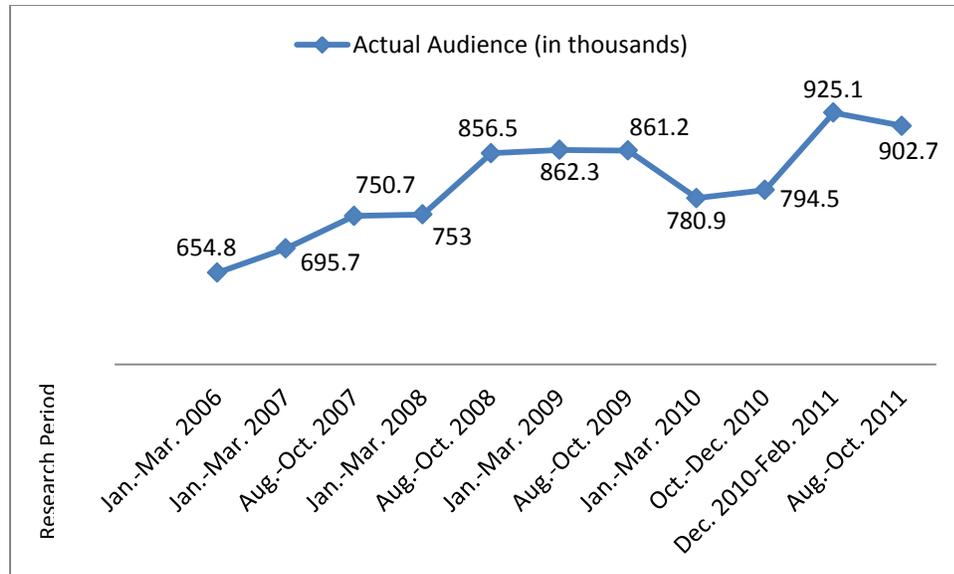


Figure 2: Ekho Moskvy Listeners in Moscow Radio Market, 2005-2011

Interestingly, the same spike did not occur in Moscow during the same time frame, and in fact held nearly constant, though the number of listeners in Moscow spiked in the months following the presidential election (Aug.-Oct. 2008).

Audience Demographics

But just who is listening to Ekho Moskvy? As Venediktov puts it, “We are a radio of influence, rather than a mass radio station.”⁷ According to Venediktov, these listeners of influence include members of the Kremlin elite. In another interview, Venediktov relates that Kremlin insiders listen to Ekho Moskvy for information lacking in state-run media, which provides Ekho with another element of support in maintaining their independent operations:

We have become a genuine source of information for people who make decisions...Apparently they don't have enough information. Because we have become a platform for debate, the decision-makers always study them, even if they do not always take part in our debates... They [people asking about information Ekho Moskvy reported during the 2010 Ukrainian presidential

⁷ Remnick, “Letter from Moscow.”

elections] checked out our data – it’s a kind of model for self-correction. I also think this may be what allows Ekho Moskvyy to exist in the form it does.⁸

The relationship between Venediktov and the Kremlin elite will be further discussed in Chapter 5, but if what Venediktov asserts at the end of the quote is true, then the station’s commitment to editorial independence has created a listener base that extends all the way to the same decision-makers who restrict editorial independence among other mass media outlets.

But it is not just members of the political elite listening to Ekho Moskvyy. Quoting a Gallup poll, Venediktov notes that 83% of the station’s listeners have received a higher education.⁹ Listeners primarily live in Russia’s largest cities with populations over a million and are middle-aged.¹⁰ Yet the station’s listenership is growing not just among Russia’s middle-aged, but among the country’s youth as well. As a result, Venediktov has shaped aspects of the station’s broadcasting to meet the new challenges posed by this growth in listenership among the young:

It turns out we had significant growth among students. Not university students, but secondary school students. That’s news to us, and we still don’t know what to do with it... We are going to make a permanent youth club discussing various political youth organizations... We think these young people should discuss not just the questions of youth policy, but the questions that concern the whole country – as an adult... we are working so that the younger generation too is attracted to a discussion on the fate of the country, not just their personal fortune.¹¹

⁸ Eismont, “Rules of Engagement.”

⁹ Yuferova, Yadviga, “Freedom of Ekho,” *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, February 20, 2008 (accessed October 13, 2011), <http://www.rg.ru/2008/02/20/venediktov.html>.

¹⁰ Pietilainen, Fomicheva and Resnianskaia, “Changing Media Use in Russia,” 50; and Remnick, “Letter from Moscow.”

¹¹ “An event for ‘talk’ radio,” *Interfax*, September 30, 2011 (accessed October 10, 2011), <http://interfax.ru/society/txt.asp?id=210199>.

This interaction with the station's listener base is not unique to the youngest demographic; Venediktov, in his time as editor-in-chief, has implemented a number of programs that bring the listeners into direct interaction with the program hosts and guests.

...we have been setting up the 'Privileged Listeners' Club,' every member of which has his own experience of life and opinion. The people who sign up for this club have to complete a questionnaire on our web site. And they have to reveal their real names and give their home and cell phone numbers. Yet listeners on the radio are usually anonymous...but they are willing to open up to us...And there are a lot of them the only restriction is that we try to limit the number of people who are involved in journalism...Of course, when we have a story involving emergency medicine, who should we call, if not our listener who is an emergency doctor? He will tell us everything much better than the chief physician of the emergency service would...we are turning our listeners into our correspondents.¹²

The "Privileged Listeners' Club" is a feature that has been expanded outside of using the listeners as correspondents and has extended to these listeners being invited onto programs as guests to debate current events or larger issues with well-known guests, This element of interactivity with the station's audience expands the station's interactivity with its audience out of their traditional role of call-in questions and turns listeners into active members of the discussion.

Venediktov has described the mission of Ekho Moskvyy simply: "Our job is to inform and entertain. These are dull, professional duties, and all we do is perform them."¹³ This sensibility relates to his previous vocation as a history teacher, but also places great emphasis on the station's listeners as the focus of the station's intent. For example, Venediktov describes the process of guest selection, which will be examined more closely later in this paper, as determined in no small part by the desire of the

¹² Rebel, "Ekho."

¹³ Eismont, "Rules of Engagement."

listeners, who wish to hear guests from a variety of backgrounds that reflect not just political actors, but cultural and international figures as well:

Witnesses [of history] are those who come to Ekho Moskvyy. But my task is to draw them out for all they are worth and let listeners themselves appraise their testimony. The fact is that the radio does not serve my personal interests but the interests of listeners. They are interested in ballerina Maya Plisetskaya, and so Maya Plisetskaya comes to the studio. They are interested in Communist leader Zyuganov, so it's Zyuganov. Clinton? It's Clinton then.¹⁴

The importance Venediktov places on keeping Ekho Moskvyy's audience informed through participant selection that allows his audience to hear opinions from diverse sources goes along with the attention he places on keeping the Kremlin elite informed as well.

Format: Balancing News and Opinion Programming

Ekho Moskvyy generally follows a talk radio format with most programs allowing listener questions provided by phone, pager, or text message. The station also provides frequent news reporting at regular intervals throughout the day and in the middle of longer programs. In later non-peak late evening hours, the station provides alternative musical programming. According to Gazprom Media's English-language company profile for Ekho Moskvyy, 70% of Ekho's broadcasts are conversational, both news and opinion programs, with music accounting for the remaining 30%.¹⁵ Ekho Moskvyy's official website describes their format as "informational-conversational" (*informatsionno-razgovornaya*).¹⁶ The guests on Ekho Moskvyy are a mixture of leading

¹⁴ Shevelev, "Implant Ekho Moskvyy."

¹⁵ Source: Gazprom-Media (accessed April 5, 2011), http://www.gazprom-media.com/en/radio.xml?&company_id=50. Curiously, the Russian-language company profile for Ekho Moskvyy does not include this information (accessed April 5, 2011), http://www.gazprom-media.com/en/radio.xml?&company_id=50.

¹⁶ Source: Ekho Moskvyy, <http://echo.msk.ru/about> (accessed April 4, 2011).

government officials, policy experts, oppositional politicians, respected journalists and prominent or newsworthy figures from popular culture.

In the past, Ekho focused on news as the most prominent aspect of its programming, but in 2006 made a switch in programming formats to counter the loss of a significant portion of its audience to Internet news sources, as Venediktov described in an interview with Alina Rebel of *Gazeta.ru* in October 2006:

But according to our market research experts' studies, a significant portion of our audience – about 40% - has gone over to Internet news. And in general 78% of our audience has Internet access. The futility of airing the same news that is on the Internet became obvious. Therefore, Ekho Moskvyy changed its format: it switched from 'news and talk' to 'talk and news'...what is important to our audience is not news, but opinions and discussions.¹⁷

Despite the editorial shift in content away from news reporting to more opinion programming, Ekho Moskvyy has cemented its role in Russian society as not just a voice of dissenting opinion but also one of the most respected sources of both domestic and international news in Russia. According to a May 2010 study on news citations across media formats by the Russian media monitoring company *Medialogiya*, Ekho Moskvyy is the third most-quoted news source in Russia out of every major newspaper, magazine, television station and radio station in the country, behind only the newspapers *Kommersant* and *Vedemosti*.¹⁸ The balance between original news and diverse and dissenting opinions that are offered on Ekho Moskvyy's programs contributes to the overall respectability and stability of the station in its uneasy balance of power with its primary shareholder, Gazprom, and Gazprom's ownership in the Kremlin. Despite the station's limited broadcasting reach, its name and reputation nevertheless permeate the

¹⁷ Rebel, "Ekho."

¹⁸ Source: Ekho Moskvyy, <http://echo.msk.ru/news/691811-echo.html> (accessed April 7, 2011).

Russian news media climate. The station reaches a mass audience through the quoting and reposting of Ekho Moskvyy reports and broadcasts as quotes in other news sources. The size of Ekho Moskvyy's audience is limited to a relatively small, but influential base of listeners, yet this limited audience is enough for the station to provide a profit for its shareholders and provide the protection of economic independence.

Ownership Stakes

Since July 2001, Gazprom has been the largest shareholder in Ekho Moskvyy, holding 66% of the shares, while Ekho's editorial board, comprised of its own journalists, hold the remaining 34% of the shares in the station; Venediktov himself personally owns 18% of the 34% total, with the station's remaining journalists owning the remaining 16%.¹⁹ According to the station's charter, which dates back to the time of Media-Most ownership and which Gazprom-Media has thus far upheld, the journalists' minority stake grants them veto power over any executive decision made by the majority shareholding members of the station's editorial board. By this same charter the journalists are allowed to hold a vote for editor-in-chief, who is granted the exclusive right to determine the station's editorial policy; Venediktov has won every election held for the position since he became editor-in-chief in 1998.²⁰

Though Ekho Moskvyy remains beyond direct control of the government, the station nevertheless remains at the Kremlin's mercy. Venediktov has described the balance struck with both Gazprom and the Kremlin since the station was bought out in 2001 as a "reprieve," aware that the government could at any time decide to crack down

¹⁹ Eismont, "Rules of Engagement."

²⁰ Anna Dolgov, "The Kremlin's Harmful but Beautiful Insect," *The St. Petersburg Times*, Feb. 3, 2004 (accessed April 8, 2011), http://www.sptimesrussia.com/index.php?action_id=2&story_id=12161.

on the station.²¹ Yet a balance is struck between the station and their state-supported majority shareholders. Ivan Zassoursky has described one operational model that combines the station's profitability with the station's ratings and international reputation as part of the formula for Ekho Moskvy's success in avoiding being shut down or taken over in Putin's Russia:

Ekho Moskvy was not only the first independent radio station, but the first independent mass medium. As such, it reflected the dominant characteristics of other independent media even as it came under the ownership first of private capital, then the state-owned Gazprom: frequent quotability, particularly in the West, and relatively low ratings nationwide, particularly outside of Moscow and St. Petersburg.²²

Zassoursky identifies several key elements to Ekho's operations that make up a possible formula for the station's success in the Putin era, including maintaining its status as an independent media outlet despite ownership changes from Media-Most to Gazprom, but such assertions inevitably raise more questions than they answer: How can Venediktov as editor-in-chief maintain independence despite a state-owned corporation controlling the station's majority stake? What, then, does independence mean for the station? If the audience numbers are so low, as Zassoursky asserts, particularly outside of Russia's two largest cities, then what are the ratings within the two largest cities, and what does it mean if they have achieved greater popularity in the political, business, and cultural capitals of the country? What does that say about the station's audience? Can the station maintain profitability with their audience concentrated in Moscow and St. Petersburg? And if quotability in the West is really part of the station's success, who are the guests that are being quoted, and what are they talking about?

²¹ Eric Helque, "Last Mic Standing," *Russian Life*, Jan/Feb 2005, 58; and Remnick, "Letter from Moscow."

²² Anna Arutunyan, *Media in Russia* (New York: Open University Press, 2009), 23.

Profitability and Independence

The viability of Ekho Moskvyy as a profitable business adds another complex dimension to the process of determining how the station continues to operate at an independent level. Advertising revenue has historically played a key role in Ekho Moskvyy's ability to operate without intervention or pressure from its majority stakeholders. In 2000, Venediktov described the importance of advertising revenue to Ekho's relationship with its owner at the time, Gusinsky's Media-Most conglomerate: "Advertising is a guarantee of our independence, from Media-Most, among others: It enables us to make a profit for it, rather than being subsidized by it."²³ Similarly, in another interview after Gazprom took over control of the station, Venediktov described the balance of relations between the station and its majority shareholders:

Gazprom said they wanted two things from me: the first was profitability. Gazprom has no intention of supporting Ekho Moskvyy financially. We have fulfilled this condition and even ended a crisis year, 2009, with a profit. All these years Gazprom hasn't put a penny into us – we were the ones paying them the dividends... The second condition is that when unflattering news about Gazprom gets released we cannot hold it back: we are the mass media. The condition was that we would immediately give Gazprom the opportunity to respond to any allegations.²⁴

In the ten years since Gazprom became the majority shareholder of Ekho Moskvyy, Venediktov has received only three requests, "not orders," as Venediktov notes, from Gazprom to withhold information. Of these requests, he agreed to two of them, one about the Ukrainian gas crisis and the other about the Belorussian gas crises; while he rejected the third request, the nature of which he has not publicly discussed.²⁵

²³ Shevelev, "Implant Ekho Moskvyy."

²⁴ Eismont, "Rules of Engagement."

²⁵ Rostova, "The Kremlin is Our Real Stockholder."

