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Theoretical foundations of shaping the media image of the newly independent states and the problem of disputable cases

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Abstract

The study shows that if a state doesn't shape its own image, doesn't disseminate the information about itself in the global level, then its natural, geopolitical and ideological opponents start to engage in shaping its negative image exploiting the "black" technologies.

Keywords: mass media, image, independent states, opinion, "black" technologies, international relations, community, competition.

1. Introduction

For over the past years both the scientific community and the political elites have actively been scrutinizing the issues of image of the newly independent states. If we take into account that the public relations interact with public mind at the level of subconsciousness, then it shall be revealed to what extent urgent this problem is.

The world public is well aware of how, for example, England was described to be "the land of conservatism", Italy – "home to mafia", Thailand – "tourist heaven", or the then U.S. President Ronald Reagan was portraying the former Soviet Union to be "the empire of evil" and Iranian President Homenei was calling the United States as the "elder devil". Such labeling was practiced yet in the past centuries, i.e. long before the science of PR was established. For instance, it was customary to name Iran to be "the Persian Gulf gendarme" or the Khiva Khanate – "the Algeria of Middle Asia". Having said that, one could think of the fact that prior to emergence of public relations, as a part of shaping one's positive image, the partners used to widely engage in the "white" technologies in the international relations in contrast with the image of their opponents. Certainly, such practices weren't called as "PR technologies", however regardless of that how they were named the substance doesn't change.

In this context, at the moment the task of shaping "the media image" of the newly independent states, i.e. their "image in the mass media" requires to accomplish the comprehensively schemed work. In this it is necessary to expand liaising with public and coordinating the activities of state governance bodies, various public organizations and businesses.

Thus, the international image of a country I am arguing about goes by the name of 'a steady *constanta*' (from Latin 'constans' – *permanent, unchangeable, constant*) and for over a span of years it gets stamped in the consciousness of the international community. Its characteristics are broadly utilized in the mass media and other news sources.

The researcher P. Zhukova has also emphasized this factor as follows: "The image of a state is a historical category. It is shaped for centuries" ^[1]. Indeed, the image of a country neither forms nor disappears right of a sudden. It emerges gradually and phase by phase on a continuous basis and gets stored for many years in the public mind.

If a state doesn't shape its own image, doesn't disseminate the information about itself in the global level, then its natural, geopolitical and ideological opponents start to engage in shaping its negative image exploiting the "black" technologies. Thus, engaging the public in the global level obeys the rules considered to be the common for other directions of this tenure.

If such is the case, let us dwell on the substance of an international image. The researcher Muhammad al-Bukhariy believes that the world public relations act as the international information exchange ^[2], the instrument of frank relations between the nations and the action platform of international organizations ^[3]. "The international information exchange and communication occupy a special niche in the international relations and shaping the political activeness of peoples" ^[4]. Especially, at the moment with the ICT seeing its development this

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Notion acquires yet more urgent significance. In her turn, P. Zhukova draws attention to ensuring the national security as one of the important aspects of an international image. The researcher believes that “for any society it is necessary to provide for the accord of interests between the shapers of state’s image and ensuring its national security”^[5].

Yet another important aspect of an international image, above all, the way it is first shaped inside the country in a historical retrospective, and then it is reviewed in the measurements of society and state power. Since, given the mutual correspondence of international image nurtured by public opinion and state power, it can then be argued about capability to act in a severe foreign competition and readiness to effectively utilize the methods of further advancing image of a state and its communication^[6].

In the international practice, the main goals and objectives haven’t been systematized as for the need to shape a positive image of a certain state. Such circumstance could be reasoned, possibly, by the fact that each and every state proceeds from its own national interests and needs in conducting its foreign policy and joins the international arena loaded with its own problems. It goes without saying – this process is never simple or easy. Such complexities of life bring into stage especially the problem of theoretical foundations of shaping the media image of newly independent states and disputable cases in practice.

Thus, it is hard to precisely enlist the objectives of an international image. It is defined in line with set of measures designed by a concrete state in a concrete circumstance in terms of addressing the precise tasks.

