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ISSUES OF THE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE OF RUSSIA IN THE MODERN WORLD

The image of the country and its perception in the world is one of the most important directions in the politics of modern states. Modern Russia is a country with a controversial image, and today serious debates are raging around this issue in the scientific community. In this article, we will consider issues related to the perception of the image of Russia in the post-bipolar period. Russia, which has a rich history and geopolitical ambitions, is perceived ambiguously today, for some it is an aggressor country, a patron of undemocratic regimes, and for others it is a state that can challenge the hegemony of the United States. The modern image of the country is based on the basis that the Soviet Union formed. As Joseph Nye once noted, the image was associated with victory in World War II, space exploration, and achievements in sports. Modern attacks on Russia are connected with these issues, an active campaign is being conducted to reassess the results of the Second World War, monuments to Soviet soldiers are being demolished in Eastern Europe, their graves are being desecrated, Russia is being accused of using doping in sports, and the anthem was banned at the Olympic Games.

Key words: Russia, Soft power, image, perception, propaganda, Crimea, Putin, regime.

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Қазіргі әлемдегі Ресейдің халықаралық имиджінің мәселелері

Елдің имиджі және оны әлемдегі қабылдау мәселесі қазіргі заманғы мемлекеттердің саясатындағы маңызды бағыттардың бірі болып табылады. Қазіргі Ресей – қарама-қайшылықты бейнесі бар ел ретінде, бүгінде бұл мәселе төңірегінде ғылыми ортада қызу пікірталастар жүруде. Бұл мақалада біз биполярлық кезеңдегі Ресейдің бейнесін қабылдауға байланысты мәселелерді қарастырамыз. Ресейдің тарихы терең, ал геосаяси амбициясы бүгінде екіұштылықпен қабылданады, кейбіреулер үшін ол агрессор, демократиялық емес режимдердің қамқоршысы, ал басқалары үшін АҚШ-тың гегемониясына қарсы тұра алатын мемлекет ретінде. Ресейдің қазіргі имиджі Кеңес Одағы құрған негізге негізделген. Кезінде Джозеф Най атап өткендей, КСРО имиджі екінші дүниежүзілік соғыстағы жеңіспен, ғарышты игерумен және спорттағы жетістіктермен байланысты болды. Ресейге қарсы қазіргі шабуылдар дәл осы мәселелермен байланысты, екінші дүниежүзілік соғыстың нәтижелерін қайта бағалау науқаны белсенді жүргізілуде, Шығыс Еуропа елдерінде кеңес сарбаздарының ескерткіштеріне және олардың қабірлері қатысты даулар күшеюде, спортта Ресей допингты кеңінен қолданды деп айыпталуда, Олимпиада ойындарында әнұран орындауға тыйым салындығын білеміз.

Түйін сөздер: Ресей, жұмсақ күш, имидж, қабылдау, насихат, Қырым, Путин, режим.

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Вопросы международного имиджа России в современном мире

Образ страны и ее восприятие в мире являются одним из наиболее важных направлений в политике современных государств. Современная Россия – это страна с противоречивым имиджем, сегодня вокруг данного вопроса разгораются нешуточные дебаты в научной среде. В данной статье мы рассмотрим вопросы, связанные с восприятием образа России в пост-биполярный период. Россию, имеющую богатую историю, геополитические амбиции, сегодня воспринимают неоднозначно, для одних она страна-агрессор, покровитель недемократических режимов, а для других – государство, которое может бросить вызов гегемонии США. Современный образ страны

базируется на той основе, которую сформировал Советский Союз. Как в свое время отмечал Джозеф Най, имидж был связан с победой во Второй мировой войне и освоении космоса и с достижениями в спорте. Современные нападки на Россию именно связаны с этими вопросами, активно ведется кампания по переоценке итогов Второй мировой войны, в странах восточной Европы сносят памятники советским солдатам, оскверняются их могилы, в спорте Россию обвиняют в использовании допингов, на олимпийских играх запретили исполнение гимна.