Competition is another important aspect of Ekho Moskvyy's operations that could influence the station's influence on the radio market. Several new talk-radio stations have started operations since Venediktov became editor-in-chief, which challenge Ekho Moskvyy both for audience numbers as well as advertising revenues. One station in particular, Siti-FM, which follows a similar news and opinion format as Ekho Moskvyy, was opened in 2006 by Ekho Moskvyy's majority-stake holding company, Gazprom-Media. Venediktov believes Siti-FM uses the same format and schedule as Ekho Moskvyy in an effort to take away shares of Ekho's audience and advertising market.²⁶ Venediktov has stressed that he is not afraid of competition from similarly-formatted radio stations; he is more concerned with their impact upon the station's bottom line: "Ekho Moskvyy is not afraid of competition from other talk radio outlets, the only question is what stake the radio stations will take of the advertising market."²⁷

The profitability of Ekho Moskvyy is often discussed by Venediktov as a buffer between the station's operations and their overseers at Gazprom and in the Kremlin. In a 2005 interview, Venediktov states that as long as Ekho can attract enough commercials to be profitable, it can continue to maintain editorial independence from Gazprom: "Since 1999, our shares have yielded a profit to our shareholders, so I do not have any problems with Gazprom...As long as we are profitable, they do not try to lean on me."²⁸ According to a 2008 press release from Gazprom-Media, Ekho Moskvyy's profit for the 2007 fiscal year was 45 million rubles, of which 60% (27.8 million rubles, or just over \$1 million

²⁶ Rebel, "Ekho."

²⁷ "'Vesti' Everywhere," *Gazeta.ru*, February 4, 2008 (accessed November 22, 2011), <http://www.gazeta.ru/business/2008/02/04/2625371.shtml>.

²⁸ Helque, "Last Mic Standing": 58.

USD²⁹) was paid out in dividends, while the remaining 40% (18.6 million rubles, over \$700,000 USD) was set aside for reinvestment in the company's development.³⁰ This ability of Ekho Moskvyy under Venediktov's leadership to maintain a level of profitability plays no small role in the continued independence of Ekho Moskvyy from the possibility of interference from its primary shareholders.

On the peculiar situation in which Ekho finds itself between its editorial staff the minority owners of a company of which the Kremlin indirectly owns a majority stake in its operations through its subsidiary company Gazprom, Venediktov states: "Yes, I believe that the Kremlin's authority is the real stockholder of the Ekho Moskvyy in a political sense of the word, while Gazprom is the stockholder in a juridical sense."³¹ According to Venediktov, Ekho is allowed to follow its own independent guidelines, as long as it continues to maintain the uneasy balance between profitability for their shareholders and walking the line of the Kremlin's official stance on news and policy. This then raises the question: how and in what form does Ekho Moskvyy present independent news and commentary that do not simply follow the Kremlin's stance, while simultaneously not crossing the line?

²⁹ Conversion based on the 2007 average annual exchange rate, which was 25.581 rubles per American dollar. Source: CIA World Factbook, "Exchange Rates" (accessed January 31, 2012), <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2076.html>.

³⁰ Source: Gazprom-Media, "Annual General Meeting of the Shareholders of the JSC Ekho Moskvyy," July 17, 2008 (accessed October 10, 2011). http://gazprom-media.com/news.xml?&news_id=5411&year_id126.

³¹ Rostova, "The Kremlin is Our Real Stockholder."

4. Literature Review and Media Context

Nearly every mention of Ekho Moskvyy in studies of Russian media, news stories, and works of political science describes Ekho Moskvyy as an anomaly. The anomalous status of Ekho Moskvyy is often attributed to its continued independence, whether that independence is described as financial or editorial; for its status as the last bastion of democratic debate in Russian media, but without exploring at length who is saying what on the broadcasts or what constitutes democratic debate; or because it hosts a diversity of guests who do not always support the positions of the Kremlin. It is often called an oppositional media outlet, though Venediktov rejects this label and describes the station's work as "professional." Although Ekho Moskvyy is frequently mentioned in academic sources discussing Russian media, those sources rarely offer more analysis than noting the station's "independence" without qualifying the term, or that the station was a pawn in the process of the media wars of the 1990s and the state takeover of Media-Most's former holdings after Putin came to power in 2000.¹ Radio is a relatively untapped subject of research in studies of the media in Russia, despite its ubiquitous reach. This paper seeks to broaden the study of Russian media to include an expansive look at perhaps the most intriguing political question relating to the Russian media: Ekho Moskvyy's enduring exceptionalism.

Survey of Literature on Russian Media

The study of post-Soviet Russian media has evolved in the last twenty years as scholars attempt to keep up with the rapid political, economic, and social changes within

¹ For example, a typical Western scholar's passing mention of Ekho Moskvyy in a larger discussion of Putin's takeover of Media-Most, "Pressure on radio [during the Media-Most takeover] was also evident in the case of the Ekho Moskvyy station, which had made a name for itself as fiercely independent." As quoted in Sakwa, *Putin*, 105.

Russia. One of the most common themes in Western literature on Russian media is the mixing of politics with the media. Minna-Mari Salminen offers a survey of Western scholarship on Russian media in her chapter in 2009's *Perspectives to the Media in Russia: "Western" Interests and Russian Developments*.² Anna Arutunyan's *Media in Russia* likewise provides a broadly-focused glimpse into many facets of the contemporary Russian media system, focusing on the problem of press freedoms, asking to what extent Russian media has been "free" since the collapse of the Soviet Union.³

There are numerous studies of Russian media that specifically pertain to the relationship between media and power in Russia.⁴ Salminen notes that a "political-ideological theme" dominates Western literature on Russian media, and then outlines three popular approaches to discussions of Russian media that recur within this body of literature:⁵ the role of democracy in the media and freedom of speech;⁶ the journalistic profession;⁷ and the media's effect on electoral behavior in Russia.⁸ The study of the operations of Ekho Moskvy in this paper cannot help but address questions of the role of democracy in the media and freedom of speech, as well as the professionalism of the

² Minna-Mari Salminen, "Expert Opinions on the Future of Russian Media," in *Perspectives to the Media in Russia: "Western" Interests and Russian Developments*, eds. Elena Vartanova, Hannu Nieminen and Minna-Mari Salminen (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2009), 85-105.

³ Arutunyan, *Media in Russia*.

⁴ Such as Olessia Koltsova, *News Media and Power in Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Ivan Zassoursky, *Media and Power in Post-Soviet Russia*; and Ellen Mickiewicz, *Television, Power and the Public in Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

⁵ Minna-Mari Salminen, "International Academic Research on Russian Media," in *Perspectives to the Media in Russia: "Western" Interests and Russian Developments*, ed. Elena Vartanova et al. (Helsinki: Aleksanteri Institute, 2009), 38.

⁶ As discussed in Sarah Oates, "The Neo-Soviet Model of the Media," *Europe-Asia Studies* 59:8 (2007): 1279-1297; Sarah Oates, *Television, Democracy, and Elections in Russia* (New York: Routledge, 2006); and Daphne Skillen, "The Next General Elections in Russia: What Role for the Media?" *Europe-Asia Studies* 59:8 (2007): 1263-1278.

⁷ As discussed in Oates, "The Neo-Soviet Model" and Svetlana Pasti, *The Changing Profession of a Journalist in Russia* (Tampere, Finland: Tampere University Press, 2007).

⁸ As discussed in Oates, *Television, Democracy, and Elections in Russia* and Laura Belin, "Political Bias and Self-Censorship in the Russian Media," *Contemporary Russian Politics: A Reader*, ed. Archie Brown (Oxford: Oxford University Press), 323-342.

journalists who work at the station, most notably evidenced by statements made by the station's editor-in-chief, Alexei Venediktov.

Studies of Russian media disagree on how to define Russia's media system. Jonathan Becker, in his article, "Lessons from Russia: A Neo-Authoritarian Media System," notes that Russia's post-Soviet media system has been dominated by authoritarian elements, comparable to authoritarian media systems around the world, including historical examples from Portugal, Spain, Latin America, and other countries within the former Soviet Union.⁹ This placing of the Russian media system within an international context of authoritarian media systems contradicts Hedwig de Smaele's suggestion in 1999 that Russia was on the path to creating its own unique type of media system, "The unique position of Russia in between Europe and Asia, and its combination of western (European) and eastern cultural and philosophical principles, might cause Russia to interpret the concept of Eurasianism into an Eurasian media model or simply the Russian model."¹⁰ This idea acknowledges John C. Nerone's discourse on authoritarian tendencies in media, "The possibility of authoritarianism in communications is present wherever the authority of power exists and is exercised to limit or suppress or define people's thoughts or expressions."¹¹ De Smaele argues that the combination of authoritarian elements along with Western democratic media models can create a unique, non-Western form of media model that can help internationalize media theory. James Curran and Myung-Jin Park offer a new comparative media model whose two axes of comparison feature democratic and authoritarian governments on one axis, with neo-

⁹ Jonathan Becker, "Lessons from Russia: A Neo-Authoritarian Media System," *European Journal of Communication* 19:2 (2004): 149.

¹⁰ Hedwig de Smaele, "The Applicability of Western Media Models on the Russian Media System," *European Journal of Communication* 14:173 (1999): 186.

¹¹ Becker, "Lessons from Russia," 141.

liberal and regulated media systems on the other; but according to their model, Russia belongs to a fifth category that does not fit within their model, classified as “transitional and mixed.”¹²

Russian democracy has suffered in the Putin era from a crackdown on media outlets, which has led to a lack of diversity of opinion and independent news. Yassen Zassoursky discusses four historical “control models” since the 1980s that have led to today’s authoritarian media climate in Russia.¹³ The first model began under Perestroika (1986-1990), when the mechanisms of control, production and distribution were much the same as during any other Soviet period, but journalists had greater editorial freedom. Second, from 1990-1995, after a short, golden age of unbridled independence from government or corporate control, journalists came face to face with tough market realities caused by a lack of institutionalism in the media. The third model is the rise of the oligarchs, 1995-1999. Today, Zassoursky asserts, Russian media is defined by a “return to a government” model, which has taken place in the Putin era, 2000-present.

Sarah Oates notes the authoritarian traits that have influenced Russian media in her article on the formulation of a neo-Soviet model in Russia, discusses the pressures and controls on media outlets in the Putin era, including economic and market forces as well as harassment and violence.¹⁴ This notion is corroborated by de Smaele, who discusses the notion that media structures in Russia are shaped not only by economic forces, but also by political and cultural ones.¹⁵ Vartanova and Smirnov note the “inseparable ties between the market as an economic structure of society and the media

¹² As quoted in Salminen, “Expert Opinions,” 64.

¹³ Arutunyan, *Media in Russia*, 32-33.

¹⁴ Oates, “The Neo-Soviet Model,” 1279.

¹⁵ Hedwig De Smaele, “The Applicability of Western Media Models on the Russian Media System,” *European Journal of Communication* 14:2 (1999), 173.

system existing within its context.”¹⁶ They also note that the media system in post-Soviet Russia has changed profoundly over the recent decades, and its restructuring has been quite similar to developments in other countries, with quantitative growth, increased diversity in media channels and media content, regionalization of media markets, and the introduction of new media technologies into the media infrastructure and into the media system itself.¹⁷ Yet Oates points out that the diversity of media does not imply media freedom in the Russian case, as a result of a dearth of effective media laws in Russia to back up the freedoms of speech and opinion guaranteed by the Constitution.¹⁸

Beneath the surface of diversity and choice, however, there are serious barriers to the Russian media functioning as a pillar of civil society. The gravest problems are continuing state control on media content; poor development of legal protection for freedom of speech despite constitutional guarantees; a selective application of the law to intimidate media outlets; and the lack of a sense of journalistic ethics on the part of either media professionals or government officials. On a more menacing note, journalists in Russia are vulnerable to intimidation and violence, either because of rampant crime and corruption, or more ominously, due to people who want to silence their journalistic voice.¹⁹

Oates discusses the variation of the media and the ability for alternative news and opinion to be discussed only within media outlets with limited audiences, such as *Ekho Moskvy*:

There remains some variation in the media sphere in Russia, as a wide range of opinion and news is expressed in smaller outlets. In particular, a Moscow newspaper called *Novaya Gazeta* and a Moscow-based radio station, *Ekho Moskvy* continue to report on issues such as the war in Chechnya, opposition to Putin, protest marches and the political opposition. They do this in an atmosphere of menace and personal threat.²⁰

¹⁶ Elena Vartanova and Sergey Smirnov, “Contemporary Structure of Russian Media,” in *Russian Mass Media and Changing Values*, ed. Arja Rosenholm et al (New York: Routledge, 2010), 39.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 39.

¹⁸ Oates, “The Neo-Soviet Model,” 1286-1287.

¹⁹ Oates, *Television, Democracy, and Elections in Russia*, 21.

²⁰ Oates, “The Neo-Soviet Model,” 1288.

De Smaele concurs with Oates' sentiment, and notes that the media situation in Russia is pluralist, but not independent.²¹

Kremlin Influence in Russian Media since 2000

The influence of political processes cannot be ignored in any study of Russian media. Since he was elected President of Russia in 2000, Vladimir Putin has consolidated tremendous power as both President (2000-2008) and Prime Minister (2008-present) through a series of reforms and crackdowns on dissenting voices in the country, from political opposition to business leaders to media outlets. The Russian press under Putin can be best be described as a neo-authoritarian media system, following Becker's definition, which is differentiated from totalitarian systems in that access to the media may be open and private ownership may be tolerated, but other mechanisms are used to control messages, such as selectively applied legal and quasi-legal actions against owners, as well as broadly worded laws which prescribe criminal and civil penalties for journalists concerning such issues as libel, state interests, national security, and the image of the head of state.²² Laura Belin has noted that the media in Russia can be and often is used by the center of political power to attack political enemies.²³

Putin's centralization of state power around the executive office, but more specifically, himself, reinforces what is referred to as the "vertical of power," in which the entire executive branch operates under his direct control.²⁴ Works by political scientists and historians have used varying degrees of authoritarianism to describe how

²¹ Hedwig De Smaele, "In the Name of Democracy: The Paradox of Democracy and Press Freedom in Post-Communist Russia," in *Mass Media and Political Communication in New Democracies*, ed. Katrin Voltmer (New York: Routledge, 2006), 50.

²² Becker, "Lessons from Russia," 149.

²³ Laura Belin, "Bias and Self-Censorship in the Media," *Contemporary Russian Politics*, ed. Archie Brown, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001, 331-332.

²⁴ As discussed in Remington, *Politics in Russia*, 21.

Russian democracy has evolved since the end of the Soviet Union in 1991, from Yeltsin-era designations such as “formal democracy” and “authoritarian,” to Putin-era terms such as “totalitarian democracy,” “hollowed out democracy,” and Putin’s own preferred terminology, “sovereign democracy.”²⁵ All definitions of the current Russian political landscape stress that Putin has led Russia astray from definitions of a liberal democracy through authoritarian measures.

