



Research article

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FEATURES OF THE POLITICAL ATTRIBUTION OF THE RUSSIAN CITIZEN AND THE CONTENT COMPONENTS OF THE POSITIVE IMAGE OF HIS COUNTRY¹

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Abstract. The article presents the results of a qualitative study of determining the peculiarities of political attribution of the Russian citizen and the content components of the positive image of Russia. The authors of the article studied the political attributions of the Russian citizen in the historical retrospective of the development of state power (during the change of political paradigms). The hypothesis that the features of political attributions of a person determine the formation of a positive image of the country is proved. The study found that the image of modern Russia in the consciousness of generations X, Y and Z has no differences and is characterized by positive characteristics both in terms of sign system and activity factors. The image of the post-Soviet state in generations X and Y has a pronounced negative character in terms of image semantics, pragmatics

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and syntactics, while generation Z, on the contrary, demonstrates a positive perception of Soviet power and a positive image of the state of that time. The image of the Soviet state also has differences in the representation of generations: X and Y — positive image; generation Z — negative image. It is also worth noting that the image of modern Russia and the image of the Soviet state in the perceptions of the generations are almost identical.

Keywords: political attribution, Russian citizen, image of Russia, national-state identity, image of power, identity crisis

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Научная статья

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ОСОБЕННОСТИ ПОЛИТИЧЕСКОЙ АТРИБУЦИИ РОССИЙСКОГО ГРАЖДАНИНА И СОДЕРЖАТЕЛЬНЫХ КОМПОНЕНТОВ ПОЛОЖИТЕЛЬНОГО ОБРАЗА СВОЕЙ СТРАНЫ²

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Аннотация. В статье представлены результаты качественного исследования определения особенностей политической атрибуции российского гражданина и содержательных компонентов положительного образа России. Авторами статьи изучены политические атрибуции российского гражданина в исторической ретроспективе развития государственной власти (при смене политических парадигм). Доказана гипотеза о том, что особенности политической атрибуции личности определяют формирование

² The article is published in the author's edition.

положительного образа своей страны. В ходе исследования установлено, что образ современной России в сознании поколений X, Y и Z различий не имеет и отличается положительными характеристиками как по знаковой системе, так и по факторам деятельности. Образ постсоветского государства у поколений X и Y по образной семантике, прагматике и синтактике имеет ярко выраженный негативный характер, тогда как поколение Z, напротив, демонстрирует положительное восприятие советской власти и положительный образ государства того времени. Образ советского государства также имеет различия в представлении поколений: X и Y — положительный образ; поколение Z — отрицательный образ. Стоит также отметить, что образ современной России и образ советского государства в представлениях поколений практически идентичны.

Ключевые слова: политическая атрибуция, российский гражданин, образ России, национальная-государственная идентичность, образ власти, кризис идентичности

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Introduction

The study of the role of personality and the influence of individual personal characteristics on the formation of the political picture of the world is one of the leading areas of research in modern political psychology. However, theoretical and empirical studies devoted to this problem, the subject of scientific research is not the peculiarities of an individual subject of cognition in the manifestation of his activity (values and meanings, attitudes, motives, features of attributive processes, etc.), but the psychological features of a particular community, group, social stratum, masses. In this regard, to date, the influence of the characteristics of an individual personality on the emergence of images of political reality has been insufficiently studied.

The analysis of foreign and domestic studies has shown that the sphere of political images includes the image of one's country, which determines the formation of the individual's system of political ideas about the state, people, culture, language and other structural elements of one's country (Shestopal et al., 2022; Selezneva, & Smulkina, 2020; Shestopal, 2021; Kotlyakov, & Puzikov, 2023; Kharus, 2023; Adejumo et al., 2024; Lin et al., 2024; Monteiro et al., 2024; Shaoyang et al., 2023; Zheltukhina, Paramonova, & Busygina, 2023).

