

MEDIA COVERAGE OF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM AT THE LEADING RUSSIAN AND FRENCH NEWSPAPERS DURING 2015-2016¹

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Abstract:

The issue of media coverage of the activity of terrorist organizations turns out to be especially relevant nowadays because of the frequency and the scale of terrorist attacks. The phenomenon of the "Islamic State" is a complex and contradictory phenomenon. The article demonstrates changes in the rhetoric of the French and Russian media on the activities of the IS during the period from the beginning of the Russian military operation in Syria (the end of September 2015) until the terrorist attacks in Brussels (March 2016). A content analysis of 574 materials in the newspapers "Le Figaro", "Le Monde", "Kommersant" and "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" allowed us to identify features of the Islamic State actions coverage. Journalists regard ISIS as a terrorist organization, as well as the real state, but predominantly it is considered as a terrorist group. Its formal leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, hardly ever appears in the articles of the four newspapers, this points the high level of the impersonality of the IS. The majority of the reviewed materials are written around a variety of binary oppositions, the most prevalent being the "we - terrorists" juxtaposition. The frequency of political leaders' references generally correlates with the frequency of the mentioned countries they represent. The intentions analysis made it possible to formulate the conclusion that French journalists identify Russia with Vladimir Putin, while in Russian press F. Hollande's activity is discussed separately from France. In the context of international terrorism, Russian journalists mention Russia, Syria and the United States as key actors, whereas in the French press the main axis is "France – Syria – Russia".

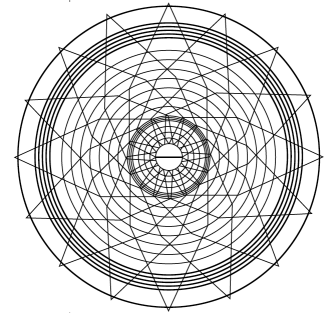
Keywords: international terrorism, Islamic State, media, Russia, France, Vladimir Putin, François Hollande

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Introduction

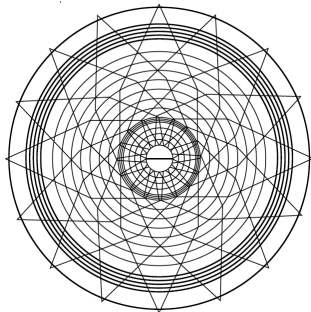
The topic of mass media coverage of the activity of terroristic organizations is especially relevant today due to the frequency and scales of terroristic acts.

The literature on the issue is numerous and counts in hundreds of publications, starting from 1970 (e.g. The Media and Terrorism 1977 and others). In the following article we based our argument on the selected publications from this long list.

The growing usage of modern means of communications by terrorists and the ways they manipulate mass media to achieve their goals are two crucial reasons of the high attention of academic community to the topic of the mass media coverage of international terrorism. B. Nacos [Nacos 2002] formulated the concept of “mediatized terrorism”, defining this idea as utilizing innocent citizens by terrorists with the aim to blow a whistle for their actions, attracting attention from the government and society [Nacos 2002: 16]. Among the foreign authors, studying the topic, we can note also Laqueur [Laqueur 1999] and Wilkinson [Wilkinson 2011], who demonstrated the destructive effects of the mass media influence on the audience in the process of coverage of terroristic acts. These authors placed the emphasis on the fact that the key issue for the terrorists is to ultimately attract the attention of the mass media. The specifics of terroristic acts and the phenomenon of terrorism in media were studied by Weinmann and Winn [Weinmann, Winn 1994]. In their works these authors stated the main characteristics of the “effective” terroristic acts, as well as showed the interconnection between the terrorists and mass media.

The influence of media on the political decision making in the situation of uncertainty is reflected in the model of mediapolitical interplay by Robinson [Robinson 2000]. This model is mainly based on the indexation theory of Bennett [Bennett 1990]: mass media classify the points of view, expressed in the news and editorial articles depending on the opinions of political leaders that are stated during the main governmental discussions on international problems. In his study Bennett made a conclusion that mass media follows the official positions of political elites with no contradiction between them. Robinson supports this notion, stating that media has no influence on the state, when there is a consensus of political elites. However, Robinson describes the other point of view as well: lack of consensus and in the situation of political instability and uncertainty there is a strong impact of mass media on the process of making political decisions. Thus the conditions, where the “CNN effect” emerges, are made and mass media gets an opportunity to influence even the strategically important decisions. The model of mediapolitical interplay gives the systematic and theoretical evaluation of the effect of mass media on political process: it allows to understand how media covers different crisis situations depending on current political climate, as well as it allows to measure the level of uncertainty and stability of the sides that make a decision.

Surette, Hansen, and Noble conducted a research on mediatized terrorism [Surette, Hansen, Noble 2009]. The main result was that terroristic groups are capable to get the attention from mass media not only by demonstrating the violence against



civil citizens, although this way is dominative. Researchers also discovered facts that can influence the level of mediatization of terroristic actions: the crucial one is the location of terroristic events. D. Bennett [Bennet 2013], S. Abdullah and M. Elareshi [Abdullah, Elareshi 2015], E. Nevalsky [Nevalsky 2015] in their works describe the specific examples of mass media coverage of terrorism. They focus particularly on terroristic actions in the agenda of TV-channels, such as “BBC”, “Al-Jazeera” и “Al-Arabiya”, as well as “The New York Times” newspaper. Zhang and Hellmueller [Zhang, Hellmueller 2015], Bekmann, Dewenter and Tobias [Bekmann, Dewenter, Tobias 2017] also study the bondage between the intensivity of discussion on problem of terrorism in mass media and the scale of terroristic actions. The experts on the Middle East Byman [Byman 2015], Neriah [Neriah 2016], Ross and Mohammadpur [Ross, Mohammadpur 2016] and others study the particularities of the phenomenon of the Islamic State: in their works the specific features of the IS are described, the reasons of development of this organization are analyzed, as well as the possible international threats, connected with the IS, are explored.

