

THE PROBLEM OF IMAGE IN POLITICS AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Summary: Image is one of the most popular topics in politics and in political science. A successful image in politics is the quintessence of different elements, a multi-faceted and multi-level phenomenon. Only an integral approach to understanding and building of the image allows to extract from it the maximum benefit. Image in politics is formed as a mosaic. This process consists of many factors and components and includes a focused work of the image-makers, opinions and actions of opponents and colleagues and the objective conditions of society, as well as the whole political context. With the rapid development of the Internet political image becomes more symbolic and easily manipulable. One of the conditions to manipulate people is stereotyped thinking.

Keywords: politics, image, components, stereotypes, symbolic reality

Introduction. In the context of intensifying globalization processes and the active development of new technologies, image becomes a powerful means of influencing mass consciousness. This term is used very widely and often, and it is in politics that it takes on the most extensive and colorful forms. There are many examples in history when the image factor (be it of a political leader, party, elite, institution or country) determined the course of development of political processes for many years. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of image for all actors in politics. Therefore, almost each of them is actively engaged in the consistent construction of their own favorable image. This issue becomes especially relevant on the eve of the elections.

Methods. In this study, methods such as systemic, comparative, behavioral, historical and information methods were used.

Research. Forming an image is not as simple, chaotic and short-term a process as it might seem at first glance. The image in politics is constructed mosaically and is the result of the following processes: consistent and long-term work of image makers together with the object of promotion; political context and events and phenomena external to the object; as well as targeted actions of opponents and adversaries. Each specific case in imageology is purely individual. That is why research that reveals the specific process of forming and promoting the image of individual leaders, interest groups, institutions, and countries is so relevant today.

At the same time, we should not forget about the essence of the concept of image as a whole. Having opened it, one can logically derive general rules that specialists in the field of public relations and political strategists should follow in the course of their work. Moreover, determining the essence of the image can also help set priorities in its formation.

The real state of affairs is of particular importance in constructing the image. If the proclaimed image does not correspond to what/who one has to deal with in reality, then it is simply untenable and ineffective. The fact is that then there is no evidence base in it, and, therefore, trust in it as an object disappears or does not arise at all. In order for the image not to

turn out to be a myth (in the scientific sense of the word), it is necessary that it be supported by real facts. At the same time, the image of a political object quite often goes hand in hand with a stereotype that simplifies reality, which can also radically distort reality. Moreover, the image in politics is replete with symbols, which brings us back to the question of the relationship between the mythological and the real in this phenomenon.

The English word image first entered the Russian language in the mid-1980s and is translated as “image, image.” Its etymology goes back to the Latin *imāgo* - “view, representation, likeness”, and is genetically related to the word imagination. So can the semantic meaning of the word image fully reflect the essence of this phenomenon? And is it possible to say that the image is more symbolic than real? Let's try to figure it out. The phenomenon called image has been known to people for a long time, long before it became the subject of study by many sciences. The famous Webster's dictionary in one of its definitions interprets image as “the image of a person, product, social institution, etc., which is shared by the general public and which is often deliberately shaped or changed by the media, advertising, propaganda, etc.” This set of sensations, associations, beliefs, emotional and rational ideas about the main features of an object is formed in the human mind as a result of information received from various sources, as well as on the basis of the individual's own experience. Images and images constitute the essence and condition of human existence.

The need to think in such categories as image, image arises due to the fact that a person needs to obtain a certain amount of knowledge about the world around him, despite the fact that he (the person) is limited in time and space, as well as in his own capabilities. And if an individual fails to empirically understand every issue that he encounters during the day (and this is not even necessary), then his consciousness and subconscious, based on available information and experience, create an idea of the object, somewhere automatically completing and completing this or that image. For example, few of us can boast of having personally communicated with famous people, but almost everyone has a certain idea about them. Their image has already been formed in society. It undergoes some changes, but the framework that was created initially remains unchanged.

The image can be both positive and negative, but, as a rule, it is more complex and multifaceted. A successful image is made up of numerous fragments that mosaically form the overall picture. But usually this mosaic does not develop randomly or chaotically, but under the influence, and more often, under the clear leadership of one or another person or group of people pursuing certain political or other (for example, financial and commercial) interests and goals. Image is an image that can be modified: adjusted and modified. The “output” image is, in fact, a product processed by our consciousness and already different from the original itself. All this strengthens the symbolic-mythical component in it. But can an image have nothing to do with reality at all? For example, can a politician's image be radically different from his real essence?