It should be noted that the image of Russia as an image of its country in the mass consciousness has undergone a colossal transformation over the past 30 years. The collapse of the Soviet Union at the end of the XX century led to the formation of a new image of the country in the national consciousness of the people — the image of the Russian Federation. A country that has chosen a new path of democratization and liberalization, a country with a new territorial structure, administrative

apparatus, socio-economic structure, etc., and a new way of life. The change of the basic paradigm of the state structure led to the destruction of the established national ideology and the formation of a new worldview (post-Soviet) in the minds of the Russian people. This period can be called a period of political vacuum, characterized by the open detachment of Russian citizens from the world of politics, disappointment in the present of the country and loss of hopes for the future development of the state. The mass consciousness of the Russian society of the post-Soviet period became oriented towards Western values, which could not but affect the national community of the people and their identity.

The analysis of domestic literature of the last twenty years of the XX century allows us to say that the leitmotif of research works was the problem of the crisis of national identity and mechanisms for overcoming it, the creation of national-state ideology, increasing civic consciousness and other ways to consolidate Russian society (Filimonov, 2010; Rastorguev, & Titov, 2024; Andreyev, 2007; Evgenyeva, & Titov, 2010; Evgenyeva, & Selezneva, 2013; Komarovskiy, 2015; Titov, 2016; Shestopal, 2018; Repina et al., 2018; Boeva-Omelechko et al., 2019; Paramonova, & Zheltukhin, 2021). The state authorities of the post-Soviet period were unable to offer a national idea to their citizens, an idea that could unite the people and form a positive image of their own country in the minds of the Russian citizen.

It is also worth mentioning the fact that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the system of state administration was oriented towards the development of international relations and sought to overcome the “iron curtain” of the Soviet era. During this period, the theory of “soft power” was widely spread, which implied an alternative to military confrontation among the world’s states and became a tool for spreading the attractiveness of Russian culture and traditions. The use of soft power theory was aimed at shaping the international image of Russia, while the image of Russia inside the country was not given due attention. Many Russian citizens in the early to mid-2000s had a negative attitude towards their state and wanted to leave that state for another more prosperous place, while accepting their homeland, culture and language with love and sadness at the same time.

It is important to note that from 2000 to the present, Russian society has also experienced the impact of various opposition forces (systemic opposition, Russian political protest, technological opposition) (Seleznev, & Chelnokova, 2021). The turning point in the political struggle of the opposition forces of the last decade can be called 2012, when V. V. Putin was again elected to the place of the head of state. After the presidential election, there was a sharp ideologization and radicalization of opposition speeches. Later, the Winter Olympics in Sochi, the restoration of the historical belonging of the Republic of Crimea to Russia, the growing and systemic anti-Russian sanctions, the establishment of the anti-Russian regime in Ukraine became a turning point in the development of patriotism and popular unity of the Russian nation.

Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM) sociological surveys in 2014 recorded a sharp rise in public confidence in the state authorities, a rapid growth

of the president's rating and unprecedented approval of his activities, the revival of imperial sentiments and other signs of consolidation of Russian society. It is worth noting that the revival of popular unity and commonality of political views developed against the backdrop of the economic crisis of 2014–2016. According to the results of questionnaires conducted by sociological agencies of that time (VCIOM), it can be concluded that most of the Russian people perceived the sanctions as a challenge that must be fought (the tendency to unite against the background of external threats is characteristic of Russian society in all historical periods). The Russian president against the background of these events became a symbol of Russian will, power, justice and strength. The dominant attitudes in the public consciousness and in the consciousness of an individual were the permanent presence of V. V. Putin at the top of the political hierarchy, conviction in his election victories and unwillingness to change the president in the future. To a certain extent, these attitudes (commitment to power, unification of the people under the onslaught of aggression from the U.S. and all European countries) are still relevant today.