The work of a group of researchers from the Higher School of Economics in Moscow is of special interest for our topic [Davydov, Kashirskih, Logunova et al. 2016]. In this paper the results of the analysis of the IS image in a range of the US, British and Asian mass media are described. This paper was used as a basis for the following research introduced in this article.

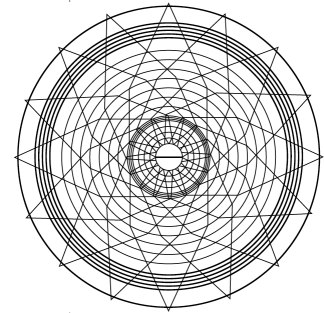
From the scientific point of view it is interesting to follow how the terrorism as a topic is covered by the leading mass media. Although the printed media are not so fast and detailed in covering the international events, their advantage over the news TV-channels is that they provide a more detailed analysis to their reader.

The Author decided to carry out an analysis of this coverage on the materials of Russian and French newspapers, due to the fact that France recently became one of the major targets of terroristic attacks, while Russia unfolded a vast military operation against the international terrorism in Syria. Chronological frames of the study were attributed to the range of important events that applied to France and Russia and became the ranging marks in the described context. First event considered as a ranging mark took place on 30th of September 2015 – on this day started the operation of Russian Military Space Forces in Syria against the terroristic militant groups, first of all against the IS and several others. The second event is 13th of November 2015 – the day when a streak of terroristic acts in Paris happened. Finally, the third event is 22nd of March 2016, a day when the terroristic acts in Brussels were committed. Building on these three events, we decided to take into account the specifics of the press working cycle that is characterized by the weekly publication. Bearing this in mind, dates were chosen with the allowance of weekly publishing cycle. As the result, the analysis of newspaper publications was conducted in the period of six months – from 28th of September 2015 (Monday) till the 27th of March 2016 (Sunday) inclusively.

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The object of the study is a set of publications on international terrorism from four mainstream newspapers: among them two French newspapers (“Le Monde” and “Le Figaro”) and two Russian (“Kommersant” and “Nezavisimaya Gazeta”).

The main scope of the study was the features of the coverage of international terrorism in the given newspapers in the period from the start of the operation of Russian Military Space Forces in Syria in the end of September 2015 till the terroristic acts in Brussels in the end of March 2016. Three research questions were as following:

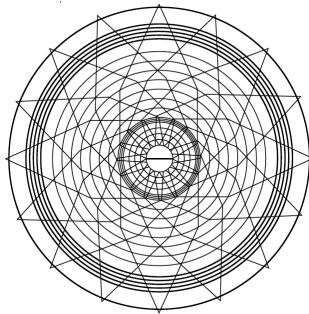
1. In which descriptors Russian and French newspapers depict international terrorism and especially the IS in the given period?
2. To which extent and in which tenors in the given newspapers during the given period in the context of a discussion on problems of international terrorism Russia and France and their political leaders are mentioned?
3. How the terroristic acts in Paris in November 2015 influenced the tone of the coverage of Russian actions in Syria in the given newspapers?

To find the answers to the stated research questions the content analysis with the statistical analysis of the data were applied. The source of analysis was the materials on the given topic in the selected newspapers. Data set of the analyzed publications consisted of 574 units, among which there were the following types: information messages, news articles, analytical articles, commentaries, interviews, reports and others. From the “Le Figaro” newspaper 212 materials were selected, from “Le Monde” – 220. From Russian newspaper “Kommersant” 46 materials were selected, from “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 96. The difference between the number of publications can be explained by the fact that the general number of the articles in Russian and French newspapers vary significantly. Minimal amount of materials of all the issues during the week (without the supplements): “Le Figaro” – 117, “Le Monde” – 73, “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 34, “Kommersant” – 60. One more specific feature of Russian newspapers is the following: newspapers are not published for the weekend and holidays. In France newspapers are published both on weekends and on state holidays. The volume of the academic article does not allow showing the full results of the study, so we will limit the results only to significant ones.

The results of content analysis: general insights

The analysis gave the opportunity to show the visible trend: the topic of terrorism in the given period was of key importance in French agenda, than in Russian agenda. This is reasoned by the fact of terroristic attacks in Paris (13 Nov 2015) and Brussels (22 Mar 2016). During the only one week after the terroristic attacks in Paris from 16 to 22 November 2015 “Le Figaro” published 33 materials and “Le Monde” 39 materials.

The representativity of terroristic organizations in the publications. First of all, we counted the frequency of mentions of different terroristic organizations. It was found that in the given data set four organizations that are considered as terroristic were mentioned: «Islamic State», «Al-Qaeda», «Jabhat al-Nusra» и «Hezbollah». The majority of mentions (89%) corresponds to the Islamic State, along with this the percent of



mentions is nearly equal for the studied newspapers in France (88%) and in Russia (89%). Whilst in sum for four newspapers about 5% of the mentions corresponds to the «Al-Qaeda», 3% corresponds to «Jabhat al-Nusra» and 3% to «Hezbollah».

From this we can make a following conclusion: the topic of international terrorism is associated mainly with the IS and only insignificantly with the other terroristic organisations.

Division of coverage of international terrorism into periods. The dynamics of the materials publication about the actions of the Islamic State was divided into several periods with the number of full weeks in each period:

1. 28.09.2015 – 08.11.2015 (six weeks) – from the start of Russian military operation in Siria to the terroristic attack in Paris;
2. 09.11.2015-20.12.2015 (six weeks) – terroristic attacks in Paris and the following events;
3. 21.12.2015-31.01.2016 (six weeks) – the continuation of investigation on terroristic acts with the less frequent publications;
4. 01.02.2016-27.03.2016 (seven weeks) – period before the terroristic attacks in Brussels, the terroristic attacks themselves and the first reaction to it.