There is an opinion among people that from any “semi-finished product” and “from scratch” you can create the desired “product”. However, this is almost impossible to do, especially when it comes to a person. A false image is an unbearable burden both for the target of promotion and for his team. Constantly playing someone else's role can lead to serious mental disorders and destruction of a person's identity. Image is like a look into the future, and it is necessary that it is based on the past and present, and continues a certain line of personal development. The image of a politician cannot be dissonant with his own image - “I”, because in this case there will be a constant struggle of opposites in him.

Not a single specialist in the field of public relations has yet managed to create an image that is absolutely not supported by real qualities. And the problem is not the lack of professionalism among PR specialists and political strategists. It is the last element of this system that eliminates the possibility of total deception of the audience. However, professionals in their field know how to present an object “with the right sauce,” enhancing its positive qualities and setting priorities. Thus, the image of a politician must correspond to the social expectations of the population. Therefore, it is necessary that the image be dually congruent, i.e. so that it reflects the real qualities and capabilities of the individual and does not disappoint its target audience.

The “corridor of opportunities” for forming the image of a political leader is determined not only by the personal, real advantages (disadvantages) of the leader himself, but also by the broader socio-political context. Experts once spoke about this: “... individuals, thanks to the characteristics of their character, can influence the fate of society. Sometimes their influence is even very significant, but both the very possibility of such influence and its size are determined by the organization of society and the balance of its forces. The character of an individual is a “factor” of social development only there, only then and only insofar as where, when and insofar as social relations allow it”.

One of the key rules in the work of political PR specialists is the slogan “to be, not to appear.” In the age of the information society, it is extremely difficult not to be, but to appear. An image that is not supported by reality is essentially ineffective. Any mistake or simply a politician’s ego bursting out can instantly destroy the image that has developed over many years. A striking example of this is the voice recorder of Gordon Brown, which was not turned off after the interview, which immediately exposed the politician and played a cruel joke on him right on the eve of the parliamentary elections in Great Britain. We all remember the continuation of this story, when Brown repeatedly apologized to the offended elderly lady. However, the deed was done and the reputation was tarnished. The former prime minister's ratings have steadily fallen.

The behavior of a political leader is not always subject to the control of his image makers, since it reflects his self-concept and sometimes becomes compensation for real or imaginary defects, something that A. Adler and later G. Lasswell stated at one time. Thus, it is sometimes difficult to completely hide the characteristics of an individual’s behavior, but at the same time, if desired, they can be corrected. One of the possible options for adjusting a politician’s image is to draw attention to his charismatic qualities, if any. Max Weber defined charisma as “a quality of personality recognized as extraordinary, thanks to which he is assessed as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically special powers and properties not available to other people”.

It is the factor of uniqueness and selectivity of the owner of charisma that gives his image a certain specialness and endows it with distinctive, easy-to-remember brand characteristics.

However, at the first stages of image formation, political strategists do not recommend using the image of a charismatic political leader, but instead advise trying on the images of the Hero that have taken place in political history. For this purpose, its mythological features are strengthened, the heroic past is recalled, which is contrasted with the petty present, and the main task of the politician becomes the transformation of the reality around him. Next, the heroic role of the politician is played out. Such a written scenario may seem unrealistic at first glance, but it is quite often and, indeed, successfully used in politics. It “works” because our psyche allows itself to be manipulated. Even more opportunities for manipulation arise when people form masses, and also when Internet technologies are developing so actively.

It would seem that thanks to the latest developments in the field of the Internet and mass media, any politician appears at a glance; every person can learn about his life and work, if only he wants to. You can follow every step of a servant of the people twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, find out his opinion on almost any issue on Twitter, Facebook or other social networks. But don't delude yourself. After all, this is a virtual space, and there is a simulacrum that gives politicians and their assistants a chance to form the desired image.

Conclusion. As a conclusion, it can be noted that in political science, research on the topic of creating a political image is an important area. Of course, the elements of the structure of the image of state power vary in degree of importance. Considering the high level of personification of the Russian political process, we can say that the personal characteristics of political figures and leaders are the most significant for target audiences.

The image of power is formed in the mass and individual consciousness as a socio-psychological phenomenon that unites the formed images of various political subjects and individual characteristics of the state's image, which, in turn, are obviously the result of the activities of certain political figures, leaders, parties, associations, etc.

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