In connection with the above, the research question arises: What are the features of the development of a new positive image of Russia in the context of the historical events presented above and what is the role of an individual personality as an active subject of political perception in this process? From the position of the question posed, the research problem is related to the need to identify and study the influence of psychological characteristics of the individual (political attribution) on the formation of a positive image of their country.

Research Methods

Purpose of the study: to determine the peculiarities of political attributions of the Russian citizen and the content components of the positive image of Russia.

Research objective: to study the political attributions of the Russian citizen in the historical retrospective of the development of state power (paradigm shift).

Hypothesis of the study: the features of political attributions of the Russian citizen determine the formation of a positive image of Russia.

Methods of empirical research: qualitative research by conducting standardized in-depth interviews.

The empirical base of the study included 60 respondents who underwent in-depth interviews conducted independently in the Russian capital. The interviews were conducted in a remote format according to the guide developed by the authors of the article. The purpose of the interviews was to study the peculiarities of Russian citizens' perceptions of their country, as well as to determine the peculiarities of political perception of the individual (cognitive style, political affiliation, attitudes, values, ideals).

Results of the study

Private hypothesis of this study was that psychological features of personality (political attribution) and perceptions of the image of Russia will differ depending on the age of a Russian citizen, level of education and gender.

Sixty people from Moscow, Moscow Region and Stavropol Region participated in the interviews. The research sample for Russia is not representative. However, the purpose of the interviewing was to conduct exploratory and content analysis, data collection for questionnaire survey design. The complexity of the objectives and the content of the questions required the presence in the sample population of representatives of different generations: X (42 to 59+ years), Y (26 to 41 years) and Z (18 to 25 years). The distribution of the sample population into representatives of generations is conditioned by the historical periods of development: 1) the heyday of the «stagnation» era, 2) the collapse and emergence of «cultural trauma» (Turkulets et al., 2021), 3) the formation of the new Russian (post-Soviet) reality.

Each group included female and male representatives with different levels of education (higher professional education / no higher education).

Study groups:

Group 1 — generation X — 15 respondents;

Group 2 — generation Y — 15 respondents;

Group 3 — generation Z — 15 respondents.

Gender composition: 30 men and 30 women. Education: 30 respondents with higher education and 30 respondents without higher education. To conduct in-depth interviews, we developed a guide that includes 7 thematic blocks (Table 1).

Table 1 / Таблица 1

In-depth interview guide Гайд глубинного интервью

No	Interview questions
1	What do the concepts of «Country Image», «Positive Country Image», «Negative Country Image» include for you.
2	What the concepts of «Image of Russia», «Positive Image of Russia», «Negative Image of Russia» include.
3	Indicate the territorial composition of modern Russia. Specify the territory of the Soviet space. Specify the territory of the post-Soviet space (1991–1995).
4	List the national symbols of Russia today. National symbols of Russia of the Soviet era. National symbols of the post-Soviet time.
5	Indicate what qualities people living in Russia in the XXI century possess. What qualities did Soviet people possess and how did the image of the people change after the collapse of the Soviet Union (mentality, language, culture, manners, etc.)?
6	Describe a) modern state power, b) Soviet power and c) post-Soviet power. What actions can characterize a) modern government, b) Soviet-era government, and c) post-Soviet government?
7	Describe a) the current political leader in Russia today, b) the image of a Soviet-era leader, and c) the image of a post-Soviet leader.

Each thematic block represents a component of the country image model, revealing the attributes, properties, characteristics inherent in the country. I. V. Fomin's (2018) semiotic model of the state image was used as the basis for selecting the model components (Fig. 1).