Ключевые слова: Россия, Мягкая сила, имидж, восприятие, пропаганда, Крым, Путин, режим.

Introduction

In the constantly developing modern world, where the role of information and information technologies is increasing, the positive image of the state, its development and further promotion become essential for the national interests of the country. This is due to the fact that in the XXI century, to increase the political and economic competitiveness of the country on the world stage, the international image of the state is one of the most important factors. Moreover, it is important to take into account not only the formation of a positive image, but also its perception by the world community. Modern Russia has an ambiguous status in world politics, in most European countries there are negative associations with Moscow in most cases, this is due to the historical understanding of the role of Russia in their history. The perception of Russia as a country where aggression comes from did not change at the end of the last century, when post-Soviet Russia pursued a policy of abandoning imperial ambitions. Analysis of current trends in the scientific community and in particular in the media it can be argued that it is not possible to change the image of Moscow in the direction of the positive in the coming years. Either Russia will have to change its rhetoric towards Europe, or Europe will have to accept the existing situation. In general, it can be argued that relations between states also depend on the perception of the image of a neighbor.

The negative perception of Russia as an aggressor country has given rise to russophobia not only in politics but also in other areas such as the economy, culture, sports and medicine. Scandals around Russian athletes, cultural figures and music have become commonplace in the modern world. We believe that it is the political negativity towards Russia that has played an important role in the refusal of many European countries to buy the coronavirus vaccine from Russia.

As the results of the conducted opinion polls show, attitudes towards Russia were more positive during the Yeltsin period, in relation to this, the researchers point out that the Russian

authorities decided to go “from the opposite” and make the former “enemies” “friends”, as well as seeking to form in the eyes of the foreign public an idea of the country as free and liberal, forever breaking with the totalitarian Soviet past, Russia, represented by President Boris Yeltsin and his government, took a course towards rapprochement with the United States and Western European countries, and at the expense of refusing to realize their own geopolitical interests and aspirations (Kolokoltseva, 2019).

The current international situation requires Russia to form a new model of behavior in the international arena, taking into account its national interests.

Purpose and methodology of the study

The purpose of the work is to study the perception of the image of Russia in the modern world, to determine the main problems and prospects for the development of its policy in the field of forming a positive image.

In the study of the country’s image, we relied on the methodological developments of the school of political realism. The image of the country, its perception, is one of the most important trends in modern political science.

Image of a state is defined as purposefully formed (by public relations specialists and political elite) picture of a country. It is a set of ideas about a country’s political, economic, socio-cultural, scientific, ecological activities. So to say, image is kind of intermediary between the state and international community.

According to scientific researches, international image of a country performs several basic functions:

Social and political identification, which allows the society to perceive an image of a country from the socio-political perspective;

Promotion of an image by creating a positive informational field around the state;

Informational and communicative, which allows the state to maintain interstate relations with other countries in the international arena.

Historically, the image of Russia was formed in different countries in different ways, but in general, on the world map of stereotypes, researchers distinguish two images of Russia:

- European-Russia through the eyes of European peoples (this image is associated with the image of Russia as a country of culture, culture and art);

- American-Russia through the eyes of Americans (our country is characterized as barbaric, aggressive and poor) (Imidzh Rossii, 2014).

Results and discussion. Russia in the post-bipolar period: the formation of a new image

In modern realities, the image of the country is closely related to the perception of national companies in the international market, the leader of the country and the image of the capital. These days, Russia faces many geopolitical challenges, which negatively affects its image. The perception of the image of Russia by the international community has been steadily deteriorating in recent decades. In this regard, Polish politicians argue that the current perception of the image of Russia is different from what it was 5-6 years ago, when only the right-wing opposition used to consider Russia the main danger for Poland, but today this idea is common in most political parties in Poland (Christine Huang, 2020).

One of the main reasons for this problem is the global information space. Anti-Russian propaganda is one of the most common things in the international media nowadays, which creates a negative effect on building international relations. Western media are taking active measures to isolate Russia from the international community. In particular, the EU has initiated plans for strategies to combat Kremlin propaganda. For instance, Finland has a special group of state-level officials whose purpose is directed specifically against Russian propaganda.

