

The Image of Russia in the System of International Relations: the Content of the Image Strategy

Abstract

The analysis of evolution of the image of Russia in the system of international relations has shown that the image of Russia has been dynamically changing throughout its history. On the one hand the image of Russia is determined by peculiarities of the citizens' attitude to the state and, on the other hand, by the state's international prestige. The results of the general political research show that for Russian people the image of the national state is associated with the President of the country, strong power, and the greatness of the country. Abroad, the Russian state is perceived as a superpower with a rich history, but however, a number of foreign states perceive Russia as a country with high levels of corruption.

Key words: international relations, image of state, image strategy, Russian government, Russia.

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In contemporary socio-humanitarian space there is a notable tendency of increasing significance of symbolic politics, based on various subjects of a political process, as well as on stereotypes and myths, formed around them. According to I. U. Kiselyov the problem of the image of the state proved itself relevant, «when it became obvious that the perception of the state is not always carried out

in accordance with the image created by the state, but is mostly figured out of the images that arise with the other participants of the international relations» [1].

General philosophical approach (S. V. Bepalov, E. A. Galumov, L. A. Mike-shina) understands the «image» as the result and the ideal model of the object reflected in the conscious of an individual,

arising in the process of historical practice and based on a sign system. Image is an impression, perception and consideration. Therefore, this category is something subjective. However, once created, the image acquires its independent character, and begins to take an active part in the behavior of the individuals.

In the framework of political analysis there is a variety of the researches of the «image of the state»: political-psychological, media, cultural, marketing, sociological, and discursive. I. V. Fomin [2] supposes, that when studying the phenomenon of the «image of the state», the researchers choose one of the two ways. The first group of scientists describes the content of this category through the listing of similar terms (symbol, sign, presentation). The second defines the «image of the state» through the set of elements (geography, culture, economy, action, status) reflected in the image.

I. Y. Kiselev offered an interesting concept of the «image of the state», believing that it can be represented at two levels. The first level is the state at the domestic level, the state for «ourselves», when the members identify themselves as «We», a single unity, comprised of a number of elements. The state at the external level becomes the «I» in the international system. «I am the image» includes the following components:

- identity (history, general values, peculiarities of political system);
- the status of the country in the international arena;
- the role of the state in the system of international relations.

According to the author, when one of the components becomes dominant, we can speak of the three types of the image of the state «I»:

- the identificational pattern (the external policy of the state is based, on the first place, on the values of its history, culture, socio-political system);
- the status pattern (the state of this type ranks first the relations with other countries in the international system);

— the role pattern (the state makes it a priority to carry out its obligations) [3].

E. A. Galumov distinguishes other components in the structure of the «image of state». From his point of view, the «image of state» is a combination of the image components: political, geographical, natural resource, civilizational, cultural, societal, production-economic, national. In the structure of the image of state A. E. Galumov distinguishes the components:

1. «Relatively static», these components never change (natural resources, cultural and historical heritage, geographical position, basic form of political system);
2. «Relatively dynamic», are in operation at the present time:
 - «updatable» sociological factors (the mood in the society, models of social — political interactions, peculiarities and style of the realization of political power);
 - «updatable» institutional factors (policy, economy, law — the factors of the basic influence on public opinion);
 - «prospects of development» planned and expected in future [4].

Different components of state structure were offered by F. E. Perz:

- the processes of the statehood's formation (the historical memory — the key events which influenced the processes of political system's constitutionalization);
- communicative factors (objectivity / the lack of objectivity of Mass Media);
- the type of political culture;
- transformation of mass consciousness (changeable processes bringing psychological tension in the society).

The image of state in foreign affairs proves to be the key element in the process of interconnection with other actors of the international system. Any articulation starts with a primary arising of the image of the opponent. According to a thorough note of K. O. Pertsovskaya «The space of the international relations is not an exception, for the way the country and its image is perceived, makes the base for the establishing of the international and economic relations with the

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external community» [6]. The creation of the positive image of the state is the foreground aspiration of any country, for it serves much to the consolidation of its political conquests, strengthens the competitive ability, and simplifies the intercourse with other countries.

Russia possesses a certain image in the consciousness of the world community. The evolution of this image had been undertaken during each period throughout its history. I. V. Lyabukhov [7] supposes that the state image in political history of Russia contingently breaks down into three main periods: 1991–1999; 2000–2008; 2008 — until now.

1991–1999 — absence of the integrate policy on forming of the positive image of the state. After the disintegration of the USSR, Russia was proclaimed the legal successor. The control over the image of the state activities weakened considerably, compared to that of the Soviet Union. The mightiest propaganda machine collapsed, and the new alternative instruments of the international state authority support had not been created.