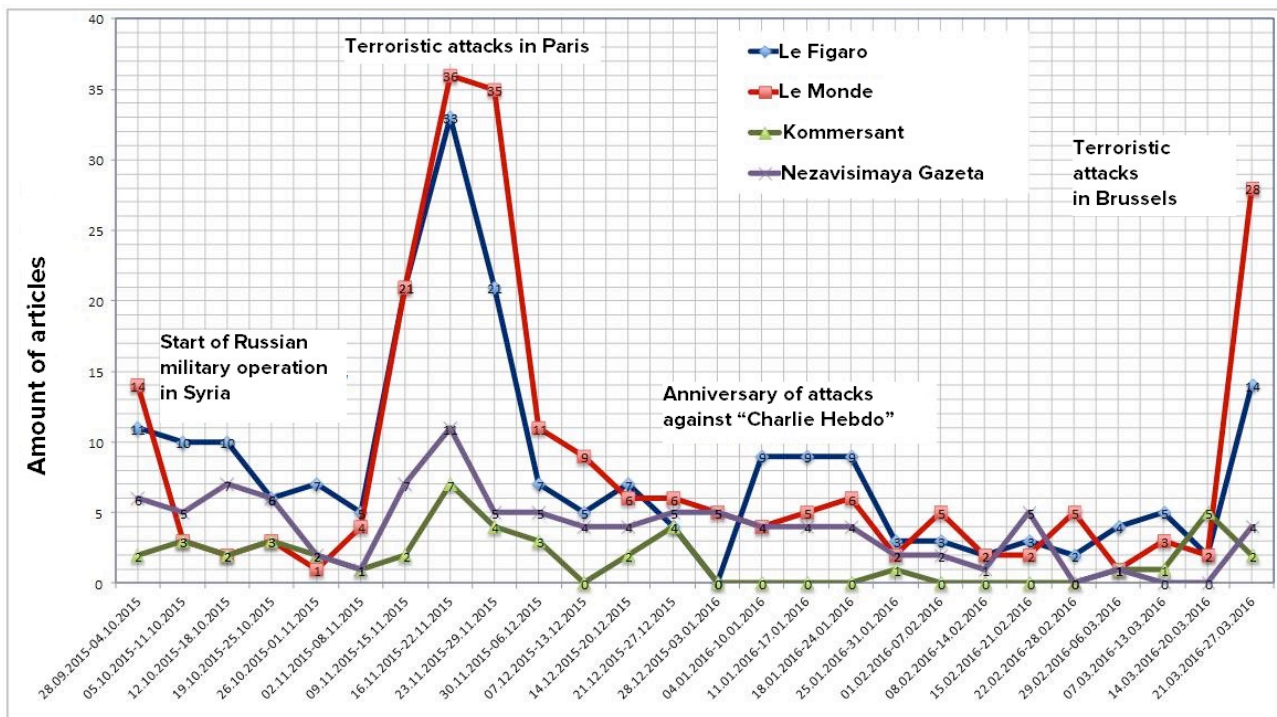
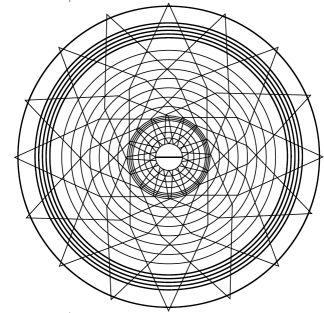


Figure 1. Dynamics of publications on the problem of international terrorism in the studied publications.

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The week to week dynamics of materials publication of four studied newspapers is shown in Figure 1, where the given periods are clearly distinguished.

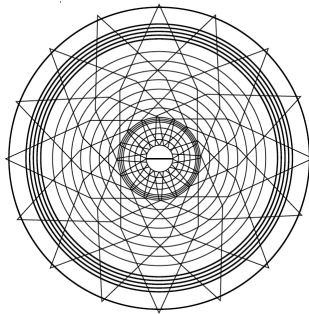
The first period is characterized by the relatively vast number of publications connected to the beginning of Russian military operation in Syria. This is clearly distinguished in the publications during the first week after the start. In the following week the attention of “Le Monde” to the given event significantly decreased, while the “Le Figaro” continued to discuss the operation relatively actively until the very date of terroristic attacks on 13th of November in Paris.

The second period differs from the others due to the fact that in a week from 9 to 15 the majority of publications are dedicated to the terroristic acts in Paris. During these and three following weeks (till the 06.12.2015) both studied French newspapers with the equal activity covered the accident: there were 85 publications in general in “Le Figaro” and 103 in “Le Monde”. The difference between the editorial policies appeared mainly in the means of delivery of information: “Le Figaro” often described the event from the point of view of the eyewitnesses, while “Le Monde” preferred the analysis of what happened. From 9th of November till 6th of December 2015 “Le Monde” published 44 analytical articles, while “Le Figaro” published only 29 of this kind. If “Le Figaro” was mainly criticizing the current political leaders for the accident, “Le Monde” on the contrary supported the actions of Hollande, trying to shift the focus of readers’ attention to the investigation of the causes of terroristic attacks and the identification of the suspects.

Two Russian newspapers for the most part covered the terroristic attacks in Paris less actively. Materials about the tragedy were published only three days after the terroristic attack, on Monday (16.11.2015), as the studied newspapers are not published on weekend. Both newspapers blamed the French government for failing the security policy. But while “Kommersant” withheld straightforward judgments, in the texts of “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” the main idea could be clearly understood: the state policy of the openness of the country became the reason why the citizens of Paris and the whole French nation were endangered. In the materials of “Kommersant” a lot of attention was also paid to the topic of changes in French domestic political in-fighting before the regional elections: the appearance of Marin Le Pen as a new leader of political run, while Le Pen criticized the migration policy of German chancellor Angela Merkel.

The third period was mainly the analysis of the current state of affairs in the system of international relations, the study of the phenomenon of the Islamic State, the analysis of Russian military operation in Syria, the investigation of terroristic attacks. The following period can not be characterized by any major events, we can only note the attention to the topic of international terrorism in “Le Figaro” from 4.01.2016 to 24.01.16: during this period the materials that were dedicated to the anniversary of attacks on the editorial of “Charlie Hebdo” (7.01.2015) were published.