Sources on Russian media systems note that one of the hallmarks of a liberal democracy is an independent media,²⁶ and most critics agree that media play a crucial role in the fostering of civil society within a democracy.²⁷ Becker defines Russia’s media system under Putin as neo-authoritarian by building off of the definition of a democratic media system developed by Richard Gunther and Anthony’s Mughan in their work *Democracy and the Media*. For Gunther and Mughan, a democratic media system is one in which:

...[it is the] media’s responsibility to maximize opportunities for citizens to make political decisions and cast ballots on the basis of informed choice – retrospectively about to the extent to which the government has kept its promises in office and, prospectively, about how rival candidates will act if (re)elected.²⁸

One of the greatest problems facing Russian media is the lack of a legal framework to protect the content of media broadcasts. Censorship is *de jure* banned by

²⁵ Definitions of Russian democracy discussed at length in *Ibid.*, 127.

²⁶ Andrei Ryabov, “The Mass Media,” in *Between Dictatorship and Democracy*, ed. Michael McFaul et al (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2004), 174.

²⁷ Three sources on the discussion of the relationship between media and civil society include Robert Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics* (New Haven: Yale, 1989); Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Oxford: Polity, 1989); Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late 20th Century* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press: 1991).

²⁸ Becker, “Lessons from Russia,” 145.

Article 29 of the Russian constitution,²⁹ but what censorship means is not defined in the Constitution. Oates discusses flaws within the legal system in terms of protection of free speech,³⁰ while de Smaele notes that despite *de jure* freedom of information and a ban on censorship in Russia, *de facto* restrictions to information imposed by the political structure and a lack of legal enforcement exist within the system.³¹ Anna Arutunyan outlines three types of censorship that can take place in any media system: preliminary, posterior, and self-censorship. Arutunyan notes that posterior censorship is technically legally permissible in Russia, and that self-censorship is a common practice among Russian journalists.³² Becker concurs, and that the Kremlin may condone or tolerate violence against opposition journalists and editors with a goal of intimidating the media, leading to a culture of self-censorship among journalists.³³

Venediktov himself believes that people carry a “huge burden of self-censorship in Russia,”³⁴ as he stated in a 2010 interview with *Index on Censorship*. He previously addressed the question of how self-censorship can arise in a journalist in a 2008 interview with the independent newspaper *Novaya Gazeta*, “When the journalist begins to think about the consequences of publishing honest material that is self-censorship. The rooster is not responsible for the sunrise, he just warns people about it.”³⁵

²⁹ Article 29 of the Russian Constitution, subsection 5: “5. The freedom of the mass media shall be guaranteed. Censorship shall be prohibited.” Source: Official Website of the Government of the Russian Federation (accessed February 19, 2012), <http://www.government.ru/eng/gov/base/54.html>.

³⁰ Oates, *Television, Democracy, and Elections in Russia*, 24-25.

³¹ Hedwig De Smaele, “Mass Media and the Information Climate in Russia,” *Europe-Asia Studies* 59:8 (2007): 1299-1313.

³² Arutunyan, *Media in Russia*, 58.

³³ Becker, “Lessons from Russia,” 149-150.

³⁴ Eismont, “Rules of Engagement.”

³⁵ As quoted in Salminen, “Expert Opinions,” 103.

Radio in Russia

Radio is a lightly regarded medium in media studies pertaining to Russia. Nonetheless, it is a broad-reaching media outlet with near-ubiquitous penetration in homes and, increasingly, cars throughout Russia. Even though most Russians in the country at large depend on television for news and information, in Moscow especially, the anomalous case of Ekho Moskvy and the station's popularity shows the importance of radio for alternative news and opinion. Ellen Mickiewicz notes the versatility of radio as a medium as well:

Radio has portability, like a newspaper, and can be used as a secondary activity, like television, and these are valuable features for a medium used while driving... Radio has found niche audiences, as it has in the United States... Is radio a competitor? Can it attract large populations to whatever news is produced (and it is mainly headlines)?³⁶

The relationship of radio with its audience is repeated in scholarly works as a marker of radio's success, and particularly the success of Ekho Moskvy. Russian media scholar Lyudmila Bolotova states that Ekho Moskvy's most attractive features are the station's interactivity and a dialogue with listeners.³⁷ Diana Platonova, in a chapter on the informational participation of society in the activities of Russian media (including television, newspapers, and radio), expands on Ekho Moskvy's emphasis on maintaining a dialogue with its listeners, and provides an analysis of the interactivity of Ekho Moskvy in comparison with two other radio stations, Evropa Plyus and Russkoe Radio.³⁸ Her discussion includes the ability for listeners of Ekho to help choose the theme and course of discussions on the station's broadcasts, as listeners are reminded throughout the day to

³⁶ Mickiewicz, *Television, Power, and the Public in Russia*, 28.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 149.

³⁸ Discussion of research and analysis of radio in D.V. Platonova, "Informatsionnoe uchastie obshchestva v deyatel'nosti SMI (rezul'taty kontent-analiticheskogo zondazha)," *СМИ в Меняющейся России*, ed. Elena Vartanova, Aspekt Press: Moscow, 2010, 200-207.

submit questions on certain topics.³⁹ Platonova notes that Ekho's programs are concerned with the "sharpest and most serious problems of a social-political nature," but not just limited to politics, as the station devotes many programs to cultural discussions.⁴⁰ Platonova sees Ekho's interactivity as one of its most salient features: "Thus, consciously or unconsciously, the radio station Ekho Moskvy is trying to organize a certain psychological training for its audience in the formulation of an informational system and, subsequently, greater civic participation."⁴¹ Through the two-way nature of dialogue with its listeners, Ekho Moskvy serves as an example of Arutunyan's idea that the rapport with audience helps the station avoid overtly political strategies to limit its influence.

Ekho Moskvy: The Anomaly

This study attempts to examine an extraordinary media outlet that has never been subjected to rigorous analysis. Ekho Moskvy is both outside of the aforementioned studies of Russian media that focus primarily on television, and wholly within the interactions between elites and audience, information and opinion programming, market and political forces. Ellen Mickiewicz has described the importance of a study of Ekho Moskvy, both for the station's importance for the public, as well as the ever-changing dynamics of power in Russian media, "As always in the Russian media sector, time horizons are notoriously short. Always excepting the Echo of Moscow, radio is not a real competitor for the public when compared to television, and no other mass-medium is either."⁴² Yet no study has been undertaken to examine what it means to be a "fiercely independent" media outlet in the Putin era or what the formula for Ekho's lasting success

³⁹ Ibid., 202.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 203.

⁴¹ Ibid., 204.

⁴² Mickiewicz, *Television, Power and the Public in Russia*, 29.

might be that has allowed Ekho to become and stay exceptional. Within the neo-authoritarian Russian media system in which the right to information is restricted by political forces, how can Ekho Moskvyy continue to present a diversity of viewpoints in independent news and opinion programming that is not allowed on other media outlets?

Part II

5. Power Relations with the Kremlin Elite

Putin has continued to let the fact be known that all forms of mass media in Russia are answerable to the highest levels of the Kremlin's power, not just television. The gathering of media leaders that Putin held in January 2012, described in the Introduction, was not the first time that Putin had publicly raged against Venediktov and the operations of Ekho Moskvyy. In a 2008 interview with David Remnick published in *The New Yorker*, Venediktov recounts the story of being invited to a private meeting of media industry leaders in Sochi around the time of the Georgian War. At the meeting, Venediktov was singularly called out and chastised in front of the entire group for Ekho Moskvyy's reporting on the Russian conflict with Georgia in South Ossetia, which Putin considered too favorable to the Georgians.¹ David Remnick describes the pair meeting in the hallway after the dressing-down in front of the nation's media leaders:

Venediktov protested to Putin that he was being "unjust." Putin pulled out a stack of transcripts to underline his points, saying, "You have to answer for this, Aleksei Alekseevich!" Venediktov was shaken, but he calculated that Putin would never have invited him to Sochi with the rest of the delegation had he intended to get rid of him or Echo of Moscow. That could have been accomplished with a telephone call.

Despite Putin's harsh tone in front of the gathered media leaders, he struck a much less confrontational tone in a private conversation with Venediktov after the meeting encounter, highlighting the tenuous line that Ekho Moskvyy treads in its relationships with

¹ As discussed in Remnick, "Letter from Moscow."

Putin and government elites, but also the importance of Venediktov's personal interactions with Putin:

“Afterward, we met one on one, and there Putin's tone was more positive,” Venediktov told me. “But he made his point. He was demonstrating his ability to do whatever he wants with us at any time.” When Venediktov returned to Moscow, he made clear to his staff that they had best “pay careful attention” to their coverage, be sure of their facts, and get sufficient government views.²

With this invitation and rebuke, Putin demonstrated to Venediktov his ability to exercise his power over the station directly. Venediktov's response also highlights the editorial balance he must strike between presenting both the Kremlin's point of view along with the station's normal independent, non-official discussions, news, and opinions. Although there were fears at the time that Putin would use this opportunity to crack down on the news and opinion content presented by Ekho Moskvyy, or to shut the station down altogether, the station continued operations they have since they began broadcasting as the first registered independent radio station in the Soviet Union in 1990.

When asked in an interview with the *Index on Censorship* how Ekho Moskvyy has been able to survive in a country deemed to be authoritarian, in which the regime tramples on the press, Venediktov responds with a description of the many ways in which he has carved out a niche for the station within the system as constructed by Putin:

First thing to say is that, in terms of formalities, we are rigorously law abiding... Second reason is that in the eyes of the authorities we are a showcase for the West, demonstrating that Russia has free speech. And of course we exploit our position. The third thing is that, as editor in chief, I've preserved the connections that I made in the Yeltsin era, at all levels of the establishment. In the event of a conflict, I always manage to get over in time to put out the flames.³

² As recounted in Remnick, “Letter from Moscow.”

³ Eismont, “Rules of Engagement.”

During his tenure as editor-in-chief, Venediktov reports that he has received only one request from the powers in the Kremlin to withhold information. During the Beslan school siege in 2002, Kremlin aides Alexei Gromov and Vladislav Surkov called Venediktov and asked him not to report on the nationality of the terrorists who had taken the school hostage. Venediktov complied with this request.⁴

Freedom of Expression vs. Freedom of Speech

Putin's attitude towards the democratic idea of a free press is evidenced in statements he has made that Russia has never had freedom of speech, and that he saw no reason to begin allowing freedom of speech now.⁵ According to Putin, freedom is the ability to express one's opinion within certain boundaries laid out by the law, even though Article 29 of the Russian constitution "guarantees" freedom of speech.⁶ Under Putin's idea of free speech, media outlets such as Ekho Moskvyy may say whatever they would like, but at the risk of falling afoul of the watchful eye of government officials in the Kremlin.⁷ Andrew Jack recounts Venediktov telling him that Putin "sees the media as someone's instrument. He looks at them as an industry, not a societal institution."⁸ In a separate interview, Venediktov has claimed that his work at Ekho Moskvyy is "professional," and by being "professional," he does not need to think in terms of free speech.⁹ At the same time, in a 2006 interview, Venediktov claims that freedom of speech exists, but that the freedom of information has changed, giving rise to forms of self-censorship, and that affects what can be discussed in the media: "There is freedom of

⁴ Rostova, "The Kremlin is Our Real Stockholder."

⁵ As described in Remnick, "Letter from Moscow."

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Maria Lipman and Michael McFaul, "The Media and Political Developments," in *After Putin's Russia: Past Imperfect, Future Uncertain*, 4th edition, ed. Stephen K. Wegren et al. (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 109.

⁸ Andrew Jack, *Inside Putin's Russia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 169.

⁹ Eismont, "Rules of Engagement."

speech, but the zone of freedom of information has narrowed. We have zones in which it is fatal, in every sense of the word, to dig... Those zones are Chechnya, corruption, and corruption in Chechnya.”¹⁰ This idea of “fatal zones” brings back the “culture of self-censorship” that prevails in Russia media, as even independent media outlets like Ekho Moskvyy must tread very carefully on issues that are forbidden to be discussed.

Kremlin Statements Regarding Ekho Moskvyy

One theory regarding Ekho’s exceptionalism regards the possibility that the station is supported by the Kremlin elite, as described by journalist Anna Dolgov, “Its survival so far seems partly due to the fact that it has some influential supporters within the Kremlin who turn to Ekho Moskvyy for the news.”¹¹ Or as Matvei Ganapolsky wrote in the newspaper *Moskovsky Komsomolets* on the occasion of the station’s 20th anniversary in 2010, “The powers that be hate them, but they listen to them, and personally at that. In their cars on their way to and from work, their radios are tuned to Ekho’s broadcasts.”¹² According to Venediktov, those Kremlin insiders “explain to President Putin that we are a harmful insect but a beautiful one.”¹³ According to an interview with Ekho program host and editor of the Russian *New Times*, Yevgenia Albats, President Medvedev is said to read transcripts of Ekho Moskvyy broadcasts online.¹⁴ In August 2010, Medvedev used his new Twitter account, which had nearly 150,000 followers by the end of 2010,¹⁵ to congratulate publicly the journalists and

¹⁰ Rebel, “Ekho.”

¹¹ Dolgov, “The Kremlin’s Harmful but Beautiful Insect.”

¹² Matvei Gonapolsky, “20 let nepreryvnogo ‘Ekha’,” *Moskovsky Komsomolets*, August 23, 2010 (accessed October 10, 2011), <http://www.mk.ru/social/article/2010/08/22/524439-20-let-nepreryvnogo-eha.html?bc515640>.

¹³ Dolgov, “The Kremlin’s Harmful but Beautiful Insect.”

¹⁴ As accounted in Scott Gehlbach, “Reflections on Putin and the Media,” *Post-Soviet Affairs*, 2010, 26:1, 81.

¹⁵ Yelena Osipova, “@MedvedevRussia, Are You Listening? A Story of 6 Months on Twitter,” December 15, 2010 (accessed January 20, 2012), <http://globalvoicesonline.org/2010/12/15/medvedevrussia-are-you-listening-a-story-of-6-months-on-twitter/>.

listeners of Ekho Moskvyy on their 20th anniversary, praising the station as a “modern and professional” example of journalism: “My congratulations to the journalists and listeners of the 20-year old Ekho Moskvyy radio. Ekho is a radio station of modern and professional journalism.”¹⁶

Putin has a history of public comments on Venediktov, especially on the occasion of Venediktov’s birthday. On the occasion of Venediktov’s 56th birthday in 2011, Putin stated:

You are rightly regarded as one of the most brilliant, talented and creative members of Russian journalism. You passed through a great professional school, developed a distinctive, unique architectural style. One might debate you on your judgments, estimates and projections. But they are certainly interesting and nontrivial. It is important that you always give the interlocutors to participate in open debate, to express their views on public issues of our time.¹⁷

Prior to that, Putin sent a congratulatory telegram to Venediktov while at his 50th birthday party. Putin wished Venediktov good health, success and all the best, and the telegram read:

You lead Ekho Moskvyy – one of the most popular metropolitan radio stations, well known for its awareness, efficiency, and objectivity. Talent, awareness, and the unchanging awareness of a social commentator have allowed you to become a significant figure in the Russian media community. Your comments and competent opinion are always interesting for your audience of listeners.¹⁸

Putin is said to have a begrudged respect for Venediktov as well, seeing in Venediktov something akin to the “loyal opposition,” as one journalist at *Russkii Reporter* has noted:

Putin described him as an enemy – someone with whom you fight, conclude a truce, then peace, a union, divide up the spoils, and then again go to war. With

¹⁶ Dmitry Medvedev (@MedvedevRussia), Tweet, August 22, 2010 (accessed April 1, 2011), <https://twitter.com/#!/MedvedevRussia/status/21828828651>.

