

PECULIARITIES OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE OF THE CASPIAN BORDER TERRITORIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THE POLITICS MEDIATIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The article is devoted to topical issues related to the mediatization of politics at the present stage. These problems are of particular importance in border territories, where multiculturalism is pronounced. The authors analyse the phenomenon of mediatization of politics and determine the degree of its impact on the political space of the Caspian border territories, as well as identify the features of political culture and factors that have a determining influence on the communicative content of these territories.

Keywords: *political culture, border territories, Caspian Sea, mediatization of politics, informatization, digitalization.*

INTRODUCTION

The modern political reality is dynamically developing towards more and more mediatization. In the conditions of the emerging information society, the influence of mass media can be traced by the changing parameters and characteristics of public administration and the decision-making process. In this regard, we are to identify the factors influencing the political interaction of political actors on the example of the border territories of the Caspian Sea, as well as to identify the features and trace the dynamics of the transformation of political culture and the displays of its elements in the conditions of the political space mediatization.

CURRENT STATE OF THE RESEARCH

In recent decades the discourse of mediatization is attracting more and more attention of researchers. Thus, the English researcher J.B. Thompson [1] was one of the first in his research to actively use the concept of "mediatization" to characterize the ongoing processes in the socio-cultural space. Further on, foreign [2] and Russian scientists [3] actively joined the research

process, revealing new connotations of the concept, its technological effectiveness and potential [4]. Political space with a historically established type of political culture attracted researchers from the second part of the 20th century, being constantly actualized by various aspects of the problem: political identity, political consciousness, intercultural dialogue, cooperation or competition [5]. One of the first Russian authors who tried to comprehensively approach the study of the Caspian region, including the problems of the border territories of the Caspian Sea, were I.S. Zonn, S.S. Zhiltsov [6, 7].

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Modern political processes are in a state of deep and dynamic transformation in the context of spreading informatization. The formation of the information society is a reality actualized by the global COVID-19 pandemic and accompanied by diverse and level-based problems. With the expanding lockdown, mass media have become a tool for communication, contacts, informing, training, and of course political management. Reduced opportunities for direct interaction and discussion of

current issues between actors, both at the mundane level and in the public sphere of power, contributed to the rapid growth of mediatization of all spheres of society and political activity in particular. The increasing uncertainty of the processes has allowed to verbalize the information-explanatory and regulatory functions of the mass communication tools (MCT), thereby ensuring the translation, formation and management of the policy subjects' vision of the facts of objective political reality. Here, the MCT manifest and fulfil their extremely great potential, as an instrument and channel of influence in the formation of political reality and stable views of the situation, processes in the mass public consciousness and in the political culture of political actors in general.

MEDIATIZATION OF POLITICS AND CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

A characteristic phenomenon of the recent decades is the formation and development of a unique political space in which information and communication technologies play an active role. This process is called mediatization of politics and is a reflection of political reality in the information space due to interpenetration of the political segment and the sphere of mass media and communication. The emergence and penetration of the Internet had a great impact on the development and formation of new forms of political communication, which, in turn, had a tremendous impact on the formation of a unique political space within social media. Analysing the present-day realities, one can see a pattern in the use of social media and information technologies as key ways to create the required image for the state, since most modern researchers attribute such political tools to an integral part of the soft power of the today's states.

Focusing on the displays of the politics mediatization in the sphere of foreign policy of states, it is worth taking into account the formation of phenomena affecting the interests of a large number of modern states, such as, for example, the growing popularity of tweet diplomacy or digital diplomacy, exerting pressure on top officials of the state with the help of such a tool as the "information press", it is also worth mentioning the development of the necessary image of states through the use of media tools.

Among such tools, social media, presented on the World Wide Web in the form of blogs and social networks, have gained great popularity, as well as information technologies and strategies, of which the so-called "Twitter Revolution", "Smart Crowd" and "Softpower" have widely spread.

We may say, that mediatization process acquires a new role as a catalyst for the creation of new ways of managing society. One of these methods is the "smart crowd" technology introduced by sociologist G. Reinhold [8]. Many of the author's ideas are currently reflected in modern IT-technology products. The application of the "smart crowd" technology is characterised by a viral way of presenting and distributing information, as well as the organization of an

information war, in which alternative channels of information transmission are totally restricted.