During the fourth period the burst of publication activity on the problems of international terrorism was connected to the terroristic acts in Brussels, while Russian



newspapers, in addition to the coverage of terroristic attacks, also discussed the result of the Russian military operation in Syria.

The results of content analysis: the specifics of description of international terrorism

Binary oppositions in the descriptions of terroristic actions. In the journalistic texts there are often posed different conceptual binary oppositions to construct the “dramatic composition of text”. These oppositions compose two opposite angles, in which the events are described, and thus structuring the whole picture. The conducted content analysis elicited the range of most frequent binary oppositions that are connected to the coverage of terroristic actions of the Islamic State. These are:

- We / Terrorists;
- Terrorists / Victims of terrorists;
- True Muslims / False Muslims;
- Islamism / Islam;
- Military intervention / peaceful settlement;
- Past / Present;
- Soft power / Hard power;
- Openness / Security threat;
- France / EU;
- Russia / USA.

The quantitative division of the distinguished oppositions was explored in two aspects. Firstly, we counted the amount materials on the topic of international terrorism that had these binary oppositions. It was revealed that these oppositions have place in the majority of studied texts: in “Le Figaro” 62% of publications included oppositions, in “Le Monde” – 57%, in “Kommersant” – 63%, in “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 60%. Then, keeping in mind the fact that one publication could include more than one binary opposition, we decided to count as 100% the general amount of binary oppositions in the texts.

Significant oppositions, that are found in more than 10% of all the texts, are the following: “we / terrorists”, “Russia / USA”, “past / present”, “victims / terrorists”, “openness / security threat” and “military intervention / peaceful settlement”. In sum, six binary oppositions can be considered as significant.

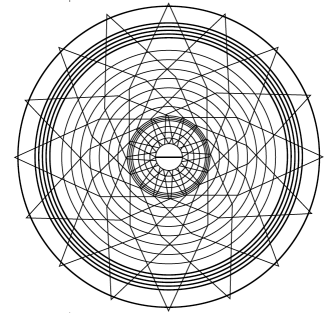
The analysis of frequency of the mentions reveals the following conclusion: the most frequent opposition is “we / terrorists” – it appears in 33% of Russian and French publications in general (“Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 28%, “Kommersant” – 31%, “Le Monde” – 33%, “LeFigaro” - 36%).

For the Russian newspapers the second significant opposition is “Russia / USA” (“Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 19%, “Kommersant” – 17%). It appears less frequently in French newspapers (“Le Monde” – 2%, “Le Figaro” – 5%).

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The other binary oppositions reveal weak coherence between the newspapers, as they vary from title to title. In that way, the second most frequent opposition for “Le Monde” is “past / present” (17%), while in “Le Figaro” it appears only in 9% of cases, in “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 9% and in “Kommersant” – 10%. For “Le Figaro” the second most frequent opposition is “openness / security threat” (13%), while for “Le Monde” and “Kommersant” it appears only in 10% of cases, for “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 7%.

Third most frequent opposition for the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” is “military intervention / peaceful settlement” (12%), while in “Kommersant” it is mentioned in 7% of cases, in “Le Monde” – 6%, and in “Le Figaro” - 8%.

The opposition “victims / terrorists” is mentioned more frequently in French newspapers (“Le Monde” – 15%, “Le Figaro” – 10%), than in Russian newspapers (“Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 9%, “Kommersant” – 3%).

Characteristics used to describe the Islamic State

Writing about the Islamic State, journalists describe it, using a certain number of characteristics. Content analysis has allowed us to reveal the main semantic units. We found seven of them in the examined body of texts (Figure 2). The value of frequency with which they were mentioned appears to be similar in Russian and French media.

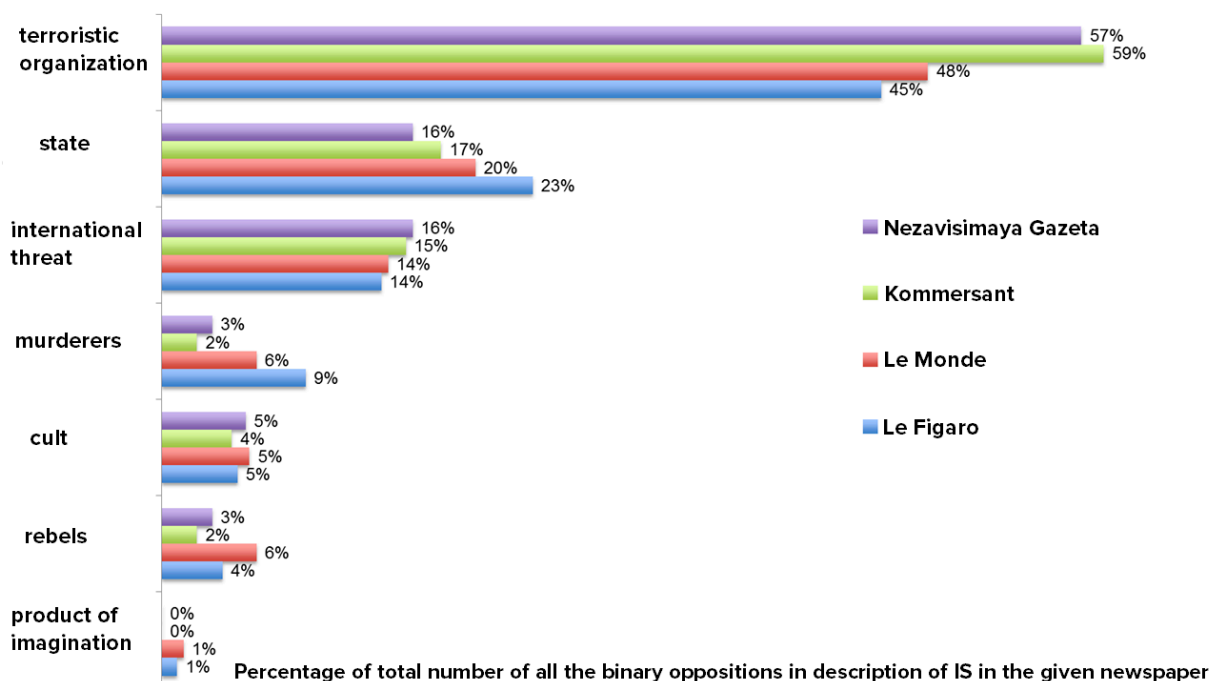
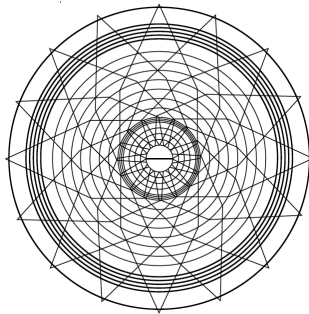