¹⁷ “Putin wished the editor-in-chief of Ekho Moskvyy a happy birthday,” *Interfax*, December 18, 2011 (accessed December 19, 2011), <http://interfax.ru/society/news.asp?id=222550>.

¹⁸ “Putin called the editor-in-chief of Ekho Moskvyy a ‘significant figure’,” *Lenta.ru*, December 18, 2005 (accessed September 23, 2011), <http://lenta.ru/news/2005/12/18/venediktov/>.

them, an open relationship of hostility, eye to eye. A traitor fights on the same side but at the first stumble puts a knife in your back.¹⁹

Venediktov has himself corroborated this idea that Putin sees the world in terms of enemies and traitors, recounting to David Remnick in a 2008 interview how Putin invited him to a meeting in the Kremlin's library to both acknowledge his respect for Venediktov while warning him at the same time:

“It’s a crucial distinction for Putin,” Venediktov said. “[Putin] said, ‘Enemies are right in front of you, you are at war with them, then you make an armistice with them, and all is clear. A traitor must be destroyed, crushed.’ This is his philosophy of the world. And then he said, ‘You know, Aleksei, you are not a traitor. You are an enemy.’”²⁰

This idea that Ekho Moskvyy is at war with Putin is not a fact that Venediktov acknowledges; his editorial style is to call to question those in power, but not to question them politically. This difference is manifested in his insistence that Ekho Moskvyy is not an oppositional media outlet, but rather a professional media outlet that thrives by presenting a diversity of opinions from all sides on political issues.

Professional vs. Oppositional Radio

A Finnish researcher held a survey of Western media experts on the future of the Russia media in 2008,²¹ and found a “clear consensus amongst the experts” that they believe Ekho Moskvyy is a “dissident voice in Russia.” The respondents admitted that the station had a limited number of listeners as opposed to national television and radio outlets, but that they believed the station plays a very important role in society. One correspondent believes that Ekho Moskvyy is allowed to operate independently as a liberal

¹⁹ Igor Naidenov, “A Tribute to Radio,” *Russkii Reporter*, September 2, 2009 (accessed September 23, 2011), http://www.rusrep.ru/2009/33/interview_venediktov/.

²⁰ Remnick, “Letter from Moscow.”

²¹ The Western participants included “eleven interviewees, including four journalists, two European Commission officials and two media researchers, one member of the European Parliament, and one government official.” Full methodology and discussion of the focus group in Salminen, “Expert Opinions,” 85-105.

voice to “take off the pressure,” while another correspondent noted that Putin, as a former KGB member, understood the political importance of allowing alternative sources of information to exist in Russia.²² Venediktov does not follow the thinking of these Western experts, and in public interviews echoes Medvedev’s sentiment that Ekho Moskvyy is not so much a *dissident* voice in Russia as it is a *professional* voice willing to air all sides of an argument, but especially those voices which go unheard on the rest of Russia’s media outlets: “We are not an oppositional radio station; we are a professional one. And we are an alternative source of information for the Kremlin’s people too.”²³ Venediktov stresses that the importance of professionalism within the station is as much a part of its operational mission as it is part of the strategy Venediktov employs to avoid political interference: “So I want to say that the professionalism of journalists at Ekho Moskvyy is the foundation of its existence. A lack of professionalism does not grant me an opportunity to defend Ekho Moskvyy. This is very important to understand.”²⁴

Venediktov identifies the diversity of viewpoints offered on Ekho Moskvyy as one of the hallmarks of the station’s professionalism, and a reason why the Kremlin might be hesitant to interfere with the station’s operations. In an interview with *Novaya Gazeta* in September 2011, Venediktov discusses this idea and further expands his definition of what professional radio means to him and to Ekho Moskvyy:

I always say that we are not the opposition but rather professional radio, but that professional media should oppose power. The opposition is a political structure that wants to come to power. We do not have this problem. The opposition press is a press that supports a certain party. We do not support any party. Our party is our listeners, who vote for different parties... We are not fighting for power. We

²² Ibid., 96.

²³ Rostova, “The Kremlin is Our Real Stockholder.”

²⁴ Full transcript of Venediktov’s program, “Without Intermediaries,” in which he answers questions directly from listeners about the operations of Ekho Moskvyy; transcript of broadcast from March 23, 2012 (accessed March 25, 2012), <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/nomed/870109-echo/>.

do not even fight for minds – we do our professional work. Because all of our guests say different things.²⁵

In another 2011 interview with the state-owned newspaper *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, Venediktov responded to the interviewer’s question of when he thought the station would be shut down, and the labeling of the station as oppositionist:

Interviewer: When will you shut down?

Venediktov: Why should we close? We are successful, we are profitable, we are popular, we are quoted, we don’t violate the laws, we are winning in court, which sometimes happens.

Interviewer: Because you are the opposition and say on air what you can’t hear from other stations.

Venediktov: We are not the opposition!²⁶

This statement about the station’s success and popularity as following along professional and legal guidelines echoes a 2008 interview Venediktov gave to *Rossiiskaya Gazeta*, in which he was asked what distinguishes professional radio station from the radio of the opposition: “The three most important tasks as editor-in-chief: reputation, ratings, and revenue from advertising.”²⁷ These traits of “professional radio” highlight the adaptation strategies that Venediktov uses to maintain Ekho Moskvyy’s exceptionalism in Putin’s Russia.

Venediktov’s concept of “professional journalism” as diversity in news stories, sources, and commentary follows the Western ideas of democratic press freedom in which the press is a public tool that helps keep the government accountable on the people’s behalf. Venediktov commented in a 2003 interview with the newspaper *Izvestiya* in which he answered listeners’ call-in questions, in a style similar to that of the programs he hosts on Ekho Moskvyy:

²⁵ “Aleksei Venediktov: ‘Kak ya mogu druzhit’ s krovavym Fursenko?! A vot tak!’” *Novaya Gazeta*.

²⁶ Alperina, “Ekho.”

²⁷ Yuferova, “Freedom of Ekho.”

We don't need any freedom [of the press]. It is you who need it. You are going to elect the deputies and the president. The regime should be open to criticism, that is why journalists exist. Especially that the president, as Putin said, is responsible for everything – both the good and the bad.²⁸

Venediktov's claim that it journalists exist to criticize the government echoes Becker's discussion of Gunther and Mughan's definition of a democratic media system as one whose responsibility it is to maximize opportunities for citizens to make political decisions and cast ballots on the basis of informed choice as well as to retrospectively consider to what extent the government has kept its promises in office and how rival candidates will act if elected.²⁹

In an era of government-sponsored takeovers of media outlets, Venediktov's stance on criticizing the powers that be reflects upon Ekho Moskvyy's role in watchdog journalism, as defined by Lance Bennett and William Serrin, in which the watchdog media outlet provides independent scrutiny of the activities of government, business, and other public institutions to document, question, and investigate those activities in order to provide publics and officials with timely information on issues of public concern.³⁰ Venediktov's mention of Putin as the center of all responsibility in the government, and thus the target of any political criticism, echoes Putin's own consideration of Venediktov as the sole figure of responsibility at Ekho Moskvyy. Yet the Kremlin is not the only target of criticism for Venediktov, as Oleg Pamfilov, head of the Moscow-based Center for Journalism in Extreme Situations, describes: "They cover everything, and they let

²⁸ "Russia: Ekho Moskvyy Radio Station Chief on Freedom of Speech," BBC Monitoring Media, October 23, 2003 (accessed April 6, 2011), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/452286960?accountid=10598>.

²⁹ As discussed in Salminen, "International Academic Research on Russian Media," 66.

³⁰ Lance W. Bennett and William Serrin, "The Watchdog Role of the Press," *Media Power in Politics*, 6th ed., ed. Doris Graber (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2011), 396.

everybody express themselves, but they do not criticize only the Kremlin, and they do not always criticize it, so they are not really partisan."³¹

Perhaps one reason Venediktov has lasted so long as the editor-in-chief at Ekho Moskvyy is his ability to create a platform for all voices to be heard on an issue, which in the Russian context constitutes a form of “professional” journalism that the Kremlin respects as much as the station’s journalists and editor-in-chief. Or perhaps the Kremlin is content with the idea of Ekho Moskvyy serving as a “steam vent” or “pressure valve” and presenting its blend of news and opinion to a strictly limited audience compared to mass media outlets, such as television. Or rather, do Venediktov’s relationships with political elites combine with many other factors to protect the station from crossing too far over the Kremlin’s undefined official line, including the station’s mixed ownership and profitability, its unique charter providing editorial independence, and the selection of a diversity of guests who appear on the station’s broadcasts?

³¹ As quoted in Helque, “Last Mic Standing,” 59.

6. Selection of Program Participants: Discussion and Methodology of Categorization

My research explores for the first time the entire universe contained within the diversity of participants and opinions presented on programs hosted by Ekho Moskvyy's editor-in-chief since 1998, Alexei Venediktov. I have done what is not often done in studies of Russian media outlets; even though so many scholars, journalists, and experts discuss how important Ekho Moskvyy and what an anomaly it is, no other source has ever analyzed the entire body of programs on Ekho Moskvyy to examine what the exceptionalism of the station truly entails. My research gets into the heart of Venediktov's discussions: it includes the attitudes of the guests towards the Kremlin and political power; it analyzes the representation of guests' occupations; it distinguishes the ranks of political officials, foreign guests, ambassadors; it records the themes of discussion and the tone of those discussions among program participants. As editor-in-chief, Venediktov is wholly responsible for determining the editorial content for the station and for maintaining a certain diversity of viewpoints among those guests. It is for this reason and those stated throughout this thesis that I chose to research only those programs Venediktov hosted.

My research on the guests and content of the discussion on Venediktov's programs is important to the understanding of Ekho Moskvyy's survival as an anomalous outlet for a diversity of viewpoints in Putin's Russia. The programs themselves enable me to answer the research question: what makes Ekho Moskvyy an anomaly and what forms of adaptation have kept it alive in an otherwise bleak landscape for diversity of viewpoints in the Russian media? I adopted this labor-intensive research strategy in order

to advance our understanding of the questions posed at the beginning of this thesis: how and why is Ekho Moskvyy able to survive as an exceptional media outlet?

Methodology of Programs to Select for Analysis

In the methodology for this research, I selected every single program, included every single guest, and coded¹ the content of each guest's contribution to the discussion on programs hosted by Venediktov from January 1, 2000 through December 31, 2010 (see Appendix A for a detailed breakout of all coding categories). For my research, I read transcripts on Ekho Moskvyy's website of every radio program hosted by Venediktov that was originally broadcast during the Putin era, January 1, 2000-December 31, 2010. This research is not a sample; it includes the entire universe Venediktov operates within as a program host at Ekho Moskvyy. To look at a random sample of Venediktov's programs would miss much and would leave more questions at the end of the research than answers, and so I created through this research a picture of the entire universe in which Venediktov operates. Excluded were any programs that featured Venediktov as a guest rather than a host, because the focus of this research is on the diversity of viewpoints; also excluded were any programs hosted by Venediktov alone without guests, as and that in those instances he does not fulfill the role of arbiter of opinions that so concerns Putin.

I created a system to apply to participants who have appeared on programs hosted by Venediktov in order to better understand the composite makeup of the participants who appear on Ekho's broadcasts. The content of these broadcasts and the personal characteristics of each participant can shed light onto *who* is saying *what* on Ekho's programs, and whether that contributes to the station's exceptionalism. My system

¹ Throughout this thesis, coding refers to the process in which I divided participants into categories that capture the theme and content of the discussion.

included two different types of categories, Content and Employment. I created Content categories to apply to what was discussed by each participant as well as the tone of the discussions. The Content analysis categories denote whether mention was made of the Kremlin (President/Prime Minister Mentions); the Political Tone; the Tone of Discussion (among all conversation participants, host(s) and participant(s) alike); and the Theme(s) of Discussion. Employment categorizes the professional designation each person receives on every Ekho Moskvyy broadcast.

7. Participant Research: Results and Analysis

From January 1, 2000 through December 31, 2010 Venediktov hosted a total of 2,094 participants on 1,568 separate programs. According to the findings of this research, Venediktov hosts a remarkable diversity of public figures on his programs from Russia and around the world, and maintains an overall tone of neutrality¹ in his discussions, both among his program participants as well as regarding the Russian President and Prime Minister. As Communist Party of Russia leader Gennady Zyuganov told an interviewer for *Russian Life* in 2005, "I know Ekho and I do not exactly see eye-to-eye on many issues, but that is another problem. Today, this is the only station where I can talk."² The compromise that Venediktov negotiates between maintaining a diversity of viewpoints and a neutral balance in the tone of discussion towards the political structure provide an added layer of protection from his Kremlin overseers.

Power and the Kremlin: Political Tone in References to the President/PM

In this section on political tone, I am referring only to comments made about the President and Prime Minister by each guest and the tone of those comments. Therefore, it may be assumed that this part of my analysis is of the most critical interest to the Kremlin and to Ekho Moskvyy itself in its adaptive strategies. In all programs hosted by Venediktov from 2000-2010, Putin, Medvedev or the offices of the President or Prime Minister are mentioned (62%) of the time (as seen in Table 3). This number of mentions of Putin or Medvedev on Venediktov's broadcasts is a telling statistic; although Ekho Moskvyy has a reputation as a politically-themed radio station, Putin maintains a near-ubiquitous presence on Venediktov's programs. One may think that Venediktov would

¹ I define the term "neutral" as it relates to political tone as well as overall tone of discussion in Appendix A.

² Helque, "Last Mic Standing."

avoid discussions that overtly mention the President or Prime Minister and keep a lower profile on Putin overall at the risk of running afoul of the Kremlin; or at the same time, Venediktov may be specifically continuing a long tradition in Russia of naming the ruler directly and tying them to all discussions in a sort of name recognition, though then 62% of programs would not quite contribute to a fully ubiquitous presence. The ultimate response to this number of mentions lies within the reader of the statistic, with the reader's own opinions forming the basis for the interpretation of the data. This seems to highlight another adaptive strategy on Venediktov's part to include the President and Prime Minister in a majority of his program's discussions, though it is not clear if the station is able to survive *because of* or *in spite of* this inclusion.