The formation of a positive image of Russia in the international community is a problem that has only recently begun to be dealt with. The first step was Vladimir Putin's speech on July 12, 2004. He stated that the image of Russia in the world is very far from reality, which is the result of planned campaigns to discredit the country, and set a task for Russian diplomats promote the image of Russia around the world. However, this task depends not only on Russian diplomats, but also on the entire Russian society and state.

In December 2005, the Russian information channel "Russia Today" was created, which broadcasts around the clock in English. Later, in May 2007, the Russian news channel "Russia al-

Yaum" was launched, broadcasting in Arabic. It broadcasts to the Middle East and North Africa. Hence, Russia has been actively working to create a positive image.

Anti-Russian company after the annexation of Crimea

However, at present, after the situation in Ukraine, the entry of Crimea into Russia, the perception of the image of Russia has sharply deteriorated. To analyze the change in attitudes towards Russia from other countries, let's turn to an international survey conducted by the Pew Research Center. The Pew Global Attitudes project (Clark Letterman, 2018) surveyed 48,643 people from 44 countries. It was attended by Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the United States, Brazil, Russia, India, China and many other countries. According to the results of the survey, it was revealed that after the events in Ukraine, the image of Russia fell sharply in the eyes of the international public. The main reasons for this was publications in the Western media, in which Russia's actions were massively criticized and called aggressive. In addition, many cases of civil rights violations are being advanced, which Russian opposition activists say are being discussed, and even some of the cases are sent to the European Court of Human Rights.

The results of the survey showed that by 2015, the negative attitude towards Russia was more than positive – from 45% to 30%, and the rest found it difficult to answer. The positive attitude was mainly observed in countries like Greece, China, Vietnam and Bangladesh. The positive attitude of China and Vietnam is explained as a negative attitude towards the United States, as the principle of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend". The attitude of the Greeks was based on historical cultural and economic ties. One of the reasons was also the economic problems faced by Greece, caused by high competition in the European market. The sanctions imposed an embargo on the supply of Greek goods to Russia, which mainly caused economic problems. Statistics show that the anti-Russian sanctions imposed by the EU cost Greek agriculture 200 million euros.

Despite the flow of negativity towards Russia, Greece tends to rely on cooperation with Russia and denies support for tougher sanctions. In 2015, the two countries signed an interstate memorandum on cooperation in the construction of a gas pipeline in Greece. Former Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras has repeatedly criticized the sanctions

initiated by EU, saying that this kind of actions lead to economic war.

The deterioration of attitudes towards Russia is observed especially in the United States and Europe. If earlier the percentage of positive attitude was about 35%, and negative – 45%, then after the annexation of the Crimea, the percentage of negative attitude reached 75%. American experts state that Russia has acquired the image of the main enemy by defeating North Korea, China and Iran. Moreover, people tend to believe that Russia's growing military power poses a greater threat to the USA's national security.

The image of Russia in European countries is also very negative. It is also based on anti-Russian propaganda promoted by the media and positioning Russia as an enemy. The Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* published an article in which it was said that Russian criticism has reached the point of absurdity, that nowadays it is possible to say anything about the Russians without attaching any facts or evidence.

Indeed, anti-Russian propaganda has gone too far, which can lead to bad consequences for the allies of the West themselves. Any statements by Western officials about considering friendly relations with Russia lead to massive criticism. Many Western experts tend to believe that the demonization of Putin imposed by the Western media does more harm than good. For instance, former Congresswoman Dana Rohrabacher (Jonathan Weisman, 2014) has often stated that, despite Putin's shortcomings, the benefits of cooperation are much more important. He also said that there are many areas where countries could make the world a better place by cooperating with Russia, rather than by constantly escalating hostility. Rohrabacher does not approve of any hacking attacks by Russia or the annexation of Crimea, but believes that Russia has become a victim of Western double standards.