Figure 2. The representability of binary oppositions in description of the Islamic State in the studied publications



The Islamic State is most often described as «a terrorist organization». This description can be found in 48% of articles published in the newspaper “Le Monde”, in 44% of articles from Le Figaro, in 59% of articles from the “Kommersant” and in 57 % of articles from the Nezavisimaya Gazeta. The second most frequently mentioned description was «Islamic state is a state» (it’s found in 20% of “Le Monde” articles, 23% of “Le Figaro” articles, 19% of the “Kommersant” articles, 16% of the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” articles), the third most frequently used description was «The Islamic State is a global threat» (it’s found in 14% of Le Monde’s articles, 14% of Le Figaro’s articles, 15% of the Kommersant’s articles, 16% of the Nezavisimaya Gazeta’s articles). Such descriptions as «The Islamic State militants are murderers», «The Islamic State militants are rebels» and «The Islamic State is a product of imagination» are found less often. The latter expression can’t be found in the Russian newspapers but is encountered in just 1% of French newspapers.

The generalized description of The Islamic State in the media appears to be as follows: «The Islamic State is a terrorist state, a global threat that in some sense is a cult of murderous rebels».

The results of the analysis lead us to the conclusion that The Islamic State manages to retain its image as a «state» because journalists describe it as such. Newspaper articles provide information on the capture of new territories and the expansion of the caliphate, and the characteristics of a state entity are attributed to The Islamic State. At the same time, The Islamic State is predominantly viewed as a terrorist organization – it’s especially evident in the case of Russian media. French newspapers are more likely than their Russian counterparts to describe the IS as murderers in consequence of the terrorist attacks that took place in France in November 2015. The studied newspapers, on the whole, agree that this terrorist organization is a global threat.

Content analysis has also allowed us to reveal the tone used by journalists when they mention the IS. All studied newspapers describe the IS either in a neutral or a negative tone. It’s never mentioned in a positive light. On the whole, a neutral tone is the most prevalent one (68%) whereas the percentage of negative mentions in the studied sample of articles stands at 32 %. At the same time, the percentage of negative mentions in two French editions combined turned out to be higher and amounted to 38% whilst in its two Russian counterparts it was lower (19%).

In summary, we have identified considerable similarities in descriptions, characteristics and assessments of IS in the studied Russian and French newspapers.

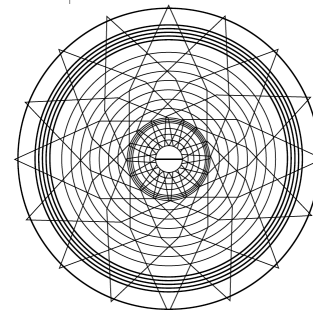
The results of the content analysis: countries and personalities mentioned in the articles on international terrorism

The representation of countries in the articles on international terrorism. Here we will examine which countries and personalities can be found in the studied articles and how frequently they are mentioned. On the whole, more than 30 countries were named in the context of the discussions on the issue of international terrorism in the

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studied period. Table 1 shows the number of references to 10 countries that had appeared in all editions in the studied period most frequently. This list includes (in the alphabetical order) Belgium, Germany, Iraq, Iran, Libya, Russia, Syria, the USA, Turkey and, of course, France. There is also a great number of less frequently mentioned countries including Armenia, Afghanistan, Belarus, Egypt, Israel, Indonesia, Jordan, Yemen, Qatar, Kyrgyzstan, China, Lebanon, UAE, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Ukraine, Japan which demonstrates the international character of the terrorist threat.

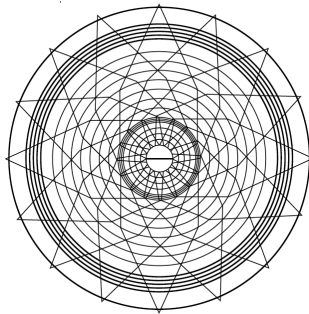
As shown in Table 1, the priorities of Russian and French newspapers slightly differ. Russian editions most frequently mention Russia (the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 841 times, the “Kommersant” – 402), Syria (the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 470 times, the “Kommersant” – 132 times) and the USA (the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 339 times, the “Kommersant” – 248 times). Iraq was the fourth most frequently mentioned in two Russian newspapers (the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 140 times, the “Kommersant” – 167 times), Turkey was the fifth (the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 168 times, the “Kommersant” – 6). France ranks only sixth on that list (the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 142 times, the “Kommersant” – 18).

A different picture emerges from the analysis of French editions. Most frequently they mention Syria (“Le Figaro” – 733 times, “Le Monde” – 613 times), France (“Le Figaro” – 614, “Le Monde” – 624) and Russia (“Le Figaro” – 455, “Le Monde” – 396). The USA is in the fourth place (“Le Figaro” – 398, “Le Monde” – 280), Turkey is fifth (“Le Figaro” – 237, “Le Monde” – 150) and Belgium ranks sixth (“Le Figaro” – 167, “Le Monde” – 134).

It appears that in the context of the debate on the issue of the international terrorism Russian press looked at the key relationships in terms of the triangle «Russia – Syria – the USA», also related to such countries as Iraq and Turkey. In this context, France appears to be a non-major player suddenly finding itself to be a victim of terrorist attacks.