Despite the constrained media climate that has seen political interference in those outlets that did not toe the Kremlin's line, Venediktov does not keep his head down, and rather maintains a consistent level of discussions that mention the President or Prime Minister (see Table 3). Only 40% of Venediktov's hosted programs over the eleven year period do not discuss either Putin or Medvedev, and only one year of the eleven researched even comes close to reaching 50% of discussions that do *not* mention Putin (49% - 2007).

Table 3: References to President/Prime Minister per Guest as Percentage of Total Guests, 2000-2010

Mention	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
Yes	65% (93)	65% (155)	70% (222)	63% (145)	67% (83)	68% (64)	59% (77)	51% (86)	61% (141)	72% (209)	61% (77)	62% (1307)
No	35% (50)	35% (85)	30% (94)	37% (84)	33% (40)	32% (30)	41% (54)	49% (83)	39% (91)	38% (82)	39% (49)	38% (787)
Total	100% (143)	100% (240)	100% (316)	100% (229)	100% (123)	100% (94)	100% (131)	100% (169)	100% (232)	100% (291)	100% (126)	100% (2094)

Putin is mentioned far more often than Medvedev; even when discussions overtly mention Medvedev as a figure fulfilling roles of the President, such as meeting foreign dignitaries or touring a local factory, the discussion of the policy aspect of Medvedev's action reverts back to a discussion of Putin. The guests on Venediktov's programs mention Putin even when politics and policy is not being discussed, in reference to cultural events and historical conversations. One curious aspect of the mentions of the President and Prime Minister is that officials representing the Kremlin (who will be discussed at length to come) often discuss Kremlin policies without mentioning Putin by name, but Venediktov brings Putin's name directly in to the discussion and the official is forced to discuss him by name. This may be part of Venediktov's strategy to hold officials accountable to government policies as much as it links together the officials themselves directly with Putin. The inclusion of non-political content and discussants, or at least less overtly concerning Putin, would add an aspect to the station's neutrality that would keep it out of the focus of the Kremlin; but 40% of discussions without a mention of Putin over eleven years is not enough to offer the station its continued survival.

If the political tone of the station's broadcasts is integral to the continued existence of Ekho Moskvy, then of particular importance is the position of participants on the subject of Putin and the offices he has represented since 2000, both when he is mentioned and when he is not. The overall tone of discussions is predominantly neutral (as seen in Table 4); even when Putin is mentioned, the vast majority of the time it is in passing among participants as part of a larger discussion of government policy or Russian foreign affairs, and the participants' opinion is not tilted one way or another towards the

political ends of the spectrum in their assessment of either the person or the office of the President or Prime Minister.

Table 4: Political Tone toward President/Prime Minister per Guest as Percentage of Total, 2000-2010

Tone	Percentage of Total
Neutral	82% (1723)
Pro-President/PM	12% (244)
Anti-President/PM	6% (127)

The recorded instances of pro-government voices are primarily from participants who have been previously categorized as Official. Anti-government opinion primarily comes from those participants in the Opposition Politician category, but not exclusively; Journalists and Duma deputies also discuss anti-government opinions. The majority of guests, 82% are simply neutral; they maintain a safe position in the discussion and remain neutral.

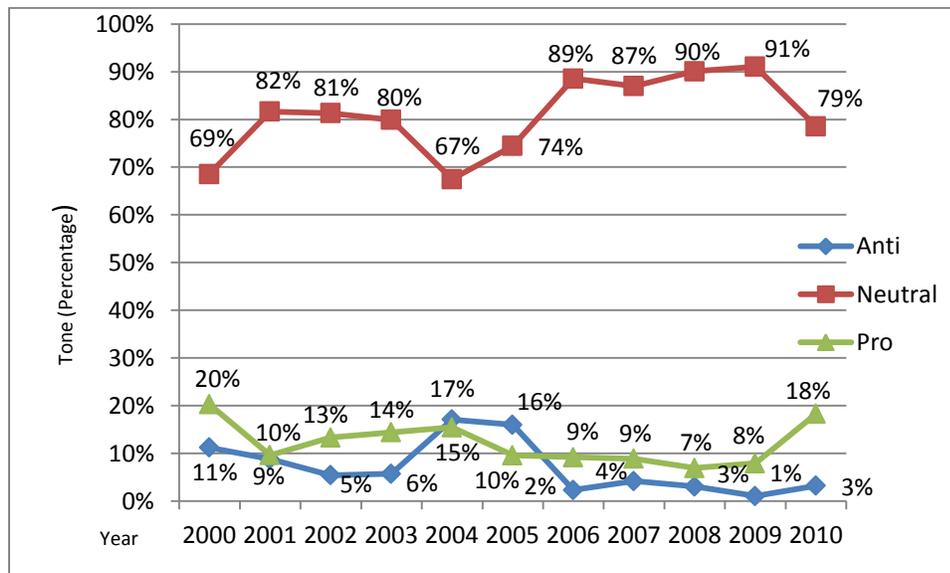


Figure 3: Political Tone towards President/Prime Minister per Guest per Year as Percentage of Total Guests, 2000-2010

The overall neutral balance of the content of discussions on Venediktov's programs is one possibility for the continued survival of Ekho Moskvyy in the Putin era. Neutrality may be part of Ekho Moskvyy's strategy that is internalized by the guests as much as the host; the station hosts all kinds of political spitfires, yet these voices are toned down and given towards neutrality when on Ekho Moskvyy. This neutral position is in accord with Venediktov's adaptive strategy of professionalism and guests judiciously adhere to Venediktov's tone on these matters. If the political tone of the discussions is examined as the numbers show over the course of the eleven years, the neutral bias is highlighted even more; despite occasional dips and spikes in the percentage of neutral political opinion on Venediktov's programs, neutrality has maintained a clear majority throughout the Putin era.

The rise in pro-Kremlin tone from 2008 through 2010 (from 7% to 18%) evidences the strategy of including "sufficient government views" that Venediktov discussed in the wake of Putin's 2008 rebuke of the station for its presentation of balanced news and opinion on the Georgian War.³ This spike in pro-Kremlin points of view on Venediktov's broadcasts from 2008-2010 indicates that his recommendation to present more government voices is being fulfilled on Ekho's broadcasts. The figure indicates that a rise in Anti-President/PM (2003-2005) or Pro-President/PM tone (2008-2010) corresponds with a subsequent drop in Neutral.

Discussions on the theme of Politics are the most likely associated with the shift away from neutrality towards taking a stand either for or against Putin and the Kremlin. The rise in Anti-President/PM between 2003-2005 is comprised primarily of the theme of

³ As recounted in Remnick, "Letter from Moscow."

Politics, though this theme drops in prominence over the three years, from 77% of all Anti-President/PM guests in 2003 to 71% in 2004 and 50% in 2005. Media comprises 15% of the themes in Anti-President/PM in 2003, but is not mentioned in 2004, before comprising 25% in 2005. The rise in Pro-President/PM tone corresponds with Politics as well, but only in 2010 does Politics dominate the pro-governmental voices on Venediktov's programs. In 2008, Politics and Health/Education/Welfare are tied for the most prominent theme in Pro-President/PM (31% each); in 2009, Politics drops to the second most prominent theme (21%) behind Russian Foreign Policy (46%); but in 2010, Politics makes up 65% of the conversational themes speaking favorably towards the Kremlin, with Health/Education/Welfare a distant second with 17%.

If the categories of Pro- and Anti-President/PM are analyzed further, certain trends become evident. In the category of Pro-President/PM, as would be expected, the vast majority of those speaking in favor of the Putin government are from the professional category of Official (86%, or 209 of 244 total from Pro-President/PM), with 7% from Business, 3% from Journalists/Media, 2% from NGO, 1% from Professional, and 0.4% (with one member) from Arts/Culture/Entertainment. The lone instance of an Opposition Politician speaking in a pro-government tone is in a 2002 interview with Grigory Yavlinsky,⁴ the leader of the liberal Yabloko political party. In the interview, Yavlinsky spoke in favor of Putin's recent foreign policy success at a summit in St. Petersburg (May 23-26, 2002), as Putin met with President Bush of the United States, in which the pair discussed a "strategic partnership" between Russia and the United States; Putin also met with the leadership of NATO and the European Union at the summit.

⁴ This interview was conducted May 30, 2002; a link to the program can be found at: <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/beseda/18611/#element-text>.

Yavlinsky praised Putin's successes in his handling of the relations world leaders at the summit, "I think in the world of foreign policy, the president can be congratulated on his real strides and successes. Judging by these three days [at the summit]. What lies ahead is a different matter."

The category of Anti-President/PM is more diverse in its representatives, with 33% from Journalists/Media, 28% from Opposition Politician, and 19% from Official. For example, on July 20, 2010, Mikhail Gorbachev appeared on a program with Alexander Lebedev and Dmitry Muratov,⁵ and all three figures harshly criticized Putin and the authoritarianism of the Putin era. These Official voices speaking out against the Putin government while serving as elected representatives in the Duma include most prominently the well-known opposition figures of Boris Nemtsov (10 of the 24 instances), Vladimir Ryzhkov⁶ (4 times), and Viktor Pokhmelkin⁷ (2 times). Other Official representatives in the Anti-President/PM category include, with one appearance each, Alexander Veshnyakov,⁸ Anatoly Ermolin,⁹ Boris Nadezhdin,¹⁰ Viktor Ilyukhin,¹¹ Vladimir Butkeev,¹² Elena Mizulina,¹³ Oleg Sysuev,¹⁴ and Sergei Yushenkov.¹⁵

⁵ This interview can be found at <http://echo.msk.ru/programs/beseda/696591-echo/>.

⁶ Vladimir Ryzhkov is a former Duma deputy who represented the Barnaul region in the Duma from 1993-2007. He is now a professor at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, as well as a contributing political commentator to newspapers (*Novaya Gazeta*, *Moscow Times* and *St. Petersburg Times*) as well as hosting a political talk show on Ekho Moskvyy. He appeared on 20 programs hosted by Venediktov from 2000-2010. His personal website can be found at <http://www.ryzhkov.ru/> and his page on Ekho Moskvyy's website, including a short biography and an archive of all of his appearances on the station can be found at <http://echo.msk.ru/contributors/22/>.

⁷ Viktor Pokhmelkin was a liberal Duma deputy who represented Perm in the Duma from 1993-2003. He was the leader of the political party Liberal Russia, as well as a member of the oppositionist Union of Right Forces. He is currently the head of the Russian Movement of Russian Automobile Drivers. His personal website can be found at <http://www.pokhmelkin.ru/>.

⁸ Veshnyakov was the outspoken Chairman of the Central Election Commission between March 24, 1999 and March 26, 2007; he was dismissed from this position following a disagreement with Putin, and was appointed Ambassador to Latvia in 2008.

⁹ A Duma deputy from the Krasnodar region elected on the United Russia party ticket, Ermolin was dismissed from United Russia in 2004 for "a breach of parliamentary ethics," which Ermolin claimed was actually caused by his criticism of the party and of Putin. He became a member of the board of the non-governmental organization Open Russia and is an editor of the political magazine, *The New Times*.

The majority of discussions with the primary theme Political have a Neutral political tone towards the Kremlin (256 of 437, 59%). There are 91 instances of an Anti-President/PM tone within the theme of Politics (20.5% of the total in the theme of Politics), while a Pro-President/PM tone is noted in 90 instances (20.5%). Of the 127 total recorded instances of Anti-President/PM political tone across all themes, Politics is the primary discussion theme in 91 of those instances (72%). Of the 244 total instances of a Pro-President/PM political tone, 90 (37%) of those instances discuss Politics as the primary theme. Which then begs the question, what do Pro-President/PM participants discuss to outwardly state their support for the government, if not politics? Politics is the most popular discussion theme for participants with a Pro-President/PM tone, followed by Financial/Monetary & Fiscal Policy (20.9%), Russian Foreign Affairs (16.8%),

Tone of Participant and Host Discussion

If the political tone of discussions is dominated by neutral opinion, what does that mean for the interactions between the participants and the hosts? Neutrality also dominates the interaction of discussion participants with each another (see Table 5). This is not to say that discussions on Venediktov's programs are not lively; it is rather to say that the interactions rarely stray into hostility. Venediktov's style as a host is not provocative. He is known for asking hard questions of his discussants, and for asking

¹⁰ Nadezhdin was a Duma deputy from 1999-2003, a member of the Union of Right Forces; after he was elected out of office, he became a member of the A Just Cause (*Pravoe Delo*) political party.

¹¹ Ilyukhin is a Duma deputy in the Communist Party of the Russian Federation representing the Penza region.

¹² Butkeev is a Duma deputy from Magadan Oblast'.

¹³ Mizulina is a Duma deputy and a member of the Yabloko Party from Yaroslavl.

¹⁴ Sysuev was President of the Congress of Municipalities of Russia (2000-06), former first deputy head of Presidential Administration (1998-99) during the time of his Anti-President/PM discussion; he later became the head of Alfa-Bank.

¹⁵ Yushenkov was an outspoken liberal politician and Duma deputy assassinated on April 17, 2003, three months after his lone appearance (January 16) on Venediktov's programs during this research period.

valuable follow-up questions that challenge participants to stand their ground or support their claims without descending into argument.

The category of Disagreement includes over one-third of all members of the professional category of Student (15, for 5% of the total in Disagreement). The majority of those in Disagreement come from the professional category of Official (29%), Business (20%), Journalists/Media (14%), and Professional (12%).

Of note is the drop in Agreement among participants since 2005. A previous drop in Agreement is evident from 2002 to 2003, but the numbers rebounded from 2004 to 2005. However, a similar increase in Agreement has not taken place since 2005. The increase in Disagreement and Slight Disagreement in 2008 and 2009 corresponds with a large increase in the percentage of discussions about Russian Foreign Policy in particular (from 12% to 27% of all primary discussion themes between 2008 and 2009; comprising 24% of all Disagreement in 2009 after no Disagreement in 2008) and a drop in discussions on the theme of Politics (from 24% of all primary discussion themes, and 83% of all Disagreement 2008 to 7% in 2009 of all primary discussion themes and only 12% of all Disagreement in 2009). Decreases in Agreement correspond with increases in overall Neutral participant relations. Guests in Agreement are made up primarily of those from professional category of Journalists/Media (16%) and Official (15%), followed by Professional (12%), Arts/Culture/Entertainment (11%), and NGO (11%).