Richard Sakwa, professor of Russian and European politics at the University of Kent in the UK, argues that the concept of "Russian aggression" has become an echo, so that it prevents people from really thinking. Sakwa also stressed the fact that it is considered normal for countries to have national interests, but when Russia tries to protect its own national interests, it is often seen as aggression and a threat to the rest of the world (Richard Sakwa, 2017).

Many people in American political society also stand in solidarity with the Kremlin. Some of them are neo-Isolationists. They disagree with US attempts to "export democracy" in violent ways,

mentioning the invasion of Iraq or intervention in Syria. In this, they agree with the Kremlin, which opposes interference in the politics of sovereign states.

One of the European countries that does not see Russia as an enemy is Hungary. Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijarto said that they do not see Russia as a threat to their national security, on the contrary, if Russia and the United States are not able to solve global problems in cooperation, this creates a great threat to the security of Eastern Europe (Robert Velkey. 2017). Hungary is also suffering from anti-Russian sanctions imposed after the annexation of Crimea. Budapest insists that the sanctions are counterproductive and have led to anti-sanctions by Russia, which harms Europe's exports. In Hungary, for example, pig farmers suffer from the Russian embargo.

Rorabacher also claimed that massive immigration and terrorism makes far more threat that Russia. "To say that Russia is the enemy, when Russia is also threatened by radical Islamic terrorism, is a wrong way to go," says ex-Congressman Rohrabacher. This shows that anti-Russian propaganda and image of an enemy created by western media prevent world from solving global problems and benefit from cooperation of countries.

The image of Russia has always been built on the fact that it is a unique country spanning eleven time zones, rich in natural resources, with strong military power, rich history and culture. Since the times of the WW2, the country is considered one of those who defeated Nazi Germany. The first country to conquer space, having high achievements in medicine and sports. However, in modern world, all these factors that support a positive image of the country have become victims of information warfare.

Nowadays it is obvious that Russia is the target of massive information war. The goal of that war is to discredit Russia in international arena and create the image of an "enemy". To achieve this goal, all existing world media, international channels, social networks are used.

Today one of the terms most used in western media is "Russian hackers". Psychological and linguo-semantic analysis of information space of foreign segment shows that 35% of users of social network "Twitter" associate the image of Russia with the power structures of the state, and most of them show the signs of "cyberphobia" (Alexander Grebenyuk. 2020).

Accusations of Russia of interference in the elections began to circulate in the media in early

November 2016. Theses with unsubstantiated accusations of Russia of interference in the internal politics of other countries continue to appear in both foreign and Russian media.

Due to the spread of coronavirus infection throughout the world, the accusations of Russia of cyberattacks, aggressive foreign policy and other charges have dropped sharply. However, with the November 2020 presidential elections approaching, the accusations began to rise again.

The construction and maintenance of such associations was significantly influenced by massive unsubstantiated accusations of Russia in cyberattacks on educational and medical institutions, broadcast in the media of different countries in 2019-2020.

According to Czech media, in April 2020, Czech hospitals, the Prague airport and the country's Ministry of Health were under cyberattacks. The information was published in the Prague newspapers (Martin Shabu. 2020). In the spring of that year, local authorities decided to dismantle the monument to Marshall Konev, who, together with first Ukrainian Front of the Red Army, liberated Prague from the Nazis. It led to the international scandal. The Russian embassy in the Czech Republic expressed outrage at the dismantling of the monument. The decision to dismantle was taken by a local district official, which was later criticized by Czech President Milos Zeman. As soon as Russia and the Czech Republic found a common language, the Western media recalled the hospital story and attributed Russian hackers to it, allegedly IP traces to Moscow. The same incident took place in Poland, when Foreign Minister Jacek Czaputowicz spoke about reconciliation with Moscow, and suddenly a story surfaced with a hacker attack on Polish institutes and schools. Again, the Western media found a "Russian trace". However, no one wonders why some Russian hackers and even more special services of Russia would hack some schools and hospitals.