Table 1. The number of references to 10 countries, most often mentioned in articles on international terrorism in studied newspapers

	The Nezavisimaya Gazeta	The Kommersant	Le Figaro	Le Monde	Overall
Russia	841	420	455	396	2112
Syria	470	132	733	613	1948
France	142	18	614	624	1398
USA	339	248	398	280	1265
Iraq	140	167	232	37	576



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Turkey	168	6	237	150	561
Belgium	68	20	167	134	389
Libya	33	19	166	28	246
Iran	83	24	92	18	217
Germany	28	6	51	9	94

In the studied period, the French editions focused their attention on the triangle «France – Syria – Russia».

These numbers give the impression that in the debate on the issue of global terrorism, led by Russian and French newspapers in the studied period, Russia played a more prominent role than the USA and the USA themselves were increasingly losing their position as a major player in the world politics.

Russian newspapers regarded France that had become a victim of international terrorism as a potential ally of Russia in the fight against the IS.

Now let's see how Russia is represented in articles on international terrorism in two French newspapers and how France is represented in articles on international terrorism in two Russian newspapers.

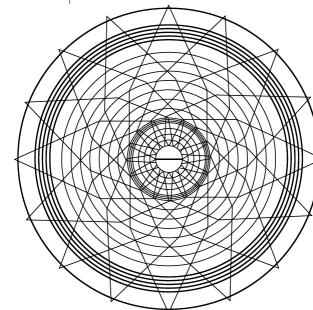
A calculation of positive, negative and neutral mentions of Russia shows that two studied French newspapers, on the whole, most often wrote about Russia in a neutral tone (88% of all mentions) and this tendency continued throughout the whole studied period. At the same time, there was only 9% negative and 2% positive references to Russia. On the whole, the balance isn't in favor of our country.

Meanwhile, the "Nezavisimaya Gazeta" and the "Kommersant" throughout the whole studied period largely mentioned France in a neutral tone (89%). However, the number of positive references (8%) outweighed the number of negative ones (3%). In other words, in Russian press, there had been a warmer, more empathetic and positive attitude towards France as a victim emerging from a tragedy, unlike the fearful and critical attitude expressed in the French editions in which the ratio of positive to negative mentions, as was shown above, was negative. *The representation of political leaders in the articles on international terrorism.* Now let's take a look at which personalities can be found in the studied articles and how frequently they are mentioned. Table 2 shows the number of references to political leaders in absolute terms throughout the whole studied period. 19 names had been mentioned at least once in no fewer than one French and one Russian newspaper. Among them are 5 American politicians (Barack Obama, John Kerry, Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton and George Bush), 5 Arab (Bashar al-Assad, Saddam Hussein, Osama bin Laden, Muammar Gaddafi and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi), 4 French (Francois Hollande, Jean-Yves Le Drian, Nicolas Sarkozy and Marine Le Pen), 2 Russian (Vladimir Putin and Sergey Lavrov), 1 German (Angela Merkel), 1 British (David Cameron) and 1 Turkish (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan).

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In French articles in the studied period the Russian president Vladimir Putin was the most frequently mentioned (“Le Figaro” mentions him 105 times, “Le Monde” – 133 times), followed by the French president Francois Hollande (“Le Figaro” – 101, “Le Monde” – 119), the U.S. president Barack Obama (“Le Figaro” – 84, “Le Monde” – 111) and the Syrian president Bashar al-Assad (“Le Figaro” – 79, “Le Monde” – 61). Further down the list are the Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (“Le Figaro” – 46, “Le Monde” – 39), the minister of Defense Jean-Yves Le Drian (“Le Figaro” – 31, “Le Monde” – 29) and the U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry (“Le Figaro” – 11, “Le Monde” – 10).

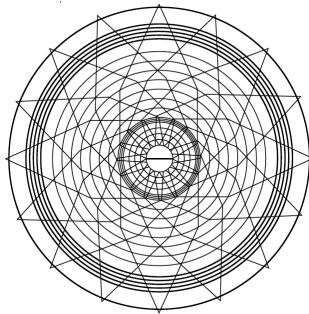
The category «Putin» is more often mentioned in a neutral tone in two French editions (90% of all references to Vladimir Putin) and less often – in a positive tone (1%). The negative references are twice as many, standing at 10%. Therefore, the general tone of the references is negative.

A different picture emerges from the analysis of Russian editions. They most often mentioned Bashar al-Assad (the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” mentions him 101 times, the “Kommersant” – 120 times), Vladimir Putin (the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 98 times, the “Kommersant” – 66 times), Francois Hollande (the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 82, the “Kommersant” – 43), and with a significantly less frequency – the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 12, the “Kommersant” – 18), John Kerry (the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 14, the “Kommersant” – 17) and Barack Obama (the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 11, the “Kommersant” – 16).

Russian newspapers largely referred to Francois Hollande in the context of Paris terrorist attacks as well as during his official visit to Russia on November 26 2015. However, there is another reason for mentioning him: after the Paris terrorist attacks Russia regarded France as a potential ally in the fight against The Islamic State. In view of this, in some of the articles encountered journalists consider possible scenarios of a partnership between France and Russia in the war against terrorism.

Table 2. The number of references to political leaders, mentioned in articles on international terrorism in studied newspapers

	The Nezavisimaya Gazeta	The Kommersant	Le Figaro	Le Monde	Overall
Vladimir Putin	98	66	105	133	402
Bashar al-Assad	101	120	79	61	361
Francois Hollande	82	43	101	119	345
Barack Obama	11	16	84	111	222
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan	7	3	46	39	95
Jean-Yves Le Drian	0	4	31	29	64



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John Kerry	14	17	11	10	52
Sergey Lavrov	12	18	2	13	45
Nicolas Sarkozy	4	12	2	5	23
Marine Le Pen	1	10	4	7	22
Angela Merkel	2	1	18	1	22
Saddam Hussein	0	7	11	3	21
Osama bin Laden	2	0	13	3	18
David Cameron	3	2	8	2	15
Muammar Gaddafi	0	0	6	8	14
Donald Trump	0	1	10	2	13
Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi	1	2	2	4	9
Hillary Clinton	0	4	3	0	7
George Bush	0	1	1	3	5

As regards to the tone in which Francois Hollande is mentioned, on the whole, the attitude of Russian newspapers towards him mirrors the attitude of French newspapers towards the Russian president. Indeed, in sum, 86% of references to Hollande in the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” and the “Kommersant” are neutral, 4% are positive and 10% are negative. The general tone is negative. Positive as well as negative references mainly appear in the period when Paris terrorist attacks took place. As an example here is a quote from Alexei Tarhanov, whose article with the headline «A One Day War» was published in the Kommersant on November 16 2015.