Having said that, I believe, by generalizing the goals and objectives in this direction, they can be divided into several categories:

1. Above all, ensuring the international acclaim and trust;
2. Bringing its domestic and foreign problems into the international stage;
3. In disputed situations having buttress or partners in the person of other subjects of international legal relations;
4. Reaching out to world markets, ensuring competitiveness of its products and services, and vice versa, engaging in imports in preferential terms;
5. Making convinced other international legal players of its own position in terms of international problems;
6. Mobilizing foreign investments to develop the country’s infrastructure;
7. Using in maximum the domestic resources, and particularly, developing tourism;
8. Enjoying a certain international status;
9. Providing domestic and foreign security, counteracting the military, political, economic, cultural and information threats;
10. Providing security to its citizens abroad and their economic or political interests;
11. Disseminating information to other countries about its own culture and ideology and by such practice – exerting certain influence to them.

Realization of the aforementioned objectives leads to shaping international image of a state. According to the researcher E. Galumov, the main targeted audiences of this process are divided into follows:

1. The sources or subjects of international law – the international state or non-state organizations (United Nations, UNESCO);

2. International specialized organizations (the sphere of economy, finance, trade, culture, sport, education and professions);
3. Political elites of foreign states;
4. Foreign investors and stockholders;
5. International public organizations;
6. Community of experts of professional interest in a certain state (financial and sector-wise analysts, political scholars, sociologists, economists, journalists, etc.);
7. Representatives of international community interested in state and are in possession of needs (nationals of other states), and particularly, potential and real tourists, as well as the populations of foreign states^[7].

I believe that this list put by E. Galumov is not full. Since, it can be added with journalists specializing in coverage of countries and regions, private media monopolies, as well as state mass media with an international status.

One of the most important components of the rising significance of image for over the past years is the openness of a country to investments (in the corporate image theory it goes by the name of ‘*business image*’ – B.A.). Having political and economic indicators to fall into the focus of attention of investors requires availability of such components of business image in the international community as high cultured atmosphere, political transparency and social responsibility (financing the educational and scientific programs, providing for environmental and technological safety, social packages for staff members of companies and enterprises, etc).

Yet, it must be emphasized with regret that nowadays there is relatively low amount of information in the world media market concerning Uzbekistan’s investment potential. I believe that in this regard a special media plan must be drafted along with accomplishment of systemic work in this direction. In this context, if to speak from a theoretical point of view, then some outstanding problems available in practice begin to crawl onto surface. For example, for over the past years (particularly 1998-2015) the scope of roundtables and large conferences on Uzbekistan’s economic partnership opportunities held abroad saw gradual decrease. Their coverage in foreign and domestic mass media was in fact sidelined.

As I believe, the business catalogues, investment booklets, print and electronic information on economic topic are being produced in a very few copies. Such information, in particular, must include “the readiness of state to accept the conditions of the world market: the lawfully solid and steady rules of economic sphere, reforming the natural monopolies, taxation, judicial and banking spheres and other institutions, etc.”^[8].

By the way, E. Galumov proposes shaping the sole image to be propagated by all media outlets inside the country^[9]. Certainly, we should accept this notion as it is. Since, any image subject to be designed must be full and complete, but the hierarchy of characteristics should somewhat vary for different layers of society. It is certain for a corporate image.

The investors are interested in generated profits, outcomes of putting capital into company, potential dangers and risks, and the business community – in the company status, its impact on the market and development rates, innovative technologies, business strategy and social position. The high competitiveness, trustworthiness and stability are important for partners. Since, the hopes of modern clientele are laid on the company professionalism, its values and the market niche. Meanwhile, the investors lean on the stability and

development prospects of companies, correlation of both domestic and foreign image, as well as correspondence of individual values with those of communal ones.

Only in the case of mutual trust in the relationships between the foreign and domestic mass media, the image can be turned in the future into a powerful force in shaping the stable status. Yet, the level of openness of sources (newsmakers, official circles) is mostly important for foreign journalists, especially, along the process of fast news gathering.

Thus, assessing the country's existing international image, analyzing the process of shaping the certain news flow, addressing the reasons leading to negative, inadequate and fragmentary coverage, establishing the trustworthy stable relationships in line with the rules of media community and media market, as well as the principles of mutual trust and solid partnerships are deemed to be a main direction in reviewing the image of the entire system of the country.

The difficult side of interacting with mass media is that given today's globalization period there is a monopoly of the group of certain (industrialized) states in the news market, non-competitiveness of information technologies available to smaller states and rising consequent dangers that the information about them face manipulation.