The introduction of "smart crowd" technology into modern society makes it possible to perceive the crowd as an information environment capable of organizing its activities under a certain influence, as well as acting as a translator of specific political information. The illusions of immeasurable influence on political processes and the effect of mass consolidation occur due to the inclusion of supporters in groups of like-minded people.

In classical media, the category of "smart crowd" is often synonymous with the concepts of flash mob or political flash mob. A political flash mob is understood as a pre-prepared action aimed at achieving a certain political effect. A feature of this category is full or partial anonymity and mobility, which explains the appearance and dissemination of information about planned actions in social media.

It is worth emphasizing that the information technology "smart crowd" creates a semblance of emotional unity, forms and distributes information of dubious origin, and also instills in its supporters' feelings of intolerance and alienation in relation to specific political and social institutions. Within the framework of this technology, swarm and network strategies are used. According to J. Arquilla and D. Ronfeldt, swarm tactics should be understood as a way of forming small network groups of supporters of specific political and social goals. The key technical resource in this case is social networks and devices for accessing the Internet [8]. In addition, the mobility inherent in network communities is of particular importance for such tactics.

A special resource for politics mediatization is "Softpower", which is based on network technologies [9, p. 57]. The so-called soft power or nonviolent mechanisms of influencing the political consciousness of the masses are the basis of social media. Besides, soft power is based on the ideas of equality of participants, free exchange of and access to information. The main catalysts of the "soft" influence on the minds of the public are technological gadgets, which, in addition to transmitting information, are means of voluntary inclusion in a certain information agenda. At the same time, the point of reference for the population mobilization can be considered the appearance of Internet access, since from that time there is no alternative option to stop this process without limiting the rights and freedoms of citizens [10].

The use of social media to organize protest movements is called "revolution through social networks" or "Twitter revolution". By the way, such processes are formed to increase the number of supporters, in most cases by attracting neutral parties. The author of this term, E. Morozov, considering the revolutionary processes in the countries of the Middle East and Africa, does not think all of them to be real Twitter revolutions. He explains this by the long-lasting mass anti-government sentiments that exhibited in the

media space at the moment when the society loses patience towards the political system [11].

Studying the technologies of Twitter revolutions, it should be noted that the inclusion of new like-minded people begins while consuming news content, actively participating in commenting and distributing video clips on social media, then develops into active participation in actions and political flash mobs in the streets. In modern conditions, social media are involved in such a phenomenon as the cult of Digital, justified by the ability of the media space to turn persons into a faceless crowd and guide it by means of the sense of network identity.

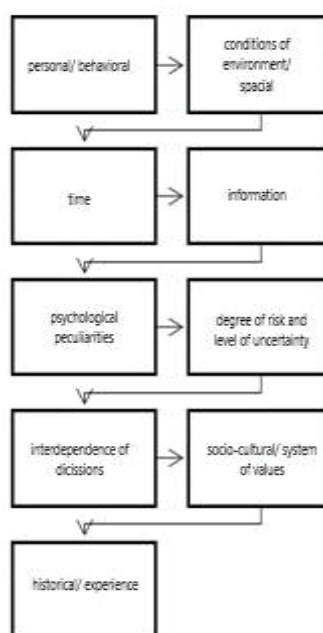
However, the emergence of social media has allowed a large number of individual actors on such Internet platforms as You Tube, Live Journal and Twitter to act as a full-fledged subject of the communication chain of information transmission. Besides, the subjects got feedback from the addressee, which largely changed the communicative model developed in the middle of the last century.

It is worth noting that a person in the modern conditions of the information society strives to live in the reality created by the information to be consumed. This statement allows us to speak about society as an active consumer of the created political media reality, since it turns into the only source of information about political reality, presenting ideological or propaganda content [12, p. 126].