The author writes:

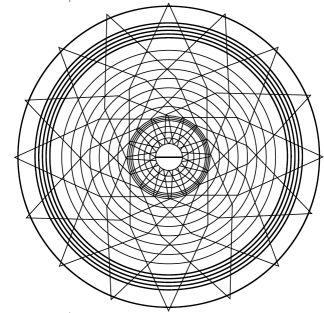
«There are no doubts that terrorists had done everything to make French people turn their backs on the ruling socialists who are unable to protect them. In order to reverse this sentiment, in the evening Francois Hollande had already appeared simultaneously in all places where he could be caught on camera to feature in TV reports and be seen as an active, energetic national leader» [Tarhanov 2015].

One interesting fact stands out as well: in the studied articles of four newspapers, the IS is largely portrayed as depersonalized, faceless. The relatively small number of references to the IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (“Le Monde” mentions his name 4 times, “Le Figaro” – 2, the “Kommersant” – 2, the “Nezavisimaya Gazeta” – 1). The “Le Monde” and “Le Figaro” journalists even more often recall an al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, despite him being dead, as well as the dead leaders of Iraq and Libya -

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Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi. The result correlates well with the findings of the study «ISIS as portrayed by foreign media and mass culture» (Davydov, Kashirskih, Logunova, et al 2016).

The impact of terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels on the tone of the media coverage of Russia's actions in Syria.

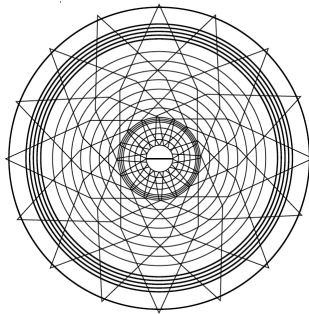
Now let's trace the change in the attitude of French newspapers towards Russia and Vladimir Putin and of Russian newspapers towards France and Francois Hollande in the studied period. The analysis was conducted over four selected periods, outlined at the beginning of this article. Calculated data shows that before the Paris terrorist attacks the negative attitude towards Russia and distrust towards Russian Air Force's military operations in Syria had been predominant in two studied French newspapers. The authors of articles assumed that the war on terrorism was far from being the most important Russian goal and regarded the military intervention as Moscow's excuse for rushing to help its ally Bashar al-Assad and keep him in power. They also assumed that there was nothing accidental about Russian strategy and Moscow was betting on stabilization of the situation in Ukraine along with the strengthening of its position in Syria, and that Kremlin was extremely interested in diverting the worldwide attention from the bloody standoff between government forces and pro-Russian separatists in Donbass, etc.

However, after Paris had been shaken by terrorist attacks in the second outlined period, the negative assessments disappeared and gave way to opinions having a positive tone. It took tragic events at the heart of France to get two leading French newspapers to turn their attention to Russia as a potential ally in the fight against «the global threat», as they themselves described the IS. And yet it didn't last long, and one and a half months later positive assessments gave way to negative ones, although the frequency of their appearance was lower.

The similar trend was observed in regards to the references to the Russian president. Before terrorist attacks in Paris, there had been no positive references to Vladimir Putin at all in the studied body of texts. After the attacks the tone of articles changes, positive references appear and negative ones temporarily disappear. The ideas of the need to establish closer cooperation with Russia in the fight against terrorism and towards the resolution of the conflict in Syria even appear in some of Le Figaro articles. For example, here is a quote from the article written by Eleonora Pizzanelli with the headline «The terrorists will never destroy the Republic, because the Republic will destroy the terrorists», published on November 17, 2015:

«The foreign policy is the cause of serious disagreements between French political parties. However, the opposition thinks that the government needs to change its diplomatic stance, get closer to Russia and concede on the issue of Bashar al-Assad staying in power» [Pizzanelli 2015].

The content analysis of articles in two leading French and two leading Russian newspapers («Le Figaro», «Le Monde», the «Nezavisimaya Gazeta» and the «Kommersant») on the issue of global terrorism conducted in the period of half a year



(from September 28 of 2015 to March 27 of 2016), full of a series of dramatic events, has allowed us to establish a number of interesting facts.

The articles on international terrorism published in both French and Russian newspapers analyzed in the studied period in the vast majority of cases were related to the Islamic State, the activities of which are mentioned in 89% of texts. The remaining 11% are divided between three terrorist organizations, including al-Qaeda (5%), Jabhat al-Nusra (3%) and Hezbollah (3%).

Now let's return to the questions posed at the beginning of the article. The first question was «What characteristics are used by Russian and French newspapers to describe international terrorism and, in particular, the IS in the studied period?». The study shows that in the articles of all four newspapers the IS was portrayed as a terrorist state, posing a global threat and viewed by the press as a «cult of murderous rebels». At the same time, the Islamic State was almost always depersonalized – the references to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi are very rare, even less frequent than the mentioning of long-dead Arab leaders – Saddam Hussein, Muammar Gaddafi and Osama bin Laden.

In the majority of articles, describing the international terrorism in general and the IS in particular, the writers employed binary oppositions. «We vs. terrorists» was the most frequently used one; the examples of this binary opposition are evident in all four newspapers. Other revealed binary oppositions vary in the frequency of their appearance in French and Russian newspapers. The second most significant binary opposition in French articles was «the past vs. the present», the third – «the victims vs. the terrorists». The second most significant binary opposition in Russian newspapers was «Russia vs. the USA», the third – «military intervention vs. peaceful resolution».