Speaking otherwise, today's international news exchange is of a one-sided nature and direction. It should be regretfully noted that the difference between capabilities in this area available to developed and developing states expands from day to day. Especially it is vividly observed in the condition of ideological, political, military or information standoffs.

The researcher Muhammad al-Bukhari systematizes these problems as follows:

- 1) The international news mainly leans on the interests of the West;
- 2) The news about developing nations are disseminated through the prism of Western values. The consequent miscorrelation of such practice leads to negative consequences;
- 3) The international news flow mainly serves the purposes of shaping a positive opinion about the West. In its turn, it brings about their comparison with developing nations, and consequently, leads to confrontation ^[10]. Certainly, such view requires no comment.

As it is argued about the image of a state, yet another important issue cannot be sidelined. The image of a country indirectly depends on the image of its certain regions.

In shaping the image of any chosen state it is necessary to pay a serious attention to shaping and bettering individual images of administrative units of this state, i.e. its domestic territories, regions, provinces and districts. In this context, I deem it necessary to note the opinion enunciated by the scholar based at the Stavropol State University I.V. Bukreyeva. Dwelling on the coverage of the image of Federal District of Northern Caucasus in the Russian state television channels, she wrote in particular as follows: "the First Channel airs very few information about domestic factors of the region, and particularly, the one related to richness and beauty of the nature of the Northern Caucasus. Meanwhile, one must usefully exploit such real features in shaping the positive image of this area. Otherwise, constant "blackening" of the media image pertaining to this district will bar the flow of potential investments and flow of tourists. Most importantly, creating the general positive image of a country in many terms is directly related to the image of its domestic territories ^[11].

It is an open secret that the Russian television channels are fond of focusing not in the beauty of the Caucasus' nature, the

cleanness of its air and diligent local population, but rather in disseminating only negative information about the area – the local turbulences, standoffs and terrorist activities. Given such scenario, the mistrust and alarm on the part of Russia will grow towards this district. As a result, the flow of foreign investments will decrease and the region will lag behind in its economic and social development. In its turn, it will bring about the problems related to security and serve for radicalization of moods of the local populations.

As it is argued about the regional image, it is also worth noting the views shed on the topic by the researcher at the Omsk State University I.A. Sushnenkova. The analysis of the stories about the Omsk region published in Russian federal and regional newspapers revealed that the domestic capabilities of the area weren't used in full in terms of creating its foreign media image. For example, the stories told a little about that the region had been a peculiar industrial, sport and cultural hub for the locality. Vice versa, the central mass media mostly focused on disseminating the negative news items on the criminal situation in Omsk and various other troublesome events. I.A. Sushnenkova believes that in shaping the area's image the journalists must fairly assess the reality and should use the correct words and phrases ^[12]. And here I also deem it necessary to give some analogous examples related to Uzbekistan's domestic and foreign policy. On several occasions we have witnessed how the entire international community endorsed the ideas put forward by Uzbekistan's President in terms of ensuring security and stability in Middle Asia, and particularly, the issues concerning Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The meaning and essence of the initiatives related to Afghanistan are as follows: the local population must address the problems of their country and provide for ending of almost 40-years-long war proceeding from their own interests and based on the assistance of states interested in stable future in the region.

The list of such states, above all, must include those involved in peacemaking mission – the United States, NATO, Russia and immediate neighboring countries on Afghanistan. The most important goal of the Contact Group "6+3" is to propose the action program of ceasefire for confronting parties in Afghanistan, locate the mutual consensus-based solutions on the major problems and standoffs that tear apart the country, ensure security and give necessary guarantees with consideration of interests of all involved parties" ^[13].

Besides, if to consider the drying up of the Aral Sea to be one of the largest ecological and humanitarian tragedies in the history of mankind, and that almost 35 million people residing in the sea basin left under its impact, the work accomplished by Uzbekistan in this direction also earned a profound recognition. With gaining Independence, President of Uzbekistan engaged in broad-scale work in terms of interstate cooperation on recovering the ecological state in the area adjacent to Aral Sea. In particular, in March 1993 the Kyzyl Orda Agreement was signed on the joint action by the heads of Central Asian states with establishment of the Interstate Council on the problems of Aral Sea, its Executive Council and the International Fund for saving the Aral Sea.