A short-term positive effect on the image of the state produced the following processes: renunciation of the confrontation with the West, democratization processes, transition to a market economy. M. F. Chernishov [8] expressed the opinion that Russia carried out a weakness image due to the drunk President B. N. Yeltsin, banditry, the Chechen War and oligarchy.

2000–2008 — forming of Russia's positive image abroad becomes the matter of priority. This period is characterized by favorable market conditions and GDP growth. Russia succeeded in paying of the greater part of the foreign debts. In the international image of the state the rewriting of the anthem, the struggle with the international terrorism (the events of the 11 September, 2001), the right of the presidency in G8, the winning the right to arrange the Olympic Games in 2014 helped a lot in returning back the status of one of the greatest world powers.

Many researchers think that a significant input to the image of the state of the period were such events as the adoption of the new

Concept of the Foreign Policy (2000); realization of the project of forming and promotion of the positive image of the state abroad (cultural, scientific, sport events) (2003); foundation of the round-the-clock channel «Russia today»; forming and promotion of the positive image of Russia (2008 — up to now); creation of the new Concept of the Foreign Policy with a widened image component (2008). The public diplomacy becomes the main method of forming of the positive «image of the state». In 2010 the State Fund of the Public Diplomacy of A. M. Gorchakov and the uncommercial partnership «The Russian Council on the Foreign Affaires» were established.

R. Tsarukyan [9] notes that at the present moment the image of Russia is inseparable with the personality of President V. V. Putin. The researcher thinks that all the attacks towards Putin should be considered as the attacks towards Russia. The same viewpoint expressed V. Volodin at the Congress of the Discussion Club «Valday»: «If there is Putin, then there is Russia. If there is no Putin, then there is no Russia» [10].

A legal regulatory framework at the present moment is comprised of a complex of documents, which contribute to the forming of the image of the state. Decree of the President of 8 November 2011. № 1478 «About the coordinative role of The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in the conducting of the unified foreign policy line of the Russian Federation» [11]. The document establishes the leading role of the Ministry in the sphere of interaction with international countries. According to the document the Minister of Foreign Affairs of RF carries out the general control of the fulfillment of the international obligations of the Russian State, provides political, diplomatic and informational support at all the levels of power while preparing and implementation of international events.

«The Concept of the Foreign policy of The Russian Federation» of the 2013 is the regulation of the first grade importance in the forming the image of Russia. The Concept represents «the system of the viewpoints on

the basic principles, the prior directions, aims and perspectives of the foreign activity of the Russian Federation» [12]. The document justified the priorities of the RF in solution of the regional and global problems, methods of the international interests' realization.

At the moment, the political elite of the RF (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs being the first) is conducting the following meaningful procedures with the purpose of creating of the positive image of the state:

- implementation of human rights activities — the struggle with the violation of the human rights all over the world;
- the support of compatriots abroad — for example the Federal program of working with compatriots, living abroad for 2015–2017 [13];
- the spread of the Russian language — according to the data of the year 2010, more than 50 Centres of culture and science in 46 countries were teaching the Russian language which attended 16 thousand people[14];
- popularization of Russian culture — organization of annual festivals «The Year of Russia abroad», active welcoming of foreign students to receive higher professional education in Russia [15].

The process of creation of the positive image is a durable process. I. A. Vasilenko notes, that the image strategy of the state should be projected for a long-term period (about 30 years). Such a durable program allows to affect the world community through all the possible channels of mass communication and public diplomacy which is necessary for creation of the stable positive internal and external image of the state. The researcher concludes that the present day image strategy comprises the following directions:

- the forming of the unique concept and popular slogan, inherent to the majority of the population and agreeable with cultural traditions;
- complex coverage of all the instruments of Mass Communication — the promotion of the positive image of the state through television, radio, internet resources,

Table 1. Which of the following statements do you most agree? Russia seems to foreigners... (use answers from 1 to 5, where 1 is strongly disagree, 5 — completely agree)

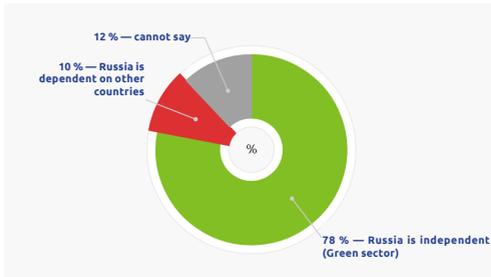
interesting	4.04
a country with strong power	3.91
responsive	3.81
independent	3.79
welcoming	3.74
rich	3.71
tolerant	3.70
striving for spiritual values	3.39
country of people	3.18
with high self-esteem	3.18
economic	3.15
country of hardworking people	3.07
authoritarian	2.96
striving for superiority	2.95
stubborn	2.83
wasteful	2.78