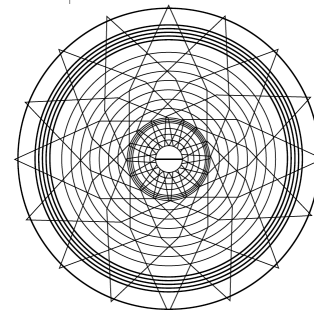
The second question posed by this article was «How frequently and in what tone Russia, France and their political leaders were written about in the selected Russian and French newspapers in the studied period in the context of the debate on the issue of international terrorism?». Content analysis allowed us to see that in the context of the debate on international terrorism French newspapers most often mentioned Syria, France, Russia and less often – to the U.S., whilst Russian newspapers most often referred to Russia, Syria, the U.S. and less often – to France. The frequency with which political leaders were mentioned, on the whole, correlates well with the frequency of references to the countries they represent. French press most often mentions Vladimir Putin, Francois Hollande, Barack Obama and Bashar al-Assad, while Russian newspapers most frequently refer to Bashar al-Assad, Vladimir Putin, Francois Hollande and Sergey Lavrov.

The analysis of the tone used by the French newspapers when mentioning Russia and by the Russian newspapers when mentioning France has revealed the asymmetry in the assessment: in French newspapers' articles on international terrorism the negative views on Russia (9%) outnumbered the positive (2%), while in Russian editions, on the contrary, positive mentions (8%) outnumbered the negative (3%). When it comes to the leaders of the two countries, the picture is symmetrical. In French newspapers, the negative mentions of Vladimir Putin (9%) significantly

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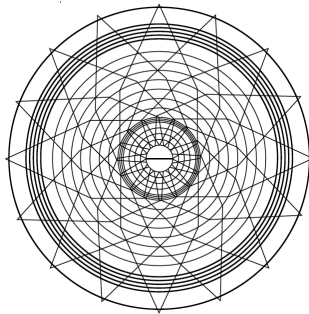


outnumbered the positive ones (1%), while Russian newspapers more often wrote about Francois Hollande in a negative (10%) than a positive tone (4%). It appears that in their assessment Russian journalists separated the actions of French president from France itself, whilst French editions sometimes judgmentally equated Russia with its leader.

Finally, the third question posed at the beginning was «How November 2015 Paris terrorist attacks impacted the tone of the media coverage of Russia's actions in Syria in analyzed newspapers?». It was revealed that before the terrorist attacks there had been no positive mentions of Russia and its president at all. Terrorist attacks carried out by the Islamic State militants forced newspapers to radically change the tone of writing, and the negative assessments disappeared, superseded by the positive ones. However, one and a half months later the tone had changed again – positive assessments once again gave way to the negative ones, but the number of the latter significantly diminished compared to the period before the attacks.

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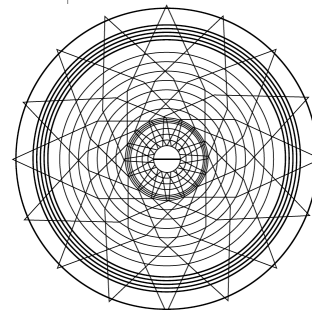
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ОСВЕЩЕНИЕ МЕЖДУНАРОДНОГО ТЕРРОРИЗМА В ВЕДУЩИХ РОССИЙСКИХ И ФРАНЦУЗСКИХ ГАЗЕТАХ В 2015- 2016 ГГ.

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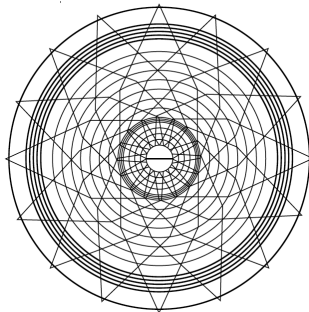
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Аннотация:

Тема освещения деятельности террористических организаций в СМИ является особенно актуальной сегодня в силу частоты и масштабности террористических актов. Феномен «Исламского Государства» (ИГ) – сложное и противоречивое явление. В статье продемонстрировано, как менялась риторика французских и российских СМИ о деятельности ИГ в период с начала военной операции России в Сирии (конец сентября 2015 года) до терактов в Брюсселе (март 2016 года). Контент-анализ 574 материалов газет “Le Figaro”, “Le Monde”, «Коммерсант» и «Независимая газета» позволил выявить особенности освещения событий, связанных с «Исламским Государством». Журналисты рассуждают об ИГ как о террористической организации, так и о реальном государстве, однако в большей мере оно воспринимается именно как террористическая группировка. Ее формальный лидер, Абу Бакр аль-Багдади, практически не фигурирует в материалах всех четырех изданий, что говорит о высоком уровне обезличенности ИГ. Большинство проанализированных материалов строится вокруг различных бинарных оппозиций, наиболее часто используемая из них – «мы-террористы». Частота упоминания политических лидеров в целом соотносится с частотой упоминания стран, которые они представляют. Анализ интенций позволил прийти к выводу о том, что французские журналисты отождествляют Россию и В. Путина, в то время как в материалах российской прессы деятельность Ф. Олланда рассматривается отдельно от самой Франции. В контексте международного терроризма российские журналисты в качестве основных игроков выделяют Россию, Сирию и США, во французской прессе основная ось стран – «Франция – Сирия – Россия».

Ключевые слова: международный терроризм, «Исламское Государство», медиа, Россия, Франция, Владимир Путин, Франсуа Олланд



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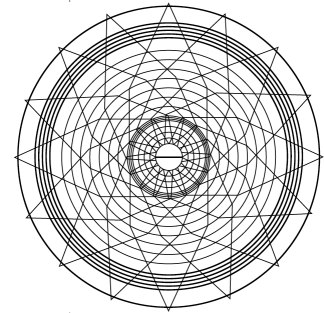
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