The peculiar features of building a democratic society in Uzbekistan also remained in the focus of attention of the international community. Indeed, thanks to Independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan made its main objective to establish a law-governed democratic state and civil society. Uzbekistan chose a path of progress deemed to be a peculiar and fitting for itself based on its national and spiritual heritage, as well as the values of building a national statehood. Since, a society

cannot be called a true democratic one if it doesn't lean on its spiritual values and heritage, if it doesn't manage to harmonize them with universal values and principles. In this regard, President Islam Karimov put it as follows: "The democracy must turn into a value of society and wealth of each and every person. But this is not accomplished overnight. Without earning its niche in the people's culture, the democracy cannot either be a part and parcel of a daily life. This process is a long one which includes preparation and assimilating the principles of democracy" [14].

Thus, the fact of a special attention paid to the theory and practice of building a democracy in Uzbekistan and introduction of learning subjects related to this sphere is thought to be, first, as an outcome of Uzbekistan's Independence, and second, thanks to sovereignty, it demonstrates that the priority of the chosen course of progress is about building a democratic state.

It is an open secret that science is an important branch which defines the present and the future of any state. At the moment, the Uzbek scientists are creating a solid foundation to ensure further development of the nation's science. Uzbekistan's Independence in 1991 stood as an enormous historical event for the whole people, and particularly, the scientific and scholarly community.

It goes without saying that solidifying the economic potential of an independent state is immediately related to effectively introducing the advanced scientific designs and gains of scientific and technical progress. The broad introduction of innovative technologies to production allowed to turn Uzbekistan into a comprehensively developed state. There are many examples to it: the Institute of Genetics, which serves for nurturing with gene technologies the new breeds of cotton, wheat and other plants; the Institute of Material Science, which operates a 1000 kilo-Watt giant solar furnace to produce in high temperatures pure and strong durable materials; the International Institute of Solar Energy; the Institute of Ion-Plasma and Laser Technologies; the Institute of Gene Pool of Flora and Fauna; the Mamun Academy and other scientific institutions to name a few.

In a word, the aforementioned and all of the achieved gains, undoubtedly, shall serve for the image of Independent Uzbekistan.

In this article as I have discussed the theoretical foundations and the problem of disputable cases in practice in terms of shaping the media image of newly independent states, the following conclusions are made:

–for over the recent years the issues of image of newly independent states are well scrutinized both by scientific community and political elites. In these conditions, if to take into account that the public relations interact with public consciousness at the level of sub consciousness, then it becomes vivid to what extent urgent this problem is;

–the main goals and objectives pursued to create the positive image of a certain state internationally haven't been systematized in the learning books. Such circumstance could be reasoned, possibly, by the fact that each and every state proceeds from its own national interests and needs in conducting its foreign policy and joins the international arena loaded with its own problems. It goes without saying – this process is never easy;

–the issue of looking for the opportunities to expand the news flow about the large-scale advances made by Uzbekistan remains yet to be urgent;

–I believe that the algorithm of creating an international image must be universal for image programs at any level. In

corporate strategies the algorithm of shaping an image should intake the stage of learning the competitor's image, as well;

–according to analyses, the theoretical foundations of shaping image of newly independent states and the cases in practice sometimes ignore one another. For example, from theoretical viewpoint the rules of creating the news flow require to present more news, ensure the continuous flow of news, provide with concrete information, work fast, know limits, accept the true message, open up its own version of the story and make one's own position known. However, when it comes to practice, due to some reasons the immediacy is lacked, the concrete position is not announced, the answers to the questions by media come slow and such practices become regular;

–although it can be mentioned that the newly independent state, which chose the path of democratic progress, must constantly demonstrate its political and economic openness, and the way that it is free. If a state doesn't shape its own image, doesn't disseminate the information about itself in the global level, then its natural, geopolitical and ideological opponents start to engage in shaping its negative image exploiting the "black" technologies. Thus, engaging the public in the global level obeys the rules considered to be the common for other directions of this tenure;

–such complexities of life bring into stage especially the problem of theoretical foundations of shaping the media image of newly independent states and disputable cases in practice. Thus, it is hard to precisely enlist the objectives of an international image. It is defined in line with set of measures designed by a concrete state in a concrete circumstance in terms of addressing the precise tasks.

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