It is also worth noting the controversial post of the White House "on the victory of the United States and Britain" over Nazism (Greg Evans. 2020). On the official White House Instagram page on 8 May 2020, was published a post stating that the United States and Britain had defeated Nazism, but the contribution of the Soviet Union was not mentioned. Earlier, the secretary of Russian Security Council Nikolai Patrushev stated that Western historians and elites are trying to diminish the role of Russia in the world by expressing false information about the war. Moreover, Russian Facebook users were outraged that the social network was deleting posts

with a photograph in which Soviet soldiers are hoisting the Victory Banner over the Reichstag (Sergey Baimukhametov. 2020), raising the flag of USSR. Facebook later explained the reasons for removing the photos by pointing out the errors of the automated tool. "Youtube" hosting blocked three Russian news channels with a total of under a billion views. Russian journalist Anna Shafran states that these are American platforms that operate according to American rules, and that such cases should not be surprising. In casino, the croupier is the one who always wins.

Campaign against Russian Coronavirus vaccine

Information war is also being actively waged against the Russian vaccine "Sputnik V". There are massive attempts to discredit the Russian vaccine in the world media. For instance, on December 9, 2020, the Turkish newspaper "Haber Turk" published a report (Fatih Atayli. 2020) referring to the head of the Ministry of Health, which stated that "Sputnik V" does not meet the standards of good laboratory practice, and it is not able to obtain a license in Turkey, and therefore "went beyond the scope of interests". Later this information was denied by Turkish Minister Fahrettin Koca.

Ekaterina Mizulina, director of the "Safe Internet League" at the Public Chamber of Russian Federation, reported that a network of more than 430 groups and communities on social networks was identified in Poland and Ukraine, aimed to spreading fake news about the coronavirus vaccination campaign and discrediting the Russian "Sputnik V".

Moreover, at the end of May 2020, the US State Department announced a grant (Pavel Mylnikov. 2020) to "expose disinformation from Russia". The US State Department's Bureau of International Public Affairs has allocated \$250,000 to "an organization with experience in analyzing countering Russian disinformation". Meanwhile, the Russian Embassy in Washington criticized such an initiative. "Even in the period of the most severe global epidemic, when we – both Russia and the United States – are losing thousands of citizens, and everyone should have rallied, efforts are directed towards finding an external enemy" on which "it is supposed to blame – in whole or in part – for the shortcomings of our authorities", emphasized in the message of the diplomatic mission.

Above stated facts proves that Russia is being a target of information war and it is extremely affecting its image. Under the current conditions

of world politics, the development of the image of the country is necessary for further development. According to experts, there are several stages in the development of the image of Russia:

1) Promotion of the country's importance in world history by emphasizing scientific achievements of the country and its contribution to the development of world culture and history;

2) Promotion of information resources (media) broadcasting abroad;

3) Attracting foreign direct investment;

4) Organizing international conferences, exhibitions, conferences, forums with the involvement of world figures or politics, art, culture and science;

5) Increasing the competitiveness of Russian enterprises in the world market;

6) Development of ecological tourism.

By creating national cultural and scientific centers, and stimulating the development of world culture and science, it will be possible to increase the competitiveness of domestic brands and attract promising investors, which will have a positive effect on tourism.

To achieve the above goals, the following main directions were identified:

1) Development of a holistic image concept at the state level. The development of the country's image should be one of the main goals of the national interest.

2) Enhancing the position of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the protection of the Russian-speaking population and Russian citizens living abroad.

3) Organization of major international forums and sports competitions.

Based on these directions, we can conclude that a lot of work needs to be done to achieve positive results and a developing image policy in Russia, but at the same time, it should be noted that Russia has a good potential to achieve this goal. First of all, it is necessary to develop a clear concept that will be supported by majority of the population. To build a stable positive image abroad, it is important to gain support of the citizens. One of the main problems of the image of Russia is that the residents of the country themselves often become victims of anti-Russian propaganda. Therefore, it is very important to build a policy that will be aimed not only abroad, but will also work within the country. It is also important to pay more attention to the media channels, including television, radio channels, printed publications and internet resources. With the help of these resources, it is necessary to form a positive image of Russia

both within the country and abroad. To do this, it is important to step up public diplomacy, bringing official and most importantly reliable information to the public masses. The information war against Russia is mainly aimed at isolating Russia from the world, so it is necessary to take countermeasures, namely, holding major international sports, cultural and tourist events that show Russia in a favorable light. One of the most important factors is richness of Russian culture, but for this to happen, the Russians themselves must evoke a sense of national pride and significance in world history and modernity. Then, it is also important to activate the compatriots abroad in order to promote Russian culture and language.