Table 5: Degrees of Tone of Discussion among Program Participants as Percentage of Total, 2000-2010

Tone	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	Total
Agreement	13% (18)	15% (35)	17% (53)	9% (20)	7% (8)	16% (15)	5% (7)	5% (9)	6% (14)	4% (11)	6% (8)	9.5% (198)
Neutral	69% (98)	64% (153)	54% (171)	62% (141)	75% (92)	62% (58)	75% (98)	78% (131)	55% (128)	54% (156)	75% (94)	63.0% (1320)
Slight Disagreement	8% (12)	12% (29)	16% (52)	20% (45)	9% (11)	10% (9)	8% (11)	11% (18)	16% (38)	19% (55)	11% (14)	14.0% (294)
Disagree ment	10% (15)	10% (23)	13% (40)	10% (23)	10% (12)	13% (12)	11% (15)	7% (11)	22% (52)	24% (69)	8% (10)	13.5% (282)
TOTAL	100% (143)	100% (240)	100% (316)	100% (229)	100% (123)	100% (94)	100% (131)	100% (169)	100% (232)	100% (291)	100% (126)	100% (2094)

Professional Background of Participants

The profession of each participant plays an important role not only in why they are chosen to participate in each program, but contributes to the questions and themes of the discussions as they take place with the hosts and participants on-air (see Tables 6 and 7). Venediktov has stated the need to get both sides of every story as part of the station's professionalism with particular emphasis, especially since his Putin reprimanded him for a lack of the Kremlin's views on the Georgian War¹, on ensuring that the Kremlin's point of view on matters is presented.

The inclusion of a large number of political elites representing the Kremlin and the government on Venediktov's programs highlights his inclusion of official views, as Putin demanded in 2008. The data on his program participants' employment shows that this is indeed the case, as Venediktov hosts more Official guests (who will be discussed at length to come) on his programs than from any other category of employment.

The broad array of professions represented by participants on Venediktov's programs are shown by the largest number of participants from the categories of Official, which includes far and away the most participants (24% of the total, with 99 more participants than the next closest category), followed by Journalists/Media (19%), Foreign (12%), Business (9%), Arts/Culture/Entertainment (8%), Professional (8%), NGO (6%), Academic (6%), Opposition Politician (4%), Other (3%), and Student (2%). The diversity of participants' employment is a highlight of the democratic aspect of Venediktov's discussions.

¹ As discussed in Remnick, "Letter from Moscow."

Table 6: Program Participant Occupation as Percentage of Total Guests by Year, 2000-2010

Employment	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	TOTAL
Academic	3% (5)	3% (8)	2% (7)	4% (10)	5% (6)	5% (5)	11% (15)	24% (40)	6% (14)	3% (9)	1% (1)	6% (120)
Arts, Culture & Entertainment	10% (15)	15% (35)	11% (35)	4% (10)	6% (7)	3% (3)	5% (7)	4% (7)	9% (20)	9% (25)	8% (10)	8% (174)
Business	7% (10)	6% (14)	5% (17)	6% (14)	2% (3)	10% (9)	11% (14)	8% (14)	14% (33)	19% (54)	6% (7)	9% (189)
Foreign	6% (8)	11% (26)	10% (32)	9% (21)	16% (20)	12% (11)	25% (33)	13% (22)	8% (19)	13% (37)	15% (19)	12% (248)
Journalists / Media	15% (21)	19% (46)	11% (36)	16% (37)	25% (31)	26% (24)	16% (21)	21% (35)	27% (63)	16% (48)	28% (35)	19% (397)
NGO	3% (5)	7% (16)	8% (26)	11% (26)	4% (5)	5% (5)	7% (9)	3% (5)	5% (12)	3% (8)	2% (2)	6% (119)
Official	34% (49)	28% (66)	29% (93)	30% (69)	28% (35)	26% (24)	11% (15)	15% (26)	10% (24)	18% (53)	33% (42)	24% (496)
Opposition Politician	9% (13)	2% (4)	6% (18)	8% (18)	3% (4)	7% (7)	3% (4)	4% (6)	3% (6)	2% (5)	2% (2)	4% (87)
Other	3% (4)	3% (6)	9% (29)	5% (11)	1% (1)	0% (0)	1% (1)	2% (3)	0% (0)	1% (4)	2% (2)	3% (61)
Professional	9% (13)	8% (19)	7% (23)	6% (13)	9% (11)	6% (6)	9% (12)	6% (10)	11% (25)	10% (29)	1% (1)	8% (162)
Student	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)	1% (1)	7% (16)	7% (19)	4% (5)	2% (41)
TOTAL	100% (143)	100% (240)	100% (316)	100% (229)	100% (123)	100% (94)	100% (131)	100% (169)	100% (232)	100% (291)	100% (126)	100% (2094)

Officials

The largest professional category for program participants is Official, which corresponds to Venediktov's stated need to ensure he gets an official point of view on air as part of the station's balance of opinion. At the same time, hosting so many political officials ties in to the complex relationships that Venediktov maintains with the political elite as an element of Ekho Moskvyy's continued survival. As he has stated, "My complicated relations with decision-makers secure the work of my radio station."¹ As was seen with the rise in pro-Kremlin points of view following Putin's rebuke of Venediktov in 2008, likewise, the number of Official discussion participants has risen since 2008 as well, from 10% of the total number of discussion participants in 2008, to 18% in 2009 and 33% in 2010.

But who exactly are these officials who come on Venediktov's programs? As Table 8 shows, the officials come from a wide array of government offices. Venediktov has discussed his need to meet with officials and politicians from all levels of government not only as a matter of journalistic information-gathering, but as a sign of his editorial leadership, to get deeper into the news and the newsmakers than his journalists can:

I need information, I need to get to grips with the thinking of people close to the decision-makers. And naturally I also meet ministers, deputy prime ministers, regional governors. It's part of the job. I think any chief editor should assess what's behind the decisions that are made, and that's something journalists can't do. They're just not at the right level.²

This access to officials at all levels of the Russian government ensures that the Kremlin's viewpoint is heard on nearly any issue.

¹ Eismont, "Rules of Engagement."

² Ibid.

The large number of Officials who appear on Venediktov's programs also illustrates his claim made in a 2011 *Index on Censorship* interview that he has preserved the connections he made in the Yeltsin era at all levels of the establishment, which gives him the ability to move quickly and utilize his connections to put out the flames of the conflict and preserve the station: "We have become a genuine source of information for people who make decisions...Apparently they don't have enough information. Because we have become a platform for debate, the decision-makers always study them, even if they do not always take part in our debates."³ Though we have no evidence to illustrate the sources of information for political officials, Venediktov believes that the station's diversity of opinions provides information to the Kremlin that they cannot receive from other Russian media outlets.

Venediktov's access to and frequent hosting of highly-placed governmental officials on his programs displays the importance of this type of elite discourse among political officials for the content of broadcasts on Ekho Moskvyy. Bruce Bimber discusses the importance of giving political elites a medium through which to speak in his examination of John Zaller's *The Nature and Origins of Mass Opinion*. Zaller, Bimber notes, observes the content of elite discourse contains information, but is not "just information":

Because political discourse is the product of values and selectivity as much as verifiably "objective" observations, it comprises a mix of information and other factors...I assume that when a political actor communicates a personal statement about the world containing a mix of facts and values, that actor is simply communicating a package of information, some of it dealing with "facts" and some of it with his or her values and predispositions. Some "facts" may even be

³ Ibid.

wrong, but they can be communicated nonetheless and they constitute information.⁴

In hosting more Official discussants than any other category, Venediktov fulfills Putin's demands to include more pro-government opinions on Ekho Moskvy's broadcasts, while also giving the political officials a forum to present their views to the public. Bimber also notes the importance of elite discourse:

...elites exercise a powerful influence on the organization of democracy, through their capacity to influence public opinion, set agendas, mobilize citizens into collective action, make decisions, and implement policies. The identity and structure of elites is neither fixed across time nor random in its changes. Many factors affect the identity and structure of elites, and the state of information is one of them.⁵

Though United Russia is the largest and most powerful political party in Russia, headed by Putin since 2008, this research found only ten instances of when participants were identified as members of either Unity or United Russia,⁶ not enough to warrant a separate category. Ekho Moskvy's general director, Yuriy Fedutinov, addressed this very lack of program participants from United Russia on Ekho Moskvy's broadcasts in a 2007 interview with the newspaper *Izvestiya*:

Our point of view is that as many different people as possible should be on the air on our station. For example, we would be glad to give airtime to representatives of United Russia, but they will not allow them to go on our station.⁷

Though United Russia does not receive a separate sub-categorization within the category of Officials, this does not mean that United Russia members do not appear on

⁴ Bruce Bimber, "How Information Shapes Political Institutions," in *Media Power in Politics*, 6th edition, ed. Doris Graber (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2011), 8.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

⁶ For a brief history of the creation of Unity as the "party of Putin" in December 1999 and the formation of United Russia in 2001, see Stephen White, *Understanding Russian Politics*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 43-44; 68-69.

⁷ Anna Fedina, "Ekho Moskvy Chief Discusses Strength, Problems of Russian Media," *Izvestiya*, June 21, 2007 (accessed April 6, 2011), <http://dlib.eastview.com/browse/doc/12233696>.

Venediktov's programs at all, nor does it mean that members of the party are not included in other subcategories without having their occupation introduced by Venediktov based on their party affiliation.

Subcategories of Officials

The different subcategories of Officials includes: ministers and deputy ministers, advisers to the executive branch (the offices of the President and Prime Minister), Russian ambassadors to foreign countries, Duma and Federation Council officials (the lower and upper houses, respectively, of Russia's legislative branch), economists, Mikhail Gorbachev, members of the judicial branch (including law enforcement officials), military officers, representatives from all branches of Moscow's local government, regional and local executives (including presidents of autonomous oblasts and governors of provinces and regions), and those who did not fit into any of these categories, under Other.

Mikhail Gorbachev is included in the category of Officials because he defies definition by any other standard. As an ex-President, he is accorded the respect that comes with his position by Venediktov, and his ten appearances are exclusively to discuss his role in and understanding of Soviet history. He does not discuss current politics of the Putin presidency or government as prime minister in these appearances, but rather gives his account of late Soviet history as it took place through the decisions he made that led to Perestroika and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The category of Minister includes the heads of various Russian government ministries, such as Sergei Lavrov (Minister of Foreign Affairs, 2004-present) as well as

deputy ministers, such as Victor Bolotov (First Deputy Minister of Education, 1996-2004). Ministers are an integral part of Venediktov’s relationships with the political elites in the Putin era, and they also provide an important part of the elite discourse that Venediktov is able to present on Ekho Moskvyy. Ministers are appointed by the President to oversee specific aspects of the running of the country, and as such, when Venediktov is able to bring them on his programs he can specifically ask them about the discussion and implementation of specific government policies. Also, due to Ekho Moskvyy’s interactive format with listener questions submitted via pager, telephone, text message, email or Twitter, the ministers are put on the spot and are not prepared for the listener questions they receive that related not only the political ramifications of their decisions but also to the real-world applications in the lives of Ekho Moskvyy’s listeners.

Table 7: Types of Officials as Percentage of Total Number of Official Guests, 2000-2010

Officials	Percentage	Total Number
Adviser (Executive Branch)	18%	88
Ambassador	2%	11
Duma	25%	124
Economics	1%	5
Federation Council	10%	52
Gorbachev	2%	10
Judicial	6%	30
Military	2%	10
Minister	22%	108
Moscow	7%	36
Other	2%	8
Regional/Local Executive	3%	14
TOTAL	100%	496

The importance of including so many ministerial voices is that they represent the authoritative voice on the policy and everyday issues covered by their respective

ministries. Hosting so many ministers offers Venediktov the chance for Kremlin opinion to come on air and state the Kremlin's reasoning behind certain policies; Venediktov does not contradict these officials during discussions and rarely allows the conversation to turn into disagreement, but rather presses the officials to state their case and then back up their points, entrenching the official position. At the same time, most of these official discussions, not just with ministers, feature call-in and online-submitted questions from listeners who have specific questions about how government policies have had an impact on their lives.

Journalists/Media

The category of Officials represents members of the Kremlin's circle of governmental officials, but there is another category as well that could highlight Ekho Moskv'y's reputation for sources that are not normally given the chance to have their voices heard and counter the contextual narrative offered by officials with non-official or dissenting opinion. As Opposition Politician is a narrow category comprised only of those participants active in the political process, Journalists/Media comes the closest to the idea of a contrasting non-official group of participants whose overall tone opposes the official Kremlin narrative. 33% of Anti-President/PM mentions are from the Journalists/Media category, and they make up the second-highest total number of participants (19% of all program participants). The counter-narrative from journalists and members of the Russian media does not consist solely of condoning Putin and his policies, but rather comes in the form of critical debate on Putin's policies and his political decisions. Venediktov is most concerned with presenting a "professional"

diversity of opinions on his stations, and as the overall neutral tone of his discussions shows, guests can speak critically of Putin's political system and his policies.

The journalists themselves come from a diverse array of sources, including numerous daily and weekly newspapers and magazines, radio programs, and television shows. One featured journalist and media personality is Soviet and Russian television journalist Vladimir Pozner, who appeared ten times over the research period. Another is Evgeny Kiselev, who worked as General Director of NTV, TV-6, TVS, and as a editor-in-chief of *Moscow News* and a journalist for Ekho Moskvyy over the course of his twelve appearances in the eleven year period of research. Kiselev was the General Director of NTV during the time of the takeover of Gusinsky's Media-Most media conglomerate, and he appeared on Venediktov's programs five times throughout 2001 to discuss developments in the situation, and on November 12, 2001, he expressed his worry that Ekho Moskvyy would be taken over the same way as had NTV. Mikhail Gusman, the First Deputy Director of news agency ITAR-TASS, appeared 103 times to discuss international events and personalities as one of Venediktov's most frequent program participants. Sergei Dorenko, the former Deputy Director General of Russian television's ORT (Channel One) and the host of a popular weekly program on ORT before his program was taken off the air and he was fired from in late August-early September 2000, appeared thirteen times over this period, with eleven of those discussions featuring an Anti-President/PM theme, including an appearance on September 9, 2000 in which he recounted his ouster from ORT and spoke critically of Putin and his allies as

orchestrating the move for political reasons following Dorenko's criticisms of Putin's handling of the Kursk submarine disaster.

Though individuals from the category of Journalists/Media comprise a sizeable percentage of the total number of participants on Venediktov's programs, there is a lack of a unified journalistic solidarity on issues; the political opinions of the journalists are split up among themselves and keep them from effectively challenging the dominant contextual narrative provided by Official viewpoints on Ekho Moskvyy. However, if the opinions of the category Journalists/Media are considered along with the third-highest category of program participants, Foreign (12% of the total), a diversity of non-official opinions and worldviews emerges on Venediktov's programs that does effectively counter the dominant narrative of official discourse provided by the inclusion of so many Kremlin officials as guests.

Foreign Participants

The category of Foreign participants, like that of Official, is comprised of a wide array of professions (as seen in Table 9), including academics, ambassadors, artists and cultural figures, businessmen and professionals, heads of state, journalists and media personalities, NGO employees, and political officials. Just as with domestic Russian political officials making up the largest number of guests on Venediktov's programs, the large majority of guests from foreign countries are also officials. Foreign Officials are comprised of a diverse array of official occupations; for example, delegates and representatives from foreign legislative and governmental bodies such as the European Union and the Council of Europe; Secretaries of State from the United States; and

ministers from Israel. The inclusion of such a large amount of foreign officials of all stripes and from so many different countries can play a two-fold role for Ekho Moskvyy, as the station might receive added protection against political interference lest their international supporters and program participants protest the interference, as well as expanding the profile of the station outside of the Russian-speaking world.