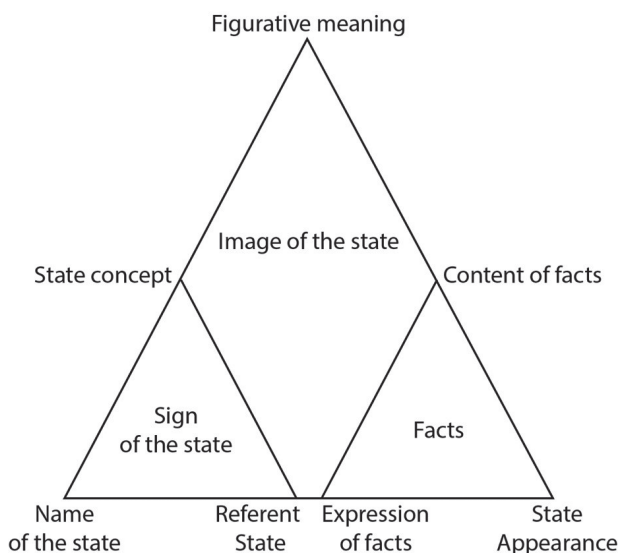


Fig. 1. Semiotic model of the image of the state by I. V. Fomin

Рис. 1. Семиотическая модель образа государства И. В. Фомина

The image of the state in the model «is a complex semiotic construction that works on the principle of combining iconic and conventional ways of signification and has as a sign means the sign of the state, and as an object — all fragments of reality (facts) like this sign. The sign of the state determines the meaning of the image. The sign of the state consists of a signifier in the form of the name of the state, which has as its referent the state itself, determining the direct interpretant in the form of the concept of the state (attributes, properties and characteristics inherent in this state). The name of the state in the presented scheme reflects not only the name of the state, official or unofficial, but in general about any means of pointing to it, be it, for example, state symbols, metonymic constructions and any other ways of denoting the state» (Fomin, p. 11).

So, the sign of the state includes the following components: the history of the country, the image of the people, power and political leader. Facts of the state: fragments of reality (territories, population density, economic level, human capital index, etc.) (Fig. 2).

Based on the results of interview transcription and processing, we have constructed comparative tables of the image of Russia, the image of the post-Soviet and Soviet state, including representations of image semantics (those definitions that emphasize the characteristics of the state reflected in the image), image pragmatics (definitions that emphasize the evaluative coloring of the image) and image

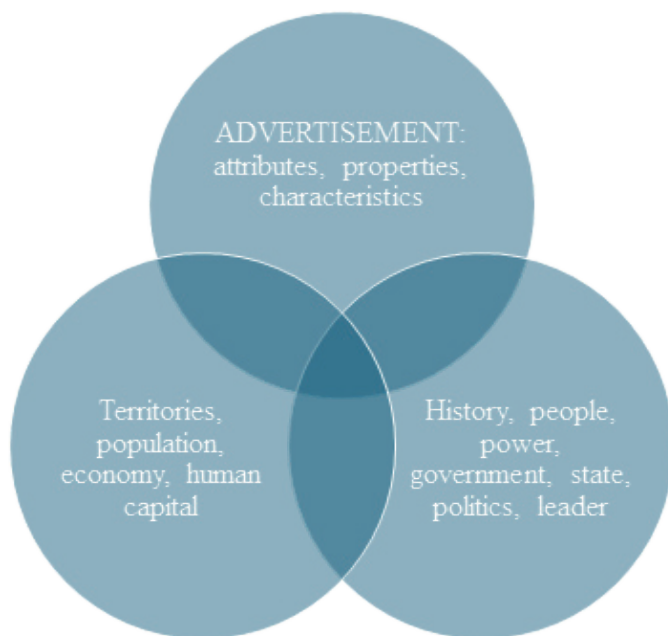


Fig. 2. Country Image Model

Рис. 2. Модель образа страны

syntactics (the concept of image includes the question of what roles the state plays (Table 2–4).