- press and others;
- activation of the Public Diplomacy in order to denounce the results of the state policy in all the areas to all the citizens;
- the interest of the nation to its history — the revival of political myths, praise of national heroes;
- to engage the representatives of science and culture in image-building projects;
- application of the technology of «a personal charm» when a charismatic political leader is placed in the centre of the informational campaign, trying to raise the prestige of the country;
- celebration of national holidays, visiting of other countries by the political leaders;
- support of compatriots in other coun-

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Figure 1. Is Russia independent or dependent on other countries?

- 12 % — cannot say (Grey sector)
- 10 % — Russia is dependent on other countries (Red sector)
- 78 % — Russia is independent (Green sector)



tries — spreading of the Russian language, creation of cultural centers;

- tourism development — promotion of domestic tourist routes;
- sports development — active participation in international competitions, propaganda of a healthy mode of life [16].

Whether the efforts of the image constructing policy correspond to the real situation, can possibly be traced with empirical measurement of the spirits of Russian citizens. According to the data of «Public Opinion Foundation» in 2014 [17] 68 % of Russians thought, that they lived in a developed country, while in 2012 this figure was 43 %.73 % of the population considers Russia a free country, the number increased to 19 % in comparison with 2012.

The majority of Russians think that other countries are afraid of Russia (86 %) and

respect Russia (68 %). As a matter of fact, according to the responders, more than a half of Russians believe that Russia is treated badly. The citizens associate negative attitude to the state with the situation in Ukraine (9 %), imposing of sanctions (7 %) and joining of the Crimea (5 %), independent foreign policy (6 %).

Of course there are those, strongly convinced that the image of Russia abroad is improving (36 %). The respondents connect the tendency with the personality of the President Vladimir Putin (7 %), strengthening of military power (3 %), correct foreign policy (4 %).

In 2014, the Russian center of public opinion [18] conducted a poll among Russians about what image of the Russian Federation, in the opinion of our citizens, formed among foreigners (table 1).

Obviously, the majority of Russians feel that in the eyes of foreigners Russia is in the first place, interesting, and sympathetic state with a strong power. The last thing the Russians tend to think that the image of our country, identified with the state, seeking superiority, stubborn and wasteful.

A similar study was carried out in 2015 by The Foundation of the public opinion [19]. The vast majority of compatriots (89 %) believe that Russia is feared in the world.56 % of responded believe, that the attitude of other states to Russia is biased.78 % of Russians believe that Russia is self-sufficient and does not depend on other countries.10 % say that the country depends on other states (figure 1). Out of them, 5 % believe that our

Figure 2. Upon which countries does Russia depend in decisions and actions?

- USA — 5 %; EU countries — 4 %; China — 1 %; Germany — 1 %;
- Many countries — 1 %; Something else — 1 %; Cannot say — 2 %

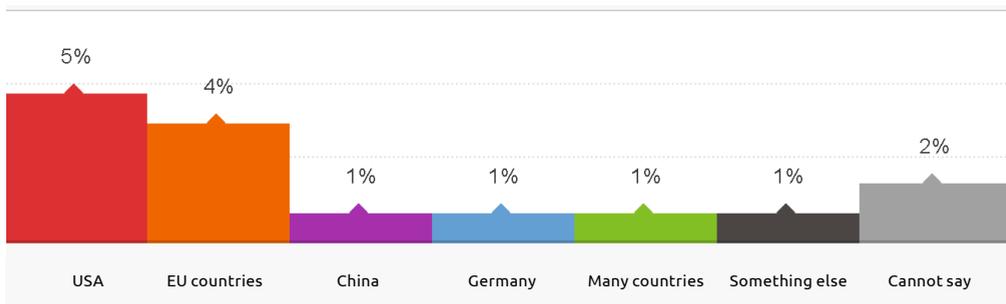


Figure 3.
Is Russia's influence in the world in recent years increasing, decreasing or staying constant?
Green — increasing. Blue — staying constant. Red — decreasing. Grey — cannot say



Figure 4. Which country do you consider a super power?