Table 8: Types of Foreign Occupations as Percentage of Total Number of Foreign Guests, 2000-2010

Foreigns	Percentage	Total
Academic	3%	8
Ambassador	25%	61
Arts & Culture	2%	5
Business/Professional	2%	5
Head of State/Gov't	9%	22
Journalists & Media	4%	9
NGO	3%	8
Official	52%	130
TOTAL	100%	248

The insurance that Ekho Moskvyy may receive from the inclusion of foreign guests is in direct relation to their importance. Venediktov has hosted 22 Heads of State/Government in the eleven years researched, which showcases both the station's perceived importance.⁸ However, 6 of those 22 instances of Heads of State/Government

⁸ The full list of participants from the category of Heads of State/Government: Vladimir Voronin (President of Moldova); Arnold Rüütel (President of Estonia); Prince Albert of Monaco; Viktor Yushchenko (President of Ukraine); Gerhard Schroeder (Chancellor of Germany); Tony Blair (Prime Minister of the United Kingdom); Vaira Vike-Freiberga (President of Estonia); Valdis Zatlers (President of Latvia); Bill Clinton (American President); Mikhail Saakashvili (President of Georgia); Toomas Hendrik Ilves (President of Estonia); Ferenc Gyurcsany (Prime Minister of Hungary); Jacques Chirac (President of France); Jorge Sampaio (President of Portugal); Ilham Aliyev (President of Azerbaijan); Valdas Adamkus (President of Lithuania); Vaclav Klaus (President of the Czech Republic); Paul Martin (Prime Minister of Canada); Leshek Miller (Prime Minister of Poland); Dominique de Villepin (Prime Minister of France).

were comprised of two leaders often at odds with Putin: Mikhail Saakashvili⁹ appeared twice as President of Georgia in 2004 and 2006; and Viktor Yushchenko¹⁰ of Ukraine, who appeared four times: once as Prime Minister (2000); once as President (2009); and twice as ex-President (2010). Venediktov's inclusion of these highest-level officials from countries Ukraine and Georgia highlights his ability to present a diversity of opinions on all issues, including those that other Russian media outlets cannot touch, like the heads of state who quarrel with Putin.

Russia's Political Allies

I expected to find instances in this research of the inclusion of Russia's political allies from those countries that make up Russia's closest allies, such as Cuba, Venezuela, Syria, Libya, Iran, Palestine, or Serbia. However, of all of these traditional allies, only Palestine and Serbia are represented in the Ambassador category. Khairi Al Adiri, the Palestinian Ambassador to Russia, appeared in 2002, and Elica Kuryak, the Chargé d'Affaires at the Serbian Embassy in Moscow appeared in 2007. Only Serbia is represented in the Official category by the country's Deputy Prime Minister (Bozhidar Dzhelic, in 2007).

Table 9: Foreign Officials' Regions as Percentage of All Foreign Official Guests

⁹ Mikhail Saakashvili is the pro-Western, pro-United States President of Georgia; he took office in January 2004 after the Rose Revolution. Saakashvili and Putin have been at odds with one another for several years, culminating in the 2008 Georgian War between the two countries.

¹⁰ Viktor Yushchenko was a presidential candidate in the 2004 Ukrainian presidential elections against Viktor Yanukovich, who was supported by Putin and considered the pro-Russian candidate. After the run-off results were protested in what became known as the Orange Revolution, Yushchenko was sworn in as President in January 2005. He served as President until February 2010.

Foreign Officials	Percentage	Total
CIS	15%	20
Europe	46%	61
Other	20%	27
USA	18%	24
TOTAL	100%	132

The category of foreign officials is comprised primarily of officials from Europe,¹¹ with officials from the United States and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) forming similar percentages of the total (see Table 10).¹² Officials from those countries not included in the other categories make up the Other,¹³ with 20 percent of the total.

Venediktov also hosts a large number of ambassadors; yet I did not find a single instance of an ambassador using their time on Ekho Moskvyy to speak negatively about the President or Prime Minister. Ambassadorial voices represent another form of official discourse for international voices on Ekho Moskvyy, and as such, ambassadors are treated by Venediktov as spokesmen for the official stance of their respective nations (or territories).

Table 10: Foreign Ambassadors' Regions as Percentage of All Foreign Ambassador Guests

¹¹ Officials from Europe represent: European Union, Council of Europe (as well as the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe), European Court on Human Rights, Finland, Hungary, Belgium, Latvia, Slovakia, UK, Sweden, Spain, Monaco, Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, France, Norway, Germany, Ireland, Serbia.

¹² As discussed previously, the Commonwealth of Independent States is comprised of former Soviet Republics, including Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Georgia is included in this study as a CIS country, though it is no longer a member of the organization.

¹³ The countries and organizations represented by Other are: Israel, NATO, Afghanistan, Canada.

Foreign Ambassadors	Percentage	Total
CIS ¹⁴	13%	8
Europe ¹⁵	38%	23
Other ¹⁶	11%	7
USA	38%	23
TOTAL	100%	61

The ambassadors' discourse serves to reify the position of their nation on Russian issues and to present a view on Russia from the outside for Ekho Moskvyy's listeners, with the themes of discussion as International and Russian Foreign Affairs. Ambassadors provide another aspect of Ekho Moskvyy's programming content that is not available on Russian state media or other independent media outlets.

As discussed in Political Theme, the importance of who is *not* included in Venediktov's programs can be as important as who *is* included. Also of note is the lack of representation by officials from Belarus; neither President Lukashenko, nor ambassadors nor officials from Belarus appear on Venediktov's programs, despite an official political "union" with Belarus that formally does away with the borders between the two nations. Not a single guest hosted by Venediktov was from Belarus. Nor were any guests from Central Asia. Of the nations in the Commonwealth of Independent States, the most guests during the research period are from Georgia and Ukraine, showing a lack of affinity for the majority of former republics of the Soviet Union among guests on Venediktov's programs.

¹⁴ CIS ambassadors' home countries are: Abkhazia (which is a disputed region in Georgia recognized as independent by Russia), Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine.

¹⁵ European ambassadors' home countries included are: Germany, Spain, Denmark, France, Britain, Norway, Estonia, Latvia.

¹⁶ Other-categorized ambassadors hail from Iran, Afghanistan, Japan, Canada, and an official representative from Palestine.

Foreign Program Participants and International Political Support

The international reputation of Ekho was greatly enhanced when US President Bill Clinton chose Ekho for an interview during his visit to Moscow on June 4, 2000. Since Clinton's visit, visiting dignitaries from many countries have regularly given interviews for Venediktov: so regularly that in 2005 Venediktov related a joke he had heard was going around the German embassy that, while in Soviet times, a visiting foreign leader had to "do" the Bolshoi, the Kremlin and Lenin's Mausoleum, today, the list of "must-dos" in Moscow includes the Bolshoi, the Kremlin and Ekho Moskvyy.¹⁷ Masha Gessen, a policy analyst at the Moscow Center of the Carnegie Endowment for Peace and a former editor of *Itogi* magazine when both it and Ekho Moskvyy were owned by Gusinsky's Media-Most group, has stated that Ekho's regular feature of international participants is important for the station. Gessen believes that the inclusion of many of the highest ranking politicians from the West, the former Soviet bloc, and beyond, has not only enhanced the reputation of the station but has also added a level of security to its operations through its international reputation. She posits that the Kremlin would face international backlash for interfering with the station.¹⁸

One example of a foreign elite both using Ekho Moskvyy to voice displeasure with the Russian government as well as signaling support for Ekho Moskvyy as an independent media outlet came in July 2001, when Jacques Chirac, then-President of France appeared on Venediktov's program to heatedly discuss Russian-French relations and to criticize the

¹⁷ Helque, "Last Mic Standing," 58.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 58.

Kremlin's attempts to weaken independent media in Russia.¹⁹ Just two days prior to Chirac's appearance on Ekho, Russian forces stormed the station and seized 14% of the station's shares, as part of the takeover from Gusinsky's Media-Most by Gazprom-Media. Chirac used his appearance to condemn the war in Chechnya, discuss NATO enlargement (which he supported, but Putin was against), and support the idea of media freedoms for all Russian media, not just Ekho Moskvyy.

The use of Ekho Moskvyy as the medium through which international elites were able to present their worldviews highlights Ekho Moskvyy's international recognition as an independent media outlet that hosts democratic news and opinion. When the President of the Czech Republic Vaclav Klaus visited Russia in April 2007, the only interview he gave to Russian media was to Ekho Moskvyy.²⁰ In a leaked diplomatic cable from the United States Embassy in 2006 (but released by Wikileaks in 2011), the United States ambassador to Russia, William Burns, discusses a meeting with Venediktov on the importance of the international element of protection granted to the station, "The Kremlin seemed reluctant to close down Ekho in part out of fear of an international outcry, Venediktov said. Hence, he concluded, barring a total breakdown in US-Russian relations, his station would continue to thrive."²¹ As Venediktov has stressed the importance of maintaining personal relationships with those in power in Russia as a means of providing a buffer against political actions domestically, so too does

¹⁹ Chirac's appearance can be found at <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/beseda/14911/#element-text>.

²⁰ The transcript of Vaclav Klaus' interview with Venediktov can be found at <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/beseda/51372/#element-text>.

²¹ Wikileaks, "EKHO MOSKVY'S VENEDIKTOV ON SUCCESSION, KREMLIN," May 11, 2006 (accessed September 22, 2011), <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2006/05/06MOSCOW5000.html>.

maintaining personal relationships with international officials, dignitaries, and elites provide an added level of protection.

Themes of Discussions

Politics is the most popular theme of discussion, but it is also one of the broadest. Politics is followed by Russian Foreign Affairs, International, Health/Education/Welfare, and Arts/Culture/Entertainment, showing the breadth of discussions on programs that Venediktov hosts.

Table 11: Primary and Secondary Themes of Discussion as All Discussion Themes, 2000-2010

Primary Theme	Percentage	Total	Secondary Theme	Percentage	Total
Arts, Culture & Entertainment	11.0%	230	Arts, Culture & Entertainment	10.6%	101
Financial / Monetary & Fiscal Policy	9.9%	208	Financial / Monetary & Fiscal Policy	4.8%	46
Health/Education/Welfare	12.0%	251	Health/Education/Welfare	5.8%	55
History (Russian & World)	6.5%	136	History (Russian & World)	4.7%	45
International	14.2%	297	International	20.1%	192
Legal Issues	0.1%	2	Legal Issues	2.1%	20
Local Moscow Issues	0.3%	7	Local Moscow Issues	2.0%	19
Media	6.9%	144	Media	3.2%	31
Military	1.3%	28	Military	0.2%	2
Other	1.1%	23	Other	0.6%	6
Politics	20.9%	437	Politics	24.1%	241
Russian Foreign Affairs	14.3%	299	Russian Foreign Affairs	11.7%	117
Sports & Olympics	0.2%	5	Sports & Olympics	2.2%	22
Terrorism	1.3%	27	Terrorism	5.9%	59
TOTAL	100%	2094	TOTAL	100%	956

If the category of political is broken down into three more specific terms, then we could divide the focus into Domestic Politics, Domestic Policy, and Elections. Domestic Politics relates to politically-themed discussions in general, especially party politics and politics in current events, and was the most popular of the Politics subheadings (213 total

references; 10.17% of the total discussion themes, not just out of the category of Politics). Domestic Policy relates specifically to government policies (177 mentions, 8.45% of the total discussion topics), while Elections refers to discussions of Elections in Russia at the local, regional, and national levels (47 mentions, 2.24% of the total discussion themes).

Fiscal/Monetary & Fiscal Policy is another broad category that includes all mentions of economic issues, on the national, international, and local levels. In this category of economic matters, the research found discussions of economics as they specifically related to business (20 instances, 10% of the category) as well as energy-specific discussions (33, 15% of the category). Of those discussions that focus on the economic aspect of specific Russian government policies, the secondary theme would be listed as Politics (Domestic Policy).

The category of International includes all discussions of foreign events and affairs outside of the Russia, without primary discussion of the official Russian angle on the issue (otherwise the topic would end up in Russian Foreign Affairs). Of the 297 instances of International as the primary theme of discussion, 53 of those mentions (18%) relate specifically to US Foreign Policy, with the rest of the mentions falling under the general rubric of International issues that take place out of the context of Russia's involvement in the matter. The bulk of US Foreign Policy mentions relate to the United States' wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that were both started during this time period.

In the secondary theme category, International issues came up 192 times, with 85 (44%) of those specifically regarding US Foreign Policy, and 31 (16%) relating to European Union Policy. Of those mentions of US and EU policy as a secondary category,

they coincide with the primary theme of discussion relating to Russian Foreign Affairs and provide a fuller understanding of the discussion, including both the Russian side as well as discussing the perspective from the US and EU side.

The Sports & Olympics category is interesting less for its Theme 1 position, in which the 5 categorizations are directly related to sporting events taking place or having taken place (primarily in chess and gymnastics), but for Theme 2, in which the Sochi 2014 Olympics (Sochi was selected as the 2014 host by the International Olympic Committee in 2007) are brought up in discussions of other matters of Politics and Domestic Policy (9 of the 22 instances).

Terrorism and Chechnya

One might expect the theme of Chechnya to be a fairly large theme of discussion for Ekho Moskvyy. If Chechnya surfaces as a theme, it is a secondary theme within discussions of Russia's Chechnya policy as part of the country's overall domestic policy. Of the 59 mentions of Terrorism recorded as a secondary theme, 40 of those (68%) relate specifically to Chechnya. Terrorism as the secondary theme more often touches on the domestic policy aspect of Chechnya, including the future of Chechnya's political and economic role in Russia, with concerns over terrorism and the legacy of terrorism as a part of a larger social, political, historical, or ideological dialogue.

Venediktov's attention to the issue of Chechnya has changed over time, however. The station used to question more directly the policies of the Russian government in Chechnya that led to reported human rights abuses and war atrocities. For example, Venediktov pressed the issue of the international outcry over human rights violations in

Chechnya and the Russian government's response to those critics in a February 18, 2000 interview he conducted on Ekho Moskvyy with Vladimir Kalamanov, the Special Envoy of the Russian President on Ensuring the Rights and Freedoms of Civil Rights in Chechnya.²² In the interview, Venediktov presses

Venediktov: A lot of media, both Russian and foreign write about the so-called filtration camps, in particular, where, in the opinion of our fellow journalists, there are massive violations of human rights. How are you going to check this information? Or maybe you're already aware, because until recently you headed the Federal Migration Service. Are you going to go there? Are you going to pay attention to what they write, these "enemies of Russia" - the Western press, as some of our politicians call them, saying "it's all lies and slander against Russia"?