Table 2 / Таблица 2

Image of Modern Russia by Generation
Образ современной России в разрезе поколений

Group No	Sign system	Facts	
	figurative semantics	figurative pragmatics	figurative syntactics
Group 1 – X	<p>Anthem; coat of arms; flag; constitution; Putin — leader, decisive, smart, strong; richness of culture; unity and integrity</p> <p>People — breadth of views; breadth of soul; multinationality; moral values and meanings</p> <p>Territory — border security; Crimea; Ukraine; resource wealth</p>	<p>Uniqueness of the Russian people; democratic system; dictatorship of power; revival of monarchy</p>	<p>Russia — mother; care; forgiveness</p>
Group 2 – Y	<p>Anthem; flag; coat of arms; constitution; Putin — leader, power, strategist</p>	<p>Variety of reforms; hope for reasonableness of actions; revival</p>	<p>Russia is the breadwinner and protector</p>

Group No	Sign system	Facts	
	figurative semantics	figurative pragmatics	figurative syntactics
	People — brotherhood; unity; commonwealth of generations; patriotism; Russian mentality; identity Territory — security; borders; regions of Russia; Crimea; DNR; LNR; Ukraine; Eurasia	of power (“getting up from the knees”); strong state with rich history and culture; centralized power	
Group 3 – Z	Anthem; coat of arms; flag; constitution; Putin; power; strength; might Multinationality; Motherland; Victory Parade Territory — Russia + + Crimea + Novorossiya	Great power; independent; traditional views with a desire for modern ones, desire for professional growth and self-realization	Winner

Table 3 / Таблица 3

Image of the post-Soviet state in the context of generations**Образ постсоветского государства в разрезе поколений**

Group No	Sign system	Facts	
	figurative semantics	figurative pragmatics	figurative syntactics
Group 1 – X	Yeltsin; White House; Swan Lake; Moscow People — lack of patriotism; lack of ideology; blurred values; fear; poverty; hopelessness Territory — blurred borders	Lack of stability; lack of confidence in the future; crisis of values, crisis of world outlook	The breakup of the Union as destruction; renewal; change
Group 2 – Y	Yeltsin; Moscow; change of power; change of power paradigm; change of political regime; democracy; chaos People — angry; hungry; fear for the future Territory — regions of Russia	Lack of stability; lack of confidence in the future; identity crisis	Destruction
Group 3 – Z	Alcohol; birch tree; feast People — bright, emotional, open-minded, working a lot and getting little; living with faith in the best. Territory — regions of Russia	Business development; new economic sectors	New World

Table 4 / Таблица 4

Image of the Soviet state by generation
Образ советского государства в разрезе поколений

Group No	Sign system	Facts	
	figurative semantics	figurative pragmatics	figurative syntactics
Group 1 – X	Flag; anthem; coat of arms; party; Andropov — strategist, competent politician, loyal to his state; Stalin — heyday of the era People — mentality; patriotism; culture; intelligence; education; identity Territory — 15 Union Republics; security; strength; power	Stability, confidence in the future	Russia is the breadwinner
Group 2 – Y	Anthem; flag; coat of arms; Moscow; party; leader Stalin and Andropov People — brotherhood; unity; identity; collectivism; commonwealth Territory — republics of the Soviet Union	Security; stability; certainty; certainty; systematic; orderly	Russia — stability in its development; closed; inertia
Group 3 – Z	Serb and Hammer; Kolkhoznik and Kolkhoznitsa; Party; Lenin; Komsomol; Stalin; Moscow People — kind; naive; friendly Territory — a huge country including many republics	Safety; routine; grayness; rules	Non-developing country

Conclusions

The systematization of concepts indicates that the image of modern Russia in the minds of generations X, Y and Z has no differences and is characterized by positive characteristics both in terms of the sign system and the facts of activity. The image of the post-Soviet state in generations X and Y has a pronounced negative character in terms of image semantics, pragmatics and syntactics, while generation Z, on the contrary, demonstrates a positive perception of Soviet power and a positive image of the state of that time. The image of the Soviet state also

has differences in the representation of generations: X and Y — positive image; generation Z — negative image. It is also worth noting that the image of modern Russia and the image of the Soviet state in the perceptions of the generations are almost identical.

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