Total	81	50	39	35	34
Brazil	65	26	10	33	12
China	94	65	45	19	32
France	85	59	24	37	43
Germany	90	69	70	56	81
India	79	33	29	28	5
Japan	70	36	16	19	20
Russia	68	24	58	22	13
Great Britain	92	78	65	60	76
USA	86	56	30	40	26
	USA	China	Russia	Japan	EU

country depends of the USA, 4 % — of Europe, 1 % of — China, 1 % — of Germany, 1 % — of other countries (Figure 2).

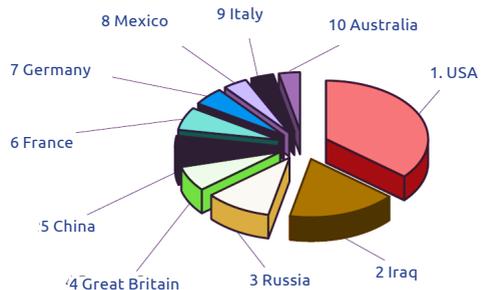
The majority of respondents believe that in recent time the influence of Russia is growing (67 %). In 2008, this index was on the mark 57 % — 62 %, in 2012—48 %, in 2014—55 % (Figure 3).

Thus, the generalized results of socio-political research showed that the image of Russia in the representation of the most Russian citizens is independent, magnificent country with the respectful political leader. In the opinion of compatriots, the image of the national state often caused fear among other actors of the international system.

A different perception of the image of the Russian Federation is met with overseas

Figure 5. Distribution of global press coverage factors in the global media space

- 1 USA. 2 Iraq. 3 Russia. 4 Great Britain. 5 China. 6 France. 7 Germany. 8 Mexico. 9 Italy. 10 Australia**



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neighbors. V. Buyanov [20] notes, that the West actively exploits a few images of Russia: for yourself, for us, for everyone else. Image for domestic consumption is: the Russian people are steeped in vice, they are not ready to accept Western values, democracy as a form of power is alien to Russia. Image for Russia itself is: a backward country, the government cannot provide the worthy standard of living for its citizens. Image for all the rest is: Russia becomes the same threat as it was in the time of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union.

S. V. Kobzev, D. A. Khalturina, A. V. Korateev, D. M. Kachkov [21] suggested that it is impossible to give a single image of Russia, which exists in the world. This image varies greatly, depending on the region, where the state is situated. According to the study «47-Nation Pew Global Attitudes Survey», the positive image of the Russian Federation has developed in the third world countries, members of CIS. The negative perception of the image of the Russian state is typical for people of the United States, of Canada, and the UK. An ambiguous assessment of the image of Russia has been formed in the Eastern Europe; for example, in Bulgaria a positive image of our country prevails, in Poland it is very negative.

A study conducted by the Bertelsmann Foundation (2007) [22] have shown that the residents of nine major countries of the world, appreciate Russia as a great power, rating the third. Russia is regarded the great

state in the United Kingdom, China and Germany (figure 4).

This situation was affirmed by the research «News factors in global media space» [23].

The results showed, that among the ranking of most frequently mentioned countries along with the USA, China, and EU Russia presents (Figure 5).

Despite the fact that Russia is considered a superpower by many foreigners, polls show that the majority of our neighbors associate the image of Russia with such problems as poverty and corruption [24] (Table 2).

It was also confirmed by the sociological study conducted by the BBC (2010). It is established that out of 26 countries Russia is leading in the problems of poverty and corruption [25].

A. Neimatov noted that these problems are deeply entrenched in the image of the Russian state, and the Western media will print the headers like «Russia is a mafia state» for a long time ahead [26].

Thus, the creation and promotion of a positive image of the state is a complex and durable process. According to I. A. Vasilenko, a positive image of the country can be achieved only with the help of the national idea, that is «the system of values of the society, expressing the consciousness of the people and setting goals for personal and national development in historical perspective» [16]. The analysis of the evolution of the image of the Russian state in the system of

Table 2.
What do you think about Russia in general?

	Eastern Europe	Western Europe
Great country		**
Mental people	*	****
An ordinary country	**	*
A third world country	***	*
Corruption, poverty	****	*
World power		***
Beautiful country	**	
Mysterious country	*	***
Great people	*	**
Better not to think	*	

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international relations has shown that the image of Russia has dynamically modified throughout the history. At present, the results of social and political research demonstrate that Russian citizens associate the image of the national state, in the first place, with the President of the country, strong power and being great state. A different view of the image of Russia is abroad. Most

often Russian state is perceived as a superpower with rich history.

However, there are states (USA, China, UK), which have developed more negative than positive image of the Russian Federation. They perceive Russia as an impoverished, dangerous country with a high level of corruption.

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Notes

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