Kalamanov: Our range of responsibilities is the most comprehensive; there is not a single question that people could be worried about that we don't already have the resources and authority to respond with. Of course, we will respond to each such application and will do so, I hope, quickly. Everything will be entirely dependent on how quickly we move from the decree to create the structure itself, as soon as possible, including meeting with the media, with specific things.

Later in the interview, as Kalamanov attempted to stress the Russian government's adherence to international protocols over its actions in Chechnya, Venediktov brought the conversation back around to human rights, which led Kalamanov to stress that the Russian government:

Kalamanov: The same representatives go from us to other countries. If there is such a difficult situation for us, then, of course, you need some way to participate together in this effort. I say again, in the activities that will benefit our definition of democracy in Russia as well. If we are an open society, we have no need to fear.

Venediktov: They say that Chechnya is Russia's internal affair because Chechnya is a part of Russia.

Kalamanov: No one denies this. Chechnya is an internal affair of Russia.

Venediktov: Now I'll switch this question over into the realm of human rights and freedoms.

Kalamanov: The notion of human rights and freedoms is extraterritorial (*eksterritorial'nye*). They are either there, or they are nowhere in the world. They

²² Kalamanov's interview can be found at <http://www.echo.msk.ru/programs/beseda/10642/#element-text>.

have defined common approaches and a categorical system. So, I think, it's a scholarly debate.

However, Venediktov's critical tone towards Russian government policy in Chechnya changed over time. In a 2006 interview with the online newspaper *Gazeta.ru*, Venediktov mentioned that there are certain topics that were too dangerous for the station to dig into: Chechnya, corruption, and corruption in Chechnya.²³ Indeed, though Terrorism and terrorism in Chechnya as a secondary theme of discussion received a total of 53 mentions 2000-2004, there were no mentions of Terrorism or terrorism Chechnya as a secondary theme in 2005, and only 2 in 2006, 1 in 2007, and 2 in 2008. There were no mentions at all of Terrorism as a secondary theme in 2009 or 2010.

²³ Rebel, "Ekho."

8: Conclusions

The exceptionalism of Ekho Moskvyy is evidenced by the diversity of program participants hosted by Venediktov and the overall balanced and neutral tone that he is able to maintain on the programs he hosts. Venediktov treads finely between toeing and walking the Kremlin's line as he maintains a balance of official and non-official opinions on his programs. The diversity of viewpoints on Ekho Moskvyy is what makes the radio station an anomaly in Putin's Russia, but this diversity of viewpoints may be challenged over time by the station's audience with the inclusion of too many Kremlin guests. Putin seeks the inclusion of official voices on Ekho Moskvyy's programs, and Venediktov acquiesces, but counters this dominant official narrative with a counter-narrative from a mixture of Russian journalists and foreign guests that provides an outlet for voices that disagree with and challenge the dominance of the Kremlin's official stance on policy.

Venediktov is willing to compromise with Putin and Ekho Moskvyy's political overseers whenever necessary in order to save what he can at the station whenever threatened. Venediktov's adaptation strategies for Ekho Moskvyy span all aspects of their operations, and from them a picture emerges of the complex balance the station walks to maintain editorial independence and, consequentially, its exceptionalism as an independent media outlet in the Putin era.

The adaptation strategies for Ekho Moskvyy's survival in Putin's Russia are evident through a combination of factors: financial sustainability, audience size, political relations, and the selection of participants and the topics and content of their discussions on-air. Venediktov's savvy editorial practices as evidenced by his selection of discussion

participants throughout the Putin era are made possible only by a combination of additional factors, including the station's financial independence and his relationship with the Kremlin's political elite.

No one factor can provide a true safeguard against future incursions by Gazprom or other politically-influenced actors; but the adaptation strategies employed by Venediktov discussed in this paper have thus far allowed the station to avoid direct Kremlin intervention and continue presenting diverse opinions not heard or seen in other Russian media outlets. It is not inconsequential to think of Ekho Moskvy's adaptation strategies as part of a new form of media model, at least in part, given the authoritarian system in which it operates. The line for media outlets that is drawn by the Kremlin in the Putin era is not rigid, and is prone to change at a moment's notice. Within this type of ever-changing system, it is important to look at both the strategies of democratic liberalism and authoritarianism where they come together and to examine the importance granted to that medium. As Putin prepares for his third inauguration as president, the future of freedoms for media outlets such as Ekho Moskvy remains unknown, but the need to study such media outlets and their means of survival may yet provide a glimpse into what may come.

Appendix A

The unit of analysis for my research is the individual guest. The methodology, therefore, analyzes aspects of the guests: their references to Putin; their political tone; the tone of the contributions to the discussion; the theme of their discussion; and their occupation. This method allows cross-analysis of any coding category with any other coding category, for example, who speaks negatively about Putin and what kind of guest speaks in what tone when a certain topic is discussed.

Power and the Kremlin

References to President/Prime Minister

In every interview, I took note of references to the President or Prime Minister, leading to a Yes or No categorization. The offices of both the President and the Prime Minister were coded because Putin is the focus of my research interest; he served as President 2000-2008 and Prime Minister 2008-2010, while remaining the central figure of visibility and, more importantly, authority, in the Russian government even after ceding the presidency to Medvedev in 2008.

Terms that warranted inclusion in the Yes category included both direct and indirect references to the person and the office of the President or the Prime Minister: Putin; Vladimir Vladimirovich (when referring to Putin by his first name and patronymic; not included when referring to guests with the same patronymic, such as Vladimir Vladimirovich Pozner); VVP; Medvedev; Dmitry; President; Premier (*prem'er*); Prime Minister (*prem'er ministr*). If mentioned at all, the interview received a Yes

categorization; if none of the above terms were mentioned, the interview received a No categorization.

Political Tone

The political tone of the participants in each discussion is the dominant expressive contribution made by an individual discussant towards the President or Prime Minister. Political tone was determined based on statements by the interview participant regarding the office or person of the President or the Prime Minister, using the same methodology for determining whether the President or Prime Minister is being discussed as in the category of References above. This categorization is applied to individual participants based on their contribution to the discussion; for example, if there are two or more guests discussing Putin, and one speaks favorably of Putin, and the other(s) speaks unfavorably, then each participant is categorized by their respective political tone category. Neutral encompasses the middle ground in discussions between outspoken favorable and unfavorable opinions towards the President/Prime Minister. Categories for denoting the political tone of the interview are: Pro-President/Prime Minister (PM); Anti-President/Prime Minister (PM); Neutral.

Theme of Discussion

The themes are broken up into the categories of Theme 1, or primary theme, and Theme 2, or secondary theme. Every guest is recorded as discussing at least one theme, but no more than two, that marks the topics included in their discussion. Some interviews include two themes when discussions between host and guest, or discussions among guests, introduced a new topic in the conversation. The primary theme is defined as the

most important topic of the discussion. A secondary theme is a topic of discussion using the same categories as primary theme, but it is defined as less prominent in the discussion, though it is advanced by the guest(s).

Theme 1 and 2 categories are the same, but do not overlap. The categories for themes are: Arts, Culture & Entertainment; Financial / Monetary & Fiscal Policy; Health/Education/Welfare; History (Russian & World); International; Legal Issues; Local Moscow Issues; Media; Military; Other; Politics; Russian Foreign Affairs; Sports & Olympics; Terrorism.

Arts, Culture & Entertainment relates to all conversations regarding both high and low forms of cultural entertainment, from opera singers and ballet dancers to novelists to television personalities.

Financial / Monetary & Fiscal Policy regards all discussions that touch on economic issues of the everyday as well as at the policy level, extending from small business concerns to issues relating to Russian banking policy and inflation of the Russian ruble.

Health/Education/Welfare includes discussions relating to aspects of Russian everyday life as well as policy issues regarding public and personal health, education at all levels, and the greater public welfare. This category includes discussions on themes that also include religion, transportation, technology, and the environment as they relate to the broader categories of health, education, and welfare.

History (Russian & World) applies to discussions that Venediktov, a former historian, hosts in which characters and events from Russian and world history are

discussed, without necessarily relating the discussion of the historical matter to the present day. Such discussions could touch on medieval Western European, ancient Greek, 19th-century American, or 16th-century Russian history.

International is a category that refers to events that take place outside of Russia without necessarily describing the Russian take on the situation. This theme can be discussed by any guest from Russia or from abroad, but concerns events that take place outside of Russia. The International category also includes two sub-categories that regard specific discussions of American and European affairs: US Foreign Policy and EU Politics/Policy.

Legal Issues relates to discussions of legal matters at the Russian national level, primarily in conjunction with other discussions of policy or public welfare.

Local Moscow Issues regard issues that arise in discussions that are particular to Moscow. This can include current events within Moscow, such as a fire at a local apartment building, or Moscow's building regulations.

Media is a theme that encompasses discussions of any and all forms of media, including matters relating to television, newspaper, radio, and Internet. These discussions could include discussions of political maneuvers in the media world or ramifications of new policies on media outlets, or it could include discussions of internal affairs at a media outlet or life as a journalist.

Military as a theme regards discussions of Russian military affairs, including military operations in Chechnya (the first Chechen War officially took place between 1994-1996 and the Second Chechen War officially between August 1999-May 2000, as

well as the unrest that continued in Chechnya through 2009¹) and in Georgia in 2008; the military's role in the raising of the sunken submarine Kursk in 2000; or discussions of amending Russia's mandatory draft law.

Other is a category that encompasses those discussions whose theme does not fit into any of the other categories.

Politics includes discussions that relate to the political structure within Russia. This broad category includes far-ranging discussions on a wide variety of aspects of politics in Russia, and is broken out into separate sub-categories: Domestic Policy (regarding the creation, implementation and effect of policy); Domestic Politics (regarding the political system and its operations as a whole); and Elections (at the national as well as regional levels).

Russian Foreign Affairs regards Russia's foreign policy, foreign relations, and the Russian political, financial, or other take on world events. This category includes, for example, discussions of Russia's relationships with the West, both with America and with various political bodies (such as the European Union, NATO, and the Council of Europe) and nation-states in Europe; the Russian perception of Middle Eastern affairs, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the invasion of Iraq; Russia's role in the G-8 and G-20 summits; and Russia's position on issues within the former Soviet Union and Soviet sphere of influence.

¹ For a very brief history of the unrest in Chechnya and Russia's North Caucasus region, but with references to comprehensive sources on the matter, see Remington, *Politics in Russia*, 74-77.

Sports & Olympics relates both to sporting events, such as soccer matches and chess championships, as well as discussions surrounding the selection of Sochi as the host of the 2014 Winter Olympic Games.

Terrorism as a category regards both discussions of acts of terrorism as they happen (such as the Nord-Ost hostage crisis, Moscow Metro bombings, and the Beslan school siege) as well as terrorism as a concept. Occasionally in the discussions terrorism and Chechnya are explicitly linked together, and I recorded those instances as well.

Tone of Discussion/Participant Relations

The tone of the discussion and relations between participants measures the individual level of agreement and disagreement per guest in a discussion. Tone was determined by the nature of the dialogue between host and participant, as well as among participants themselves, as in the instances where more than one participant took part in the discussion. Neutral encompasses the middle ground among program discussants when their dialogue does not explicitly warrant inclusion in a category of agreement or disagreement with their fellow guest(s) or host(s). Categories for tone of discussion are: Agreement; Neutral; Slight Disagreement; Disagreement; Strong Disagreement.

Guest Occupation

Occupation of each guest was provided by the information given *within* each interview when the guest is introduced.

Employment categories are: Academic; Arts, Culture, and Entertainment; Business; Foreign; Journalists/Media; NGO; Official; Opposition Politician; Other; Professional; Student.

Academic designates those participants who are listed as professors and researchers affiliated with universities. This includes think tanks and research institutes that are affiliated with universities.

Arts, Culture, and Entertainment designates those participants who come from the worlds of high and low culture. This includes singers of rock and pop music groups, ballerinas and opera singers, gallery owners and artists, actors of stage and screen, film directors and television personalities.

Business includes a diverse array of participants who come from the broader world of business, and includes oligarchs, bank presidents and directors, CEOs of large corporations, and small business owners.

Foreign includes any participant not from Russia, regardless of their profession. Foreign is broken out into sub-categories for further designation, which are: Academic; Ambassador (ambassadors of foreign nations serving in Russia); Arts & Culture; Business/Professional; Heads of State/Government (including both heads of state, such as presidents and monarchs, as well as the heads of government, such as prime ministers); Journalists & Media; NGO; Official.

Journalists/Media refers to participants from the world of Russian media. This includes journalists and media professionals who may serve as editors, writers, columnists, or reporters for newspapers, radio, television, or Internet-based projects.

NGO refers to participants who work for non-governmental organizations, including think tanks and research institutes that are not affiliated with universities, as

well as Russians who work for foreign NGOs based in Russia. This category includes professions such as pollsters, researchers, political scientists, and economists.

Official is an occupation applies to those participants who come from the political structure in Russia, from the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the Russian government. This broad category is broken out into sub-categories: Adviser (Executive Branch); Ambassador (Russian ambassadors to foreign nations); Duma (the lower house of Russian Parliament); Economics (government officials in charge of economic programs or institutions, such as the head of the Russian Central Bank); Federation Council (the higher house of Russian Parliament); Gorbachev (former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev); Judicial (including law enforcement); Military; Minister (including heads of Russian ministries as well as deputy ministers); Moscow (officials from all branches of Moscow's local and regional government); Other; Regional/Local Executive (including governors and presidents of Russian regional governments).

Opposition Politician is applied to participants who are introduced as an oppositionist figure. This categorization is not rigid, and as such, opposition politicians can be identified as such by the Ekho Moskvyy host on occasion but differently on other occasions, as in the particular figure of Boris Nemtsov, who is identified on various programs over the eleven-year period as a Duma deputy (which warrants inclusion in the Official [Duma] category) or as a non-systemic opposition politician or leader in the oppositionist Union of Right Forces. In the Putin era, any individual who disagrees with the Kremlin can be called oppositionist, but I am not implying that this term denotes an organized opposition that would come from Western literature on political opposition.

The categorization of opposition politician is not self-applied by the participant, nor do I attempt to apply the term opposition politician to any participant who is identified as such by the host on the program.

Other includes those participants whose employment does not fall into one of the other categorizations; Other also includes those professions that included less than ten participants. This category includes religious figures, participants in an ongoing Ekho Moskv program called “One Family in the Time of Putin,” athletes and chess champions, and witnesses to current events who called in to the station to provide their eyewitness account.

Professional includes occupations such as educators (at schools and lyceums, all below the university level); lawyers; doctors and nurses; psychologists; and museum directors.

Student applies to participants who are identified by the host as a student, both as university students as well as students in secondary school.

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