The image of the state is one of the most important factors for increasing its socio-economic and political competitiveness, as well as for realizing its national interests.

Conclusion

Summing up the results of the study, it is worth noting that based on the collected data, we selected only a few areas/situations related to the image of Russia in the modern world.

First, authors of this article consider that the most fundamental problem is the transformation of the Kremlin's political rhetoric in the post-Soviet period. The Soviet past problem is the cornerstone in the perception of the image of Russia. Although, as stated above, in the 90s of the last century, Russia tried to change its attitude to the legacy of the Soviet Union. Russia agreed that the states of Eastern Europe have the right to determine their future and abandoned the policy of pressure on them. Also, Russia practically withdrew from Central Asia, and territorial problems were resolved with the former post-Soviet republics, in particular with Ukraine and the Baltic states. The authors of the article believe that Russia was waiting for a mutual response from the Western countries, and Russia's attempts to make concessions were regarded as a sign of weakness. Western countries and some states from the Muslim world did not support Russia's actions during the Chechen War. The expansion of NATO to the east, contrary to the "gentlemen's agreements", led to the activation of the «instinct of self-preservation». Thereafter it led to changes in the Kremlin's foreign policy directions. The lack of dialogue with the West through strengthening the role of the OSCE, and each side started to consider the other guilty.

The second important issue is the annexation of Crimea, and the unilateral recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. A

gross violation of the norms of international law and the fundamental principles of international relations has taken place. In this regard, there was a gross violation of the norms of international law and the fundamental principles of international relations. Nevertheless, there is another side, the so-called unpopular view of Russia's actions. Russia's actions in 2008 were a response to the recognition of Kosovo's independence by Western countries and the United States in the first place. For Russia, which considers itself a power, it was vital to create a so-called "security belt", and the attempts of some countries to earn political dividends on anti-Russian rhetoric were regarded as a threat to Russia. Now, as for the issue of Crimea, the return of the peninsula under the control of Kiev is unlikely, over the past 7 years, Russia has invested a lot in the process of integrating Crimea into Russia, and it is unlikely that even with a radical change of power in Russia, someone will decide to return it to Ukraine. However, Moscow must understand that without the support of other centers of power, the recognition of Crimea as part of Russia is not possible. In world politics, there are several similar cases, for example, the fate of the Palestinian Territories, Northern Cyprus, etc., when the issue of non-recognition by the world community faded into the background. But Russia has no allies in this matter, as potential allies of the Kremlin in the person of Beijing, Delhi have similar problems, and their actions can lead to

the destruction of the world order. This issue will remain on the agenda of world politics for a long time to come.

In the end, disputes around the issue of the anti-Russian company in relation to the Sputnik V vaccine flare up. As argued before, the Russian vaccine is seen as another propaganda tool from Moscow. Initially, when Putin announced the creation of the vaccine, there were many skeptics about the vaccine. The authors of this article argue that Moscow needs to depoliticize this issue. Since we are talking about the fate of millions of people. Most of all, questions about the effectiveness of this vaccine are considered to be more of a medical issue. And the more officials talk about the vaccine, the more questions will arise, the first step in this regard has already taken when Russian scientists published their reports in popular international scientific journals. It is necessary to note that the publication of the results of the vaccine trial published in the British journal "The Lancet" caused the growth of the "Sputnik V" popularity in Europe. And in most of the European media, the invention of the vaccine was considered a great breakthrough in Russia in medicine.

In sum, the issue of forming a positive image and its perception in the world will still be an actual direction in research, and authors of this article hope that this article will lay the foundation for further consideration in the scientific community.

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