Media personalities, using social networks, pursue strategies that affect the perception of the image of the state they represent. By interacting with a foreign audience through social media, political leaders have the opportunity to form the necessary identity of the country within the framework of international relations. To achieve this goal, the existing opinion of international actors about the state, as well as the reaction of the population of this state to the broadcast identification, is of paramount importance. In case of dissonance in the perception of the image of the country by these two categories, political leaders, resorting to the use of social media tools, can transform the strongly held views of the image of the state in the right direction [13, p. 156].

It is important to note that the media influence itself can be considered in terms of depth and scale and characterized as "strong" and "limited". Our position is that this influence is discrete and mediatization as a process and factor in the formation of political consciousness and political culture of the actor as a whole can lead to very different results.

The following factors can be considered as determining ones affecting the result:



BORDER TERRITORIES AS A SPECIAL SPACE OF POLITICAL AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

Each of these factors is significant and deserves a separate study. As part of our research, we particularly note the spatial environment where the processes of mediatization and political and cultural transformation are directly unfolding. In this regard the political space or field (according to P. Bourdieu), where the direct interaction of actors takes place, is of great importance. P. Bourdieu convincingly proves the role and influence of journalism and, more broadly, the media on socio-political processes that have the potential to impose their demands on all other fields, and especially the fields of cultural production, the field of social sciences, philosophy, and of course the field of politics [14, p. 130].

The field of politics or political space can be considered quite specifically as a certain outlined territory with formal features. Within the framework of the research issues, we distinguish the concept of "border territory" as a broader concept and "border territory of the Caspian Sea" as a more localized phenomenon. Border territories represent an absolutely special space, having, on the one hand, all the signs of the field, and on the other - completely unique characteristics.

According to some researchers, not all territories of the Russian Federation, the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Iran as border territories of the Caspian Sea should be designated as border ones (due to the remoteness of a significant territory from the Caspian Sea), but only administrative-territorial units of the Caspian states that are closely interrelated in terms of their border, administrative, and economic functions [15, p. 52].

Within the border territories of the Caspian region, specific (different from the internal ones within the country's units) identities, phenomena and processes are formed and develop. They are influenced by a combination of factors specific to the border region (legal, economic, political, ethnic, demographic, religious and others) related to international differentiation and interaction.

Thus, Erikson, exploring the phenomenon of identity, points to its continuity, the process of formation involves the constant integration or differentiation of the individual's inner "Self-image" with permanent changes in the environment [16].

It is important to note that as for the Caspian border area, we are dealing with a trans-border space and interaction, which can be interpreted as the territory of the frontier, in the interpretation of L. Kristof [17], as a transit zone, with a pronounced integration factor. In recent years, interest in the border areas of the Caspian Sea has been constantly increasing. This was due to the growing importance of the Caspian Sea in the system of political and international relations. The studies were of a multidisciplinary nature, revealing historical, economic, geostrategic, transport and logistics and cultural features [18, 19]. Russian scientist A.G. Sanina in modern conditions focuses on such factors of influence as migration processes and globalization. They contribute to dissolving national and cultural identity, being constantly replenished with ethnic and political connotations [20]. Besides, the processes of informatization and mediatization are becoming increasingly important, which have a significant impact on the characteristics and vectors of interaction between actors of the Caspian border area. In the context of growing international challenges, the demand for the creation of a system of collective security of the Caspian countries is growing, where political and cultural channels and interactions have a significant untapped potential.

CONCLUSION

Political culture, as a product and result of collective political interaction and, in general, the historical development of society, embodies the basic characteristics of political consciousness and political behavior of the majority of residents of border territories. In the context of increasing international challenges and risks, the transformation of the role of border territories is beyond doubt. It is important that the processes that significantly change the communication and cultural space come to the fore, exacerbating the peculiarities and problems of international politics concerning border regions.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The article was written by a team of authors, all authors took equal part in the theoretical analysis of the

problem and in the conduct of research. O.I. Oskina analyzed the features and factors of political culture. E.V. Kudryashova considered topical issues of mediatization of politics at the present stage in the context of cultural transformation. A.Sh. Nogmova researched the current state of the problem and conceptualized its manifestations. M.Sh. Dzhantaleeva was responsible for the study of border areas as a special space of political and cultural identity.

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